

**UNIVERZA V LJUBLJANI**  
**FAKULTETA ZA DRUŽBENE VEDE**

**Simon Ličen**

**TELEVIZIJSKO ŠPORTNO KOMENTATORSTVO:**  
**ŠPORTNI PRENOSI NA SLOVENSKI JAVNI TELEVIZIJI**

**TELECASTING SPORTS:**  
**SPORTS BROADCASTS ON SLOVENIAN PUBLIC TELEVISION**

**doktorska disertacija**

**LJUBLJANA, 2011**

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*To Dr. Brane Dežman*

*A true and lifelong mentor*



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Televizijsko športno komentatorstvo: športni prenosi na slovenski javni televiziji  
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# **Televizijsko športno komentatorstvo: športni prenosi na slovenski javni televiziji**

## **Ključne besede**

Analiza vsebine, analiza diskurza, okvirjanje, prednostno tematiziranje, spol, rasa, narodnost

## **Izvleček**

Športni prenosi sodijo med najbolj priljubljene medijske vsebine. Zaznamujejo jih negotovost in nabitost s čustvi. Televizijske prenose opisujejo športni reporterji oziroma komentatorji, ki med svojim delom izrekajo tudi subjektivna mnenja. Takšne izjave določajo okvirje diskurza o številnih vsebinah; med ostalim vplivajo tudi na pojmovanje družbe in identitete. To področje je v Sloveniji še pretežno neraziskano. Namen doktorske disertacije je tako analizirati vsebino in diskurz športnih komentatorjev v prenosi na slovenski javni televiziji.

Pomen se ustvarja skozi komuniciranje. Nezavedno ali namerno prikrojevanje diskurza lahko zato vodi k različnim razumevanjem istega pojava. Televizija, ki jo George Gerbner in Larry Gross označujeta za »osrednje kulturno vodilo ameriške družbe« (1976, 175), prikazuje rahlo, a nenehno popačeno sliko vsakdanjega življenja. Na ta način oblikuje posameznikov pogled na svet in na ljudi v njem. Tudi športne vsebine pogosto ponujajo nestvarno sliko družbe.

Športni komentatorji so običajno novinarji in kot takšni zavezani k spoštovanju profesionalnih novinarskih načel. Kljub temu so raziskovalci teh vsebin povsod po svetu zasledili številne primere dosledno pristranskega in neuravnoveženega poročanja glede na spol, rasno oziroma narodnostno pripadnost nastopajočih tekmovalcev. Športni novinarji to deloma tudi priznavajo in svoj način poročanja utemeljujejo z željami občinstva.

Da bi ugotovili delež in vsebino subjektivnih komentarjev v diskurzu slovenskega športnega poročevalstva je bilo analiziranih 83 ur in 25 minut športnih prenosov na TV Slovenija. Javna televizija je bila izbrana zaradi posebnih vlog, ki se ji tradicionalno pripisujejo, in posledično strožje (zakonsko predpisane) regulacije. V primerjavi s komercialnimi programi je njena tradicija produciranja športnih prenosov veliko daljša. Analizirani so bili prenosi olimpijskih iger iz leta 2008 v atletiki, gimnastiki in plavanju, tekem v mednarodnih košarkarskih in rokometnih tekmovanjih ter srečanj državnega prvenstva v nogometu. Vsi deskriptorji (pridevniki, pridevniška določila, prislovi in prislovna določila), ki so jih komentatorji izrekli med prenosi v povezavi s tekmovalci ali ekipami, so bili zabeleženi in kodirani po dopoljnjeni klasifikaciji za proučevanje okvirjanja posameznikove spolne, rasne oziroma narodnostne pripadnosti (Billings in Eastman 2003). Tipologija razvršča deskriptorje v 19 kategorij, ki zajemajo tri večje oziroma »makro« kategorije: pripisovanje uspeha ali neuspeha, telesni in osebnostni opisi ter nevtralne oziroma objektivne izjave. Značilne razlike med skupinami so bile ugotovljene s hi-kvadrat ( $\chi^2$ ) analizami, pri katerih so bile pričakovane frekvence posameznih kategorij deskriptorjev določene sorazmerno z deležem vseh komentarjev, ki se je nanašal na posamezno skupino tekmovalcev (glede na nacionalnost, raso ali spol). Avtor je opravil tudi kritično analizo diskurza športnih komentatorjev. Za boljše razumevanje načina in pristopa k športnemu komentiranju so bili opravljeni polstrukturirani intervjuji s šestimi uredniki in komentatorji s Televizije Slovenija.

V prenosih olimpijskih iger je bilo tekmovalcem moškega spola posvečenih več komentarjev, ki so se nanašali na njihovo predanost, ekstravertiranost in na njihove pričakovane dosežke. Podanih je bilo tudi več dodatnih informacij o njih. Tekmovalke so bile deležne več izjav o lepoti in privlačnosti, izkušnosti, introvertiranosti, uporabi nedovoljenih snovi ter o telesu ali njegovih delih. Namenjeno jim je bilo tudi več opisnih komentarjev. Belopolti športniki so zbrali statistično značilno več izjav o nadarjenosti oziroma sposobnosti, vendar pa manj izjav o preteklih dosežkih in rezultatskih pričakovanjih. Temnopolti tekmovalci so bili pogosteje opisani v smislu njihove moči oziroma hitrosti, njihovih preteklih dosežkov in pa pričakovanj o prihajajočem nastopu. Obenem so bili deležni manj izjav o nadarjenosti in čustvenosti. Azijski predstavniki so bili nadpovprečno pogosto prikazani v smislu koncentracije, nadarjenosti, privlačnosti in opisov telesa oziroma njegovih delov. Najbolj opazni diskurzivni trendi so se nanašali na banalni nacionalizem in opis

slovenskih tekmovalcev kot »naših«, na malikovanje zmage in uspešnih tekmovalcev ter na podcenjujoč odnos do športnikov, ki so jih opisovali kot »eksotične«. Za ohranjanje in poudarjanje socialnega ugleda so se komentatorji največkrat poslužili diskurzivnih mehanizmov »kitenja s tujim perjem« (BIRGing) in »distanciranja od neuspeha« (CORFing).

V prenosih mednarodnih klubskih tekmovanj v moški košarki in ženskem rokometu se je nanašajski okvir »naših« iz slovenskih reprezentantov preslikal na ljubljanski ekipi, ki sta nastopali v teh tekmovanjih, in njune člane. Diskurz nacionalne pripadnosti je bil ponovno prikazan kot posameznikova osrednja značilnost. Večina komentarja je izpostavljala posameznikove in ne ekipne poteze. Najbolj opazni diskurzivni trendi so bili podobni tistim iz prenosov olimpijskih iger: banalni nacionalizem in odkrito navijanje za »naši«, tokrat ljubljanski, ekipi, manipulativno prikazovanje dogodkov (mehanizmi so vključevali BIRGing, »zaničevanje« (Blasting) in »distanciranje od morebitnega neuspeha« (COFFing)) ter opravičevanje agresivnega vedenja »naših« tekmovalcev.

Diskurz v prenosih državnega prvenstva v nogometu je vseboval največji delež objektivnega in opisnega komentarja. Vse nastopajoče ekipe so bile enakovredno prikazane, le uspešnejše ekipe so bile deležne nekoliko večjega deleža pozitivnih pripisov. Nacionalna pripadnost je bila pri neslovenskih tekmovalcih ponovno največkrat omenjena lastnost. Sodniki so bili prikazani bolj pozitivno kot v mednarodnih klubskih tekmovanjih. Večja mera variabilnosti komentatorjev je omogočila tudi opis nekaterih značilnosti sloga komentiranja posameznih reporterjev.

Subjektivni opisi so v analiziranih športnih prenosih skupaj znašali 35.1 odstotka vseh izrečenih deskriptorjev. Največji delež subjektivnih komentarjev se je pojavil v gimnastičnih, najmanjši pa v nogometnih prenosih. Čeprav so bili slovenski tekmovalci prikazani kot »naši« in so komentatorji odkrito navijali zanje, jim v prenosih iz olimpijskih iger niso namenili statistično večjega deleža pozitivnih omemb. V teh prenosih so bili tekmovalci moškega spola zastopani pogosteje kot tekmovalke ženskega spola. Pojavili so se primeri neuravnoteženega poročanja o spolu in rasni pripadnosti, vendar je bilo teh odklonov manj kot v ostalih raziskavah s tega področja. Kvalitativni del raziskave je pokazal, da novinarji in komentatorji sicer trdijo, da je objektivnost bistveno vodilo njihovega dela, obenem pa menijo, da je

»določena mera« subjektivnosti v športnih prenosih prisotna, dobro sprejeta pri gledalcih in tudi neizbežna.

Številni strokovnjaki in raziskovalci ne dojemajo športa kot »resnega« področja. Kljub temu so te vsebine zelo vplivne, saj sodijo med najbolj gledane medijske vsebine. Zato imajo pomembno vlogo pri oblikovanju posameznikove samopodobe ter njegove individualne in skupinske identitete. Na slovenski javni televiziji je bila nacionalnost poudarjena in prikazana kot pozitivna kategorija. Razlika od pripadnikov drugih skupin je bila poudarjena z omalovaževanjem številnih držav, ki ne pripadajo t.im. zahodnemu svetu. Športni komentatorji so se poslužili številnih mehanizmov, značilnih za navijače, kot so izbrani psihološki mehanizmi, spremenljivo počutje glede na zmago ali poraz in odkrita pristranskost. Pristranski reporterji tako poustvarjajo svet, v katerem so narodi temeljna identifikacijska kategorija, in predstavljajo tekmovalnost kot najpomembnejšo temo. Pogosto so se poslužili okvirjanja, da bi vplivali na interpretacijo uspeha nastopajočih ekip.

Snovalci in producenti programa na Televiziji Slovenija ne dojemajo športa kot vsebine, ki bi lahko informirala in izobraževala gledalce ter jih osveščala o svetu okrog njih. Namesto predstavljanja drugačnih kultur so zmagovalci preko zapostavljanja in zaničevanja poražencev lažno okvirjeni kot norma oziroma družbena večina. Športne vsebine tako zadovoljujejo predvsem pričakovanja in zahteve pripadnikov »nizke kulture«, ki v medijskih vsebinah iščejo kompenzacijo in predvidljive vsebine (Gans 1974). Športni prenos postajajo hibridni, psevdoinformativni žanr.

Disertacija povezuje športne vsebine na TV Slovenija z obstoječimi teorijami diskurza in medijskih vsebin. Poleg tega prilagaja taksonomijo za proučevanje okvirjanja spola, rasne in narodnostne pripadnosti v športnih prenosih (Billings in Eastman 2003) specifičnim potrebam posttranzicijskih družb. Disertacija odpira tudi možnosti nadaljnjih analiz športnih vsebin tako na hitro rastočem tržišču slovenskih športnih televizij kot v primerjavah z drugimi državami in/ali kulturami.



# **Telecasting Sports: Sports Broadcasts On Slovenian Public Television**

## **Keywords**

Content analysis, discourse analysis, framing, agenda-setting, gender, ethnicity, nationality

## **Abstract**

Sports broadcasts are some of the most popular television contents: they are characterized by thrill and emotions. In their voiceovers, commentators provide a running commentary on a sports event. Part of their speech is interpretive. This subjective component shapes the frameworks of discussions about several topics such as identity and society. In Slovenia, this field has been largely unexplored; the aim of this dissertation is thus to analyze commentary content and discourse in sports broadcasts on Slovenian television.

Meaning is produced through communication. Alternative meanings can thus be evoked by deliberately or inadvertently manipulating the discourse about the issue at hand. Deemed the “central cultural arm of American society” by George Gerbner and Larry Gross (1976, 175), television presents slightly, yet constantly inaccurate pictures of everyday life. It directs rather than reflects one’s perception of reality. This cultivates individuals’ views of the world, including views of their own and other people’s identity. Televised sports are no exception as they often provide an imbalanced picture of society. Even though sports broadcasters are habitually journalists and thus bound to professional journalistic standards, scholars around the world have found extensive evidence of national, ethnic and gender bias in sports

media. Sports journalists partially admit this, but claim they are just providing the public with what it wants.

To assess the amount of subjective discourse in Slovenian sports telecasts and the biases it might be conveying, 83 hours and 25 minutes of sports broadcasts by the Slovenian public service broadcaster, TV Slovenija, were analyzed. These broadcasts included the 2008 Olympic gymnastics, swimming, and track and field competitions, international basketball and team handball club competitions, and national soccer league telecasts. All descriptors (defined as any adjective, adjectival phrase, adverb or adverbial phrase) pertaining to athletes or teams spoken by the commentators were transcribed and coded according to an expanded classification originally introduced by Billings and Eastman (2003) to study the discursive framing of gender, ethnic and nationality variables. The taxonomy divides the descriptors into 19 categories and three super-categories: attributions of success or failure, depictions of personality or physicality, and neutral. Significant differences between groups were detected with chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) analyses by using the percentage of overall comments for distinct groups of athletes as expected frequencies. After having conducted a quantitative content analysis, the author observed distinct discursive strategies through a critical analysis of the transcribed commentary. In addition to content and textual analyses, semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with several members of TV Slovenija's Sports Section to understand their views on and approach to commenting on sports.

In the Olympic telecasts, male athletes attracted significantly more commentary evaluating their commitment, extroversion, projected outcome and background. Conversely, women collected more remarks about attractiveness, experience, introversion, doping, size or body parts, and factual commentary. With regard to ethnicity, White athletes received significantly more commentary about talent/ability but less talk about past achievements and immediate expectations. Black competitors were amply described in terms of strength/speed, past achievements and performance expectations, but hardly in terms of talent and emotionality. Asians attracted above-average mentions of concentration, talent, attractiveness and size/parts of the body. The most notable discursive trends included banal nationalistic discourse (Billig 1995) and the representation of Slovenian athletes as "ours," the obsession with victory and with successful athletes in general, and a

disparaging attitude to competitors deemed “exotic.” The mechanisms of image-maintenance and image-enhancement commonly employed by sportscasters included Basking in Reflected Glory (BIRGing) and Cutting Off Reflected Failure (CORFing).

In international men’s basketball and women’s team handball club competitions, the television portrayal of “our” athletes shifted from Slovenian national teams to Ljubljana-based franchises. Nationality was again seen as the most important characteristic of individual participants. Despite broadcasting team events, announcers’ commentary focused on individual efforts. The most notable discursive trends were banal nationalism and overt cheering for the two teams from Ljubljana, the manipulating of perceptions and expectations (the mechanisms included BIRGing, Blasting and Cutting Off Future Failure or COFFing), and the condoning of “our players’” aggressive behavior.

The discourse of the national soccer league broadcasts provided the largest share of objective commentary. The split of commentary between participating teams was relatively fair, with more successful teams receiving a slightly bigger share of positive commentary. Nationality was yet again the most frequent background information announcers provided about non-Slovenian players. The referees were portrayed more positively than those in international competitions. The soccer broadcasts were also the only ones that allowed a search for differences in announcers’ individual styles.

Evaluative descriptors added up to 35.1 percent of all descriptors spoken in the analyzed broadcasts. The highest share of subjective commentary was found in the Olympic gymnastics and the lowest in the national league soccer broadcasts. Although Slovenian athletes were identified as “ours” and were openly cheered for, their share of positive descriptors in the Olympic telecasts did not stand out from the average figures. Yet the Olympic programming did provide a significantly larger amount of commentary about male competitors than female competitors. There was also some evidence of gender and ethnic bias; however, it was less pronounced than that usually reported by scholars analyzing sports media in other societies. The qualitative part of the study showed that sports journalists and announcers seem to identify objectivity as their paramount professional norm, yet recognize that a “certain amount” of subjectivity is present and even unavoidable; they justify their subjectivity by arguing it is well accepted by the viewers.

Many media scholars and professionals reject sports as a “serious” field; however, it is very influential in that it reaches a much broader audience than many other media contents. Sports media play an important role in shaping a viewer’s identity in terms of both individual and group components of a person’s self-perception. On Slovenian public television, nationality was emphasized and perpetuated as positive. The distinction from out-groups was highlighted by discrediting many countries outside of the Western world. Sportscasters employed many mechanisms that are characteristic of fan behavior, such as the adoption of selected psychological mechanisms, differences in mood after victories or losses, and the overt lack of impartiality. These biased announcers set the perpetuation of a world of nations and the promotion of competitiveness highest on their agenda. Framing was often used to manipulate the perception of team performance.

Mediated sports is not seen by TV Slovenija’s producers as a potential means of informing and educating viewers, nor as a tool to raise awareness about the world. The promotion of diversity still does not occur there; instead, medalists are constructed as a false majority which emerges as such because other groups are symbolically annihilated. Media sports belong to the “low culture” of viewers who seek compensation and predictable content (Gans 1974). Sports broadcasts are becoming a hybrid, pseudo-informative genre.

This dissertation connects sports contents on TV Slovenija to existing discourse and media content theories. It also expands an existing typology (Billings and Eastman 2003) to meet the needs and peculiarities of post-transition societies. In the end, it opens the way for a further analysis of an expanding market of Slovenian renderings of mediated sports.

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## Acknowledgements

A dissertation is never an individual effort; hence, I sincerely thank everybody who has helped me achieve this goal which has at times in the last several years been both pushing me forward and holding me back. During this personal journey I have met many people and acquired much experience that has allowed me to learn both positive and negative things. Many of them came from the most unlikely sources. I am especially compelled to thank all my critics who stimulated me to keep learning and improving day after day. I believe I have emerged ever the stronger and, now that this particular stage of my life is completed, I feel ready to move on.

I thank my fellow doctoral candidates Neja Markelj and Samo Rauter for our many fruitful conversations, unselfish peer support and cheering in many less-than-glamorous moments. We became true friends in the process.

Professor Andrew C. Billings from the Department of Communication Studies has been much more than an outside reader. He has been relentless in providing me with suggestions and insights, and always recommended just the right book or offered the right advice to motivate me to carry on with my work. He often pointed to new paths worth pursuing and I dare say that, without his devoted and enthusiastic help, this dissertation would be of a considerably lesser value.

I am grateful to the views expressed by the sportscasters at TV Slovenija in the interviews I had the opportunity to conduct with them. They provided vital insights and helped me better understand the “Slovenian television sports broadcasting universe” which they create. I especially thank Mateja Mir for her unswerving support and suggestions through all stages of the dissertation.

It is not easy writing about *discourse* and *language* and to speculate about the *meaning of meaning* (if I may borrow Charles Ogden’s syntagma) in an idiom in which one is not completely at ease. Language editor Murray Bales has helped me rise to this challenge by cleverly providing suggestions and corrections to allow me to shape the final version of the thesis.

Last but not least, I wish to thank my family for their support through all the years of my education. My father Branko has been especially motivated to help me, recording many of the broadcasts I analyzed in this study.

And Mateja, who has been standing by me during all my ups and downs—and there have been many. I love you very much and hopefully, I will make it up to you, someday and somehow.

## 1 Introduction

In the ten years I spent officiating and observing youth and semi-professional basketball, I became aware of a curious phenomenon: the remarks about officiating and about the game in general fans made on weekends sounded a lot like the comments spoken by TV broadcasters of Olimpija Ljubljana's Euroleague basketball matches shown on preceding Wednesday or Thursday nights on Slovenian television. The comments were not exactly the same. Rather, statements from both fans and sportscasters seemed to belong to the same set, or *frame*, of ideas about basketball and the participants in it. This convergence occurred at all levels of competition: it seemed that fans were not distinguishing between professional sports and an Under-14 basketball game.

Mediated sports in general, and televised ones in particular, have a great impact on those consuming them. One can often see children practicing on a playground, fantasizing about starring in a decider and yelling something like, "Kobe Bryant for three... He scoores!" upon clinching a shot from distance (many adult players probably *imagine* the same comment but are too inhibited to scream it to the winds). Such impact is relatively clear and rarely perceived as problematic. Far less evident, however, is the reproduction of *ideas and beliefs* through the media ("in general," we might add). People are willing to recognize a "general" impact the media has on them, but are usually very jealous about the originality of their own thoughts.

Scholarship on media contents and media effects abounds; yet, this field is exceptionally prone to limitations deriving from language barriers. Theorists agree that communication as a system of exchanging and *producing* meaning is society-bound. This dissertation will largely rely on theory and research published in the English language. They should provide an adequate basis for an analysis of the discourse in the Slovenian media. Hopefully, its results will in turn be appealing to media and discourse scholars from many disparate societies.

The question central to this dissertation is *what do commentators speak when they broadcast sports on Slovenian television?* Are some types of comments about, say, referees, or women, or Slovenians, attributable to an individual announcer's style, or are they rather more systematic? Which views, ideas, meanings, notions,

biases, and connotations are expressed in the broadcasters' commentary? Establishing this is the aim of this dissertation. To this end, over 80 hours of sports broadcasts aired on the Slovenian public television broadcaster, TV Slovenija, were analyzed. In an effort to include the widest selection of athletes of different quality, gender, ethnic and national background, the study included Olympic telecasts of gymnastics, swimming, and track and field, as well as international basketball and team handball competitions, and the national soccer<sup>a</sup> league. The texts produced by TV Slovenija's voices are analyzed in quantitative and qualitative terms.

The introductory part of the dissertation outlines the fundamental theoretical concepts pertaining to this study: relevant concepts and ideas from communication theory and the formation of identity through (mediated) discourse are described and explained.

Then, some key features of the journalistic profession are presented and the distinct role of sports journalists is discussed. Because of their specific function in society, journalists are key media figures, and journalism is regarded as a vital profession generating trustworthy information. Particular attention is devoted to public service broadcasting. It has, on top of everything, a specific mission in society—namely, that of *educating* its audience, a feature that goes beyond securing the highest audience and maximizing revenues. In the final sections of the theoretic introduction, an extensive body of knowledge pertaining to mediated sports in the US and other societies is presented.

Chapters 5 and 6 present the research goals and research hypotheses; Chapter 7 features a comprehensive description of the methods used to achieve those goals and test the hypotheses.

The results of the study are presented in three separate chapters. Chapter 8 contains a summary of the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of broadcasters' commentary in the telecasts of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. The most notable discursive trends pertinent to televised displays of the event are described and explained. The same approach is then applied for the analyses of broadcasts showing Slovenian teams in international competitions in Chapter 9, and that of Slovenian league soccer in Chapter 10.

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<sup>a</sup> Throughout this dissertation, the term "soccer" will be used to denote "association football."

The most notable common trends and significant differences are described in Chapter 11. This part also provides a conclusive review of the characteristics of televised sports specifically addressed by the research hypotheses, and an examination of the contributions this dissertation brings to theory.

Analyzing discourse in a language code that is not the one that provided the actual material is a particular challenge. In this case, it dramatically increases the potential reach of this report, but also required great efforts to provide suitable translations. As a general rule, the conversions are idiomatic, but the translations are as literal as possible. No particular effort to clean up inelegant turns of phrase was made as they often point out deep-rooted conceptions. The focus was on the quotes that indicated noteworthy meanings, bias, stereotypes, or any other significant discursive phenomenon. Innocent slips of the tongue that are inevitable in live television did not find their way into these pages. Additional effort was made to present relatively simple ideas in a simple way. Modern social science sometimes seems to be caught up with presenting simple facts in the most complex manner possible. Since both sports and the media are mass phenomena, it seems only fair to deal with their intersections in a simple way. This inquiry will hopefully attract not only academics but also intellectually curious lay people. Slovenian readers will likely appreciate the addition of the original quotations in the appendix to the manuscript. These endnotes are denoted by Arabic numbers.

This dissertation deals with much more than sports broadcasts on television. It indicates some ramifications of public service broadcasting that are often overlooked, and presents network staff members' opinions on its role in sports, media and society. This work also writes about the construction of personal image, of individual and group identity, and of pictures of the world that surrounds us through some of the most popular contents of the ever-growing media market. Elite sports are a global phenomenon. This aspect of globalization clashes every day with established notions about the individual on numerous TV channels. Hopefully, the readers will manage to transcend these omnipresent conceptions and open their minds for possible alternative views. Everything is relative.

## **2 Key concepts from communication theory**

Communication theory is a three-pronged scientific field that focuses on production, content, or effects of its subject matter. The present study centers on the first and second steps: it aims to investigate content and production of sports broadcasts that are aired on Slovenian public television. The third prong, media effects, is seen by many as the most inviting and provoking, the most pointed and sharp of the three; the many critics and politicians that include this topic in their sermons in so many different societies confirm this. However, very few politicians actually are communication *theorists*; they are rather trying to control the “fourth estate” for their own interests and purposes. Those who are interested in the media as a social phenomenon understand that its contents must first be determined to be able to study the effects they might have.

The topic of this study is not a world first. Nonetheless, it has very rarely been in the focus of Slovenian social scholars. The purpose of this dissertation is thus to introduce the study of discourse in sports media in Slovenia. Hopefully, the specifics of this inquiry, conducted in a post-socialist, former Yugoslav country, will stimulate similar analyses in other “new democracies” that have appeared on the world geopolitical map after 1990.

This is the first comprehensive study of televised sports in the Slovenian academic environment. It specifically deals with the “localization” of some aspects of media discourse in a post-socialist environment, so it is necessary to outline possible effects of media discourse in order to assess the factors causing them. This chapter thus presents the relevant traits of all three aspects of communication theory we referred to above.

### **2.1 Representation: A means of conveying meaning**

Early definitions of communication typically emphasized the encoding and, later, the decoding, or processing, aspect. When combined, they produce communication, which is a transactional process. Through communication, meaning, or “sense” is produced in everyday life.

Words are not “meanings” *per se*; they are combinations of letters which, when spoken or written, stir concepts in the listener’s or reader’s mind. A word *represents* a concept (instead of *being* the concept itself); it is the link between concepts and language that enables us to refer to either “real” or imaginary objects or events.

People do not think only about individual concepts; they also organize, cluster, arrange and classify them, as well as establish complex relations between them. We thus speak of a “system of representation,” which is a conceptual system that allows us to operate with the mental representations we have (Hall 1997).

Communication is possible because people share conceptual maps that are *largely the same* and can thus make sense of (i.e., interpret) the world in *similar ways*. This is what it means to belong to the *same culture*. White noted that “meanings do not originate with some abstract sender, but are derived from a historical-cultural tradition and a concrete political-economic context” (1983, 293). Joint conceptual maps allow individuals to form a shared culture of meanings and thus construct a social world in which they cohabit (du Gay et al. 1997). Culture is thus both a prerequisite for and a consequence of communication.

Meanings are exchanged by means or words, sounds or images; these *signs* are used to communicate consensual *concepts* which are, in turn, abstract images of actual *objects*. Signs and symbols reduce complexity to a few representations, making communication possible and efficient (Fiske 1982). The relations between the sign, the signifier (i.e., the *object*) and the signified (the *concept*) were most prominently analyzed by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (Culler 1976). His approach is generally known as *semiotics*.

In the semiotic approach, words and even objects can function as signifiers in the production of meaning. Barthes (1967) cites the example of clothes: a pair of jeans, for instance, is a piece of clothing to cover the body as well as a symbol of “casualness.” The first, descriptive level, is the level of *denotation*, while the second that of *connotation*.

Meaning is thus subject to change and is never fixed. “Making the meaning” must involve a process of *interpretation*, in which an (the) appropriate meaning has to be “read” or “interpreted.” This “interpretation” or “decoding” is never an exact process; it is subject to overhearing, mistakes, misunderstandings, manipulation.

Further, each component of communication is subject to change over time: new words are invented (“twitting”), words acquire new meanings (“mail” can now be electronic), concepts themselves shift (what was “fast” for a driving car in 1910 and what is today? And what is “fast” for the casual jogger?), as well as the actual objects (since 1896 we have had 49 “Olympiads”). None of these examples and meanings is wrong, or even inaccurate, as long as they come up in the appropriate circumstances. Real notes that the actual interpretation “results from a negotiation of the many levels of meanings *implicit* in the text and the many levels of social group, class, and individuality embedded in the audience member” (1989, 59; emphasis added).

In their seminal analysis of sportscasters’ descriptions of football action, Bryant, Comisky and Zillman (1977) noted that a sizable portion of the commentary was devoted to “a dramatic embellishment of the game” (p. 140). Game action reports are thus enhanced by broadcasters. McCarthy, Jones and Potrac (2003) acknowledged that “although viewers largely believe they are seeing a true representation of the particular event being screened, television, like any other medium of communication, stands between the audience and the event being portrayed” (p. 217). Hence, broadcasted sports games are in fact “media events” that are produced by the director with his film crew and the sportscasters or what Comisky, Bryant and Zillman referred to as “a team of professional gatekeepers and embellishers” (1977, 150). This is also what media re-presentation is about: “again-presentations”<sup>a</sup> of contents through the media—in our case, television. Reality is *produced* and then aired—in a word, *represented*.

## **2.2 Discourse analysis**

Meaning is created through discourse. This term and the expression “discourse analysis” can have quite different meanings depending on the author’s theoretical stance and the issues they wish to address. One approach derives from structuralism and post-structuralism. It has been picked up by those interested in issues of identity, selfhood, personal and social change, and power relations. Other authors focus upon the performative qualities of discourse: what do people do with their talk or writing, what they try to achieve. This line of research studies how accounts are constructed

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<sup>a</sup> The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1995) explains “re-” as a prefix that simply means “again,” such as in “reapply” or “re-decoration.”



and bring about effects for the speaker or writer, and which rhetorical devices are employed while doing this (Burr 1998).

If communication is a three-pronged field that involves production, content and effects, the structuralist approach to discourse analysis explores its impacts on the effects dimension, while the performative approach reflects analyses of the production stage. The different approaches are not incompatible; they merely reflect the different interests and focuses of people working within the context of social constructionism (Burr 1998). The term “discourse” itself is both a noun and a verb, and each aspect fits quite well with one of the lines of thought just mentioned.

Social constructionists argue that social reality cannot be construed as either totally objective (the realist position) or totally subjective (the nominalist position). Rather, social reality—the world of meanings—is seen as an intersubjective construction that is created through communicative interaction (e.g., Berger and Luckmann 1967).

Burr (1998) elaborated on the definition of discourse in media studies by stating that “a discourse refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events” (p. 48). These ways of conferring meanings thus construct a *particular understanding* (one could also say, *reading*) of facts or events. Burr compares this phenomenon to “a particular picture that is painted of an event (or person or class of persons), a particular way of representing it or them in a certain light” (ibid.). Discourse can also paint a certain *idea*.

The term discourse as the means through which knowledge is *produced* was introduced by Michel Foucault. His project was to analyze “how human beings understand themselves in our culture” and how our knowledge about “the social, the embodied individual and shared meanings” comes to be produced in different periods (in Hall 1997, 43). Foucault argues that discourse constructs the topic. It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge, and it governs the way a topic can be meaningfully talked and reasoned about.

Discourse never consists of one statement, one text, one action or one source. Instead, the same discourse appears across a range of texts, as forms of conduct within a number of institutions in society. That is why this dissertation will generally

not deal with one-off utterances or even lapses which are inevitable (even though such errors can be quite amusing; in the past, some of them had made it into the domain of popular culture and can be considered as having grown into a distinct frame of discourse). Further, an announcer's individual *style* and the sportscasting *discourse* will be handled separately. Still, announcers do represent (as in: embody) media outlets and one assumes that an outlet's management implicitly agrees with (or at least accepts) its announcer's texts even when they are not scripted.

### **2.3 Media effects**

With a little exaggeration, one could say that media effects theory is a century old; in 1910, Max Weber encouraged his sociology peers to turn their attention to what he called *Soziologie des Zeitungswesens*, or the "sociology of the press." At the first congress of the German Sociological Society, his opening address included the following suggestions:

We finally have to explore the press, first, with regard to the question of its influence on the development of the modern person; second, how it influences objective and super-individual cultural values, what changes about them, what is destroyed and what created about mass beliefs, hopes, "feelings about life" and what is forever destroyed and what is created about—as it is called today—the possibility of taking a stand? (...)

You will now ask: where is the material to start research? In the papers themselves, and we will, to put it frankly, proceed in the most pedestrian manner, by measuring with calipers and compass, how the content of the press has shifted quantitatively in the course of the last generation and not ignore the advertising sections, the feature section, the balance between features and editorials, between editorials and news, and between what comes in and what is actually utilized ... We have the beginnings of such investigations ... but only the very beginning. And on the basis of these quantitative findings we will then turn to the qualitative ones.

We will analyze the style of the newspapers, the way issues are dealt with in and out of the newspapers, the obvious concealment of the emotional in the newspapers, what perpetuates the grounds for their existence and so forth. Only then we will finally dare

to hope to come close to this multifaceted question, which answer is the purpose of our doings (Weber 1924, 441 in Weber 2001, 168 and Lang 1996, 16<sup>b</sup>).

Weber was aware of the impact newspapers had on German society and of their broader potential. He was likely the first sociologist to indicate the ways the media influences an individual's identity and cultural values. In his speech, he alluded to what would later become known as their agenda-setting function, as well as to the relations of power reflected in newspapers—a topic which would be elaborated decades later by authors such as Michel Foucault. Weber also indicated the importance of the representation of social events in media texts, something Stuart Hall would later deal with (Vezovnik 2008), and even suggested the methods to conduct media research by outlining both “quantitative” and “qualitative” approaches.

Unfortunately, Max Weber's call to German sociologists was unsuccessful and he soon ceased with his own efforts to introduce “media analysis” to the sociology of that period<sup>c</sup>. Since then, theoretical conceptions of the effects the mass media has on its audiences (also frequently called “recipients”) have seen great changes. These theories explain public opinion, public stances and the processes by which the media shapes both the individual's and the collective view of the world.

The earliest theories contended that the mass media has direct, immediate and powerful effects. Rooted in behaviorism psychology, this Hypodermic Needle model of communication (also known as the Magic Bullet perspective) suggested that the media has an automatic one-on-one stimulus response effect on the audience, thus causing a message to be directly received and entirely accepted by the recipient (Lasswell 1927).

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<sup>b</sup> The initial congress of the German Sociological Society took place in Frankfurt in 1910; Max Weber delivered the opening address. This address was first published the same year and then reprinted as the chapter “Rede auf dem ersten Deutschen Soziologentage in Frankfurt 1910” [Speech from the first German Sociological Days in Frankfurt 1910] in Weber, Max. 1924. *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Soziologie und Sozialpolitik*, pp. 431–449. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr. Both references (the Slovenian translation of a portion of the address and Lang's quotation) drew from this publication. Some English terms or translations might be unsuitable; unfortunately, a complete translation of Weber's 1910 address into English could not be found.

<sup>c</sup> Even though Max Weber was perhaps the first sociologist to call for scientific media research, awareness of the influence the (print) media has on its readers can be traced back centuries to Martin Luther's struggle for the translation of the Bible to the vernacular and “perhaps the first famous victim of mass-media delusions,” Miguel Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (Real 1989, 20).

Research during and after World War II contradicted these positions and focused on social relations and personal influence. The Two-Step Flow of Communication model argued that ideas first flow from the mass media to opinion leaders, and from them to the wider population (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet 1944; elaborated in Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955). This model was the first to introduce human agency in the process of making sense of mediated messages: supposedly, those people with most access to the media and having an in-depth understanding of media content explained and diffused the content to others.

Both paradigms soon began to lose relevance. Scholars suggesting a strong and direct impact found little evidence of their claims, and the media, most notably television, became easily accessible to the masses, circumventing opinion leaders' role in interpreting media contents. An alternative to the effects debate came from functionalism which studied the social functions fulfilled by the media. Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948/2002) described three of them: status conferral, enforcement of social norms, and narcotizing dysfunction. The mass media thus confers status on public issues, persons, organizations and social movements, giving them recognition and legitimization. It reaffirms social norms by exposing deviations, but also produces large masses of politically apathetic and inert citizens.

### **2.3.1 *Agenda-setting theory***

The status conferral function relates to what Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw described decades later as the “agenda-setting function” of the media. An earlier impulse for this theory came from Bernard Cohen who argued that 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*” (1963, 13). As a result, Cohen stated that the world looks different to different people not simply because of their differing interests, but also because of the picture presented to them by media writers, editors and publishers. McCombs and Shaw developed Cohen’s work and coined the term *agenda-setting* to describe the mass media’s function of setting the agenda for political campaigns (1972).

Agenda-setting theory analyzes the relations between the media agenda, the public agenda and the policy agenda. It argues that media sources influence

perceptions about what are the important issues of the day. The media agenda does not influence the public agenda by directly saying, “this issue is important.” Rather, it does so by assigning the issue space and time in the first place and then by giving the issue more prominent space and time (and, at the same time, neglecting other issues). People will tend to know and care about the things the mass media deals with, provided that the issues at hand do not otherwise obtrude into their lives (McQuail and Windahl 1993, Miller 2005). As Foucault would say, discourse constructs the topic.

McCombs and Shaw’s findings did not prove a causal relationship between media contents and one’s opinions; they simply showed there was a connection between the two. The actual flow of influence from the media agenda to the public agenda was confirmed in some subsequent studies (e.g., Funkhouser 1973, Weaver, Graber, McCombs and Eyal, 1981, Iyengar, Peters and Kinder 1982).

Agenda-setting is particularly effective with people who are undecided. McCombs and Shaw suggested that the “high salience of affect tends to block use of communication media to acquire further information about issues with high personal importance” (1972, 187)—in other words, information that might challenge one’s strongest views and opinions simply will not be sought. On the other hand, people with a high *need for orientation* (Weaver 1977) will be especially susceptible to mediated agenda-setting. The need for orientation arises from high *relevance* and *uncertainty* about the issue.

The majority of agenda-setting inquiries deal with political communication. Mediated sports are also particularly prone to such investigations as many viewers of televised sports experience a strong emotional involvement in this activity (Hastorf and Cantril 1954, St. John 2004). Some professional sports organizations exploit agenda-setting to organize their exposure strategy so as to increase revenues from different income sources (Fortunato 2008, King 2010). For many viewers, major sports events such as the Olympics represent their first contact or even only exposure with many foreign cultures. Real deems it “the world’s most encompassing shared event” (1989, 210), with an unprecedented scale and penetration which can contribute profoundly to intercultural dialogue. As agenda-setting is a theory of *learning* rather than attitude or opinion change (McQuail and Windahl 1993, 104), it is particularly effective when it comes to people who are undecided. Differential

treatment thus has significant implications for the development of viewers' identity and awareness of the world, particularly for children and teenagers. Every inaccurate comment and partial media representation is thus a missed opportunity to educate viewers and raise awareness about the world that surrounds them (Billings 2008). Real (1989) argues it is logical that, when audience members think of "the world" or particular foreign countries, the perceptual structure they use comes at least in part from the Olympic experience. This part increases with a decreasing amount of those countries' other types of media exposure. Hence, in the absence of comparative information, distorted representations become important.

Later developments of the agenda-setting theory have introduced the distinction between first-level and second-level agenda-setting. The former is the "traditional" domain of agenda-setting and sees the media only as influential regarding *which* issues are included on the public agenda. In contrast, second-level agenda-setting suggests the media also manipulates *how* people should think about an issue (Miller 2005, 275).

Agenda-setting has evolved into agenda-building theory which addresses the often reciprocal relationships between the media, its consumers, and policy-makers—officials, decision-makers and elites (Lang and Lang 1983). Agenda-building suggests that all it takes is a provocative cover story positioned in a prominent magazine; subsequent mounting coverage of that issue in mainstream media can contribute to the building of a broad public agenda. On some occasions, sports also supply stories that eventually become nationally relevant (e.g., Denham 2004).

### **2.3.2 Framing**

Framing is a concept central to second-level agenda-setting. It is the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality (and disregarding others) and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation of the topic (Entman 1993, Miller 2005). Scheufele (2000) describes its functioning by noting that "framing influences how audiences think about issues, not by making aspects of the issue more salient, but by invoking interpretative schemas that influence the interpretation of incoming information" (p. 309). Fully

developed frames typically perform four functions: problem definition, causal analysis, moral judgment and remedy promotion (Entman 2004).

Media framing examines how media gatekeepers reinforce frames that hold the power to shape audience perceptions, creating new and often atypical definitions employed within belief systems (Billings et al. 2008). Gitlin (1980) ascribes three primary functions to framing: selection, emphasis and exclusion.

The idea of conceiving the circumstances of acts and events in everyday life as frames derives from Erving Goffman. *Per se*, frames are the (communal) circumstances that make communication possible: an event can be ascribed different *meanings* according to the circumstances within which it occurred and the way the individual saw, decoded or “made sense of” the event. Goffman (1974) notes that “a ‘definition of the situation’ is almost always to be found, but those who are in the situation ordinarily do not *create* this definition (...) ordinarily, all they do is to assess correctly what the situation ought to be for them and then act accordingly” (p. 1). Thus, individuals do not usually *act*—they only *react*.

To expound the role the media plays in framing our everyday experiences, Goffman persistently refers to media contents (especially newspaper articles), illustrating instances of the widest choice of media “framings.” He sees the media as a strong force capable of preserving the societal status quo: “What appears, then, to be a threat to our way of making sense of the world turns out to be an ingeniously selected defense of it” (Goffman 1974, 14). Daniel Hallin (in Real, 1989) labels the same phenomenon the “reformist conservatism” of the media, while C. Richard Hofstetter (1976, in Real 1989, 212) originated the distinction between “political bias” and “structural bias,” with the first referring to actual political party bias (which can be avoided relatively easily) while the second is much more deep-rooted and pervasive, which (in the North American case) preserves the existing pursuit of high ratings and perpetuates existing schemes of perceived news interests.

Bennett Berger explains that what goes on in interaction is governed by (usually unstated) rules or principles more or less implicitly set by the character of some larger, though perhaps invisible, entity “within” which the interaction occurs (for example, “the definition of the situation”). The character of a frame is not always

clear and—even more importantly—participants in interaction may have interests in blurring, changing or confounding it (Berger 1986, xiii-xiv).

In everyday communication, frames are not applied purposely. Individuals constantly project into the world around them the interpretive frames that allow them to make sense of ongoing events. Frames are only shifted when incongruity (or “frame dissonance”) calls for a frame-shift. Hence, the frames selected (for its viewers) by the media interpret ongoing events in the same manner and contribute to a preferred reading of the topic at hand.

The social construction of collective action frames is created through public discourse as the interface of media discourse and interpersonal interaction (Klandermans 1997). The meanings a text holds for individuals depend on the discourses they are embedded in. Framing influences the individual’s *perception* of the *meanings attributed*<sup>d</sup> to words or events. A frame favors a preferred interpretation and discourages others. The extent of individual susceptibility to them varies.

## **2.4 Cultivation theory**

Compared to agenda-setting, cultivation theory narrows its research field, yet suggests a greater influence. It focuses on one specific medium, television, and does not predict the tube’s immediate impact on people’s thinking about specific issues, rather its impact on the very way people view the world.

This theory finds its roots in the rise in popularity of television media noticed in the United States in the 1950s. In the following decade, George Gerbner and his team of communication researchers from the Annenberg School at the University of Pennsylvania developed a theory suggesting that television should not be studied in terms of targeted and specific events, but in terms of the cumulative and overarching impact on the way people see the world in which they live. They deemed television the “central cultural arm of American society” (Gerbner and Gross 1976, 175). Cultivation theory thus deals with a broadly conceived consideration of the social

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<sup>d</sup> This is nicely illustrated by one of the meanings of the verb “frame,” which is “to produce false evidence against an innocent person so that he or she appears guilty” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 1995). Frames can thus be *misleading* and are always—purposely or inadvertently—*leading*.



construction of public perception rather than with particular media messages (Miller 2005).

Cultivation theory posits that television is essentially different from other media: it is pervasive (virtually omnipresent, households often own multiple TV sets), highly accessible and non-selective (it is free and does not require literacy), as well as coherent (it presents the same basic messages about society across programming and across time). Cultivation theorists suggest “viewers watch by the clock” (Gerbner 1990 in Miller 2005, 282), meaning that most people do not choose to watch particular shows or genres of shows, but instead watch television at certain times of the day (or week, or year) and whatever is on at that time will be watched. Television viewing is thus highly non-selective and ritual in nature: Gerbner and Gross noted that “you watch television as you might attend a church service, except that most people watch television more religiously” (1976, 177); this religion anchors values and identities.

Television’s accessibility, coherence and the rituality of the individual’s viewing habits combine to create an important implication about the nature of television: if all messages conveyed by its programs are essentially the same and if they are perceived virtually non-selectively, then viewers only differ in terms of the time spent watching them (Potter 1993). Television thus penetrates daily life and creates the environment; the larger the exposure, the greater the effect it has on personal identity.

Authors embracing cultivation theory suggest that television will serve to cultivate people’s views of the world. The notion of cultivation describes a long-term and cumulative impact of this medium on their views of reality. Cultivation theorists believe that television can create and maintain very basic sets of beliefs about the world which conform to the stereotyped, distorted and selective view of reality systematically portrayed on television itself. These influences are cumulative and long-lived ones (McQuail and Windahl 1993, Miller 2005). Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorielli (1986) noted that the longer people live with television, the more invisible it becomes. To date, it has become more than a self-obvious piece of furniture: it has actually grown into a member of the family to the point of “both preced[ing] reading and, increasingly, preempt[ing] it” (Gerbner and Gross 1976, 176). Considering the development of television in the last few decades and its presence in children’s lives which starts at birth—even through specialized networks

for infants such as *BabyTV* or *BabyFirstTV*—one can assume that its influences are indeed becoming ever more inevitable and inalterable.

Gerbner (1990 in Miller 2005, 283) summarized the assumptions of cultivation theory in the following six generalizations:

Television is a unique medium requiring a special approach to study.

Television messages form a coherent system, the mainstream of our culture.

Those message systems (content) provide clues to cultivation.

Cultivation analysis focuses on television's contributions over time to the thinking and actions of large and otherwise heterogeneous social aggregates.

New technologies extend rather than deflect the reach of television's messages.

Cultivation analysis focuses on pervasive stabilizing and homogenizing consequences.

At the core of cultivation theory is the notion that the amount of television viewing is interconnected with views of the world that are consonant with television reality, but far from the real world. Inquiries into this hypothesis are referred to as content analysis and cultural indicators analysis. On the content level, Gerbner et al. (1986, 25-26) noted that, in the early 1980s on US television, men outnumbered women three to one; older and younger people, as well as minority members were underrepresented; 70 percent of television characters were "middle class;" and crime was 10 times as rampant in the "television world" than it was in the real world. In the popular media, absence means symbolic annihilation, and the television world was quite far from being an accurate mirror of reality.

Content analysis was followed by the Cultural Indicators project within which individuals were surveyed to discover their perceptions of the world that surrounded them. Combined, the aspects resulted in cultivation analysis. Early studies showed that heavy viewers were more likely to perceive the actual world in line with the television world in terms of violence (e.g., Gerbner and Gross 1976). Later work developed indicators of other themes, roles and relationships significant for social science and policy (see Morgan 2000 for a review).

Even more than agenda-setting, cultivation theory is actually a theory of learning rather than of altering public opinion. Television is a world in itself which directs rather than reflects one's perception of reality. McQuail and Windahl (1993) address television's accessibility and the impact of ritual viewing habits by noting that

the degree of attention can be important, as “the less attentive and less active, the more likely will be incidental learning and acculturation by television” (pp. 101-102).

Gerbner presents two main explanations of how cultivation takes place. *Mainstreaming* is a process of blurring distinctions so as to develop moderate, centripetal views and opinions about each field (most notably economics and politics). This process dovetails with the sense of “middle-classness” instilled by the great majority of television characters. *Resonance* is the second process and implies the amplification of cultivated cultural patterns caused by the congruence of events on television and experienced by the viewer in actual life (Griffin 2003, 384-386).

As in agenda-setting theory, some scholars have suggested distinguishing between first-order and second-order cultivation effects. The former refer to the impact of television on statistical descriptions about the world, while second-order cultivation effects relate to the consequences for beliefs about the general nature of the world. Potter (1991 in Miller 2005) notes that cultivation theorists have already made this distinction on an operational level, but never developed the implications of the distinction on the theoretical level.

Some critics of cultivation theory have argued that the actual television experience is probably more differentiated than allowed for in the theory, and may be becoming even more so as production and supply increases—especially outside the United States. European sports television contents largely feature domestic or other European fixtures; however, other TV programming such as news shows and fictional (movie and series) productions are saturated with content deriving from or related to the USA. An ad hoc analysis of prime-time and late-evening programming in the week ending October 31, 2010 (the week this portion of the text was being written) shows that the biggest Slovenian commercial channel, POP TV, broadcasted six US movies, twelve US series, five British series<sup>e</sup> and one Slovenian series. In the same time slot, a public broadcaster, TV Slovenija 2, aired five US movies (including a Russian-American co-production), two British movies, an Italian movie, two US series, two British series, a series from Austria and one from France. Slovenian

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<sup>e</sup> Some US series and British series were counted multiple times as they were broadcast several days in the week the study was conducted. Each individual “airing” was counted as a separate unit. Additional programming, such as talk shows or documentary movies, was not counted. “Prime-time” programming was deemed to start at 8 PM, when both evening news shows (Pop TV’s *24 ur* and TV Slovenija’s *Dnevnik*) end.

producers were represented by the broadcast of a theatrical play and a Slovenian-Czech movie. Hence, in this particular week American contents accounted for approximately one-half of the prime-time and late-evening fictional programming on public television and for over 75 percent of commercial TV programming in Slovenia. This points to the need to study the potential cultivation of American TV contents on nations and societies other than the North American. Tagging Gerbner's arguments as irrelevant to the European case seems imprudent and inappropriate; on the contrary, cultivation research on Slovenian and European viewers seems necessary.

### 3 Discourse and identity

Viewers' perceptions of individual characteristics such as gender, ethnicity and nationality are shaped (i.e., framed) by television's selection, narration and description of events. The audience's understandings about their own and others' gender, ethnicity and nationality can be altered by television's manipulations, especially when similar practices are repeated over long periods of time (Eastman and Billings 1999, 2002).

Thus far, the issue of the *intentionality* of the construction of a particular version of events has not been addressed. Namely, discourse can refer to the intentional conveying of a selected message (propaganda), the enhancement of a simplified reading that is perceived to be appropriate (stereotyping), or even to a casual perpetuation of a topic at hand (setting the agenda). A multitude of alternative versions of events is thus potentially available through language, meaning that a variety of discourses can relate to one single object, person, issue, or idea. Engaging in a conversation is usually intentional; the constitution of a discourse is frequently not.

Discourse does not necessarily reflect the author's opinion or attitude regarding the topic being considered. Discourse analysis does not even equip us with tools that can verify these *feelings*, something that (necessarily) resides within the domain of psychology and personality. This is also one of the limitations of Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis as research methods: a researcher can analyze the *text* that was produced (regardless of whether it is in spoken or written form), but does not necessarily know all the author's motives for selecting that specific wording, or the circumstances that led them to it. Many scholars in this area see this as a *strength*, as it focuses on the message in its purest form without attempting to determine antecedents.

A person constructs her or his identity (this dichotomy already being an example of gender identity construction<sup>a</sup>) from the options provided to us *through*

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<sup>a</sup> Transgenders or intersexes frequently do not recognize themselves as either option. This example is less trivial than it might seem: some data show that up to 2 percent of live births deviate from the "ideal" male or female, while the frequency of individuals receiving "corrective" genital surgery likely runs between 1 and 2 per 1,000 live births (Blackless et al. 2000). This accounts for over seven million

discourse. Each person perceives and thus defines her- or himself within the categories being discussed in her or his environment—actually, her or his *society*—at a designated moment in time. Hall (1996) notes that “precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices” (p. 4). They are not monolithic and are subject to constant flux. Simultaneously, the situation itself influences the meaning a viewer will take away from these *cultural* texts. Meaning will be constructed differently according to the historical, cultural and institutional contexts within which interpretations are made (Rose and Friedman 1997).

Occasionally though, non-dominant social groups such as ethnic minorities and women may resist using hegemonic discourses in which they are generally subjugated as a group and instead create alternate discourses (Van Sterkenburg and Knoppers 2004). However, media coverage of sports in general (and megasporting events in particular) generally reinforces prior ideologies that privilege established notions of identity. Empirical studies provide evidence of both and will be further discussed in Section 3.5.

### **3.1 Stereotyping**

A phenomenon that has great influence on one’s identity is stereotyping. This term symbolizes the process of ascribing characteristics to people on the basis of their group memberships. A stereotype is “the collection of attributes believed to define or characterize the members of a social group” (Oakes, Haslam and Turner 1994, 1).

Inquiry about stereotypes started in 1922 when Walter Lippman published his book *Public Opinion*. He characterized stereotypes as being selective, self-fulfilling and ethnocentric ideas, and labeled them “a very partial and inadequate way of representing the world” (Lippman 1922, 72). To him, they represented over-generalized, exaggerated images which overlooked variability and denied individuality.

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people on the global scale. See Jami 2005(?) for an interesting insight into gender identity issues among Hijras in South Asian cultures.

Lippman disapproved of stereotyping; however, he also argued that this process fulfilled a necessary function in allowing the individual to interact with a world too complex to be accessible in all its details. Stereotyping as a form of simplification and “economizing attention” (Lippman 1922, 60) was thus unavoidable in one’s dealings with everyday life.

Solomon Asch (1952) argued that the behavior of individuals is on many occasions determined by their group membership—as a member of audiences, families etc. Hence, representing people in terms of these group memberships (i.e., stereotyping) could be important in the representation of social reality. Fishman (1956) argued that stereotypes were valid to the extent that they served to reflect the nature of interaction between stereotyped and stereotyping groups.

The concept of stereotyping was controversial in that some saw it as a form of *prejudice* (with its subsequent negative connotations) while others claimed it was a natural process, in its core neither irrational nor “bad.”

Henri Tajfel introduced an approach where he looked at the way psychological processes were functionally affected by social factors. He conducted studies on *accentuation*, i.e., the exaggeration of both differences between and similarities within categories. Tajfel thus reconceptualized stereotyping as the product of explicitly normal cognitive processes common to all individuals, although he shared Lippman’s view that stereotypes themselves were deficient by being rigid and neglecting individual differences.

Tajfel was the most influential researcher to apply the insight gained in minimal group experiments to intergroup relations. He concluded that in some conditions the mere division (albeit arbitrary) into groups could suffice to trigger discriminatory behavior and in-group preference. The stereotypes of one group shared by the members of another are referred to as social stereotypes (Tajfel 1981). He proposed that individuals seek to enhance their self-esteem by identifying with social groups. This approach has evolved into social identity theory and developed into a more general theory of group processes, namely, self-categorization theory.

### **3.2 Bias and stereotype**

A stereotype is thus a generalized and preconceived idea that attributes certain “typical” characteristics to all members of a class or set. The term is often used with a negative connotation when referring to an oversimplified, exaggerated or demeaning assumption. Stereotypes are most often attributed with regard to one’s ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status.

In contrast, bias is used to describe a tendency or preference towards a specific perspective, ideology or result, especially when this tendency interferes with the ability to be objective, unprejudiced or impartial.

Hence, bias is a personal, individual preference, while a stereotype is a generalized and preconceived idea that attributes all members of a class with certain characteristics. Bias can be felt towards a single individual or towards groups—say, athletes caught using illicit substances. It can lead to discrimination, which involves (positive or negative) behavioral manifestations of prejudice.

Groups can be discriminated in media programming and through media discourse (e.g., the underrepresentation and/or constant stereotypical portraying of a class or set). More importantly, the media can be an important agent of bias and stereotype (de)construction. Although the myth of journalistic objectivity is often challenged (cf. Section 4.2 and Ličen 2008), the reasons and background of media bias are rarely discussed. Entman highlights it as a “curiously undertheorized staple of public discourse about the media” (Entman 2007, 163), and observes that bias is yet to be defined clearly. He presents three major meanings of media bias (*ibid.*):

Sometimes, it is applied to news that purportedly distorts or falsifies reality (distortion bias), sometimes to news that favors one side rather than providing equivalent treatment to both sides in a political conflict (content bias), and sometimes to the motivations and mindsets of journalists who allegedly produce the biased content (decision-making bias).

Meanings two and three can be easily attributed to sports journalism and sports broadcasting. They also closely resemble Hofstetter’s distinction of “political” and “structural” bias (in Real 1989, 212).



The outcome of overt media slant is that the side favored by the slant becomes more powerful and popular among the audience, while those losing the framing contest become weaker. In these instances, “stereotypes ... serve as short-hand codes of representation and social control” (Real 1989, 107).

### **3.3 Social identity**

Henri Tajfel argues that individuals apply the categorization process in social interaction in order to “structure the causal understanding of the social environment” as a guide to action (Tajfel 1978 in Oakes et al. 1994, 81). This process also provides a system of orientation for self-reference, creating and defining the individual’s place in society. The individual’s self-definition in a social context, the meaning and significance of their actions and attitudes in that context, depend upon social categorization (Oakes et al. 1994, 81-82). The link between the self and social categorization is encapsulated in the concept of social identity.

Social identity theory assumes that people are motivated to evaluate themselves positively—they seek a *positive social identity*. Hence, when group membership becomes relevant to their self-definition, they will be motivated to evaluate that group positively. As the value of any group membership depends on a comparison with other relevant groups, positive social identity is achieved through the establishment of positive distinctiveness of the in-group from relevant out-groups.

Social identity theory seeks to establish the different ways in which individuals can achieve positive in-group distinctiveness, and to specify the conditions in which various strategies might be pursued (Oakes et al. 1994). The most typical strategies include individual mobility (psychologically or physically putting the group at a distance), social creativity (redefining group characteristics to change society’s evaluations of the group), and social competition (taking direct action to improve the status of the group).

Tajfel (1981) identified five basic functions of social stereotypes: two of them are individual and three are group-level functions. For an individual, stereotypes serve the cognitive function of systematizing and simplifying the environment, and the motivational function of representing and preserving important social values. At the group level, stereotypes contribute to the creation and maintenance of group beliefs

which are then used to explain large-scale social events and justify various forms of collective action. Then, they are involved in the creation of positive group distinctiveness, which is the tendency to differentiate the in-group positively from selected out-groups. According to Tajfel, cultural traditions, group interests and social differentiation are the primary causal factor in stereotyping, and other factors have to be understood in light of the fact that stereotypes reflect and make possible group life (Oakes et al. 1994). The group is thus both a psychological *process* and a social *product* (Turner and Giles 1981).

Tajfel introduced the difference between interaction *as an individual* or *as a group member*, distinguishing the two extremes with regard to the presence or absence of social categorization. This way of perceiving the self and others emphasizes group memberships rather than individual characteristics. According to this approach, a person has not just one “personal self” but several selves that correspond to the widening circles of group membership. When people engage in social categorization, they become concerned with their social identities.

Tajfel and Turner (1986) define social identity as “those aspects of an individual’s self-image that derive from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging” (p. 16). In some cases, social identity (displayed as group behavior) is more salient than personal identity—to the point of excluding it. As people want to feel good about themselves, they worry about the quality of their groups. Social comparison of in-groups to relevant out-groups allows people to make quality judgments (Tajfel and Turner 1986, Lambert 2005).

As already noted, Tajfel and Turner (1986) showed that the mere act of individuals categorizing themselves as group members was sufficient to lead them to display in-group favoritism (even when group assignment was random). Groups thus do not exist merely as means of social categorization and sense-making, but they also serve a self-referential function by helping define self-identity through intergroup comparison. Hence, “people are not only *different* according to their group membership, but they are also *better* or *worse* than others” (Bryant and Cummins 2009, 221). For the purpose of individual identity, they *need to be*.

### 3.4 Self-categorization theory

Turner suggested that accentuation effects (i.e., amplified intracategory similarity and intercategory difference) influence self-perception in the same way as it does in the perception of others. In other words, the functioning of a social categorization in the self-concept produces self-stereotyping. Thus, while Tajfel viewed social identity as reflecting group affiliations, Turner argued that it comprised social categorizations of the self which caused group phenomena. The social group and social categorization are the core of self-categorization theory and lie at the heart of social stereotyping (Oakes et al. 1994).

The authors of the theory emphasize that it does not postulate the group's primacy over the individual. Rather, the two components are intertwined. They explain (Turner and Oakes 1989, 270):

It is called self-categorization theory (and not social identity theory) because it deals with the interrelation of personal and social, individual and group, and asserts the interdependence of individuality and shared, collective identity. The theory proposes that the group is a distinctive psychological process, but in doing so it reminds us that group functioning is a part of the psychology of the person – that individual and group must be reintegrated psychologically before there can be an adequate analysis of either.

Self-categorization theory emphasizes categorization processes and their importance for self-conception. Self-categorization exists at different levels of abstraction related by class inclusion. Three levels of abstraction of self-categories are distinguished: the interpersonal (self as an individual person), intergroup (self as a member of a group) and interspecies (self as a human being). Each level is defined not by specific attributes, but by the level at which people are being compared and categorized. Distinct cues and characteristics can thus apply to more than one level of abstraction (Oakes et al. 1994). Categorization is dynamic.

The theory introduces the principle of meta-contrast. It predicts that “a given set of items is more likely to be categorized as a single entity *to the degree that differences within that set of items are less than the differences between that set and others within the comparative context*” (Oakes et al. 1994, 94; emphasis in the original text). This implies that categories are formed so as to ensure that (relevant) differences *between* them are larger than differences *within* them, and to preserve

existing categorization. Self-categorization theory construes the stereotypic accentuation effects of in-group versus out-group categorizations as the basic cognitive function of group behavior (Oakes et al. 1992).

Categories are not fixed, and people who are perceived as different in one context can be re-categorized and perceived as similar in another without any actual change in their own position. Imagine two antagonistic groups of soccer fans (such as Ljubljana's "Green Dragons" and Maribor's "Viole"<sup>b</sup>) who reconsider themselves ahead of an international game and cheer together. In this instance, the perceived similarity of belonging to the same nation overrides the difference in local origin and/or team affiliation.

Oakes, Haslam and Turner (1992, 99) introduce the term "distance" to mark the variance in group members' characteristics. Namely, "distances" between individuals are transformed into similarities and differences (two terms that bear connotations) in a cognitive process. This categorization provides the basis of an individual's social orientation towards others, and it can quite evidently be changed or influenced.

Changes can also occur in the intracategory structure. The meta-contrast principle can be used to define the relative *prototypicalness* of members within a group (Turner and Oakes 1989, 259–265). The more a group member differs from out-group members and at the same time resembles other in-group members, the more this person will be perceived as a prototype for the group (Oakes et al. 1992). Brewer, Dull and Lui (1981) even explicated "stereotypes as prototypes." As relative prototypicalness is constructed within a group, the idealized subject or characteristics can change. In the case of an elite sports competition, a successful performance can assure the individual "prototypicalness;" however, should the effort be less triumphant, the connotation will not be assigned.

Perceived differences often conceal the fact that in order to be different, two elements have to be similar on a higher (yet still meaningful) level of abstraction. While the "distance" between these elements may vary, both elements still derive from the same "plane of existence:" they are apples and oranges in the same bowl of fruit. The members of the "Green Dragons" and "Viole" can identify themselves as Slovenians, and both Slovenians and Croatians can regard themselves as European

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<sup>b</sup> Both are the fan groups' original names.

nations (as well as former Yugoslav republics, a dramatically ambiguous characteristic which can result in great communion or ardent antagonism, depending on the circumstances). This lineage allows the recategorization discussed earlier.

*Social* categorization of the self and others becomes more likely as intergroup differences increase and intragroup or interpersonal differences decrease. In contrast, categorization at the *personal*, individual level becomes more likely as intergroup differences decrease and intragroup differences grow (Oakes et al. 1992). Thus, the more prototypical one can be, the better the individual will identify with the group (and vice versa).

The key theoretical propositions of social identity theory applied to the sports fan context were summarized by Jennings Bryant and R. Glenn Cummins (2009). If people strive for a positive self-concept and, consequently, for a positive social identity, fans achieve this by associating with successful teams (Wann, Royalty and Roberts 2000). The variety of opponents within a competition allows for the necessary favorable comparisons between the in-group and relevant out-groups (Hogg 2003). Their different levels of quality will likely provide enough opponents that can be defeated, resulting in the enhancing of the winner's fans' social identity.

In modern sports, a variety of criteria to determine team or individual success beyond mere a victory-to-losses ratio are employed, such as division or conference titles and individual statistical leaders charts. The search for a "suitable" level of comparison accounts for so-called "social creativity" which results in an alteration of the comparison process itself in order to preserve a threatened social identity. Fans who shed team allegiances in the face of a loss confirm that some individuals leave the group (while others engage in it so as to make it more positively distinctive) when social identity is unsatisfactory.

Self-categorization is thus not a series of clean-cut choices on the personal-social continuum. Instead, the appropriate level of categorization changes with the context. As the theory's authors put it: "Human beings are both individual persons and social groups, but the extent to which they are one or the other varies" (Oakes et al. 1992, 100).

### 3.5 The construction of identity through mediated sports

In one of the earliest texts dealing theoretically with the sports and media nexus, Garry Smith (1976) wrote that “[t]he mass media form a link between the individual sports fan and his favorite team or athlete. The fact that the mass media inundate [sic] society with sports information is an indication that this is what the public wants” (p. 5). Team identification and sports fan groups thus play a very central role in a variety of reception processes related to sports consumption (Gantz and Wenner 1995, Wann 2006a, 2006b; also see Bryant and Cummins 2009 for a detailed review) as well as in an individual’s identity formation<sup>c</sup>. Identification with a team can lead to unusual forms of behavior such as dressing up or odd rituals (Eastman and Riggs 1994, St. John 2004). While most such cases are harmless, some can produce extreme and even violent forms of behavior.

Personal fan rituals reveal the creation of multistranded connections between fans and teams or players—even when separated by an electronic wall. Gantz (1981) found that “to thrill in victory” was the strongest motive, and fans balance the need for suspense (the thrill of the game in itself) with a need for reassurance, extending to superstitions and “part-play/part-serious” efforts to influence game outcome. Fans engage in such activities in an attempt to gain social and cultural empowerment (Eastman and Riggs 1994).

Scholars embracing the social identity theory tradition have found evidence of several image-maintenance and image-enhancement techniques developed by sports fans to cope with the different situations and outcomes that may influence the team they follow. A review of these mechanisms might contribute to the later understanding of both the causes of some announcers’ comments and possible implications these statements might have for their audiences. In this subsection we draw extensively from the theory review performed by Bryant and Cummins (2009).

Basking in Reflected Glory (*BIRGing*) occurs when people tend to “share in the glory of a successful other with whom they are in some way associated” (Cialdini et al. 1976, p. 366). Thus, people wish to be associated with things that are evaluated

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<sup>c</sup> A recent dramatized example of the influence sports can have on building individual and national identity is the 2009 movie *Invictus* which presents the role a sports competition (the 1995 Rugby World Cup) played in reconciling the shattered South African nation. Although idealized, sociologist Richard Lapchick believes the events in the movie are presented accurately enough to be used for discussion (Jay Coakley, electronic communication, March 1, 2010).

positively (such as victorious athletes or teams) in order to benefit from the glory ascribed to them. Examples include spontaneous rallies of supporters in cities that claim national soccer titles, and impromptu fans' receptions of athletes or teams when they return "home" (usually at the airport) from international competitions. Political figures also frequently resort to BIRGing, such as in the case of former Slovenian Minister of the Economy Andrej Vizjak's cheerful and fan-like appearance by Primož Kozmus' side at the Bird's nest stadium in Beijing after Kozmus' victory in the Olympic hammer throw competition (ath, Aug 17)<sup>d</sup>, or Slovenian Prime Minister Borut Pahor's symbolic polishing of several soccer players' shoes following Slovenia's qualification for the 2010 FIFA World Cup (denissarkic, YouTube, video posted on November 24, 2009, Ka. K. 2009).

Cialdini and Richardson (1980) introduced *Blasting* as an image-maintenance technique. Blasting serves to decrease evaluations with negatively associated objects such as opposing teams and perceived rivals. An interesting example of this is the disparaging jokes recast by Slovenian soccer fans upon a neighboring nation (and post-1991 sports rival), when Croatia failed to qualify for the 2010 FIFA World Cup<sup>e</sup> (see Š. Ro. 2010 for examples).

Snyder, Lassegard and Ford (1986) described another image-maintenance method adopted by sports fans, namely, Cutting Off Reflected Failure (*CORFing*). With this technique, individuals seek to sever ties with negatively evaluated groups to avoid damaging associations with the group (Bryant and Cummins 2009). On an individual level, an example of this is watching the postgame show after a beloved team's victory but not after a loss (Eastman and Riggs 1994). Typical corporate examples of this phenomenon are sponsors' decisions to terminate contracts with athletes in unflattering situations—e.g., Kellogg's decision not to renew their endorsement contract with Michael Phelps after pictures of the swimmer allegedly smoking marijuana were published in a British magazine. In this case, Kellogg's

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<sup>d</sup> This is the first occurrence of the customized citation method that will be employed in this dissertation. In this case, the citation refers to "athletics [broadcast], [aired on] August 17." A list of all abbreviations can be found in the Methods section).

<sup>e</sup> We consider this situation particularly interesting because of the high frequency of disparaging jokes among Slovenian people, the light-heartedness with which these comments were made, and the absence of any kind of critical stance towards them.

spokeswoman reportedly stated that “Michael’s most recent behavior is not consistent with the image of Kellogg” (Macur 2009)<sup>f</sup>.

A fourth image-maintenance technique is Cutting Off Future Failure (*COFFing*), introduced by Wann, Hamlet, Wilson and Hodges (1995). This technique explains why some individuals *refrain* from basking in reflected glory (BIRGing) despite group success. The authors suggest individuals do this in an attempt to protect their ego from future damage which could follow a team’s *less successful* performance.

Besides these four image-maintenance techniques, Bryant and Cummins (2009) listed a number of effects team affiliation and competition outcome can have on fans’ emotions. Among those, research evidence demonstrates fans’ greatest mood enhancement following a difficult win, and the biggest drop after a difficult loss. Fans feel significantly better about themselves when their team wins than when it loses. This even affects fans’ self-confidence in personal, professional and business decisions made in the time around a match. Fans’ moods and perceived suspense also swing considerably according to the course of the game (Knobloch-Westerwick et al. 2009). Being a fan and being viewed as a fan is thus a critical component of a person’s identity. There is even a significant positive correlation between fan identification and collective self-esteem, and the use of media to gather information about the team one identifies with (Phua 2010).

Research has also documented a so-called “allegiance bias” which is reflected in fans’ biased recollections of past victories and excessive optimism in predicting their team’s potential for a future outcome. Negative sports outcomes transcend the individual sphere and can even have significant negative repercussions on the losing country’s stock market (Edmans, García and Norli 2006 in Bryant and Cummins 2009). Soccer is considered by many as the most influential sport in this regard.

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<sup>f</sup> Curiously, in February 2010, approximately a year after the “marijuana incident,” Phelps was appointed Youth Olympic Games Ambassador by the International Olympic Committee. The press release issued by the IOC on this occasion offered no detailed grounds for the appointment (International Olympic Committee 2010).



## **4 Sports journalism as a profession**

Journalists are among the most important producers of media texts. Their power and influence (especially on public opinion) have earned journalism the moniker of “the fourth estate.”

With the advent of digital technology, the number of media outlets and consequently the number of people dealing with journalism has grown larger than ever before. Hence, the number of people with the means to influence the public has risen dramatically.

Nonetheless, there is no unique definition or general agreement as to what journalism is. Various theoretic and practical conceptions emphasize different aspects of the job. Most of them converge on the need for objective reporting, yet none is able to identify *what exactly* journalistic objectivity is. Sports even seems to be somewhat of an exception, where biased reporting is acceptable and often even normal—despite the fact that staff members working in sports departments are also deemed “journalists.”

It is evident even to the lay viewer that the discourse typically employed by sports journalists and announcers transcends mere talk about participating athletes or teams. This chapter thus presents an outline of the norms and functions traditionally attributed to journalism and compares them with the practice in sports journalism. Since this study focuses on sports broadcasts on the Slovenian public service, the specific role public service broadcasting has in a society is then identified. The final part contains a review of the characteristics most commonly found in the sports media discourse.

### **4.1 The mission of journalism**

Today’s so-called “Western civilizations” understand journalism predominantly as “collecting, writing, editing and spreading of information as well as other types of (especially spiritual) contribution to daily and periodical press, radio and television stations” (Splichal 2000, 48). Such a definition characterizes the journalist’s work as

essentially preparing and spreading information, making journalism fundamentally a craft.

There are also more ideological definitions such as Croatian scholar Marko Sapunar's understanding that journalism "ranks among the oldest human activities; its aim is to *shape public opinion* or to preserve the circulation of socially important information in a society with a common language" (Sapunar 2000, 5; emphasis added). Whether journalism is *entitled to* directly shape public opinion (rather than providing unbiased information for individuals' informed, yet independent decisions) remains ambiguous, even though it is clear that it certainly does. Sapunar also introduces the element of common language in defining the reach of a media outlet. Language borders often do not coincide with state borders.

Journalistic discourse is deemed a "speech that goes on in a determined time and space, and which interweaves certain mechanisms, from linguistic to ideological" (Košir 1988, 11). Schudson claims news is not merely a mirror of reality: "It is a representation of the world, and all representations are selective" (Schudson, 2003). Some authors focus on the journalist's mission and conceive media as the watchdog of democracy (Košir 2003; cf. Whitehouse 2001). All in all, it is easier to identify the things that journalists nowadays *do* than to clearly label the *functions and roles* of journalism (Tapsall and Varley 2001, 5).

In their self-regulatory acts, Slovenian journalists identify in their code of practice "the public's right to the best possible information" as the main journalistic guideline (*Kodeks novinarjev Slovenije* 2002, preamble). Further, they "are bound to present a complete picture of events" (ibid.). Although objectivity is not explicitly stated in the Slovenian code, it is implicit that the journalist's mission is to inform the public objectively (impartially) and thoroughly (cf. *Society of Professional Journalists*, 1996). The lack of declared objectivity might be due to the common understanding that absolute or "true" objectivity is a myth and impossible to achieve (due, among other things, to the journalist's incomplete knowledge of the events and to their involvement in the society they are reporting about). This provision was echoed in the author's conversations with sports journalists. We thus embrace McKnight's understanding of journalistic objectivity as "a *sophisticated attempt* (...) to interpret events in an unbiased way using provable sources" (McKnight 2001, 50; emphasis added).

## 4.2 Sports journalism and sports broadcasting

Sports journalism is an important and somehow unique part of the news media. It is often referred to as “the toy department of the news media”<sup>a</sup>, where sloppy journalists work in a place of fun and frivolity, rather than applying the serious function of the fourth estate (Rowe 2004). However, sports journalism has always had a big commercial impact, especially on the popular press (Boyle 2006). Herbert Gans (1974) sees the compensation offered by sports competition as belonging to the domain of low taste culture. Despite all these claims, sports media still attract comparatively little scholarly attention. Raymond Boyle claims that until recently sports journalism “has been largely absent from journalism education and practice and similarly invisible among the growing critical literature from within media and communication studies which examines issues in and around journalism” (2006, 2). This certainly applies to Slovenian research and education which has yet to offer a comprehensive sports journalism/broadcasting university course.

Korošec (2005, 259) argues that the essence of sports journalism is to report from a sporting event. The aspect of describing the course of a game relates to the reporter’s mission as a journalist.

The “unique individuality” (Košir 1988, 73) that makes sporting events newsworthy is their unpredictable outcome. Sports *reporting* should be objective, yet Korošec argues that especially when reporting about sports (2005, 262):

[t]here is a special relationship between the communicator and the recipients. Viewers rely on (their) reporter, they trust his knowledge, they are often accustomed to him, understand him, and are even willing to accept inconsistencies with reporting standards, such as when a reporter shifts from reporting to excitement, from admiration of sports achievements to fanaticism, from praising a successful athlete to depreciation etc.

Sports reporters thus frequently fail to comply with reporting standards and are carried into subjectivity. While Korošec claims that the audience accepts such alterations as inevitable, others disagree and argue that sports journalism should not be exempt from scrutiny regarding conventional professional criteria within the news

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<sup>a</sup> An expression deriving from Howard Cosell’s assertion that “sports is the toy department of human life” (O’Brien 2007).

arena (Andrews 2005; Boyle 2006). Smith (1976) argues that that public has other role expectations of the sports journalist: “[a] portion of the public expects that sports journalists will serve an ombudsman role in that they will expose injustices and raise controversial issues. In effect they will keep sports promoters honest” (p. 9).

Smith (1976) succinctly writes that “the sports journalist is concerned with conveying his sports information in such a way that he is able to attract a large portion of the listening or reading public. The sports journalist is part of an organization whose primary goal is to make money” (p. 9). While the part dealing with the organization’s *primary* goal is debatable when it comes to public service broadcasting, sports journalists are indeed concerned with attracting the largest possible audiences. Gerd Von der Lippe also sees sports journalism in Europe and the USA as a dominating masculine exposure business focused on *selling* rather than producing quality journalism (Von der Lippe 2010; emphasis added). Slovenian author Tomo Korošec mentions what he believes the audience *prefers*, essentially sharing a starting point with Smith. But even assuming the audience does indeed prefer and thus dictates *biased* reporting, especially from/about international competitions (a claim that lacks conclusive evidence either for or against), this does not *justify* it. Media discourse influences audiences in ways most of their members are unaware of. This is like expecting students to dictate their own school curricula according to their personal preferences.

A prominent exception in its approach to sports reporting is the US-based National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), which considers it “a cardinal sin” for their sportscasters to incorporate specific personal pronouns to describe “their” United States team (Billings 2008). In the words of NBC executive producer David Neal before the 2006 Torino Winter Olympics: “We are here to document the Olympics; we’re not here to be cheerleaders” (McCarthy 2006 in Billings 2008, 23).

As a media content, sports have enabled the development of specialized outlets. Some of the most prominent thematic newspapers (e.g., *L’Equipe* in France or *La Gazzetta dello Sport* in Italy) have a centennial tradition and in the past few decades specialized sports television broadcasters such as *Canal+* in France, *Sport 1*<sup>b</sup> in

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<sup>b</sup> Up until April 11, 2010, the network was called DSF, short for *Deutsches Sportfernsehen* (literally, “German sports television”). Curiously, the adjective denoting nationality has been dropped in the new brand.

Germany, *ESPN* in the United States, or the pan-European *Eurosport*<sup>c</sup> have become increasingly popular. The United States does not have a national specialized sports newspaper: Eastman and Billings note that *The New York Times* and *USA Today*, two all-round and renowned newspapers, are “the largest national sources of daily sports news (other than the Web)” (2000, 196).

Newspaper sports pages tend to focus on previews and descriptive reporting of sports events. These reports add up to 58 percent of all articles published (the International Sports Press Survey 2005<sup>d</sup> in Rowe 2007, 387). Analogously, in television sports broadcasting the share of descriptive/factual commentary amounts to between 59 and 73 percent of all commentary (Bryant, Comisky and Zillman 1977, Woo, Kim, Nichols and Zheng 2010). There is thus little room for other topics within sport such as issues regarding policies, transparency, integration/discrimination, betting etc. This consolidates the views of sports journalism as being a “toy department” and an “advertising agency” for sports (Rowe 2007).

In the past few decades, the phrase “media event” has emerged to describe large-scale live events built around mass media and big audiences (Real 1989). Major sporting events like the Olympic Games and the soccer World Cup meet this definition. Among all mass media, television is particularly appealing for the live broadcasting of sporting events. Their final outcome is unknown so the audience feels like it is watching *history in the making*. Elite sporting events broadcasts attract huge audiences: the International Olympic Committee (2008a) estimates that 3.6 billion people watched at least one minute of dedicated coverage of the 2008 Beijing Olympics—this figure representing 53 percent of the world’s population. A total of more than 61,700 hours of dedicated Beijing 2008 television coverage was aired globally across 220 territories—40 percent more than with Athens in 2004 and more than double that of Sydney in 2000. Thus, if aired on a single network the worldwide TV coverage of the Beijing Olympics would fill 2,570 days of around-the-clock

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<sup>c</sup> Established in 1989, *Eurosport* is perhaps the first sports television network with immediate transnational ambitions. Its headquarters are in France but it has 14 national/sub-regional offices around Europe and in Hong Kong. As of October 2010, *Eurosport* was available in 59 countries and broadcasting in 20 languages, while *Eurosport 2* is available in 46 countries and 15 languages. The latest addition to the franchise, *Eurosport Asia-Pacific*, reaches 14 countries in the region ([Eurosportcorporate.com](http://Eurosportcorporate.com), 2010).

<sup>d</sup> To date, this is the largest international survey of sports journalism ever produced, covering ten countries, over 10,000 sports articles, and 37 newspapers from Australia, Austria, Denmark, England, Germany, Norway, Romania, Scotland, Switzerland and the USA (Rowe 2007, 387).

programming—over 7 years of uninterrupted permutations of 16 days of sporting events.

Few other events generate a viewership that, in one or several countries, can be compared to that of the Olympics. The 2006 FIFA World Cup final between Italy and France recorded a 91.1 percent share in Italy (SIPRA 2006)—meaning that nine out of ten Italians who were watching the tube on that evening had tuned in to see the game—while the 2010 Super Bowl XLIV attracted an average audience of 106.5 million US viewers, reaching a 45.0 percent rating (the Nielsen Company 2010). However, very few events attract such great numbers of viewers across many countries *simultaneously* as do the Olympics, as the *average minute* of Beijing 2008 coverage was seen by 160 million viewers worldwide (International Olympic Committee 2008a). For several decades, the Olympics have been “the most widely shared regular event in human history” (Real 1989, 222).

In Slovenia, the most popular sports telecasts include soccer media events, winter sports broadcasts (especially Alpine skiing and ski jumping) and the Olympic Games. In 2010, the sports viewership records were led by the three games played by Slovenia at the FIFA World Cup. On average, each of these three games was seen by 482,000 viewers—a 24.9 percent rating. In comparison, the 2006 World Cup final between Italy and France was the most viewed sports broadcast that year in Slovenia and was seen by 455,000 viewers (a 23.8% rating). In both years, viewership figures of selected World Cup soccer games topped those of the most viewed Winter Olympics broadcasts. Curiously, the Summer Olympic Games did not generate the largest sports telecasts audience in a given year either. In 2008, the single most viewed Olympic event (the athletics afternoon session on August 17 with the men’s hammer throw final) ranked eighth in the annual review, trailing behind three Alpine skiing events, two ski jumping competitions, the Euro 2008 soccer final between Germany and Spain, and a Formula 1 race (AGB Nielsen Media Research for TV Slovenija, target audience 4+).<sup>e</sup>

Aggregate viewership figures also give the edge to soccer over the Olympic Games. The 56 live broadcasts of the 2010 FIFA World Cup totaled over 11 million

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<sup>e</sup> The source of all audience data is AGB Nielsen Media Research for RTV Slovenija, target audience 4+. The author wishes to thank Mateja Mir from TV Slovenija for her exhaustive help in obtaining and interpreting the data.

viewers, averaging just below 200,000 viewers per game (a 10.3% average rating). In comparison, live broadcasts from the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver totaled 10.2 million viewers, averaging an audience of 128,000 per event. Live transmissions from Beijing collected an even lower viewership, with a combined audience of 8.1 million, an average viewership of 57,000, and an average rating of 3.0%. However, this comparison should only be taken as a guideline since many live broadcasts from Vancouver and especially from Beijing were made in the small hours in Slovenia, occasionally attracting audiences as small as several thousands. Re-runs on the following afternoons thus usually attracted considerably greater audiences but, with the outcome already known, they were still smaller than what they might have been<sup>f</sup>.

Still, media events and national team competitions (including basketball and team handball World Cups) attract viewing figures that are many times larger than that of continental and national fixtures. Interestingly, winter sports world cup broadcasts on TV Slovenija (which occur on a weekly basis during wintertime) also often attract very large audiences. This occurs despite their relatively unpopular airing time (Saturday and Sunday mornings), and the less-than-superb performances of Slovenian representatives in most of these sports.

As an indication of the relationship between media events and “regular” sports fixtures viewership in Slovenia, Table 4.1 compares media events audiences with those of national and international competitions in soccer, basketball and team handball. The data relate to 2007 which is the year when most team sports content analyzed in this dissertation was broadcast. In addition, viewership of media events aired in 2008 (including the most-seen Olympic broadcast) is included under the media events rubric.

The type of competition plays an important role in attracting viewers to their TV sets. In all team sports, international competitions attracted over twice the viewership of national fixtures. Yet media events were even more popular. The Winter or Summer Olympic Games did not achieve record viewership; still, they also stand out from regular sports telecasts in Slovenia.

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<sup>f</sup> The situation was even worse for the Slovenian press as the print media was literally reporting with a delay of more than one day.

**Table 4.1 Viewership of selected sports broadcasts in Slovenia in 2007 and 2008**

Type	Event	Airing date	Viewers	Rating
Media events	Ski flying World Cup final (m) in Planica, Slovenia <sup>1</sup>	March 25, 2007	353,350	18.5
	Alpine skiing World Cup (f) in Maribor, Slovenia <sup>2</sup>	January 12, 2008	263,580	13.8
	Euro 2008 final (m), Germany vs. Spain <sup>*.3</sup>	June 29, 2008	236,840	12.4
	Summer Olympic Games, athletics (m+f)	August 17, 2008	223,470	11.7
Soccer	Euro 2008 qualifier (m), Slovenia vs. the Netherlands	March 28, 2007	210,100	11.0
	Champions League qualifier (m), Domžale vs. Dinamo	August 1, 2007	143,250	7.5
	National league (m), Domžale vs. Hit Gorica	September 26, 2007	82,130	4.3
Basketball	European Championship (m), Slovenia vs. Lithuania	Sept. 12, 2007	210,100	11.0
	Euroleague (m), Olimpija vs. CSKA Moscow	November 11, 2007	112,690	5.9
	National championship (m), Olimpija vs. Domžale	June 6, 2007	59,210	3.1
Team handball	World Championship (m), Slovenia vs. Tunisia	January 22, 2007	187,180	9.8
	Champions League (f), Ribarroja vs. Krim	January 20, 2007	99,320	5.2
	National championship (m), Velenje vs. Koper	November 4, 2007	43,930	2.3

Note: (m) denotes male events; (f) denotes female events; (m+f) denotes mixed-gender events. An asterisk \* denotes events without Slovenian participation.

<sup>1</sup> Sports event with the highest viewership in 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Sports event with the highest viewership in 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Broadcast on TV3 (a private, free-to-air, national network).

Televised images of sports are complemented by the speech of network-employed broadcasters. Their exact role and mission remain ambiguous: their tasks usually include accurate and unbiased description of the ongoing events, as well as their interpretation, often even including patriotic cheering when competitors originate from the same country as the broadcaster (see Billings et al. 2009 for examples of different approaches to commenting).

In an attempt to enhance the viewers' experience, commentators include dramatic features in their speech. The actual content of these remarks differs between different nations: Brazilian soccer broadcasters are renowned for their distinct way of yelling when goals are scored, Croatian commentators are perceived as extraordinarily patriotic, Chinese media staff are even legally required to nourish the spirit of collectivism, while Austrian and British sportscasters stand out for their calmness and poise.

Jennings Bryant, Paul Comisky and Dolf Zillman (1977) were the first scholars to assess the actual share of commentary devoted by TV broadcasters to dramatic embellishment of the game. Their analysis of NFL football broadcasts on three major



US networks showed that 72 percent of all spoken commentary was factual or descriptive in nature; 27 percent was composed of dramatic sentences, and the remaining 1 percent was classified as humorous. Dramatic ascription was much more likely to be used to build up an athlete instead of tearing him down. Apparently, announcers did not think that disparaging a player or team was appropriate behavior, or perhaps they did not find it effective for creating excitement. Instead, they relied heavily on interpersonal conflict to generate the “drama of sports” (Bryant, Comisky and Zillman 1977).

Bryant, Comisky and Zillman’s findings proved that sportscasters transcend the role of reporters: they complement the drama and generate involvement and excitement for the television viewer. They assumed that such dramatic embellishments substitute the drama experienced by the audience of live sporting events, and noted that the announcers on the different networks relied on a relatively small number of dramatic motifs and discursive topics. The fact that commentators voice their personal opinions about the game in progress is not a surprise even for the occasional viewer of mediated sports. TV Slovenija’s Head of Sports, Mile Jovanović, sees it as both an inevitable and deliberate feature (personal communication, May 19, 2010).

#### **4.3 Ethical codification and professional standards in sports media**

In Slovenia, sports broadcasters and play-by-play announcers are recognized as journalists. Their formal job description is “journalists/reporters,” but they are commonly identified as either “commentators” (Sl. *komentator*) or “reporters” (Sl. *reporter*) when broadcasting sports events. Former TV Slovenija’s Head of Sports, Marjan Lah, favors the label “reporter” as he argues that “the term ‘commenting’ requires both the skills of analysis and synthesis, the latter including the ability to suggest possible solution, which is in turn linked to creative thinking” (personal communication, January 27, 2010)—a feature, he argues, that is not characteristic of sports broadcasters. As a consequence, he favors the term “reporting” and understands it as “the description and reflection of the event happening on the game field” (ibid.). Others, including the current Head of Sports, Mile Jovanović, do not

distinguish between the two terms and regard them as synonymous (personal communication, May 19, 2010).<sup>§</sup>

Ropret (2004) and Okorn (2008) identify the following issues in sports journalism as being the most salient: conflicts of interest, promotional journalistic pieces (journalists as PR agents), biased reporting, cheering, the relation between informing and commenting, racism, stereotyping, gender differences, excessive criticism, the degradation and denigration of athletes, and the invasion of privacy. Zrinski (2008) indicates that media cheering in national competitions is “extremely ethically questionable,” while in international competitions broadcasts she deems it “somehow understandable that the journalist is a little biased and cheers for ours [sic], but not to the expense of insulting the opponent” (p. 23). Her sentiments were echoed by the majority of Slovenian practitioners/TV reporters interviewed for this dissertation: most of them agreed that a *certain amount* of biased and/or cheering attitude is *normal* (rather than “allowed” or “admissible”); however, none of them could identify the *exact* amount of *normal* bias, its admissible manifestations or other signposts delimiting this “certain” amount of narrative phenomenon.

Jovanović said that a subjective attitude is both admissible and expected from commentators; however, within this subjectivity, they should remain *fair* and be able to substantiate their opinions. He thus perceives subjectivity as “being an individual and having an opinion.” When mentoring younger staff members, he said he teaches them to express their informed opinions and not to distort facts (Mile Jovanović, personal communication, May 19, 2010).

TV Slovenija’s commentators/reporters are members of the station’s sports desk and regularly contribute to sports news shows. When they speak on air, they represent TV Slovenija and are thus bound to follow the acts and documents that (self-)regulate this media outlet. Ethical, professional, and juridical acts should apply to them as well.

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<sup>§</sup> Despite suggestions by a number of colleagues, this dissertation does *not* deal with the issue of determining the (most) appropriate label for media staff who speak on-air during a sports broadcast. Although important, this issue is relatively irrelevant to the topic of this dissertation which is determining the characteristics of sportscasters’ *text content and discourse* on Slovenian public television. The issue of determining the appropriate *Slovenian* term to characterize speakers during play-by-play broadcasts is one best left for a text written in the Slovenian language. This is an appropriate moment to point out that throughout this dissertation the terms “announcer,” “sportscaster,” “play-by-play announcer,” “reporter” and “commentator” are used as synonyms. Any exceptions will be highlighted.

The representative institutional body of Slovenian sports journalists is the Society of Sports Journalists of Slovenia (Sl. *Društvo športnih novinarjev Slovenije*). Membership in the society is not mandatory for sports journalists. In the 2010-11 term (new members are only accepted every two years), the society has 313 regular members<sup>h</sup>. 24 of them are registered as members of TV Slovenija (*Društvo športnih novinarjev Slovenije 2010*).

The society's rules specify that the organization "endeavors for an ethically impeccable image of the society membership's work, and represents and safeguards their interests when needed" (*Društvo športnih novinarjev Slovenije 2006, Art. 3*). It does not have its own Code of Ethics or any other code of practice. In its place, it recognizes and adopts the Code of the Slovenian Journalistic Society. The latter identifies "the public's right to the best possible information" as the main journalistic guideline. Further, journalists "are bound to present a complete picture of events" (*Društvo novinarjev Slovenije 2002, Preamble*). The Slovenian journalistic code allows/foresees the possibility of commentary as one of the fundamental genres of journalism. It stipulates that when a journalist produces one, it should be clearly marked as such and distinguished from information. The code does not have any distinct sections or special provisions regarding sports reporting, nor do any of TV Slovenija's most important regulatory acts.

Occasionally, sports reporting is mentioned in separate sections of "regular" codes such as those of the New York Times (2005) or the Associated Press (2006). In both instances, two key points are addressed: journalists are not allowed to request free tickets to sporting events (apart, of course, from free press accreditations), or to act as official scorers at events they report from<sup>i</sup>. Yet, if these are the only specifics pertaining to sports reporting, all remaining provisions shall apply to them as well, including those codifying thorough work, objectivity, fair and unbiased reporting etc. Holmes (1971 in Smith 1976) even explicitly points out that the sports journalist "should be performing the same general functions of anyone else in the mass media,

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<sup>h</sup> The author is a "freelance" member of the society.

<sup>i</sup> This seemingly unusual provision derives from the role of "official scorers" formerly awarded to journalists by Major League Baseball. Statistical data provided by journalists used to be considered part of the official record of the league. Active sportswriters were removed from this role in 1980. Although their statistical judgment calls could not affect the outcome of a game in progress, the awarding of errors and wins/saves were seen as powerful influences on pitching staff selections and play lists. The removal of writers sought to remove this perception of a conflict of interest and to increase statistics' volume, consistency and accuracy (*Sports journalism, Wikipedia 2010*).

that is: (1) supplying information, (2) commenting on current issues, (3) educating the public and (4) entertainment” (p. 269).

A frame of potential sports stories transcending pre- or post-game reports is mandated in the Reuters Handbook of Journalism (2008). Its relatively extensive Sports Style Guide (it spans over 32 pages) reminds authors about noteworthy facts and potential sources of stories. Guidelines include the information that cricket “often throws up political angles” (p. 448), citing several examples of political controversies that were reflected on pitches (e.g., the withdrawal of international cricket as one of the main weapons used to isolate South Africa in the apartheid era). The section on soccer—introduced as “the most popular sport in the world” (p. 468)—stresses that “F[ootball] A[ssociation]s and domestic leagues also have a bearing of every aspect of the game and need to be followed closely for stories on discipline including drug abuse, transfers, refereeing, television rights, sponsorship, finance, corruption, match-fixing and other stories” (ibid.). The section even points out that big clubs link up with smaller overseas clubs as nurseries for new players and to generally expand their influence: “This is a trend likely to become more widespread. *Many stories will require equities or general news codes as well as sports codes*” (ibid., emphasis added). The Reuters news agency thus recognizes that sports is much more than just games, and sports reporting can merge with topics linked to law, medicine, the economy, the media, and other fields.

Despite the great public interest in soccer (even for its most remote leagues and competitions), women’s soccer does not seem to be able to jump on the bandwagon. As a rule, Reuters (2008) does not cover it; it is further explained that “(a) few [women’s] leagues are now professional/semi-professional but the women’s game lacks sponsorship and investment to raise its profile. Offbeat brights, features and strong news angles are, however, welcome” (p. 473). It seems that women’s soccer does not appeal to the Slovenian audience (or perhaps to Slovenian media editors and producers). On Slovenian public or commercial television channels a sports fan can follow over 20 soccer competitions from 15 countries on three continents—yet, not one of them is a women’s competition (Ličen 2009a). Only pan-European *Eurosport* shows certain women’s international tournaments, such as the UEFA Women’s EURO, the FIFA Women’s World Cup and even some youth tournaments (Eurosport 2011).

#### 4.4 Public service broadcasting

Public service broadcasters are electronic media—radio, television and increasingly the Internet (as well as New Media Technologies, which in turn open a wide range of formal and ethical challenges to public service broadcasting)—that are predominantly financed by public sources<sup>j</sup>.

At the heart of conceptions of public service broadcasting is the notion that a *healthy public sphere* is required to produce democratic conditions (Garnham 1986). By remaining outside of market influences, public service broadcasting should provide a much needed public forum within which information dissemination can occur, aiding in the stimulation of public debate.

Hartley (2002) noted that public service broadcasting plays a significant role in shaping national identity by creating and reinforcing cultural products and practices. Its attempts to provide quality content for the nation, he argues, has placed public service broadcasting in the problematic position of having to assume what it is that citizens should know and enjoy as citizens of a particular country.

Traditionally, the public server broadcaster's mission is to inform, educate and entertain (BBC Charter of Incorporation 2006). This was actually Lord John Reith's vision of the BBC's mission. Lord Reith became the BBC's first General Manager when the corporation was founded in 1922, and his idea is now generally embraced as the public service broadcasters' main purpose. Today, public service broadcasting has a two-fold mission: it is both an ideal and an actual institution. Both instances are symbolized by the BBC (Raboy 1997, 80).

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<sup>j</sup> In 2008 (data for 2009 are unavailable at the time of writing), the share of yearly income deriving from the license fee collected by the Slovenian public broadcaster, RTV Slovenija, amounted to 64.4%, while commercial incomes totaled 16.3% (the remaining 19.7% constituted other business-related income, governmental grants etc.) (RTV Slovenija 2009). By comparison, in the same year license fee incomes for the BBC amounted to 76.3% and commercial revenues were 16.3% (BBC 2010a). Thus, well over half of the total income of public service broadcasters in both Slovenia and Great Britain derives from license fees paid by subscribers. This share largely exceeds the "subscription" revenues collected by the US version of a public service broadcaster, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. In 2008, this corporation collected 26.3% of its total financial funds from subscribers (defined as "membership and subscription contributions and friend groups"); this was the biggest single source of its revenue. The remaining funds come from Federal, State and local sources, College and University funds, and Foundation resources (Corporation for Public Broadcasting 2009) —a source with no equivalent in comparable European institutions.

#### **4.4.1 The “public” in public service broadcasting**

In most countries’ media spheres, a public service broadcaster usually cohabits with one or more commercial broadcasters (see Contreras Arellano 1987 in Real 1989 for a schema of six basic forms of television ownership). However, individual media outlets are not limited to the territory of one country alone. Radio and television airwave signals are not confined to a country’s borders. With the advent of satellite and cable television, these boundaries even became obsolete. As of February 6, 2010, a cable television subscriber in Slovenia could watch at least 29 non-Slovenian public TV channels<sup>k</sup>; in turn, TV Slovenija is accessible on cable television in Austria, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, the Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia and Sweden (RTV Slovenija 2009, 3).

The various economic, political and social implications of the spread of the European television market led to the adoption of the European Convention on Transfrontier Television (Council of Europe 1989), recently replaced by the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (Commission of the European Communities 2009). In 1994, the Council of Europe adopted a resolution defining the characteristics of public service broadcasting. The policy framework for this type of media requires public services, among other things (Council of Europe 1994):

to provide, through their programming, a reference point for all members of the public and a factor for social cohesion and integration of all individuals, groups and communities. In particular, they must reject any cultural, sexual, religious or racial discrimination and any form of social segregation; (...) to reflect the different philosophical ideas and religious beliefs in society, with the aim of strengthening mutual understanding and tolerance and promoting community relations in pluriethnic and multicultural societies; to contribute actively through their programming to a greater appreciation and dissemination of the diversity of national and European cultural heritage (...).

At the time, participating states and their respective public broadcasters were encouraged to cooperate and form alliances, while the Council of Europe would follow this cooperation closely and study the problems which might arise in this

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<sup>k</sup> On top of them, a cable TV subscriber in Slovenia can access six Slovenian public channels (TV Slovenija 1, 2, 3; TV Koper-Capodistria; Tele M; and TVS HD), 43 Slovenian commercial programs and 151 foreign commercial programs (data gathered from websites of the three major cable television providers in Slovenia: SiOL, Telemach, and T2).

respect. It would be interesting to find out whether the (negative as well as positive) effects broadcast sports have on individuals were seen as a *problem* for the citizen, perhaps (due to its typical “us vs. them” dichotomy and its military jargon) even as a failure to strengthen mutual understanding and tolerance.

Bašić Hrvatin (2002) argues that:

today, supporting public media means supporting the possibility of an open communication field, where all *citizens*, regardless of their material means or communication competence, must have access to channels of communication and influence on program contents. (p. 10, emphasis added)

A spirit of transnationality permeates the European regulation of public service broadcasting, as well as of media in general; a spirit that puts great emphasis on the universal promotion of human rights, tolerance and integration. Many new nation-states were constituted upon the fall of the socialist and communist regimes in Eastern Europe after 1990. The media in these countries had to cope with a number of issues: first, they were faced with the challenge of re-conceiving themselves from *national* (that is, *state-controlled*) broadcasters to *public* ones (*state-funded*, but autonomous). The new conception understands the media as free from political pressure and held accountable to the public (Bašić Hrvatin 2002). Journalists who used to be “socio-political workers” (Sl. *družbeno-politični delavci*) upholding the existing political system had to revert to a watchdog function, bound to advocate democracy, report impartially and thoroughly, conduct investigative work, and take a skeptical and even critical stance to those (political) messages that used to be predominant sources of information. Newly-established countries were striving (many of them are still striving) to construct a new, strong and distinctive national identity that would mark the final distancing of their peoples from the previous identities—upheld, among other things, through state-controlled media.

Differences in the discourse of public and commercial media representatives on one hand and announcers from state-controlled media on the other were also presented in an analysis of the same basketball game through the lens of four different telecasts (Billings et al. 2009). The authors ascertained that many differences in different nations’ broadcasts could be directly attributed to the differences between the political and cultural systems in the countries they studied:

For instance, the lack of individualistic commentary surrounding the Chinese telecast can be explained by considering that collectivism is the Chinese version of “teamwork.” (...) [T]he lack of focus on individual backgrounds and performances is not just stylistic; it is legislated in the central notions of what Chinese sport should and should not be in their society (p. 393).

Socialist and communist regimes strive to uphold their system of domination through many channels, with the media and sports being among the most important<sup>1</sup>. The fusion of both, complemented by a mandatory discourse about patriotic virtues and socialistic ideology, seems as an extremely apt mean for maintaining the cultural and ideological status quo. While such an approach is understandable in state-controlled media, it seems inappropriate in media that is responsible to the public and meant to inform and educate, among other things, about cultural diversity.

The shift from state-governed to public media seems particularly troubling in most post-socialist countries. Bašić Hrvatin (2002) notes that “the new political elites that came to power in the early Nineties incessantly try to gain control of the media and to change them into some sort of para-statal or para-public media” (p. 20). Hence, this study of sportscasters’ discourse on Slovenian public television will hopefully be relevant to other societies in transition that are opening their media markets up and rethinking their formerly state-controlled, now public media services.

Slovenian legislators see the media as a means of upholding national identity. The Slovenian Mass Media Act (Zakon o medijih, ZMed-UPB1 2006) stipulates that “(t)he Republic of Slovenia shall support the mass media in the creation and dissemination of program important to (...) the protection of the Slovenian national and cultural identity” (Art. 4). Similarly, the Radio and Television Corporation of Slovenia Act (ZTVS-1 2006) states that the Slovenian public service broadcaster shall “spread understanding of Slovenian history, culture and identity, including from the aspect of European history and international connections” (Art. 4). It shall also “promote public cultural dialogue and facilitate a broad arena for public debate on issues in society” (ibid.).

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<sup>1</sup> Writing about sports press censorship in Spain during Franco’s rule, de la Viuda (2008) notes that the Press Law passed in 1938 provided that the mission of the media was just an extension of the state’s functions. The Law defined the press as “a decisive organ in popular culture formation and especially in collective consciousness building” (“*órgano decisivo en la formación de la cultura popular y, sobre todo, en la creación de la conciencia colectiva*”) (p. 113).



The promotion of “Slovenian history, culture and identity” seems to fulfill especially partial *Slovenian* needs, even though RTV Slovenija should simultaneously promote “public cultural dialogue” (ibid.). Sports journalism and sports reporting (not just in Slovenia) appear as a field where the clash of two inherently contradictory provisions meets the broadest audience. In reality, this is a non-existing conflict: biased reporting (especially as it appears in sports media; see Section 4.5 for a review) is not a suitable method of nurturing national identity—in sports or any other area of society. Paraphrasing a famous quote, disparity for anyone diminishes the equality of all.

#### ***4.4.2 Regulation of the Slovenian public service broadcaster***

The most relevant documents regulating RTV Slovenija’s duties and responsibilities include the Radio and Television Corporation of Slovenia Act (Zakon o Radioteleviziji Slovenija 2005), its Statute (RTV Slovenija 2006), and the Professional Standards and Principles of Journalistic Ethics in RTV Slovenija’s Programs (RTV Slovenija 2000). Through them, RTV Slovenija implicitly embraces Reith’s/BBC’s conception of a public service broadcaster (Zakon o Radioteleviziji Slovenija 2005). The Corporation Act thus stipulates that the broadcaster “ensure[s] high-quality information on all important cultural, political, historic, sports, social and economic events,” and that it “promote[s] sport” (Art. 4). These are the Corporation Act’s only direct references to sports.

Journalists, editors and others directly involved in the creation or production of RTV programming must abide by the following (usually “journalistic”) ethical canons (Zakon o Radioteleviziji Slovenija 2005, Art. 5):

- adhere to the principle of truthfulness, impartiality and integrity of information;
- respect human individuality and dignity;
- adhere to the principle of political balance and pluralism of world views;
- adhere to the principle of constitutionality and legality in the formulation of programming, including the prohibition on incitement of cultural, religious, sexual, racial, national or other forms of intolerance;
- ensure the impartial and integral provision of information so that citizens have the possibility to freely form their opinions;
- adhere to the principle of political independence and autonomy of journalists;

- institute professional ethics for reporters and the consistent distinction between information and commentary in journalistic reports; and
- protect children and young persons from content that could have a harmful effect on their mental and physical development, and respect universal human values.

These provisions are further defined in the Professional Standards and Principles of Journalistic Ethics document (RTV Slovenija 2000). It establishes some relatively obvious rules concerning journalistic standards of work. The section on production standards thus states that “[R]eports do not include elements of commentary and RTV Slovenia refrains from broadcasting commented reports” (Sec. 5.5). The section governing commentary in the broadcaster’s programming states that its mission is to inform the audience “as extensively as possible in a balanced and unbiased manner” (Sec. 5.7):

Although journalists may have shaped opinions on the subject matter they report, they may in no case use only those facts that suit their personal opinion. When broadcasting the subjective opinion of a journalist, this needs to be clearly signaled to the audience. Since subjective opinion can be based on certain, very often partial facts, editors have to ensure the schemes and contents of commentaries are as pluralistic as possible (ibid.).

The section on information processing states: “The role of the reporter is to convey news to the audience, with maximum fairness, accuracy and integrity.” Reporters must not “express or reflect their personal opinion or bias” (Sec. 9.2).

The Program standards document (RTV Slovenija 2000) even has a special section on the portrayal of distinct groups of people in society, stating that “RTV Slovenia has a responsibility to serve *all sections and groups* of society. While avoiding stereotypes and portraying the full range of roles, we must be aware of the danger of depicting a society that does not exist. Where prejudice and disadvantage exist we need to report and reflect them in our programs, but *we should do nothing to perpetuate them*” (Sec. 12; emphases added). The groups explicitly mentioned in the following subsections are women, people with disabilities, sexual minorities, and older people.

None of the most important documents regulating either the work of RTV Slovenija as a whole or that of its journalists contains specific provisions applicable to the field of sports reporting. Sports broadcast(er)s are thus not officially exempt from

following any of these guidelines (nor are any additional requirements imposed on it/them, for that matter).

#### **4.5 Portraying society: media representation of athletes and sports**

Media discourse about sports became a distinct issue in the social sciences in the late 1970s. Since then, it has grown considerably. This is probably linked to the exponential *commercial* growth of sport, elevating some of its most outstanding representatives to the status of pop icons. Perhaps the first athlete to transcend the boundaries of sport was Michael Jordan. Dubbed by the press a “global hero of a global show” (Halberstam in Andrews 1996a, 315), his image achieved worldwide fame *beyond* the world of sports<sup>m</sup>, most likely paving the way for athletes (until then relatively rare) who would have careers as singers, musicians, models, actors or other ventures parallel to that of professional sportsmen (and occasionally sportswomen).

Michael Real identifies two fundamental groups of approaches to the media. *Behaviorism* is centered on measuring audiences and behavioral effects through controlled experiments and surveys. It seeks unambiguous scientific results that can predict similar behaviors. In contrast, *criticism* emphasizes the understanding of the creation, content and implications of the media. It seeks understanding rather than prediction (Real 1989, 44). This dissertation operates predominantly within the second domain.

A significant amount of research on media portrayals of athletes derives from Anglophone countries, most notably the USA and UK. This might be due to the cultural diversity of both societies: the United States of America is a cultural melting pot par excellence, and the British influence spans at least 54 country members of the Commonwealth of Nations—countries formerly under British rule, where cultural and population exchanges are still two-way. Hence, it was likely that such issues would surface in these societies, just as it is understandable that scholars in countries with a relatively stable ethnic and national composition are less fascinated with studying the portrayal of diversity. Studies of representation derive from discourse analysis, an

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<sup>m</sup> Michael Jordan as a cultural phenomenon in postindustrial America (and as an American cultural ambassador, one might add) became the subject of a special issue of the *Sociology of Sport Journal* (1996, vol. 13, no. 4). Thus far, Jordan is the only athlete this prominent journal has devoted a special issue to.

approach and method that require analyses of words and wordings, grammatical and syntactical structures. Many of the most prestigious scientific and research journals are published in English, making it a daunting task to prepare articles dealing with non-English discourse. Last but not least, studies of media discourse in non-English speaking countries could be (and most likely are) published in journals that are inaccessible to many because of their circulation, language or editorial specifics.

When planning the contents of their sports sections, journalists and editors (regardless of whether they work in print or electronic media) are driven by what they believe to be most appealing to their audiences. This can be measured relatively accurately by comparing circulation or viewership figures. Practitioners also employ and structure their discursive strategies in accordance with what they perceive are the methods, topics and approaches preferred by the audience (Hartley 2002; Van Sterkenburg and Knoppers 2004; Miha Žibrat, personal communication, January 25, 2010). This approach was questioned earlier in this chapter.

The space and prominence the media devotes to sports events vary. In an analysis of newspaper coverage of the Olympics, Real (1989) found that some countries devoted as little as 1.4 percent of newspaper space to this topic, whereas Korea dedicated a high 34.3 percent of text to the topic. The author noted that the differences did not appear to correlate with the size or ideology of a country, nor did they correlate with regions of the world or stages of development. Rather, the event was least covered in poorer countries of Latin America and those with special interests in hosting the Olympics (Korea, Spain) provided the most (ibid.)

Comisky, Bryant and Zillman (1977) noted that sportscasters in mediated sports dramatize their narrative and interpret the events as they see fit in those moments. They are “in charge of embellishing the drama” (p. 150), rather than just reporting the events that occur on the court, field, pitch or track. This team of researchers found that 27 percent of all sports commentary is dramatic, or interpretive, in nature (Bryant, Comisky and Zillman 1977).

The study was replicated in other cultural environments only decades later. In a pilot study of a broadcast on Slovenian and Croatian television, Ličen and Doupona Topič (2008) found that the share of subjective commentary amounted to 29 percent. Also, in a very recent comparison of baseball World Series broadcasting on US,

Chinese Taipei and South Korean television, Woo et al. (2010) showed that the ratio of informative vs. evaluative commentary varied considerably between societies. Interpretive commentary amounted to 27 percent in the USA, but rose to 38 percent in Chinese Taipei and even to 41 percent in South Korea.

Referring to the data from the seminal study by Bryant, Comisky and Zillman (and confirmed in a recent study by Woo and colleagues), Billings noted that those 27 percent “shape the frameworks of the discussion and connect the dots (...) between the actions at a sporting event and the representation and interpretation of the actions at a sporting event. It is within this 27 percent that issues of identity can be colored and swayed” (2008, 19).

In the following sub-sections, the most common discursive strategies employed by sports journalists and announcers reported by scholars are reviewed. This will offer insights into the *colors* used by media producers to paint pictures of society through mediated sports. Further, it will provide referential values to compare with the picture being painted on Slovenian public television.

#### **4.5.1 Sports and gender—the quantitative aspect**

In recent decades, feminist criticism has produced so much research on gender representation that it may be deemed “the most creative area of media research” (Real 1989, 132). Indeed, it seems as if the fourth estate has hardly ever treated the “fair sex” reasonably. In a longitudinal content study of the *Chicago Tribune*<sup>n</sup> newspaper sports section from 1900 to 1975, Lever and Wheeler (1984) found that the share of articles on female athletes accounted for a mere 1.2 percent in 1900; it grew to 4 percent in 1925 and remained at virtually the same level until 1975. This level of women’s sport representation persisted in four major US daily newspapers until the 1990s (Duncan, Messner and Williams 1991 in Vincent et al. 2002), despite earlier more optimistic assessments which estimated that the coverage of women’s sports in the newspaper hovered around 15 percent of all articles (Rintala and Birrell 1984). Crossman, Hyslop and Gutrie (1994) analyzed the sports section of the Canadian newspaper *Globe and Mail* and found that female athletes accounted for

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<sup>n</sup> In 2009, the Chicago Tribune ranked eight among daily US newspapers in terms of circulation (BurrellesLuce 2009).

6.3 percent of the space, compared to the 83 percent devoted to male athletes. By the turn of the century, newspaper coverage of women's sport had risen to 11 percent of all articles in the *New York Times*' sports section, and 14 percent in USA Today's, whereas pictures representing female athletes accounted for 11 and 19 percent, respectively (Eastman and Billings 2000). Lately, figures describing women's sports coverage in print media seem to be rising (MacKay and Dallaire 2009).

The situation on the other side of the Atlantic is similar: Valgeirsson and Snyder's (1986) cross-cultural content analysis found that coverage of women's sports in two European papers, the British *The Times* and the Icelandic *Morgunbladid*, did not top the 10-percent mark: it reached 5 and 9 percent, respectively. The traditional soccer-loving Italy also did not show interest in women's sports as it involved even less than 1 percent of newspaper coverage in Italy in 1991 (Aversa and Cence 1992 in Capranica and Aversa 2002). In 1998, an analysis of sports coverage in the British media showed that 10.9 percent of sports articles in *The Times* covered women's sports, whereas *The Sun* devoted as little as 0.5 percent to this topic (Mason 1998 in Bernstein 2002). In Denmark, this share was only marginally higher and reached 2 percent of sports coverage in the *Politiken* and *BT* newspapers (a broadsheet and a spots newspaper, respectively) in 2004 (Pfister 2008).

Women's sports is also largely absent from TV screens. A 1998 analysis of sports coverage in the UK showed that 90.2 percent of sports-related programs on BBC1 covered men's events and only 6.7 percent were dedicated to women's (Mason 1998 in Bernstein 2002). Similar results were reported by Koivula (1999) in Sweden and Von der Lippe (2008) in Norway.

Various studies employing different methods to assess the share of women's sport presence on US television (e.g., clocking newscasts or broadcasts, programming over the course of one day or over a longer period of time) converge around the 5 percent figure, while men's events exceed 90 percent of sports airtime (Williams, Lawrence and Rowe 1986, Duncan, Jensen and Messner 1993, Tuggle 1997, Duncan and Messner 1998, Eastman and Billings 2000, Messner, Duncan and Cooky 2003). The latest round of the Gender in Televised Sports report shows a further drop in women's sports coverage in early evening and late night television sports news on three networks. It dropped from 6.3 percent in 2004 to 1.6 percent in 2009, and ESPN's *SportsCenter* devoted only 1.4 percent of its airtime to the coverage of

women's sports, compared with 2.2% in 1999 and 2.1% in 2004 (Messner and Cooky 2010).

The prominence of women's sports increases considerably during the Olympic Games. The German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* gave over 14.3 percent of its sports pages to this topic as early as in 1936 during the Berlin Olympics, and the share of reports about women's Olympic sports had risen to 29.3 percent by the 1980 Games (Pfister 1987 in Vincent et al. 2002). Women's participation rates in these two Olympic Games amounted to 8.1 and 21.6 percent, respectively; the German (liberal) press thus actually "positively discriminated" in favor of female participants on those two occasions. In the British press, female Olympic athletes were underrepresented until the 2004 Athens Games (King 2007). However, a comparison of selected "serious" and "popular" press in the Anglophone world showed that female and male Olympic athletes achieved equitable newspaper coverage *compared to their respective participation rates* slightly earlier, by the 1996 Atlanta Olympics (Vincent et al. 2002). The media dubbed this edition of the Games the "Games of Women," largely because the Olympic Charter was amended in 1994 to make explicit reference to the promotion of women (see International Olympic Committee, *Olympic Charter 2007a*, Rule 2, paragraph 7, p. 15). These were also the first Olympics in which a generation of American female athletes that had been raised after the introduction of Title IX of the United States Constitution took part. Since then, women have been offered proportionately equal newspaper coverage in Italy as well (Capranica et al. 2001 in Capranica and Aversa 2002). Across the globe, female athletes thus seem to be witnessing a closing of the gap in the quantity of print media reporting. Yet plenty of research evidence still shows the underrepresentation of women athletes in Olympic editions of dailies worldwide (Hindson 1989 in Vincent et al. 2002, Duncan 1990, Lee 1992, Alexander 1994, Urquhart and Crossman 1999, Crolley and Teso 2007, Pfister 2008).

Since the 1992 Barcelona Games, American Olympic telecasts have been consistently (and statistically significantly) favoring men's over women's sports in terms of clock-time. Over this period, NBC devoted between 53 and 60 percent of clock-time to men's sports and between 40 and 47 percent of time to women's athletes (Higgs and Weiler 1994, Eastman and Billings 1999, Tuggle and Owen 1999, Billings and Eastman 2002, 2003, Billings and Angelini 2007, Billings 2008, Billings,

Angelini and Holt Duke, 2010). Clock-time biases are more pronounced during the winter editions of the Olympic Games (Billings et al. 2008). It should be noted that studies of US TV coverage of the Olympic Games usually analyze only the content broadcasted in the evening “prime-time” slot (between 8 and 10 or 11 PM, depending on the year).

Analyses of Olympic Games TV coverage in other countries have found a less promising situation. Toohey’s (1997) study of Australian television coverage of the Summer Olympics showed that TV coverage of female events accounted for 32.9 percent in 1980 and 27.7 percent in 1984. Capranica and Aversa (2002) recorded an even lower share on Italian public television: women’s events accounted for 29 percent of the entire 2000 Olympic programming—far from equal to their male counterparts, yet in line with the proportion of Italian female participation in the Games (28%).

Though clock-time differences favoring men’s sports still persist, it should be noted that NBC has taken important steps to equalize the number of minutes devoted to women’s Olympic events (Eastman and Billings 1999). As a commercial network, NBC’s efforts prove that women’s sport *can* be appealing to a broad viewership and *should* be a regular television feature, even more so on (European) public television where programming standards forbid gender-biased scheduling.

The quantity of media space devoted to women’s athletes can also increase during other major international sporting events (although not necessarily “megaevents”). Examples of “fair” coverage of women’s sport include reports from the Wimbledon tennis tournament (Crossman, Vincent and Speed 2007), FIFA’s Women’s World Cup in soccer (Mackay 1999 in Bernstein 2002), Israeli basketball and UEFA’s European Women’s Championship in soccer (Bernstein 2002).

It seems as if there might be some grounds for the claim that the sports media *generally* does not snob women’s sports; however, it does admit focusing only on major achievements and prominent events (Jurij Završnik<sup>o</sup>, personal communication, November 27, 2008)—events they presume will yield commercial interest and, consequently, profit.

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<sup>o</sup> Jurij Završnik is deputy editor-in-chief of the Slovenian sports newspaper, *Ekipa*, and a member of the Board of the Slovenian Association of Sports Journalists in the 2010–14 term of office.



Women athletes are thus “gaining grounds” in terms of equal media coverage of their athletic activity—but it is still too early for a victory lap (Bernstein 2002, 426). Nonetheless, there seem to be examples of women’s sport that yield great audiences and even lead Olympic broadcasting rating charts: in Japan, the most viewed broadcast from the 2008 Olympics was the *women’s* marathon, watched by 18.6 million people, followed by the *softball* final between Japan and the USA, watched by 17.8 million people. This reflects the strong interest in women’s sport in this territory (International Olympic Committee 2008b, 31)

The only comprehensive analysis of Slovenian newspaper coverage of women’s athletics conducted to date shows that female athletes are underrepresented. Doupona Topič and Lavrinc (2009) reviewed the Slovenian sports daily *Ekipa* during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and found that 57 percent of all articles referred to male athletes, 24 percent to female athletes, and 19 percent to both. Women accounted for 42 percent of all participants at these Games (International Olympic Committee 2008d).

The increase in women’s Olympic programming in the USA is connected to the increase in female audience that tunes in to watch the Games. Nielsen ratings started observing an alteration in the demographic structure of Olympic viewership in 1988, and former NBC Olympic producer, Rick Gentile, notes that currently the share of women viewers can reach 65 percent (in Billings 2008, 9). Understandably, a commercial network does its best to meet the viewing preferences of the *majority* of its audience. Interestingly, the structure of the Olympic audience at the Slovenian rights holder, TV Slovenija, is diametrically opposite: 63.4 percent of viewers of the 2008 Beijing Olympics were men and 36.4 percent were women (RTV Slovenija from AGB Nielsen Media Research).

Another method of assessing gender balance is to count the times each athlete’s name is mentioned by a commentator. Eastman and Billings (1999) compiled top-ten lists of the most-mentioned athletes during NBC’s coverage of the 1994, 1996 and 1998 Games. On all occasions, less than half the names on the top-ten lists were of women athletes, and were women rarely ranked at the very top of the charts. Mentions became considerably more balanced in 2000 when women athletes took the top two slots, and three additional spots in the top-ten list (Billings and Eastman

2002). But the Sydney Olympics were a “one-hit wonder” and since then men have claimed more than half of the positions on these lists (Billings 2008).

#### ***4.5.2 Sports and gender—the qualitative aspect***

The “quality” of these mentions is at least as important as the sheer quantity of women’s (or any social group’s) sport being mentioned on television. Images conveyed through discourse influence the mental picture every individual paints of their society.

Theberge and Cronk (1986) suggested that in both quantitative and qualitative terms the sports media engaged in the “symbolic annihilation” of women by focusing on their traditional gender role characteristics. At that time, “the media continue[d] to present a picture of sport as a man’s world in which, should women enter, they do so as strangers” (p. 196).

Andrews (1993) and Klein (1988) argued that anatomical differences between male and female athletes are constructed in sport as natural differences that are used to legitimize sex-exclusive sport activities. Norwegian feminist scholar Gerd von der Lippe succinctly summarizes this in the expression: “Men have balls. Women don’t. Ergo have women (sic) inferior bodies” (2008). Rhetorical analysis suggests that sports media discourse reinforces masculine sports hegemony through strategies of marginalization (Daddario 1994, Halbert and Latimer 1994, Harris and Clayton 2002, Van Sterkenburg and Knoppers 2004). A typical example is the trivialization of their sport experience. Women are symbolically discouraged from participating in activities (whether occupations or sports) seen as traditionally male. The myth of female frailty often perpetuated by the media provides an ideological justification of the continuing exclusion of women from physically demanding and hazardous occupations (Theberge and Cronk 1986). As a corollary, the application of differing descriptors has contributed to the construction of some sports as “female-appropriate”, with these including archery, diving, equestrian, fencing, golf, gymnastics, ice skating, swimming, synchronized swimming, table tennis, tennis and volleyball—that is, predominantly those sports that tend to emphasize the aesthetic movements of the body. Women athletes engaging in these sports are usually highly represented in media reports and especially newspaper photographs. Yet this can

denigrate female athletes. Reports about these accomplishments are often trivialized and athletes themselves are sexually objectified by condescending descriptors, gratuitous photography and sexist television conventions (Bryant 1980, Rintala and Birrell 1984, Duncan and Hasbrook 1988, Klein 1988, Duncan 1990, Lee 1992, Sabo and Jansen 1992, Daddario 1994, Vincent et al. 2002, Messner, Duncan and Cooky 2003). Typical examples include extensive coverage of “sports beauties” such as (former tennis player) Anna Kournikova and (golfer) Annika Sorenstam which generated more media interest than many of their more competitively successful peers (Harris and Clayton 2002).

Gender marking and the division of sports as “female-appropriate” or simply “feminine,” as opposed to “male-appropriate” or “masculine,” mirrors a division existing in fiction television, namely the division of TV genres as “feminine” (most notably, soap operas, but also local news programs) and “masculine,” with the latter comprising action series, national news programs, and sports (Kennedy 2000). Fiske (1995) outlined eight generic characteristics of “feminine” narratives and inverted them to describe “masculine” narratives using soap opera and *The A-Team* as examples.

Gender marking often includes “compulsory heterosexuality” when journalists either explicitly represent female athletes as sex objects, or portray them in heterosexual roles such as that of a mother/wife/girlfriend of males. Further, women athletes are also often constructed according to an adolescent or even prepubescent ideal (e.g., referring to them by their first names, as “young ladies,” or as the “favorite girl next door”) (Duncan, Jensen and Messner 1993, Daddario 1994, Halbert and Latimer 1994, Bon and Doupona Topič 2004, Crolley and Teso 2007, Poniatowski and Hardin 2009, Messner and Cooky 2010). The distinction between male- and female-appropriate sports is occasionally so imbued in the journalist’s idea of order in society that they question the sexual orientation of females based solely on their engagement in activities perceived as typically masculine (Daddario 1994, Leonard 1998, Sage 1998, Hardin and Whiteside 2009).

Some commentators who emphasize appropriate femininity focus on traditionally feminine physical and emotional characteristics or behaviors (e.g., attractive, beautiful, graceful, emotional, small, weak, emotionally unstable, dependent, self-sacrificing, and concerned for others). Women are presented as

driven by cooperation rather than competition. They are portrayed as other-oriented, competing for someone or something else, rather than for themselves. Their athletic skills and talents are diminished. These related techniques situate female athletes so they are not a threat to the patriarchal order: even though they may play sport (and do so well), they must conform to the ideals of a “real woman” (Daddario 1994, Knight and Giuliano 2001, Wensing and Bruce 2003).

Media representations of women athletes engaging in “masculine” sports such as soccer or team handball are ambivalent: some studies show that “feminine” characteristics of behavior and personality prevail here as well (Bon and Doupona Topič 2004), whereas others note that females assume some traits typically attributed to men (Christopherson, Janning and McConnell 2002, Von der Lippe 2002, 2008). In fact, gender-marking mechanisms have been giving way to *ambivalence*, a dominant framing technique where positive descriptions and images of women athletes are juxtaposed with descriptions and images that undermine and trivialize women’s efforts and successes (Duncan and Hasbrook 1988, Duncan, Jensen and Messner 1993, Halbert and Latimer 1994, Eastman and Billings 1999, Tuggle, Huffman and Rosengard 2002, Vincent et al. 2002, Wensing and Bruce 2003). Women can compete well in “masculine” sports, but commentators will still refer to their male counterparts/role models (Poniatowski and Hardin 2009). Although generally considered an improvement on stereotyped coverage, ambivalence remains problematic because it denies sportswomen appropriate recognition and prestige.

In this discourse, male athletes are traditionally seen as active, (positively) aggressive, committed, competitive, dominant, independent, skilled, strong, even violent (Sage 1988, Halbert and Latimer 1994, Kennedy 2000, Meân 2001, Harris and Clayton 2002, Starc 2003, Bon and Doupona Topič 2004, Van Sterkenburg and Knoppers 2004). Men are more likely to succeed because of attributed composure and intelligence, and to fail because they are seen as lacking commitment (Eastman and Billings 2000, Billings and Eastman 2002, Billings et al. 2008). Photographs showing male athletes often convey their fighting spirit and outnumber those depicting females (Crolley and Teso 2007, Zrinski 2008). However, some of the latest research shows a dramatic improvement and a concrete shift towards equal gender representation in certain environments (King 2007, MacKay and Dallaire 2009).

Since about 1990, examples of a gradual “softening” of the traditional “macho” image have started to appear (Whannel 1999). Characters such as David Beckham do not fit the traditional figure of a “macho” athlete, let alone the stereotypical view of soccer players as being less intelligent. Quite the opposite: Beckham is a prototype of the so-called “metrosexual man,” a fashion icon, even popular among homosexuals while simultaneously being a “family person.” He is accepted and acceptable in heterosexual and homosexual communities without having his sexuality and sexual orientation questioned (see Rahman 2004). Once popular characters such as Mike Tyson, Paul Gascoigne or O.J. Simpson had to step aside and make room for athletes such as Shaquille O’Neal who would paint his toenails before games (Tharps 2000).

Research evidence thus show many instances in which sports media emphasize men’s power and privilege over women. The intensity and classification of these trends vary considerably depending on the medium and the sport in question.

#### **4.5.3 Sports and nationality**

The media is saturated with more or less implicit indications of nationalism. Michael Billig (1995) labeled *banal nationalism* a phenomenon that was, until then, perceived as “patriotism”—a positive quality, as opposed to nationalism which is usually considered a “negative,” marginal and extremist manifestation. Patriotism goes by virtually unchallenged, making it a very powerful ideology. The media constructs an imagined sense of *national* solidarity and belonging, emphasizing intra-border events and alienating extra-border affairs. The homeland is set at the center of the universe. One of the means of achieving this is rhetorical pointing, or deixis: news shows feature reports about “the government” taking measures (rather than “the Slovenian government”), “workers” or “students” protesting, and even what “the weather” will be like, rather than talking about “the Slovenian government” and “Slovenian workers protests” (French or Greek ones are often ignored, anyway). The media staff’s choice of words assumes that the reader will take the “national” perspective, and all those terms *imply* togetherness by self-evidently referring to items that are supposedly in the audience’s common domain (which Korošec calls a “common communication circle,” 2006, p. 618). Sports pages, Billig claims, display flags particularly vigorously (1995, 119–122).

Banal nationalism is thus an ideology in which “being ours” and (thus) “being winners” is more important than collective, super-national well-being. Media reports emphasize advantages deriving from membership in international organizations (such as the euro area and NATO alliance), but snub responsibilities deriving from the same circumstance (participation in NATO missions in Afghanistan, crisis-stricken Greece’s bail-out). Foreign news is made to appear too remote, fast-changing and complex to allow the lay public to assimilate it (Real 1989).

With the advent of modern state-assured protection of human rights and freedoms, which has led among other things to the separation of the state and religious communities, the “nation” as a population (supposedly) sharing common customs, origins and history remains one of the last entities state bodies themselves can appeal to (Billig 1995). And it does, too: Coakley suggests that “government officials use international sports to establish their nation’s legitimacy in the international sphere, and they often believe that winning medals enhances their image around the world” (2009, 443–444).

As with gender bias, nationalism in sports broadcasts can be measured in two ways: by determining the raw exposure or clock-time devoted to “home” athletes as the production aspect, and by examining the meanings and ideas that are narrated as the context aspect.

Drawing from Alan Bairner, Billings, Angelini and Holt Duke (2010) note that “at the Olympics, national flags trump over all other forms of identity” (p. 9). Hargreaves (2000) argues that the Olympic Games promote and stimulate the processes of globalization—the summer editions are without doubt the most all-encompassing popular event—yet, she also notes that sports nationalism is pervasive regardless of country. International competitions in both individual and team sports provide many games and events that occur simultaneously, and network producers and editors must choose who and what to show when. The majority of games and events are thus never aired: each country’s network slants coverage toward native athletes to meet what they deem the audience’s preferences and to attract stronger ratings (Larson and Rivenburgh 1991, Billings and Eastman 2002, Billings 2008). Media reports of the Olympic Games can contribute to nation-building even in regions with an otherwise strong separatist movement, such as the Catalan media’s

exceptional framing of athletes as “Spanish” rather than “Catalan,” as it normally does (Juncà 2008, 2009).

Empirical data from various countries confirm the hypothesis that national media devote “native” athletes a disproportional amount of airtime. The extent of media self-centeredness varies between nations. Michael Real found massive differences in the “index of nationalism” in the 1984 Summer Olympics press coverage, which spanned from a moderate 17.1 percent in Mexico to a massive 79 percent in the United States. Yugoslavia as the host of the Winter Olympics it organized earlier that year and the former common state encompassing today’s Slovenia reached an index of 25.5—the second lowest among the 11 countries that were studied (Real 1989, 238).

Editorial policies in press coverage are relatively independent. In contrast, on television, speech complements the images on screen so the discourse in television coverage depends in part on the content shown. Indeed, individual broadcasters are also independent in deciding which content they will air, but the production of the chosen events is conventional and made so as to satisfy all potential signal takers—which usually means broadcasters from all continents.

Between the 1996 (Atlanta) and 2006 (Torino) Olympic Games, US television network NBC devoted between 39.2 (in 2002) and 57.2 percent (1996) of athlete mentions in prime-time broadcasts to US representatives. The network’s producers claim their goal is often to achieve a 50/50 equilibrium between US and foreign participants (Billings 2008). This share is significantly higher than that of medals won by US representatives, or the number of US participants in relation to all competitors.

Curiously, both the highest (Atlanta 1996) and the lowest (Salt Lake City 2002) coverage of “domestic” athletes on NBC occurred during games played on US soil. Billings (2008) reported that lately the NBC has deliberately moved away from a “cheering” attitude for US athletes. They have even stopped using first person plural pronouns when discussing US competitors because network producers feel this makes telecasts *more impartial, as they are supposed to be* (pp. 43–50). Thus, if the 1996 Games were the last remainder of “jingoistic patriotic” reporting, the home event six years later might have been the perfect opportunity to minimize extensive

“home-team” presentations and detailed scenery depictions (as US viewers were likely relatively familiar with Utah’s capital), and rather focus on other stories.

To understand the subjects of the key stories in US Olympic broadcasts, Billings determined the ten most-mentioned athletes during each edition of the Games between 1994 and 2006. He discovered that 50 of the 70 most-mentioned athletes came from the United States (Eastman and Billings 1999, Billings 2008; also in Billings and Eastman 2002, 2003, Billings and Angelini 2007, Billings et al. 2008).

Other studies examining the sheer frequency of individual athletes’ mentions are rare. An analysis of US sportscasts of selected United States and Brazilian 2002 FIFA World Cup matches showed that the network’s “home” team (i.e., the United States) received the bulk (62.7%) of all commentary, while the much more successful (and eventual champion) Brazilian team received 37.3 percent of all descriptors (Billings and Tambosi 2004). In a pilot study of a televised basketball game between a Slovenian and a Croatian team, Ličen and Doupona Topič (2008) found that commentators on both Slovenian and Croatian public television stations devoted 52 percent of all commentary to “their” team and approximately 30 percent to the “opposing” team (the remaining 20% comprised mentions of score, time and other game-related details). If the shares in the latter study were normalized by excluding all commentary that was directly related to either team, the distribution would be very similar to that in the US soccer study.

The patriotic “us vs. them” dichotomy is *almost* omnipresent in mediated accounts of sports events. Indeed, the highlighted exception to the rule is quite prominent and—for readers not coming from the United States, at least—most likely unexpected. Still, nationalism in media sports transcends the rhetoric of the first person plural. Among other forms, it typically manifests in differing discursive practices to explain success/failure and personality/physicality descriptors for “domestic” (or “our”) and “foreign” (“them”) representatives.

Longitudinal studies of US Olympic broadcasts showed that US competitors are more likely to be depicted as succeeding due to superior concentration, while foreigners were depicted as lacking this ability. US athletes are also frequently portrayed as having greater composure, while this characteristic is not often attributed to foreign athletes. The former are offered a disproportionate amount of



commentary about athletic commitment and are described as possessing greater courage. One topic more likely to be discussed in relation to foreign athletes is experience: they are more likely to be given labels such as “veteran” and “mature” (Billings and Eastman 2002, Billings and Angelini 2007, Billings 2008, Billings et al. 2008). Incidentally, this is one of the few descriptive categories that can actually be quantified—e.g., with one’s age or years of experience as a professional athlete. This information is often offered to media representatives by event organizers so it does not require much inside knowledge.

Depictions of personality and physicality seem less biased. The single category in which tangible differences were observed was that of background commentary, specifically, provenance. Billings (2008) found that Americans received more of such comments, and they were associated with their local region (e.g., “New Hampshire rebel”), while foreign athletes were associated with their countries (e.g., “Croatian wonder”). This observation has an imperfection as “New Hampshire” (one of the 52 *states*) is actually comparable to one Slovenia or Croatia<sup>p</sup>, which are *per se* indeed *countries* but located within the wider institutional frames of the European Union (Slovenia) or, more generally, Europe (Croatia). A more accurate distinction would be to compare athletes from, say, Concord, NH, to those from Slovenia.

Overall, American Olympic sportscasters communicate the following differences about US and foreign athletes competing at the Olympics: the latter are more often characterized as succeeding due to their athletic ability and experience—both qualities that can be objectively measured or quantified. In contrast, subjective measures seem to favor native athletes who are more frequently described as winning because of immeasurable qualities such as concentration, composure, commitment and courage.

Most studies examining the representation of domestic athletes converge on the following characteristics ascribed to successful competitors: winners are labeled “golden boys” and their victories are constructed as “heroic” (de Moragas Spà, Rivenburgh and Larson 1995, Darnell and Sparks 2005, Zrinski 2008). Athletes’ qualities are exaggerated and portrayed as emblematic of the nation’s character.

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<sup>p</sup> In terms of area, New Hampshire (24,217 km<sup>2</sup>) is roughly 20% larger than Slovenia (20,273 km<sup>2</sup>) and half the size of Croatia (56,594 km<sup>2</sup>). Population-wise (1.3 million inhabitants), it reaches approximately two-thirds of the Slovenian population (2 million inhabitants) and less than one-third that of Croatia (4.5 million inhabitants). Data were obtained from Wikipedia.

These types of hegemonic discourses preserve the existing relations of power in society (Billig 1995, Van Sterkenburg and Knoppers 2004, Darnell and Sparks 2005). On occasions, they even renew Cold War framing ideologies in US and Canadian media (Poniatowski 2009; cf. Real 1989).

A significant construction of competitors as “heroic” was the media portrayal of two Slovenian rowers who won a bronze medal at the 1992 Summer Olympics<sup>q</sup>. This was the first Olympic medal claimed by Slovenia as an independent state. The Slovenian media saw the mere participation at the event as a promotion of nationhood. Besides the two “heroes,” all Slovenian representatives were repeatedly presented as national symbols and, as such, incorporated into an act of national promotion (Splichal, Bašić Hrvatin and Luthar in de Moragas Spà, Rivenburgh and Larson 1995).

Maguire and Poulton (1999) note that media representation of events such as the European soccer championship serves more to “divide” than to “unite” the nations. In their study, English newspapers presented England as confronting “a series of *old enemies*,” (p. 22) as sport became a substitute for war (Orwell 1945, Von der Lippe 2002). Xenophobia became prominent in the face of certain games and the media reacted “happily and gloriously” by connecting English victories to the nation’s psyche and feeling of pride—in short, BIRGing (Cialdini et al. 1976).

In contrast, in soccer, a sport where US teams seldom excel, the United States’ side at the 2002 FIFA World Cup was often portrayed as failing due to “bad luck” (rather than, for instance, its lack of athletic skill, physicality, creativity, intelligence or teamwork). The more successful Brazilian team received a greater share of the comments about personality and creativity (Billings and Tambosi 2004).

Contents unique to the Olympic Games are the opening and (though less glorious) closing ceremonies. These events regularly attract billions of viewers worldwide<sup>r</sup> (International Olympic Committee 2008a) and juxtapose notions of

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<sup>q</sup> Earlier that year, Slovenia took part in Albertville for its first Olympic Games as an independent nation. Curiously, this Winter Olympics appearance came before Slovenia had joined the United Nations (on May 22, 1992). Nowadays, this would not be possible as the International Olympic Committee only recognizes states formally recognized by the UN (which prevents countries such as Kosovo from taking part in the Olympics or even playing official international games in any sport).

<sup>r</sup> The opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Games had the second highest audience of all Olympic programming on TV Slovenija after the August 17 track and field session (RTV Slovenija from AGB Nielsen Media Research).

globalization as well as nationalism. A “global community” is symbolically constructed by joining athletes competing under different flags; yet, participants are still primarily identified by their nationality. Many countries’ commentaries pick up these themes by fostering nationalistic pride as well as a sense of international understanding (Tomlinson 1996, Collette 1998 in Billings 2008, Lee and Maguire 2009). At least as much as participants unite in difference, they also differ in unity. Viewers are reminded of this each time a track winner wraps herself or himself in their national flag, rather than in the Olympic standard (if at all allowed), or the United Nations’ flag. Michael Real argued that one of the negative contributions of Olympic sports is that they “divide winners from losers instead of unifying the participants as other rituals might” (1989, 245). As the participants are *representatives* of the *nation*, the Olympics convey an inherent message of competition, rather than cooperation, among the people.

A nationalistic sub-theme is the identification of “national sports” (or “national pastimes”), and the framing of a nation as being exceptionally linked to and naturally successful in it. Slovenia is often presented as a “skiing nation”—a myth that was born in the early 1980s as a means of establishing ethnic “purity,” Slovenian-ness, and to (further) dissimilate from other Yugoslav nations in a period when ethnic intolerances were becoming ever more pronounced and the dissolution of the common country was imminent (see Starc 2003). To date, this myth has also been strongly promoted by the media and is promptly brought up every time a Slovenian skier performs well in international competitions. By contrast, Slovenians strived to detach themselves from soccer, which was seen as a “Balkanite”<sup>s</sup>, “southern” (Sl. *južnjaški*) sport, where “south” unequivocally denoted the other former Yugoslav republics which all lie to the south of Slovenia (cf. Starc 2009). Yet feelings about soccer started to change with the advent of the new millennium, when successful performances of the Slovenian national side culminated in it qualifying for the UEFA European Championships (in 2000) and FIFA World Cups (in 2002 and, most recently, in 2010). The popularity of soccer has increased dramatically even though the national team is largely composed of first- or second-generation immigrants from the other former Yugoslav republics. The players are now hailed as “the golden

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<sup>s</sup> A geographical attribution Slovenia has been striving to detach itself from because of its perceived negative and almost barbaric connotation.

generation” and “heroes,” while every success was seen as a sign of typical Slovenian vitality (see Starc 2003, Stankovič 2004).

A quite extreme case of mediated sports nationalism occurred on the Croatian public service, HTV, in late June 2007. After reporting that four basketball players had declared themselves unavailable for a then-upcoming national team training camp, the anchor and present sports editor<sup>t</sup>, Bruno Kovačević, labeled the act a “sporting betrayal” and addressed the players with the following words (bollockshr, YouTube, video posted on July 1, 2007):

Gentlemen basketball players, the flag is sacred and the national anthem is life. Not so few of your peers did not reach your age because they lost their lives so you could play for Croatia; for the Croatia you do not wish to play for.

Nationalism is thus deeply entrenched in major international sporting events. In the case of the Olympics as the ultimate global festival (Lee and Maguire 2009), it would require a huge change of mentality to take even a small step towards actually “universalizing” the Games. Coakley (2009, 454–458) suggested nine changes to control nationalism and commercialism in the Olympic Games, while Galtung (1982) proposed to organize even more events so that nothing, not even the Olympics, would stand out. Knowing that the traditionally conservative 115-member International Olympic Committee is “predominantly composed by older and very rich males, mostly Europeans, among which there are at least ten Crowns and twenty aristocrats” (Janez Kocijančič<sup>u</sup>, round table, February 10, 2010), the proposed changes seem unlikely to occur soon.

#### ***4.5.4 Sports and race/ethnicity***

As with sports and nationality, media representations about sports and race appear particularly salient and most often studied in Anglophone countries. Enquiries into this topic usually focus on narrative differences between Black and

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<sup>t</sup> Bruno Kovačević was Head of Sports at HTV from 2002 until 2004, when he resigned. He started a second term on October 5, 2007.

<sup>u</sup> Janez Kocijančič has been President of the Slovenian Olympic Committee since its foundation in 1992. The quote is taken from his contribution at a round table concerning the then upcoming Vancouver Winter Olympic Games organized by the Dnevnik newspaper on February 10, 2010, in Ljubljana.

White<sup>v</sup> athletes. Discourse about other ethnic groups (e.g., Asians, Middle Easterners, Muslims—the latter not being a distinct “race”) is far less studied. This might be due to the less known and less turbulent history surrounding their civil rights movements, as well as the relatively small number of these athletes engaging in sports in Western societies. In Winter Olympics, as well as winter sports in general, conclusions regarding ethnically biased discourse are vague because very few (less than 20%) minority athletes take part (Billings and Eastman 2003, Billings et al. 2008).

Media discourse about Black and White athletes differs concerning two major traits: that concerning “physical skills,” and that of “intelligence.” Many researchers have found that Black athletes tend to receive more positive physical attribution. They are often portrayed as “natural” athletes with great physical power (Whannel 1992, Murrell and Curtis 1994, Andrews 1996b, McCarthy and Jones 1997, Knoppers and Elling 1999, 2001 in Van Sterkenburg and Knoppers 2004, Billings and Eastman 2002, McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003, Simons 2003, Billings 2008). Some have even pointed out that Black athletes are often presented as violent, thuggish and selfish (Eitzen and Sage 2003 in Billings et al. 2008, Von der Lippe and MacLean 2008).

Conversely, White athletes tend to be described in terms of superior intellect, perseverance, and hard work (Birrell 1989, Murrell and Curtis 1994, McCarthy and Jones 1997, Davis and Harris 1998, Billings and Eastman 2002, Simons 2003, Billings 2008, Von der Lippe and MacLean 2008). Some evidence, however, shows that intelligence descriptors are evenly distributed among these two ethnic groups (Sabo et al. 1996, Denham, Billings and Halone 2002, McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003). White athletes are also often identified as “born leaders” of team sports (e.g., “natural” point guards in basketball or quarterbacks in American football; Wonsek, 1992).

Such comments are pervasive regardless of the athletes’ gender (Eastman and Billings 2001). They are so entrenched in the sports media discourse that Bruce (2004) reported several commentators had admitted finding it difficult to accurately

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<sup>v</sup> The terms “Black” and “White” to refer to two distinct ethnic groups seem to be the most suitable for this part of the study. Terms such as “African-American” and “Caucasian,” frequently employed in the USA, are inaccurate: for instance, Nigerian-born and naturalized Italian basketball player Benjamin Eze is certainly not *African-American*, nor is the Spanish race walker Marta Dominguez *Caucasian*. In addition, the generic and more “visual” terms “Black” and “White” are often used in both British and US academic and general literature.

represent an athletic event when they consciously tried to avoid ethnic stereotypes. Dewar (1993) argued that these stereotypes are often used as a way of explaining White athletes' lack of success in some sports, while Billings et al. (2008) found parallels between these stereotypes and the depiction of athletes of different nationality on American television: US athletes were accorded "White" stereotypes, while "foreigners" were often described as Blacks usually are.

The media thus often (re)produces an image that associates "Blackness" with being "naturally" suited to perform well in sport, and sees "Whiteness" as being intellectually superior. Some scholars emphasize that both physical and intellectual ability have been historically linked together as the key positive attributes of strong athletes (Horga 1993, Entine 2000 in Billings 2008). While this might be true, media representation reinforces a societal hegemony in which mental qualities are valued above physical ones, supporting the privileged social position of White men (Van Sterkenburg and Knoppers 2004). Hill (2008) notes that "it is the inability to see a person as a person, rather than as a blank space or a cliché, that defines racism (p. 238). Stereotypes serve as shorthand codes of representation and social control, and ethnic stereotypes seem to preserve the existing societal status quo in ethnically heterogeneous societies.

#### **4.6 The rationale behind biased reporting**

In 1976, Smith noted that there were "sports magazines for specific ethnic, racial and even sexual groups," citing *Black Sports* and *Women's Sports* as two examples of this genre (p. 6, emphasis added). The reason for presenting "specific sexual groups" as exceptional remains unclear, especially considering the article was published *after* the United States had adopted the landmark Title IX which dramatically increased athletic opportunities for women at universities and in colleges. Perhaps the (Canadian) author found it extraordinary that women's sports were not integrated into other media outlets, or he found the idea that anybody would be interested in female sports bizarre. The mystery becomes even more compelling when the author acknowledges that "for the urbane sports reader there is *Sports Illustrated*, and for *the sub-mongoloid reader*, there are at least five different professional wrestling magazines" (ibid., emphasis added). Whatever Garry Smith's motives were, it is clear

that the sports media market has been fragmented and is attempting to cater for even the most disparate tastes of the readers for decades.

The motives behind biased reporting in sports media are rarely examined. One of the recurring themes is the “routine” coverage of topics that are considered appealing to the audience (Theberge and Cronk 1986, Hartley 2002, Knoppers and Elling 2004). This simplification centers on offering the public what it wants. Routine coverage’s function, simplification, curiously dovetails with the “simplification of life” role described by some researchers of stereotypes. Similarities apply to the content level as well.

One of the flaws of routine coverage is that editors and producers are not necessarily accurate in determining audience or readership preferences. In fact, the media rarely conducts such inquiries; TV Slovenija’s sports section never did (Marjan Lah, personal communication, January 27, 2010, Mile Jovanović, personal communication, May 19, 2010). Tamir and Galily (2010) showed a significant discrepancy between what newspaper sports editors perceive as interesting to their readership and the actual public interest. Perceptions often are at odds with reality.

Apart from soccer and the Olympics, which are truly global media events, the selection of events that receive “regular” media coverage changes between societies and in time. Journalists claim to follow athletes and/or teams considered “top performers” regardless of their gender—yet they are unable to explain the criteria for what a “top performance” is (Knoppers and Elling 2004).

A particular type of routine media coverage is the reporter’s “beat.” The designation of a beat ensures continued coverage and attention to an event, athlete or organization, and its activities. Such regular coverage of selected topics reduces the variability of the news—it is thus another form of simplification—but also brings some order to the news world (Theberge and Cronk 1986, 199). The importance of the beat for newspaper work is underlined in Fishman’s observation that beat writers are *expected to produce* stories. In such circumstances, that “nothing happened” is not sufficient reason for not writing a story (Fishman 1980 in Theberge and Cronk 1986). Since “the beat defines the world of possible news” (p. 199), this practice narrows the horizon of topics and is thus a barrier to the expansion of women’s sports coverage. Because White (middle class heterosexual) men tend to have the most economic

power in Western society, their discourses—both those *selected by* them and those *about* them—often dominate. Sports journalism is focused on selling, rather than producing quality journalism and these are the topics editors perceive as appealing (Knoppers and Elling 2004, Von der Lippe 2010). Van Sterkenburg and Knoppers (2004) claim these discourses are constantly challenged by alternate discourses (p. 303) and this is likely what keeps media sports linked to the otherwise socially responsible task of journalism. Still, its hegemonic pressure is great.

Referring to Richard Gruneau's work, Billings, Angelini and Holt Duke noted that "sportscasters may not be keenly aware of the political and ideological stereotypes and consequences their products provide" (2010). Interviews with several Slovenian sports announcers indeed showed that none of them considers or is even aware of this aspect of their work. Hegemony is thus inadvertent, rather than purposeful. Nonetheless, the framing that occurs within sport still produces biases that can be transferred to viewers. It is thus necessary to pinpoint and unveil these biases and to educate sports journalists about the consequences of their on-air efforts. *Not knowing* cannot be an admissible excuse.



## 5 Research goals

The previous chapters presented a review of the most notable discursive characteristics of sports media. This literature review draws predominantly from Anglophone societies and includes mostly countries located in the “first,” or Western world—mainly the United States of America and, to a smaller extent, the United Kingdom, Canada and other nations. These countries are long-standing democracies and most of them have been carving their national identities for many decades or even centuries. All of them are solid economies and have mutual historical ties, as well as a similar social and political background.

Slovenia has a different societal milieu: as a former Yugoslav republic, it is a post-socialist country in transition to a democracy<sup>a</sup> and market economy. It gained independence in 1991 and became a member of the European Union in 2004. It is thus a new, yet already steady member of many major European inter-governmental organizations.

Slovenia has a surface area of 20,273 km<sup>2</sup>—approximately the size of Wales and slightly smaller than New Jersey. It has two million inhabitants and is thus slightly less populous than Houston, Texas or Vienna, Austria. In its brief history as a sovereign state, Slovenia has been governed mostly by presidents and administrations of a liberal and/or social democratic profile; it is therefore deemed a liberal and social country, and the average voter leans slightly to the left on the political ideology spectrum (Toš et al. 1999, 2004, 2009). It has two autochthonous national minorities (Hungarian and Italian) and a relevant portion of its citizens are first- or second-generation immigrants from former Yugoslav republics. Despite its socialist past, liberal legacy and relatively heterogeneous inhabitant structure, Slovenia has had some cases of inadequate handling of social and human rights issues<sup>b</sup> (this being the reason for considering the country as still in transition).

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<sup>a</sup> Although some scholars and politicians imply that the transition process has finished, Slovenia obviously lacks of a long-standing democratic tradition. Consequently, many societal mechanisms that are common in “older” countries have not yet developed in Slovenia. The “transition” label is most likely avoided due to its perceived negative connotation and the different societal situations in other former Yugoslav countries that are in an earlier stage of the transition to a democracy and market economy. Actual agreement on whether Slovenia is a transition or a post-transition country is otherwise irrelevant to this study.

<sup>b</sup> These include a dispute regarding citizens who were “erased” from the registry of Permanent Residence (Sl. *izbrisani*; see Dedić, Jalušič and Zorn 2003 for an insight into this topic); issues with

Researchers from the Faculty of Social Sciences in Ljubljana have been systematically studying Slovenian public opinion since 1968. Citizens' patriotism/nationalism and their attitudes to various social groups are traditionally measured with the questions "To what extent are you proud of being Slovenian?" and "Who would you prefer to not have as a neighbor?".

The share of people who classified themselves as either "very proud" or "relatively proud" of being Slovenian rose from 86.6% in 2005 to 91.1% in 2008. In those three years, Slovenians seemingly also became considerably more intolerant of diversity: the share of people who would prefer to not have as neighbors "people of other ethnicities" rose from 14.5% to 28.2%; the share of people not wanting "immigrants or foreign workers" grew from 17.6% to 27.8%; those not wanting "Muslims" went up from 21.8% to 28.4%; while the share of those not wanting "Jews" as neighbors increased from 17.2% to 27.4%. Conversely, the share of people not wanting "drug addicts" as neighbors dropped from 68.1% in 2005 to 47.3% in 2008, and those not liking "drunks" declined from 63.5% to 46.1% (all data from SJM 2005/3 and SJM 2008/1 datasets in Toš et al. 2009). Between 2005 and 2008, Slovenian citizens became more tolerant of people with addictions (and thus in need of psychological or psychiatric assistance), but grew increasingly intolerant of foreigners and people not conforming to the archetype of Slovenianness.

The Slovenian media market became pluralized after the country's proclaimed its independence in 1990. The former monopolist, government-controlled RTV Slovenija became public, while private radio and TV stations populated the opened electronic media sector in the years that followed. Because of this, Slovenia had to revert from a seemingly monolithic company that was *national* (that is, government-controlled) to a *public* one. This process is necessary in all countries in a transition to a democracy (see Bašić Hrvatin 2002).

Slovenia is thus a post-socialist, (post-)transition country striving to reinforce its individual national identity, which is partially carved out of the former "wider" Yugoslav identity. Simultaneously, the country is quickly integrating in an increasingly inter-connected global society. Its efforts to differentiate itself from the over 30 countries that gained independence after 1990 while integrating its citizens

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the Roma population's rights; and recent issues surrounding the protection of workers' rights for foreign citizens.

in an ever-changing global community put the Slovenian media in a specific situation: it is expected to nurture a sense of national identity (more accurately, to override the identity it had been imbuing for decades), while simultaneously fulfilling the media's traditional role of critical, impartial and unbiased reporting.

As a specific and very popular media content, sports have traditionally been exposed to contrasting expectations. Examining sports media discourse in societies in transition allows establishing specific discursive mechanisms in countries that lack a long-standing democratic tradition. Besides mapping the specific Slovenian case, this study can be a useful reference for research in other former socialist countries and perhaps even for post-colonial states in other regions of the world.

This study aims to achieve the following research goals:

- To ascertain the frequency of mentions of different athletes with regard to their gender, ethnicity and nationality.
- To ascertain the frequency of different types of comments in the discourse of sports broadcasters on Slovenian public television.
- To determine any differences in the representation of distinct athletes, groups of athletes, or teams with regard to their gender, ability, ethnicity or nationality.
- To determine the means sports broadcasters most frequently employ to express subjective opinions and moral judgments.
- To compare the discursive strategies Slovenian sportscasters employ in different types of competitions: the Olympic Games, international and national fixtures.
- To compare the discursive strategies Slovenian sportscasters apply with strategies used in other societies.
- To understand why sports announcers express opinions and moral judgments in their discourse.

## 6 Research hypotheses

This dissertation aims to determine the characteristics of discourse in sports broadcasts on Slovenian public television that are most often studied in sports media content analyses.

The first goal is to hypothesize the proportion of factual, objective commentary versus that of subjective commentary or dramatic embellishment. The latter provides an approximation of the amount of discourse which may be said to “color and sway identity.” This is where biased representations of individuals, gender, ethnicity and nationality are sought.

Sportscasters’ discourse combines an objective description with subjective views and moral judgments about the unfolding events. Two studies conducted in different periods indicate that the share of dramatic commentary in US sports broadcasts amounts to 27 percent (Bryant, Comisky and Zillman 1977, Woo, Kim, Nichols and Zheng 2010). In a pilot analysis of a basketball broadcast on Slovenian public television, Ličen and Doupona Topič (2008) recorded a slightly lower (21.5%) share of subjective commentary, whereas baseball World Series transmissions in Chinese Taipei and South Korea educed larger shares of evaluative commentary, reaching 38% and 41%, respectively (Woo, Kim, Nichols and Zheng 2010). Based on the results of the pilot study, it appears that the structure of Slovenian television commentary sufficiently resembles that of US broadcasters to allow the assumption that the share of subjective commentary will not exceed the 27 percent level found in US sports media discourse.

- Hypothesis 1: The share of subjective commentary in sports telecasting discourse on Slovenian public television does not exceed 27 percent.

Extensive research from different societies shows that television broadcasters tend to portray “domestic” athletes in an overtly positive and consonant way (e.g., Billig 1995, Maguire and Poulton 1999, Billings and Eastman 2002, Darnell and Sparks 2005, Billings 2008, Zrinski 2008). It is assumed that telecasters on Slovenian public television frame Slovenian athletes in a similar way.

- Hypothesis 2: In Slovenian Olympic Games telecasts, the share of positive comments about Slovenian athletes exceeds the share of positive comments about foreign athletes.

According to International Olympic Committee (2008d) data, the pool of athletes at the 2008 Olympic Games included 58 percent of males and 42 percent of females. The combined gender split for athletics, artistic gymnastics and swimming was more balanced, resulting in a 53/47 ratio of men and women competitors (data from Wikipedia<sup>a</sup>). Most past Olympic studies assumed an equal (50/50) gender split either in terms of clock-time or by frequency of mentions (e.g., Eastman and Billings 1999, Billings 2008, Billings, Angelini and Holt Duke 2010). However, these studies focused on prime-time programming which usually only features the medal rounds in which the same number of men and women compete.

This research included TV Slovenija's athletics, gymnastics and swimming broadcasts in their *entirety*—that is, including preliminary rounds, where men slightly outnumber women. Hence, a split of comments devoted to male/female athletes equal to their actual representation in the observed events can be an appropriate estimate of the balanced representation of male and female athletes in sportscasters' discourse (Capranica and Aversa 2002). This study assumes male athletes will be relatively overrepresented in this discourse.

- Hypothesis 3: In Olympic Games telecasts, the share of comments about male athletes exceeds 53 percent of all gender-related comments.

Many researchers have found that the sports media tends to diminish women's athletic qualities and trivialize their efforts and successes (e.g., Daddario 1994, Eastman and Billings 1999, Vincent et al. 2002, Messner, Duncan and Cooky 2003, Bon and Doupona Topič 2004, Messner and Cooky 2010). In turn, male athletes are typically framed as active, committed, strong, dominant and independent (Meân

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<sup>a</sup> Main sources: Wikipedia contributors, "Athletics at the 2008 Summer Olympics" 2010; Wikipedia contributors, "Gymnastics at the 2008 Summer Olympics – Qualification" 2010; Wikipedia contributors, "Swimming at the 2008 Summer Olympics" 2010. Although the data may not be completely exact, it provides a very accurate indication of the number and identities of competitors at the 2008 Olympic Games. Wikipedia contributors cite the IOC as the source of data.

2001, Billings and Eastman 2002, Harris and Clayton 2002, Van Sterkenburg and Knoppers 2004). Gender bias is assumed to also occur in Slovenian sportscasts. Specifically, the expectation is that men will be more frequently presented in terms of strength, diligence and intelligence, whereas comments about beauty and elegance will be accentuated in the discourse about female competitors.

- Hypothesis 4: Male athletes will receive the majority of comments about concentration, strength, talent/ability, composure, commitment, courage, experience, intelligence, consonance and extroversion, whereas female athletes will receive more comments about their emotion, attractiveness, size/parts of the body and introversion.

In many societies, mediated sports contribute to the perpetuation of ethnic and racial myths and stereotypes. Especially in Anglophone countries, Blacks are often portrayed as physically super-gifted, while Whites are perceived as superiorly intelligent (Whannel 1992, Murrell and Curtis 1994, McCarthy and Jones 1997, McCarthy, Jones and Potrac 2003, Simons, 2003, Billings 2008).

Slovenian society is ethnically relatively homogeneous. Research into the representation of non-White people in the Slovenian media is rare, yet it shows that the portrayal of minority ethnic groups in Slovenia tends to be stereotypical (Ivančič 2007 and Kuk 2009 for representations about Africa and African people; Prelog 2005 and Kebrič 2009 for representations of the Roma people; Bećirović 2007 about the representation of Muslims on Slovenian commercial television). Slovenian media discourse is thus not immune to bias and stereotype. Given that a significant share of media contents aired on Slovenian television is produced in the United States (including movies, series, even some talk shows), one can expect to find similar ethnic stereotypes as those found in Anglophone media.

Ethnic bias is a dimension with many strands so Hypothesis 5 needs to be broken up into sub-questions that distinguish between both ethnic groups and attributions to them.

- Hypothesis 5a: Black athletes will receive significantly more comments about strength/speed than White athletes.

- Hypothesis 5b: Black athletes will receive significantly more comments about talent/ability than White athletes.
- Hypothesis 5c: Black athletes will receive significantly more comments about expectations regarding the competition's outcome than White athletes.
- Hypothesis 5d: White athletes will receive significantly more comments about concentration than Black athletes.
- Hypothesis 5e: White athletes will receive significantly more comments about composure than Black athletes.
- Hypothesis 5f: Black athletes will receive significantly more comments about commitment than Black athletes.
- Hypothesis 5g: White athletes will receive significantly more comments about intelligence than Black athletes.

Routine, “beat” reporting and perceived preferences of the audience play an important role in giving prominence to contents and issues in sports media (Smith 1976, Theberge and Cronk 1986). Despite the lack of data, sports journalists intuitively believe their subjective depictions and cheering attitude are appreciated by their audience (Korošec 2005). This study will look into sportscasters’ motives for selecting their approaches to announcing. It assumes that Slovenian sportscasters will express the belief they act according to their viewers’ wishes and expectations. This hypothesis will be tested through qualitative interviews with sports journalists and editors from the Slovenian public television broadcaster TV Slovenija.

- Hypothesis 6: Telecasters describe competitors subjectively because they believe their viewers prefer this approach.

Several studies show that sports reporters claim to follow “top performers” regardless of their gender or other characteristics. They are also often unable to explicate why their editorial decisions or policies lead to the absence of selected groups of athletes (Theberge and Cronk 1986, Knoppers and Elling 2004, Tamir and Galily 2010). This study assumes that Slovenian sportscasters believe their discourse does not include any bias towards any particular groups of competitors. This

hypothesis will also be tested through qualitative interviews with sports journalists and editors from the Slovenian public television broadcaster TV Slovenija.

- Hypothesis 7: Telecasters believe they are unbiased when depicting all competitors.



## 7 Methods

The study was carried out on a sample of recorded broadcasts of elite sporting events aired by the Slovenian public television broadcaster, TV Slovenija<sup>a</sup>. This network has the longest tradition in sports broadcasting<sup>b</sup> and the widest spectrum of sports airing among all channels that show sports contents in Slovenia<sup>c</sup>. In addition, it is subject to extensive internal, national and international regulation as described in Section 4.4.

First, a quantitative content analysis was conducted to determine quantifiable characteristics of sports broadcasts discourse on TV Slovenija. Then, critical analysis was employed to understand and interpret the implications of this discourse. To gain a deeper understanding of the discursive trends found in telecasts, the author conducted semi-structured interviews with TV Slovenija's play-by-play announcers along with current and former sports editors.

### 7.1 Sample of analyzed sports broadcasts

To ensure the inclusion of a wide spectrum of participants (and hence a sufficient variety of commentary about athletes of different abilities, genders ethnicities and nationalities) and a balance between individual and team events, recordings of the following sports events were analyzed:

- 2008 Beijing Olympic Games artistic gymnastics broadcasts

These included 7 hours and 7 minutes of men's and women's event broadcasts in the qualifying and final stages. Two participants representing Slovenia competed in these events.

- 2008 Beijing Olympic Games track and field broadcasts

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<sup>a</sup> TV Slovenija broadcasts sporting events on its second channel, TV Slovenija 2. The first channel, TV Slovenija 1, transmits sports news items which, however, were not analyzed in this study.

<sup>b</sup> TV Slovenija has been broadcasting sporting events since 1960 when a ski jumping competition was aired live on the national network and distributed internationally through the European Broadcasting Union (EBU/Eurovision).

<sup>c</sup> These are: POP TV, Kanal A (Slovenia's first private television network, operating since 1991), TV3 (until 2006 known as Prva TV), and the most recent addition to the Slovenian television market: cable sports channels Šport TV 1 and Šport TV 2 (both are Slovenian-owned), and Sportklub, Sportklub+, Golf Klub, Sportklub 3, Sportklub 4, and Sportklub 5 (all parts of the transnational IKO Sport Media group, owner of the Sportklub brand).

These included 25 hours and 29 minutes of men's and women's event broadcasts in the qualifying and final stages. Seventeen participants representing Slovenia competed in these events.

- 2008 Beijing Olympic Games swimming broadcasts

These included 18 hours and 31 minutes of men's and women's event broadcasts in the qualifying and final stages. Ten participants representing Slovenia competed in these events.

- 2007 EHF Women's Champions League team handball broadcasts

These included four round-robin and two quarter-final matches, all played by Krim Mercator Ljubljana. Combined, the broadcasts lasted a total of 8 hours and 45 minutes.

- 2007 Euroleague men's basketball broadcasts

These included seven round-robin matches, all played by Union Olimpija Ljubljana. Combined, the broadcasts lasted a total of 11 hours and 43 minutes.

- 2007 Prva Liga Telekom Slovenije men's soccer broadcasts

These included seven league matches played by five different teams competing in the Slovenian top soccer competition. Combined, the broadcasts lasted a total of 11 hours and 50 minutes.

All broadcasts were aired on TV Slovenija 2. The author recorded them on DVR/DVD disks and later analyzed them. A detailed list of selected characteristics of the recorded broadcasts (their airing dates, running times, and on-air sportscasters) is included in Appendix A at the end of the manuscript.

In the Olympic part of the analysis, the author aimed to analyze *all* airings of the three sports (as opposed to, say, only the final stages of the competitions or only prime-time coverage). Some broadcasts were not recorded (and, consequently, not analyzed) due to last-minute lineup changes, or technical difficulties with the recording equipment.

## 7.2 Analytical procedure

In the first stage of the analysis, the author transcribed into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets all descriptors (defined as any adjective, adjectival phrase, adverb or adverbial phrase) pertaining to athletes or teams spoken by commentators. Simultaneously, the author identified (coded) the identity of the speakers.

In the second stage, each descriptor was linked to the athlete it pertained to. Exact identities were determined with the aid of public data sources (e.g., IOC, NOC and federations' websites, media websites, Wikipedia). This allowed the gender, ethnicity and nationality to be coded. Table 7.1 shows which gender and ethnic categories were used for this coding:

**Table 7.1 Gender and ethnic categories**

Gender	Ethnicity	
Male	Asian	Middle Eastern
Female	Black	White
Both/Neutral	Hispanic/South American	Other/Unknown

Ethnicity is a complex variable: unlike gender and nationality, categories are not mutually exclusive (even citizens of more than one country can compete internationally under just one “athletic nationality”) and many athletes have ethnically heterogeneous ancestries. Billings (2008) notes that sportscasters regularly reduce an amalgamation of different ethnicities into overarching categories defined solely by skin color. For the purposes of this study, ethnicity was determined according to the coder’s visual perception of skin tone. When in doubt, the Internet and other sources were consulted to determine the appropriate classification. Such a crude notion of race assessed mainly on an individual’s outward appearances can be inaccurate or even misleading. Still, visual recognition was opted for because it is the method most broadcasters and viewers at home assess and understand ethnicity on a daily basis, as well as in the media.

The author then coded each descriptor according to the following 19-item taxonomy, which is an expanded version of the classification introduced by Billings

and Eastman (2003)<sup>d</sup> to study the discursive framing of gender, ethnic and nationality variables. Categories that were added by the author are underlined.

The taxonomy divides commentary into three categories: attributions of success or failure, depictions of personality or physicality, and neutral. Descriptors coded as attributing success or failure were additionally coded for the attribution they express.

The group of descriptors denoting success or failure comprised the following categories:

- Concentration (e.g., “She took a bit more time to concentrate before each jump.”<sup>1</sup>);
- Athletic Skill—Strength/Speed (e.g., “Another strong Russian weapon.”<sup>2</sup>);
- Athletic Skill—Talent/Ability (e.g., “An extraordinarily talented, gifted hurdler.”<sup>3</sup>);
- Composure (e.g., “I think Tirunesh Dibaba won’t allow her opponents to threaten her in the finish.”<sup>4</sup>);
- Commitment (e.g., “She’ll try to do everything to get this medal.”<sup>5</sup>);
- Courage (e.g., “We can say, one of the heroines of this marathon.”<sup>6</sup>);
- Experience (e.g., “Lesourd is a young competitor, he is only 20 years old.”<sup>7</sup>);
- Past achievements (e.g., “Shawn Crawford, 19.86 this year, the world’s second fastest time of the season.”<sup>8</sup>);
- Intelligence (e.g., “Sara made a smart decision.”<sup>9</sup>);
- Consonance (e.g., “The champion became, believe it or not, a Surinamese, Anthony Nesty.”<sup>10</sup>);
- Stated expectations (e.g., “This is one of the candidates for a very high placing today.”<sup>11</sup>); and
- Doping (e.g., “Both were caught using prohibited substances before the Games started.”<sup>12</sup>).

Depictions of personality or physicality were coded as:

- Outgoing/Extroverted (e.g., “He’s making jokes with Ryan Lochte.”<sup>13</sup>);
- Modest/Introverted (e.g., “Today, we haven’t seen particular happiness in this competitor yet.”<sup>14</sup>);

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<sup>d</sup> This citation refers to the final version of the taxonomy. Earlier versions can be found in some publications (e.g., Eastman and Billings 1999).

- Emotional (e.g., “The disappointment is even more evident.”<sup>15</sup>);
- Attractiveness (e.g., “Coventry and Zueva are worth a glance.”<sup>16</sup>); and
- Size/Parts of body (e.g., “Here is Bernard, those wide shoulders say it all.”<sup>17</sup>).

Neutral commentary included the following categories:

- Background (e.g., “Hanae Ito is 23; the second Japanese representative.”<sup>18</sup>); and
- Factual/Neutral (e.g., “The USA first, Russia second, and Jamaica third.”<sup>19</sup>).

After having conducted a quantitative content analysis, the author observed distinct discursive strategies through a critical analysis of the transcribed text (Carey 1988, Verschueren 2000, Vezovnik 2008). Critical analysis is an expansive approach which integrates all the major social sciences and is directed at the totality of society in its historical specificity. Its characteristics are both an asset and a limitation: critical analysis works as long as the author/analyst is informed about all relevant influences (which, however, is not measurable). For instance, the analyst can examine the text and be aware of the specific societal circumstances in which it was produced; yet, he or she might be unaware of the text’s author’s state of mind, or personal circumstances, when the text was produced. This is seen by many scholars as being as much a limitation as a strength since it allows focusing on the message in its purest form without attempting to determine antecedents. In a way, this would be the closest possible method of achieving “absolute objectivity” as the researcher is able to step aside and observe only the text, with his mind free of preexisting bias and potentially misleading conventions.

In the present study, some insight into the announcers’ motives and approaches has been gained through semi-structured interviews conducted with some of the sportscasters who produced the texts that were analyzed by the author.

The analysis included only network staff’s comments spoken within a broadcast before, during and after each event/competition. Commercial time and topical programs (e.g., “Olympic Studios”) occasionally aired before and/or after broadcasts were excluded from the analysis. Only comments spoken by network-employed individuals—play-by-play announcers, technical/color commentators, and on-site

reporters—were studied<sup>e</sup>. Quotes spoken by non-network people, such as in post-game interviews with athletes or coaches, were also excluded from the study.

All the coding was done by a single individual, namely the author of this dissertation. The overwhelming amount of data made it impractical and virtually impossible to have a second coder review all the material. Nonetheless, the author intends to have part of the database coded separately by a second party and then analyzed for agreement percentages for future publication purposes.

### **7.3 Methods of data processing**

For the quantitative content analysis, the relative frequencies of each category of descriptors were calculated. Differences between groups of athletes with regard to their gender, nationality and ethnicity were cross-tabulated.

Significant differences between groups were detected with chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) analyses by using the percentage of overall comments for distinct groups of athletes as expected frequencies (Billings 2008, Billings, Angelini and Holt Duke 2010)<sup>f</sup>. Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated to determine the correlation of commentary distribution in international men's basketball and women's team handball. Differences will be tested at the 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance.

Discursive trends that surfaced in the critical analysis of the texts are presented separately for Olympic, international sports, and national soccer broadcasts. Each characteristic is supplemented by examples. Where possible, trends are associated with the quantitative data.

### **7.4 Qualitative interviews**

In addition to content and textual analyses of the sportscasters' narratives, semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with several of TV Slovenija's reporters and Heads of Sports (both current and former). The purpose of these interviews was to understand the network staff's approach to commenting on sports,

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<sup>e</sup> Regardless of whether they were employed under a fixed-term or open-ended contract.

<sup>f</sup> The author wishes to thank Dr. James Angelini for his help and suggestions on how to conduct these analyses.

discover their views on television sports journalism and find out the circumstances that might influence their motives for preferring certain wordings.

The interviews were conducted from January until June 2010. Some of them were audio recorded and later transcribed, while in others the interviewer took written notes. A listing of the interviews and a list of core questions for all interviewees is presented in Appendix A. Throughout the dissertation, interviewees' opinions are quoted as personal communication.

## 7.5 Altered citation method for announcers' quotes

Given the high number of commentators' quotes cited throughout the text, their referencing was altered in an attempt to make the manuscript more readable and appealing to Slovenian readers.

Original quotations in Slovenian (as spoken on TV Slovenija) and their sources are included as endnotes and placed in Appendix B. Rather than listing the announcer's name and airing date for each of the several hundred quotes cited, this information is condensed in a shorthand citation comprising the sport from which a quote derives and the date the event was broadcast. These references are located at the end of each original quote in the appendix. For example, the reference "sw, Aug 16" denotes text that was spoken in a **swimming** Olympic broadcast aired on **August 16, 2008**. Table 7.2 explains the abbreviations used in the references.

**Table 7.2 List of abbreviations**

Sports		Months	
Abbrev.	stands for	Abbrev.	stands for
ath	Athletics	Jan	January
bb	Basketball	Feb	February
gym	Gymnastics	Mar	March
hb	Team Handball	Aug	August
soc	Soccer	Sep	September
sw	Swimming	Oct	October
		Nov	November
		Dec	December

## **7.6 Scientific contribution to the field**

This is the biggest study examining televised sport commentary in Slovenia. The sample size and the selection of six different individual and team sports (rather than the sporadic single-sports analyses that have been conducted in this media market) assure relatively large variability and provide a representative record of mediated sports discourse on Slovenian public television.

Nearly all analyses of sports media discourse have been carried out in English-speaking countries. Slovenia's unrelated language background, as well as its specific media, social and political setting, makes this study a potentially exemplary one for similar investigations in other transition countries, especially those located in the Western Balkans and others that gained independence after 1990.

Having public television broadcasts as its subject matter, this dissertation provides an insight into any discrepancies between theoretic codification and actual discourse in public television sports contents. Several suggestions to expand the existing taxonomy to evaluate sportscasters' discursive strategies emerged during the research process. Further, the addition of semi-structured qualitative interviews with network sportscasters and editors offers a combined model for analysis. In the final section, the findings are reconnected to theory: the tenets of the theories presented in the introductory part are compared with the findings of this study, and advancements to science are offered.

This content study also provides the basis for future investigations of media effects of sports contents on Slovenian audiences. Mediated sports research is an emerging field in Slovenian scholarship and this study will hopefully contribute to its future development.



## **8 Results and discussion: 2008 Olympic Games telecasts**

This study analyzes TV coverage of several different competitions. Their characteristics vary, *inter alia*, in terms of competing athletes, event circumstances and amount of sportscasts analyzed. These differences make direct comparisons of the findings impossible. Hence, the results need to be presented in separate sections. The first, entitled *2008 Olympic Games telecasts*, provides an insight into TV Slovenija's transmissions of the Beijing Summer Olympic Games. The *Slovenian teams in international competitions* segment deals with telecasts of games played by Krim Mercator and Union Olimpija in two top-flight European club competitions. The third chapter, entitled *National soccer league*, offers an insight into the discourse about the Slovenian national fixture of the world's most popular game. Each section presents separate reports on quantitative and qualitative aspects of the broadcasts. Common features and distinct differences between the airings, as well as a review of the hypotheses, are summarized in the *Discussion* section.

Each section opens with a summary of the characteristics of the competition and the role Slovenian athletes had in it. Then, the quantitative results are presented: these include the number of comments devoted to each athlete or team, and the quantifiable differences in descriptors with regard to the competitors' gender, ethnicity or nationality. In the latter part of each section, discursive trends and strategies that emerged in a critical analysis are presented. On occasion, the sportscasters' own view on some of the results is also presented.

### **8.1 Quantitative data analysis**

The 2008 Summer Olympics, officially known as the Games of the XXIX Olympiad, took place in Beijing, China, from August 8 to 24. A total of 11,028 athletes from 204 national and regional Olympic committees competed in 302 events in 28 sports (International Olympic Committee 2008c).

This study analyzed three sports that are among the largest<sup>a</sup> and most popular in the Olympic program. In Beijing, they were split into 95 events and featured 3,291 individual competitors; 53.2% were male, and 46.8% female (data from Wikipedia).

Sixty-two athletes competed under Slovenia's flag, accounting for **0.56%** of all participants at the Beijing Games. 17 athletes (ten male and seven female) competed in athletics, two (one male and one female) in artistic gymnastics, and ten (five male and five female) were swimmers.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) awarded a total of 957 medals in 302 events<sup>b</sup>. Athletes representing Slovenia claimed five, or **0.52%**, of all medals. These include Primož Kozmus with a gold medal in the men's hammer throw and Sara Isaković with a silver medal in the women's swimming 200 m freestyle. In the medal table, Slovenia was ranked 41<sup>st</sup> (according to the IOC's official ranking<sup>c</sup>), or 38<sup>th</sup> (when ranked by total medals won<sup>d</sup>). The figures suggest that Slovenian athletes collected a share of medals proportionate to the size of their team at the 2008 Olympics.

Between August 9 and 24, TV Slovenija tuned in for 73 broadcasts in the sports observed; 48 of them were broadcast live. Many athletes representing Slovenia did not qualify for the final competition stages so broadcasts of qualifying rounds were included in the study to assure a sufficient Slovenian presence in the sportscasters' discourse.

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<sup>a</sup> Athletics is the largest Olympic sport in terms of both events competed (47) and number of entries. Swimming competition involves 34 events and is the sport with the second highest numbers of medals awarded after athletics (Olympic Games Beijing 2008 Handbook 2008).

<sup>b</sup> The number of medals awarded exceeds the figure achieved by tripling the number of events contested. In boxing, judo, taekwondo, and wrestling, two bronze medals are awarded in each weight class. In addition, there were several ties, resulting in the awarding of two silver or bronze medals, and one athlete was stripped of a medal (without it being reassigned) due to a doping violation.

<sup>c</sup> The IOC-issued table is sorted by the number of gold medals athletes from a nation have won; the number of silver medals is taken into consideration next and then the number of bronze medals.

<sup>d</sup> This approach to determining the "most successful" nation at the 2008 Olympics seemed to be preferred by US media (e.g., CNN Sports Illustrated 2008). The United States claimed the top position in this ranking with its 110 medals, followed by China with a round 100 medals. Curiously, the IOC's official medal count sees a switch in the top two positions with China topping the USA 51 against 36 in terms of gold medals won.

### 8.1.1 Athlete mentions

The Olympic Games are a global sports festival and a television event. One of its modern fundamental principles is to ban any form of discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, politics, gender or otherwise (International Olympic Committee 2007, 11). The Olympics provide a myriad of potential stories; in the end, journalists and media producers decide who will receive attention and airtime.

Overall, **21,961 descriptors** spoken by network-employed personnel during TV Slovenija's broadcasts of athletics, gymnastics and swimming events at the 2008 Olympic Games were transcribed and analyzed. In slightly over 51 hours of airtime, four commentators mentioned **1,856 individual athletes** (current, as well as former competitors, including past winners, record holders, etc.). Of them, 1,060 (57.1%) were male and 796 (42.9%) were female.

Content analysis offers an insight into “who was hot and who was not” in the eyes of the sportscaster. Among the “hot” ones there are certainly those that yielded most mentions and were thus the subjects of key stories. Table 8.1 lists the ten most-mentioned athletes in TV Slovenija's 2008 Olympic telecasts.

**Table 8.1 Most-mentioned athletes in Slovenian 2008 Olympic telecasts**

	Athlete	N	Sport	Nation	Medals won
1	Michael Phelps	529	Swimming	USA	8 gold
2	Sara Isaković	233	Swimming	Slovenia	1 silver
3	Nastia Liukin	208	Gymnastics	USA	1 gold, 3 silver, 1 bronze
4	Fabian Hambüchen	203	Gymnastics	Germany	1 bronze
5	Usain Bolt	184	Athletics	Jamaica	3 gold
6	Yang Wei	178	Gymnastics	China	2 gold, 1 silver
7	Primož Kozmus	169	Athletics	Slovenia	1 gold
8	Shawn Johnson	166	Gymnastics	USA	1 gold, 3 silver
9	Yang Yilin	124	Gymnastics	China	1 gold, 2 bronze
10	Marian Dragulescu	119	Gymnastics	Romania	none

Total N = 21,961.

By far, the single most-mentioned athlete was the swimmer Michael Phelps. He won an unprecedented eight gold medals and swam literally every day (often even twice daily) in swimming competitions in Beijing. Besides the popularity he achieved

in Slovenia, he was the main Olympic story on US television (Billings, Angelini and Holt Duke 2010), and probably in numerous other nations. It is thus not surprising that he alone generated 2.4 percent of *all* commentary related to Olympic athletes.

The second athlete in terms of commentary exposure was the Slovenian swimmer Sara Isaković. In Beijing, Isaković became the first Slovenian swimmer ever to win an Olympic medal. This made of her one of the hot topics among Slovenian sportscasters and media in general. Isaković received a total of 233 mentions, less than half the figure reached by Phelps; however, she collected them over “just” two events (and withdrew from a third), while he competed—and won—eight. Hence, these two swimming exploits were certainly two of the most prominent Olympic stories on TV Slovenija.

Despite the relatively small amount of Olympic gymnastics aired on TV Slovenija—just over seven hours, compared to over 18 hours of swimming events and 25 hours of athletics action—this sport provided six of the ten most-mentioned athletes. Many of them appeared in multiple events and some competitions—the individual and team all-around—are actually aggregates of performances on four apparatuses. Hence, a gymnast such as Nastia Liukin, who competed in both individual and team all-around finals, as well as in three event finals, actually totaled ten final performances, in addition to the qualifications on each apparatus. The same applies to the other five gymnasts appearing in Table 8.1. Adding to the quantity of commentary about gymnastics is the fact that this was the only sport announced by an actual *team* (sportscaster Peter Kavčič and technical commentator Dr. Ivan Čuk). The two often dialogued throughout the broadcasts and thus produced more discourse than those sportscasters who delivered commentary on their own.

Michael Phelps, Nastia Liukin and Shawn Johnson were the most popular characters in USA Today’s Olympic coverage, as well (Smith and Wrynn 2009). NBC commentators discussed Michael Phelps not only during the swimming races, but also at the beginning and end of NBC’s prime-time coverage, during other sporting events, and throughout each of the 17 days of Olympic coverage (Billings, Angelini and Holt Duke 2010).

The high rankings achieved by Sara Isaković and Primož Kozmus on Slovenian television suggest a bias towards Slovenian athletes. This is confirmed by Table 8.2

which displays athletes ranked 11<sup>th</sup> through 22<sup>nd</sup> in terms of the number of mentions during TV Slovenija’s 2008 Olympic telecasts.

**Table 8.2 Most-mentioned athletes in Slovenian 2008 Olympic telecasts—ranks 11 through 22**

	Athlete	N	Sport	Nation	Medals won
11	Mitja Petkovšek	119	Gymnastics	Slovenia	none
12	Kenenisa Bekele	117	Athletics	Ethiopia	2 gold
13	Olga Kaniskina	113	Athletics	Russia	1 gold
14	Damir Dugonjič	111	Swimming	Slovenia	none
15	Marija Šestak	109	Athletics	Slovenia	none
16	Ksenia Semenova	104	Gymnastics	Russia	none
17	Peter Mankoč	104	Swimming	Slovenia	None
18	Chen Yibing	100	Gymnastics	China	2 gold
19	Kosuke Kitajima	100	Swimming	Japan	2 gold, 1 bronze
20	Alex Schwazer	98	Athletics	Italy	1 gold
21	Matic Osovnikar	98	Athletics	Slovenia	none
22	Anja Čarman	97	Swimming	Slovenia	none

Total N = 21,961.

In total, eight Slovenian representatives were ranked among the 22 most-mentioned athletes in TV Slovenija’s Beijing telecasts. Some might argue that Isaković’s and Kozmus’ high rankings were expected and are understandable due to their successful performances (both won medals). While this holds true, one can hardly put the two single-medalists on the same level as five-time medalist Nastia Liukin (ranked third) or “the world’s fastest man” and triple-gold medalist Usain Bolt (ranked fifth). Further, among the 22 most-mentioned athletes there are eight competitors who did not win a medal in Beijing; six of them represent Slovenia. Thus, it is obvious that “home” athletes on TV Slovenija were given more attention than other participants.

Women seized four spots in the ten most-mentioned athletes list, and eight among the top 22. Women were thus underrepresented in absolute terms, as well as amongst Slovenian competitors.

Three to four women also usually make it into similar top-ten popularity lists in NBC's Olympic telecasts. Since 1996, female athletes have been at a par with their male peers only once, during the 2000 Sydney Summer Olympics (Billings 2008).

All in all, TV Slovenija's commentators spoke about athletes from 159 different countries/NOCs. They thus mentioned 78% of all participating nations. 58 countries were mentioned five times or less: these were mostly smaller nations whose athletes did not progress to the final stages of the competitions. These were not the "hot stories" of Olympic broadcasting.

Table 8.3 offers a summary of the ten nations most often mentioned in Slovenian Olympic telecasts. The chart offers information about the number of athletes representing each nation in the athletics, gymnastics and swimming parts of the Olympics, and the number of medals won in the three sports combined.

**Table 8.3 Distribution of athlete mentions by nationality in Slovenian 2008 Olympic telecasts**

	Nation	N	% of total	Athletes	Medals
1	USA	3436	15.6	175	67
2	Russia	2002	9.1	153	24
3	Slovenia	1749	8.0	29	2
4	China	1516	6.9	137	22
5	Australia	871	4.0	90	24
6	Jamaica	837	3.8	49	11
7	France	696	3.2	99	10
8	Japan	667	3.0	81	9
9	Great Britain	646	2.9	111	11
10	Germany	640	2.9	96	6

Total N = 21,961. Note: Competing athletes and medals won refer to combined athletics, gymnastics and swimming competitions only.

Source: Wikipedia.

US nationals attracted the greatest share of commentators' discourse. In the three sports analyzed, their team was the largest, and they also collected the most medals, claiming almost one in four accolades (a total of 287 medals were awarded in gymnastics, swimming, and track and field). The similarly numerous but considerably less successful Russian and Chinese teams also elicited plenty of

commentary. Team Slovenia, a group five times smaller and ten times less triumphant than Russia or China, managed to squeeze in between them.

The list of countries in Table 8.3 suggests the relatively balanced representation of participants, and even of the entire world: the top five countries are located on four continents, while two of the poorest global regions, Africa and Latin America, are not represented.

The most frequently mentioned nation attracted 15.6% of the total commentary. This is much less than the 50/50 split consistently observed in US Olympic telecasts (Billings 2008, 96). Slovenia ranks third on this list, and the average Slovenian athlete attracted three times as many comments as the average American one. However, despite this relative overrepresentation, an “index of nationalism” of 8.0 is still considerably lower than the indexes registered by Real (1989) in his analysis of newspaper content during the Olympics. On that occasion, Yugoslavia had an index of 25.5, yet it was still ranked very low in terms of biased coverage.

Comparing teams that differ greatly in size is not easy. Team Slovenia had almost half as many members as Jamaica, which was the second smallest team in Table 8.3, and was six times smaller than the United States team. In fact, if Slovenia had had as many representatives as the United States, it would have yielded approximately 10,500 comments—about half the total number of descriptors, and close to the 50/50 equilibrium pursued by NBC’s producers (Billings 2008, esp. 43–50 and 62–70).

The host nation received relatively little attention. Its sports are largely unknown to Slovenian viewers and sports reporters as major international competitions such as World Championships or the Olympic Games are the only opportunities to come in touch with Chinese athletes. In contrast, the Slovenian media offers ample opportunities to follow non-Slovenian sports: press coverage and television programming regularly follow many soccer fixtures (including Russian, French, English and German leagues), as well as the National Football League, and even MLS soccer and NCAA basketball. Athletics, gymnastics and swimming are indeed far less shown than team sports; still, team sports can also contribute to spreading knowledge and awareness about a country’s athletic scene and about its society. Familiarity breeds commentary (see Billings et al. 2009) and familiarity with

American popular culture allowed for remarks such as that about Michael Phelps being inspired by Lil' Wayne's song "I'm Me" (sw, Aug 17), whereas the musical tastes of Chinese or Jamaican athletes remained unknown to Slovenian sports reporters and, consequently, to the viewers.

Alongside nationality, gender and ethnicity were the defining characteristics of this analysis. Table 8.4 shows the distribution of sportscasters' comments to competitors of both genders and different ethnic backgrounds.

**Table 8.4 Distribution of comments by gender and ethnicity in Slovenian 2008 Olympic telecasts**

Gender	N	% of total	Ethnicity	N	% of total
Male	12198	55.5	White	12756	58.1
Female	9319	42.4	Black	4869	22.2
Both/NA	444	2.0	Hispanic/South American	645	2.9
<i>Total</i>	21961	100.0	Asian	2581	11.8
			Middle Eastern	115	0.5
			Other/NA	995	4.5
			<i>Total</i>	21961	100.0

Data from the International Olympic Committee (2008d) shows that male athletes accounted for 58 percent of the participants at the Beijing Games. The combined split for athletics, artistic gymnastics and swimming was more balanced, resulting in a 53/47 ratio between men and women competitors (according to Wikipedia<sup>e</sup>). Ideally, a gender-balanced commentary would mirror this latter proportion. The figures, however, show that TV Slovenija's on-air discourse was imbalanced: male athletes received significantly more than the 53% share derived from the actual participation figures ( $\chi^2(1)=117.618$ ; sig.<0.01; gender-neutral comments were excluded).

In terms of ethnicity, White athletes received the bulk of the commentary: six descriptors out of ten were devoted to them. Blacks received two, and Asians one in ten observations. Official statistics about the ethnicity of Olympians do not exist so it

<sup>e</sup> Main sources: Wikipedia contributors, "Athletics at the 2008 Summer Olympics" 2010; Wikipedia contributors, "Gymnastics at the 2008 Summer Olympics – Qualification" 2010; Wikipedia contributors, "Swimming at the 2008 Summer Olympics" 2010. Wikipedia contributors cite the IOC as the source of data.



is impossible to estimate whether all ethnic groups are fairly represented in media contents.

Different sports have different levels of appeal in various areas of the world. Track and field ranks among the most popular activities all over the world, whereas participation in swimming and gymnastics is much more limited. As a guideline of participation in different sports, a content breakdown of ethnicity by sports was prepared. The results are shown in Table 8.5.

**Table 8.5 Distribution of comments by ethnicity within different sports in Slovenian 2008 Olympic telecasts**

Ethnicity	% within athletics	% within gymnastics	% within swimming	Total
White	48.0	60.2	83.7	58.1
Black	37.5	0.0	1.4	22.2
Latino/South American	4.5	0.8	0.8	2.9
Asian	4.4	35.0	9.6	11.8
Middle Eastern	0.8	0.2	0.0	0.5
Other/NA	4.8	3.8	4.5	4.5

Table 8.5 suggests that gymnasts and swimmers are considerably less ethnically diverse than the athletics family. Especially in swimming, White Australians, Europeans and North Americans dominate the scene. They are occasionally joined by Japanese and, even less frequently, Chinese swimmers. The share of Asian competitors rises in gymnastics where China is considered a superpower. Other ethnicities are virtually absent from top-notch gymnastics events. In athletics, Black athletes appear (and often prevail) mostly on the track, whereas White athletes are more common in field events.

### **8.1.2 Nationalism in Olympic telecasts**

This opening section provided some basic quantitative aspects of the content in TV Slovenija's Olympic broadcasts. These sheer proportions tell very little about the messages conveyed in sports media. Hence, it is necessary to study the content in

greater depth, starting with differences in the categories applied to athletes that differ in terms of gender, ethnicity or nationality.

First, a breakdown of commentary with regard to athletes' nationality is presented. In Table 8.6, the texts contents are divided into 19 categories and split among the four nations that attracted the most commentary—the United States,

**Table 8.6 Absolute frequencies of different types of comments by nation in Slovenian 2008 Olympic telecasts**

Comment	Slovenian athletes	US athletes	Russian athletes	Chinese athletes	Others	$\chi^2(4)$	Sig.
Concentration	5 (0.3)	19 (0.6)	7 (0.3)	15 (1.0)	22 (0.2)	<u>38.174</u>	***
Athletic skill— Strength/Speed	25 (1.4)	99 (2.9)	37 (1.9)	19 (1.2)	239 (1.8)	23.373	***
Athletic skill— Talent/Ability	196 (11.2)	366 (10.6)	132 (6.6)	202 (13.3)	1022 (7.7)	89.758	***
Composure	13 (0.7)	32 (0.9)	24 (1.2)	22 (1.4)	92 (0.7)	13.812	***
Commitment	16 (0.9)	65 (1.9)	22 (1.1)	16 (1.0)	157 (1.2)	14.092	***
Courage	0 (0.0)	3 (0.1)	1 (0.1)	2 (0.1)	15 (0.1)	<u>2.768</u>	
Experience	49 (2.8)	217 (6.3)	109 (5.4)	76 (5.0)	852 (6.4)	38.157	***
Past achievements	10 (0.6)	52 (1.5)	40 (2.0)	12 (0.8)	201 (1.5)	18.641	***
Intelligence	9 (0.5)	6 (0.2)	4 (0.2)	2 (0.1)	35 (0.3)	<u>6.674</u>	
Consonance	210 (12.0)	411 (12.0)	356 (17.8)	204 (13.4)	1932 (14.6)	38.082	***
Stated expectations	137 (7.8)	279 (8.1)	157 (7.8)	159 (10.5)	1035 (7.8)	12.407	*
Doping	0 (0.0)	8 (0.2)	16 (0.8)	0 (0.0)	36 (0.3)	<u>29.340</u>	***
Outgoing/Extroverted	10 (0.6)	12 (0.3)	5 (0.2)	6 (0.4)	37 (0.3)	<u>4.848</u>	
Modest/Introverted	0 (0.0)	6 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.1)	8 (0.1)	<u>8.373</u>	
Emotional	164 (9.4)	98 (2.9)	17 (0.8)	34 (2.2)	128 (1.0)	570.686	***
Attractiveness	8 (0.4)	33 (1.0)	10 (0.5)	30 (2.0)	30 (0.2)	99.713	***
Size/Parts of body	1 (0.1)	8 (0.2)	10 (0.5)	9 (0.6)	59 (0.4)	10.218	*
Background	450 (25.7)	950 (27.7)	485 (24.2)	461 (30.4)	3902 (29.4)	24.416	***
Factual/Neutral	446 (25.5)	772 (22.5)	570 (28.5)	246 (16.2)	3456 (26.0)	71.354	***
<i>Total</i>	1749	3436	2002	1516	13258		

Note: values in brackets denote shares within all comments about the respective nationality.

Underlined  $\chi^2$  values indicate categories where one or more groups had an expected value of less than five.

\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.01 level.

Russia, Slovenia and China. Significant differences between the groups are exposed by means of a chi-square analysis.

Table 8.6 shows significant differences in the attribution of 13 sub-types of commentary. The 29 Slovenian athletes were more likely to be portrayed in terms of athletic talent/ability and in terms of emotionality. Statistically, they were also more likely to be discussed in terms of intelligence. Yet, there are only nine such comments in the total count; most of them referred to Sara Isaković's "smart" swimming strategies. The very high number of comments about "Slovenian emotion" tells more about the announcers than the athletes: namely, descriptors coded as "emotive" included all references to Slovenian athletes as "ours," and announcers' cheering about their own nation's athletes' performance.

In turn, the group of Slovenian athletes was underrepresented in terms of talk about size and body parts, experience, and past achievements (the latter two are essentially linked). Slovenian competitors also did not attract a single comment about doping. This is interesting given that (former) star runner and Athens Olympic bronze medalist Jolanda Čeplak was at the time serving a two-year suspension following an anti-doping rule violation (IAAF, 2007). Yet, Čeplak was completely ignored in television presentations of the athletic superspectacle: she received a single mention in a *swimming* telecast (sw, Aug 13).

US athletes were significantly more often depicted in both categories related to athletic skill. A further analysis showed that most of these comments were positive in nature, and devoted to swimmers and track athletes—hence, to participants in sports where strength and speed play key roles in determining success. US representatives won 57 swimming and track medals combined so such a high share of positive comments about athletic skill is neither surprising nor inappropriate. Athletes competing under the Star Spangled Banner also received a disproportionate amount of commentary related to their emotionality, attractiveness and commitment. Most of the latter went to eight-time gold medalist Michael Phelps.

Russian athletes received ample commentary regarding consonance. Most of them were sparked by the outcome of a performance, such as the mentioning of "an outstanding result for Mariya Abakumova."<sup>20</sup> This team received plenty of factual commentary, as well as a significantly larger share of comments about doping. The

latter derives mostly from a discussion about a raid at the Russian Olympic trials where several athletes were caught using illicit substances.

Talent and ability were not often discussed for Russian representatives. The same holds true for talk about emotions and background commentary. Background information was often found to be in an inverse correlation with factual comments; in this case, it suggests that announcers more abided by the mere facts and did not offer many subjective considerations about athletes from this nation.

Overall success, and the eloquence of the gymnastics commentary team, contributed to enhancing the discourse about Chinese athletes. This group received significantly more commentary about its concentration, talent, composure, attractiveness and performance expectations.

Most descriptors of “attractiveness” were praising remarks about the elegance of female gymnasts. Hence, both US and Chinese competitors attracted above-average shares of such comments. Almost all comments in this category came from gymnastics broadcasts so the nationalities that were not represented in the gymnastics part of the Olympics result were underrepresented in this segment.

Some dialogic categories—those pertaining to concentration, courage, intelligence, doping, extroversion and modesty—were seldom employed in the over 50 hours of Olympic coverage. They combined to make just over one percent of all descriptors. Due to their low incidence, they will occasionally be dropped from the tables and instead dealt with in the qualitative/discursive part of the dissertation.

Interesting findings come from observing the sheer amounts of different types of comments. The most subjective commentary was generated in discussions of the consonance of athletic performance (e.g., “No problems, of course, for Rybakov”<sup>21</sup>), and by expressing expectations either about a competitor’s performance or the outcome of a race (e.g., “the top favorite,”<sup>22</sup> and “there are several favorites: Taher, Kipruto, Tahri and Hachlaf are the favorites”<sup>23</sup>). The favorites of heats were determined even in the earliest stages of a competition (e.g., the comment, “I think that Čavić will be the winner,”<sup>24</sup> was spoken in the 100 m butterfly *heats*), when all the best athletes focus only on progressing to the next stage and saving their energy for later, rather than displaying all of their ability.

TV Slovenija’s Olympic announcers produced ample evaluative commentary. Of the 21,961 descriptors coded, 9,498 (43.2%) belonged to this category. 6,573 lines, or 69.2% of all evaluative commentary, attributed success, while 2,925 lines (30.8%) denoted failure. Hence, of all evaluative speech about athletes the ratio of praiseful vs. negative commentary is roughly 7/3.

One of the characteristics of home-team bias is the attribution of overly positive characteristics. Table 8.7 offers an item-to-item comparison of the share of positive ascriptions of Slovenian and foreign performance.

**Table 8.7 Comparison of positive ascriptions by nationality in Slovenian 2008 Olympic telecasts**

Comment	Slovenian athletes			Others			$\chi^2(1)$	Sig.
	Positive	Negative	% of positive	Positive	Negative	% of positive		
Concentration	3	2	60.0	30	33	47.6	0.146	
Athletic skill— Strength/Speed	19	6	76.0	330	64	83.8	0.170	
Athletic skill— Talent/Ability	165	31	84.2	1446	276	84.0	0.001	
Composure	10	3	76.9	114	56	67.0	0.173	
Commitment	16	0	100.0	246	14	94.6	0.046	
Courage	0	0	—	14	7	66.7	—	
Experience	33	16	67.3	953	301	76.0	0.466	
Past achievements	7	3	70.0	257	48	84.3	0.235	
Intelligence	9	0	100.0	44	3	93.6	0.032	
Consonance	127	83	60.5	1364	1539	47.0	7.441	***
Stated expectations	111	26	81.0	1274	356	78.2	0.132	
Doping	0	0	—	1	58	1.7	—	
<i>Total</i>	500	170	74.6	6073	2755	68.8	3.063	

Note: \*\*\* indicates a  $\chi^2$  significant difference at the 0.01 level.

Despite the considerable differences in nationality contents presented in Table 8.6, Slovenian telecasters were consistent in their attribution of positive vs. negative commentary to Slovenian competitors. The only significant difference emerged in the category of consonance where Slovenian athletes were more likely to be portrayed in affirmative terms. This suggests that announcers might have adopted a “lower

standard” when assessing their own nation’s competitors either to amuse the viewers or to frame as positive and successful a performance by members of the group to which both they and the viewers belong.

The texts produced by Olympic announcers were predominantly positive. In all but three categories of descriptors, positive remarks significantly outnumbered negative ones. Two categories, “concentration” and “consonance,” reached a roughly 50/50 split, and only commentary about doping was decidedly negative. In the total count, affirmative portrayals outnumbered negative ones with a seven-to-three ratio. The dominance of positive over negative commentary was also found in NBC’s 2008 Olympic coverage (Billings, Angelini and Holt Duke 2010).

The figures suggest a favorable and even praiseful attitude towards all Olympians, regardless of their nationality. Yet, the types of comments that were most often attributed to athletes—those about athletic skill, consonance, competitive expectations and experience—also imply that the bulk of speech was devoted to an “athletic elite”—a group that, considering its skills, certainly deserves to be portrayed in positive terms, but it is still a relatively small group of star competitors. Weaker competitors did not find their way into the Olympic media discourse. Instead, large portions of commentary were aimed at establishing event favorites (even in the earliest stages of the competition) and confirming the anticipated outcome (expressing positive consonance).

### ***8.1.3 Gender in Olympic telecasts***

Table 8.1 in Section 8.1.1 showed that women filled four slots in the list of the ten most mentioned Olympic athletes, and eight slots among the top 22. Both shares fall short of the actual amount of female competitors, which was 42 percent overall and 47 percent in the three sports analyzed.

All in all, TV Slovenija’s announcers mentioned 796 individual female competitors, or 42.9 percent of all individuals mentioned in Olympic broadcasts. They accounted for 9,319 lines of commentary—a 42.4 share. Of the 21,961 coded descriptors, 12,198 (or 55.5%) were related to male athletes, and 444 (2%) were either unclassifiable or gender-neutral (e.g., “The United States on top in terms of medals”<sup>25</sup>).

The literature review in the opening chapters shows that gender bias usually emerges in the differing contents of commentary awarded to participants of different genders. To see whether Slovenian broadcasters share the characteristics of other broadcasters, Table 8.8 offers a review of the frequencies different types of comments were made about men and women in Slovenian Olympic telecasts.

**Table 8.8** Frequency of different types of comments by gender in Slovenian 2008 Olympic telecasts

Comment	Male		Female		Both/Neutral		$\chi^2(1)$	Sig.
	N	% within	N	% within	N	% within		
	category		category		category			
Concentration	32	47.1	36	52.9	0	0.0	2.569	
Athletic skill— Strength/Speed	225	53.7	193	46.1	1	0.2	1.395	
Athletic skill— Talent/Ability	1087	56.7	785	40.9	46	2.4	1.444	
Composure	104	56.8	75	41.0	4	2.2	0.145	
Commitment	180	65.2	91	33.0	5	1.8	10.451	***
Courage	14	66.7	6	28.6	1	4.7	1.443	
Experience	678	52.0	603	46.3	22	1.7	7.386	***
Past achievements	186	59.0	126	40.0	3	1.0	1.087	
Intelligence	29	51.8	27	48.2	0	0.0	0.549	
Consonance	1711	55.0	1351	43.4	51	1.6	0.821	
Stated expectations	1038	58.7	707	40.0	22	1.3	5.549	*
Doping	19	31.7	31	51.7	10	16.7	7.114	***
Outgoing/ Extroverted	46	65.7	21	30.0	3	4.3	3.908	*
Modest/Introverted	3	20.0	12	80.0	0	0.0	8.224	***
Emotional	246	55.8	156	35.4	39	8.8	3.321	
Attractiveness	48	43.2	57	51.3	6	5.5	5.152	*
Size/Parts of body	38	43.7	47	54.0	2	2.3	4.972	*
Background	3539	56.6	2552	40.8	157	2.5	4.946	*
Factual/Neutral	2975	54.2	2443	44.5	72	1.3	6.996	***
<i>Total</i>	12198	55.5	9319	42.4	444	2.0		

Note: Some categories may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

$\chi^2$  differences were calculated by considering **only comments about males and females**. Gender-neutral comments were excluded from the analysis.

\* indicates  $\chi^2$ -significant differences at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* indicates  $\chi^2$ -significant differences at the 0.01 level.

The gender comparison shows significant differences in ten categories (out of 19). Male athletes attracted significantly more commentary evaluating their commitment, extroversion and background. They were also more likely to be discussed in terms of expectations regarding the competition's outcome. Conversely, women collected the majority of remarks about attractiveness, introversion, doping, size or body parts, and factual commentary. They also received more commentary about their experience (or lack thereof).

Some findings are in line with the discursive trends commonly reported by international studies of sports media contents. Hence, men attracted the bulk of commentary regarding commitment and extroversion (confirming the findings of Sabo and Jansen 1992, Harris and Clayton 2002, and Van Sterkenburg and Knoppers 2004), while women received more commentary about attractiveness, introversion, and their size or parts of their body (cf. Daddario 1994, Harris and Clayton 2002, Messner, Duncan and Cooky 2003, and Van Sterkenburg and Knoppers 2004).

Male athletes also received significantly more commentary in terms of performance expectations and background, while women drew more comments concerning doping, experience and more factual comments. Performance expectations and doping are two categories that were not investigated in other studies so an equal distribution of commentary was assumed. It was, however, predicted that male competitors would be overrepresented in terms of experience. Yet the data show the opposite: even though 52% of remarks about experience went to men, this share is still significantly lower than the total discourse focusing on them. Table 8.9 shows a comparison of positive versus negative comments and perhaps offers an additional insight into these findings.

The literature review suggests that men might be expected to draw the majority of comments about concentration, strength, talent/ability, composure, courage, intelligence and consonance, while women would be more often portrayed in terms of emotions. Yet this content analysis of Olympic broadcasts on Slovenian public television does not confirm this assumption: all these types of comments were equally distributed among both genders. To better understand the possible gender bias in the analyzed telecasts, it is necessary to compare the shares of positive and negative comments attributed to each gender in each category of discourse. Table 8.9 shows the details of this comparison.



**Table 8.9 Comparison of positive ascriptions by gender in Slovenian 2008 Olympic telecasts**

Comment	Male			Female			$\chi^2(1)$	Sig.
	Positive	Negative	% of positive	Positive	Negative	% of positive		
Concentration	17	15	53.1	16	20	44.4	0.263	
Athletic skill— Strength/Speed	183	42	81.3	165	28	85.5	0.215	
Athletic skill— Talent/Ability	924	163	85.0	656	129	83.6	0.111	
Composure	69	35	66.3	53	22	70.7	0.119	
Commitment	170	10	94.4	87	4	95.6	0.008	
Courage	8	8	50.0	5	1	83.3	<u>0.820</u>	
Experience	527	151	77.7	443	160	73.5	0.766	
Past achievements	151	35	81.2	111	15	88.1	0.427	
Intelligence	26	3	89.7	27	0	100.0	0.158	
Consonance	775	936	45.3	678	673	50.2	3.804	
Stated expectations	805	233	77.6	561	146	79.3	0.173	
Doping	1	18	5.3	0	31	0.0	<u>1.632</u>	
<i>Total</i>	10551	1647	86.5	8090	1229	86.8	0.060	

Note: Underlined  $\chi^2$  values indicate categories with one or both groups' expected value of less than five.

Remarkably, this comparison shows no significant differences in the attribution of positive or negative commentary to any gender. The announcers were thus consistent in their evaluations of all Olympians, regardless of their gender.

The share of positive remarks is thus virtually the same for both men and women and accounts for 87 percent of all evaluative commentary. Positive commentary also dominated NBC's 2008 Olympic coverage. In the American telecast, the share of positive attributions to each gender was lower than that in Slovenia: NBC's announcers positively framed 77% of evaluative commentary about men and 79% about women (Billings, Angelini and Holt Duke 2010).

#### **8.1.4 Ethnicity in Olympic telecasts**

The list of the ten most mentioned athletes presented earlier in this chapter offered some basic notions of ethnicity in Slovenian Olympic coverage. That list is composed of seven White, one Black, and two Asian competitors (Table 8.1). The actual distribution of the commentary is slightly different, with the White/Black/Asian ratio being roughly 6/2/1 (Table 8.4). Such a distribution is even more varied than the long-term average in NBC's Olympic telecasts: Billings (2008) found that White competitors attracted 72.1% of all mentions in the 1996–2006 Olympics, Black athletes were placed second with 13.1%, while Asians were third with 9.5%. However, these compound figures include the Winter Olympics where Black athletes are virtually absent from ski slopes and ice rinks.

The distribution of ethnicity-related commentary by sports in Table 8.5 highlights an important aspect of the Olympic Games, namely, the varying appeal of different sports to different parts of the world. Athletics has a more global appeal (and thus a more diverse array of competitors) than gymnastics and, to a lesser extent, swimming.

To assess potential discursive differences stemming from the participants' ethnicity, it is necessary to review the commentary split among representatives with different backgrounds. Table 8.10 offers that comparison.

Low frequencies for several groups—specifically, Hispanics/South Americans, Middle Easterners and “others”—result in small expected values in some categories. This reduces the reliability of the chi-square analysis. Therefore, it is useful to exclude minor ethnic and discursive groups to allow for a valid comment-to-ethnicity quantitative comparison. The smaller groups will be discussed in the second part of the study, while Table 8.11 presents a narrowed review of comments awarded to competitors belonging to the three most “populous” ethnic groups.

The data show that broadcasters characterized White athletes according to four main features: they received significantly more commentary about talent/ability and emotionality, but less about past achievements and immediate expectations. The high rate of “emotion” commentary is due to the framing of (White) Slovenian competitors as “ours”—a coding specific that has already been mentioned.

**Table 8.10 Absolute frequencies of different types of comments by ethnicity in Slovenian 2008 Olympic telecasts**

Comment	White	Black	Hispanic /S. Am.	Asian	Middle Eastern	Other /NA	$\chi^2(5)$ Sig.
Concentration	32 (0.2)	8 (0.2)	2 (0.3)	22 (0.8)	1 (0.9)	3 (0.3)	<u>30.465</u> ***
Athletic skill— Strength/Speed	239 (1.9)	120 (2.5)	6 (0.9)	38 (1.5)	2 (1.8)	14 (1.7)	<u>15.110</u> ***
Athletic skill— Talent/Ability	1242 (9.7)	237 (4.9)	35 (5.4)	320 (12.4)	4 (3.5)	80 (8.0)	149.971 ***
Composure	100 (0.8)	40 (0.8)	9 (1.4)	28 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	6 (0.6)	<u>6.378</u>
Commitment	171 (1.3)	50 (1.0)	8 (1.2)	27 (1.0)	1 (0.9)	19 (1.9)	<u>7.183</u>
Courage	13 (0.1)	3 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	4 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.1)	<u>2.322</u>
Experience	706 (5.5)	304 (6.2)	43 (6.7)	159 (6.2)	5 (4.3)	86 (8.7)	17.818 ***
Past achiev.	152 (1.2)	123 (2.5)	22 (3.4)	15 (0.6)	2 (1.7)	1 (0.1)	<u>88.789</u> ***
Intelligence	30 (0.2)	20 (0.4)	2 (0.3)	3 (0.1)	1 (0.9)	0 (0.0)	<u>11.095</u> *
Consonance	1735 (13.6)	727 (14.9)	98 (15.2)	374 (14.5)	20 (17.4)	159 (16.0)	8.704
Stated expect.	932 (7.3)	480 (9.9)	44 (6.8)	219 (8.5)	8 (7.0)	84 (8.4)	30.732 ***
Doping	38 (0.3)	12 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	10 (1.0)	<u>29.044</u> ***
Outgoing/ Extroverted	44 (0.3)	16 (0.3)	1 (0.1)	8 (0.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.1)	<u>2.691</u>
Modest/ Introverted	9 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.1)	3 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	2 (0.2)	<u>7.558</u>
Emotional	347 (2.7)	18 (0.4)	3 (0.5)	46 (1.8)	2 (1.7)	25 (2.5)	<u>106.912</u> ***
Attractiveness	67 (0.5)	10 (0.2)	2 (0.3)	30 (1.2)	0 (0.0)	2 (0.2)	<u>33.700</u> ***
Size/Parts of body	55(0.5)	9 (0.2)	3 (0.5)	18 (0.7)	0 (0.0)	2 (0.2)	<u>13.284</u> *
Background	3686 (28.9)	1248 (25.7)	204 (31.7)	826 (32.0)	54 (47.0)	230 (23.1)	52.026 ***
Factual/ Neutral	3158 (24.8)	1444 (29.7)	162 (25.1)	441 (17.1)	15 (13.0)	270 (27.1)	115.595 ***
<i>Total</i>	12756	4869	645	2581	115	995	

Note: values in brackets denote shares within all comments about the respective ethnicity.

Underlined  $\chi^2$  values indicate categories where one or more groups had an expected value of less than five.

\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.01 level.

Notably, Black competitors attracted diametrically opposite trends in all four categories, receiving little commentary about talent and emotionality, and plenty of description about past achievements and performance expectations. Adding to this the above-average share of comments about strength and speed, the figures support

**Table 8.11 Absolute frequencies of different types of comments by ethnicity in Slovenian 2008 Olympic telecasts—a narrowed review**

Comment	White	Black	Asian	$\chi^2(2)$	Sig.
Concentration	32 (0.2)	8 (0.2)	22 (0.8)	29.561	***
Athletic skill—Strength/Speed	239 (1.9)	120 (2.5)	38 (1.5)	9.916	***
Athletic skill—Talent/Ability	1242 (9.7)	237 (4.9)	320 (12.4)	134.431	***
Composure	100 (0.8)	40 (0.8)	28 (1.1)	2.345	
Commitment	171 (1.3)	50 (1.0)	27 (1.0)	3.616	
Experience	706 (5.5)	304 (6.2)	159 (6.2)	3.780	
Past achievements	152 (1.2)	123 (2.5)	15 (0.6)	58.770	***
Intelligence	30 (0.2)	20 (0.4)	3 (0.1)	6.548	*
Consonance	1735 (13.6)	727 (14.9)	374 (14.5)	4.876	
Stated expectations	932 (7.3)	480 (9.9)	219 (8.5)	29.056	***
Doping	38 (0.3)	12 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	7.699	*
Outgoing/ Extroverted	44 (0.3)	16 (0.3)	8 (0.3)	0.090	
Emotional	347 (2.7)	18 (0.4)	46 (1.8)	96.647	***
Attractiveness	67 (0.5)	10 (0.2)	30 (1.2)	29.183	***
Size/Parts of body	55(0.5)	9 (0.2)	18 (0.7)	11.468	***
Background	3686 (28.9)	1248 (25.7)	826 (32.0)	25.867	***
Factual/Neutral	3158 (24.8)	1444 (29.7)	441 (17.1)	107.361	***
<i>Total</i>	12756	4869	2581		

Note: values in brackets denote shares within all comments about the respective ethnicity.

Underlined  $\chi^2$  values indicate categories where one or more groups had an expected value of less than five.

\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.01 level.

the notion of framing Black athletes as “physically super-gifted.” High scores in the strength department were topped by ample commentary regarding their past achievements which led to expectations about the outcome of their performances. The very few comments about their emotional state (even considerably less than the share for Asian competitors) coupled with the higher ratio of commentary about intelligence hint that the “physical” label might have been backed by personality stereotypes that would fit the “dumb jock” frame. Other figures, however, suggest otherwise: Black athletes collected significantly *fewer* comments about their talent/ability, which is a category that normally fits into the “super athlete” frame.

The third major group of competitors are Asians. Their portrayal was largely limited to gymnastics broadcasts, which provided 61% of descriptors about this ethnic group. Asians drew above-average mentions in terms of concentration, talent, attractiveness, and size/parts of the body. The most significant differences derive from their numerous appearances (and successful performances) in gymnastics. Especially noteworthy are the descriptors pertaining to their physicality attributes, such as remarks about Deng Linlin's "satisfied baby face,"<sup>26</sup> and He Kexin's weight, who was described as "light as a feather, weighs only 30 kilograms."<sup>27</sup>

The only remaining coding category in which Asians received a high number of comments is that of background information. Most of these statements related to their nationality: virtually every Chinese competitor who appeared on screen was (sometimes repeatedly) referred to as "the Chinese." This might hint at interweaving notions of ethnicity and nationality as the adjective "Chinese" became almost a signal that flagged a "certain diversity."

It is not uncommon for announcers to limit the background information they provide about athletes they are less familiar with (Billings et al. 2009). In such cases, nationality becomes a handy solution to seemingly enhance sports broadcasts. In reality, this only strengthens nationalisms by ascribing them to individuals without actually knowing their identity sentiments.

After having determined the incidence of each category of comments, it is interesting to observe the success versus failure attributions given to competitors of different ethnicities. Table 8.12 presents details of the analysis. Ethnic groups and discursive categories that collected only marginal shares of comments are again excluded from the analysis.

Announcers gave Black athletes significantly more positive commentary in terms of consonance, stated expectations, and in the total count. Almost all of these athletes competed in track and field events (see Table 8.5). Obviously, they were consistently seen first as favorites for top placings, and their performances were positively evaluated. In addition, the abundance of talk about their strength and speed (with as much as 92.5 percent of these mentions denoting success) confirms that the quantitative data consistently suggest a biased representation of Black athletes as physically super-fit and athletically gifted. This group also drew

**Table 8.12 Comparison of positive ascriptions by ethnicity in Slovenian 2008 Olympic telecasts**

Comment	White		Black		Asian		$\chi^2(2)$	Sig.
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative		
Concentration	18	14	5	3	9	13	<u>0.805</u>	
Athletic skill— Strength/Speed	187	52	111	9	32	6	1.960	
Athletic skill— Talent/Ability	1038	204	219	18	267	53	1.907	
Composure	66	34	32	8	12	16	3.481	
Commitment	166	5	43	7	25	2	0.513	
Experience	545	161	237	67	103	56	2.918	
Past achievements	121	31	11	13	10	5	3.309	
Intelligence	28	2	19	1	3	0	<u>0.014</u>	
Consonance	814	921	423	304	131	112	13.450	***
Stated expectations	673	259	439	41	173	46	14.900	***
<i>Total</i>	3666	1723	1541	474	768	310	14.974	***

Note: Underlined  $\chi^2$  values indicate categories with one group's expected value of less than five. \*\*\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.01 level.

significantly more commentary about intelligence than their peers, which was largely swayed positively. In the qualitative part of the study, discursive clues corroborating (or rejecting) actual discursive privileging of this ethnic group on Slovenian public television will be sought.

## 8.2 Qualitative data analysis

Assessing the characteristics of media discourse based solely on the frequencies of various types of comments provides a partial image at best: the *figures* do not tell the whole *picture*. Specific framings, discursive approaches and even individual statements are often more influential (and certainly more memorable) than subtle, often unintentional content bits. Every nation probably has more than one quote by sports broadcasters which has stuck in the nation's collective memory for many years, often even decades: Al Michaels' ecstatic "Do you believe in miracles?"<sup>f</sup> in 1980,

<sup>f</sup> Spoken on US television after the United States unexpectedly won the 1980 Winter Olympic ice hockey final against the top-seeded and hot favorite USSR.

Nando Martellini's poised, yet resolute "Campioni del mondo, campioni del mondo, campioni del mondo!"<sup>g</sup> in 1982, or Igor Evgen Bergant's unfortunate "commentator's curse," "Samo še potres ali naravna katastrofa lahko reši Jugoslavijo"<sup>h</sup> in 2000. In many ways, such quotes influence public opinion on many issues in sports and more widely in society. They need to be studied in order to understand the messages that transcend statistical figures. Naturally, they also provide confirmation and succinct examples of the trends unveiled by quantitative data.

To this end, the author conducted a critical analysis of the sportscasters' discourse (Carey 1988, Verschueren 2000, Vezovnik 2008). As noted in the Methods section, critical analysis is an expansive and inter-disciplinary approach. This is both an asset and a limitation: it allows focusing on the message in its purest form, yet some relevant circumstances and even personal motives of the speaker may fall outside of the researcher's knowledge. This has been alleviated by conducting semi-structured interviews with some of the sportscasters who produced the analyzed commentaries.

In this section, the most striking discursive trends that emerged during the examination of athletics, gymnastics and swimming Olympic telecasts on Slovenian public television are presented. Some of them are pervasive through all sports, while others are limited to a single event or even a single sportscaster. Even this, however, does not diminish TV Slovenija's and its Sport Section's responsibility to assure a fair and unbiased coverage—even (?) about sports. The "busiest" commentator in this study, for instance, accumulated over 25 hours of airtime through nine days of track and field competitions (predominantly, though not always, alone). His spoken efforts *alone* had a wide reach and were thus potentially influential for a great deal of viewers who tuned in to watch the world's global sports festival.

Broadcasts are carried out by individual reporters, rather than editors, or even by an indefinite "Television;" however, sports editors and company executives monitor the announcers' work. When speaking on air, they act as the voice of the network they represent. Implicitly, *they are* the television and, in this case, they are

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<sup>g</sup> "World champions, world champions, world champions!" Spoken on Italian public television, RAI, moments after the referee's final whistle in the 1982 FIFA World Cup final against West Germany.

<sup>h</sup> "Only an earthquake or a natural disaster can save Yugoslavia," spoken after Slovenia scored a third consecutive goal to grab a 3-0 lead in a game against Yugoslavia at the 2000 UEFA EURO soccer championship. Yugoslavia managed to equalize by netting three consecutive goals within approximately five minutes of Slovenia's third goal.

the voice of a *public* service broadcaster. Biased and partisan reporting, even if it derives from a single individual, becomes an issue for the entire network.

### **8.2.1 A special attitude to Slovenian athletes**

The single most obvious and pervasive trend, shared by television sportscasters in nearly all nations, is their special approach to representatives of the network's "home" nation.

When reporting from international competitions, most sports reporters engage in a patriotic discourse characterized by the "Us vs. Them" dichotomy. This is most evident in the incorporation of specific personal pronouns to designate an athlete or a team as "ours." Many scholars see this as a form of nationalism (Billig 1995, Tomlinson 1996, Maguire and Poulton 1999, Lee and Maguire 2009) and some have studied its impact on the viewers' identity (Turner and Oakes 1989, Bryant and Cummins 2009). Still, this notion is so deeply rooted in many nations' media and societal praxes that even most media professionals perceive it as a natural and universal discursive practice.

Slovenian announcers are no exception as they continuously referred to Slovenian competitors as "ours:" the swimmer Damir Dugonjič was presented as "our student at Berkeley,"<sup>28</sup> and even as "our Damir."<sup>29</sup> Even Aljaž Pegan, a gymnast who *failed* to qualify for the Olympics, was labeled "our ace."<sup>30</sup> Patriotic descriptions were also common for members of the Slovenian track and field team: the prowess of the sprinter Matic Osovnikar was accentuated by stating that he is "our record holder"<sup>31</sup> as many as three times in a single telecast. Brigita Langerholc was described as "our champion,"<sup>32</sup> and hammer thrower Primož Kozmus as "our hope for an athletics medal"<sup>33</sup>—all on one day.

These examples combine two methods of enhancing nationalism through discourse: the connotation of Slovenian athletes as "ours," and their portrayal as supremely successful. References to "our champion" or "our record-holder" abounded throughout the entire 17 days of the Olympics. Hence, besides building a sense of imagined community, the commentators persistently underscored the quality of its representatives. In doing so, they uplifted the social identity of viewers who recognize themselves as Slovenians (Oakes et al. 1994).



The participants labeled “ours” included Marija Šestak, a Serbian-born athlete who obtained Slovenian citizenship after marrying former Slovenian runner Matija Šestak in 2006. Before the marriage, Marija Šestak (nee Martinović) lived in Belgrade, Serbia; she competed internationally for Yugoslavia and, later, Serbia and Montenegro. Nonetheless, she was labeled “our champion”<sup>34</sup> just as the “native” Brigita Langerholc was, and introduced as being on the verge of “becoming the new hero of the women’s national team.”<sup>35</sup> In the last quote, the announcer did not specify *which* women’s national team he referred to; he assumed the viewer would “naturally” take the Slovenian perspective.

The naturalization of athletes is a common practice in contemporary sports. A swap of jerseys and documents can result in the transformation of an alien into “one of us.” In fact, some national teams would currently be best described as a group of athletes sharing a common passport<sup>i</sup>, rather than a true “national” team. This can have curious implications, such as in the shifting role of soccer in Slovenian society. This sport was seen as a “Balkan” one (an adjective that connotes negative feelings for most Slovenian nationals) after the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1991, but was then reinstated and watched with admiration after the Slovenian national team qualified for the 2000 UEFA EURO, the 2002 FIFA World Cup and, most recently, the 2010 FIFA World Cup. The game became popular among Slovenians of all strata and even top-level politicians began attending their games. Still, many team members are first- or second-generation immigrants from other former Yugoslav republics, effectively legitimating the “Balkan” descriptor (see Stankovič 2004). This makes the idea of cheering for a *national* team only because athletes, broadcasters and television fans share a common passport even more obsolete<sup>j</sup>.

A telling observation concerning the perception of Slovenian national identity was that “ever since ’91, we, Slovenians, of course, don’t have anything in common

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<sup>i</sup> An example is the Slovenian basketball team whose past members include US native Arriel McDonald, Bosnian natives Aleksandar Čapin, Ivica Jurković and Emir Predžić, Croatian native Jurica Golemac, and other “non-natives.”

<sup>j</sup> Another curious example of shifting national identity and social phenomenology that transcends sports was the selection of Lopez Lomong as the United States’ flag-bearer at the 2008 Olympics opening ceremony. Lomong is one of the “lost boys of Sudan” and his selection was politically motivated as a form of protest against the Chinese support of the volatile political situation in this African country. The symbolism of Lomong’s appointment as the USA’s flag-bearer was mentioned during a telecast: “With this [appointment], the Americans have somewhat shown their attitude towards the genocide in Darfur, which the global community somehow cannot stop” (ath, Aug 17; Sl. *Američani so s tem nekako pokazali svoj odnos do genocida v Darfurju, ki ga nekako ne uspe ustaviti svetovna skupnost*).

with the Balkan Games.”<sup>36</sup> This regional sporting event (featuring competitors from Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Turkey and Yugoslavia) was obviously seen by the announcer as a relic from the period when Slovenia was a Yugoslav republic—a period that is now trying to be diminished in light of Slovenia’s shift to as a sovereign and “European” country (see Doupona Topič and Coakley 2010).

The quantitative data in Sections 8.1.1 and 8.1.2 showed the imbalance of comments devoted to Slovenian athletes. A critical analysis of the discourse confirms these findings and illustrates occasional exaggerations in the perception of their performances as partisanship and cheering led to frequent biased and even irrational comments and estimations of possible outcomes. The gymnastics commentary team, for instance, suggested that spectators had applauded Mitja Petkovšek “because the public announcer *probably added* that he is the world champion on the parallel bars”<sup>37</sup> (emphasis added). Similarly, the swimming commentator intimated that Sara Isaković was given *special* attention: “As you can see, the camera operator shows her *more*, she is *in the spotlight*, of course, as the one with the fastest time in the semifinals”<sup>38</sup> (emphasis added). Later, the commentator speculated that the organizers were *expecting* Isaković to triumph (rather than foreseeing that possibility)—a claim she made based on the fact she had heard the Slovenian national anthem being played at the venue prior to the start of the competitions that morning. The same commentator cheerfully predicted that “an avalanche [of medals]”<sup>39</sup> would follow Isaković’s silver accolade. Stated expectations of Slovenian athletes’ performance outcomes often turned out to be incorrect, such as when the voice of the Slovenian Olympic swimming telecasts suggested that Damir Dugonjič was “fighting through towards first place”<sup>40</sup> only seconds before he ended up in *fifth* position in the event.

Cheering for Slovenian athletes was thus not concealed, nor were any attempts made to contain it. Rather, it was considered self-obvious and something all viewers will engage in: after Primož Kozmus won the hammer throw competition, the sportscaster Andrej Stare assumed that “we’ll obviously all celebrate in our own way”<sup>41</sup>, while swimming commentator Jolanda Bertole introduced the swimming medal count by stating: “It’s our great joy, Slovenia [is] in 13<sup>th</sup> place.” Bertole also commented on Isaković’s progression to the Olympic final by declaring that “we hope this would encourage some Slovenian swimmer to work harder, to practice, so that

one day, maybe even in London in four years, he'll experience the same moments as the swimmers here."<sup>42</sup>

Rooting for Slovenian athletes was considered both self-obvious and compulsory. Andrej Stare let out a sigh of relief after hammer thrower Ivan Tsikhan (from Belarus) missed an opportunity to take the lead over Primož Kozmus. He added: "I don't want to be malicious, but today of course I am rooting, myself and of course the entire Slovenia, for Primož Kozmus."<sup>43</sup> Pan-Slovenian cheering was also anticipated for other competitors seen as favorites: "Let's thus cross our fingers for the Kranj-born [Brigita Langerholc],"<sup>44</sup> and "Tomorrow will be D-day for us; tomorrow we'll cross our fingers for *our hero*, Mitja Petkovšek"<sup>45</sup> (emphasis added). Other rudimentary forms of support included an eccentric ritual suggested by the telecaster before Primož Kozmus threw the hammer: "Now of course we'll all shake a little bit; those of you who can tap with your feet, do so; I can't [tap] in my commentating booth, but I'm as tense as a string on a guitar."<sup>46</sup>

The interviews with TV Slovenija's commentators showed that they think of cheering for Slovenian athletes as an acceptable custom and something the viewers expect. Even though Head of Sports Mile Jovanović says this is often the subject of debate at staff meetings (personal communication, May 19, 2010), all members of the sports section who were interviewed consider it normal to have "a certain amount of bias" towards their nation's competitors in international events; one of the network's senior commentators even claimed that, when broadcasting international competitions, "the public does not accept unbiased commentators well" (Miha Žibrat, personal communication, January 25, 2010). On the other hand, Jovanović himself claimed that especially older and more experienced staff members argue that commentators on public television should *not* use specific personal pronouns to denote competitors as "ours," or say that "we" are playing. Yet, he says he is "in doubt" regarding what approach is suitable and says he thinks these experienced staff members "might be right" (personal communication, May 19, 2010).

The two medals won by Slovenian competitors in athletics and swimming were presented as belonging to a whole imagined community of Slovenian people—they were also "ours." When it became certain that Primož Kozmus would win one, Andrej Stare exclaimed, "*we've* got a medal!"<sup>47</sup> Moments later, he specified that "at least the silver medal is *ours*"<sup>48</sup> (emphases added). A similar attitude was adopted in a

swimming telecast when the commentator shouted: “We’ve got a silver medal, bravo Sara!”<sup>49</sup> and “We lived through the first swimming medal in history”<sup>50</sup> when referring to Sara Isaković’s second-place finish, the first swimming medal won by a Slovenian representative. The discourse employed by telecasters during Kozmus’ and Isaković’s medal performances were typical cases of basking in reflected glory, or BIRGing (Cialdini et al. 1976), as they offered a piece of glory to both viewers and the announcer himself who was part of this glorious moment.

As noted in the introductory section, rooting for and the resulting identification with a team can result in superstitions and “part-play/part-serious” efforts to influence game outcomes (Eastman and Riggs 1994). Hence, it is not surprising that Kozmus’ gold medal—which was allegedly won thanks to fans’ feet stomping and the commentator’s tenseness, among other elements—is genuinely perceived as a nation’s effort. In addition, compulsory rooting and the “collective effort” of winning a medal was sensed in a particular way by announcers themselves as both athletics and swimming commentators framed Kozmus’ and Isaković’s achievements as highlights of their own careers (e.g., “I’ve been broadcasting athletics for 30 years and my desires were somehow oriented in such a way that, someday, Slovenian athletics would reach the world and Olympic top,”<sup>51</sup> or a clear-cut: “For me, this is also the climax of my career as a reporter”<sup>52</sup>). Sara Isaković’s success would influence swimming telecasts for entire days to come as the commentator noted that she could not “get Sara Isaković and her silver medal out of [her] mind”<sup>53</sup> even the day after she had won the medal.

Both commentators who reported these two performances lacked distance towards the events as their rooting for them was followed by seemingly uncontrolled emotions. However, there were hints that such “uncontrolled” emotions might have been planned, after all: Andrej Stare announced in advance that “in the next minute, after Vadim Devyatovskiy’s throw [the penultimate in the hammer throw competition], I’ll also be able to squeal like my Japanese colleague... Excuse me in advance if the scream may be a little unexpected for our television routine.”<sup>54</sup> His “Japanese colleague” was actually described as “squealing as if they had cut into his flesh with a razor blade when [Japanese athlete] Murofushi releases the hammer”<sup>55</sup> earlier in that telecast.

It is unclear whether commentators honestly failed to anticipate the chance of Slovenian medals in these events—an unlikely scenario considering the extensive favorites previsions sportscasters offered ahead of the events—or they simply picked very unfortunate lines to go along with what they perceived were historic moments for Slovenian sport. NBC skating and track and field sportscaster, Tom Hammond, said that “if you know there’s a chance there could be a big moment, you have to at least have thought about what you might say and say something meaningful” (in Billings 2008, 75). Perhaps the Slovenian announcers did not do this.

Primož Kozmus’ and Sara Isaković’s triumphs were framed with a strong patriotic connotation. The hammer throw was regarded as a “gold medal for Slovenia!”<sup>56</sup>, and the awards ceremony was presented as an occasion when “we’ll sing our Zdravljica [the Slovenian national anthem] all together.”<sup>57</sup> The anthem was labeled “our beloved Zdravljica”<sup>58</sup> later in the telecast. The swimming medal was likewise deemed “a big moment for Slovenian sport, for Slovenian swimming, especially,”<sup>59</sup> and this ceremony was introduced by noting that “it is with great joy that we’ll follow this ceremony, the first Slovenian Olympic swimming medal.”<sup>60</sup> At one point, this single exploit was even framed as more important than the entire Olympic swimming program: “The fact that the swimming part of the Olympics came to the end and that Michael Phelps made it through history with eight gold medals is marginal for the Slovenian people.”<sup>61</sup> Hence, not only was “our” silver medal privileged over eight golds, but it even outgrew the entire global festival. It became a myth.

Circumstances concerning Slovenia were occasionally introduced even during events or performances involving foreign competitors. These references tended to positively portray Slovenia or events based in this country (e.g. “We had the honor of watching [Chinese multimedalist, Cheng Fei] in Maribor last year,”<sup>62</sup> or “Anastasia Zuyeva, European champion this year (...) She trained in Koper, she wanted to prepare well (...) Zuyeva, she trained at ours in Koper”<sup>63</sup>). Such remarks can indeed be considered curious or noteworthy from a reporting point of view; yet, they also convey subtle patriotic connotations that lift the country’s reputation as an influential athletic environment, like fostering the idea that “athletes are better because they gathered experience/practiced in Slovenia.” Similarly, breaststroke events were framed as “Slovenian events”<sup>64</sup> because Slovenia had three swimmers who specialized

in that particular style (even though only two of them actually competed in Beijing). These were the only events that were ascribed a “nationality” in the Olympics: even the women’s 100-meter dash with three Jamaicans on the podium and the men’s 400-meter run with three US competitors claiming the top spots were presented as “regular” athletic events.

### 8.2.2 Praising the stars

A second group of competitors discussed in a distinct way in Slovenian Olympic telecasts encompassed the most successful individuals, or “stars.” This group included a handful of selected competitors—most notably the swimmers Michael Phelps and Sara Isaković, and the athletes Usain Bolt and Primož Kozmus—who drew particular attention both in terms of the quantity of reporting, and on-air portrayal. Table 8.13 shows the total number of comments dedicated to these four athletes and the share of appreciative/negative descriptors applied to them.

**Table 8.13 Total comments and appreciative/negative commentary ratio for Michael Phelps, Sara Isaković, Usain Bolt and Primož Kozmus**

Athlete	Comments (rank)	Appreciative (%)	Negative (%)
Michael Phelps	529 (#1)	208 (92.4)	17 (5.6)
Sara Isaković	233 (#2)	73 (94.8)	4 (5.2)
Usain Bolt	184 (#5)	107 (89.2)	13 (10.8)
Primož Kozmus	169 (#7)	68 (95.8)	3 (4.2)

Note: appreciative/negative figures only include evaluative comments (see Section 7.2).

The mere fact that successful athletes are predominantly presented in a positive way is not unexpected, nor is it problematic *per se*. After all, commentators could hardly make negative remarks about multi-gold medalists even if they had been looking for them. The issue here is the lack of professional distance that media staff who are essentially *journalists* should be able to maintain.

Exaggerated comments were most evident in swimming events: Michael Phelps, for instance, was deemed a “swimming superstar,”<sup>65</sup> a person “we could talk about throughout the entire Olympic Games,”<sup>66</sup> and even “the biggest name here, not just in the swimming part, but also of the entire Games.”<sup>67</sup> In the eyes of the commentator, Phelps’ victories were so self-obvious as to be met with slight disappointment if he

failed to deliver a historical performance: “*Too bad* it wasn’t a little bit faster, so we could have seen a world record. This would make his achievement *much bigger*”<sup>68</sup> (emphases added). Phelps’ eighth achievement of his unprecedented multi-gold medal swimming exploits was introduced as “a step towards athletic eternity, towards the greatest athletic achievement this world has ever seen,”<sup>69</sup> and the announcer wished the swimmer to make it into history. His eighth victory was accompanied by a scream of joy by the commentator and described as “an achievement we might not see *not only in the next one hundred, but even one thousand years*”<sup>70</sup> (emphasis added). Certainly, extraordinary coverage and supernatural descriptions of Phelps’ successes were not limited to Slovenian television: US anchor, Bob Costas, dubbed him “a human speed boat” (Billings, Angelini and Holt Duke 2010).

The exaggerated descriptions of Slovenian athletes mentioned in the previous section also applied to Slovenian star swimmer Sara Isaković. Despite the seven-medal difference between Phelps and Isaković, swimming announcer Jolanda Bertole employed very similar discursive strategies to portray both. Isaković was referred to as being “in the spotlight”<sup>71</sup> and also as being given extra focus by the camera crew. Competitively, she was described as “breaking record after record this year”<sup>72</sup> while, physically, she was identified as the one “obviously having the brightest smile”<sup>73</sup> on the 200-meter freestyle podium.

Female US competitors are sometimes described as “all-American girls.” This image symbolizes the qualities typically sought in a young female in the United States. Slovenian commentators did not systematically engage in such discourse, although Isaković was once described in the following terms: “When we ask people, they all say, [she is] good, laborious, likeable, kind, lovely, always smiling, talkative, positive, aspiring, she fulfilled her dreams; all just superlatives describing this young swimmer.”<sup>74</sup> Many of these qualities are traditionally the epitome of the “Slovenian national character;” Isaković was thus portrayed as an archetype of Slovenianness. Perceived threats to the swimmer equaled threats to the nation: Bertole reported that US swimmer Katie Hoff had stated in an interview that she did not know Isaković. As a consequence, when Hoff came in fourth in two consecutive finals in a 70-minute time span, the reporter noted that “Hoff has now received a true lesson,”<sup>75</sup> and identified her as “the one who said she didn’t know Sara Isaković.”<sup>76</sup> Jolanda Bertole later spoke to the author of this dissertation and explained that she was bothered by

Hoff's quotes, which she deemed "typically American, essentially, how good she is, how she is going to beat them all, how oh-so-great she is and everything" (personal communication, June 4, 2010).

Other athletes were also portrayed using very praiseful terms. Several were described as "heroes," including "hero of the day,"<sup>77</sup> Brian Clay, and "the big hero of the Slovenian sports delegation in Beijing,"<sup>78</sup> Primož Kozmus. This list also included Usain Bolt who was described as "one of the biggest heroes of these Olympic Games."<sup>79</sup> The sprinter was hailed as the "new king of the sprint"<sup>80</sup> and even labeled an extraterrestrial: "It's as if Usain Bolt is a sprinter the Jamaicans have imported from, let's say, Saturn or Neptune. No man on Earth ever was as fast as Usain Bolt."<sup>81</sup> He also attracted several negative comments, which made him somewhat of an exception among the other spick-and-span star competitors. These criticisms were triggered by his uncalled-for behavior towards his opponents, which at one point was characterized as "slightly humiliating."<sup>82</sup>

Over-praising comments about individual competitors were largely absent from gymnastics; some admiring remarks were only devoted to successful nations (e.g., "the Chinese's routines are quite simply divine"<sup>83</sup>). This is partially due to the different format of the competition: stringent qualifying rules cut the number of participants (less than one-tenth that of the track and field competition), and the contest itself is considerably shorter than the athletics or swimming part. The strict selection process results in a more balanced competition and individuals generally have fewer opportunities to "stand out."

In general, Slovenian announcers seem to enhance reporting from sporting events with some storytelling. Star competitors are presented as heroes, and some of their antagonists, such as Katie Hoff, inevitably come out as villains. This construction does not differ from that in North American networks such as NBC where storytelling is considered an important part in that many uninitiated, "casual" fans *need* such contents to actually develop an interest in the event (Hammond in Billings 2008, 61). Yet Slovenian broadcasters explicitly deny any purposeful constructing of "heroes versus villains" narratives (Jolanda Bertole, personal communication, June 4, 2010).



Eulogizing commentary is common to all TV Slovenija's sportscasters. The actual selection of vocabulary varies among them. The quantity and tone of speech depends on personal style. Examples presented in this section indicate that the most praiseful commentary was dedicated to the two swimmers mentioned. This is to some extent understandable: if any athlete were to receive hyperbole, then no one other than Michael Phelps deserves it for his unprecedented eight gold medals in a single Olympic Games. This phenomenon was reported in other nations' Olympic broadcasting; still, comments about infinity and imagined physical traits seem over the top. Interestingly, Slovenian announcers differ from their NBC colleagues in that there is virtually no "spillover" between sports: each Slovenian commentator stuck almost exclusively to the sport at hand, whereas Michael Phelps was a subject who transcended swimming broadcasts within NBC Olympic programming (Billings, Angelini and Holt Duke 2010). This is odd given that some performances were depicted as universally extraordinary and even "millennial."

### ***8.2.3 Winning is all that counts***

A third discursive trend consistently found in Slovenian Olympic telecasts is a fascination with winning. The glorification of great athletic achievements and successful performances is an extension of the previous trend, which was the unabridged admiration of victors.

This obsession with triumph differs from the popular notion (as well as Olympic creed) that it is taking part which counts, and dovetails with football coach Henry Russel Sanders' famous statement that "Winning isn't everything; it's the only thing." Slovenian announcers' attitudes to competing and winning is thus best summarized by the following statement made after US sprinter Lauryn Williams dropped the baton in the 4 x 100 meter relay: "In a sportsmanlike fashion, the American then ran till the end, but this won't help much; the Americans won't win a new medal at these Olympic Games."<sup>84</sup> Just taking part is thus far from satisfying.

On-air talent's obsession with results and successful performances explains the quantity of positive commentaries that were made (see Table 8.7). Many of them comprised information about all sorts of records—personal, national, continental, junior, past, Olympic, and/or World. They were often reported as either background

information or a guideline to determine an athlete's quality. On several occasions, records in general were seen as the highlights of the day (e.g., "It's really fantastic to be broadcasting such athletics, when world records are broken on a daily basis; we've seen five, and an additional three European, and two world juniors,"<sup>85</sup> and "Is it really possible that today we'll witness world records being set in all events?"<sup>86</sup>). Medal count standings were also mentioned frequently.

Jolanda Bertole explained the origins of this fascination with records: "You always strive for more, for better, for higher. (...) We somehow fell into it. The swimmers were happy, and everybody says records are meant to be broken. (...) A record is a record, it's something special" (personal communication, June 4, 2010).

If records inspired fascination, less-than-glamorous results were deemed as something "to get over as soon as possible."<sup>87</sup> The women's 5000-meter final impressed the announcer as he noted, "I can't recall a five kilometers run so slowly,"<sup>88</sup> while the men's high jump qualifications were described as "all but promotion for athletics... This hopping [sic] at 2.15 [meters]... But of course this annoyance for many athletes, the qualifications, must be carried out."<sup>89</sup> Similar rhetoric was applied to nations and competitors that, in the sportscasters' opinion, stood no chance: the "realistic chance" of claiming a medal was set as the criteria for determining first-rate athletes (e.g., "Moldova doesn't have many elite athletes, [ones] who could reach for the medals"<sup>90</sup>), and sportscasters were even willing to bet on an athlete's likeliness of losing: "Here is the leading competitor from Lesotho. I bet she, of course, won't be among the best at the end."<sup>91</sup> Examples of diminishing and even disparaging remarks about "second class" results and placings abound through all sports.

Even Slovenian competitors who performed below (the commentator's) expectations were not exempt from overt criticism. Pia Tajnikar's result in the 100-meter dash was considered "extremely poor"<sup>92</sup> and her entire performance "an unpleasant surprise."<sup>93</sup> The commentator argued that Tajnikar had "fallen short completely with this really humble, humble achievement."<sup>94</sup>

The negative portrayal of a humble performance by a Slovenian athlete even became the subject of a public controversy involving the pole vaulter Jurij Rován and the commentator Andrej Stare. The dispute started with the TV personality's very

critical on-air evaluation of Rován's performance in the qualifications. After the first unsuccessful attempt at 5.15 meters (a relatively low height), Stare described the event as "incredible" and expressed his hope that Rován would "be more focused in the continuation of these qualifications."<sup>95</sup> Negative remarks continued after Rován's second unsuccessful attempt, when Stare exclaimed: "He has failed for the second time! Ouch, ouch, ouch, ouch, ouch. Five meters fifteen, unsuccessful for the second time. Ohhhh. I wanted to say a couple of sentences, but I'd better bite my tongue."<sup>96</sup> Moments before the athlete managed to vault over the opening height, the telecaster explained the reason for his concern: "If he will be [sic] eliminated without a valid result, then this will truly be a tourist trip to the Olympic Games in Beijing."<sup>97</sup>

On the following day, an irate Jurij Rován went to TV Slovenija's commentary booth at the athletics stadium and poured some bottled water over the telecaster. Stare made the incident public; he regarded it as a form of "unheard of and inadmissible pressure on the media (...) because they critically and fairly report [about athletes'] performances" (S. J./T. O., August 23, 2008). Most media outlets expressed disagreement with Rován's behavior. Eventually, the athlete apologized for his actions, whereas the commentator neither apologized nor retracted his comments.

Andrej Stare's coverage of Tajnikar's and Rován's poor performances appear as examples of cutting off reflected failure, or CORFing (Snyder et al. 1986). Unlike after Kozmus' "golden" performance, which was framed by Stare as the highlight of his own career as a broadcaster, the announcer now rejected associating with what he perceived were sub-standard and thus image-damaging feats.

In the interview conducted for this dissertation, Andrej Stare said he has never been sorry about the remarks he made. He explained his remarks by suggesting that 35-year-old Rován went to the Olympics just to secure the status of an "elite athlete of international class" (a status awarded by the Slovenian Olympic Committee which grants, among other things, financial compensation). "He did not go there to compete," said Stare. "Then he starts making excuses, 'I was injured.' Listen, an injured athlete does not belong to the Olympic Games. (...) So you went there to perform, not to compete" (Andrej Stare, personal communication, June 3, 2010).

Stare claimed that what led to the argument between himself and Rován was actually a misunderstanding: “I used the conditional, ‘*If* he does not jump over, this is a tourist trip.’<sup>98</sup> But he had information from his prompters, which are [prompters] harmful, right, he had completely different information. He had completely different information and then he was apologizing, cried there and so on, even though they sent him home then” (Andrej Stare, personal communication, June 3, 2010).

Hence, the source did not find his own quoted statement problematic and thus did not offer any apology for it. Yet slightly more troubled was Head of Sports at TV Slovenija, Mile Jovanović, who commented on the issue as follows (personal communication, May 19, 2010):

This quote is worded awkwardly, right. However, say, personally, I would even somewhat agree with the content of this statement. (...) In my opinion, it’s the Olympic Committee’s fault, which sends athletes for whom they know from the beginning it’s not even sure they will make it past the qualifiers, let alone do something in the game. Yet, Holy Mary, if we really completely shut the reporters’ mouths, so they don’t have some liberty to say some things a little more plastic, then we won’t do much, right? Then we’ll be criticized, which we already are, about how boring, monotonous are we, we don’t put in feelings, and so on.

A wide gap exists between the perception of the brightest performances—which are eulogized and extensively discussed—and the depiction of more mundane efforts. These are mentioned only in passing or even portrayed in a disparaging tone. Jurij Rován was seen as a “potential tourist” for allegedly traveling to the Olympics to *perform*, rather than to *compete*.

Both eulogizing and disparaging discursive strategies contribute to presenting a one-sided picture of sports, as well as of society. Sports is not always about winning so it would be good if public television sportscasters were to adopt an unbiased and unprejudiced attitude to what are, literally, both sides of the medal.

#### **8.2.4 Foreigners and exotics**

The Olympic Games are a showcase of several thousand competitors hailing from over 200 countries and territories from the four corners of the globe. In this unique sports festival, less skilled participants are able to compete on the same stage

as the world's best athletes, and the qualifying rounds in many individual events offer a wide array of performances from contestants of different levels of talent and ability. Most of them do not progress to the finals, which are usually reserved for the most successful professional athletes; yet, all participants have the same opportunities—at least in theory. Indeed, Olympic history has had its share of heroes and heroines who have managed to pull off unlikely victories and earn Olympic glory.

For hundreds of sportsmen and sportswomen, the qualifying rounds at the Olympic Games are a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for international exposure. The majority of them are largely unknown to reporters from nations other than their own, and most reporters following the Olympic Games learn only those basic facts about them that the International Olympic Committee's information system provides (Atos Origin 2010). Official start lists, which are a sportscaster's essential source of information, often provide nationality as the only detail regarding each competitor. It is thus not surprising that nationality was among the most frequent type of background information offered to TV Slovenija's viewers about non-Slovenian competitors, as it was often the only known snippet of information about them.

People tend to organize information so as to simplify cognition and produce a harmonious image of life and reality. Naturally, only what is learned (as opposed to what remains unknown) can be added to this image. Early stages of competitions make up a significant portion of TV Slovenija's Olympic programming. At this stage, most athletes do not succeed in advancing to the next round. These defeats are often looked upon as failures—more so if the athlete is unknown to both viewers and the TV announcer, and her or his achievement cannot be put into perspective.

Clear-cut divisions between successful and failing competitors (i.e., between those who advance to the next round and those who do not), as well as between Slovenians and non-Slovenians—or, more generally, between “us” and “them”—easily combine to create the following cognitive image: if “our” *representative* is successful and “theirs” fails, then “we” are more talented and/or skilled than “them” (e.g., “The athlete from Saudi Arabia is not too fast, either”<sup>99</sup>). This discursive dichotomy is common in most national broadcast coverage. Comparisons can be very direct; for instance, a male runner's ability was portrayed in the following way: “The representative of Myanmar has an average personal best for a women's competition, 15:16.23. He probably wouldn't even win the Slovenian national championship.”<sup>100</sup>

These are very basic examples of the self-categorization mechanism whereby the nationality variable denotes the social group, and the athletic outcome stands for the social category. Both are at the heart of social stereotyping (Oakes et al. 1994). In this case, it creates a form of uplifting its own nation's representatives and, as a result, all nationals.

This mechanism is stimulated by the International Olympic Committee itself as it deems nationality the principal factor for determining athletes who will compete at the Olympics besides their actual athletic achievement (i.e., a fulfilled qualifying norm or process). Hence, it is no surprise that medals won by single competitors are often credited to an entire nation (as in the all-Slovenian medals mentioned earlier). Divisions by nationality are widespread and have grown to be perceived as self-obvious (Tomlinson 1996, Collette 1998 in Billings 2008, Lee and Maguire 2009). Alternative methods of identification are possible; some examples are offered by Coakley (2009, 454–8).

All sportscasters on TV Slovenija regularly identified athletes by their nationality—either as an additional bit of information (e.g., “The American, Horton,”<sup>101</sup> or “Boštjan Buč, Slovenia”<sup>102</sup>), or as the sole identifier (e.g., “16.475, the score for the French”<sup>103</sup>). Nationality was frequently used as a synonym to avoid repeating an athlete's name (e.g., “Yang Wei even 16.625. (...) Definitely another big step by the Chinese towards a new Olympic title”<sup>104</sup>).

The discourse about nationality was occasionally influenced by perceptions of ethnicity. Athletes who did not match typical images of ethnicity and national belonging were accentuated and described as “imported.” “The Black imported Norwegian, Ezinne Okparaebo, is also very fast. Okparaebo actually comes from Nigeria and is one of the two million immigrants from other continents in Norway. When you walk through the streets of Oslo you feel as if you were in Nairobi and not in a Scandinavian capital.”<sup>105</sup> Naturalized athletes were deemed “untrue” representatives of their new homelands: “The best Asian [steeplechase] runner, Yoshitaka Iwamizu. By the best Asian runner, of course, I mean from that true Asia, not those runners imported from Africa who compete for Gulf countries.”<sup>106</sup> Interestingly, naturalized Slovenians were considered neither “imported” nor “untrue;” on the contrary, Marija Šestak was regularly labeled a Slovenian or, in the

alternative, described as a former Serbian national, and even the Jamaican-born Merlene Ottey was referred to as “now a Slovenian citizen.”<sup>107</sup>

Another inappropriate descriptor was that of “exotics.” Reporters in athletics and swimming occasionally resorted to this label to describe nations and competitors perceived as being outside the circle of medal contenders. Heats featuring these competitors were framed as dull: “The first two heats, *nothing in particular*, if I just mention the countries that swam: Congo, Bolivia, Liberia, Mauritius, Armenia, Bermuda, Fiji, Aruba, the United Arab Emirates. *Now you understand*”<sup>108</sup> (emphasis added). The same tone was employed the next day: “We’ve been watching countries such as Kyrgyzstan, Virgin Islands, Guyana, the Netherlands Antilles, Micronesia, Turkmenistan, American Samoa, Myanmar, Cambodia, Sudan, Palestine, Tajikistan, Rwanda, Guinea, Malawi, Seychelles, Tanzania, Antigua and Barbuda, Laos, Yemen, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Congo, Togo. A whole bunch of, we could say, *non-swimming countries*”<sup>109</sup> (emphasis added). Indeed, none of these countries ever won swimming medals at the Olympics—but up until the Beijing Games, this was also the case with Slovenia (even Slovenian swimmers competing for former Yugoslavia). Deeming such countries “non-swimming” seems excessive.

A track variation of the “non-swimming” mark was branding “sprinting countries” several Southeast Asian nations that rarely claim medals over short running distances: “This time the renowned sprinting country of Bangladesh doesn’t have any representative [in the men’s 100 m heats], nor does Taiwan. Thailand is without one as well; and, let’s say, Madagascar, which has always had an athlete among the best sprinters.”<sup>110</sup> Bangladesh, Madagascar and Thailand never won an Olympic athletics medal. Taiwan, however, has won two (in 1960 and 1968) and was thus at par with Slovenia in the all-time athletics medal count before the Beijing Games. Curiously, in 1968, one of the medals was won by Chi Cheng in the women’s 80-meter hurdles race—a sprinting event.

Exotism was not limited to far-flung countries on other continents. It included Bosnia-Herzegovina which, like Slovenia, is a former Yugoslav republic. The statement, “The entry list features some athletes from athletically exotic countries, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina (...)”<sup>111</sup>, is also remarkable since it describes as “athletically exotic” a nation which could arguably be compared to Slovenia itself.

Individual athletes were not spared similar derogatory comments, either: athletics announcer, Andrej Stare, referred to Tongan runner Aisea Tohi as “a true, as I often call them, Coubertinian athlete.”<sup>112</sup> This refers to the Olympic creed that the most important thing is not winning but taking part—a phrase inaccurately attributed to the founder of the modern Olympic Games, Pierre de Coubertin, who had only summarized the thoughts of the Bishop of Central Pennsylvania, Ethelbert Talbot, in 1908 (Wendl 1995, Widlund 1995, International Olympic Committee 2007b, Greenberg 2009).

Occasionally, “exotic” competitors performed unexpectedly well. These feats were met with dissonance and surprise. For instance, Kenyan swimmer Jason Dunford was first described as “hardly (...) one of the favorites for a top place.”<sup>113</sup> This assessment was retracted moments later when the swimmer won a heat with an Olympic record: “Or not [referring to the quote about not being a favorite], this Olympic record set by Dunford speaks otherwise.”<sup>114</sup> Later on, he was described as someone who had “somehow appeared and became a star”<sup>115</sup> the previous year, and the earlier remark about Dunford not being a favorite was explained by noting that “we’re not used to seeing many Kenyans in swimming.”<sup>116</sup>

Since Slovenia is not an athletic superpower, derogatory comments about other nations seem even more inappropriate: “People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.” At one point during the Olympics, Slovenia was indeed ranked first in terms of medals per inhabitants (not a very common measure of success), and had slipped into second place by the end of the games (dnevnik.si, August 18, 2008, 24ur.com, August 21, 2008). However, it only ranked 38<sup>th</sup> in terms of total medals won. As noted earlier, Slovenian athletes accounted for 0.56% of all participants and won 0.52% of all medals (5 out of the 957 medals awarded in 302 events). This share could thus be “expected” considering the number of athletes taking part in the event. Hence, comments such as that about the Palauan runner Jesse Tamangrow who “at the Slovenian girls’ championship would not finish among the top-three,”<sup>117</sup> are inadequate, to say the least.

Olympic myths make history and society intelligible (Real 1989), and Olympic telecasts can be a culturally broadening experience as they bring stories from scores of countries around the world (Billings 2008). That is why representing athletes or nations as “sporting exotics” can be interpreted as insulting and is certainly inapt.



The purpose of the International Olympic Committee's wild-card entry system, which allows these "exotics" from lesser sporting nations to compete against the world's best without having to achieve normal qualifying standards, is not to amuse spectators and sportscasters but to encourage a new era of competition in countries without an Olympic, or even athletic, heritage (Rendell, Gibbons and Rice 2004). Offensive remarks invalidate such efforts and can only increase ignorance and hostility. They can at best be seen as a wasted chance of informing and educating the public—two pillars of the mission of public service broadcasters (Zakon o Radioteleviziji Slovenija 2005, BBC Charter of Incorporation 2006).

Many opportunities to stimulate talks about athletic or cultural differences throughout the world are missed or barely mentioned: when Robina Muqimyar prepared for her race in the 100-meter dash heats, the reporter noted that "the athlete from Afghanistan (...) runs with a scarf on her head."<sup>118</sup> He did not, for instance, explain the purpose of the scarf, or provide background information about what had likely been her turbulent road to the Olympics. Instead, he merely suggested that "the Afghan, of course, competed under the original rules of Olympism."<sup>119</sup> Rather than focusing on the individual, the telecaster merely mentioned Muqimyar's nationality, which was observed in all three comments about the athlete.

The idea that Robina Muqimyar competed "under the original rules of Olympism" is bizarre: originally, women were not even allowed to compete, and the creed that the important thing is taking part was not coined until 1908. Muqimyar might instead be considered a "true Olympian," as Guardian writer Alex Gibbons dubbed her (Rendell, Gibbons and Rice 2004). She might be reflecting the *contemporary* Olympic spirit, which is quite distant from some ideologies supported by the Olympic movement in the past. Even more remarkable is the fact that she was the first Afghan woman to *ever* compete at an Olympic Games (Baker 2004) and that, despite her modest personal best, she had already competed at the previous Games in Athens. Unfortunately, such culturally enriching pieces of information were instead traded in for characterizations of "exotism."

### 8.2.5 Gender stereotypes

The quantitative data in this Olympic content study indicated some gender differences in the attribution of descriptors (Table 8.8). Most notably, men received the bulk of commentary about commitment and stated expectations, whereas women were given more mentions of their experience (or lack thereof).

On the discursive level, specific differences were not very common. Most of the potentially gender-biased themes turned out to work both ways. The first such theme was the construction of one gender as exemplary or superior compared to the other (cf. Poniatowski 2009b). An example was Jolanda Bertole's rhetorical asking about which women might stand out in the swimming part of the Olympics: "Who will be *the women's Phelps*—will it be Katie Hoff or Alessia Filippi or Elizabeth Beisel?"<sup>120</sup> (emphasis added). In turn, race walk sportscaster Peter Kavčič cited a women athlete as a positive example for men racers: "In the same fashion as yesterday's winner, Olga Kaniskina from Russia, we saw the first escape; Alex Schwazer decided to try and gain some advantage in these opening meters."<sup>121</sup> Athletic sportscasts also included several references to "women's" and "men's results"<sup>122</sup> to contextualize good and humble scores, respectively, for competitors of the opposite gender.

TV Slovenija's reporters often referred to female competitors as "girls" (Sl. *dekleta*), potentially constructing their image according to an adolescent ideal (Duncan, Jensen and Messner 1993, Daddario 1994, Halbert and Latimer 1994). However, this mechanism worked in two ways as they described male competitors as "boys" (Sl. *fantje*) only slightly less frequently. Notably, both descriptors were most common in (but not limited to) gymnastics telecasts. This might be due to the look of many competitors which (especially among women) tended to be petite and appear younger, at times even childish. The gymnast Yang Yilin, for instance, was once even referred to as "yet another from that gymnastics kindergarten."<sup>123</sup>

Discussion of the family life and sexual orientation of the athletes was rare. It mainly included mentions of sporting offspring (e.g., "Reiko Tosa comes from a truly athletic family, as her father was a Japanese national middle distance runner, while her mother, interestingly, was involved in javelin throwing"<sup>124</sup>), or "athletic" marriages (e.g., "Natallia Koronenko, married Mikhnevich; of course, she is married to the shot putter who has already won a bronze medal at these Olympic Games"<sup>125</sup>).

Similar mentions were observed in all three sports and spoken by all commentators. Homosexual or lesbian couplings were never mentioned, though.

The only area that featured obvious gender bias was the depiction of the physical looks and attractiveness of the competitors. Andrej Stare described two hammer throwers in terms that can hardly be seen as acceptable: Aksana Miankova was dubbed “the most, like, most ‘twiggy’ hammer thrower in the whole world (...) she is 1.81 [meters tall] and weighs only 71 kilograms,”<sup>126</sup> and “Clarissa Claretti has, like, the sexiest figure of all hammer throwers, she put on the least body weight.”<sup>127</sup> A similar comment was made about a female shot put competitor who was described as “the most, like, athletically developed shot put competitor.”<sup>128</sup> The same commentator barely contained improper implications of his words ahead of the women’s 800-meter final: “The competitors have already stripped. Not completely, but to get ready for the race (...).”<sup>129</sup>

The author asked Andrej Stare whether he regretted the remarks he made about “sexy female throwers.” He replied (personal communication, June 3, 2010):

Not at all. You know, in athletics, female throwers are a specific group of athletes. They sacrifice the beauty of their body for their athletic results, they stuff themselves and become, I’ll say, chubby, stout, even slightly adipose. (...) And such a woman is considerably less attractive than, I’ll say, a long jumper, who you look at and you get a thousand and one ideas, right? Whereas, for that shot putter, you say, ‘As long as one doesn’t have to look at her,’ right? If she were yours, you’d say, ‘Wow, great, we’ve got a gold medal,’ right, you would venerate her. Otherwise, I think, aesthetically, through a prism of general aesthetics, it’s not exactly the prettiest sight. (...) And why not highlight, right, that you can be in an Olympic final even though you are not evidently in that group.

The gymnastics commentary team frequently portrayed competitors as “elegant.” Women received the most (though not all) of such commentary. On one occasion, technical commentator Ivan Čuk presented elegance as a distinctive female feature; he declared that he was happy Nastia Liukin had won the women’s individual all-around title as “she had an extremely good combination, that winning

combination of difficulty and female elegance, which just brings additional points, maybe not just with the judges, but with all spectators and gymnastics in general.”<sup>130,k</sup>

In over 50 hours of Olympic programming, only two cases of objectified/sexualized representation of male competitors were found. In one instance, Iordan Iovtchev was portrayed as a “charming finalist”<sup>131</sup> by the male gymnastics broadcasters, while a female swimming announcer drew attention to Alain Bernard’s size with the following statement: “Look at this hunk, his shoulders really are as wide as a closet. This is not only mine [opinion?], we can also read it in some swimming magazines.”<sup>132</sup>

The content analysis did not show significant differences in the attribution of remarks denoting competitor’s emotions by gender (Table 8.8). Commentators did not shun male emotionality (e.g., “Latino Americans are emotional, and Cielo Filho also showed his emotions”<sup>133</sup>). Yet, overall, such comments were rare.

Discourse in the three sports analyzed showed no evidence of gender-typing (e.g., distinguishing between male- and female-appropriate events). Even events that some see as extremely physically demanding and thus potentially unsuitable for the “fair sex,” such as the 20 kilometer race walk, hammer throw, or shot put, did not produce gender-typed commentary. The only truly questionable remarks concerned the sexualization of female hammer throwers (curiously limited to just one event). A slight imbalance was also found in the representation of youth and elegance amongst women’s gymnasts. Still, in general the Olympic commentary on TV Slovenija produced very little gendered language.

### **8.2.6 Ethnic stereotypes**

Like most societies in Southeast Europe, Slovenia is ethnically relatively homogeneous. Its cultural variety chiefly derives from its national heterogeneity, which is a corollary of being historically located within multi-national entities, most recently (between 1912 and 1991) within Yugoslavia—a country with four recognized

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<sup>k</sup> Note that judges in female gymnastics competitions are, as a rule, female. The Slovenian language has grammatical genders (“sodnice” being the Slovenian feminine plural form of “judges”), and this distinction was correctly observed in the original statement. The reference to “bringing additional points with the judges” thus does not imply the preferential treatment of female competitors by male judges due to one’s looks.

religions (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox Christianity, and Islam), five nationalities and eight autochthonous minorities (“Yugoslavia: Socialism of sorts” 1966, Wikipedia contributors, “Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia” 2010). As one of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement, Yugoslavia remained neutral and kept in contact with both the “free world” and the Soviet Bloc during the Cold War. People of ethnicities other than White are not completely absent from Slovenian society: up until 1991, Black students came to Ljubljana from African members of the Non-Aligned Movement and some stayed in Slovenia upon graduating. Immigration from other continents again increased after Slovenia joined the European Union. In the last few years, several Blacks have become public figures in Slovenia, such as the former actor and entrepreneur Inacio Binchende, the journalist and poet Sekumady Condé, the singer Joseph “Jose” Nzobandora and, most recently, Peter Bossman, who became the first Black Mayor ever elected in an Eastern European country (Adetunji 2010, Associated Press 2010)<sup>1</sup>. In the last few years, Asians (predominantly Chinese) are increasingly present as restaurant owners; one of them appeared as a guest in a sports show on TV Slovenija aired in evening prime-time during the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Throughout all the Olympic broadcasts, commentary directly linked to athletes’ ethnicity was rare: only a handful of notable comments was isolated from the almost 22,000 lines of transcribed text. Two of them dealt directly with the color of some competitors’ skin: Andrej Stare described the ethnically mixed German relay team as “a colorful team,”<sup>134</sup> and when power supply was momentarily cut off from the monitors in his commentary booth at the Olympic stadium, he described the screen as being “black as if I were to meet, say, Kenenisa Bekele in a tunnel.”<sup>135</sup> Stare also emphasized some athletes’ ethnicity when criticizing their looks: he said he “always admired these Black runners wearing sunglasses at almost 10 p.m. local time, when the sun has long set. Maybe they are just promoters for a sunglass manufacturer.”<sup>136</sup>

Athletic telecasts offered two comments suggesting the “similarity” of all members of an ethnic group: Black Nigerian sprinter Folashade Abugan’s face was

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<sup>1</sup> Ghana-born Peter Bossman, M.D., became Mayor of the Municipality of Piran (coincidentally, the author’s municipality) on October 24, 2010. Bossman (b. 1955) has been living in Slovenia since the mid-1970s and has been a municipal councilor since 1998. Nonetheless, his candidacy became the subject of major public interest in Slovenia and his election sparked international attention. At one point on the day following his election, the news report about it published on the BBC’s website (BBC 2010b) was the tenth-most read item of the day. Among others, Bossman was interviewed by CNN in the days following the election.

described as “very much resembling Falilat Ogunkoya, the Nigerian record-holder,”<sup>137</sup> while New Zealander Valerie Vili, a daughter of a Tongan mother and an English father (Butcher 2009, Wikipedia contributors, “Valerie Vili” 2010), was incorrectly introduced as a Māori (ath, Aug 16) (note: the Māori are the indigenous Polynesian people of New Zealand). Both comments diminish ethnic diversity: the first seems to perpetuate the myth that “all Blacks are alike,” while the other was probably an analogous (and similarly inaccurate) generalization that “all indigenous Polynesians are Māori.”

Other stereotypical portrayals of ethnicities other than White include the description of Latinos as “emotional,”<sup>138</sup> while Asians in general and Japanese in particular were described as usually smiling: “Usually the faces of the Japanese are adorned by smiling teeth; a smiling face is usually a Japanese face.”<sup>139</sup>

As noted earlier, perceptions of ethnicity occasionally mixed with discourse about nationality. Skin tone signified “obviously” extraneous individuals, such as Blacks in Norway or Arab countries. Further, the successful performances of Black swimmers, such as Anthony Nesty from Suriname and Oussama Mellouli from Tunisia, were also spoken about as unexpected. However, the White Kenyan Jason Dunford also amazed the telecaster with his successes.

This analysis showed little evidence of ethnically-biased language. The quantitative analysis showed significant differences in the rate of attribution of some types of descriptors to distinct ethnic groups; yet, there were much fewer differences in the rate of positive attributions. In some cases, these discrepancies can be explained by the very nature of the sports. It appears that the quantitative differences were caused by the commentators’ enthrallment with success, rather than pre-conceived ideas about race.

### **8.2.7 Stating expectations**

The Slovenian sports telecasts are characterized by the reporter’s frequent prediction of candidates for top placings and of possible outcomes. The most frequent were references to competitors as “favorites” (e.g., “[Leisel] Jones, definitely the top favorite”<sup>140</sup>), and speculating on upcoming events’ outcomes and individual performances (e.g., “If he runs around, let’s say, his personal best, say around 4’ 25”

Sitar would earn about 770 points and his final result would be around 7,400 points,”<sup>141</sup> or “I think he’s capable of running close to the world record”<sup>142</sup>).

Favorites were determined even in the earliest stages of a competition when the best athletes (the “favorites”) typically try to save their energies and focus on performing just enough to secure a spot in the next round, rather than achieving top results. Athletically, the purpose of these rounds is not to bring all the best competitors in a shoulder-to-shoulder contest; instead, they provide many opportunities to inform the viewers about lesser known athletes, or the state of sports in the “exotic” countries described in Section 8.2.4. They might also simply be occasions to present sports facts and strategies. One way or another, talking about likely winners of heats (which, in a multi-day competition such as the Olympics, are in any case expected to reappear and be discussed in the final days), and comments such as “Bolt let himself be beaten,”<sup>143</sup> are poorly timed and misplaced.

Outcome predictions accounted for 8 percent of the total commentary—almost one in ten lines of transcribed text. Apparently, telecasters consider speculating about possible outcomes and, consequently, “advising” the audience who they should turn their attention to, one of the most important parts of their job. For instance, Antoinette Nana Djimou Ida was immediately dismissed as “of course, without a single chance of achieving a high placing,”<sup>144</sup> implying that following her efforts did not make sense. On the other hand, special attention was given to Ksenia Semenova, introduced by the announcer Peter Kavčič as technical commentator Ivan Čuk’s “silent favorite.”<sup>145</sup>

Public expressions of a commentator’s expectations are questionable: they implicitly determine which competitors deserve attention and which do not. Such an attitude helps maintain biased attitudes to individual athletes and nationalities. It also diverts the viewers’ attention from interesting stories of potential upsets or unlikely triumphs.

Mistaken predictions, especially when they become recurring, can undermine the sportscaster’s authority as a connoisseur of the sport she or he reports about. For instance, the high jumper Blanka Vlašić was portrayed as an arguably strong contender for a gold medal by noting her recent successes (“The world champion last year, undefeated this year,”<sup>146</sup> “Has a running streak of 34 consecutive victories”<sup>147</sup>).

Her prospects of Olympic glory only grew in the later stages of the event (“She is a moment away from claiming the high jump gold medal,”<sup>148</sup> “I think she is now very close to the gold medal!”<sup>149</sup>, “Vlašić may even try for the world record today,”<sup>150</sup> “If she now jumps over this height, she will most likely be the Olympic champion”<sup>151</sup>). However, Vlašić finished second, despite succeeding in “jumping over 203 [centimeters] in her first attempt,” which was offered by the commentator as the criteria to “virtually secure” the top spot in this event. A mistake at a later height prevented her from claiming a gold medal—yet, even minor mistakes can make the difference in elite sports. Commentators should be aware of this and refrain from announcing “virtual winners”.

When prophecies turn out to be erroneous, sportscasters try to restore their reputation by shifting the attention away from their predictions. When Jeremy Wariner finished behind LaShawn Merritt in the men’s 400-meter final after commentator Andrej Stare had described Merritt as an unlikely favorite (“If LaShawn Merritt is the top favorite... Well, [he is] for half of the people; for me it’s, of course, Jeremy Wariner!”<sup>152</sup>), Stare himself did not mention his earlier prediction, but he did frame the outcome as his favorite’s failure: “The big loser is, of course, Jeremy Wariner. He expected victory, but won silver.”<sup>153</sup> Detachment from favorites’ performances considered below expectations was pervasive through sports (e.g., “Trickett, who was considered a favorite, the world record holder, even ended without a medal”<sup>154</sup>). In turn, successful performances were often related to announcers’ expectations (e.g., “The Olympic champion, as predicted, Chen Yibing”<sup>155</sup>).

The double-edged nature of speculations and predictions is best summarized by the following brief dialogue between two snooker announcers on Eurosport: while Steve Davis was observing the outcome of a safety shot he had just played, commentator, Mike Smith, noted that “He [Davis] is happy,” then paused, and added, “Is he?” to express his own doubt about what he had just said. Pundit, Joe Johnson, simply replied: “Well, what is it, Mike?” (Eurosport, April 27, 2010).

### ***8.2.8 Providing insight: the role of technical commentators***

Gymnastics and race walk were the only sports in this study to feature announcing pairs. In race walking, Peter Kavčič and Andrej Stare both acted as “play-



by-play announcers.” Gymnastics was thus the only sport where a technical analyst/commentator (Sl. *strokovni komentator*), Ivan Čuk<sup>m</sup>, sat beside the announcer Peter Kavčič behind the microphone.

TV networks often hire experts to work with announcers and enhance the viewing experience. Although different networks and media markets label them differently—they are known as color commentators, expert commentators, pundits, technical analysts, and technical commentators, among others—their role is the same: to provide a deeper understanding of the events by adding expert insight to the dialogue. Technical commentators are usually former athletes or coaches (or both), rather than journalists. Their primary goal is to appeal to viewers with their colorful commentary, not to be thoroughly objective (Bender and Johnson 1994, Hedrick 2000).

A pilot study of Slovenian and Croatian basketball telecasts has shown that in TV markets in Southeast Europe technical analysts indeed do not make particular efforts to report unbiasedly, but rather focus on the play and comment on both good and bad actions (Ličen and Doupona Topič 2008).

TV Slovenija occasionally adds this profile to their sports broadcasts; however, most of the time, sports events are announced by individuals who both report from and comment on the unfolding game.

This section presents some characteristics of the expert commentators’ discourse in the Slovenian Olympic gymnastics telecast. It opens with a review of the number of times each member of the commentary team made different types of comments. Table 8.14 offers a comparison of the absolute and relative frequencies.

The table shows that the commentary is split relatively equally between each member of the commentary team. Čuk as the expert spoke significantly more in terms of concentration, strength and consonance, but made fewer comments about composure, commitment, experience and emotions.

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<sup>m</sup> Ivan Čuk, PhD, is a Full Professor of Gymnastics at the University of Ljubljana and a former gymnastics coach.

**Table 8.14 Absolute and relative frequencies of different types of comments by commentators in Olympic gymnastics telecasts**

Comment	Kavčič (announcer)		Čuk (technical analyst)	
	N	% within type	N	% within type
Concentration	12	29.3	29	<b>70.7</b>
Athletic skill—Strength/Speed	9	20.4	35	<b>79.6</b>
Athletic skill—Talent/Ability	312	<b>55.0</b>	256	45.0
Composure	49	<b>69.0</b>	22	31.0
Commitment	43	<b>69.3</b>	19	30.7
Experience	181	<b>85.4</b>	31	14.6
Consonance	249	34.3	477	<b>65.7</b>
Stated expectations	258	<b>53.2</b>	227	46.8
Emotional	102	<b>77.9</b>	29	22.1
Attractiveness	24	<b>51.1</b>	23	48.9
Size/Parts of body	11	42.3	15	<b>57.7</b>
Background	795	<b>52.7</b>	713	47.3
Factual/Neutral	430	<b>84.5</b>	79	15.5
Other (combined)	30	<b>71.4</b>	12	28.6
<i>Total</i>	2504	<b>56.0</b>	1967	44.0

*Notes:* “% within type” denotes the split of each type of comment between the two commentators. **Bolded** shares denote the higher value within each category. “Other” comprises descriptors coded as “courage,” “intelligence,” “outgoing,” “modest,” “past achievements” and “doping,” which individually yielded very low frequencies.

Both commentators offered a similar share of background commentary. Yet their contents were very different: Kavčič’s speech usually related to biographical information about the competitor, such as age or nationality (e.g., “The Belarusian representative, Denis Savenkov, 24 years old”<sup>156</sup>), while the expert provided plenty of information about their routines (e.g., “This was a handspring, a salto forward with 2/1 twist (...) It is very difficult to land after this jump, as we’ve seen from Botella’s jump”<sup>157</sup>). The small share of factual data substantiates the technical commentator’s efficiency: he was not there to announce competitors or state the obvious, but to provide an insight into the reasons for individual success and failure, as well as to explain routines and relevant technical details.

Table 8.15 shows the shares of positive vs. negative remarks within each category of discourse offered by each member of the announcing couple.

**Table 8.15** Relative frequency of positive versus negative commentary by commentators in Slovenian Olympic gymnastics telecasts

Comment	Kavčič (announcer)		Čuk (technical analyst)	
	% positive	% negative	% positive	% negative
Concentration	17.1	12.2	21.9	48.8
Athletic skill—Strength/Speed	11.4	9.1	43.2	36.4
Athletic skill—Talent/Ability	44.5	10.4	34.2	10.9
Composure	42.2	26.8	15.5	15.5
Commitment	67.7	1.6	25.8	4.8
Experience	62.7	22.6	9.0	5.7
Consonance	10.2	24.1	26.6	39.1
Stated expectations	35.9	17.3	28.9	46.8
<i>Total</i>	32.5	17.9	27.2	22.4

*Note:* shares by rows add up to 100.

This table shows even more tangibly the “activity” of each member of the team. Kavčič’s evaluative commentary leaned on the positive side, while Čuk offered a balanced account in terms of positive versus negative opinions. The analyst’s evaluative commentary differed substantially from that of professional sportscasters: it was very precise and focused on specific actions—athletes’ moves, elements or routines—rather than general statements. Hence, while Kavčič opined that “[Nastia Liukin] made many mistakes in the qualifiers,”<sup>158</sup> without being able to elaborate on the alleged mistakes, Čuk noted that “perhaps her legs go a bit loose every now and then, such as during this swing into a handstand.”<sup>159</sup>

The high figures in the evaluative commentary department suggest there might be considerably more subjective commentary than the 27 percent hypothesized. Indeed, the evaluative dialogue of both members of the announcing team adds up to form a 49.7 percent share of commentary expressing performance judgment (2,224 descriptors out of a total 4,471). Discourse about personality and physicality accounted for 5.1 percent of the total speech, while objective commentary tallied the remaining 45.2 percent.

In a previous section, “trace evidence” of gendered language in gymnastics broadcasts was reported. It included occasional references to women’s elegance, men’s charm, and some competitors’ youth. These data corroborate Billings’ (2007)

finding that events with subjective assessments (i.e., gymnastics) contained more gender biases than sports with objective assessments (i.e., athletics and swimming).

### **8.2.9 A commentator's quest against doping**

The last discursive trend detected in Slovenian public television's broadcasts of the 2008 Olympic Games is the decidedly negative attitude to doping and doping offenders. Media coverage of doping is seldom the subject of scientific enquiry so even though this topic was only marginally represented in the Slovenian Olympic telecasts it is worth discussing it under a separate heading.

This discourse was particular to one of the commentators, namely the track and field broadcaster Andrej Stare. He was not the author of all the descriptors coded as pertaining to this category, yet his opinion on the issue was the strongest among all. In his broadcasts, Stare referred to athletes who were disqualified due to illicit substance abuse as "doped," "drugged" and "frauds"<sup>160</sup>. Besides condemning disqualified athletes, he occasionally implied who were other possible users of these substances; for instance, he described Craig Pickering as "one from the troupe of young English sprinters who keep getting better and better; [they are] true successors of the doped Chambers."<sup>161</sup> He also noted that "today, of course, women discus throwers are, due to stringent and serious doping tests, 10 to 15 meters shorter than the Olympic champion;"<sup>162</sup> this comment specifically refers to the 2004 Olympic champion Natalya Sadova who in 2006 was banned for two years after testing positive for an anabolic steroid. As it was spoken, however, the remark suggested that four years ago, many, perhaps even most, discus throwers used banned substances.

On several occasions, Stare suggested that all athletes who tested positive for illicit substances should be stripped of all their medals and results achieved *before* as well as after testing positive. He argued that sports officials should reclaim all the money won by these athletes as "this is of course the worst penalty for these *cheating frauds*, to lose all the money. Mostly, they don't care much about the medals, anyway"<sup>163</sup> (emphasis added).

Not surprisingly, all but one descriptor about doping were negative. Curiously, neither Stare or any of TV Slovenija's commentators cared (or dared?) to mention that the 2004 bronze Olympic medalist in the women's 800-meter race, Slovenian

national Jolanda Čeplak, had tested positive for erythropoietin in 2007 and was thus banned from competing at the Beijing Games. The *single* time Čeplak was mentioned in the 50+ hours of Olympic telecasts was during a review of the medals won by Slovenian representatives (sw, Aug 13). Hence, instead of dealing with the potentially explosive issue of a banned Slovenian competitor, Slovenian announcers chose to ignore the fact completely.

Hartmann-Tews (2010) noted that both sports media and the economy have a common interest in “keeping the show going.” Her comparative study of media discourses about doping at the Tour de France showed that German and French broadsheet papers used strong words, similar to those highlighted in our study, to deal with and condemn cyclists involved in doping affairs. Media coverage of doping is thus individualized and focused on specific cases, offenders or victims.

The sports media is quick to condemn doping in sports, yet fails to discuss the phenomenon in further detail and consider the motives that drive athletes to use illicit substances. The conclusion put forward by Andrej Stare, a medical doctor who works part-time as a TV sportscaster for Slovenian public television, that money is the sole motive for such a decision, seems incomplete. In addition, the media itself (as acknowledged in this dissertation) keeps pressing athletes to push their limits farther: average athletes are referred to as “exotics,” the lack of a world record is perceived as a disappointment, and victory is considered a greater value than sportsmanship. Denham’s (2004) study of the impact the (not only sports) press’ intense reaction had on instituting drug-testing procedures in Major League Baseball in 2002 shows that sports policy-makers are just as susceptible to negative reporting as many other officials in society. If media staff and gatekeepers were to relax their expectations or even re-conceptualize some fundamental aspects of their job, athletes could start taking seriously the claim that victory is not the only thing that counts.

The discursive analysis of the Slovenian Olympic telecasts yielded nine macro-themes produced by network-employed individuals commenting on the events. The first four themes—the differing attitudes to Slovenian and foreign athletes, and the praiseful feelings towards both star competitors and record achievements—can be combined into a nationalistic super-theme that presents Slovenian athletes in a

biased and uncritical way, draws parallels between the athletes portrayed as “ours” and premium performances, and tries to diminish the athletic achievements of non-Slovenian competitors.

One of the media’s functions is the reinforcement of social norms. Slovenian public sports media ascribes a higher status to Slovenian representatives, and to the most successful. In turn, remote peoples are portrayed as “exotic” (and thus deviant from the “normal”), and less-than-superb scores are despised. Announcers indeed occasionally referred to Olympic maxims, but these exceptions are so few that they are lost in the overwhelming amount of signifiers of success. According to their opinions, which are perceived by the audience as qualified, even Slovenian athletes who cannot aspire to top placings should remain at home.

Little gender and ethnic bias was found in Slovenian Olympic programming; most notable are the inappropriate and sexualized portrayals of female hammer throwers, and the narrowing of diversity perception by deeming that all athletes share an identical ethnicity.

Slovenian on-air personnel seem to be heavily result-oriented; it is thus not surprising that a distinctive theme of the Olympic programming was the frequent predictions of outcome, which accounted for almost one in ten remarks. Commentators strive to direct viewers’ attention to competitors they perceive as favorites; they even speculate on specific achievements (e.g., a world record) they see within the athlete’s reach. This approach is not recommendable as predictions generally contribute to framing viewers’ perceptions, and the frequent mistakes diminish the commentator’s reputation as an expert in the sports she or he broadcasts.

## 9 Results and discussion: Slovenian teams in international competitions

Besides participating in national team competitions such as the Olympic Games, World, and European championships, many European athletes engaging in team sports play in international (continental) club competitions such as the UEFA soccer and EHF team handball Champions Leagues, and the basketball Euroleague. In some ways, these fixtures resemble American professional leagues such as the MLS and NBA<sup>a</sup>. There are some differences, as well: perhaps the main distinction between the two sports models is that North American professional franchises compete *exclusively* in individual professional leagues (e.g., the Los Angeles Lakers only play in the National Basketball Association), while European teams with *international* engagements are not exonerated from taking part in *national* championships. The basketball team Union Olimpija from Ljubljana, for instance, competes in: (1) the pan-European Euroleague; (2) in the Adriatic league (a regional international competition featuring teams from former Yugoslavia); (3) in the Slovenian national league; and (4) in the Slovenian Cup challenge. Obviously, the schedule of each of these contests is less intense than that of the NBA; however, when summed up, the number of games elite European teams play in a season reaches that of their North American peers.

European club teams formally represent a town or city (e.g., Union Olimpija *Ljubljana*, Inter *Milan*, or CSKA *Moscow*—same as the *San Francisco* Giants, but unlike the *Texas* Rangers). However, when they play in international competitions they are often perceived as representatives of a *nation*. They thus serve as around-the-year substitutes for national teams—even more so when they are the only representatives of a country in a distinct competition (e.g., Krim Ljubljana as the only Slovenian team in the EHF Champions League for Women). Their games are broadcast nation-wide and (consequently?) their fan base expands beyond the city boundaries.

In this research, broadcasts of two professional teams (one male and one female) participating in continental competitions were studied. Krim Mercator Ljubljana played in the EHF Champions League for Women in team handball, and

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<sup>a</sup> Major League Soccer and National Basketball Association, respectively.

Union Olimpija Ljubljana played in the ULEB Euroleague for Men in basketball. The two competitions were equally popular among TV Slovenija's viewers (the average viewership of team handball broadcasts was 67,500 viewers, while that of basketball was 68,500; rating figures were 3.5 and 3.6 percent, respectively) (AGB Nielsen Media Research for RTV Slovenija, target group 4+). Direct quantitative comparisons between the two sports are not possible. Hence, the focus of this section will be on comparing the discourse commentators engage in during international sports broadcasts that feature Slovenian teams.

### 9.1 Quantitative data analysis

A distinction between individual and team sports that results in important discursive differences is the presence of a *team* as a form of organization of the participants. Discourse about individual athletes and the nations they represent is thus complemented by speech concerning the teams they belong to.

Within this study, six games of women's team handball and seven of men's basketball were analyzed. All games were played within continental club competitions and featured teams originating from Ljubljana as the network's "home" teams. **The team handball broadcasts yielded 7,664 descriptors in 525 minutes of actual clock-time, while basketball offered 12,411 lines of commentary in 703 minutes of airtime.** As an estimation of eloquence, the comments-per-minute ratio shows that handball announcers offered 14.6 comments in 60 seconds, whereas their basketball colleagues spoke 17.6 descriptors over the same period. This statistic is improvised; although imprecise, it suggests that TV Slovenija's basketball play-by-play announcers are more loquacious than their handball peers. This likely depends on sportscasters' individual style as well as on the speed of the game itself. Basketball offers more plays that an announcer must keep abreast of.

All in all, basketball and team handball announcers mentioned just over 70 individual athletes in each sport. In addition, several dozen people (coaches, referees, and other sports personalities) were named in each sport.

As the sampling focused on analyzing broadcasts of games played by *Slovenian* teams, Slovenian nationals understandably dominate both individual and aggregated lists of the most-mentioned subjects in the telecasts. More informative are the data



regarding the national distribution of descriptors in each sports. Table 9.1 offers the five most-mentioned nationalities in TV Slovenija’s international basketball and handball telecasts.

**Table 9.1 Distribution of commentary by nationality in Slovenian international basketball and team handball telecasts**

Basketball (Men)			Team handball (Women)		
Nationality	N	%	Nationality	N	%
1 Slovenia	4696	37.8	Slovenia	2179	28.4
2 USA	1695	13.7	Russia	1085	14.2
3 Lithuania	949	7.6	Hungary	668	8.7
4 Bosnia Herzegovina	603	4.9	Denmark	589	7.7
5 Italy	596	4.8	Ukraine	576	7.5
Other	3872	31.2	Other	2567	33.5
<i>Total</i>	12411	100	<i>Total</i>	7664	100

Places 2-5 resemble the actual national distribution of “sports power” within each sport. While the USA and Lithuania are basketball powerhouses, producing many high-quality players who play outside of their countries of origin, team handball is very popular in former Soviet republics, Hungary, and Denmark, with the latter also being the sport’s cradle.

Judging by the table, one might assume that Slovenian teams played against sides from the four countries on each list. This deduction would be erroneous as only two nations on each list—Lithuania and Italy in basketball, and Russia and Denmark in team handball—provided teams that faced Union Olimpija and Krim. The remaining two only supplied individual athletes with most of them playing for the Slovenian teams. Curiously, even though Krim Ljubljana played a Spanish team twice and Union Olimpija faced CSKA Moscow two times, Spain and Russia did not make it onto the lists of most-mentioned athletes. Many professional teams in Europe, including these two, rely *primarily* on foreign players.

Another characteristic that can be compared between the two sports is the ethnicity split of commentary. Table 9.2 offers an account of the distribution of comments in international team handball and basketball with regard to the athletes’ ethnic backgrounds.

**Table 9.2 Distribution of comments by ethnicity in Slovenian telecasts of international basketball and team handball competitions**

Ethnicity	Basketball			Team handball			Total		
	N	Valid %	% of total	N	Valid %	% of total	N	Valid %	% of total
White	6257	75.9	50.4	4547	90.7	59.3	10804	81.5	53.8
Black	1978	24.0	15.9	185	3.7	2.4	2163	16.3	10.8
Hispanic/S. American	8	0.1	0.1	0	0.0	0.0	8	0.1	0.0
Asian	0	0.0	0.0	279	5.6	3.6	279	2.1	1.4
Middle Eastern	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0
N.A.	4168	/	33.6	2653	/	34.6	6821	/	34.0
<i>Total</i>	12411	100	100	7664	100	100	20075	100	100

Note: “N.A.” denotes comments that could not be attributed to individual ethnicities (including comments about the running score, game clock etc.).

“Valid %” denotes the share relative to all comments that could be attributed to individual ethnicities (i.e., comments about specific individuals, including coaches and game officials).

“% of total” denotes the share of comments relative to all comments spoken during the broadcasts.

The majority of comments in both sports was devoted to White athletes. This ratio is particularly overwhelming in team handball where nine in ten comments about individuals were devoted to players of this ethnic group. The remaining 10 percent accounted for remarks about three players: “Asian,” Liudmila Bodnieva, a Russian national of Kalmyk ethnicity, and “Blacks,” Emiliya Turey, a Russian national whose father is of Sierra Leonean descent (a detail that was mentioned twice in a single game; hb, Mar 24), and Marta Mangué Gonzales, a Spaniard from the Canary Islands, an archipelago located just off the northwest coast of mainland Africa. Apart from the notes concerning Turey being of Sierra Leonean descent and a single comment framing Mangué Gonzales as “a Black handball player from the Canary Islands,”<sup>164</sup> no additional references (either evaluative or neutral) were made in the context of their ethnicity.

Black male basketball players educed more commentary than their two female handball colleagues. Fourteen orange ball professionals (out of a total 73 in the seven games studied—that is, one in five) elicited 24 percent of all descriptors. The quantitative imbalance in favor of Black athletes (statistically significant at the 0.01 level;  $\chi^2(1) = 83.152$ ) probably emerged because most of them were of starting-lineup quality, as opposed to the several local or national (White) “bench-warmers” who

have less glamorous roles in each team’s hierarchy. Hence, Black players probably spent more time on court than their average White counterparts and generated more opportunities for discourse. Their quality also resulted in a higher share of positive commentary: 78.3 percent of evaluative descriptors painted a picture of success for Black players, compared to 68.4 percent of positive commentary about White players ( $\chi^2(1) = 22.377$ , sig.<0.01). Especially in European basketball, many Black players are signed up by teams to enhance team performance. Of course, they are not selected because of their skin tone but due to their quality (or in some cases, such as the financially troubled Union Olimpija, even because of their favorable quality-to-price ratio). Hence, Slovenian broadcasters are not biased towards Black athletes; a textual analysis of their discourse confirmed this conclusion.

When compared to individual events, team competitions bring in the division of announcer commentary between the two sides in a game. A characteristic of the discourse in international competitions is the distribution of commentary: do announcers center on the network’s “home” team or is the spoken text evenly distributed between both sides? Table 9.3 shows this comparison.

**Table 9.3 Distribution of comments about Slovenian and foreign teams in basketball and handball broadcasts**

Subject	Basketball		Handball		Both	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Ljubljana-based team	6435	51.8	4065	53.0	10500	52.3
Other team	4751	38.3	2492	32.5	7243	36.1
Other content	1225	9.9	1107	14.5	2332	11.6
<i>Total</i>	12411	100	7664	100	20075	100

Even though announcers in TV Slovenija’s basketball and handball broadcasts differ (see Appendix A for a list games and announcers), the contents they verbalize are very similar. In both sports, the two Slovenian teams attracted approximately 1.5 times more descriptors than their opponents. In the interviews, neither telecaster mentioned any implicit or explicit editorial policy on the frequency of individual mentions. One can thus deduce that the 3/2 proportion is a concretization of the “slight imbalance” in favor of Slovenian teams described by all the interviewed TV personalities as “acceptable and even expected by viewers.” This ratio is similar to

that found in a pilot study conducted on Slovenian and Croatian basketball (Ličen and Doupona Topič, 2008), as well as to the 63/37 split noted by Billings and Tambosi (2004) in their analysis of World Cup soccer matches on US television.

Another dimension worth exploring in team sports broadcasts discourse is the ratio of individual versus team commentary. This feature, which has hardly ever been pursued by media scholars, can provide information regarding the place of individuals within an inherently collective event. Table 9.4 presents the division of comments by topics within Slovenian broadcasts of international handball and basketball.

**Table 9.4 Distribution of comments about different subjects in basketball and team handball broadcasts**

Subject	Basketball		Handball		Both	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Individual athletes	7598	61.2	4607	60.1	12205	60.8
Teams	3147	25.4	1693	22.1	4840	24.1
Officials	229	1.8	138	1.8	367	1.8
Score, time	817	6.6	677	8.8	1494	7.4
Other	620	5.0	549	7.2	1169	5.8
<i>Total</i>	12411	100	7664	100	20075	100

Despite the differences in commentator wordings, the distribution of commentary by topics is remarkably consistent. Most notably, approximately 60 percent of descriptors are devoted to individual athletes, and one in four focuses on team performance. The remaining 15 percent comprises speech about officials, the score and time, and other contents (including opening greeting sentences etc.).

Individual efforts thus provide the meat of team sports commentary. Players offer numerous potential stories that transcend factual descriptions of the events on court. Even in team sports, the focus is on them. This is particularly interesting for this enquiry of media contents in a post-socialist country; an inter-cultural analysis carried out by Billings et al. (2009) showed that basketball telecasts in the People's Republic of China, a communist regime, focus much more on team efforts than on individual performances. The authors explained this is a direct result of the specific political and cultural system in the country as there is a law determining that a focus

on individual backgrounds and performances is virtually inadmissible. Regardless of the opinion one might have about such “totalitarian” regulation, it is noteworthy that this regime ascribes mediated sports a much greater influence (and thus wishes to control them) than most democratic countries. It would be interesting to know whether the legislation in socialist Yugoslavia was similar and whether mediated sports discourse from that period differed from today’s.

To gain an insight into the “alphabet aerobics” carried out by TV Slovenija’s basketball and handball announcers, the frequency of each type of comment was determined. Table 9.5 shows the absolute and relative distribution of commentary in the two sports.

**Table 9.5** Distribution of different types of comments in basketball and team handball telecasts

Subject	Basketball		Handball		Both	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Concentration	39	0.3	23	0.3	62	0.3
Athletic skill—Strength/Speed	110	0.9	57	0.7	167	0.8
Athletic skill—Talent/Ability	296	2.4	181	2.4	477	2.4
Composure	163	1.3	86	1.1	249	1.2
Commitment	106	0.9	69	0.9	175	0.9
Courage	16	0.1	22	0.3	38	0.2
Experience	119	1.0	63	0.8	182	0.9
Past achievements	574	4.6	229	3.0	803	4.0
Intelligence	29	0.2	12	0.2	41	0.2
Consonance	2410	19.4	823	10.7	3233	16.1
Stated expectations	245	2.0	153	2.0	398	2.0
Doping	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Outgoing/extroverted	24	0.2	11	0.1	35	0.2
Modest/introverted	4	0.0	1	0.0	5	0.0
Emotional	69	0.6	51	0.7	120	0.6
Attractiveness	16	0.1	4	0.1	20	0.1
Size/Parts of body	179	1.4	18	0.2	197	1.0
Background	1531	12.3	1390	18.1	2921	14.6
Factual/Neutral	6481	52.2	4471	58.3	10952	54.6
<i>Total</i>	12411		7664		20075	100

The results show that more than half the discursive categories are barely represented: 11 categories (out of a total 19) did not exceed the 1 percent incidence. These figures are substantially different than those pertaining to the Olympic Games commentary. Apparently, team sports announcing is much less varied.

Team sports seem significantly more action-packed than individual events: competing sides alternately engage in offensive and defensive actions, and game stoppages are brief. The atmosphere is so intense and team sports commentary so specific that it yielded a new term, *play-by-play*, to describe the announcer's commentary during game-time. Obviously, this does not mean team sports are more interesting to watch than individual ones; their contents are just structured differently.

The bulk of play-by-play commentary in team handball and basketball broadcasts on Slovenian television is factual. Acknowledgements of ball possessions, individual scoring attempts and similar game-related actions comprised 54.6 percent of the commentary in both sports combined. This category includes mentions of running score and game time, as well as simple statistical information (e.g., points scored by a player).

Background information comprised 14.6 percent of all commentary in these sports. The paramount type of background facts was nationality. National affiliation was acknowledged repeatedly and very matter-of-factly (e.g., “The sixth goal of the Hungarian, Mehlmann”<sup>165</sup>), often even as a synonym, or a substitute identifier for individual competitors (e.g., “Lungu tries... The Romanian is fouled on”<sup>166</sup>). Nationality was more frequently identified in team handball than in basketball. Other background information often cited included players' age and playing history.

Factual and background information combined to make up 69.2 percent of all commentary in the two sports. Objective discourse was more frequent in team handball telecasts where it comprised 76.4 percent of the total speech. In basketball, it covered 64.5 percent of on-air talk.

The third most frequent discursive category was that of consonance. It accounted for 10.7 percent of handball commentary, and almost twice as much basketball talk. Most of such commentary related to evaluations of player actions (e.g., “[Saša Dončić] saw well the empty space under CSKA's basket”<sup>167</sup>), and

references to luck and faith (e.g., “Luckily, Turey was not sufficiently accurate”<sup>168</sup>). Remarks such as the latter were double-coded: in this case, it denoted both positive consonance for the Krim team (“luckily”) and negative consonance for Emiliya Turey (“not sufficiently accurate”). Team performance was also frequently discussed in terms of consonance (e.g., “Now the *Krimovke*<sup>b</sup> have wasted two consecutive offensive plays”<sup>169</sup>). Consonance was by far the category that supplied most evaluative commentary in team sports, providing four times as many descriptors as evaluations of past achievements.

Allusions to teams’ and players’ past achievements were the fourth most frequent type of commentary. References to this were made before and during game-time, but not post-game. They included recollections of competition history (against the same, as well as against other opponents), and individual exploits in previous games and/or seasons. A descriptor was coded as denoting (successful or negative) past performance if the announcer’s wording implied a positive or negative quality of the athlete or team—such as the description of Nataliya Derepasko as “by far, the all-time best scorer of the *Krimovke* in European cups,”<sup>170</sup> or a pre-game remark that “the *Ljubljaničani*<sup>c</sup> *already* have two victories and *only* one loss”<sup>171</sup> (emphases added). Comments about past achievements were more frequent in the basketball telecasts.

Comments expressing expectations regarding the outcome of the game added up to two percent of all descriptors. They included team-related speculations on game, or even competition outcome (e.g., “among the favorites for the final crown in this year’s Euroleague”<sup>172</sup>). Some expressions transpired cheerful feelings for the Slovenian teams such as claims that “maybe not everything is lost”<sup>173</sup> minutes before the final whistle, or that “Union Olimpija surely has something to spare for the second 20 minutes [i.e., the second half].”<sup>174</sup>

Only two more types of comments surpassed the 1 percent mark in both sports, namely, those referring to athletic talent/ability and composure. Mentions of players’ size exceeded 1 percent of commentary in basketball due to the frequent references to

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<sup>b</sup> The female demonym for Krim players. The team acquired its name after the Krim hillock overlooking the district of Ljubljana where the team is based. Team members are often referred to as “Krimovke,” which is a feminine form that would otherwise be literally translated as “Krim women” or “Krim women players.”

<sup>c</sup> The demonym for the male inhabitants of Ljubljana.

players' heights. These were so common that the height of the basketball player Eurelijus Žukauskas (2.16 meters, or 7 feet, 1 inch) was reported four times in two matches, and he was referred to as the “tall Žukauskas” an additional ten times.

The relative shares of each single category are remarkably similar in both sports, and Pearson's correlation coefficient reached  $r = 0.98$  (sig. = 0.000). Gender thus did not influence the announcers' content and did not result in the biased attribution of some types of comments over others. These findings differ from Bon and Doupona Topič's (2004) study of gendered language in Slovenian handball telecasts.

After assessing the frequency of each distinctive category, attention should turn to the split of evaluative remarks. Table 9.6 offers the aggregate share of positive versus negative commentary in women's team handball and men's basketball broadcasts.

**Table 9.6** Number and share of comments denoting success/positive performance and failure/negative performance in Slovenian basketball and team handball telecasts

Type of comment	Basketball			Handball			Both		
	N	% of all	% of evaluative	N	% of all	% of evaluative	N	% of all	% of evaluative
Success/positive	2840	22.9	69.2	1241	16.2	72.4	4081	20.3	70.1
Failure/negative	1267	10.2	30.8	473	6.2	27.6	1740	8.7	29.9
Other	8304	66.9		5950	77.6		14254	71.0	
<i>Total</i>	12411			7664			20075		

Note: “% of all” denotes the shares of each category with regard to all commentary.

“% of evaluative” denotes the shares of each category within evaluative commentary alone.

“Other” denotes personality/physicality descriptors, and neutral commentary.

The ratio of positive versus negative commentary hovers around the 7/3 split, which is very similar to the proportion found in the Slovenian Olympic telecasts (see Table 8.7). Yet what does change considerably between the sports is the total amount of evaluative commentary, which peaks at 43.2 percent in Olympic gymnastics broadcasts, but falls to 22.4 percent in women's team handball.

These results (discussed in greater detail in the following sections) suggest a gradual increase in the amount of interpretive commentary in televised sports. Past studies indicated an approximately 3:1 ratio in favor of objective (play-by-play) comments (Bryant, Comisky and Zillman 1977, Ličen and Doupona Topič 2008).



However, a very recent study of telecasts in some Asian markets (Woo et al. 2010) shows that evaluative discourse has risen to approximately 40 percent in television renderings in Chinese Taipei and South Korea. This study of sports programming on TV Slovenija confirms the 3:1 split only in women's team handball broadcasts; in basketball, the share of objective commentary falls to 2:1, and is even lower in the Olympic Games renderings.

This study examined public television broadcasts of international competitions in two different sports. The actual selection was largely influenced by the absence of other women's team events that feature Slovenian sides in international club competitions. Chances of comparisons are thus limited. A noteworthy fact, however, was that a number of men were mentioned in women's handball broadcasts (mostly as coaches or referees), while the only woman cited in men's basketball programming was a well-known handball coach shown by cameras while sitting in the stands.

Earlier in this section it was noted that even though sports teams represent single cities, they are often perceived and/or framed by announcers as substitutes for national teams. Consequently, they appear as deserving pan-Slovenian support. The statistical data in Table 9.3 support the assumption that the network's "home" teams receive more commentary. The next meaningful assessment is thus the cross-tabulation of interpretive comments with regard to the origin of the team. Table 9.7 presents the frequency of evaluative commentary with regard to team provenience in men's basketball.

Significant differences in the attribution of positive commentary emerged in the category of experience. Players from teams other than Union Olimpija were considerably more likely to be portrayed in such terms, and these mentions were virtually always positive. In turn, Ljubljana players collected fewer references, and every second such remark was negative. The facts did not support this imbalance: Union Olimpija coach, Aleksandar Džikić, was indeed in his first stint as head coach, yet the average age<sup>d</sup> of Union Olimpija's players (27.1 years) was only slightly lower than, for instance, that of later champion and Olimpija's regular season opponent, CSKA Moscow (27.3 years). Yet, in the two games between these two teams, CSKA

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<sup>d</sup> Average age was calculated by subtracting each player's year of birth from 2008—we analyzed matches played in the 2007/08 campaign—and then calculating the mean of these "ages."

attracted 49 descriptors denoting experience (all but one were negative), while Union Olimpija attracted 17, and only six were positive.

**Table 9.7 Comparison of evaluative commentary by team origin in Slovenian telecasts of Euroleague basketball**

Comment	Union Olimpija Ljubljana			Other teams			$\chi^2(1)$	Sig.
	Positive	Negative	% of positive	Positive	Negative	% of positive		
Concentration	14	19	42.4	1	5	16.7	<u>0.876</u>	
Athletic skill— Strength/Speed	33	20	62.3	46	9	83.6	1.685	
Athletic skill— Talent/Ability	66	11	85.7	204	14	93.6	0.384	
Composure	43	44	49.4	29	43	40.3	0.728	
Commitment	74	14	84.1	17	0	100	0.416	
Courage	14	0	100	1	1	50.0	<u>0.467</u>	
Experience	18	17	51.4	83	1	98.8	6.535	*
Past achievements	60	37	61.9	118	30	79.7	2.577	
Intelligence	11	7	61.1	8	2	80.0	0.338	
Consonance	1029	590	63.6	487	228	68.1	1.584	
Stated expectations	327	95	77.5	109	31	77.9	0.002	
<i>Total</i>	1689	854	66.4	1103	364	75.2	10.276	***

Note: Underlined  $\chi^2$  values indicate categories where one group had an expected value of less than five.

\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.01 level.

Differences were significant in the total count of positive attributions to Union Olimpija and its opponents. Opposing teams were accorded more positive commentary. This is likely due to Union Olimpija's relatively modest success as the team won only two of the seven encounters analyzed. Table 9.8 presents the same comparison in women's handball broadcasts.

Even though "foreign" teams received less than half as much evaluative commentary as Krim did, statistical tests show that the two handball announcers and the courtside entourage were not biased in the attribution of positive and negative commentary to either team. Differences did not emerge in any category.

**Table 9.8 Comparison of evaluative commentary by team origin in Slovenian telecasts of Champions League handball**

Comment	Krim Mercator Ljubljana			Other teams			$\chi^2(1)$	Sig.
	Positive	Negative	% of positive	Positive	Negative	% of positive		
Concentration	11	4	73.3	7	1	87.5	0.134	
Athletic skill— Strength/Speed	20	7	74.1	21	7	75.0	0.002	
Athletic skill— Talent/Ability	107	1	99.1	71	2	97.3	0.146	
Composure	28	21	57.1	9	23	29.0	3.244	
Commitment	47	2	95.9	16	1	94.1	0.004	
Courage	19	2	90.5	1	0	100	<u>0.010</u>	
Experience	19	8	70.4	23	6	79.3	0.149	
Past achievements	117	3	97.5	22	9	71.0	1.884	
Intelligence	10	0	100	2	0	100	<u>0.000</u>	
Consonance	324	214	60.2	157	86	64.6	0.523	
Stated expectations	146	30	83.0	32	9	78.0	0.098	
<i>Total</i>	848	292	74.4	361	143	71.6	0.362	

Note: Underlined  $\chi^2$  values indicate categories where one group had an expected value of less than five.

## 9.2 Qualitative data analysis

The previous section showed that the contents of Olympic and international team sports broadcasts on Slovenian public television differ more than the contents in male and female team sports. This suggests that discourse—the meanings that go beyond the mere frequencies with which words or phrases are used—will vary as well.

The purpose of this dissertation is not to estimate the quality of individual announcers. The criteria for such an evaluation vary and depend on social, cultural, and even political conditions in each country. They are also subject to editorial policies in individual media outlets. The interviews conducted with announcers working for TV Slovenija disclosed several ideas about their canons of good and/or proper live coverage of sports events. They also showed the lack of policy or guidelines on how to be a sports commentator on Slovenian public television. Rather, this study focuses on determining the characteristics of mediated sports discourse that are deemed either unexpected or potentially problematic for the viewer.

Most discursive trends took shape during the transcription of the announcers' texts. It thus takes a wary and concentrated observer to actually notice the messages that are conveyed in the sports broadcasting discourse. This does not mean that passive viewers are immune from the meanings imparted by sports commentators. Quite the opposite; awareness is a necessary pre-requisite for a *critical* reception. Without it, meanings are just layered and mildly, but persistently contribute to an imagined picture of society and reality.

All basketball and team handball games were commented on by sportscasters working individually. During some games played in Ljubljana, they were aided by court-side reporters who conducted interviews with technical guests before and after the matches. These reporters also collected half-time and post-game quotes from players and coaches associated with the two Slovenian teams. A list of on-air personnel who contributed to the broadcasts is presented in Tables A3 and A4 in Appendix A.

Most discursive trends in basketball and team handball telecasts derive from two closely related categories: cheering/partisanship, and inherent patriotism. After several iterations of analysis, the following 13 discursive phenomena were formed.

### **9.2.1 Team addressing**

In individual events, each athlete competes (relatively) independently of one another to secure the best placing possible. Conversely, team competitions comprise a series of games (a league, a championship) in which two different sides vie for victory among themselves in every game.

In European basketball and team handball, each game typically lasts 90-120 minutes. One broadcast thus usually offers several hours of images of (only) two teams. In such circumstances, something seemingly unsophisticated as the words used to address each team become an important means of making sense of the game and shaping viewers' attitudes to teams.

Announcers on TV Slovenija announcers referred to competing teams in a number of ways. The most obvious and frequent choice was simply to use the official name ("Krim," "Ribarroja," "Union Olimpija"). Yet, nearly as often the official name

was complemented or even substituted by the team's nation of origin, such as mentions of “the Spaniards [i.e., Ribarroja] in yellow jerseys,”<sup>175</sup> descriptions of “a nice action by the Spaniards,”<sup>176</sup> or talks about “the Danish Slagelse.”<sup>177</sup>

Considerably less often teams were referred to by the city from which they originate: “Now well [done] on the line [of] the *Ljubljančanke*,”<sup>178</sup> or “the *Ljubljančani* are already in a team foul penalty situation.”<sup>179</sup> Slovenian teams were most frequently referred to either by their team name, or by their *city* demonym (*Ljubljančanke* and *Ljubljančani* for female and male teams/athletes, respectively), whereas opposing teams were often referred to by their nationality (e.g., “the Spaniards,”<sup>180</sup> “the Germans”<sup>181</sup>).

Both Slovenian teams were regularly identified by all announcers as “ours.” Handball announcers referred to the Krim team as “our champions”<sup>182</sup> 114 times in six games, and broadcaster Ivo Milovanović alone used this syntagm on 105 occasions in the four matches he provided commentary for. The rhetoric of the first person plural (Billig 1995) was thus associated with a social identity mechanism aimed at enhancing the social identity of members of the nation represented by their finest (Oakes et al. 1994). This is an example of basking in reflected glory, or BIRGing (Cialdini et al. 1976).

When “our champions” were mentioned in team handball broadcasts, their opponents were usually referred to by their nationality (e.g., “The Spaniards lost the first game in front of their home crowd to our champions, 31-36”<sup>183</sup>). However, Krim and Olimpija were actually dubbed as “Slovenians” only once in the 13 games analyzed (specifically, in “[Katalin Palinger] the goalkeeper for the Slovenians”<sup>184</sup>). Krim Mercator was once introduced as “the only *Slovenian* representative in European competitions, when it comes to *our homeland*”<sup>185</sup> (emphases added). On another occasion, Krim's assistant coach Rolando Pušnik was described as “our most successful Olympic handball player.”<sup>186</sup> The “us” represented by Pušnik was not identified; an imaginary collective was only implied. Such references are particularly significant approaches to enhance patriotism and determine unity and an imaginary collective (“us Slovenians”), represented for the occasion by its finest (“our champions”), and facing an imagined opposing hostile national collective (“the Spaniards,” “the Germans” etc.).

Framing one of the teams as “ours” (which, in turn, implies a collective opponent, a “them”) is a typical case of biased (sports) reporting. Such a construction of an imagined collective in Slovenian sports broadcasts was regular, but inconsistent: for instance, within a single game, a basketball commentator switched from referring to Union Olimpija in a neutral, third-person, reporting style before tip-off (“A game in which Union Olimpija chases its first away victory in this year’s Euroleague”<sup>187</sup>), to a cheerful attitude caused by the team’s advantage by the end of the first quarter (“I can say that we can be satisfied with these first ten minutes, as Union Olimpija leads Prokom by two points”<sup>188</sup>). Then, in the third quarter, the announcer switched into identification mode, associating himself and perhaps all the viewers with the team by stating that “*we*, of course, also have a player who can shoot from distance (...) Yet, what matters is that the ball is *ours* and *we* have a new scoring opportunity”<sup>189</sup> (emphases added). All commentators recurrently switched between first-person and third-person references to Slovenian teams competing in continental fixtures. These teams are obviously seen as representing the whole of Slovenia, and consequently cheered for by all (or at least the majority) of the audience (Ličen 2009b). Notions of “ours,” such as in talks about “our captain [Tatjana] Oder,”<sup>190</sup> or Liudmila Bodnieva’s “performances for our franchise,”<sup>191</sup> were also frequent in handball broadcasts.

Non-Slovenian teams were occasionally also described in praiseful terms; adjectives and adverbial phrases used to describe former Euroleague champion, CSKA Moscow, included “the great CSKA”<sup>192</sup>, “the renowned CSKA”<sup>193</sup>, “the Russian giant”<sup>194</sup>, “a European basketball giant”<sup>195</sup>, and “a team about which one speaks only in the highest terms.”<sup>196</sup> This particular example is especially significant as Union Olimpija had an unexpected victory against this opponent. The triumph of “our” team in a battle against a “giant” is a frequent theme in Slovenian public television broadcasting. The following week, the announcer referred to this victory as one against “currently, one of the best teams for sure, in Europe and in the world.”<sup>197</sup> TV Slovenija’s staff deliberately boosted fans’ moods in a situation—a difficult win—when they were already experiencing the greatest mood enhancement (Knobloch-Westerwick et al. 2009). In fact, the announcer’s reactions suggested they were fans themselves as their voice pitch and overall mood also shifted considerably after Ljubljana’s difficult or unlikely victories.

### **9.2.2 Framing the televised experience: creating expectations**

Team addressing is the first form of framing the viewers' experience. This syntax of hegemony produces an imagined conflict and indicates the side the viewer ought to belong to (and identify with).

Purposeful wording is a denotative feature; words set the frame of the representation about to be delivered. At a deeper level, telecasters influence the perception of the outcome by connoting additional meanings through the words and sentences they use.

In the analyzed games, connotation usually started very soon after cueing in on the broadcast. In pre-game reviews of both teams' recent performances, the announcers customarily spent more time examining the Slovenian team. Basketball broadcaster Peter Vilfan even acknowledged this during one of the telecasts by noting, "so, I've spoken too much about Žalgiris' results in this season. So this is how Union Olimpija played in the first three games: in Siena, a defeat, 52-80. Then, two fabulous victories, true sensations, actually; first, in Ljubljana against Olympiacos, 87-78 for Union Olimpija, then the incredible victory against Moscow's CSKA, currently one of the best teams for sure, in Europe and in the world, 74-72."<sup>198</sup> Besides presenting a detailed review of past performances, the commentator made a point of framing the two victories as "fabulous" and "true sensations."

This description shows that these reviews offer more than simple background information about each team. Their purpose is often to reaffirm the quality of "our" Slovenian team and thus suggest the possibility, or even probability, of another victory. Favorites and likely winners are established early in many games (e.g., "Who is the favorite in this game, Krim or Slagelse; I'd say the chances are fifty-fifty"<sup>199</sup>), and athletes are left to go "on a hunt for a victory."<sup>200</sup>

Speculations may even amount to arrogance, such as when a sportscaster stated that "*it may sound a bit immodest*, but Krim Mercator is on a higher level than Ribarroja"<sup>201</sup> (emphasis added). The consideration itself is not necessarily out of place; but the fact that the commentator *identifies* with the team is—why else would he sound *immodest*, if stating his qualified opinion? Conversely, when the same Krim Mercator was trailing by six goals in another game—the same difference that motivated the "immodest" quotation in the other game—the same announcer

described the game as “equalized,”<sup>202</sup> and the Ljubljana team was even described as *likely* to either overturn the score in that game, or else win the two-game series in the following week’s home encounter.

A particular challenge for sportscasters is to create suspense when one team is much stronger than the other. To keep their viewers interested despite potential blowouts, TV Slovenija staff resorted to argumentation (e.g., “Perhaps a loss by seven goals seems really high, but in the following seconds we will try to convince you that there are certainly enough realistic chances of a turnaround in today’s game, after all”<sup>203</sup>) or, more frequently, to passion and a spirit of belonging (e.g., “Regardless of whether Union Olimpija today loses or wins, which we surely all wish for...”<sup>204</sup>).

Sometimes, prospects of a possible loss were presented as a tangible option even before the opening tip-off. Announcer Miha Žibrat stated the following expectations minutes before Union Olimpija’s home game against CSKA Moscow (a game Union Olimpija eventually won): “Union Olimpija should, today, if nothing else, show a good game: brave, fighting, and we all believe it will be so. Then, even if a defeat comes, as expected by the majority, we won’t be too disappointed.”<sup>205</sup> The announcer was thus preparing the audience for a possible trashing. Besides lowering expectations, he sought alternative positive aspects (courage, determination) to substitute the likely elusive victory. Another announcer offered a similar disclaimer with a week’s advance notice: just as Union Olimpija had lost a game, he noted that “Union Olimpija will play the next Euroleague game next week in Vitoria against Tau Ceramica. There, we can hardly expect the *Ljubljančani* to cause an upset, even though in a sportsmanlike manner of course we always hope, we always wish of course to create an upset.”<sup>206</sup> Here, the likely forthcoming failure was heralded to save face and protect viewers from the perceived likely future damage (Wann et al. 1995).

Yet most opening discourses tried to create a glorious atmosphere. The courtside reporter of the Union Olimpija vs. CSKA Moscow game announced that “a true basketball spectacle”<sup>207</sup> was coming up, while a handball game was introduced as “a superspectacle, a superclash, a clash for [sic!] the titans.”<sup>208</sup>

An unusual dialogic feature was the repetitive labeling of a game as being “without a true competitive spirit”<sup>209</sup> because it could not affect the final group



standings. This syntagm was used multiple times by both the play-by-play announcer and courtside reporter. It was either followed by comments on the alleged difficulty of playing such a match (i.e., one without competitive spirit), or by (not particularly convincing) predictions of an attractive game despite this peculiarity. It seems that sports broadcasters and journalists perceive sports only as an occasion to sit back, fold their arms and reiterate a favored team's superiority. This is a legitimate yet narrow view of sports. It is unfortunate that media gatekeepers limit their scope of interest only to this aspect of sporting events.

### **9.2.3 Manipulating perceptions: reporting the score**

The creation of expectations is a form of media framing (Goffman 1974, Entman 2007). Its purpose is to influence viewers' perceptions of events through manipulation.

Reporting the running score is one of the most common features of sports broadcasting. Many North American authors and publicists suggest how often should radio and television broadcasters provide this information (e.g., Bender and Johnson 1994, Hedrick 2000), but they seldom specify how to convey this detail.

This tiny, yet influential feature has become another method of establishing preferred teams within Slovenian sports broadcasts. Explicit denotation as the fundamental method of determining "our" team has already been highlighted; on Slovenian public television, this included the adoption of the first person plural to express scoring margins (e.g., "We trail by 12"<sup>210</sup>). A more subtle method is the complete ellipsis of pronouns, leaving the meaning implied (e.g., "Three goals ahead"<sup>211</sup>). Curiously, instances of reporting the score by using the first person plural ("we lead/we trail") were found in both basketball and handball, even though both current the Head of Sport at TV Slovenija Mile Jovanović and his predecessor Igor E. Bergant characterized this approach as "inadmissible" (personal communications, January 21, 2010, and May 19, 2010).

A paradox observed in connection with the way commentators offered scoring information was the reaffirmation of success despite being equalized, or even trailing: handball announcer Ivo Milovanović twisted the perception of a scoring deficit by stating that "*our champions* are trailing by four goals"<sup>212</sup> (emphasis added). He later

interpreted the occurrence as a de facto opportunity by stating that “The *Krimovke* have been trailing by three or four goals or, *in other words, the game is still completely open*, there is enough time to turn the course of events around”<sup>213</sup> (emphasis added). This ambiguity was applied to other game situations, as well: “Šarić’s [a Ribarroja player] mistake, she didn’t get to shoot or, better said, good defense by the *Krimovke*.”<sup>214</sup>

Paradoxical reporting points to a more widespread tendency to alleviate the failure of teams and players playing for Slovenian sides. Justification was sought for their errors (“*Again*, [Krim goalkeeper] Palinger was *very close* [to blocking the shot]”<sup>215</sup> (emphases added), or “Well, even [Olimpija’s] Hukić of course can’t always score”<sup>216</sup>). In turn, opponents’ mistakes were at times accepted with relief, and presented as lucky strikes: “Žukauskas luckily missed the first free throw.”<sup>217</sup> Words were thus manipulated so as to constantly convey a sense of success and control.

#### **9.2.4 Alleviating failure**

In the games analyzed, Krim Mercator performed well while Union Olimpija had a struggling year in both athletic and business terms. Two unexpected victories early in the Euroleague campaign boosted fans’ and club representatives’ hopes and expectations, but after the initial euphoria the game results turned for the worse. As a consequence, Olimpija’s coach Memi Bečirović resigned mid-season and several players parted the team before the year ended.

In an attempt to downplay Union Olimpija’s likely and possibly lopsided losses basketball commentators adopted a discourse emphasizing the alleged very high quality of the team’s opponents. Apparently, the commentators tried to suggest that “it was not a shame to lose against *such a great* opponent.”

On several occasions, alleviating circumstances were declared even before the game had started. For instance, the commentator of the game between Olimpija and the “Russian giant,” CSKA, invited the audience “not to be too disappointed” should a defeat, “expected by the majority,”<sup>218</sup> occur. Nonetheless, most alleviating comments came towards the end of games that were taking turns for the worse.

Union Olimpija's difficult situation was cited by broadcasters as an alleviating factor in the team's poor performances. In one game, Peter Vilfan noted that "Union Olimpija, unfortunately, won't be achieving its fourth victory today,"<sup>219</sup> and then provided the following argumentation: "Basketball fans, do not forget, before the beginning of the season, Union Olimpija was practically a team without a roster, a team without money, without a real perspective, without, of course, as some people thought, a real opportunity to get back on its feet."<sup>220</sup> Hence, the *true* success was the fact that the team *had made it* till then without collapsing.

The argumentation was reiterated by the same announcer in the final minutes of Olimpija's last Euroleague performance that year. Then, Vilfan spent several minutes alleviating and justifying the team's humble performance in the past period:

All you basketball fans who may be very critical about what Union Olimpija has shown this year in the Euroleague; I have to say that, you remember of course last summer, remember that time when Union Olimpija was of course a team with a huge, huge debt, with a huge deficit in its bank account, when it had only one player with a signed contract, when it didn't have a coach, when it actually didn't have anything of what even average teams have, let alone those playing in the highest European competition. Then, luckily, some things happened, which started resolving things, actually, contributed to saving Union Olimpija. I think it came to some sort of economic-political consensus that Union Olimpija is such a big, of course not just basketball, but sports institution, and not just of Ljubljana, but even Slovenia, so it deserves to be saved, so it would be good to do, of course, anything to keep Union Olimpija existing, so it would, of course, still play in the highest European competition.

A new management came, a new executive board, and I would say, the executive board, one of the most competent and in my opinion also one of the best in past years. Here, I would emphasize those members of the executive board who come from the economic sphere, not just because their companies, of course, support financially Union Olimpija and they will, I hope, in the future, but, of course, because these people put in great efforts, they put in all their knowledge, put in energy, put in, of course, also a lot of their spare time to save this Union Olimpija of course. And I can say that, of course, at the moment, Union Olimpija is on the right path to turn this into a reality.

If this will be so, then you, basketball fans, will, of course, in the next season again watch an Olimpija that will be a source of pride for us. An Olimpija which will be, if not feared, then at least respected by those [sic] biggest European teams, at least, including those bearing the most resounding names. An Olimpija which will in the next seasons,

of course, not just in the next one, still play in the Euroleague. And an Olimpija which will keep on filling the Tivoli Hall, and then, soon I hope, also the new hall at Stožice. An Olimpija, of course, an Olimpija, which will play a game that will allow all of us, especially all basketball fans in Slovenia, to keep on enjoying.<sup>221</sup>

This extended quotation produced many descriptors and also displays many aspects of broadcasters discourse on TV Slovenija. Two of the most obvious are the alleviation of failure, and inherent patriotism. Slightly more subtle is the praising of the franchise's executive board—a board of which the broadcaster Peter Vilfan himself was a member at the time the game was played<sup>e</sup>. Union Olimpija is represented as a sports institution of national relevance, hence he used public television airtime to justify both a private and public investment in a franchise in precarious state.

The purpose of this dissertation is not to assess whether a private and/or public investment in this franchise was either reasonable or necessary; the topic at hand is media discourse, not management. It is, however, worth noting that the speaker exploited the public media to promote the financing of a private club<sup>f</sup> (which, in objective terms, meant a massive investment as Union Olimpija had been in the red for several consecutive years). This behavior is even more questionable if one knows that Vilfan himself is an official (a board member) of the team he was speaking about. He thus spoke as a media representative to support investment in a venture he is involved in, and called upon the “national relevance” of (t)his “sports institution” to substantiate his claims.

Alleviating discourse was less pronounced in handball, probably due to Krim's greater competition success. The only such instance was after the team's loss in the knock-out play-off stage of the competition, when the courtside reporter concluded

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<sup>e</sup> At the time the game was played, sportscaster Peter Vilfan was a member of Union Olimpija's Executive Board (and thus directly involved in the team's operations); he was also a City Councilor of Ljubljana (and thus a public servant); and a father-in-law of one of the players, Vlado Ilievski, who had been released to another Euroleague team earlier that season.

<sup>f</sup> In Slovenia, sports teams (even at the professional level) are organized as “societies,” meaning they have “members” and are not properly “owned” by anybody; they are not proper private franchises. The law stipulates that all the profit such a society makes should be re-invested in the operations of the society itself. They can employ people (including players, coaches, managers, staff etc.). Their salaries are not legally limited (provided, of course, that taxes are regularly deducted and that contractual agreements are met). Despite the “public” character of such societies, these salaries are usually kept confidential.

It is worth noting that the same Societies Act applies to both amateur sports societies operating in youth or recreational sport and to professional sports teams playing in international competitions.

her post-match contribution by noting that “the world, of course, won’t end even after Krim’s defeat,”<sup>222</sup> and invited viewers “not to be too sad”<sup>223</sup> about it.

### **9.2.5 Cheer-leading**

The most evident form of biased discourse in Slovenian team sports telecasts is overt cheering for “home” teams. This bias has been revealed in this entire section as it included extensive examples of announcers’ cheering for the teams they perceive as “theirs”—in fact, “ours.”

Examples of biased play-by-play speech abound. The most obvious and frequent were expressions of happiness when Ljubljana-based teams performed well, while sadness and disappointment prevailed when Krim or Olimpija missed their opportunities. Successful actions by “home” players were met with approval (e.g., “This is how it’s done, this was an excellent shot by Anja Frešer. This is what we’re waiting for, what we want!”<sup>224</sup> and “This is what we expect from Jasmin Hukić!”<sup>225</sup>). Conversely, regretful expressions were common after Ljubljana’s players missed their attempts (e.g., “Derepasko now misses, unfortunately,”<sup>226</sup> and “Unfortunately, he was far from succeeding”<sup>227</sup>).

Another frequent influence on the game outcome was good and bad fate. Commentators commonly referred to luck when describing opponents’ mistakes: “This is, luckily, a turnover for Prokom,”<sup>228</sup> and “Tatjana Medved [a Ribarroja player] missed, luckily.”<sup>229</sup> Hope was frequently brought in to build a sense of community among the viewers and, simultaneously, to elicit success (e.g., “Let’s hope the *Krimovke* will carry on successfully and [secure] two points [in the overall standings],”<sup>230</sup> or “CSKA is leading by one point, 55-54; let’s hope this won’t be enough for a victory in the Tivoli Hall”<sup>231</sup>). A corollary to good and bad fate was TV Slovenija on-air staff’s occasional wishes that opposing players or teams would fail (e.g., “Let’s hope [Slagelse’s] Popović doesn’t play well”<sup>232</sup>). Commentators were thus doing more than just cheering for Ljubljana-based teams: they were actually stimulating support and leading the cheering.

Allegedly, “luck” also instigated referees’ calls in favor of Slovenian teams. Commentators described as “lucky” several instances when officials, in the announcer’s opinion, did not see infractions committed by players cheered for (e.g.,

“another intervention by Bodnieva [a Krim player] from behind, it was on the verge of a suspension. Luckily, the referees didn’t see this”<sup>233</sup>).

Cheering for teams from Ljubljana on Slovenian public television was presented as self-obvious and pervasive (e.g., “Our champions scored shorthanded, and now, of course, we breathe easier, we breathe easier”<sup>234</sup>). Successful plays were perceived as source of pride and satisfaction for “us” (“Union Olimpija still plays relentlessly, we can be enthusiastic,”<sup>235</sup> and “We can be quite satisfied with the performance of those from Ljubljana in the first half”<sup>236</sup>). In fact, while plays by non-Slovenian teams were usually attributed to either a specific player or the team they belonged to, commentary concerning Krim or Union Olimpija often went unattributed and was spoken factually. When an announcer described “an opportunity for a half-fast-break,”<sup>237</sup> the relation to Krim Mercator was taken as obvious.

Remarks such as “the crowd will, of course, cheer for Ljubljana’s basketball players,”<sup>238</sup> might also be understood as factual descriptions when broadcasting a team’s home game. Less clear are appeals such as the following: “Next Saturday, [Krim will play] hopefully in front of a packed hall (...) those who can, come to Tivoli [Hall], and together with the *Krimovke* after Round 6 we’ll celebrate the qualification to the quarter-finals.”<sup>239</sup> Apart from the obvious questionability of such invitations from the objectivity point of view—supporting Krim is seen as mandatory for TV Slovenija’s viewers—such an appeal is questionable from a corporative standpoint, as well: it would surely be more appropriate for a telecaster to invite viewers to *tune in* next week.

TV Slovenija’s sportscasters perceive the cheering for Slovenian teams in international competitions as normal; this was confirmed in all the interviews with members of the network’s editorial staff. In fact, none of them was even willing to conceive this issue as being potentially problematic. Head of sports programming Mile Jovanović argued that he never heard any complaint about their broadcasters’ support for Slovenian team (personal communication, May 19, 2010); hence, he deduces they are giving the viewers what they want.

Legislation, including the Mass Media Act (2006) and the Radio and Television Corporation of Slovenia Act (2005), mandate that Slovenia supports the media in the production of content which is “important (...) for the preservation of Slovenian

national and cultural” (the Mass Media Act 2006, Art. 4). Biased reporting and the generation of an imagined community (Anderson 1983) may be seen as a form of nation and identity nurturing; however, it also collides with the canons of objective and impartial reporting. Apart from Andrej Stare (who is only employed part-time by TV Slovenija), sports reporters consider themselves and are employed as sports *journalists* (the payroll actually lists them as “journalists/commentators”). Biased reporting is considered inadmissible in broadcasts of national fixtures. It seems odd to change the rules of the game as the content shifts.

### **9.2.6 Slovenian-centrism**

In addition to the cheering for Slovenian teams, sports broadcasting discourse on TV Slovenija was substantially Slovenian-centric.

This trend includes the acknowledgement of all Slovenian nationals affiliated with opposing teams. CSKA Moscow’s starter and captain, Matjaž Smodiš, was described as “a top-notch basketball player (...) currently the best power forward in Europe,”<sup>240</sup> and as “Clearly, one of the best members of the Slovenian national team.”<sup>241</sup> The recognition of Slovenianness was not limited to players: “The Slovenian coach, David Dedek,”<sup>242</sup> was mentioned as Prokom Trefl’s *assistant* coach—a role otherwise seldom mentioned by Slovenian sportscasters. In handball, where Slovenian players or coaches were not affiliated with any of the teams Krim played against, the commentator found Slovenianness in the prefabricated hall in Volgograd, Russia, which was built by “our conational, Dušan Olaj”<sup>243</sup>—a detail that was mentioned more than once during the game.

Slovenian nationality was not even mandatory for a player to be deemed “Slovenian;” the Montepaschi Siena team was described as having “a tiny Slovenian-Macedonian flavor, as one of the members of the team is Vlatko Ilievski, the Macedonian national who used to play for Union Olimpija,”<sup>244</sup> and CSKA’s Trajan Langdon was mentioned as being, among other things, of Slovenian heritage. Affiliation with Slovenia was spread to former players of Slovenian teams (“the Slagelse goalkeeper, former Krim goalkeeper, Cecilia Leganger”<sup>245</sup>). It is worth noting that Vlatko Ilievski, besides being a former Olimpija player, is also married to a Slovenian and is, in fact, the son-in-law of TV Slovenija’s basketball commentator,

Peter Vilfan. This personal detail was not mentioned by the courtside reporter, but it might contribute to the explanation of his “Slovenianness.”

This was also accomplished through references to the Slovenian national side: Greek national, Theodoros Papaloukas, was presented in the following fashion: “Of course we have *bitter memories* of him, what he did to the *Slovenian national team* at the European championship”<sup>246</sup> (emphases added). The same episode was recalled by the same announcer in a game played several months later. Papaloukas was thus seen as an adversary (rather than a player), almost as an “enemy of the state,” due to his performances in both club and national competitions.

Positive profiling of Slovenia in connection with other athletes was also found in the Olympic telecasts. There, also, subtle patriotic connotations were offered to enhance the country’s reputation as an influential athletic environment.

### **9.2.7 Ample positive consonance for Slovenian teams**

In addition to the overt cheerleading for Slovenian teams, announcers on TV Slovenija transmitted their preference for certain teams by expressing more positive consonance of their actions. Tables 9.7 and 9.8 show that both Slovenian and opposing teams were devoted equal shares of comments denoting positive consonance; yet, in absolute terms, Krim Mercator and Union Olimpija received more than twice as many mentions as their opponents.

Some remarks combined positive consonance with cheering (e.g., “His first shot and Hukić, immediately [scores]! This is what we expect from Jasmin Hukić!”<sup>247</sup>). Especially in crucial moments, successful plays were described as “typical” for athletes playing for Ljubljana teams (e.g., “An outstanding play, then a left-hand finish, a typical play for Dragić”<sup>248</sup>). Conversely, successful actions by opposing players were acknowledged with reluctance, almost regret: “Lavrinovič in a difficult position, but he scored this nicely, we must admit, the Lithuanian, Ksistof Lavrinovič.”<sup>249</sup>

Commentators often tried to frame bad plays by Slovenian players or teams positively. Sportscaster Miha Žibrat euphemistically described an “airball” by Olimpija’s Marko Milić as “a shot that is not exactly Marko Milić’s ideal choice, as you



could see.”<sup>250</sup> Mistakes were diminished by noting that “there are some mistakes in offense here and there, but mistakes always occur,”<sup>251</sup> and that “Even Hukić, of course, can’t always score.”<sup>252</sup> Hence, when it came to “our” team, “individual mistakes” are legitimate and accepted. This notion, however, dissipated when opposing sides, let alone referees, were at stake.

Luck was another factor contributing positive consonance to Slovenian teams’ causes. Especially in basketball, commentators attributed opponents’ mistakes to fortune (e.g., “Luckily there, a personal foul by [Montepaschi Siena’s] Ksistof Lavrinovič. This ended quite well, as [Union Olimpija’s] Saša Dončić was actually without a real solution there.”<sup>253</sup> Adverse luck was also the cause of some defeats, such as when “it just wasn’t their day.”<sup>254</sup> Conversely, successful performances by Olimpija’s and Krim’s players were presented as a product of superior skill.

### **9.2.8 Biographic and gendered language**

Like with the Olympic broadcasts, the most common biographic information offered by TV Slovenija’s team handball and basketball sportscasters was an athlete’s nationality. Occasionally, nationality was used to identify those most “characterized” by it—such as Black basketball player Pape Sow who was referred to simply as “the Senegalese.”<sup>255</sup> Curiously, nationality was virtually the only biographic information repeatedly offered about the referees.

Frequently mentioned biographic information also included an athlete’s career review (the teams they had played for), her age and hometown (especially in women’s handball), and his height (only in men’s basketball).

Overt references to athletes’ racial backgrounds were largely avoided. Black African players were instead identified by their nationality (e.g., “Nigerian-born, hailing from Lagos,”<sup>256</sup> and “Romain Sato, as I already said, coming from the Central African Republic”<sup>257</sup>). The only exception was a reference to Marta Mangué Gonzales as a “Black handball player from the Canary Islands.”<sup>258</sup>

Direct comparisons involving potentially gendered language are not easy to make while studying women’s *handball* and men’s *basketball*, each with its technical peculiarities. On a quantitative level, more men were mentioned during women’s

sports telecasts than the opposite; however, this merely reflected the actual involvement of male participants (coaches, referees, and game commissioners) in the women's competition. This is an organizational, rather than a dialogic issue.

Unlike English, the Slovenian language has a gendered grammar: nouns, adjectives and pronouns are classified as either masculine, feminine or neuter. Hence, when communicating, grammatical categories must agree in terms of number and gender. Occasionally, Slovenian women's handball announcers had trouble using feminine forms of certain expressions. Most notably, when citing the name of the competition, the unsuitable *Liga prvakov* (En. "Champions League") was occasionally used, instead of the appropriate feminine form, *Liga prvakinj* (literally, "Champions League for Women," or "*Championesses* League." Yet on some occasions announcers immediately corrected their own mistaken pronunciation.

In Slovenian grammar, the masculine gender form is neutral (Toporišič 2000). This means that when the natural gender is obvious, masculine forms may be used (e.g., *Ana je arhitekt*, or "Ana is an architect"), but the feminine, if existing, are preferred (*Ana je arhitektka*). Most linguists believe that the neutrality of the masculine form is an unalterable characteristic of the language system. Some feministic linguists see it as a form of patriarchy and consequently reject it, demanding double-gender referencing to account of the female presence in society. Double referencing is problematic as it leads to numerous awkward forms that overload texts and considerably diminish their clarity (Neža Umek 2008). In the case of public television broadcasting, announcers should be wary of the issue and make efforts to use the recommended, feminine form whenever possible.

A single potentially derogatory comment about women's sport was recorded in handball broadcasts: "Both the Krim and Ribarroja players showed that *they can play handball*, that they can play attractively"<sup>259</sup> (emphasis added). This formulation does not necessarily derive from the players' gender (perhaps it had been spoken to emphasize the quality of the game). Other gendered negative commentary was not observed; nor was evidence of significant differences in the degree of "gloriousness" of male versus female sports found (cf. Bon and Doupona Topič, 2004). In fact, women athletes received fewer negative comments than men.

A characteristic often seen as a form of gender-marking is the compulsory heterosexuality of athletes (Duncan, Jensen and Messner 1993, Daddario 1994, Poniatowski and Hardin 2009). This spirit was present in both basketball and handball broadcasts on Slovenian television. Marital status was more often discussed for heterosexual women (e.g., “Here is [Cecilia] Leganger (...) next to her, her intimate friend and coach,”<sup>260</sup> or “[Bojana] Popović, some of you remember her by her maiden name, Petrović”<sup>261</sup>]). Homosexual orientation and marital status was avoided for at least one openly lesbian handball personality, Slagelse’s coach, Anja Andersen. In basketball, (heterosexual) marital status was only mentioned for J.R. Holden (bb, Nov 7).

### **9.2.9 Boosting the reputation of “our” Krimovke**

The single most obvious discursive trend recorded in the handball broadcasts was that members of Krim Mercator were more likely to be portrayed in positive terms than their opponents. The quantitative comparison of positive ascriptions by team set out in Table 9.8 showed that, while the share of positive versus negative commentary was equal, Krim players received more than twice as many positive mentions as their opponents. A textual analysis reveals that the positive note was much more pronounced for players treated as “ours.”

Krim’s Liudmila Bodnieva, for instance, was repeatedly dubbed “the world’s best pivot.”<sup>262</sup> Coach Robert Beguš was deemed as having “a good nose”<sup>263</sup> for substitutions, and “our captain,”<sup>264</sup> Tatjana Oder, was labeled as being “engraved with capital letters in the rich and successful history of this club.”<sup>265</sup>

In turn, comments about opposing players were occasionally on the verge of controversy—as if to diminish the positive note expressed by the remark itself. Ribarroja’s Marta Mangué Gonzales was deemed “an excellent player, but not a player of *that special kind*”<sup>266</sup> (emphasis added). Current Slagelse and former Krim goalkeeper, Cecilia Leganger, was also described in conflicting terms:

The excellent Cecilia Leganger. Obviously, she is only successful in the Scandinavian region, she didn’t make it in Ljubljana. She had too many problems and then left Ljubljana with the excuse that she can’t study medicine. The truth is, she’s not studying

medicine now, either. It would've been better if she had honestly admitted that she just didn't click with the team from Ljubljana.<sup>267</sup>

Another former Krim Mercator member, Tatjana Logvin, was also described in ambiguous terms when she faced her former team as an Aalborg player: "Tanja Logvin left Ljubljana because of her daughter, who started attending school in Vienna. Back then, this was her official reason; many people say that there were many other things."<sup>268</sup> The announcer, however, did not specify what these "many other things" were, or might have been. Other examples abound of blasting opposing players (Cialdini and Richardson 1980), such as the description of Slagelse's coach, Anja Andersen, as a "capricious lady."<sup>269</sup>

### **9.2.10      *Containing expectations regarding "our" Ljubljančani***

If the reputation of Ljubljana's Krim players was enhanced through broadcasting commentary, much the opposite was done for Union Olimpija. Announcers reacted to the franchise's infelicitous situation by attempting to hold back viewers' expectations. They did so by alleviating stated prospects about the team's performance and by being overtly appreciative of opponents' smart plays.

Sportscasters did not shy away from providing less than flattering commentary about Union Olimpija, such as: "Taylor, this is not the best pass... Too fast, inconsiderate, inaccurate pass, unfortunately, by Ronell Taylor."<sup>270</sup> Still, most of Olimpija players' mistakes were presented euphemistically (as noted in Section 9.2.7).

In turn, Olimpija's opponents were portrayed in more honestly appreciative terms than Krim's opponents in handball telecasts. CSKA's J.R. Holden, for instance, was dubbed "an experienced cat,"<sup>271</sup> while his teammate, Ramunas Šiškauskas, was introduced as "one of CSKA's sharp-shooters."<sup>272</sup> The same label was given to Siena's Terrell McIntyre (bb, Dec 13), while CSKA's Theodoros Papaloukas was honored as "distinguished."<sup>273</sup>

If Slovenian players or personalities were gladly mentioned even when they were not directly affiliated with Ljubljana teams, there was a notable exception with former Union Olimpija and current Žalgiris player Goran Jurak. Jurak was

introduced by commentator Peter Vilfan as being very motivated due to him playing against his former team (i.e., Union Olimpija). At one point, Vilfan commented in a somewhat disappointed tone on one of Jurak's actions: "We have to admit; so far, Jurak is doing very well."<sup>274</sup> In another game, the same commentator downplayed Jurak's skills by declaring, "Jurak is quite successful with Žalgiris (...) I say, if Jurak, of course, can almost be the best player for Žalgiris, then this is not the Žalgiris that once subdued the entire Europe"<sup>275</sup> (referring to Žalgiris winning the Euroleague in 1999).

The latter appears as an example of blasting a former player of the beloved team, and other examples in this section confirm a tendency to cut off future failure (Wann et al. 1995) to protect the constructed social group's ego (of Slovenians) from potential damage. Expectations have to be contained.

### ***9.2.11 Discussing referees***

Sports referees and game officials are responsible for providing all participants with the same game conditions, and thus the same chances to win the competition. In the eyes of both competitors and audience members, they represent the "government," and thus repression. Officials are seldom perceived well.

In terms of the quantity of mentions, referees were marginal characters in both basketball and handball broadcasts, generating only 1.8% of all commentary. Much like talk about other participants, over two-thirds of referee-related commentary was neutral. However, unlike descriptors regarding players and teams, evaluative commentary about referees tended to be negative. Examples include the evaluation that "referees' reactions are so interesting. When they blow it, they quickly try to prove they are right. They carry on with nonsense. After calling an inexistent foul for a suspension, the Hungarians now gave a yellow card to [Krim coach] Beguš,"<sup>276</sup> or opinions that "the Germans, again, don't call. Now they correct their own mistake with a yellow card to [Krim's] coach Beguš. That's what it's usually like when referees make a mistake, they search for culprits among the others."<sup>277</sup> Both examples are drawn from handball broadcasts; and in both, referees were referred to by their nationality, while allegedly erroneous calls resulted in yellow cards for Krim's coach.

An important means of creating meaning was the semiotic “principle of omission,” expressing a negative assessment of referees’ work through “tacit criticism” and without explicitly pointing out mistakes. In these cases, commentators repeatedly referred to officials’ calls without openly assessing their correctness. By doing this, announcers directed viewers’ attention to almost every (not necessarily disputable) call, resulting in the implicit questioning of their correctness.

Other methods of criticism include a repetition of statements (e.g., “What are the Germans calling, a foot fault. The Germans are calling a foot fault”<sup>278</sup>), and apparent resignation in an adverse destiny (“Let’s leave the referees to call what they’ve just called”<sup>279</sup>).

Nationality was another prominent characteristic in the discourse about referees. This biographic information was mentioned *multiple* times for almost all officials, and it was also used as a substitute identifier (e.g., “The Austrians don’t allow conversation in the Dinamo camp,”<sup>280</sup> or “The Hungarians called an infraction”<sup>281</sup>). This was especially true in handball where games are officiated by fixed and nationally homogeneous crews. In basketball, officiating crews are changed for every game.

Slovenian telecasters displayed an ambiguous attitude to referees: they *expected* them to be objective, yet *believed* them to be biased, and wished they would favor “their” team: “It’s perfectly clear, usually it is like this, that referees make at least some calls in favor of the home team, but tonight this doesn’t apply.”<sup>282</sup> Such overt and unsubstantiated allegations of bias are problematic as they raise suspects in officials’ integrity. Professional sports are a business and need fair and impartial officials; if journalists and announcers feel that some aspects of the game are being intentionally manipulated, they should act accordingly.

### **9.2.12      *Commenting on aggressiveness and violence***

Traditionally, sports reporting employs the same terminology as reports about armed conflicts. TV Slovenija’s announcers are no exception: both games and individual match-ups were framed as confrontations (“Ilievski against Taylor”<sup>283</sup>) or even as duels (“Now the Žukauskas/Begić duel”<sup>284</sup>). Occasionally, match-ups were announced by the “collaborative” conjunction “and” (such as “Milić and

Stonerook”<sup>285</sup>). Interestingly, the same words and formulations were used to speak about both match-ups between opponents, and cooperation between teammates.

Sportscasters had an ambiguous attitude to displays of aggressiveness that occurred during game-time. In handball, for instance, an infraction by Krim’s Katja Kurent, which resulted in her opponent falling to the ground, was deemed “a good intervention.”<sup>286</sup> Frequent falls to the floor as consequences of fouls are perceived a normal part of the game and are described by poised and accepting comments, such as “Khmyrova is on the ground,”<sup>287</sup> or “Bodnieva is somewhat used to receiving such hits.”<sup>288</sup> Resulting two-minute suspensions because of violent infractions were mentioned as an opportunity to rest, rather than a penalty for an illegal act (e.g., “Katja Kurent will rest for two minutes”<sup>289</sup>). Likewise, fouls in basketball were frequently met with understanding and even appreciation, as signs of “truly manly” performance (such as in “here, manly, tough, Dončić, of course, acted upon this attempt by Eze. He’ll have two free throws, which is better than letting the guests get easy, unchallenged points”<sup>290</sup>).

Two scuffles broke out in the seven basketball games analyzed. Interestingly, on both occasions commentator Peter Vilfan tried to justify the violent acts by Slovenian players by arguing they had been provoked. This was his reaction to the first such episode:

Unsportsmanlike foul for Goran Dragić. Obviously, Goran Dragić has been provoked in this game. You see him, Dragić is still getting angry, now talking to [Žalgiris’ player] Brown. Brown, of course, experienced enough to know how to incite an opposing player, a young player like Goran Dragić. Who knows what happened here. [The replay is shown.] Well, Dragić, here, indeed hit Brown with his elbow, but there was surely something else before that. Maybe Brown said something to Dragić, maybe he incited him in some other way.<sup>291</sup>

On the other occasion, the same announcer spoke in favor of Union Olimpija captain, Marko Milić, who had just been disqualified for engaging in a brawl:

Sow and Milić, whoa, Milić now hit Sow there. He became mad because of that elbow hit; Sow, made an ugly move, of course, with his elbow towards Marko Milić’s head. Milić, of course, then reacted in an instant. Milić is now, of course, disqualified, so the game is over for him.

Milić is of course still upset; quite legitimately, I'd say. The referees should have, of course, at that first attempt at hitting him with his elbow, Sow towards Milić, they should have reacted at that first attempt. You saw here [the replay is shown], here, Milić luckily withdrew his head, then of course absolutely no doubt that Milić, for his action here, deserved, of course, first an unsportsmanlike foul and then a disqualification. But here, look at this, this was really extremely dangerous play by Sow. Milić, of course, just answered, reacted to the provocation, reacted to the hit. This is not, of course, by any means an excuse for how Milić reacted, but believe me, these things frequently occur during games, when nerves are tense, when, for instance, referees don't sanction an action by one player, a player simply loses his temper, this time this happened to Marko Milić.

(...) Milić will now, of course, walk off the court, obviously. Sow, of course, is not as badly injured as it looked in that first moment, when he fell on the floor as if Milić had knocked him down, now he's even back on the court, so he'll be able to carry on with the game. Both of them shouldn't have done what they did in this last action. I think, actually, that Sow would also deserve a punishment, even if the referees, of course, were to assign him at least an unsportsmanlike foul or a disqualifying foul post-festum.<sup>292</sup>

Rather than directing his attention to the game, Vilfan kept on focusing on whom he saw as the "real" culprit in the incident. When Sow committed a personal foul several minutes later, he called for an unsportsmanlike foul, and suggested:

I think that the Senegalese is being a bit too courageous in this game. Whichever way we look at it, and of course we cannot agree with Milić hitting Sow, it was Sow who actually, of course, started everything. He was the one hitting Milić with an elbow and, in fact, it's just a matter of luck that Milić wasn't the one who got wounded.<sup>293</sup>

The message was ambiguous: while violent behavior was inadmissible, Milić's and Dragić's reactions were understandable and, what is more, it is just sheer luck that the one who got wounded was not Olimpija's player. Commentators regularly using bellicose language thus showed a great amount of tolerance when game confrontations escalated and were on the verge of becoming rough. More accurately: while they declaratively condemned violence, they explained why it should be understood, after all, in the episodes involving players they cheered for.



### 9.2.13 *Framing the framers*

Evaluative commentary adds up to one-third of on-air dialogue in Slovenian team sports broadcasting on public television (see Table 9.7). This portion of televised commentary exposes sportscasters' opinions and helps shape the audience's perceptions.

The last section in this chapter deals not so much with a discursive trend as it does with their authors. It reviews some characteristics of announcers' and courtside reporters' personalities that are conveyed through the tube.

In the broadcasts analyzed, play-by-play announcers occasionally made a point of reaffirming their knowledge by either agreeing with coaches' suggestions or formulating tactical recommendations of their own. Examples included: "Beguš is one of those younger coaches who emphasizes an aggressive defense and, *of course, I agree with the finding that* a good defense results later in an efficient offense"<sup>294</sup> (emphasis added). On other occasions, they post-festum confirmed their own assumptions spoken (or not) earlier: "As we predicted before the game *and knew what it's going to be like*, Bojana Popović, right, six goals in the first half alone..."<sup>295</sup> (emphasis added).

TV Slovenija's voices occasionally acted as authorities to either confirm or reject referees' calls: "I can assure you, as my commentating spot is courtside, it all happened about five meters from me, that Dragić stole that ball from him completely cleanly, without a foul,"<sup>296</sup> and "I think that this second unsportsmanlike foul called on Milić was an absolutely unnecessary call."<sup>297</sup> Most commentary about officiating supported Union Olimpija's cause; in some cases, however, announcers did assess as (obviously) correct some calls that went against Ljubljana's team's interest (e.g., "the referees were quick to call the first personal foul on [Union Olimpija's] Hasan Rizvić. [The replay is shown.] Well, here, of course, there was a hit on the hand, with his left hand he hit Ilievski, Hasan Rizvić."<sup>298</sup>

Favoritism and jingoistic announcing occasionally resulted in mistaken predictions: "Milić is good at the free throw line this season. [Misses the free throw.] Well, this always happens, when you commend somebody, just the opposite happens."<sup>299</sup> While this episode (and Miha Žibrat's reaction to it) is in itself quite humorous, similar implications and suggestions are unnecessary as they challenge

the validity of the announcer's expertise. In the long run, viewers will likely grow tired of predictions that appear to have about the same validity as flipping a coin. A broadcast example of many viewers' reactions was presented earlier in the snooker announcing commentary.

In both handball and basketball, game broadcasts produced by TV Slovenija were usually enhanced by pre- and post-game courtside reporting. The role and influence of these reporters was obviously limited (although they are the authors of several of the examples cited). The characteristics of their at least partially Q-and-A reporting style dovetail with those documented in play-by-play announcers' commentary. Their most notable features include hyping pre-game expectations (e.g., "We're looking forward to a true basketball spectacle that is sure to be staged by Union Olimpija and Moscow's CSKA;"<sup>300</sup> Slovenian-centrism (regardless of the game outcome, only members of Slovenian teams were interviewed); and overt cheering ("We hope, of course, for an at least seven-goal margin victory for Krim, right?"<sup>301</sup>).

Questions in courtside interviews with players and coaches frequently sounded assertive as if practically imposing their opinion on the interviewees, or putting words in their mouths. One reporter consistently formulated the questions as statements: "So, Slagelse didn't let us see their practice. This is probably another caprice by Anja Andersen, right?"<sup>302</sup> And "[Krim's] Golubić played for your team for the first time. She also scored quite a few times. It's probably your assessment, as well, that she connected well with this team?"<sup>303</sup> The same reporter also asked three different Krim members during the same game (the coach, the assistant coach and a player) whether it was difficult to find the motivation to play the game which, in her words, did not have any competition value as it was the final game of the group stage and the standings could not be changed.

Team sports are different than individual ones: broadcasting discourse reflects this divergence. The number of people announcers have to focus on is considerably narrower; consequently, sportscasters have much more time available for providing an insight into players, teams, the game in general, or other sports-related topics. Nonetheless, the range of additional and/or background information offered to TV viewers is very narrow and limited to some biographic facts. The bulk of the text

comprises depictions of factual description of events and estimations about the course of the game.

This analysis has showed that discourses during individual Olympic events and during continental team fixtures share many characteristics. Technical terms differ, while patriotism persists. This as well as some other characteristics of broadcasters' discourse appear *universal*. Announcers themselves justify this contradiction as they build this separate universe through a syntax of hegemony, and educate viewers in terms of the frames they articulate.

## 10 Results and discussion: National soccer league

Thus far, this study has dealt with individual international events in the Olympic program, and team international events in continental competitions. Both competitions provided obvious clues as to who represented “us, the viewers,” and who were the “antagonists.” The third part of this study focuses on content that should not include obvious identification signposts: the national soccer league.

A national fixture was added to this research to study the influence an international athletic environment has on sportscasters’ commentary—most notably, its impact on discourse about ethnicity and nationality, but possibly more.

National soccer as a field of analysis was selected for two main reasons: one is the sport’s undisputable worldwide popularity and the other, more pragmatic one, is that the men’s soccer championship was the only Slovenian fixture in any sport to be regularly broadcast on TV Slovenija outside of play-off and finals games<sup>a</sup>.

National soccer league telecasts were less popular among the viewers than were the international basketball and team handball broadcasts. The seven games included in this study attracted an average of 49,500 viewers per game, reaching an average rating of 2.6% (AGB Nielsen Media Research for RTV Slovenija, target group 4+).

The sample of games analyzed consisted of seven games of the Prva Liga Telekom Slovenije (the Slovenian top-flight competition) broadcast on TV Slovenija. Five different teams (Ajdovščina, Domžale, Koper, Maribor, Nova Gorica) took part in the games analyzed. The games were played in May 2007 (at the end of the 2006/07 campaign) and in autumn of the same year (in the opening stages of the next season). The broadcasts lasted a total of 11 hours, 50 minutes, and produced a total of **9,192 items for analysis**. More detailed broadcast specifications are listed in Appendix A.

When combined, all descriptors related to 131 individual players, eight coaches, and 14 officials (either referees or federation officials). Of those, 125 were Slovenian nationals and 28 had other nationalities (from 14 different states). The only non-White participants were three Black soccer players (deriving from Cote d’Ivoire,

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<sup>a</sup> In addition to the Prva Liga Telekom Slovenije, TV Slovenija also regularly broadcast English Premier League games up until the 2010/11 season.

France, and Nigeria) and two Latino/South American athletes (both Brazilian nationals). Table 10.1 summarizes the split of commentary by ethnicity and by nationality. More than half of all the commentary was about people of Slovenian nationality, and almost all descriptors related to individuals of White ethnicity.

**Table 10.1 Distribution of comments by ethnicity and nationality in national soccer league broadcasts on TV Slovenija**

Ethnicity	N	% of all	Nationality	N	% of all
White	6781	73.8	Slovenian	4978	54.2
Black	114	1.2	Other	1946	21.1
Hispanic/South American	29	0.3			
N/A	2268	24.7	N/A	2268	24.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>9192</i>	<i>100.0</i>		<i>9192</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Note: comments under “N/A” relate to the game itself, current score, time, or other remarks that could not be attributed to individuals or groups of distinct ethnicity or nationality. This includes general statements about teams.

**10.1 Quantitative data analysis**

The analyses of Olympic and international sports broadcasts showed that factual commentary added up to two-thirds of the on-air talk. Descriptions of consonance were the most frequent evaluative content, and most of it denoted success.

A content analysis of commentary in soccer telecasts on Slovenian public television shows similar ratios: factual and background commentary combines to make up 68.9 percent of all speech (just 0.3% shy of the figure recorded in the international basketball and handball broadcasts), and speech about consonance significantly outweighs all remaining discursive categories. Details are presented in Table 10.2.

Factual and background commentary accounts for over two-thirds of all commentators’ speech. Again, descriptions of consonance comprise the third most frequent aspect spoken about. Other categories are barely represented, and nine of them do not reach the 1 percent mark.

**Table 10.2 Absolute and relative frequency of different types of comments in national soccer league broadcasts on TV Slovenija**

Subject	Positive	Total	% of Positive	% of all
Concentration	29	53	54.7	0.6
Athletic skill—Strength/Speed	91	143	63.6	1.6
Athletic skill—Talent/Ability	193	215	89.8	2.3
Composure	69	153	45.1	1.7
Commitment	120	134	89.6	1.5
Courage	10	12	83.3	0.1
Experience	120	202	59.4	2.2
Past achievements	30	49	61.2	0.5
Intelligence	25	37	67.6	0.4
Consonance	693	1413	49.0	15.4
Stated expectations	216	271	79.7	2.9
Doping	—	0	—	0.0
Outgoing/extroverted	—	20	—	0.2
Modest/introverted	—	2	—	0.0
Emotional	—	31	—	0.3
Attractiveness	—	25	—	0.3
Size/Parts of body	—	98	—	1.1
Background	—	1353	—	14.7
Factual/Neutral	—	4981	—	54.2
<i>Total</i>		9192		100.0

Note: “% of total” denotes the incidence of each type of comment with regard to all descriptors (N = 9192) spoken during the telecasts analyzed.

The very small number of Black and Latino players makes cross-tabulation by ethnicity irrelevant. In turn, soccer specifics and the limited amount of teams involved in the games open opportunities for other types of data analysis.

Slovenian nationals outnumbered foreign citizens in Slovenian soccer telecasts by roughly a 4 to 1 ratio. The 28 non-Slovenians from 14 different states (some of them had dual citizenship), while nine countries were represented by a single athlete. A comparison between nations is thus impossible; it is hence more useful to bring all foreigners under one umbrella and compare the attribution of different comments to Slovenian and non-Slovenian athletes. Table 10.3 shows the differences in this distribution.

**Table 10.3 Comparison of frequencies of different types of comments by nationality in the Slovenian national soccer league**

Comment	Slovenian nationals	Others	$\chi^2(1)$	Sig.
Concentration	33 (0.7)	3 (0.1)	6.965	***
Athletic skill—Strength/Speed	68 (1.4)	49 (2.5)	10.987	***
Athletic skill—Talent/Ability	122 (2.4)	61 (3.1)	2.475	*
Composure	73 (1.5)	18 (0.9)	3.121	
Commitment	48 (1.0)	19 (1.0)	0.002	
Courage	4 (0.1)	2 (0.1)	<u>0.081</u>	
Experience	124 (2.5)	29 (1.5)	6.340	*
Past achievements	17 (0.3)	4 (0.2)	0.853	
Intelligence	18 (0.4)	8 (0.4)	0.091	
Consonance	752 (15.1)	254 (13.0)	4.063	*
Stated expectations	60 (1.2)	25 (1.3)	0.072	
Doping	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	—	
Outgoing/ Extroverted	10 (0.2)	2 (0.1)	<u>0.777</u>	
Modest/Introverted	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	—	
Emotional	16 (0.3)	2 (0.1)	2.573	
Attractiveness	7 (0.1)	5 (0.2)	<u>1.092</u>	
Size/Parts of body	55 (1.1)	39 (2.0)	8.333	***
Background	613 (12.3)	247 (12.7)	0.161	
Factual/Neutral	2958 (59.4)	1179 (60.6)	0.317	
<i>Total</i>	4978	1946		

Note: values in brackets denote shares within all comments about the respective nationality. Underlined  $\chi^2$  values indicate categories where one or both groups had an expected value of less than five.

\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.01 level.

Table 10.3 shows that Slovenian players inspired 71.9 percent of all commentary, while non-Slovenian players elicited 28.1 percent of all commentary. This is slightly higher than the 20 percent share anticipated by the number of athletes of non-Slovenian nationality. The difference comes as a consequence of the longer time the latter spent on the pitch or, more accurately, due to the *shorter* time they spent *off* the pitch as foreign players (like in basketball) are usually brought into a team to enhance its performance and results. In a soccer game, approximately 15 players from both teams are on standby to substitute any of the 22 starters and jump into the game. In every game, most of these 15 players were Slovenian nationals and

obviously only rarely mentioned in each telecast. As a rule, they were only mentioned within both teams' introductions just before the opening kick-off and occasionally during the half-time break.

The comparison showed six significant differences in the attribution of some types of commentary. Specifically, non-Slovenian players inspired more commentary in terms of strength, talent and size/body, but less about concentration, experience and consonance. Commentary in the two most frequently ascribed categories, namely factual and background descriptors, was evenly distributed among both groups.

Comments about the body mostly referred to players' contacts with the ball (e.g., "with his heel, Amel Mujaković,"<sup>304</sup> or "Džinić stopped the ball with his hand"<sup>305</sup>). On some occasions, announcers stated a player's height or referred to it when reporting game actions (e.g., "Elsner, the tallest in this jump [while deflecting the ball with his head]"<sup>306</sup>).

The next comparison focuses on differences in the attribution of positive and negative evaluative commentary. Table 10.4 shows the number of positive ascriptions in each category awarded to Slovenian and foreign competitors.

Apart from ascriptions of consonance, evaluative discourse was very modest in the Slovenian soccer broadcasts. It is thus not surprising that very few differences emerged. The only disparity was found in the attribution of positive commentary about non-Slovenian players' experience, which was higher than that of Slovenian nationals. This can be explained with the earlier note on the engagements of foreign players over domestic ones, who are usually signed up *because* they bring skill and experience to a team (there are enough "mediocre" athletes in each country so there is no need to seek them abroad).

The lack of other types of commentary, most notably regarding athletic skills, may imply an *absence* of this quality. Announcers thus perhaps preferred not to talk about aspects they saw as negative.

Most evaluative commentary expressed consonance. Descriptors such as "the soccer player who did what was necessary"<sup>307</sup> (a quote that might well be found on one of those funny quotes lists) or "Now, maybe an opportunity for Rakovič... It didn't work out"<sup>308</sup> are likely familiar even to non-Slovenian sports fans. Sports



**Table 10.4 Comparison of positive ascriptions by nationality in Slovenian national soccer league telecasts**

Comment	Slovenian			Non-Slovenian			$\chi^2(1)$	Sig.
	Positive	Negative	% of positive	Positive	Negative	% of positive		
Concentration	21	12	63.6	0	3	0.0	<u>1.909</u>	
Athletic skill— Strength/Speed	47	21	69.1	27	22	55.1	0.884	
Athletic skill— Talent/Ability	110	12	90.2	54	7	88.5	0.012	
Composure	32	41	43.8	7	11	38.9	0.842	
Commitment	43	5	89.6	17	2	89.4	0.000	
Courage	2	2	50.0	2	0	100.0	<u>0.500</u>	
Experience	59	65	47.6	<b>23</b>	6	79.3	4.415	*
Past achievements	9	8	52.9	4	0	100.0	<u>1.158</u>	
Intelligence	12	6	66.7	6	2	75.0	0.055	
Consonance	371	381	49.3	115	139	45.3	0.648	
Stated expectations	53	7	88.3	21	4	84.0	0.038	
<i>Total</i>	759	560	57.5	276	196	58.4	0.052	

Note: **Bolded** figures indicate categories with a significantly higher observed frequency. Underlined  $\chi^2$  values indicate categories where one or both groups had an expected value of less than five.

\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.05 level.

reporters often employ undefined yet understandable terms, such as “doing the necessary” or the verb “go” to denote successful and “won’t go” to describe unsuccessful plays (an idiomatic conversion to the English language might be “to work out;” see quotes 302 and 308). These comments allow plenty of expressive options without forcing the speaker to explicate.

Another research option is to seek differences in the attribution of commentary to each participating team. As an indicator of whether each team was given proportionate attention, the comparison included the actual and theoretically equal distributions of comments for all teams (e.g., the sum of comments pertaining to Hit Nova Gorica, which played in two of the games analyzed, was expected to be twice that of comments about Koper, which played a single game). A chi-square analysis showed significant differences in the attribution of commentary ( $\chi^2(4) = 61.748$ , sig.<0.01). Due to the small number of games analyzed, the differences were likely

caused by the unfortunate partial erasure of the recording of one of the games. However, when that game was excluded from the sample and the test repeated the differences were still significant at the 1 percent level ( $\chi^2(4) = 20.818$ , sig.<0.01).

Both analyses showed the greatest discrepancy between actual and theoretic distributions for teams that played fewer games (Koper and Primorje). This suggests that in the long run announcers do devote each team equal attention and balanced commentary.

**Table 10.5 Distribution of different types of comments to five teams participating in Slovenian national soccer league telecasts**

Comment \ Team	Domžale	Hit Gorica	Koper	Maribor	Primorje	$\chi^2(4)$	Sig.
Concentration	13 (0.5)	9 (0.7)	5 (0.9)	20 (0.7)	4 (0.4)	<u>2.470</u>	
Athletic skill— Strength/Speed	39 (1.5)	14 (1.1)	9 (1.7)	53 (1.8)	25 (2.5)	7.523	
Athletic skill— Talent/Ability	55 (2.2)	44 (3.3)	6 (1.1)	68 (2.3)	35 (3.5)	12.997	*
Composure	45 (1.8)	27 (2.0)	11 (2.1)	52 (1.8)	12 (1.2)	2.734	
Commitment	36 (1.4)	20 (1.5)	13 (2.4)	44 (1.5)	18 (1.8)	3.373	
Courage	4 (0.2)	2 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	3 (0.1)	3 (0.3)	<u>2.801</u>	
Experience	39 (1.5)	40 (3.0)	10 (1.9)	86 (2.9)	23 (2.3)	14.505	***
Past achievements	7 (0.3)	12 (0.9)	1 (0.2)	17 (0.6)	8 (0.8)	<u>9.135</u>	
Intelligence	10 (0.4)	9 (0.7)	1 (0.2)	12 (0.4)	3 (0.3)	<u>3.231</u>	
Consonance	309 (12.1)	255 (19.3)	76 (14.3)	536 (18.3)	145 (14.4)	45.539	***
Stated expectations	76 (3.0)	50 (3.8)	11 (2.1)	82 (2.8)	37 (3.7)	5.836	
Outgoing/Extroverted	5 (0.2)	2 (0.1)	3 (0.6)	7 (0.2)	1 (0.1)	<u>3.988</u>	
Modest/Introverted	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	<u>3.700</u>	
Emotional	14 (0.5)	6 (0.4)	0 (0.0)	9 (0.3)	1 (0.1)	<u>6.912</u>	
Attractiveness	6 (0.2)	1 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	11 (0.4)	3 (0.3)	<u>4.875</u>	
Size/Parts of Body	38 (1.5)	11 (0.8)	4 (0.8)	28 (1.0)	17 (1.7)	7.737	
Background	334 (13.1)	152 (11.5)	71 (13.3)	401 (13.7)	142 (14.1)	4.131	
Other/Neutral	1519 (59.6)	670 (50.6)	312 (58.5)	1496 (51.1)	532 (52.7)	24.187	***
<i>Total</i>	2549	1324	533	2927	1009		

Note: values in brackets denote shares within all comments about the respective team.

Underlined  $\chi^2$  values indicate categories where one or more groups had an expected value of less than five.

\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.01 level.

The rate with which each type of comment was attributed to each of the five teams was then analyzed. As in some previous tests, several coding categories did not meet the minimal requirements for a valid statistical analysis due to their low frequencies. Table 10.5 offers a summary of the attribution of each type of comment to each of the five teams shown on Slovenian public television.

Hit Gorica played two of the games analyzed and won both—the second even against the reigning champions Domžale. This explains the greater share of commentary about talent and consonance.

Maribor received significantly more commentary about experience. This was due to the team's successes in the two decades of Slovenian football championships in which it has won eight national titles and once qualified for the UEFA Champions League. It also attracted plenty of commentary about consonance. Most of it (55.2%) was negative and mainly comprised evaluations of its players' actions in the five games they played on live television. Maribor lost two of the games it played by a substantial margin (the final scores were 4-1 and 4-0 in favor of their opponents) and the performances of the team on those occasions generated ample commentary denoting failure.

Domžale received relatively little commentary about consonance and experience, and more objective descriptions. This was likely due to the announcers' deliberate efforts not to sound too biased, or even "happy" about soon-to-be-champion Domžale's successful campaign. Domžale is located very close to the capital, Ljubljana, and announcers are often accused of favoring Ljubljana-based teams. Evidently, they reacted by trying to avoid evaluative speech about the team.

Confirmations of these assumptions are provided by a comparison of the positive versus negative commentary for each team. Table 10.6 displays a summary of this comparison in which, due to the small frequencies in most categories, all positive and negative remarks have been merged into two groups.

These figures confirm the rationalization of the different attribution of commentary. Hit Gorica won both games it played and attracted the most positive commentary. The champions, Domžale, received the *least* negative commentary, whereas the great Maribor in decline sparked some negative descriptors. Overall

**Table 10.6 Aggregated frequencies of positive versus negative evaluative commentary on teams in Slovenian national soccer league telecasts**

Team	Total comments	% positive	% negative	% neutral
Domžale	2549	15.7	9.1	75.2
Hit Gorica	1324	25.0	11.4	63.6
Koper	533	15.6	11.2	73.2
Maribor	2927	17.7	15.5	66.8
Primorje	1009	18.9	12.1	69.0
<i>Total</i>	8342	19.1	13.0	67.9

figures also show that 19.1 percent of evaluative commentary was appreciative, 13 percent was negative, and over two-thirds was neutral.

Table 10.5 also provided a breakdown of the topics that received little or no attention in TV Slovenija’s soccer broadcasts. Remarks on the character, looks and intelligence of players were rarely heard. Comments about courage and concentration were also missing. In fact, more than in any sport analyzed so far in this dissertation, broadcasters’ discourse in national soccer turned out to be the most “sterile.” Most of it was limited to acknowledging ball possession and generalized, often single-word remarks on the success of a play. Almost 70 percent of the discourse in national soccer telecasts is thus factual or neutral, while comments about consonance, where plays and players are mostly assessed as either “good,” “bad” or “lucky” account for half the remaining descriptors.

## **10.2 Qualitative data analysis**

The differences in the content of discourse in Slovenian soccer telecasts can thus be traced back to actual differences in team performances rather than announcers’ pre-conceived ideas. Even divergences between the portrayal of Slovenian and foreign players were rare.

The structure and organization of soccer broadcasts on Slovenian public television is standardized. The transmission starts approximately five minutes before kick-off. After the opening greeting, the announcer usually first presents the two participating teams in terms of past performances, followed by an introduction of the

actual line-ups and game officials. The final moments before the actual start of the game are filled with results of past encounters between the two sides and/or information about the weather, pitch conditions and spectators. This formula is standardized, almost as a genre.

A distinctive feature of soccer is that, unlike most other sports that are clocked, such as basketball and handball, the game clock runs continuously. Interruptions to the flow of the game are relatively rare and play stoppages are usually administered as quickly as possible. While not being continuously *intense*, the game action is virtually uninterrupted. For sportscasters, this means they have few opportunities for in-depth analysis and discussion during stoppages. Sports such as basketball and American football provide more chances to enhance sportscasters' commentary; in soccer, game-time discourse mostly involves factual descriptions of actions ("Kreft received the ball"<sup>309</sup>), events ("An upcoming substitution for Primorje"<sup>310</sup>) or even simple mentions of the player currently in control of the ball.

Quantitative data showed that approximately one in six comments denoted consonance (Table 10.2) and half of them were positive in nature (Table 10.4). Most of such comments referred to either successful or failed plays or attempts; they presented the broadcaster's feeling about them, without particular efforts being made to explain the reasons behind the action outcome. Such comments abounded in both appreciative (e.g., "Rakovič was also placed well,"<sup>311</sup> "a good pass by Knezović to Džukič,"<sup>312</sup> "Knezović now in a nice penetration"<sup>313</sup>) and negative terms ("It didn't go [i.e., it didn't work out],"<sup>314</sup> "He slightly disappeared in the second half,"<sup>315</sup> "Džukič was nowhere to be found"<sup>316</sup>).

Goal coverage—arguably, the highlights of every game—is relatively standard: a replay usually follows the goal itself, and the play-by-play broadcaster summarizes the key moves that led to the ball hitting the back of the net. The accounts in these situations are not particularly meticulous; this is a typical example of the coverage of these events:

Mezga... Mezga has a very accurate long-range shot. An opportunity now, Bačinovič, an opportunity! Hasič saves... Goal! The number two, Dragan Čadikovski! A goal at the end of the 23<sup>rd</sup> minute of the match, the *Mariborčani*<sup>b</sup> capitalized on this milder

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<sup>b</sup> The demonym for inhabitants of Maribor.

pressure on Hasič's goal and, after all, scored a goal after some attacks. First, Bačinovič, then a crowd there. Hasič went for the ball which, however, came to Čadikovski who obviously doesn't slip on such an occasion, with the experience he has. Maribor leads one-nil. This is Dragan Čadikovski's 31<sup>st</sup> goal in the first Slovenian league, and the second this season.<sup>317</sup>

This account alone generated 14 descriptors—however, only three of them were evaluative (“Mezga has a very accurate long-range shot,” “the *Mariborčani* capitalized,” and “Čadikovski [...] the experience he has”). The remaining were either factual or (in the last sentence) background information.

Every goal stimulated additional dialogue about the same action later in the same game. For instance, Čadikovski's goal was recalled five times in the same broadcast. These occasions included the half-time wrap-up (the goal was scored in mid-first half) and the opening of the broadcast before the second half, when accounts of all goals and/or even notable opportunities (especially when few or no goals were scored in the first forty-five minutes) are customarily offered.

Final wrap-ups commence seconds after the final whistle. They include vocal (and sometimes visual) replays of game highlights. Other game day scores, updated standings and information on the next game day are also reported. Post-game summaries usually last up to five minutes and are not followed by thematic shows.

Commentary that is not related either strictly to the broadcast game or more broadly to the league (i.e., other scores, standings, future match-ups) is virtually non-existent; in the seven games analyzed there was less than a handful of comments on topics such as fans' behavior and fair play. These descriptors will be analyzed in a following sub-section.

### ***10.2.1 Nationality as a prominent personal characteristic***

As in other sports broadcasts on TV Slovenija, nationality was considered the non-Slovenian athletes' most defining personal characteristic: it was mentioned at least once for 21 of the 28 foreign nationals (and three of the remaining seven were substitutes who did not step onto the field and were only mentioned during team introductions). As a comparison, age was mentioned for 11 non-Slovenian athletes or

coaches, and height (although it is not a central body feature in soccer) for five of them. Even past teams in which these players either played or coached—surely a much more interesting and telling detail about a sportsman—were only discussed on 16 occasions.

Sportscasters again used nationality as a substitute identifier for a player—virtually, as a synonym (e.g., “Here is the 28-year-old Czech [i.e., Lubomir Kubica] who improved the Maribor top-league side after arriving from Baník in the Czech Republic”<sup>318</sup>). On other occasions, nationality was offered as equally important as the actual identity of a player: “In offense, Damir Pekič and the Bulgarian, Makriev.”<sup>319</sup>

Nationality was additionally emphasized when talking about Black players. Willy Fondja was meticulously described as: “The Senegalese French, or the French Senegalese, whatever way you want it, the Black defender with number five.”<sup>320</sup> In the case of Abdoulaye Diarra, discourse about nationality added up to over 10 percent of all descriptors devoted to him: of the 34 descriptors about him in the two games he played, four were about him being “a soccer player from Ivory Coast.”<sup>321</sup> Diarra’s national background was brought into the spotlight a further three times; besides being characterized by his nationality, he was also described as “a soccer player from Africa.”<sup>322</sup> His playing history was intertwined with a mention of his personal story when it was noted that “he already came to Europe as a junior, nothing unusual.”<sup>323</sup> The meaning of this sentence remains unclear: whether he was so talented that it was just a matter of time before he came to Europe, or that it is not uncommon for Ivorian/African players to seek engagements in European soccer teams before turning 18. The latter seems more likely as Diarra’s skills were deemed limited when, in an earlier game, the same announcer described him as being “still far from playing for his national team, which is one of the best in the world.”<sup>324</sup>

Nationality is in itself a neutral category. Yet in Slovenian sports broadcasts nationality sometimes indicated either superior, inherent talent or the lack thereof: Kenyan long-distance runners, for instance, are automatically deemed fast, whereas sprinters from Bangladesh are mocked. Such generalizations are inaccurate, often biased and can lead to stereotyping. Both phenomena contribute to the reinforcement of banal nationalism (Billig 1995) as a form of mythical representation of one’s own nation as being superior to others regarded as opposing ones.

What stands out when discussing nationality as a *characteristic*, instead of it as a background fact, is the lack of other information that is equally if not even more relevant when identifying an athlete. Information such as age, playing history and other characteristics are easily available from online sources so broadcasters could cite it more frequently. Instead, a player is still best defined by the passport he or she holds.

Unlike foreign nationals, Slovenians were not explicitly labeled as such. Implicit information about some of them was provided by presenting them as national team members (e.g., “Here, both captains, both national team members, as well: Fabijan Cipot, Maribor’s defender, and Ermin Rakovič, Domžale’s forward.”<sup>325</sup>). More frequent were references to their local affiliations such as their hometowns or regional backgrounds: “Here is Darko Džukič, a *Ljubljančan*,”<sup>326</sup> or “Here is Dejan Nemeč, one of the many *Prekmurci*<sup>c</sup> at today’s game.”<sup>327</sup> Slovenian players were occasionally identified by their regional provenance, as well (e.g., “After this beautiful free kick by the *Primorci*<sup>d</sup>”<sup>328</sup>).

Whether it is nation or region, TV Slovenija’s soccer announcers seem fond of delimiting the geographical area players derive from. Although they claim such details are offered as background information or even just to make their dialogue less repetitive, the motivation for selecting this particular feature remains unclear. Viewers would likely rather appreciate more input on athletes’ *playing* characteristics, than a wider selection of labels they are referred to.

### **10.2.2      *Discourse about referees***

In team sports, there is a notable third team that takes part in each game but has very little fan support: the officiating crew. In Slovenian soccer broadcasts, the “distributors of justice,”<sup>329</sup> as they are occasionally labeled, were the subject of 2.4 percent of all descriptors: insufficient to allow a full quantitative analysis, yet enough to identify some trends for this qualitative review.

Referees generated three types of comments: factual, background, and consonance. The first type comprised their introduction and acknowledgement of

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<sup>c</sup> The demonym for inhabitants of the Prekmurje region.

<sup>d</sup> The demonym for inhabitants of the Primorska region.



their calls during game-time on the factual side. Hometowns (as they were all Slovenian nationals), age and, occasionally, the number of yellow and red cards shown thus far in the season were offered as background information. These mentions combined to make up 69.4% of all comments about game officials (152 mentions out of a total 219). Statements coded as evaluating consonance comprised 25.6% of the discourse about referees. Less than half of them (40.8 percent) were positive in nature. Interestingly, the share of positive consonance comments does not differ significantly from the values pertaining to soccer players ( $\chi^2(1)=0.098$ ).

Commentators' discourse about *Slovenian* referees officiating the *Slovenian* championship was significantly less harsh and inflammatory than speech about officials in international handball and basketball competitions. Although announcers evaluated some calls as incorrect (e.g., "Here is a wrong call by the linesman,"<sup>330</sup> or "This is a big mistake by the referee"<sup>331</sup>), they were also eager to acknowledge accurate decisions. And while mistakes were attributed to the general role (the referee, the linesman), correct calls were more frequently attributed to the individual himself: "Referee, Matjaž Bohinc, saw this well,"<sup>332</sup> or "A good call by referee Huselja."<sup>333</sup>

A notable discursive feature was the recognition of the officiating crew as an equal third party to the game. This was achieved with the use of inclusive statements (albeit denoting failure): "Now we could wish for a more focused continuation from everybody on the pitch,"<sup>334</sup> and "The whistles you hear [coming from the stands] are, in my opinion, aimed at everybody on the pitch, the *Mariborčani*, the *Koprčani*<sup>e</sup>, and all three officials."<sup>335</sup> Soccer referees were thus put on a par with the players—for better or worse.

### **10.2.3 Individual style**

With as many as four men alternating in the role of play-by-play announcers, soccer broadcasts were the first in this dissertation to allow the possibility to seek differences in announcers' individual *styles*.

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<sup>e</sup> The demonym for inhabitants of Koper.

Individual commentary style is both unavoidable and welcome. It can contribute to the public's enjoyment of a media content that is, by nature, entertaining. The absence of differences in individual announcing styles can either point to an editorial policy or to the established routine at a media outlet. Inter-commentator variability can also shed light on individual unsuitable or questionable approaches.

In this section, the four soccer announcers' peculiarities will be presented in alphabetical order. The first is former Head of Sports at TV Slovenija, Igor Evgen Bergant, who commented on two of the games analyzed. In both he included references to either English or international soccer—part of his area of expertise—and especially to the English Premier League, a topic high on the list of his personal preferences (Bergant 2008). As an example, he introduced Maribor's Marijan Pušnik as being “in a double role, let's say some sort of *English role* at Maribor: the coach, as well as the sports director, that is, the manager”<sup>336</sup> (emphasis added), while an unsuccessful play was euphemistically summarized by noting that “Liverpool does this better,”<sup>337</sup> Bergant drew a parallel between the Slovenian national championship and the UEFA Champions League—the top-flight European club competition—by noting that “This [i.e., the Slovenian league] is not the Champions League, but we wish that Slovenian soccer would progress so we can see quality games with a higher tempo than the current ones. When compared to Champions League games, soccer players in the Prva Liga Telekom cover approximately half the distance; Gattuso and his comrades around 12 kilometers, our [Slovenian league?] soccer players a little less.”<sup>338</sup>

Bergant's commentating style might be described as “rich” in that he offered significantly fewer factual descriptors than his microphone colleagues ( $\chi^2(1)=133.659$ ; sig.<0.01), but had much more background commentary ( $\chi^2(1)=47.206$ ; sig.<0.01) and remarks on athletes' consonance ( $\chi^2(1)=139.381$ ; sig.<0.01). The figures also show he used an above-average share of positive descriptors; he can thus be considered as “looking at the bright side,” preferring positive aspects of sports over negative ones. A typical example is when this former sports editor spoke about Maribor's forward, Damir Pekič: “some call him, ‘an eternal talent.’ Better [to be] an eternal talent than without any talent.”<sup>339</sup>

Peter Kavčič also tried to provide as much information as possible in his airtime. He strived to elaborate his speech as much as he could: “Here is a presentation of the *exceptionally promising* forward of Hit Gorica, Tim Matavž. And in his last gasp, [the ball] is sent off the pitch by Fabijan Cipot, *also the captain of the Mariborčani*”<sup>340</sup> (emphases added).

His descriptions were on occasion even much more detailed, such as in this description of one player during the Primorje versus Domžale game:

An opportunity in the final stage of this game [is given to] Tim Lo Duca. Well known to the home fans, a soccer player who is deemed an exceptionally promising forward, which he also proved at this stadium, namely, he is a former player of Ajdovščina’s Primorje. Tim Lo Duca is only 21 years old and, as a very promising forward, of course coach Slaviša Stojanovič wanted to have him in his lineup, so after the last season he also left Ajdovščina’s Primorje and ventured into Domžale’s premier league team<sup>341</sup>

As the last description suggests, a shortcoming of Kavčič’s approach is that his sentences occasionally became overloaded and thus difficult to understand. This is to some extent normal when producing unscripted speech; however, some of the remarks he made were either syntactically incorrect (“Now an opportunity for Škerjanc... Škerjanc... But *indecision* of the home-team forward”<sup>342</sup> (emphasis added), or just too mixed up and almost impossible to understand:

Now a big opportunity, Nikezič. Nikezič decided to fake and then a strike, exactly into the goalkeeper, Marko Pridigar. A great mistake this time of the otherwise young Slovenian representative Miral Samardžič who lost the ball. Matavž unselfishly passed to Nikezič, who perhaps hesitated even too much, wanted too much. In the end, he didn’t have any real strength anymore, struck too much to the middle of the goal, exactly into Marko Pridigar.<sup>343</sup>

Two other characteristics were peculiar to Peter Kavčič’s style of discourse: the occasional use of foreign terminology (“*off-side*,” “Teinovič has a good *pass*,”<sup>344</sup> and “*no-look pass*,” these expressions are sporadically used only in Slovenian soccer lingo), and the extensive use of military jargon. Belligerent vocabulary is a standard component of sports media discourse (e.g., Coakley 2009); however, Kavčič exaggerated with these notions as he opened one broadcast by introducing (emphases added):

[a] *duel* between the two teams which *reigned* on the Slovenian soccer scene in the past ten years. Current champions from Nova Gorica against the pretenders from Maribor. A *duel* which is exceptionally important in the *fight* for the title of Slovenian runner up. (...) Both teams predicted a *fight* for the victory, the home team a *hunt* of a plus five, so a five-point advantage ahead of Maribor.<sup>345</sup>

He also described a team as “[coach] Bojan Prašnikar’s troop,”<sup>346</sup> and this team was deemed “more dangerous”<sup>347</sup> than the other. The latter were, in turn, once introduced as “raiding towards three home-team defenders.”<sup>348</sup> The game was thus presented as an incessant conflict, although the events on the pitch were far from violent.

Urban Laurenčič’s approach to commenting on soccer is very viewer-oriented and he often referred to viewers’ enjoyment of the game being broadcast. At the onset of one game, he noted that: “Both [teams] announced they would play for the victory and let’s hope we’ll see many goals.”<sup>349</sup> After 45 minutes, he sounded disappointed with the course of the game and hoped for a more interesting second half: “Thank goodness we saw the one-nil goal. This very goal might mean that in the continuation the *Koprčani* will have to attack more and so we might follow a more interesting soccer performance.”<sup>350</sup> A similar remark was made during another equalized game: “The game is absolutely dynamic. For us, this of course means an even better, more attractive soccer performance. Let’s hope it’ll be as thrilling and interesting all the way till the 90<sup>th</sup> minute.”<sup>351</sup>

The fourth soccer announcer was Ivo Milovanović, who was also one of the two handball commentators. His commenting style is distinctively factual: up to 70.1 percent of all descriptors spoken in the soccer game he reported belonged to this category ( $\chi^2(1)=95.283$ ; sig.<0.01). An additional 12.8 percent were background comments. A typical piece of commentary in his soccer (as well as handball) broadcasts would thus sound as follows (note: three dots here denote a pause of at least one second):

Žinko... Aljančič. Aljančič; Aljančič, pass into the penalty area! There was Ljubljankič, a try by Kirm... With number 16, Tomažič... Here, Janez Aljančič... From out-of-bounds Panikvar shoots, then Tomažič, now the offense is prepared. On the right-hand side, Popović. A long pass towards Makriev. Rejected by Elsner... Aljančič... Panikvar... Aljančič... Samardžič... Panikvar... A foul committed by Janković... Look again, that’s

how he was elbowed by Janković... And indeed a foul by Panikvar. Lungu... Lungu. And with number 16, Tomažič... Fondja. The Senegalese French, or the French Senegalese, whatever you want, the Black defender with number five. Now Makriev, is this an opportunity for the *Mariborčani*? Makriev is in the penalty area. Makriev fell in the penalty area. And what did Skomina call? Was this foul worth a penalty kick? [No call by the referee.] We will surely see this action one more time... Brezič prepares Domžale's offence. And Apatič... Elsner... Aljančič... Janković... It's not yet the time for a replay of Makriev's play. This is Maribor's captain [Rene Mihelič]. Let's look at it one more time, Knezović was the one who pushed Makriev. And Skomina could easily have shown the most severe penalty.<sup>352</sup>

This commentary lasted over two minutes, with all but the last descriptor being either factual or background. Further, it took Milovanović 50 seconds to speak his mind on the episode surrounding Makriev's alleged foul and the referee's subsequent no-call; indeed, this is also the time that passed between the actual play and the televised replay. This portion also shows Milovanović's frequent use of the passive voice.

The high share of factual and background commentary in handball sportscasts was highlighted in Section 9 of this dissertation. This is obviously a characteristic of this announcer. Another typical attribute of his speech was the accentuation of the referee—both the role in general (e.g., “The referee is letting play continue”<sup>353</sup>), and the individual in particular (e.g., “A foul on Mihelič, but Skomina didn't blow the whistle,”<sup>354</sup> or “As it's clear, Skomina's decision always stands”<sup>355</sup>). By doing this, he often tacitly expressed his opinion without actually having to put it into words. He thus seemingly let the viewers draw their own conclusions—which, however, had already been guided by merely emphasizing an event which might have otherwise gone unnoticed. Here lies a typical sports example of agenda-setting (McCombs and Shaw 1972). This process is most efficient with people who are undecided.

#### **10.2.4      *Counting fans and condemning vandals***

A final topic addressed by most Slovenian soccer announcers was the lack of spectators at national league soccer games. Close-to-empty stadiums were made a subject on several occasions and included both comments on the modest attendance (e.g., “Not too many spectators today in Ajdovščina, 600, maybe 700. In general [...],

a low attendance in Ajdovščina”<sup>356</sup>), as well as framing this as a broader issue of Slovenian soccer: “I don’t know if there are a thousand spectators at the Slovenian league derby. Of course, this is that bad side of Slovenian soccer, there just aren’t spectators. Probably, there are several reasons why there isn’t a greater attendance at games of the Slovenian national championship.”<sup>357</sup>

Commentators were observant: they also pointed out several cases of questionable, if not unsportsmanlike conduct in the stands. When Maribor supporters started chanting, “Kill the *žabar*,” during a game against Domžale, one quickly reacted to the event: “We’re now listening to distasteful cheering by home-team fans. For them, the players from Domžale are, of course, some sort of substitute for Olimpija, a visit from a team at least close to the capital.”<sup>358</sup> Igor Evgen Bergant succinctly summarized the reason behind the insult: the citizens of Ljubljana are sometimes derogatorily referred to as *žabarji*, or “Frogs”. As the capital’s most glorious team, Olimpija, had been demoted several years earlier, the supporters of Maribor—the second-biggest Slovenian city and Ljubljana’s rivaling city—“extended” their offensive, frog-related remarks to what they perceived as second-best: Domžale, a city 20 kilometers outside the capital. Bergant succeeded in both playing it cool and condemning possible escalation: “There is something going on in the stands. Some home-team fans, if we can call them that, are now provoking visiting soccer fans who have arrived from Ljubljana and its surroundings. In the last [few] minutes we’ve been devoting them even a bit too much attention to what is going on in the stands; let’s instead look at what’s happening on the pitch.”<sup>359</sup>

Fans became an issue in a game between the same two teams several months later. Soon after tuning in, Ivo Milovanović firmly condemned an incident that had happened the previous night, when some people believed to be Maribor supporters caused damage to and around the stadium in Domžale. As the game progressed and a group of supporters chanted with their backs turned to the pitch—not an uncommon form of protest among fan groups in Europe—Milovanović did not show any sympathy for them and noted that “It would be better if these fans turned around and watched the game rather than doing a show that is not amusing anybody.”<sup>360</sup>

Critical stands on fans’ vandalism and offensive chanting are both welcome and necessary. One might even disagree with Igor Evgen Bergant when he noted he had been devoting too much attention to them; perhaps sports media in general deal

*insufficiently* with violence in sports. Reporting about a brawl between fans, or even between players themselves (cf. Section 9.2.12, when “home” players’ aggressiveness was not blamed) means dealing with the consequences. As things currently stand, media producers on one hand glorify success in a fight and the home nation but, on the other hand, condemn those who demonstrate their passion—indeed at the expense of other people’s dignity. Yet, the two phenomena do not seem that far apart.

## 11 Overarching findings: testing the hypotheses

This analysis of 83 hours and 25 minutes of sports programming provided a great amount of data for both a content and critical analysis of sportscasters' discourse on Slovenian public television. The indefiniteness of society and of discourse within it influenced the results: were the frames applied in the portrayal of athletes intentional, inadvertent or even completely incidental? And perhaps more importantly, should this influence the results and conclusions?

The media holds great responsibility to its audience. Public service broadcasting, as the name implies, has an even more defined, unique role in catering to public needs: it must foresee what it is that citizens should know (Hartley 2002). This public is usually implicitly understood as a *national* one. However, in an increasingly globalized world (whose manifestations include the United Nations as a global political organization, the European Union as a continental economic alliance, Euroleague as an economic and athletic association, and even Krim and Olimpija sports clubs as multinational ensembles), the concept of public should also shift to a transnational understanding (cf. Turnšek Hančič, forthcoming). Indeed, the great majority of broadcast discourse will remain confined in the language in which it is produced, and conventions *need* to be established to prevent texts from being overly complicated (which Michael Billig refers to as “deixis”). However, evaluative language is not the same as deixis; it can, and should, be monitored.

In Chapters 8 to 10 many quantitative and qualitative differences that emerged in the study of different events and competitions were presented. Now, it is necessary to bring the most significant results under one umbrella and test the hypotheses about Slovenian broadcasters' discourse set out at the start of this dissertation, as well as to connect the results with theory.

As through the entire study, the first hypotheses to be tested will be those related to quantitative data. The analyzed broadcasts yielded 51,228 descriptors and lines of commentary, making an overall ratio of 10.23 descriptors per broadcast minute.

To understand whether there is a single sport broadcasting discourse or whether contents significantly differ across sports three types of competitions were studied:



individual events at the Olympic games; team sports in international competitions; and team sports in a national league. Table 11.1 shows the relative frequency of each type of descriptor within the “universe” of each type of content.

**Table 11.1** Relative frequency of different types of comments by broadcast contents on Slovenian public television

Comment	Olympic Games	International competitions	National league	$\chi^2(2)$	Sig.
Concentration	0.3	0.3	0.6	15.090	***
Athletic skill—Strength/Speed	1.9	0.8	1.6	86.720	***
Athletic skill—Talent/Ability	8.7	2.4	2.3	999.011	***
Composure	0.8	1.2	1.7	42.002	***
Commitment	1.2	0.9	1.4	23.903	***
Courage	0.1	0.2	0.1	6.691	*
Experience	5.9	0.9	2.2	845.53	***
Past achievements	1.4	4	0.5	452.781	***
Intelligence	0.3	0.2	0.4	9.541	***
Consonance	14.1	16.1	15.4	26.157	***
Stated expectations	8.0	2.0	2.9	887.816	***
Doping	0.3	0	0	79.961	***
Outgoing/ Extroverted	0.3	0.2	0.2	9.283	***
Modest/Introverted	0.1	0.1	0.1	<u>5.770</u>	
Emotional	2.0	0.6	0.3	245.439	***
Attractiveness	0.5	0.1	0.3	57.108	***
Size/Parts of body	0.4	1.0	1.0	63.587	***
Background	28.4	14.5	14.7	1171.313	***
Factual/Neutral	24.5	54.5	54.2	2600.745	***
<i>Total</i>	21961	20075	9192		

Note: Underlined  $\chi^2$  values indicate categories with an expected value of less than five comments at least in one group.

\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.01 level.

Total shares within broadcast contents do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

The figures show that the discourses indeed differ between sports. The discrepancies are caused by many factors with the following outcomes: first, individual event broadcasts (in this study, Olympic gymnastics, swimming, track and field) featured mentions of 1,856 individual athletes in the 50+ hours of airtime—

much more than in any other sport, where around 100 athletes were mentioned in approximately 10 hours of airtime devoted to each sport. This explains the abundance of commentary about athletic skills, experience, expectations and emotionality of competitors: there were simply more people whose talent and experience could be assessed. The larger mass of competitors also accounts for the difference in background information offered by Olympic sportscasters: many more nationalities can be flagged and more ages reported as these are the most typical pieces of background information announcers offered.

An important difference between individual and team sports is the quantity of events occurring simultaneously. Team sports normally feature only one game that unfolds over an extended period of time, while individual competitions comprise several events which are in turn divided into stages and carried out consecutively. Thus, 90 minutes can include performances by 28 handball players in a single game, or 132 swimmers in 18 heats of three individual Olympic events (sw, Aug 9). The same amount of time can thus either supply 1 winning team and 14 winning players, or 18 winners and 32 swimmers who advanced to the next stage.

Sportscasters' commentary is also influenced by individual announcing styles. Descriptors about doping, for instance, were peculiar to one single track and field announcer. This is to some extent understandable as track and field is, among all sports, the most prone to doping cases. In relative figures, this topic accounted for a mere 0.3% of total discourse in the Olympic telecasts; yet, each individual statement can turn out to be important and influential. After all, media personalities can even be sued for imprudent statements.

### **11.1 Hypothesis 1: The share of evaluative commentary**

Announcer subjectivity in sports broadcasts and mediated sports in general is obvious. The true challenge is to determine its actual extent, or an index of sportscasters' subjectivity. Defining "subjective" or "evaluative" commentary is not as clear-cut as may seem. The statement: "A new world record has been set" is factual, but what if the same person announces "a *fantastic* world record by the Australian relay team?" For the purpose of this dissertation, the latter comment was coded as denoting successful consonance and thus as "evaluative." However, it is not

unthinkable that in other circumstances—say, a discussion between coaches—the same remark would be understood as objective.

Few researches have studied the ratio of objective versus subjective commentary in sports broadcasts. Two studies conducted in different periods and different media markets showed a roughly 3:1 ratio in favor of objective comments (Bryant, Comisky and Zillman 1977, Ličen and Doupona Topič 2008). Recent studies, however, reveal that proportions vary considerably between societies and media markets (Woo et al. 2010). As one of these sources was a pilot study for this research, a 3:1 ratio was assumed for the full-scale analysis and it was hypothesized that subjective commentary in sports broadcasts on Slovenian public television would not exceed 27 percent.

Subjective commentary included all descriptors *denoting* either success or failure—hence, all the remarks coded as expressing concentration, strength and speed, talent and ability, composure, commitment, courage, experience, past achievements, intelligence, consonance, performance expectations and doping. These comments added up to 35.1 percent of all descriptors in Olympic, basketball, handball and soccer broadcasts combined. This figure is significantly greater than the share hypothesized ( $\chi^2(1)=1725.848$ ; sig.<0.005). **Hypothesis 1 is thus rejected.**

Yet not all broadcast contents are completely alike: analyses by sports produced considerable differences in the attribution of different types of commentary. Table 11.2 shows the share evaluative commentary in each sport.

**Table 11.2 Shares of subjective commentary by sport**

Event	Total descriptors	% of subjective
Olympics—Gymnastics	4472	49.7
Olympics—Track and field	12821	43.4
Olympics—Swimming	4657	36.7
Basketball	12411	33.1
Soccer	9192	29.2
Handball	7664	22.4
<i>Total</i>	51217	35.1

There were substantial differences in the quantity of evaluative commentary between sports. The biggest share of subjectivity was found in gymnastics broadcasts. This is a sport with a highly pronounced aesthetic component, and also the only event that featured a technical analyst (whose role and purpose is to offer a personal insight). Coincidentally, Olympic gymnastics broadcasts were also chiefly characterized by subjective commentary on US television (Billings 2007).

The three sports with a higher share of evaluative commentary differed from the others in that they were Olympic events (rather than “regular” fixtures), but also because they were individual rather than team sports. Both circumstances probably contributed to the amount of expressive speech: the Olympics and the surrounding aura provide an experience that often go beyond sports, while individual sports seem to elicit a more subjective view on the individuals engaging in it. In addition, each sport was announced by a limited number of commentators and they were in turn relatively independent in shaping their own announcing style. The differences could thus partly be caused by individual preferences and approaches to the job.

Determining the overall share of evaluative commentary in sports announcing, as well as partial shares by individual sports, is an important achievement: it provides a new guideline on the portion of commentary or media text in general that colors and sways issues of identity. These figures are likely similar to respective shares in other post-socialist nations so they provide a necessary comparative measure for future research in other media markets.

## **11.2 Hypothesis 2: Framing nationality and hyping home athletes**

Sports broadcasts provide some of the most typical examples of mediated banal nationalism. This has been established by virtually all researchers who have examined this aspect of mediated sports, regardless of whether they focused on the prominence offered to “home” athletes (Eastman and Billings 1999, Billings 2008), the terminology used to refer to them (Tomlinson 1996, Maguire and Poulton 1999, Darnell and Sparks 2005, Juncà 2008, 2009, Poniatowski 2009), or the personality/physicality traits ascribed to them (Billings and Eastman 2002, Billings and Tambosi 2004, Darnell and Sparks 2005, Billings and Angelini 2007, Billings

2008, Billings et al. 2008, Zrinski 2008). Patriotic discourse is further enhanced in media renderings of the Olympic Games.

This study revealed the disproportionate representation of Slovenian athletes. Despite accounting for just 0.56% of all participants at the Olympics, and comprising 3.4% of the 1,856 individuals mentioned at least once during Olympic broadcasting, commentators provided Slovenian athletes with 8 percent of all descriptors. Of the 22 most mentioned athletes in the Olympic broadcasts, eight were Slovenian.

Slovenian athletes were thus overrepresented in their country's network coverage. Nonetheless, an "index of nationalism" of 8 percent is not a high one: Real (1989) reported figures ranging from 17 to as high as 79 percent of coverage devoted to each country's own athletes and teams. Even though his study referred to newspaper coverage, the differences in some cases are still ten-fold. Examining television coverage in the United States, Billings (2008) detected a 50/50 split between American and foreign athletes, which is still far above the 8% share found in Slovenian programming.

Direct comparisons with Michael Real's and Andrew Billings' figures should be interpreted with caution: in both cases, the other national teams were considerably larger than the 29-member Team Slovenia at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. In addition, both print media coverage and prime-time programming is extensively edit(orializ)ed, and images and stories are selected and edited, with an important criterion for selection being reporting about their own nation's competitors. TV Slovenija broadcast the three sports according to the broadcast feed supplied to it without really being able to have a say in it. Of course, the decision to broadcast entire sessions was also an editorial one so TV Slovenija can be said to be more "global" and considerably less nation-centered than many others.

Besides quantity, the quality of mentions and portrayals is of paramount importance. Specifically, this study aimed to discover whether it is more likely for Slovenian nationals to be portrayed in positive terms than non-Slovenian competitors. The hypothesis stated that it would.

In general, the evaluative commentary on Slovenian public television tended to be positive. Soccer commentators were the "least appreciative" yet still 57.8 percent

of their subjective commentary was positive. Praising remarks in other sports ranged between 69 and 73 percent.

The share of positive descriptors conferred by TV Slovenija's reporters on Slovenian athletes competing in the Olympic Games did not significantly differ from the overall figures ( $\chi^2(1)=3.063$ ). In fact, this held true for each single sport as well as for the combined figures ( $\chi^2(1)=3.157$ ). **Hypothesis 2 should thus be rejected.** In Olympic telecasts on TV Slovenija, Slovenian representatives received a share of positive commentary proportionate to the share of total commentary.

Slovenian representatives were thus not portrayed in considerably *more positive* terms than competitors from other nations. They were, however, certainly portrayed considerably *differently*. In a world of nations, where competitors were often distinctively identified by their national affiliation (e.g., "The Senegalese French, or the French Senegalese, whatever way you want it"<sup>361</sup>), Slovenian competitors were characterized by a unique quality: they were "ours."

The quality of Slovenian competitors was constantly reiterated: there were many references to "our sprinting ace"<sup>362</sup> Matic Osovnikar; silver medalist Sara Isaković was established as "the leading favorite among ours for a high placing;"<sup>363</sup> and Krim Mercator players were identified as "our champions."<sup>364</sup> These are just a few examples of successful athletes-turning-prototypes (Brewer, Dull and Lui 1981). In international club team competitions, the title of being "ours" was conferred on *Ljubljana's* teams which acted as de facto *national* teams. In soccer, national affiliation was recognized both explicitly ("our national team will play a friendly game with Montenegro"<sup>365</sup>) and implicitly by positioning the homeland—and home soccer championship—at the center of our daily universe.

Extensive use of the rhetoric of the first person plural makes it clear which athletes and teams are *preferred* and who should be *supported*: "Today, of course, I am rooting, myself and of course the entire Slovenia, for Primož Kozmus;"<sup>366</sup> further, "We're happy that Union Olimpija leads, 39–36;"<sup>367</sup> and yet again: "Those who can, come to Tivoli [Hall] and together with the *Krimovke* after Round 6 we'll celebrate the qualification for the quarter-finals."<sup>368</sup> Nationality becomes important because it is framed as such, and this has been the case ever since Slovenia won its first ever Olympic medal in a "heroic" performance by two rowers only a year after Slovenia

had proclaimed its independence from Yugoslavia (Splichal, Bašić Hrvatin and Luthar in de Moragas Spà, Rivenburgh and Larson 1995).

When asked about the reasons for referring to Slovenian athletes and teams as “ours,” TV Slovenija’s announcers first stated that it is a customary form used to insert some variation in the commentary (hence, to avoid repetition of the same expressions—e.g., “the Slovenian team,” “the Slovenians”—over and over again), and to make the commentary more succinct (“ours,” or *naši* in Slovenian, is shorter than “Slovenian athletes,” or *slovenski športniki*).

Former sports editor at TV Slovenija Marjan Lah (editor from 1985 until 2002) stated that such short versions “are admissible in all examples of expressing journalistic contents. At home and abroad—especially in old democracies, where national pride is shaped and evident” (Marjan Lah, electronic communication, January 29, 2010). He added that “(even too frequently) it is a matter of false familiarity, to express sports journalists’ own importance” (*ibid.*).

In contrast, announcer Andrej Stare argued that Croatian broadcasters were the first to start referring to athletes as “ours” in an attempt to build a nation following the war of independence (the “Homeland War”) that lasted from 1991 until 1995. He claims Slovenian announcers picked this theme up from their colleagues in Croatia (Andrej Stare, personal communication, June 3, 2010). Nationalistic reporting indeed seems to be particularly marked in the Croatian media and it might have contributed to the accentuation of patriotic sports reporting in Southeast European media. However, the claim that the act of referring to the network’s own nation’s athletes and teams as “ours” was invented by Croatian television in the 1990s is an overstatement.

Former sports editor and current journalist and broadcaster Igor Evgen Bergant said he considered it admissible referring to Slovenian teams as “ours” but not to resort to the first person plural, i.e., “we.” According to him, it is all right to say “ours are leading” but not “we are leading” (*naši vodijo* and *mi vodimo*, respectively). Bergant says he deems the latter an “*exaggerated* level of identification, which is professionally inadmissible” and that “*too much* fusion can be counter-productive” (Igor Evgen Bergant, personal communication, January 21, 2010; emphases added).

Lah's validation that the act of referring to the network's own national athletes as "ours" is pervasive has at least one prominent exception, namely the United States of America where personal pronouns denoting "our" teams have been banned from Olympic coverage. Bergant's argument is unusual from both journalistic and psychological points of view. Identification implies subjectivity, which is in direct contrast with the myth of objectivity, and references to "our" team contribute to building an imagined community, a common social group, much in the same way as appealing to "we." Either one is member of a group or one is not. References to "our champions" and "our record holders" (114 times in six handball games, and 41 times in track and field broadcasts, respectively) boost the social identity of the viewers identifying with this group in a similar way as would a statement that "we claimed a record."

Practitioners unanimously consider the rhetoric of the first person plural admissible, adding that it should be used prudently. Nonetheless, nobody is able to pinpoint the extent to which such wording is appropriate. The most emblematic account on the matter was offered by TV Slovenija's sports editor, Mile Jovanović (personal communication, May 19, 2010):

This debate is often raised in our office, as well. I'll say, the great majority of, especially older, colleagues (...) argue that we shouldn't allow ourselves to talk about "ours," or "us," on national television. It's that, we as reporters, when we say, "ours," they are not [really] "ours." We haven't done anything so we [sic] would win; if we say, "we," that makes me part of it, right? Neither myself as Mile Jovanović or we as TV Slovenija, or the sports section, have done anything for the basketball national team so that it would win or lose. (...) It's their predominant opinion that there needs to be a distance and talk about the Slovenian national team, Slovenian players, Slovenian basketball players, Slovenian soccer players, national team members<sup>a</sup>, representatives; basically, [there needs to be] a neutral stance, a strict division—you are not part of it.

My opinion—I'll say, after these debates, I'm often in doubt. I certainly had slips of the tongue or I even used these expressions. When I listen to them [the older colleagues], it seems to me that in principle they might sometimes even be right, that it needs to be separated. (...) I don't know. Well, let's say that I would be a little more flexible [about it]. (...)

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<sup>a</sup> Note: in Slovenian, there are also single words to signify "basketball players" (i.e., *košarkarji*), "soccer players" (i.e., *nogometaši*) and "national team members" (i.e., *reprezentantje*), so the original expressions are short and concise.



And the limits on cheering: this is also always present [as a topic], where is the limit. And we don't all agree on this, either. When Slovenia or a Slovenian representative plays against a foreigner, I think that we can allow ourselves some cheering, but we must not lose the feeling for objectivity. Cheering, yes, but [with] a mature look.

The editor's own uncertainty about the matter might have been resolved before he hosted the pre-game shows prior to Slovenia's matches at the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Then, he cued the imminent games with remarks such as, "Let's cross our fingers and let's go for victory,"<sup>369</sup> or "And now, let's all together cross our fingers and cheer."<sup>370</sup> These statements do not just *imply* a common entity, a broader "we" to which the host, viewers and soccer players belong to. By exclaiming "Let's go for victory," the host/editor effectively presented any eventual victory as *our own* accomplishment, one to which we, the viewers, actively contributed, essentially rebutting the claims he made during the interview conducted several weeks earlier. Jovanović's on-air remarks might have been unconscious; such a contradiction would show how deep-rooted the rhetoric of the first person plural and the creation of an imagined community is in Slovenian sportscasters' practice.

The problem with social group affiliation is that "we" can only exist in relation to non-groups, to "them." In order to enhance one's positive social image, members of this group (whose membership is not necessarily formalized) have to perceive their group as superior to other groups. Sports provide numerous opportunities for such confrontations and professional sports fixtures are comprehensive year-round substitutes for national team competitions. On these occasions, even otherwise "foreign" athletes such as Krim player and Russian national Liudmila Bodnieva or Union Olimpija player and US national Maurice Bailey become members of "our" group of people.

By watching sports, many viewers satisfy their need for social identification. Sports reporters deliberately submit to the desires of the majority and offer them what they yearn for: Isaković's silver medal becomes "ours" and Kozmus' Olympic victory will mean that "all of us will celebrate it each in our own way." And in a way, *we all* become Olympic winners. When Slovenian representatives are not at hand, other successful individuals take center stage—the Phelps, Liukins and Bolts, which are brought so close to the viewer as to make her or him feel as if (s)he knows them

personally<sup>b</sup>. Conversely, when Slovenian teams lose it is important to reassure the viewers that they lost to a *better side*, rather than saying that “we” played poorly.

Banal nationalism is not messages from unconscious minds (Billig 1995, 174). Sports victories are perceived as especially important for developing countries. This is perhaps best summarized in the words of the prominent Ghanaian sports journalist Michael Oti Adjei (in Hill 2008, 243):

For a country like Ghana, football victories mean so much. It is very, very symbolic. It's one of the few occasions when this country really feels like it belongs to the world. [...] Football is when we see them [the Ghanaians] on TV, when they are the centre of attention of the world, [and it] provides a really good source of patriotism that nobody can channel.

The role of sports on this occasion could be seen as noble and enriching, so it is important to point out that this particular passage derives from a book on match-fixing. In fact, when the author Declan Hill asked Oti Adjei about allegations of (obviously illegal) match-fixing in some African countries, the renowned journalist replied that he and other Ghanaian journalists had managed to suppress news about it and added: “We journalists tend to be motivated by patriotism” (Hill 2008, 269).

Patriotism as an impetus does not seem very distant from Slovenian commentators' approaches to broadcasting. In some African countries, this comes at the expense of covering up criminal acts. This is not likely the case in Slovenia—but it is hard to say what would happen if the circumstances were in any way analogous. Sports media should be motivated by professionalism and impartiality, and be free of bias. The primary focus of sports broadcasts is certainly not to uncover criminal acts in the world of sports, but the individuals who carry out the broadcasts are the same as those who should inquire into the dark sides of sports as well. This is very hard to do when one is motivated by patriotism.

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<sup>b</sup> Identification with such characters—more accurately, with their successes—seems about as meaningful as the “basking in reflected glory” of electing political candidates with “revolutionary” characteristics, such as Barack Obama or Peter Bossman. In most cases, such cheering is premature if it honors the person before giving her or him the opportunity to actually *do* something.

### 11.3 Hypothesis 3: Gendered contents in Olympic telecasts

The analysis of the 2008 Beijing Olympics included the three individual events (the so-called “basic sports”) that are traditionally among the most popular Olympic contents in Europe and North America. These competitions are carried out over a number of days, and women’s and men’s events are intertwined in every day’s program. Some networks—such as the NBC in the United States—select and broadcast only selected portions of gymnastics, swimming, and track and field competitions; others, including TV Slovenija, air entire daily programming for these events. The Slovenian coverage of these sports thus provided more than 51 hours of airtime to analyze.

Most competitors at the Olympic Games are males; official data provide a 58/42 split (International Olympic Committee 2008d). Participation in athletics, swimming, and gymnastics is more balanced: aggregate shares combine to make a 53/47 ratio. As TV Slovenija aired almost all programming in these three events, an ideal split of commentary would mirror this equilibrium in terms of gender comments.

Drawing on previous research, it was assumed that the discourse would favor male competitors and would thus exceed 53 percent of descriptors about them.

In this analysis, only comments/descriptors that could be attributed as referring to a specific gender (i.e., a comment about an athlete, as well as about a relay team) were considered. Gender-neutral commentary and discourse that applied to both genders (e.g., comments on the medal count) were excluded from this calculation.

In the three sports analyzed, announcers provided male athletes with 12,191 descriptors and 9,318 for female competitors. The share of commentary about male athletes is 56.7 percent, compared to the 43.3 percent of comments about female athletes. The distribution differs significantly from the theoretic 53/47 split ( $\chi^2(1)=116.845$ ; sig.<0.005). **Hypothesis 3 is thus confirmed.**

#### **11.4 Hypothesis 4: Gender bias in Slovenian sports broadcasts**

Media discourse is often “gendered” and sports contents are no exception. Extensive research evidence shows that sports media tends to diminish women’s athletic qualities and trivialize their efforts and successes, whereas male athletes are usually seen as active, committed, dominant and strong (e.g., Daddario 1994, Eastman and Billings 1999, Meân 2001, Billings and Eastman 2002, Harris and Clayton 2002, Vincent et al. 2002, Messner, Duncan and Cooky 2003, Van Sterkenburg and Knoppers 2004, Bon and Doupona Topič 2008). Exceptions exist and ever more networks are making efforts to balance this deep-rooted practice (Billings 2008, Messner and Cooky 2010). Nonetheless, a spirit of disparity still pervades daily sports reporting.

Drawing on data from Slovenian and international media, it was assumed that in sports broadcasts on Slovenian public television male athletes would attract the majority of comments about concentration, strength, talent/ability, composure, commitment, courage, experience, intelligence, consonance and extroversion, whereas female athletes would receive more comments about their emotions, attractiveness, size/parts of body and introversion.

To test this hypothesis, it is first necessary to sum up all the gender-defined comments (thus excluding gender-neutral commentary) in all the sports analyzed. Then, a series of chi-square analysis is conducted to test whether announcers’ commentary produced any significant differences in the attribution of each category to either men or women. Tables 11.3 and 11.4 show the distribution of commentary by gender; the tables are divided to bring together categories with the projected prevalence of male and female commentary, respectively.

The data only partially confirm the hypothesized discursive structure. Male athletes indeed attracted the relative majority of commentary regarding composure, commitment and consonance; yet, they also received abundant commentary regarding their size and parts of the body.

Most physicality descriptors derive from basketball (56.6 percent of all “male” comments about size and body) and soccer (31 percent)—two sports where size and body parts are seen as prominent game characteristics and, more importantly, two

**Table 11.3 Discursive categories where it was predicted that male athletes would receive the relative majority of commentary**

Category	Male athletes	Female athletes	$\chi^2(1)$	Sig.	Disparity
Concentration	123 (0.4)	58 (0.4)	0.015		<i>none</i>
Athletic skill—Strength/Speed	475 (1.4)	248 (1.6)	2.410		<i>none</i>
Athletic skill—Talent/Ability	1599 (4.7)	962 (6.1)	41.889	***	<b>yes/female</b>
Composure	434 (1.2)	138 (0.9)	14.845	***	yes /male
Commitment	428 (1.3)	146 (0.9)	10.143	***	yes /male
Courage	65 (0.2)	67 (0.4)	22.368	***	<b>yes/female</b>
Experience	991 (2.9)	613 (3.9)	32.319	***	<b>yes/female</b>
Intelligence	97 (0.3)	36 (0.2)	1.273		<i>none</i>
Consonance	5507 (16.3)	2093 (13.4)	58.436	***	yes /male
Outgoing/ Extroverted	92 (0.3)	28 (0.2)	3.808		<i>none</i>

Total comments N = 49,477; n<sub>male</sub> = 33,834; n<sub>female</sub> = 15,643.

Note: values in brackets denote shares within all comments about the respective gender.

\*\*\* indicates  $\chi^2$ significant differences at the 0.01 level.

“Disparity” denotes the gender/group of athletes that received the relative majority of commentary within each discursive category. **Bolded** entries denote a disparity diametrically opposite to what was hypothesized.

**Table 11.4 Discursive categories where it was predicted that female athletes would receive the relative majority of commentary**

Category	Male athletes	Female athletes	$\chi^2(1)$	Sig.	Disparity
Modest/Introverted	10 (0.1)	12 (0.1)	5.349	*	yes /female
Emotional	356 (1.0)	194 (1.2)	3.400		<i>none</i>
Attractiveness	90 (0.3)	60 (0.4)	4.876	*	yes /female
Size/Parts of body	316 (0.9)	64 (0.4)	38.366	***	<b>yes /male</b>

Total comments N = 49,477; n<sub>male</sub> = 33,834; n<sub>female</sub> = 15,643.

Note: values in brackets denote shares within all comments about the respective gender.

\* indicates  $\chi^2$ significant differences at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* indicates  $\chi^2$ significant differences at the 0.01 level.

“Disparity” denotes the gender/group of athletes that received the relative majority of commentary within each discursive category. **Bolded** entries denote a disparity diametrically opposite to what was hypothesized.

sports where only men’s competitions were analyzed. If only Olympic events had been taken into account, the results in this category would be diametrically opposite; there, women collected more “size” commentary in absolute terms as well ( $\chi^2(1)=22.040$ ; sig.<0.005). Most of it was produced in the gymnastics broadcasts.

Broadcasters provided women athletes with more commentary about attractiveness and modesty (although the frequencies for both genders were very low). Surprisingly, they also gave them significantly more commentary in terms of talent and ability, courage and experience—three topics originally predicted as “male domains.” Handball broadcasts contributed a significant share of talent descriptions. No significant differences were found in the discourse about concentration, strength and speed, intelligence, extroversion and emotionality.

In addition to the hypothesized distribution, the comparison included the attribution of factual and background commentary, as well as the distribution in the three categories added to Billings and Eastman’s (2003) original taxonomy. Table 11.5 shows the distribution in these five categories.

**Table 11.5 Distribution in other discursive categories**

Category	Male athletes	Female athletes	$\chi^2(1)$	Sig.	Disparity
Past achievements	483 (1.4)	276 (1.8)	7.910	***	yes /female
Stated expectations	1874 (5.5)	921 (5.9)	2.303		<i>none</i>
Doping	19 (0.1)	31 (0.2)	21.349	***	yes /female
Background	6518 (19.3)	3671 (23.5)	91.749	***	yes /female
Factual/Neutral	14345 (42.4)	6025 (38.5)	39.862	***	yes /male
<i>Total/all categories</i>	33834	15643			

Note: values in brackets denote shares within all comments about the respective gender.

\*\*\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.01 level.

“Disparity” denotes the gender/group of athletes that received the relative majority of commentary within each discursive category.

The results reveal no disparity in the attribution of expectations. Unexpectedly, women were more likely to be portrayed in terms of their past achievements and competition history. They also drew more talk about doping, and more women than men were mentioned in the total count of descriptors about doping. As throughout the entire study, the distribution of factual commentary is again inversely proportional to background commentary: in this instance, women received more background commentary and men attracted more factual descriptors. Soccer broadcasts contributed greatly to the increase in factual commentary in male sports.

The research found evidence of five correctly predicted distributions of descriptors, but also of four imbalances diametrically opposite to what was theorized.

Five discursive categories were evenly distributed among sportsmen and sportswomen. **Hypothesis 4 thus cannot be confirmed.**

### **11.5 Hypothesis 5: Ethnic bias in Slovenian sports broadcasts**

Slovenia is usually presented as a liberal, social democratic country. Most citizens think of themselves as open-minded and immune to prejudice. Everyday life in the country supports the claim as major events in support of traditionally liberal values (the “Million Marijuana March,” Pride Parades, union marches etc.) usually come to pass peacefully and relatively unchallenged (as opposed to, for example, the first Pride Parade recently held in the former “brotherly” nation of Serbia, where rioters reportedly injured over 100 people (Lowen 2010) and caused damage worth millions of euros).

On the other hand, public opinion polls regularly conducted by scholars from the Faculty of Social Sciences in Ljubljana show that the share of people declaring they would not want as neighbors people of other ethnicities rose from 14.5% in 2005 to 28.2% in 2008. Resistance to other groups perceived as aliens (immigrants and foreign workers, Muslims and Jews) also rose considerably (data from the SJM 2005/3 and SJM 2008/1 datasets, Toš et al. 2009).

Representations of other ethnicities in Slovenian media are scarce. When they occur, they tend to perpetuate preexisting myths and conceptions about Blacks, Muslims etc. (Prelog 2005, Bećirović 2007, Ivančič 2007, Kebrič 2009, Kuk 2009). A case study by Tonči Kuzmanić (1999) showed that in sports patriotic discourse had come close to xenophobia.

After it was established that Slovenian media discourse is not immune to bias and stereotype, it was reasonable to assume that sports contents on Slovenian public television would reflect this bias. Specifically, the presumption was that sports media discourse on Slovenian television would mirror the ethnic stereotypes found in the Anglophone media. They include the assumption that Black athletes would receive significantly more comments about strength/speed, talent/ability, and expectations regarding the competition’s outcome, whereas White athletes would receive the bulk of commentary about concentration, composure, commitment and intelligence. Ethnic bias is multifaceted so this hypothesis was broken up into seven sub-

questions, each dealing with a separate aspect of the discourse. The main hypothesis will then be confirmed if more than half of the sub-hypotheses are corroborated.

As in the previous section, the data analysis is split into two tables: Table 11.6 shows categories with a projected bias in favor of Black athletes (hypotheses 5a, 5b and 5c), while Table 11.7 shows those expected to give preference to White competitors (hypotheses 5d, 5e, 5f and 5g). Table 11.8 contains data whose distribution has not been predicted. Athletes of Middle Eastern ethnicity were excluded from the analysis due to the very small number of comments about them (n = 115).

**Table 11.6 Discursive categories where it was predicted that Black athletes would receive the relative majority of commentary**

Hyp. Category	White	Black	Latino	Asian	$\chi^2(3)$ Sig.
5a Athletic skill—Strength/Speed	434 (1.4)	155 (2.2)	6 (0.9)	40 (1.4)	22.886 ***
5b Athletic skill—Talent/Ability	1723 (5.7)	313 (4.4)	36 (5.3)	334 (11.7)	193.770 ***
5c Stated expectations	1157 (3.8)	506 (7.1)	44 (6.4)	219 (7.7)	194.696 ***

Total comments N = 41,133; n<sub>White</sub> = 30,331; n<sub>Black</sub> = 7,145; n<sub>Latino</sub> = 682; n<sub>Asian</sub> = 2,860.

Note: values in brackets denote shares within all comments about the respective ethnic group.

\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.01 level.

**Table 11.7 Discursive categories where it was predicted that White athletes would receive the relative majority of commentary**

Hyp. Category	White	Black	Latino	Asian	$\chi^2(3)$ Sig.
5d Concentration	101 (0.3)	13 (0.2)	2 (0.3)	22 (0.8)	<u>21.040</u> ***
5e Composure	325 (1.1)	48 (0.7)	9 (1.3)	29 (1.0)	9.928 *
5f Commitment	294 (1.0)	71 (1.0)	8 (1.2)	36 (1.2)	2.411
5g Intelligence	86 (0.3)	25 (0.3)	2 (0.3)	4 (0.1)	<u>3.171</u>

Total comments N = 41,133; n<sub>White</sub> = 30,331; n<sub>Black</sub> = 7,145; n<sub>Latino</sub> = 682; n<sub>Asian</sub> = 2,860.

Note: values in brackets denote shares within all comments about the respective ethnic group.

Underlined  $\chi^2$  values indicate categories with one group's expected value of less than five.

\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.01 level.

The tables show the results are not as clear-cut as earlier studies suggested. White athletes received a disproportionately large amount of attention only in the category of “emotionality” and in terms of factual descriptors. The first trend derives from the coding of references to “our” athletes as emotional (all Slovenian



**Table 11.8** Frequency of other discursive categories where an equal distribution was assumed

Category	White	Black	Latino	Asian	$\chi^2(3)$ Sig.
Courage	37 (0.1)	4 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	6 (0.2)	<u>5.330</u>
Experience	968 (3.2)	332 (4.7)	43 (6.3)	163 (5.7)	82.454 ***
Past achievements	278 (0.9)	145 (2.0)	22 (3.2)	17 (0.6)	97.457 ***
Consonance	4257 (14.0)	1102 (15.4)	102 (14.9)	398 (13.9)	8.295 *
Doping	38 (0.1)	12 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	<u>5.589</u>
Outgoing/ Extroverted	70 (0.2)	19 (0.3)	1 (0.1)	9 (0.3)	<u>1.210</u>
Modest/Introverted	12 (0.1)	1 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	3 (0.1)	<u>4.597</u>
Emotional	391 (1.3)	19 (0.3)	3 (0.4)	48 (1.7)	64.825 ***
Attractiveness	88 (0.3)	10 (0.1)	2 (0.3)	30 (1.0)	<u>56.115</u> ***
Size/Parts of body	276 (0.9)	38 (0.5)	3 (0.4)	18 (0.6)	12.743 ***
Background	5984 (19.7)	1455 (20.4)	208 (30.5)	875 (30.6)	180.320 ***
Factual/Neutral	13812 (45.5)	2878 (40.3)	190 (27.9)	609 (21.3)	409.652 ***

Total comments N = 41,133; n<sub>White</sub> = 30,331; n<sub>Black</sub> = 7,145; n<sub>Latino</sub> = 682; n<sub>Asian</sub> = 2,860.

Note: values in brackets denote shares within all comments about the respective ethnic group.

\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.05 level.

\*\*\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significant differences at the 0.01 level.

competitors were White), and the second is attributable to the copious amount of factual coverage in soccer and handball broadcast, two events with a base of mostly White athletes. In turn, White athletes received significantly less commentary denoting expectations, experience and past achievements.

As expected, Black athletes attracted a higher share of commentary about their strength/speed, and more expressions of expectations about their performance. Yet, they received significantly fewer descriptors about talent/ability than other ethnic groups. They were also subject to significantly more commentary about experience and past achievements, and attracted slightly more descriptions of consonance than theorized.

Neither the quantitative nor qualitative analyses fully support the assumption that Blacks are automatically presented as “natural athletes.” Rather, commentators focused on *actual performance evaluations*—hence the bigger share of portrayals in terms of consonance (they performed either well or poorly), expectations (prospects of placings), and strength/speed (either appreciative or negative comments during and after the sports performance). Discourse about them appeared biased due to

their actual successes, especially in track and field events; other aspects were not mentioned largely due to the announcers' lack of knowledge about them. Blacks also received little commentary about composure, concentration and emotionality. This is due to their absence from those Olympic events where announcers were more likely to focus on these aspects of athletic performance—most notably, gymnastics. The relatively small number of individual participants accounts for the fewer mentions of their size and body parts; had there been more Black basketball and soccer players, the results would have been different.

Latino/South American athletes were found almost exclusively in Olympic track and field events. They were portrayed as slightly above-average in terms of experience, past achievements, and background commentary. These are the categories that apply to all athletes for which competition organizers provide biographic/fact sheets that sportscasters then avail themselves of.

The Beijing Olympics were also the only showcase of athletes of Asian ethnicity within this study. Chinese athletes were the “hosts” of the event and, as such, more present even in sports where they are otherwise seldom represented, such as swimming. Nonetheless, the bulk of commentary about Asian athletes came from gymnastics where, despite the relatively short airtime compared to other Olympic events, the announcing team produced three times as much commentary about this group as in either swimming or track and field.

Chinese, and to a lesser extent Japanese and South Korean gymnasts, were seen as hot favorites for top placings in nearly all male and female gymnastics events. This group actually claimed 16 medals (out of the 33 awarded) in the artistic gymnastics program, with 14 of them being given to “host” gymnasts alone. This exploit granted them over one-third of the total commentary within gymnastics broadcasts (see Table 8.5), as well as two spots in the top-ten ranking of most-mentioned Olympic participants (Table 8.1). The discourse revolved principally around their talent and ability, as well as performance expectations. The extensive coverage of gymnastics events also resulted in a tangible increase in terms of concentration, emotionality, and experience descriptors—that is, evaluative and personality qualities traditionally linked with this highly aesthetic activity.

The differences in the distribution of some categories of discourse do not support a general tendency to depict Black athletes as “physically supergifted,” and White athletes as “supremely intelligent,” as predicted in the theoretic part of the dissertation. Two partial hypotheses concerning Black athletes’ physicality descriptions were confirmed, but the third showed an imbalance towards White athletes. In turn, none of the four assumptions pointing to superior intellectual abilities of White participants was confirmed, either. **Hypothesis 5 is rejected.**

Of course, rejecting the hypothesis does not imply that differences did not exist. Rather, many differences can be explained by the specifics of the discourse in selected sports and the greater incidence of some athletes in those events (e.g., Asians in gymnastics, Blacks in track and field). The qualitative analysis of individual descriptors also provided little evidence of a biased attitude to athletes of any ethnicity. The isolated disparaging sentences found in sportscasters’ commentary can be attributed to ignorance, even slight bigotry, but they are far from constructing any systematic ethnic bias. They fall more easily into the domain of bad humor.

An anecdote on ethnicity in a mediated sport popular in former Yugoslav countries states that, during a boxing bout sometime in the 1970s, the late sports reporter Sreto Ščepanović introduced the two participants by stating: “Dear viewers, you’ll recognize our boxer, Svetomir Belić, by the white shorts, and his opponent, Motungua<sup>c</sup> from Kenya, by the black shorts.”<sup>371</sup> The quote obviously became famous for its apparent overlooking of race which transpired from the focus on their shorts (which, in fact, is a customary method of identifying boxers). Today, it is impossible to determine what led Ščepanović to this amusing identification; it does, however, show an unbiased and even witty approach to sports reporting. It is also much more appropriate than defining athletes as being from “exotic countries,” or even explaining black as “Kenenisa Bekele in a tunnel.”

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<sup>c</sup> The boxer in question is most likely Dick “Tiger” Murunga, a bronze medalist at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games. The author wishes to thank Dr. Jepkorir Rose Chepyator-Thomson for her help with identifying the boxer and putting the author in contact with Murunga’s DT72 humanitarian foundation.

## 11.6 Hypotheses 6 and 7: the reasons behind biased broadcasting

The last two hypotheses refer to TV Slovenija announcers' self-perceptions. Based on the few existing qualitative enquiries of sports broadcasting (Smith 1976, Theberge and Cronk 1986, Knoppers and Elling 2004, Billings 2008, Tamir and Galily 2010) and the author's pre-existing knowledge of Slovenian sports media professionals' attitudes, it was presupposed that telecasters believe they depict all competitors in an unbiased way (Hypothesis 7) and that they describe competitors subjectively because they believe their viewers prefer this approach (Hypothesis 6).

These hypotheses were tested by conducting a series of semi-structured interviews with televised sports professionals. The list of interviewees included current Head of Sports at TV Slovenija Mile Jovanović and former Heads of Sports Marjan Lah and Igor Evgen Bergant (who now works as a journalist, studio host and play-by-play commentator at the network). The on-air talent pool comprised the journalists and play-by-play announcers Jolanda Bertole and Miha Žibrat (also a former president of the Slovenian Association of Sports Journalists), as well as the commentator Andrej Stare. Four of them were also subject to analysis in this study.

All interviewees asserted that sports journalists *should* be objective. Jolanda Bertole, for instance, said that objectivity in sports reporting is “necessary and logical” (personal communication, February 2, 2010), while Andrej Stare said that it is “one of his main guidelines when doing his job,” and he highlighted bias as the “main problem of sports journalism and reporting” (personal communication, June 3, 2010). Similarly, Marjan Lah noted that objectivity—more accurately, its approximation, since absolute objectivity cannot be achieved—is both possible and necessary in sports journalism (electronic communication, January 29, 2010).

As the network's Chief of Sports, Mile Jovanović elaborated on his understanding of the term “objectivity.” He stated that commentators “absolutely have the right to subjectivity,” but that, “within this subjectivity, you must be objective in the sense that you are realistic, that you are honest. (...) I think that [it is meant to] be objective as in a realistic, fair, righteous look at the matter, not just from one point of view” (personal communication, May 19, 2010).

Although the second hypothesis on the broadcasters' approach to commenting on games seems in contradiction with the first—how is it possible to be “unbiased” or

“impartial” but at the same time “subjective”—this is what some of TV Slovenija’s on-air staff seems to argue: that despite the *need* to be objective, viewers *want* them to be biased.

Miha Žibrat said that, although impartiality in sports broadcasting is possible, “the viewers do not accept impartiality well” and hence he argues that “everybody strives not to be *too* biased” (personal communication, January 25, 2010; emphasis added). Jovanović initially noted that “when Slovenia or a Slovenian representative plays somebody foreign, I think that we can allow ourselves some partisanship;” then, when asked whether viewers prefer biased, partisan reporting, he answered: “Absolutely yes in this sense, Slovenia against others [sic]” (personal communication, May 19, 2010). He added that biased reporting is absolutely inadmissible when it comes to national championships. Jovanović explained that TV Slovenija has never conducted any research or poll to determine whether viewers actually prefer some commentary styles over others (or any other sports-related matter). He said he relies on online forums for public opinion, although he added that “he does not perceive them as a directive.” He said he occasionally reads posts which consider that some commentators favor one team or the other, but he “has never come across any reproach that we had cheered for Slovenia when it was fighting against somebody” (ibid.). This is not surprising as Igor Evgen Bergant also suggested that “fans have a Slovenian-centric look on the world and they cannot be blamed [for doing so]” (personal communication, January 21, 2010). In a way it seems as if sports journalism and broadcasting has escaped the Enlightenment: TV Slovenija’s sports section has been run by people who know what they do because they have always done it that way. These people “know” what viewers want and act accordingly, disregarding professional guidelines and the influence the media has on viewers (cf. Kuper and Szymanski 2009).

Athletics announcer Andrej Stare was asked whether he regretted having described two female throwers as “sexy” in his Olympic telecasts. He denied regretting the statements (his rationale was already noted in Section 8.2.5) and suggested that such subjectivity is commanded by viewers themselves: “Viewers must be given what they demand, what they pay for, right. My opinion is that you have to act in a relaxing way on the audience so from time to time it’s good to tell a joke, some remark, to relax people and ease their tension. And people like it” (personal

communication, June 3, 2010). Hence, people in general seemingly want to hear about sexy female throwers and tongue twisters due to the pronunciation of difficult Madagascan names. This is what sportscasters claim and also what editors and network officials tolerate.

The interviews with TV Slovenija's announcing and editorial staff support both assumptions regarding sportscasters' approaches to on-air commentary. It is thus possible to **confirm Hypothesis 6** which stated that telecasters describe competitors subjectively because they believe their viewers prefer this approach. It is also possible to **confirm Hypothesis 7** which suggested that telecasters believe they depict all competitors in an unbiased way.

The contrast between the discursive trends determined and their authors' comments about them is notable. Announcers largely fail to recognize their own bias. They are slightly more successful in identifying the bias of their colleagues.

TV Slovenija's sports program appears to be lacking comprehensive editorial policies regarding telecasters' commentary styles. Andrej Stare has been criticized by the current and former sports editors for his inappropriate on-air remarks. However, no one reacted: Mile Jovanović said that "you can apply some sanctions, but the thing has already been said, anyway; the damage has been done" (personal communication, May 19, 2010). Indeed it has—and this will recur if no action is taken

Announcers' remarks in general—and Andrej Stare's in particular—seem to be in conflict with several documents regulating the media sphere and TV Slovenija's mission. The Council of Europe's (1994) definition of public service broadcasting, for instance, mandates that it must "reject any cultural, sexual, religious or racial discrimination." This is echoed by the Radio and Television Corporation of Slovenia Act which also prescribes the "respect of universal human values" (Zakon o Radioteleviziji Slovenija 2005, Art. 5). Simply put, stereotypical and potentially offensive language should be avoided, rather than offered as an amusing embellishment.

Slovenian sports broadcasting features all three major ideological forms concealing domination according to Anthony Giddens (1979, 193–195): (1) "the representation of sectional interests as universal ones (...);" (2) "the denial of transmutation of contradictions (...);" and (3) "the naturalization of the present:

reification.” These forms work together to represent the present arrangement of society not as arbitrary but as natural, even necessary (Real 1989). It remains unclear whether sportscasters engage in the perpetuation of domination consciously or not (the author leans towards the latter); but, regardless of its intentionality, the phenomenon itself confirms the need for its critical analysis.

### **11.7 Connecting back to theory**

Like some journalism professionals, many social and communication theorists reject sports as a “serious” source of data. Certainly, the fundamental purpose of sports contents is not to provide “serious” contents, and even professional leagues and athletes aim primarily to entertain their audiences. The numbers of people they reach, however (or perhaps—because of it?), are remarkable and many sport contents—including, but not limited to media events—achieve significantly greater viewership figures than other types of programming. Up until now, only limited, small-scale analyses have been conducted in the field of mediated sports in Slovenia. This thesis is the first comprehensive analysis of televised sports broadcasting in this nation. As such, it offers the possibility to explore whether the tenets of various theories hold true for this type of content, and whether advancements in any of these precepts have been made.

The media plays an important role in shaping a viewer’s identity. It influences both individual and group components of a person’s self-perception. In particular, this study offers some insight into the messages about group identity made by Slovenian public television through its sports broadcasts.

The extensive use of the first person plural when referring to Slovenian athletes or teams implies two societal features. First, in a world of nations, there is the Slovenian nation which is represented by national teams and its members. These individuals and teams then *compete against* other nations, rather than *play with* them. The promotion of victory as sport’s paramount essence means valuing competition higher than fair play or (intra-team) cooperation. Second, viewers were framed as being members of the Slovenian nation. Viewers and commentators alike were perceived as conceiving themselves as Slovenians. In club competitions, nationality was flagged by Slovenian teams which were treated as year-round

substitutes of national sides. Indeed, these teams were often referred to by the city in which they originate—yet, their opponents, as a rule, were “nationals.”

In sports broadcasts on Slovenian public television, nationality was not only flagged: it was emphasized and perpetuated as positive. Cheering for Slovenian representatives was assumed to be obvious (“The representatives of our homeland”). Successes of Slovenian representatives were presented as mutual efforts (“The gold medal for Slovenia”) and thus a source of pride for all viewers (“We’ll sing our Zdravljica all together”).

Nationality was not only affirmed by stressing inter-group coherence, but also by highlighting distinction from out-groups. Many foreign nation(al)s were described as “exotic” and their athletic achievements disparaged. Almost all nations outside Europe, North America or Australia were potential “exotics.” However, there is not enough evidence to label the whole of Europe (and North America and Australia) some sort of “middle ground”. Rather, the “Western world” seemed to be the society Slovenia belongs to—as opposed to other former Yugoslav republics which were linked to Slovenia in a complex web that at times featured strong ties and other times severed ties.

After Slovenia’s secession from Yugoslavia in 1991, Slovenian sports journalists and broadcasters maintained some sort of familiar attitude to other former Yugoslav nations, most notably Serbia and Croatia. This positive attitude was likely stimulated by the successful athletic history of the “former common country” and many Slovenian citizens are immigrants or second-generation immigrants from other former Yugoslav republics (in the 2002 census, 6.5 percent of respondent citizens identified themselves as belonging to one of the former Yugoslav national groups—e.g., Serbians, Croatians, Bosniaks etc.). Even many Slovenian nationals are somewhat fond of these athletes and teams, with sportscaster Jolanda Bertole noting that sports journalists at TV Slovenija also informally cheer for either Croatia or Serbia, in addition to them cheering for Slovenia (Jolanda Bertole, personal communication, June 4, 2010).

Such ties to former Yugoslav republics in Slovenian sports broadcasts were ambiguous. Announcers expected viewers to be familiar with the Yugoslav athletic and cultural milieu: in Olympic swimming broadcasts, Mirna Jukić was mentioned as



“born in Vukovar”<sup>372</sup> (a town in Croatia) and “now competing for our northern neighbor,”<sup>373</sup> after her family had moved to Austria. Jukić was thus twice familiar in terms of her original and naturalized countries. Concerning Sara Isaković’s swimming medal, the same announcer noted that “our neighbors, the Croatian reporter who’s been following swimming for many years, also said: it’ll be silver.”<sup>374</sup> Familiarity in both examples involving Croatia was thus obvious. Conversely, Bosnia-Herzegovina was counted among the “athletically exotic countries”<sup>d</sup> that had competitors in the women’s marathon run, and ties to former Yugoslavia and the Balkan region were explicitly cut by noting that “ever since ’91, we, Slovenians, of course, don’t have anything in common with the Balkan Games”—a regional sporting event in which Slovenian athletes regularly took part as members of Yugoslav national teams.

References to a common athletic and cultural history were even more frequent in the national league soccer broadcasts (e.g., “A player of Primorje Ajdovščina for many years. Before that, he wore the shirt of the famous team in the former Yugoslav top league from Mostar, the Velež,”<sup>375</sup> or “a former star player of Crvena zvezda and Partizan,”<sup>376</sup> (two teams from Belgrade that played in the same league). Still, the nationality of all players from other former Yugoslav republics was stated at least once during the games they played in.

Despite recognizing a shared athletic history with Yugoslavia, and at times being sympathetic to the countries that had gained independence after its dissolution, televised sports in Slovenia serves first and foremost to reaffirm a sovereign Slovenian nation, and to define its place within a wider athletic and social global community. “Slovenian sport” is associated with that of the Western world and the distinction from allegedly athletically underdeveloped nations is accentuated. References to the Yugoslav athletic history which could still be detected in the past decade are steadily being replaced by an exclusively Slovenian narrative. The major dialogic shift undertaken two decades ago, when the athletic and social “we” had to be rethought from a Yugoslav to a Slovenian perspective, is being consolidated. National flagging pre-empted previous associations with the late federation. This is partly achieved by framing Slovenia within a wider social, cultural and economic milieu; yet, indices of a pan-European identity are not in sight.

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<sup>d</sup> Strangely, the announcer attributed the exoticness to Bosnia-Herzegovina as a *country*, rather than to its representative, Lucia Kimani Mwachiki-Marčetić, originally from Kenya and a naturalized Bosnian after having married Bosnian athlete Siniša Marčetić.

Many of the mechanisms sportscasters employ to make sense of events are characteristic of fan behavior. In international competitions, they obviously *identify* with “their” team (cf. Wann 2006a). This led to typically fan behavior such as superstitions and “part-play/part-serious” efforts to influence the game outcome (Eastman and Riggs 1994, St. John 2004): “Tomorrow will be D-day for us; tomorrow we’ll cross fingers for our hero,” or “Now of course we’ll all shake a little bit; those of you who can tap with your feet, do so; I can’t [tap] in my commentary booth, but I’m as tense as a string on a guitar,” and “Let’s cross our fingers and let’s go for victory.”

Announcers also adopted all the most common techniques of image-maintenance and image-enhancement fans normally use to cope with the different situations that arise in sports. The most evident approach was Basking in Reflected Glory (*BIRGing*), which occurs when people tend to “share in the glory of a successful other with whom they are in some way associated” (Cialdini et al. 1976, p. 366). Sara Isaković’s medal became “ours” with the exclamation “We’ve got a silver medal, bravo Sara!”

*Blasting* as a mechanism of decreasing evaluations with negatively associated objects, such as opposing teams and perceived rivals (Cialdini and Richardson 1980), included the extensive tagging of athletes as “exotics.” Yet this feature was more common in team sports where the blasting was aimed at diminishing the reputation of opposing players, such as that of (Slovenian national) Goran Jurak: “If Jurak can almost be Žalgiris’ best player, then this is not the Žalgiris that once subdued the entire Europe.”

The image-maintenance method of Cutting Off Reflected Failure (*CORFing*), when ties with negatively evaluated groups are severed in an attempt to avoid damaging associations with the group (Snyder, Lassegard and Ford 1986), was most obvious after the poor performances of Slovenian track and field athletes at the Beijing Olympics. Pia Tajnikar’s performance was deemed “an unpleasant surprise” and Jurij Rovar was even symbolically stripped of the title of “competitor” and deemed an “almost tourist.”

The Cutting Off Future Failure mechanism (*COFFing*) works to protect fans’ egos from future damage which could follow a team’s *less successful* performance (Wann, Hamlet, Wilson and Hodges 1995). Typical examples were found in

basketball broadcasts: “Even if a defeat comes [for Union Olimpija] ... we won’t be too disappointed” or “Union Olimpija will play the next Euroleague game next week in Vitoria against Tau Ceramica. There, we can hardly expect the *Ljubljani* to cause an upset.”

TV Slovenija’s on-air staff thus displays many characteristics of fan behavior: the adoption of selected psychological mechanisms, differences in mood after victories or losses, and the overt lack of impartiality (which the announcers themselves deemed as something viewers appreciate). Commentators thus fit the profile of fans rather than journalists (as most of them conceive themselves), or media gatekeepers in general. Indeed, the bulk of their commentary is objective and informative. However, the interpretive share appears to be driven by biased subjective perceptions rather than inside knowledge resulting in educated opinions. There is no such thing as an “ideal sportscaster;” yet, those at TV Slovenija do not seem to be optimal, either.

Sports contents on Slovenian public television are thus produced by people who conform to the characteristics of sports fans rather than journalists and media specialists. This has important consequences for the televised representation of individuals and events: the world is made sense of by people who have a relatively narrow and partial personal interest in it.

Biased announcers set the agenda for the thousands of viewers who watch televised sports. The two topics that ranked highest on the sports television agenda were the perpetuation of a world of nations (sided by patriotism/nationalism), and the promotion of competitiveness. The chase for victories and records was a pervading topic which overrode other possible themes such as the promotion of collaboration, education, enjoyment and even the economic and financial aspects of professional sports. All announcers ranked the pursuit of victory as the supreme aspiration of athletes and viewers alike. The only exception was a soccer broadcaster who also promoted viewer enjoyment as one of the purposes of televised soccer. Yet even resorted to confrontational language, which stressed the confrontational aspects of sports.

The ranking of nationality and successfulness as the highest priorities resulted in several framing mechanisms announcers employed to communicate a message of

success. Media framing means that gatekeepers shape audience perceptions by creating new and often atypical definitions to express messages that will fit into the existing belief system.

Framing was most often used when referring to teams and reporting the score (which became a crucial detail the moment the result became the cardinal characteristic of sports competitions). In team sports, running scores and scoring margins were most often reported with regard to Slovenian teams: they either “trailed by 12” or were “three goals ahead.” Additional manipulation occurred when the unfolding was framed as positive for Slovenian teams even though they were actually trailing: “The *Krimovke* have been trailing by three or four goals or, in other words, the game is still completely open.”

Framing was also achieved by selecting and emphasizing some aspects of team performance over others. More than 5 percent of all descriptors involved the direct framing of competitors as favorites. An additional effect was achieved by referring to some teams as “giants,” partly as an attempt to alleviate (actual or foreseen) losses of the preferred teams. In the case of Union Olimpija, competitive success was even disregarded altogether and substituted by the framing of the team’s *mere existence* as its true success. This shift in evaluation standards then continued into an argumentation for increasing the private and public funding of the institution.

Media framing was the most obvious in team sports broadcasts where a preferred side denoted as “ours” was constantly in sight. The network’s home teams also received significantly more commentary than their opponents with a 5-3 ratio. Individual events featured less patriotic framing; this was probably due to the small number of Slovenian competitors rather than a resolute dialogic approach. Still, Olympic broadcasts displayed instances of all three primary functions achieved by the media framing (Gitlin 1980): selection (“We saw the scoring for the French, but we’re not actually interested in it”), emphasis (“having the brightest smile”), and exclusion (“The fact that the swimming part of the Olympics has come to an end and that Michael Phelps has made it into history with eight gold medals is marginal to the Slovenian people”). Manipulative framing was thus far from absent from individual events and there would probably have been more had a bigger number of Slovenian athletes taken part in it.

Very little humor was found in the programming, which is essentially entertaining in nature. Even more striking is the low level of this humor, which relied primarily on physicality descriptors (“the most ‘twiggy’ hammer thrower in the whole world,” “his shoulders really are as wide as a closet”). The author of one of these quotes inferred that such comedy is dictated by audience preference. The network’s sports editor also did not see the need to raise the level of comedy in sports broadcasts. Media sports thus obviously belongs to what Herbert Gans (1974) would deem the “low culture” of blue-collar workers who seek compensation in sports competition and rely on predictable sit-coms for humor. It is thus not surprising that cross-over comedy-sports commentators who mix play-by-play announcing with comedy and (often deliberately biased) opinion thrive in some countries. Commenting teams such as Roy and HG in Australia and the Gialappa’s Band in Italy blur the line between journalism and comedy and opinion. Both commenting teams record high audience figures, and their success largely derives from the deliberately exaggerated opinionated dialogue which alters the typically “dry” and very predictable sports broadcasting.

Sports in Slovenia thus provide low aesthetic content. Media gatekeepers complement this picture by offering an extensive amount of patriotic discourse, highlighting the struggle and triumph of the nation’s representatives and occasionally spicing up the commentary with sexualized humor or gossip (“Leganger (...) next to her, her intimate friend and coach”). Evidently, sports are not seen as a potential means of informing and educating viewers, nor as a tool to raise awareness about the world (Real 1989, Billings 2008). In the absence of other types of information, distorted representations become the norm. Even if the law imposes the balanced and inclusive representation of people (not just athletes) regardless of their gender, ethnicity and nationality, the promotion of diversity still does not occur in sports broadcasts.

Like with all television content, sports broadcasts contribute to the cultivation of the viewer’s perception of society. TV Slovenija offers a fair approximation of the global community: in its Olympic broadcasts over 150 countries and territories were acknowledged through mentions of their representatives. About one-third of them, however, were discussed five times or less, and several dozens were identified as “exotic.”

Winners and medalists characterized the 50+ hours of Olympic programming on TV Slovenija. Medalists were to sports what the “middle class” is to “regular” television programming in George Gerbner’s studies: a false majority which emerges as such because other groups are symbolically annihilated. TV Slovenija conferred a high status on the winners and discarded unsuccessful competitors, sometimes by mocking, other times by simply cutting ties to “former favorites.”

In broadcast sports, the rules do not apply to all participants alike. Announcers call for sanctions when opponents break them, while incorrect interventions by home players are deemed “good fouls.” Doping is frowned upon, but Slovenian culprits are overlooked. Even referees are expected to favor Slovenian teams when playing home games. Hence, sports broadcasts do not inspire an image of fair competition; rather, all avenues within and many outside the scope of the rules are deemed permissible to claim victory. In the television sports world, only winners are praised.

Media events provide many viewers with their first and often only exposure to certain foreign cultures. This is especially true of numerous new and/or relatively unknown countries that rarely find their way into foreign media. In Slovenia, many theorists and opinion leaders are particularly prone to considering sports as a means of promoting the nation and its economy, tourist appeal, society etc. However, very few people examine the image of *foreign* societies on *Slovenian* television to see whether the inverted process occurs here. After all, it is fair to assume that the amount of and approach to portraying either, say, Austria or Zimbabwe will be reciprocal on the respective broadcasting networks.

It turns out that sport broadcasts on Slovenian public television offer remarkably little information about a nation, its culture and society. Most “additional,” background comments related to athletics (e.g., “Daniel Bailey is from the Antilles, [...] from the small country of Antigua. The Antilles are some sort of island group, and Antigua is a small country *which, however, has some very good sprinters—among the girls, as well,*”<sup>377</sup> emphasis added). The Olympics, for instance, is an opportunity to discuss literally hundreds of societies, and thousands of personal stories. Yet very few make it to the tube: apart from the host nation, countries attracted very little or no recognition and TV Slovenija also did not air pre-produced athlete profiles. In team sports, often the only cultivation offered related to the enunciation of teams’ title sponsors, such as Siena’s *Montepaschi*, a bank and

financial investment company. Televised sports in Slovenia thus contribute very little to viewers' erudition. If this approach is adopted by other countries' sports broadcasters, international renderings would offer very little promotion of Slovenia as a nation, apart from acknowledging its existence.

As noted, the only nation to receive sizable "societal" coverage was China as the host nation. Even there, the occasional political criticism ("We've seen Tiananmen Square, remembered by many across the globe after the student massacre decades ago when Chinese forces quashed the demonstrations led by Chinese students in a very bloody way. Apparently, several hundred were trampled over by tanks, and the order and discipline lasting till then was thus restored"<sup>378</sup>) was overridden by messages of the efficiency of Chinese organizers, which built architectural wonders such as the Bird's Nest stadium and the Water Cube venue, and which "make the Swiss appear like amateurs as far as precision is concerned." Conflict and disparity thus exist in the televised sports world—and they are less important than audience and spectator enjoyment.

The Olympic broadcasting discourse featured several differences in the portrayal of some social groups. Among the different nations, the Chinese were significantly more often portrayed in terms of diligence, talent and concentration. In the gender comparison, commitment and extroversion were deemed domains of men, while women were more often discussed as being modest and elegant. Team sports featured much more commentary about individual players rather than team efforts. Still, the analyzed speech exhibited relatively little stereotyping (understood as preconceived ideas that attribute certain "typical" characteristics to all members of a group). Rather, bias as the preference of a specific perspective over impartiality was much more pronounced. The sports broadcasts on Slovenian public television were mostly produced under the influence of content and decision-making bias (Entman 2007). This feature is usually a cause for alarm when applied by media gatekeepers and it certainly does not satisfy the roles and duties expected of journalists. Recurring transitions from journalism to announcing and back are not typical of nations with long democratic traditions, but are relatively common in transition regimes in Southeast Europe.

A striking practical difference is the divergence between the codified role of TV Slovenija as a public broadcasting service, its staff's attitude to professional norms

and values, and the actual manifestations identified in this study. Several functions that normally do not mix were found to be intertwined. Sports broadcasts are becoming a hybrid, pseudo-informative genre, with a similar claim of objectivity and professionalism as other genres of this type (most notably, some television news shows and tabloid newspapers). This study thus connects sports contents on TV Slovenija to existing theories of discourse and media content. It also expands an existing typology (Billings and Eastman 2003) to meet the needs and peculiarities of post-transition societies. In the end, it opens the way for further analysis of Slovenian renderings of mediated sports.



## 12 Conclusion

This dissertation is the first large-scale quantitative and qualitative analysis of sports commentators' discourse on Slovenian television. It points out many actual and potential issues that derive from this segment of TV programming. Individual studies on smaller samples, or limited to a single sport, were conducted in the past; however, the scope of their findings was limited. This study offers a much wider overview of the field as well as foundations for analyses in other post-transition societies.

Sports broadcasts are a rich, yet often overlooked source of views and ideas about the human being and its place in society. The recent steep rise in the number of dedicated networks—from zero to eight sports-only channels<sup>a</sup> since 2006—represents a drastic shift in the Slovenian sports media market. A big part of the population has seen the number and scope of information providers expand strongly. As a consequence, the need for on-air talent has grown dramatically. New contents, including (but not limited to) NFL and NCAAF football, MLB baseball, lacrosse and even unprecedented broadcasts of the Lingerie Football League<sup>b</sup> have found their way into the lineups of these channels, considerably altering the Slovenian sports broadcasting horizons. Research of this kind is acutely needed in Slovenia as well as in post-transition Eastern and Southeast Europe. Hopefully, this dissertation fills part of the gap and will prove a useful starting point for scholars engaging in this field.

TV Slovenija's sports program staff appear to be caught within the limits of what they perceive to be the(ir) domain of sports reporting. At its core lie telecasts, while on its outskirts are news items about scores, standings and related topics essentially complementing that core. Though most refer to themselves as sports *journalists*, they very rarely delve into potentially problematic issues. Instead, they rely on routine topics and approaches: pre- and post-game reports are appealing to viewership and easy to produce. The great field of sports is reduced to broadcasting and reporting about professional competitions. Other aspects perpetually remain outside of their interest. Some staff members, including editor Mile Jovanović, attribute this to the

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<sup>a</sup> Šport TV 1-2, Sportklub 1-5, Golf klub. Apparently, TV Slovenija's management is also considering the possibility of launching of a dedicated sports program after finalizing the conversion to high-definition broadcasting (Mile Jovanović, personal communication, May 19, 2010).

<sup>b</sup> The Lingerie Football League is a women's American football league in which athletes compete in undergarments instead of "regular" jerseys and pants; see Evans (2009) for additional information.

lack of an appropriate outlet for such content (such as a weekly sports show). In turn, they do not consider the possibility of placing such stories within any of the news or talk shows or roundtable discussions scheduled in the regular programming. It seems as if they abide by the perception that sports are not “real” news.

Broadcasters’ discourse in different societies is far from homogeneous: culture shapes dialogue (Church 2010). Viewers’ expectations about the media derive from their past experiences—and can thus be altered by shifting editorial policies. The Slovenian media already experienced a major dialogic shift with its transition from life and society in Yugoslavia to the independent state of Slovenia. The explanation that a routine cannot be changed because the audience *seems* to like it, or because it is seen as *illogical* (e.g., not to refer to teams as “our”), is objectionable. Much greater ideological shifts were achieved in the country as early as 20 years ago.

TV Slovenija has a paramount role in Slovenian sports broadcasting. Due to its half-century tradition of producing televised sports, it is still considered the trend-setter in this field. With the nationwide lack of a serious sports journalism/sports broadcasting university course, journalists and announcers can only learn by imitation, essentially mimicking existing commentators and, over time, carving out a personal style.

Sportscasters offer what they think viewers want—and very little more. Of the three functions traditionally pertaining to public services, sports producers at TV Slovenija seem to be only interested in the entertainment component. Indeed, especially major sports broadcasts are a relatively safe and efficient means of securing high rating figures and consequently high marketing incomes. Their profitability, however, should not be seen as a reason to yield to the tyranny of viewers’ (perceived, yet never really tested) preferences: after all, it is debatable whether all viewers truly appreciate a broadcast that is essentially biased, nationalistic, occasionally chauvinist, modestly informative, permeated by announcers who focus predominantly on “hot favorites” and know athletes almost exclusively through their standard biographies. This is surely the right circumstance to rather “over-estimate the mentality of the public, than to under-estimate it” (Reith 1924 in Coyle and Woolard 2009, 19). Sportscasts’ audiences are very loyal, thus making it even *easier* for network producers to seek new approaches in sports reporting. To begin with, commentators could focus on delivering truthful portraits of the unscripted events

that take place on sports fields rather than resorting to accentuation effects to enhance viewers' social identification. In this dissertation, examples of BIRGing, CORFing, Blasting and COFFing by sportscasters on TV Slovenija are presented.

The most promoted social group is the nation; patriotic flag waving saturates sports broadcasts, and an inclusive discourse contributes to framing the audience as an active part of "national successes." Behind it are the logics that this is what viewers want and, more importantly, that TV Slovenija is a *national* (rather than *public*) television, "bound to show the creativity of our athletes!" (Marjan Lah, electronic communication, October 5, 2010). The assumption that nationalism as "we" understand it is pervasive regardless of countries is incorrect. Patches of land as big as the African continent demonstrate the detrimental nature of enforcing artificial "national," that is, colonial boundaries that prevent the development of the continent: "African nationalism can only be Pan-Africanism or else, as Mwalimu [Julius Nyerere] characterised it, it is 'the equivalent of tribalism within the context of [African] separate nation states.' Pan-Africanism gave birth to nationalism, not the other way round" (Shivji 2010, 17). This aspect is overlooked even by the many scholars who seek to equate societies in post-socialist and post-colonial countries (the term "nation" is intentionally avoided). Nationality is a neutral category *per se*; it becomes problematic when framed as the predominant social group which, in turn, implies the depreciation of out-groups.

In this study, over 83 hours of media text produced by sports broadcasters was coded according to an expanded taxonomy first proposed by Andrew Billings and Susan Eastman (2003). The adaptation of this taxonomy to a Slovenian, and possibly Southeast European, environment is the first major contribution to the existing knowledge base.

A second major contribution is the determination of the share of evaluative commentary in Slovenian sports broadcasts. The large sample size and variety of sports analyzed allow the results to be generalized. The figures differ significantly from those found in analyses of other media markets: they suggest this is a specific setting. Individual shares determining gender, ethnic and national bias are also important findings.

Some findings are connected back to theory, while some implications for notions of identity and cultivation are proposed. It is likely that more will emerge in later renderings of this and other data.

This dissertation provides insights into an aspect of public television broadcasting that has rarely been subjected to systematic research. Discrepancies between theoretic codification and actual discourse have been highlighted. Views from announcers and editors enhance the analysis and its conclusions.

This research has been a very strenuous, yet enjoyable project that has taken over two years to complete. Its results and conclusions are built on a solid and representative database. They are now open to debate and available for future explorations and, hopefully, international comparisons. Some studies in North America have helped improve the ways sports commentators speak about sports (Billings 2008, Messner and Cooky 2010). They also served as models for this enquiry into Slovenian sports broadcasting. Hopefully, this study will also play a modest role in understanding the impact sports commentators have on society. And hopefully, sports commentators themselves will appreciate its implications.

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## **Povzetek**

### **1 Uvod – temeljni koncepti iz komunikologije**

Raziskovanje športnih vsebin v medijih postaja čedalje pomembnejša veja komunikacijskih znanosti. Doslej v Sloveniji to področje ni bilo deležno posebej množične obravnave; redke raziskave, ki so bile izvedene, so se osredotočile na razmeroma ozko temo (bodisi samo en šport ali samo en vidik medijskih tekstov). Namen te raziskave je vpeljati in utrditi analizo televizijskih vsebin in televizijskega diskurza v športu v Sloveniji. Glede na specifični zgodovinski in družbeni položaj Slovenije kot post-socialistične države utegne ta raziskava spodbuditi podobne analize v drugih bivših jugoslovanskih republikah in sploh v »novih demokracijah«.

V vsakdanjem življenju se pomen ustvarja skozi komuniciranje oziroma sosporočanje. Komuniciranje je kulturno pogojeno; odvisno je od zgodovinske in kulturne tradicije, pa tudi od trenutnih političnih in družbenih okoliščin (White 1983). Skupna kultura je torej predpogoj za možnost komuniciranja, obenem pa je tudi njen produkt. V njej se pomeni besed spreminjajo ter neprestano poustvarjajo.

Z vsebino tekstov v športnih prenosih so se med prvimi ukvarjali Bryant, Comisky in Zillman (1977). Ugotovili so, da je velik del teksta v športnih prenosih posvečenega »dramatičnemu polepšanju igre« (str. 140). Reporterji<sup>a</sup> torej težijo k olepšanju svojih opisov dogodkov na športnih prizoriščih. McCarthy, Jones in Potrac (2003) menijo, da »čeprav gledalci verjamejo, da gledajo resnično poustvarjenje določenega dogodka, ki se prikazuje, stoji televizija, kot katero koli drugo občilo, med občinstvom in opisanim dogodkom« (str. 217). Športni prenosi so torej »medijski dogodki«, ki jih producirajo režiser, snemalna ekipa in reporterji. Zaradi njihove

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<sup>a</sup> V Sloveniji se osebe, ki govorijo k sliki televizijskih prenosov športnih vsebin, naziva z »reporterji« ali »komentatorji«. Konsenz glede tega, kateri izraz je ustrežnejši, ni dosežen: nekdanji urednik Športnega programa Televizije Slovenija Marjan Lah meni, da izraz »komentiranje« implicira sposobnost analize in sinteze, kar omogoča sposobnost predlaganja rešitev in je posledično značilnost ustvarjalnega mišljenja. Lah meni, da pri športnem reporterstvu (zanj »deskripcija in refleksija dogodkov na športnem prizorišču«) to ni značilno, zato sam dosledno uporablja izraz »reporter«. Drugi, med katerimi je trenutni urednik Športnega programa Televizije Slovenije Mile Jovanović, ne ločujejo med izrazoma in ju uporabljajo kot sopomenki.

Določitev ustreznega izraza je za stroko sicer potrebna, ni pa bistvena za to disertacijo (lahko pa ta prispeva argumente, ki bodo omogočili poenotenje mnenj). V njej bosta zato izraza »reporter« in »komentator« praviloma uporabljana kot sopomenki.

vloge in učinka jih Comisky, Bryant in Zillman imenujejo »ekipa poklicnih čuvajev in olepševalcev« (1977, 150).

Eden pomembnejših načinov proučevanja medijskih tekstov je analiza diskurza. Obstajata dva prevladujoča pristopa k temu načinu analize. Prvi je strukturalistični in post-strukturalistični in se nanaša na vprašanja identitete, družbene spremembe in odnosov moči v družbi. Drugi način spremlja, kaj in kako poskušajo sporočevalci doseči s svojim besedilom.

Diskurz ni nikoli sestavljen iz samo ene povedi, enega teksta, enega dejanja ali enega vira; diskurz se pojavlja v vrsti različnih tekstov in se uresničuje skozi več družbenih institucij. V disertaciji zato praviloma ne bodo obravnavane posamezne izjave ali celo lapsusi. Bodo pa ugotovljene značilnosti diskurza dopolnjene s primeri izjav, ponekod pa bodo tudi izpostavljene značilnosti posameznikovih osebnih slogov komentiranja.

## **1.1 Učinki medijev**

Zgodnje teorije medijskih učinkov so se med seboj razlikovale po moči neposrednega učinka, ki so ga pripisovale množičnim občilom. Nekatere teorije so zagovarjale močne neposredne učinke, druge šibke, tretje so predpostavljale vpliv vmesnih členov v verigi prepričevanja. V 60-ih in 70-ih letih 20. stoletja so pridobile na veljavi teorije, ki so poudarjale, da množični mediji ne vplivajo odločujoče na to, *kako misliti*, pač pa na to, *o čem razmišljati*. Mediji torej izvajajo prednostno tematiziranje (McCombs in Shaw 1972), s katerim pripisujejo posameznim temam večjo ali manjšo pozornost in s tem vplivajo na pomen, ki jim ga pripisujejo občinstva. Prednostno tematiziranje je najbolj uspešno pri neodločenih ljudeh in pri vprašanih oziroma temah, ki so manj znana.

Največji športni dogodki, kot so olimpijske igre, so za marsikaterega gledalca na prizorišču ali pred domačimi televizijskimi ali radijskimi sprejemniki prvi stik z mnogimi tujimi narodi in kulturami. Real (1989) zato poudarja, da medijske reprezentacije nastopajočih tekmovalcev in narodov oblikujejo tudi gledalčevo predstavo o tej državi. Pomanjkljive, netočne ali izkrivljene reprezentacije torej ravno tako vplivajo na posameznikovo razumevanje sveta.



Eden od načinov ustvarjanja pomena je okvirjanje. Ta postopek zajema izbor in povezavo določenih delov stvarnosti (ter zanemarjanje drugih) tako, da način upovedovanja poudari izbrane dele oziroma povezave med elementi. S tem se izpostavi določen način razumevanja tega vprašanja (Entman 1993, Scheufele 2000, Miller 2005). Temelji delovanja okvirjanja so izbor, poudarjanje in izključevanje (Gitlin 1980), dovršeni okvirji pa običajno zadovoljijo štiri funkcije: opredelijo problem, analizirajo njegove vzroke, izdajo moralno sodbo in predlagajo rešitev (Entman 2004). Posamezniki okvirjajo teme in razumevanja tudi v vsakodnevnem komuniciranju (Goffman 1974).

Eden od pristopov k analizi učinkov medijev je teorija kultivacije. Ta teorija se v primerjavi s konceptom prednostnega tematiziranja ukvarja samo z učinki enega medija, in sicer televizije, vendar pa predpostavlja širše učinke. Pojavila se je v Združenih državah Amerike v 70-ih letih 20. stol. in zagovarja, da ni smiselno preučevati učinkov posameznih vsebin ali oddaj, pač pa da ima televizija kumulativne in dolgoročne posledice na gledalčev pogled na svet, v katerem živi. Televizija naj bi bila »osrednje kulturno vodilo ameriške družbe« (Gerbner in Gross 1976, 175). V primerjavi z drugimi občili je vseprisotna, zelo lahko dostopna, neselektivna in koherentna. Gledajo jo praktično vsi pripadniki družbe, ki se med seboj razlikujejo le v količini izpostavljenosti temu mediju.

Teorija kultivacije predpostavlja, da televizija oblikuje in ohranja nekatere temeljne poglede na stvarnost. Gledalci naj bi torej verjeli, da je družba, ki je prikazana na televiziji, enaka tisti, v kateri živijo. Večja kot je izpostavljenost mediju, bolj je prepričanje zasidrano v gledalcu. Vendar pa je takšna predstava o družbi zmotna: raziskava ameriških televizijskih programov v 80-ih letih 20. stol. je pokazala, da so bili moški prikazani trikrat pogosteje kot ženske; starejši, mlajši in pripadniki manjšin so bili nesorazmerno redko zastopani; 70 odstotkov likov na televiziji je pripadalo srednjemu sloju; in kriminal je bil desetkrat pogostejši kot v resničnem svetu. Televizija torej prikazuje močno izkrivljeno sliko družbe in sveta.

Teorija kultivacije je utemeljena skoraj izključno na primeru ameriških televizijskih vsebin. Kljub temu je raziskovalno smiselno predpostavljati, da so oziroma bodo njene posledice enake tudi v drugih delih sveta, vključno s Slovenijo – toliko bolj, ker izhaja velik delež predvajanih vsebin (predvsem igrane produkcije) na slovenskih televizijskih postajah ravno iz ZDA.

## 2 Diskurz in identiteta

Vsak posameznik oblikuje svojo identiteto v okviru kategorij, ki se pojavljajo v njegovem okolju. Čeprav je vsakemu posamezniku lastna, je identiteta družbeno pogojena. Tudi šport kot del družbe prispeva nekaj kategorij in usmeritev za oblikovanje posameznikove identitete. Te običajno utrjujejo obstoječo hegemonijo.

Dva diskurzivna pojava, ki prispevata k oblikovanju posameznikove identitete, sta pristranskost in stereotipiziranje. Prvi pojem označuje osebno preferenco do določenega vprašanja ali ideologije, drugi pa se nanaša na pripisovanje določenih značilnosti vsem pripadnikom ene družbene skupine. Pristranskost lahko vodi k diskriminaciji. Ta se v medijskih diskurzih pogosto pojavlja, občila pa lahko prispevajo tudi k njenemu odpravljanju.

Posameznik, ki se znajde v situaciji družbene interakcije, osmišlja dogodke tako, da jih kategorizira (Oakes idr. 1994). Na ta način lahko koorientira samega sebe in tako opredeljuje svojo *socialno identiteto*. Funkcije socialnih stereotipov je opisal Tajfel (1981). Posamezniki stremijo k vzdrževanju pozitivne socialne identitete.

Prisotnost oziroma odsotnost socialne kategorizacije se odrazi v samopercepciji *sebe kot posameznika* oziroma individuuma in *sebe kot pripadnika socialne skupine*. Vsaka oseba se v različnih situacijah nahaja na različnih točkah tega kontinuuma. Po tej teoriji ima torej posameznik več sebstev, ki se prekrivajo s situacijami in socialnimi skupinami, ki jim pripada.

Ker posameznik stremi k oblikovanju pozitivne socialne identitete, bo težil k ugodnejšemu ocenjevanju socialne skupine, ki ji pripada. Ljudje se med seboj torej ne samo *razlikujejo* po skupinski pripadnosti, ampak jih tudi *vrednotijo* – morajo biti bodisi *boljši ali slabši* od ostalih (Bryant in Cummins 2009). To velja celo, ko je razvrstitev v skupine naključna (Tajfel in Turner 1986). V primeru nezadovoljive socialne identitete, se lahko posameznik zateče h kateremu od mehanizmov za njeno izboljšanje (Oakes idr. 1994). Obenem socialne kategorije niso povsem zaprte in samouvrstitev v njih se lahko spremeni.

Socialna identiteta se gradi tudi skozi športne vsebine. Navijači denimo dosegajo pozitivno socialno identiteto skozi povezovanje z uspešnimi ekipami (Wann, Royalty in Roberts 2000). Šport ponuja tudi dovolj primernih tekmecev in kategorij

vrednotenja uspeha (derbiji, število zmag doma, največ doseženih ali najmanj prejetih zadetkov, zmaga proti aktualnemu prvaku itd.), da tudi v primeru slabših rezultatov omogočijo posamezniku primerjavo, ki bo prispevala k izboljšanju njegove socialne identitete.

Posameznikova identifikacija z ekipo ima pomembne posledice tako pri potrošnji športnih vsebin kot pri oblikovanju individualne identitete (Gantz in Wenner 1995, Wann 2006a, 2006b). Lahko se odrazi v neobičajnem vedenju ali oblačenju ter celo v napol resnih poskusih vplivanja na izid tekmovanja (Eastman in Riggs 1994, St. John 2004). Raziskovalci so v okviru teorije samokategorizacije opisali štiri načine, s katerimi navijači v različnih situacijah ohranjajo oziroma višajo svoj ugled: »kitenje s tujim perjem« (*Basking in Reflected Glory*; Cialdini idr. 1976), »zaničevanje« (*Blasting*; Cialdini in Richardson 1980), »distanciranje od neuspeha« (*Cutting Off Reflected Failure*; Snyder, Lassegard in Ford 1986) in »preprečevanje bodočih razočaranj« (*Cutting Off Future Failure*; Wann, Hamlet, Wilson in Hodges (1995).

### **3 Športno novinarstvo kot profesija**

Športno novinarstvo je najpogosteje podcenjevalno smatrano za »otroški oddelek novinarstva« (O'Brien 2007), v katerem se površni novinarji ukvarjajo z zabavnimi in postranskimi vsebinami, namesto da bi vršili svojo funkcijo četrte veje oblasti (Rowe 2004). Kljub temu ima športno novinarstvo pomembno komercialno vlogo in je omogočil razvoj vrste specializiranih medijev, kot so športni časopisi in televizijski programi.

Športni novinarji se pri svojem poročanju osredotočajo (le) na vsebine, ki se neposredno tičejo tekmovanj, ki jih spremljajo – na primer napovedi in poročila s tekem (The International Sports Press Survey 2005 v Rowe 2007). Mnoge ostale teme, kot so športna politika, transparentnost, integriteta, diskriminacija ipd., so praktično prezrte.

Šport je tudi ena od osrednjih vsebin »medijskih dogodkov« kot prireditev, ki so utemeljene prav na svoji veliki popularnosti in privlačnosti za medije, predvsem

televizijo. Zgleda takšnih dogodkov so olimpijske igre in svetovno prvenstvo v nogometu, ki pritegnejo izredno velike množice gledalcev tako na stadione kot pred televizijske sprejemnike. Poletne olimpijske igre v Pekingu leta 2008 so tako v več kot 220 državah in deželah sveta skupno ponudile več kot 61.700 ur programa (International Olympic Committee 2008a). Če bi vse te prenose predvajali na enem televizijskem programu, bi teh 16 dni športnega dogajanja razvlekli na več kot sedem let neprekinjenega oddajanja. Takšni medijski dogodki so izredno priljubljeni med televizijskimi gledalci: v povprečju si je vsako minuto prenosov teh iger ogledalo 160 milijonov gledalcev z vsega sveta (prav tam). Medijski športni dogodki so med najbolj gledanimi televizijskimi vsebinami tudi v Sloveniji (AGB Nielsen Media Research za RTV Slovenija).

Med televizijskimi prenosi znaša delež objektivnega oziroma opisnega teksta med 59 in 73 odstotkov (Bryant, Comisky in Zillman 1977, Woo, Kim, Nichols in Zheng 2010). Prav Bryant in sodelavci so prvi utemeljili, da so televizijski reporterji več kot samo objektivni opisovalci dogodkov. Dramatični opisi tvorijo 27 odstotkov njihovega teksta; večina tega se nanaša na olepšave oziroma pohvalne opise. Avtorji so zapisali, da ti dramatični opisi pri televizijskih gledalcih nadomeščajo negotovost, ki jo doživljajo gledalci na stadionu. Teme oziroma motivi, ki se jih pri tem poslužujejo, so razmeroma maloštevilni.

Korošec (2005) ugotavlja, da športno novinarstvo zaznamuje vidik poročanja o športni prireditvi, kar je novinarska dejavnost. Športno poročanje naj bi opisovalo potek dogajanja. V športu se enkratna individualnost dogodka (Košir 1988) kaže v negotovosti izida tekme. Po definiciji naj bi tudi športno poročevalstvo bilo objektivno, vendar Korošec (2005) ugotavlja, da vlada v njem posebno razmerje med tvorcem in naslovniki, v katerem so slednji pripravljene sprejeti celo odmike od poročevalskih standardov (npr. navdušenje, navijaštvo, omalovaževanje). Vendar četudi so naslovniki res pripravljene sprejeti te odmike, to ne opravičuje odstopanja od poročevalskih standardov (Andrews 2005, Boyle 2006). Ena najočitnejših oblik pristranskosti je nazivanje športnikov ali ekip iz istega naroda z »naši«. Mnogi novinarji in uredniki smatrajo to za samoumevno in vseprisotno, kar pa ne drži: ameriška televizijska mreža NBC je svojim komentatorjem prepovedala uporabo svojilnih zaimkov, kot so »naš«, za opisovanje ameriških tekmovalcev. Izvršni producent te mreže David Neal je odločitev utemeljil z naslednjo navedbo: »Tu smo,

da poročamo iz Olimpijade; nismo tukaj, da bi navijali« (McCarthy 2006 v Billings 2008, 23). Poleg identifikacije z nastopajočimi se pri športnih novinarjih pojavljajo še navzkrižja interesov, promocijsko novinarstvo, pristransko poročanje, navijaštvo, rasizem, stereotipiziranje, šovinizem, kritikantstvo, žaljenje in zaničevanje športnikov ter vdori v zasebnost (Ropret 2004, Okorn 2008).

Kljub vsem tem značilnostim in morebitnim specifikam pa področje športnega poročevalstva ni posebej regulirano v etičnih oziroma poklicnih kodeksih medijskih hiš ali združenj. Stanovsko Društvo športnih novinarjev Slovenije svojega kodeksa nima, vendar se ravna po kodeksu Društva novinarjev Slovenije. V kodeksih pomembnejših tujih medijev so športu posvečena posamezna specifična določila, ki pa ne »znižujejo« zahtevanih poročevalskih standardov (npr. New York Times 2005, Associated Press 2006). Novinarski priročnik medijske hiše Reuters (2008) celo izrecno opozarja na to, da recimo kriket »pogosto odpre politične poglede« (str. 448), pri nogometu pa naj bi bilo potrebno spremljati morebitne zgodbe v zvezi z zlorabo prepovedanih poživil, prestopi, sojenjem, televizijskimi pravicami, pokroviteljstvi, financami, korupcijo, nameščanjem izidov in drugimi zgodbami (str. 468).

V tej doktorski disertaciji so pod drobnogledom bili pregledani športni prenosi na TV Slovenija. Ta televizijska hiša je bila izbrana zaradi njene zelo dolge zgodovine prenašanja športnih vsebin in zaradi posebne vloge, ki jo ima kot javni medij. Javni mediji naj bi namreč še pred razvedrilno imeli informativno in izobraževalno vlogo. Obenem je ta medijska hiša razmeroma podrobno regulirana z internimi, zakonskimi in evropskimi akti (RTV Slovenija 2000, Zakon o medijih, ZMed-UPB1 2006, Zakon o Radioteleviziji Slovenija, ZTVS-1 2006, Commission of the European Communities 2009). Ta določila med ostalim prepovedujejo sleherne oblike diskriminacije in segregacije, zapovedujejo pa spodbujanje medsebojnega spoštovanja in strpnosti.

### **3.1 Medijska podoba družbe in športnikov v njej**

Znanstvene analize medijskega poročanja o športu najpogosteje ugotavljajo sporočila, ki jih novinarji in uredniki posredujejo glede področji spola, narodnosti in rasne pripadnosti. Izsledki kažejo, da je ženski šport količinsko zapostavljen v primerjavi z moškim, vendar pa podatki iz nekaterih držav kažejo, da se je v zadnjih dveh desetletjih v času olimpijskih iger in nekaterih drugih medijskih dogodkov

razkorak med prikazovanjem športnikov obeh spolov skoraj izničil. V ZDA je to posledica dejstva, da tvorijo večino občinstva najbolj gledanih olimpijskih vsebin prav ženske.

Športnice in športniki se razlikujejo tudi po podobi, ki jih o njih ustvarijo mediji. Moški so praviloma orisani kot aktivni, agresivni, predani, tekmovalni, dominantni, neodvisni, spretni, močni in celo nasilni. Njihovi uspehi so pogosteje posledica zbranosti in inteligentnosti, neuspehi pa sledijo pomanjkanju predanosti. Po drugi strani so pri ženskah izpostavljene čustvene in vedenjske značilnosti, kot so privlačnost, lepota, milina, čustvenost in čustvena nestabilnost, šibkost, odvisnost, požrtvovalnost ter skrb za druge. Bolj kot moški naj bi bile nagnjene k sodelovanju. Prikazane so kot bolj altruistične, njihova znanja in sposobnosti pa so omalovaževane. Ženske so sicer praviloma zelo dobro sprejete v »feminiziranih« športih, kot so lokostrelstvo, skoki v vodo, konjenišstvo, sabljanje, golf, gimnastika, drsanje, plavanje, sinhrono plavanje, tenis, namizni tenis in odbojka. Nekatere od teh podob se v zadnjih letih sicer spreminjajo in opisi postajajo bolj uravnoteženi.

Mediji so prežeti tudi z bolj ali manj očitnimi nacionalističnimi zaznamki. Michael Billig označuje pojav, ki je sicer običajno označen kot »patriotizem« in (zato) ni problematiziran, za »banalni nacionalizem« (1995). Nacionalizem se v športnem poročevalstvu kaže v količini poročanja: delež časopisnih poročil, posvečenih nastopom »svojih« športnikov v času olimpijskih iger, znaša od 17 do 79 odstotkov (Real 1989), ameriška televizija pa si v času tega tekmovanja prizadeva za 50-odstotni delež prikaza ameriških športnikov, kar je precej več kot njihova dejanska zastopanost na tem dogodku (Billings 2008). Pristranskost se kaže tudi v diskurzivnih razlikah: v času olimpijskih iger »nacionalne zastave poteptajo vse ostale oblike identitete« (Billings, Angelini in Holt Duke 2010, 9) in identifikacija z narodom se krepi celo na ozemljih z močnimi separatističnimi težnjami (Juncà 2008, 2009).

Nacionalizem se najbolj očitno kaže v nazivanju športnikov iz svoje države z zaimkom »naši«. Kot navedeno, se te »retorike prve osebe v množini« (Billig 1995) ne poslužujejo na ameriških televizijskih postajah. Kljub temu »domačim« športnikom tudi tam pogosteje pripisujejo sposobnosti koncentracije, mirnosti, predanosti in poguma. Nasprotno so »tuji« športniki pogosteje opisani v smislu njihove izkušnosti in nekaterih biografskih informacij. Mediji iz drugih držav

opisujejo »svoje« zmagovalce kot »zlate fante« in »junake«, njihove lastnosti pa so opisane kot značilnosti naroda. Tudi v Sloveniji se je takšen diskurz začel pojavljati takoj po osamosvojitvi, na olimpijskih igrah leta 1992 (Splichal, Bašić Hrvat in Luthar v de Moragas Spà, Rivenburgh in Larson 1995). Posebej v času velikih športnih prireditev se nacionalizem včasih protislovno prepleta z globalizacijo.

V rasno in kulturno mešanih državah se pojavljajo tudi razlike v obravnavi športnikov različnih barv polti (slov. »rasa«, angl. »ethnicity«), predvsem belopoltnih in temnopoltnih. Prvim se najpogosteje pripisujejo višje intelektualne sposobnosti, prizadevnost in marljivost, medtem ko so drugi predstavljeni kot »telesno nadarjeni, rojeni športniki«. Komentatorji pri tem ne delajo razlik med spoloma.

Športni novinarji in uredniki utemeljujejo svoje načine upovedovanja in poročanja z željami in preferencami naslovnikov. Pomembno vlogo imata rutinsko spremljanje posameznih tem oziroma področij in spremljanje »najpomembnejših« tekmovanj. Vsakega od teh argumentov je sicer možno zavreči. Kljub temu ostaja pristransko poročanje dejstvo in način hegemonškega utrjevanja obstoječe družbene ureditve.

## **4 Cilji in hipoteze**

Namen doktorske disertacije je analizirati vsebino tekstov in diskurz športnih reporterjev na javni televiziji v Sloveniji. Cilji naloge so:

- Ugotoviti število omemb tekmovalcev glede na njihov spol, raso in narodnost.
- Ugotoviti pogostost različnih vrst komentarjev/izjav v diskurzu športnih reporterjev na slovenski javni televiziji.
- Ugotoviti morebitne razlike v reprezentaciji posameznih športnikov, skupin športnikov ali ekip glede na njihov spol, sposobnost, raso ali narodnostno pripadnost.
- Ugotoviti najpogostejše načine izražanja reporterjevih subjektivnih mnenj in moralnih sodb.
- Primerjati diskurzivne strategije slovenskih reporterjev med prenosi naslednjih vrst tekmovanj: olimpijske igre, mednarodna tekmovanja in državna prvenstva.

- Razumeti razloge, zakaj reporterji v svojem diskurzu izražajo mnenja in moralne sodbe.

Na podlagi raziskovalnih ciljev in analize literature so bile oblikovane naslednje raziskovalne hipoteze:

- **Hipoteza 1:** Delež subjektivnih izjav v diskurzu športnih reporterjev na slovenski javni televiziji ne presega 27 odstotkov.
- **Hipoteza 2:** Delež pozitivnih pripisov slovenskim tekmovalcem v prenosih iz olimpijskih iger presega delež pozitivnih pripisov tujim tekmovalcem.
- **Hipoteza 3:** Delež komentarja o moških tekmovalcih v prenosih iz olimpijskih iger presega 53 odstotkov vseh komentarjev o tekmovalcih po spolu.
- **Hipoteza 4:** Moški športniki bodo deležni večine komentarjev o koncentraciji, moči, nadarjenosti/sposobnosti, mirnosti, predanosti, pogumu, izkušenosti, inteligentnosti, konsonanci in ekstrovertiranosti, medtem ko bodo ženske športnice prejele večino komentarjev o čustvenosti, lepoti, telesu/delih telesa in introvertiranosti.
- **Hipoteza 5:** se nanaša na pristranskost glede na raso in je razdeljena na sedem delnih hipotez:
  - **Hipoteza 5a:** Temnopolti športniki bodo prejeli večji delež komentarjev o moči/hitrosti kot belopolti tekmovalci.
  - **Hipoteza 5b:** Temnopolti športniki bodo prejeli večji delež komentarjev o nadarjenosti/sposobnosti kot belopolti tekmovalci.
  - **Hipoteza 5c:** Temnopolti športniki bodo prejeli večji delež komentarjev o pričakovanju njihovega izida kot belopolti tekmovalci.
  - **Hipoteza 5d:** Belopolti športniki bodo prejeli večji delež komentarjev o koncentraciji kot temnopolti tekmovalci.
  - **Hipoteza 5e:** Belopolti športniki bodo prejeli večji delež komentarjev o mirnosti kot temnopolti tekmovalci.
  - **Hipoteza 5f:** Belopolti športniki bodo prejeli večji delež komentarjev o predanosti kot temnopolti tekmovalci.
  - **Hipoteza 5d:** Belopolti športniki bodo prejeli večji delež komentarjev o inteligentnosti kot temnopolti tekmovalci.



- **Hipoteza 6:** Športni reporterji se zatekajo k subjektivnim opisom, ker verjamejo, da je gledalcem takšen pristop ljubši.
- **Hipoteza 7:** Športni reporterji menijo, da vse tekmovalce opisujejo nepristransko.

## 5 Metode

Analiza je zajela vzorec športnih prenosov, predvajanih na TV Slovenija v letih 2007 in 2008. Med njimi so bili prenosi kvalifikacijskih in finalnih sporedov poletnih olimpijskih iger v Pekingu v gimnastiki, plavanju in atletiki (skupaj 51 ur in 7 minut), rokometnih tekem Lige prvakinj (skupaj 8 ur in 45 minut), košarkarskih tekem Evrolige za moške (skupaj 11 ur in 43 minut) in nogometnih tekem državne Prve lige Telekom Slovenije za moške (skupaj 11 ur in 50 minut).

Avtor je najprej zapisal celotne tekste komentatorjev v analiziranih prenosih. Nato je za vsako izjavo ugotovil, na koga se nanaša, in njen spol, narodnost in rasno pripadnost. Slednjo je določil na podlagi lastne vizualne ocene. Kljub nenatančnosti takšnega pristopa (različne rasne skupine niso jasno razmejene niti medsebojno izključujoče) je to način, ki se ga za presojanje rasne pripadnosti poslužuje večina gledalcev in komentatorjev.

Nato je avtor kodiral vsako izjavo oziroma deskriptor skladno z modificirano taksonomijo, ki sta jo za preučevanje diskurzivnega okvirjanja spola, narodnostne in rasne pripadnosti razvila Billings in S. Eastman (2003). Ta deli deskriptorje v tri makroskupine: pripisovanje (ne)uspeha, orisi osebnosti in telesa ter nevtralni opisi. Pripisovanje (ne)uspeha se nadalje deli na 12 kategorij: koncentracija; moč/hitrost; nadarjenost/sposobnost; mirnost; predanost; pogum; izkušnost; vrednotenje preteklih dosežkov; inteligentnost; konsonanca; pričakovanja o izidu/dosežku; uporaba prepovedanih snovi (dopinga). Orisi osebnosti in telesa vključujejo kategorije družabnosti in ekstrovertiranosti; skromnosti in introvertiranosti; čustvenosti; privlačnosti; delov telesa. Nevtralni opisi so razdeljeni na dodatne opise in ozadja ter objektivne navedbe dejstev.

Dobljeni podatki so bili obdelani z osnovnimi postopki opisne statistike. Razlike med skupinami so bile ugotovljene s  $\chi^2$  analizo, pri kateri je bil pričakovani delež komentarjev o vsaki posamezni skupini v vsaki kategoriji enak skupnemu deležu komentarjev o tej skupini. Povezanost med istorodnimi kategorijami komentarjev v moški košarki in ženskem rokometu je bila ugotovljena s Pearsonovim koeficientom korelacije.

Po izvedeni analizi vsebine teksta ga je avtor še kritično analiziral (Carey 1988, Verschueren 2000, Vezovnik 2008). Za pridobitev dodatnih informacij in podatkov o pristopu in motivih komentatorjev je avtor opravil še šest polstrukturiranih intervjujev z reporterji in uredniki Športnega programa TV Slovenija.

## **6 Rezultati**

Vsebina analiziranih prenosov je bila namenoma izbrana tako, da bi ponudila čim večji razpon tekmovalcev. Interpretacija rezultatov je zato kompleksna. Podatki so najprej analizirani po posameznih panogah oziroma vsebinah. V drugem delu so opisane podobnosti in razlike med prenosi.

### **6.1 Prenosi olimpijskih iger 2008**

Na olimpijskih igrah v Pekingu je nastopilo 11.028 tekmovalcev. 62 med njimi je predstavljalo Slovenijo (0,56 % vseh udeležencev) in ti so osvojili pet medalj (0,52 % vseh). Med odličji je eno pripadlo atletu Primožu Kozmusu, eno pa plavalki Sari Isaković. V teh dveh športih in v gimnastičnem delu sporeda je sicer nastopilo skupno 3.291 tekmovalcev; 53.2 % je bilo moških in 46.8 % žensk.

Temu delu tekmovanja so štirje reporterji namenili skupno 21.961 deskriptorjev, ki so se nanašali na 1.856 posameznikov. Najpogosteje omenjeni športnik je bil dobitnik osmih zlatih medalj v plavalnih disciplinah Michael Phelps (529 omemb), za njim pa plavalka Sara Isaković z 233 omembami. Med desetimi najpogosteje omenjenimi tekmovalci se je znašel tudi Primož Kozmus, slovenski tekmovalci pa so zasedli osem mest med prvih 22 na tej lestvici. Prav toliko je bilo na tej lestvici žensk,

katerim je sicer pripadlo 42,4 % vseh deskriptorjev. 55,5 % teksta se je nanašalo na moške tekmovalce, dva odstotka pa sta bila nevtralna.

V tekstih komentatorjev so bili omenjeni tekmovalci iz 159 različnih držav. Najpogosteje so bili omenjeni tekmovalci ZDA (15,6 % vseh omemb), sledijo predstavniki Rusije (9,1 %), Slovenije (8,0 %) in Kitajske (6,9 %). Ostali narodi so prejeli manj kot pet odstotkov omemb. Visoke uvrstitve športnikov iz ZDA, Rusije in Kitajske se skladajo z visokim številom medalj, ki so jih osvojili. Slovenija je v tem smislu izjema in očitno pozitivno diskriminirana. Delež teksta o slovenskih tekmovalcih je sicer nižji od »indeksov nacionalizma«, ki jih je v svoji raziskavi opisal Real (1989), vendar pa če se ta delež normalizira glede na število omenjenih slovenskih tekmovalcev, bi ob enako številčni reprezentanci kot ZDA znašal 50 odstotkov. To pa je delež, ki se pojavlja v ameriških raziskavah prenosov iz olimpijskih iger, kjer se vsaka druga omemba nanaša na »domače« tekmovalce medijske hiše (Billings 2008).

Analiza vsebine tekstov je pokazala značilne razlike pri uporabi 14 kategorij deskriptorjev glede na narodnost tekmovalcev. Slovenskim tekmovalcem je bilo namenjenih več opisov glede nadarjenosti/spretnosti, čustvenosti in inteligentnosti ter manj opisov o velikosti, delih telesa, izkušenosti in preteklih dosežkih. Ameriški tekmovalci bili deležni večjega števila orisov njihovih športnih sposobnosti, ruski pa so bili pogosto omenjeni v kontekstu konsonance oziroma zanesljivosti njihovega nastopanja (npr. »Prenizko je bila Čičerova«). Kitajski tekmovalci so bili najizdatneje omenjani v gimnastičnih prenosih. Njihovi orisi so se najpogosteje nanašali na njihovo sposobnost koncentracije, nadarjenosti, mirnosti, privlačnosti in pričakovanja izidov.

Subjektivne oziroma presojevalne ocene so skupaj znašale 43,2 % komentatorjevih tekstov. Večina omemb (69,2 %) je bilo pozitivnih. Pozitivne omembe so bile praktično enakomerno porazdeljene tako med slovenske in tuje tekmovalce kot med športnicami in športniki. Športnicam je bilo sicer namenjenih več deskriptorjev o izkušenosti, doping, skromnosti/introvertiranosti, privlačnosti in delih telesa, pa tudi več nevtralnih opisov. Nasprotno so moški tekmovalci bili deležni večje pozornosti v smislu predanosti, izražanja tekmovalnih pričakovanj, ekstrovertiranosti in biografskih podatkov. Nekatere od teh ugotovitev se skladajo s tujimi raziskavami vsebin tekstov v športnih prenosih.

Razlike so se pojavile tudi v atribuciji komentarjev športnikom različnega rasnega porekla. Belopolti športniki so prejeli največ komentarjev o nadarjenosti/sposobnosti in čustvenosti ter najmanj komentarjev o preteklih dosežkih in pričakovani tekmovalni uspešnosti. Temnopolti so v teh štirih kategorijah dosegli diametralno nasprotno rezultate, poleg tega pa tudi značilno več komentarjev o njihovi moči oziroma hitrosti. Obenem so ti športniki prejeli tudi značilno več pozitivnih komentarjev v zvezi s pričakovanji pred nastopi ter v zvezi s konsonanco oziroma skladnostjo s pričakovanji. Ti podatki nakazujejo možnost, da so tudi v Sloveniji temnopolti implicitno prikazani kot »rojeni športniki«. Azijski tekmovalci so bili deležni največ komentarjev v zvezi s koncentracijo, nadarjenostjo, privlačnostjo in telesom/deli telesa. Takšne vrednosti so bile pridelane predvsem v gimnastičnih prenosih. Hispanski (južnoameriški) športniki ter tekmovalci iz Bližnjega vzhoda so bili tako redko zastopani, da njihovih rezultatov ni bilo smiselno posebej obdelovati.

Na nivoju diskurza je bilo v prenosih iz olimpijskih iger najdenih devet značilnih tem. Slovenski komentatorji so tako do slovenskih športnikov imeli poseben odnos: nazivali so jih kot »naše«, pogosto poudarjali njihovo kakovost in zanje tudi odkrito navijali. To je veljalo tudi za naturalizirano Marijo Šestak. Sami so se identificirali z njihovimi uspehi, ki so bili tudi prikazani kot uspeh za slovenski narod. Zanimivo, na zelo podoben način so prikazovali in doživljali tudi uspehe najboljših tujih tekmovalcev (npr. Michaela Phelpsa in Usaina Bolta).

Dodatne informacije o športnikih so najpogosteje vključevale »izmerljive« informacije, kot so narodnost (osrednja identifikacijska lastnost neslovenskih športnikov), telesna višina in pretekli rezultati. Osebne zgodbe tekmovalcev praktično niso bile omenjene. »Njihovi« (kot dialoško nasprotje »našim«) so bili občasno označeni za »eksote«, naturalizirani športniki pa kot »uvoženi«. Zanimivo je, da je med »atletsko eksotične« države bila uvrščena tudi Bosna in Hercegovina. V ospredju športnih prenosov je neprestano bil rezultatski vidik, kot so zmage, najhitrejši časi in rekordi. Športniki, ki niso zadostili temu kriteriju, so bili podcenjevani, včasih celo omalovaževani.

Razlike med prikazom spolov niso bile zelo izrazite. Tako v ženskih kot v moških tekmovanjih so bili primeri navajanja športnikov nasprotnega spola kot pozitivni zgled. Kljub temu so bili nekateri moški, ki so v atletskem delu olimpijskega sporeda dosegli slabše rezultate, podcenjujoče primerjani z ženskami. Nastopajoči obeh

spolov so bili včasih pozvani s pomanjševalnicami, kot so »dekleta« in »fantje«. Najbolj občutna razlika se je pojavila pri označevanju nekaterih tekmovalk kot seksualnih objektov, npr. »najbolj seksi« in »najbolj *Twiggy*« metalki kladiva. Avtor teh izjav je dejal, da se mu takšne izjave ne zdijo sporne, saj naj bi izpostavil ženski iz skupine tekmovalk, ki so sicer »bistveno manj atraktivne (...) kot neka skakalka v daljino, ki jo pogledaš in se ti porodijo tisoč in ena ideja«, saj »skozi neko prizmo neke obče estetike, to ni prav nekaj najlepšega« (Andrej Stare, osebna komunikacija, 3. junij 2010).

Neuravnoteženo ali stereotipno poročanje na podlagi rasnega porekla skorajda ni bilo prisotno. Nekaj posameznih spornih izjav se lahko pripiše omejenemu znanju oziroma neosveščenosti reporterja ali pa celo poskusom duhovičenja. Diskurzivna analiza tekstov tako ni potrdila možnosti, nakazane v analizi vsebine, da je poročanje pristransko tudi na podlagi barve polti športnikov.

Značilnost diskurza slovenskih športnih komentatorjev je pogosto izrekanje pričakovanj in navajanje favoritov. Predvidevanja o možnem rezultatu ter špekuliranje o favoritih za zmago je tvorilo osem odstotkov komentatorjevega teksta. Takšen diskurz je zaznamovan, saj usmerja pozornost občinstva na samo enega ali nekaj tekmovalcev. Vodi lahko k spregledanju potencialnih presenečenj ali sicer zanimivih zgodb, ob ponavljajočih se zgrešenih napovedih pa lahko zamaja trdnost reporterjeve avtoritete kot poznavalca športa, ki ga spremlja.

TV Slovenija je strokovnega komentatorja vključila samo pri prenosih iz gimnastike. Tekst je bil dokaj enakomerno porazdeljen med njim in reporterjem (razmerje 44 : 56), vendar pa je prvi izrekel več deskriptorjev v zvezi s koncentracijo, močjo/hitrostjo, skladnostjo nastopa in telesom. Njune izjave pa se bistveno razlikujejo po vsebini: medtem ko so bile ocene reporterja splošne, je strokovni komentator izražal natančnejše ocene, ki jih je tudi razložil oziroma utemeljil.

Izjave v zvezi s prepovedanimi poživili so bili v izključni domeni enega od komentatorjev. Njegovi orisi so bili pretežno negativni, ob tem pa je za tako zaznamovane športnike uporabljal skrajno negativne oznake, kot so »drogeraši« in »prevaranti«. Kljub temu je zanimivo, da med prenosi ni omenil niti enega pozitivnega dopinškega primera, ki bi se nanašal na slovenske tekmovalce.

## 6.2 Slovenski ekipe v mednarodnih klubskih tekmovanjih

Drugi del analize se je nanašal na prenose srečanj dveh slovenskih (pravzaprav: ljubljanskih) ekip v mednarodnih ligaških tekmovanjih, in sicer Uniona Olimpije iz Ljubljane v moški košarkarski Evroligi in Krima Mercatorja iz Ljubljane v ženski rokometni Ligi prvakinj.

Raziskava je zajela nekaj več košarkarskih posnetkov. V njih je bilo zabeleženih 12.411 deskriptorjev v 703 minutah prenosov, medtem ko je rokomet postregel z 7.664 deskriptorji v 525 minutah. Košarkarska komentatorja sta bila nekoliko bolj gostobesedna kot rokometna, saj sta v povprečju navedla 17,6 deskriptorjev v minuti prenosa (v rokometu je ta znašal 14,6).

V vsakem od teh prenosov je nastopila ljubljanska (košarkarska ali rokometna) ekipa proti tekmečem, ki so se izmenjavali. Največji delež teksta je bil v obeh športih posvečen športnicam in športnikom slovenske narodnosti (37,8 % v košarkarskih in 28,4 % v rokometnih prenosih). Po pogostosti omemb so sledili košarkarji ameriške (13,7 %) in litovske (7,6 %) narodnosti ter rokometnišice ruske (14,2 %) in madžarske (8,7 %) narodnosti. Ob tem je zanimivo, da Unia Olimpija sploh ni igrala proti nobeni ameriški ekipi (vendar so se ameriški košarkarji uvrstili na drugo mesto po številu omemb), Krim Mercator pa ni igral proti nobeni ekipi iz Madžarske. Ta podatek priča o naraščajoči globalnosti poklicnega športa, obenem pa sproža zanimiva identitetna protislovja, ko so npr. igralke madžarske narodnosti, ki nastopajo za Krim Mercator, označene za »Ljubljančanke«.

Večina omemb v obeh športih se je nanašala na belopolte športnike. V košarkarskih prenosih je bilo teh za 75,9 %, izjav o temnopoltih košarkarjih pa 24 %. V rokometu je bilo omemb belopolnih rokometnišic za 90,7 %, temnopolte rokometnišice so zbrale 3,7 % omemb, azijska rokometnišica Ljudmila Bodnjeva pa 5,6 % vseh izjav (ta rokometnišica ima rusko državljanstvo in je kalmiške narodnosti, »vizualno« pa je še predvsem zaradi epikantusa najbolj podobna Azijki).

V obeh športih sta bili ljubljanski ekipe predmet nekaj več kot polovice teksta (51,8 % v košarki in 53 % v rokometu). Nasprotno ekipe so zbrale približno tretjino vseh omemb (38,3 % v košarki in 32,5 % v rokometu), preostale izjave pa so se nanašale na vsebine, ki niso bile neposredno povezane z eno od nastopajočih ekip (npr. uvodni in zaključni pozdrav, čas, izid, sodniki; 9,9 % v košarki in 14,5 % v

rokometu). Čeprav sta rokomet in košarka ekipna športa, se je šest desetih komentarjev nanašalo na posamezne tekmovalce (61,2 % v košarki in 60,1 % v rokometu). Ekipe kot celota so zbrale četrtno vseh omemb (25,4 % v košarki in 22,1 % v rokometu), preostanek pa se je nanašal na sodnike, izid, igralni čas in ostale vsebine. Tudi v prenosih ekipnih športov so se komentatorji osredotočali na posameznike v njih. Takšen pristop ni univerzalen, saj mediji v nekaterih komunističnih režimih izpostavljajo vidik športne ekipe, komentarji o njihovih posameznih članih ter njihovih dejanjih pa so močno omejeni (Billings idr. 2009).

V prenosih obeh športov je bila večina deskriptorjev (skupaj 54,6 %) objektivnih opisov, 14,6 % pa je bilo dodatnih (npr. biografskih) informacij. Med temi je bilo največ omemb narodnosti tekmovalcev. 16,1 % deskriptorjev se je nanašalo na konsonanco oziroma skladnost športnikovih potez s pričakovanji. Preostalih 16 kategorij si je razdelilo prav tolikšen delež teksta; največ je bilo omemb preteklih dosežkov (4 %), presojevalnih izjav v zvezi z nadarjenostjo oziroma sposobnostjo pa je bilo za 2,4 %. Porazdelitev komentarjev po kategorijah je bila v prenosih obeh športov praktično enaka, saj je koeficient korelacije znašal  $r = 0.98$  (sig. = 0.000). Športa se torej nista razlikovala po vsebini komentatorjevih izjav. Razmerje 3 : 1 med objektivno in presojevalno vsebino je bilo že ugotovljeno v sicer redkih predhodnih raziskavah na to temo (Bryant, Comisky in Zillman 1977, Ličen in Doupona Topič 2008).

Pri presojevalnih izjavah je bilo skupno 70,1 % pozitivnih pripisov ter 29,9 % negativnih ocen in sodb. Ta delež je praktično enak deležu pozitivnega diskurza v olimpijskih prenosih. Ljubljanski ekipi in njihovi tekmeci so bili enako pogosto deležni pozitivnih oziroma negativnih pripisov.

Analizirane košarkarske in rokometne prenose na TV Slovenija so komentirali štiri različni reporterji – po dva v vsakem športu. Vsak od njih je tekmo spremljal sam. Pri večini prenosov iz Ljubljane so sodelovali tudi drugi člani Športnega programa televizije, in sicer kot »leteči« reporterji ob igrišču.

Tudi v teh športih je bil najočitnejši patriotski način okvirjanja prenosov. Ljubljanski ekipi sta bili pogosto, a nedosledno označevani kot »naši«. Manj pogosto sta bili ekipi oziroma njeni tekmovalci označeni glede na mestno poreklo: »Ljubljančanke«, »Ljubljančani«. Tekmeci so bili največkrat označeni glede na

njihovo nacionalno pripadnost: »Španke«, »danski Slagelse«. Klubske ekipe so torej dojele kot nadomestki za reprezentanco v obdobju, ko reprezentančnih tekmovanj ni na sporedu.

Identifikacija z ekipo je najmočnejši argument in smisel športnega udejstvovanja, kot ga vidijo športni komentatorji. Kakovost in sposobnost naroda in države sta bila v rokometnih prenosih implicitno prisotna skozi nazivanje ekipe z »naše prvakinje« in »naše šampionke«; takšen naziv je bil uporabljen 114-krat v šestih tekmah. Predvsem v rokometu so bili pogosti tudi drugi načini poudarjanja kakovosti ljubljanske ekipe oziroma igralk, ki nastopajo zanjo. Odkrito navijanje za ljubljanski ekipo je bilo torej prikazano kot samoumevno in predpostavljeno kot skupno vsem gledalcem. Mnenja novinarjev in urednikov glede takšnega načina nazivanja so nekoliko deljena: večina jih meni, da je povratni zaimek »naši« zgolj eden od možnih načinov nazivanja ekip, ki se ga uporablja kot popestritev oziroma v izogib pretiranemu ponavljanju. Nekdanji urednik Športnega programa TV Slovenija Igor Evgen Bergant meni, da je nazivanje ekip z »naši« sprejemljivo, z »mi« pa nedopustno (dejanski učinek na gledalčevo predstavo o sebi v svetu je sicer enak v obeh primerih); trenutni urednik Mile Jovanović pa se nagiba k mnenju, da ne bi smeli nazivati slovenskih ekip z »naši«.

Percepcija dogajanja je bila do določene mere manipulirana skozi navajanje trenutnega izida. Ta se je pogosteje navajal v oziru na ljubljanski ekipo (»Union Olimpija vodi/izgublja«). Včasih je bilo tudi televizijsko občinstvo vključeno v tekmo (»zaostajamo za 12«), včasih pa so bili samostalniki ali zaimki celo povsem opuščeni (»trije goli prednosti«).

Tudi v teh športih je bilo pogosto navajanje pričakovanj oziroma napovedi o poteku tekme. Te so v rokometu vedno napovedovale zmago Krima Mercatorja, medtem ko je v košarkarskih prenosih večkrat bila omenjena možnost poraza Uniona Olimpije. V slednjih primerih so bila ostala moštva prikazana kot zelo kakovostna, za ljubljansko ekipo pa so bile uvedene »alternativne« kategorije za oceno uspešnosti nastopa, kot so borbenost in prizadevnost. Ob koncu sezone so bili porazi Uniona Olimpije prikazani kot manj pomembni od dejstva, da je ekipa sploh obstala in zmogla nastopiti v tekmovanju.



Posebej v rokometnih prenosih se je v omembah sodnikov kazala uporaba semiotskega načela zamolka. Komentator je izražal nezadovoljstvo oziroma nestrinjanje z odločitvijo s samo omembo odločitve in brez konkretne navedbe, ali je po njegovi oceni bila odločitev pravilna ali ne. Na sodnike se je sicer nanašalo 1,8 % celotnega komentatorjevega teksta. Približno dve tretjini teh deskriptorjev je bilo nevtralnih oziroma objektivnih, pri presojevalnih omembah pa so za razliko od ostalih športnikov prevladovale negativne ocene.

Najpogostejša osebna oziroma biografska informacija je pri neslovenskih športnikih ponovno bila njihova narodnost. To je bila tudi edina dodatna informacija, ki so jo komentatorji obeh športov ponudili v zvezi s sodniki. Narodnost je občasno služila tudi označevanju temnopoltih športnikov, ki so bili nedvoumno označeni kot taki z nazivanjem »Senegalec« ali »po rodu Nigerijec, doma iz Lagosa«. Med ostalimi biografskimi informacijami so bile še navedba preteklih ekip, za katere so športniki igrali, njihova starost, rojstno mesto (samo v rokometu), in višina (samo v košarki).

V ženskih rokometnih prenosih je bilo omenjenih tudi nekaj moških – predvsem sodniki in trenerji. Nasprotno pa je bila v prenosih moške košarke samo enkrat omenjena ena ženska, in sicer kot gledalka. Rokometna liga prvakinj je občasno bila zmotno navedena kot »Liga prvakov«, vendar so se reporterji včasih sami popravili. V ženskih prenosih je bil delež pozitivnih orisov celo nekoliko večji kot v košarki. Diskurzivnih načinov omalovaževanja športnega udejstvovanja žensk ni bilo zaslediti. Edina lastnost je bila, da so bile ženske (pa tudi moški) dosledno orisane kot heteroseksualke (kljub vsaj enemu primeru trenerke, ki je odkriti homoseksualec<sup>b</sup>). Navedbe zakonskih stanov so se pojavile tudi v prenosih moške košarke.

Košarkarski komentator je dve epizodi nasilja deklarativno obsodil, vendar pa je ob tem prikazoval agresivne reakcije članov ljubljanske ekipe kot razumljive, saj naj bi bili provocirani. V obeh športih so bili grobi telesni stiki, zaradi katerih so igralke in igralci občasno pristali na tleh, razumljeni kot normalni del igre; ko so takšne kršitve storili predstavniki ljubljanskih ekip, so bili celo pohvaljeni zaradi »dobrih« dejanj. V športnem poročevalstvu je zelo prisoten vojaški žargon.

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<sup>b</sup> Ob tem velja omeniti, da je homoseksualec »kdor čuti spolno nagnjenje do oseb istega spola«. Čeprav je spol tega samostalnika moški, velja torej za moške in ženske (žensko obliko *homoseksualka* Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika ne navaja, za razliko od recimo *predsednik* in *predsednica*).

### 6.3 Prenosi državnega prvenstva v nogometu

Državno prvenstvo v nogometu za moške je bilo analizirano kot edino državno tekmovanje, katerega tekme so redno na sporedu na slovenski javni televiziji. Analizirani posnetki so skupaj trajali 11 ur in 50 sekund, v tem času pa so štirje različni reporterji izrekli 9.192 deskriptorjev.

V sedmih analiziranih tekmah je nastopilo pet različnih ekip (nekatero po večkrat). Med 153 posamezniki, o katerih so komentatorji spregovorili, je bilo 125 slovenskih in 28 neslovenskih državljanov. Vsi so bili belopolti, razen treh temnopoltih in dveh južnoameriških nogometašev.

Več kot dve tretjini teksta je bilo objektivnih opisov (54,2 %) oziroma navajanja dodatnih informacij o igralcih (14,7 %). Komentarji o konsonanci oziroma skladnosti so bili druga najštevilčnejša skupina in takšnih izjav je bilo 15,4 %, medtem ko je bilo navedb pričakovanj (tudi zaključkov posameznih akcij) za 2,9 % teksta.

Slovenskim nogometašem je bilo namenjenega 71,9 % teksta, tujim pa 28,1 %. Slednji so torej nekoliko nadpovprečno zastopani v tekstih slovenskih nogometnih tekm, kar je verjetno posledica njihove večje minutaže na igrišču. Komentatorji so sicer namenili tujim nogometašem nekoliko več izjav glede moči/hitrosti, nadarjenosti/sposobnosti in delih telesa, slovenskim športnikom pa več izjav o koncentraciji, izkušeni in konsonanci. Edina značilna razlika v atribuciji pozitivnih orisov je bila v kategoriji izkušeni, kjer so neslovenski nogometaši prejeli nekoliko več tovrstnih komentarjev. 59,5 % presojevalnih komentarjev je bilo pozitivnih.

Analiza pripisa posameznih vrst izjav nastopajočim ekipam je pokazala na nekaj razlik. Te je bilo možno povezati z igralsko uspešnostjo posameznih ekip oziroma z drugimi njihovimi lastnostmi, tako da zanje večinoma ni možno trditi, da bi izvirale iz pristranskih ali stereotipnih predstav o posameznikih ali ekipah.

Poročanje med nogometnimi prenosi je poseben televizijski žanr. Informacije, ki jih komentator posreduje pred tekmo, so razmeroma standardne; enako velja za vsebino in način poročanja med tekmo ter tudi za poročanje ob zadetkih. Kljub temu imajo posamezni reporterji različen osebni slog. Ta se kaže v različnem načinu podajanja informacij oziroma v poudarkih, ki jih pripisujejo posameznim vsebinam.

Ponovno je bila osrednja lastnost komentatorskega diskurza poudarjanje narodnosti kot osrednjega biografskega podatka o tujih posameznikih. Ta lastnost je bila najmanj enkrat omenjena pri 21 od 28 neslovenskih nogometašev, ki so bili v postavah ekip v analiziranih prenosih (trije od preostalih sedmih nogometašev sploh niso stopili na igrišče). Za primerjavo, starost je bila omenjena samo pri enajstih neslovenskih nogometaših, telesna višina pri petih, celo igralska oziroma trenerska zgodovina – torej navedba ekip, v katerih je posameznik nastopal pred prihodom v trenutni klub slovenskega državnega prvenstva – je bila omenjena samo pri 16 neslovenskih športnikih.

Občasno je bila narodnost uporabljena kot sopomenka oziroma nadomestna nanašalica za določenega športnika (npr. »28-letni Čeh« za Lubomira Kubico). Obenem je bila narodnost posebej poudarjena pri temnopoltih nogometaših. Narodnost je bila precej manj pogosto omenjena pri slovenskih nogometaših; pri teh je bilo včasih navedeno regionalno poreklo (npr. »mladi Prekmurec«).

Patriotizem in bolj pozitivno vrednotenje pripadnikov lastnega naroda se je odrazila celo pri ocenjevanju dela sodnikov. Sodniki v slovenskem nogometnem prvenstvu so namreč prejeli večji delež pozitivnih presojevalnih komentarjev kot pa tuji sodniki v prenosih najkakovostnejših evropskih rokometnih in košarkarskih ligah. Zanimivo je še, da so bili v nogometu negativni komentarji pogosteje pripisani vlogi (npr. »Tule napačna odločitev stranskega sodnika«), pozitivni pa *ad personam* (npr. »Dobra odločitev sodnika Huselje«).

## 7 Vrednotenje hipotez

Primerjava vsebine prenosov olimpijskih iger, mednarodnih tekmovanj in državnega prvenstva je pokazala, da obstajajo razlike v pogostosti navajanja vseh razen enega tipa komentarjev. Na vsebino tekstov sicer vplivajo sam šport, značilnosti tekmovanja, pa tudi osebni slog komentatorjev.

Od sedmih zastavljenih hipotez se jih je pet nanašalo na vsebinski vidik tekstov, dve pa na reporterjeve motive.

Prva predpostavka je bila, da delež subjektivnega oziroma presojevalnega komentarja v športnih prenosih na TV Slovenija ne bo presegel 27 odstotkov. Analiza je pokazala, da je ta delež dejansko znašal 35,1 odstotka, kar je statistično značilno več od predvidene vrednosti ( $\chi^2(1)=1725.848$ ; sig.<0.005). Hipoteza 1 je zato zavrnjena.

Druga domneva je izhajala iz ugotovitve, da je diskurz športnega komentatorstva v svojem bistvu patriotski. Reporterji na slovenski javni televiziji posvečajo slovenskim tekmovalcem nesorazmerno več pozornosti kot tujim športnikom. Predpostavka se je glasila, da bodo slovenski športniki tudi deležni večjega števila pozitivnih komentarjev kot njihovi tuji tekmeci. Izkazalo pa se je, da reporterji tako po posameznih športih kot v skupnem merilu podeljujejo slovenskim in tujim športnikom enak delež pozitivnih orisov. Hipoteza 2 je zato zavrnjena.

Hipoteza 3 se je glasila, da bo moškim tekmovalcem na olimpijskih igrah namenjenih več kot 53 odstotkov celotnega teksta. Tolikšen je namreč bil delež moških športnikov v atletskem, gimnastičnem in plavalnem delu tekmovanj skupaj. Izkazalo se je, da je bilo moškim namenjenih 56,7 odstotka besedila, ženskam pa 43,3 odstotka. Ta delež je statistično značilno večji od pričakovanega ( $\chi^2(1)=116.845$ ; sig.<0.005). Hipotezo 3 se zato potrди.

Četrta domneva se je nanašala na uravnoveženost poročanja glede na spol nastopajočih. Na podlagi dosedanjih raziskav, izvedenih v slovenskem in tujih jezikovnih prostorih, je bila oblikovana hipoteza, da bo moškim namenjeno več komentarjev na temo koncentracije, moči/hitrosti, nadarjenosti/sposobnosti, mirnosti, predanosti, poguma, izkušenosti, inteligentnosti, konsonance in odprtosti, medtem ko bodo ženske prikazane predvsem v smislu čustvenosti, privlačnosti, telesa in introvertiranosti.  $\chi^2$  analize so potrdile predpostavljene razlike v petih kategorijah. Prav tako v petih kategorijah ni bilo značilnih razlik med spoloma, v štirih kategorijah pa je bila razlika ravno obratna napovedani. Hipoteza 4 je tako zavrnjena.

Tuje raziskave pogosto izpostavljajo neuravnoveženo poročanje na podlagi rasnega porekla tekmovalcev. Poročanje, ki meji na ksenofobijo, je omenjeno tudi v nekaterih slovenskih raziskavah. Peta hipoteza je zato ugotavljala, ali obstajajo razlike pri pripisovanju posameznih lastnosti športnikom glede na njihovo barvo polti. Predpostavljeno je bilo, da bodo temnopolti deležni statistično značilno več komentarjev o moči/hitrosti, nadarjenosti/sposobnosti in pričakovanih izidih,

belopoliti pa o koncentraciji, mirnosti, predanosti in inteligentnosti. Za pravilni sta se izkazali samo domnevi o višjih deležih komentarjev o moči/hitrosti, in o pričakovanih izidih za temnopolte športnike. Hipoteze 5 zato ni mogoče potrditi.

Hipoteza 6 se je nanašala na motive komentatorjev za pristransko poročanje. Vključevala je namreč domnevo, da se komentatorji poslužujejo pristranskih oziroma navijaških opisov, ker si tega želijo gledalci. Predpostavka je bila preverjena s polstrukturiranimi intervjuji s tremi športnimi reporterji in tremi športnimi uredniki s TV Slovenija. Med njimi jih je pet potrdilo domnevo, da menijo, da si gledalci želijo pristranskih in navijaških opisov. Hipoteza 6 je zato potrjena.

Sedma hipoteza pa je (v primerjavi s šesto nekoliko protislovno) domnevala, da reporterji menijo, da so pri svojem delu objektivni in da je njihov diskurz uravnotežen. Tej oceni (in nujnosti objektivnega in uravnoteženega poročanja) je pritrnilo vseh šest vprašanih. Zato je tudi hipoteza 7 potrjena.

## **8 Znanstvena vrednost dela**

Mnogi medijski delavci in raziskovalci gledajo nekoliko podcenjujoče na športne vsebine v medijih. Te praviloma res niso »resne« oziroma so namenjene predvsem razvedrilu in zabavi, vendar pa imajo prav takšen vpliv na posameznikova stališča, identiteto in dožemanje sveta kot ostale vsebine in oddaje na televiziji.

Ta raziskava je prva, ki se je celovito lotila analize diskurza in vsebin športnih prenosov na slovenski javni televiziji. Kot takšna omogoča določene posplošitve njenih spoznanj, pa tudi povezavo z obstoječimi teorijami delovanja in vplivanja medijev.

Mediji pomembno vplivajo na oblikovanje posameznikove identitete. Ena najočitnejših značilnosti športnih prenosov na slovenski javni televiziji je bilo označevanje slovenskih športnikov kot »naše«. Reporterji na ta način ustvarjajo namišljeno skupino, s katero naj se identificirajo tudi gledalci. Nacionalnost je bila celo poudarjena in prikazana izrazito pozitivno. Navijanje za »naše«, tj. slovenske ekipe je bilo samoumevno, uspehi v teh nastopih pa so bili okvirjeni kot skupni uspeh in vir ponosa za gledalce. Dihotomija »naši : njihovi« se je odrazila tudi v

mednarodnih klubskih tekmovanjih poklicnih ekip, ki so dejansko okvirjena na enak način kot tekmovanja državnih reprezentanc.

Nacionalnost je bila izražena tako s poudarjanjem notranje kohezije pripadnikov skupine (naroda) kot z izpostavljanjem razlik v primerjavi z ne-člani. Mnogi narodi in/ali njihovi pripadniki so bili označeni za »eksote«; med njimi so prednjačili narodi zunaj Evrope, Severne Amerike in Avstralije. Ta »zahodni svet« je bil tudi nekakšen referenčni okvir za Slovenijo in slovenske tekmovalce. Ta skupnost je bila postavljena naproti ostalim bivšim jugoslovanskim republikam. To zgodovinsko in športno okolje se je skozi diskurz implicitno prikazovalo kot skupno, vendar pa je bila Slovenija eksplicitno ločena od Balkana oziroma Balkanskih iger, Bosna in Hercegovina pa je bila celo prišteta k »atletsko eksotičnim« državam. Skupna športna tradicija se je odražala tudi v prenosih državnega prvenstva v nogometu, vendar so bili v teh vsi državljani ostalih nekdanjih jugoslovanskih republik omenjeni kot tujci.

Kljub omembam skupne zgodovine je v športnih prenosih na slovenski javni televiziji torej očitno poudarjanje samostojnosti in suverenosti Slovenije. Skozi prenose se gradi tudi podoba države v mednarodni športni in družbeni skupnosti. »Slovenski šport« se povezuje z zahodnim svetom, poudarjajo se razlike z domnevno podrazvitimi državami. Omembe bivšega skupnega jugoslovanskega športnega prostora nadomešča izključno slovenska narativa. Nekoliko presenetljivo diskurz športnega reporterstva (še) ne kaže znakov zaznamovanja skupne evropske identitete.

Športni reporterji so med prenosi pogosto kazali znake mehanizmov tolmačenja dogodkov, ki so značilni za športne navijače. Med tekmovanji so se identificirali s »svojo« ekipo (prim. Wann 2006a). To je vodilo k značilnim navijaškimi potezami, kot so vraževerje in napol resni poskusi vplivanja na izid tekme (Eastman in Riggs 1994, St. John 2004). Reporterji so se tudi poslužili najznačilnejših tehnik zaščite in izboljšanja lastne socialne podobe, ki so običajne za navijače: »kitenje s tujim perjem« (*Basking in Reflected Glory*), »zaničevanje« (*Blasting*), »distanciranje od neuspeha« (*Cutting Off Reflected Failure*) in »distanciranje od morebitnega neuspeha« (*Cutting Off Future Failure*).

Reporterji so torej ustrezali profilu navijača in manj profilu novinarja (za katere se sicer praviloma izrekajo) oziroma medijskega odbiratelja. Večina njihovih izjav je

sicer res objektivnih, vendar pa je presojevalni del podvržen predvsem pristranskim percepcijam in manj strokovnemu znanju. Pri ocenjevanju jih ženejo pristranski, osebni interesi, med katerimi je izboljšanje svoje socialne podobe. Nacionalizem in gonja po uspehu sta prikazana kot najpomembnejši komponenti poklicnega športnega udejstvovanja. To se odraža v okvirjanju sporočil tako, da sporočajo uspeh »naših« tekmovalcev. Sem med ostalim sodijo načini sporočanja trenutnega izida in poudarjanje pozitivnih vidikov nastopa.

Estetska vrednost teksta v športnih prenosih je nizka. Večkrat so vključene nepreverjene govorice. Humor je na nizki ravni in vsebuje namige na telo oziroma seksualnost. Športni prenosi torej po Gansu (1974) sodijo v domeno kulture nižjega razreda, pri katerih je poudarek na jasni in razumljivi vsebini uživaškega značaja, namenjena fizičnim delavcem z nizko stopnjo izobrazbe.

Šport torej na slovenski javni televiziji ni obravnavan kot potencialni način obveščanja in vzgajanja gledalcev, kar naj bi sicer bilo poslanstvo javne radiotelevizije, niti osveščanju o svetu in dogajanju v njem (Real 1989, Billings 2008). Izkrivljene reprezentacije so sprejemljive in normalne. Športni prenosi v Sloveniji ne služijo promociji različnosti in socialnega vključevanja.

Tudi šport prispeva h kultivaciji gledalčeve predstave o družbi. TV Slovenija ponuja razmeroma celovito sliko globalne skupnosti: v prenosih iz olimpijskih iger je bilo omenjenih več kot 150 držav. Vendar pa si je približno tretjina držav prislužila manj kot šest omemb, nekaj deset pa jih je bilo označenih za »eksotične«.

Šport na TV Slovenija kultivira predvsem kult zmage. Večina pozornosti je namenjena dobitnikom medalj in jih tako dela za nekakšen »večinski srednji sloj«, ki je sicer značilen za ostale televizijske vsebine (Gerbner 1990 v Miller 2005). Reporterji pogosto prikrojijo razumevanje pravil v korist ekipe, za katero navijajo.

Nastopi na največjih športnih dogodkih (npr. olimpijske igre, svetovno prvenstvo v nogometu) se pogosto omenjajo kot izvrsten način promocije države in njenega naroda, družbe, gospodarstva in turizma v tujini. Če se za trenutek privzame zunanje stališče do vsebin na slovenski televiziji pa postane jasno, da šport v resnici sporoča izredno malo informacij o tujih državah in kulturah. Večina tovrstnih »dodatnih« informacij se tako ali tako spet nanaša na svet športa. Olimpijske igre kot dogodek, ki omogočajo prikaz dobesedno več sto družb in več tisoč osebnih zgodb, so

omejene na nekaj osnovnih informacij o malem številu tekmovalcev. V prenosih mednarodnih tekmovanj v ekipnih športih pride še najbolj do izraza promocija gospodarstva tistih držav skozi navajanje imen nazivnih pokroviteljev nastopajočih ekip. Dejanska informativna vrednost športnih prenosov v smislu posredovanja znanja in informacij o družbi je praktično nična, delna izjema je le država, ki takšna velika športna tekmovanja gosti.

Stereotipni opisi v športnih prenosih so redki. Med njimi sodijo opisi kitajskih tekmovalcev kot (socialistično) discipliniranih, nadarjenih in zelo skoncentriranih med nastopi. Pri primerjavi prikazov spolov so bili moški nekoliko pogosteje prikazani v smislu predanosti in ekstrovertiranosti, ženske pa kot skromne in elegantne. Kljub temu je bilo dejanskega stereotipiziranja malo; več je bilo pristranskega oziroma neuravnoveženega poročanja v korist preferiranih posameznikov oziroma ekip. Tudi v ekipnih športih so prevladovali opisi posameznikov.

V športnih prenosih na slovenski javni televiziji sta bila zaznavna predvsem vsebinska in odločevalska pristranskost (Entman 2007). Pojav teh v medijskih tekstih sta problematična. Izmenično prevzemanje vloge (objektivnega) novinarja in (navijaškega) komentatorja je neustrezno, vendar razmeroma pogosto tudi v drugih državah Jugovzhodne Evrope. Očitni so odmiki od vloge javne televizije, pa tudi neskladje reporterjevih ravnanj s poklicnimi merili.

Športne prenose bi lahko označili za hibridni, psevdoinformativni žanr. K tovrstnim vsebinam (npr. tabloidi, nekatere informativne oddaje) jih vežejo neutemeljeno sklicevanje na objektivnost in profesionalnost. Naloga prikazuje deleže različnih vsebin v športnih prenosih na slovenski javni televiziji.

Doktorska disertacija prinaša tudi dopolnitev taksonomije Billingsa in S. Eastman (2003) za analizo športnih tekstov. Ta bo uporabna predvsem za analizo športnih vsebin v drugih postsocialističnih in posttranzicijskih državah.

Izsledki raziskave so pomembni tudi za slovenski medijski in predvsem televizijski prostor. Ponudba televizijskih športnih programov je v zadnjih letih močno narasla in v sporedih so se pojavile vsebine, ki se na slovenskih televizijskih postajah doslej niso prikazovale. Raziskava zato predstavlja izhodišča za nadaljnje študije športa na televiziji. Prakse v športnem novinarstvu se najpogosteje prikazujejo



kot samoumevne in enake po vsem svetu, kar je zmotno. Marsikateri odkloni od novinarske norme so značilni tudi ali celo zgolj samo za slovenske novinarje, urednike in medijske hiše, ne pa mednarodno uveljavljena praksa.



## **Appendix A: Details of the broadcasts**

The following is a specification of some characteristics of the broadcasts we analyzed for this dissertation. The broadcasts are grouped according to sports.

All broadcasts were aired on TV Slovenija 2. Most of them were aired live; some were either re-runs or extended summaries. The airing dates of all events/recordings are included. Due to the overwhelming amount of data, it was not possible to note the exact airing times of each broadcast. Running times are rounded up/down to the nearest whole minute. The listed total running times are “net,” that is, free of commercial and half-time breaks.

In team sports, the home teams are listed first. Countries of origin of non-Slovenian teams are listed in brackets. Final scores are also provided.

All lists indicate the names and roles of network-employed individuals whose discourse has been analyzed. Table A1 below summarizes the various roles these individuals played within each broadcast.

***Table A1*** Roles and abbreviations of network-employed individuals

Abbrev.	Role
CR	Court-side reporter
PP	Play-by-play commentator
TA	Technical analyst

### **Olympic broadcasts**

Analyzed broadcasts include all 2008 Beijing Olympics athletics (track and field), gymnastics and swimming broadcasts we could record. Some emissions were not recorded due to last-minute scheduling changes or technical difficulties with the recording equipment.

**Table A2 List of Olympic broadcasts analyzed**

Event	Aired on	Total running time	Network personnel
Swimming	August 9, 2008	94 mins	Jolanda Bertole (PP)
Swimming	August 10a, 2008	21 mins	Jolanda Bertole (PP)
Swimming	August 10b, 2008	10 mins	Jolanda Bertole (PP)
Swimming	August 11a, 2008	36 mins	Jolanda Bertole (PP)
Swimming	August 11b, 2008	54 mins	Jolanda Bertole (PP)
Swimming	August 11c, 2008	117 mins	Jolanda Bertole (PP)
Gymnastics	August 12, 2008	154 mins	Peter Kavčič (PP), Ivan Čuk (TA)
Swimming	August 12a, 2008	22 mins	Jolanda Bertole (PP)
Swimming	August 12b, 2008	96 mins	Jolanda Bertole (PP)
Swimming	August 12c, 2008	108 mins	Jolanda Bertole (PP)
Swimming	August 13, 2008	92 mins	Jolanda Bertole (PP)
Gymnastics	August 13a, 2008	36 mins	Peter Kavčič (PP), Ivan Čuk (TA)
Gymnastics	August 13b, 2008	78 mins	Peter Kavčič (PP), Ivan Čuk (TA)
Gymnastics	August 14, 2008	159 mins	Peter Kavčič (PP), Ivan Čuk (TA)
Swimming	August 14a, 2008	67 mins	Jolanda Bertole (PP)
Swimming	August 14b, 2008	125 mins	Jolanda Bertole (PP)
Athletics	August 15a, 2008	50 mins	Andrej Stare (PP)
Athletics	August 15b, 2008	111 mins	Andrej Stare (PP)
Swimming	August 15a, 2008	94 mins	Jolanda Bertole (PP)
Swimming	August 15b, 2008	3 mins	Jolanda Bertole (PP)
Athletics	August 16, 2008	173 mins	Andrej Stare (PP)
Athletics (race walk + stadium events)	August 16, 2008	121 mins	Peter Kavčič, Andrej Stare (both PP)
Swimming	August 16, 2008	82 mins	Jolanda Bertole (PP)
Athletics (marathon)	August 17a, 2008	34 mins	Peter Kavčič (PP)
Athletics	August 17b, 2008	222 mins	Andrej Stare (PP)
Swimming	August 17, 2008	90 mins	Jolanda Bertole (PP)
Athletics	August 18a, 2008	20 mins	Andrej Stare (PP)
Athletics	August 18b, 2008	10 mins	Andrej Stare (PP)
Athletics	August 18c, 2008	119 mins	Andrej Stare (PP)
Athletics	August 20a, 2008	112 mins	Andrej Stare (PP)
Athletics	August 20b, 2008	22 mins	Andrej Stare (PP)
Athletics (race walk)	August 21a, 2008	62 mins	Peter Kavčič (PP)
Athletics	August 21b, 2008	161 mins	Andrej Stare (PP)
Athletics (race walk)	August 22a, 2008	60 mins	Peter Kavčič (PP)
Athletics	August 22b, 2008	153 mins	Andrej Stare (PP)
Athletics	August 23, 2008	99 mins	Andrej Stare (PP)

## Basketball broadcasts

Analyzed basketball broadcasts include seven Euroleague [for Men] encounters played by Union Olimpija Ljubljana (short: Union Olimpija) in the 2007/08 campaign. After that season, transnational sports network Sportklub acquired the electronic media rights for this competition.

**Table A3** List of basketball broadcasts analyzed

Game	Aired on	Total running time	Final score	Sportscaster(s)
Union Olimpija vs. CSKA Moscow (RUS)	November 7, 2007	122 mins	74-72	Miha Žibrat (PP), Mateja Janežič Hemler (CR)
Žalgiris Kaunas (LTU) vs. Union Olimpija	November 15, 2007	98 mins	91-72	Peter Vilfan (PP)
Union Olimpija vs. Montepaschi Siena (ITA)	December 13, 2007	103 mins	80-86	Miha Žibrat (PP), Luka Šefic (CR)
CSKA Moscow (RUS) vs. Union Olimpija	January 2, 2008	75 mins*	74-57	Miha Žibrat (PP)
Union Olimpija vs. Žalgiris Kaunas (LTU)	January 10, 2008	105 mins	74-83	Peter Vilfan (PP)
Union Olimpija vs. Virtus Bologna (ITA)	January 24, 2008	102 mins	75-60	Miha Žibrat (PP), Luka Šefic (CR)
Prokom Trefl (POL) vs. Union Olimpija	January 30, 2008	98 mins	79-68	Peter Vilfan (PP)

Note: TV Slovenija started airing the CSKA Moscow vs. Union Olimpija game approximately halfway into the first quarter of the encounter.

## Team handball broadcasts

Analyzed team handball broadcasts include six European Handball Federation (EHF) Champions League for Women encounters played by Krim Mercator Ljubljana (short: Krim) in the 2006/07 campaign. After that season, the commercial network TV3 acquired the electronic media rights for this competition for a license period of five years (TV3 sublicensed the electronic media rights for the 2009/10 season and the remaining two seasons of the five-year license agreement to TV Slovenija).

**Table A4 List of team handball broadcasts analyzed**

Game	Aired on	Total running time	Final score	Sportscaster(s)
Ribarroja (ESP) vs. Krim	January 20, 2007	66 mins	31-33	Tomaž Kovšca (PP)
Dinamo Volgograd (RUS) vs. Krim	February 10, 2007	82 mins	29-34	Ivo Milovanović (PP)
Krim vs. Aalborg (DEN)	February 17, 2007	97 mins	30-26	Ivo Milovanović (PP), Bojana Knez (CR)
Krim vs. Ribarroja (ESP)	February 24, 2007	86 mins	34-28	Ivo Milovanović (PP), Bojana Knez (CR)
Slagelse (DEN) vs. Krim	March 18, 2007	87 mins	30-23	Ivo Milovanović (PP)
Krim vs. Slagelse (DEN)	March 24, 2007	107 mins	28-26	Tomaž Kovšca (PP), Bojana Knez (CR), Boštjan Ogris (CR)

### Soccer broadcasts

Analyzed soccer broadcasts include seven “Prva Liga Telekom Slovenije” national soccer league games aired on TV Slovenija in May, September and October 2007.

**Table A5 List of soccer broadcasts analyzed**

Game	Aired on	Total running time	Final score	Sportscaster
Maribor vs. Domžale	May 2, 2007	105 mins	2-0	Igor Evgen Bergant (PP)
Hit Gorica vs. Maribor	May 5, 2007	105 mins	4-1	Peter Kavčič (PP)
Primorje Ajdovščina vs. Domžale	May 13, 2007	103 mins	0-4	Peter Kavčič (PP)
Maribor vs. Primorje Ajdovščina	May 16, 2007	71 mins*	1-1	Igor Evgen Bergant (PP)
Domžale vs. Maribor	August 18, 2007	106 mins	4-0	Ivo Milovanović (PP)
Domžale vs. Hit Gorica	September 26, 2007	113 mins	2-3	Urban Laurenčič (PP)
Maribor vs. Koper	October 3, 2007	107 mins	3-3	Urban Laurenčič (PP)

Note: The final part of the broadcast could not be analyzed due to technical difficulties.

## Qualitative interviews

To gain insights from television practitioners, we conducted semi-structured interviews with the following six members of TV Slovenija's sports section. The interviews typically lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. We added their current (and, where relevant, past) job descriptions within the network to highlight the insights they bring to the picture.

- Mr. **Igor Evgen Bergant**, sports journalist, host and broadcaster at TV Slovenija, former Head of Sports (from 2002 until 2007). We interviewed him on January 21, 2010.
- Ms. **Jolanda Bertole**, journalist and broadcaster at TV Slovenija. We interviewed her on February 2 and June 4, 2010.
- Mr. **Mile Jovanović**, Head of Sports at TV Slovenija since 2007, also host and broadcaster. We interviewed him on May 19, 2010, and had further e-mail communication on October 3, 2010.
- Mr. **Marjan Lah**, former Head of Sports at TV Slovenija between 1982 and 2002, later Executive Producer at Athens Olympic Broadcasting, Torino Olympic Broadcasting, Vancouver Olympic Broadcasting. We interviewed him on January 27, 2010, and had further e-mail communication on January 29 and October 5, 2010.
- Mr. **Andrej Stare**, part-time commentator at TV Slovenija. We interviewed him on June 3, 2010.
- Mr. **Miha Žibrat**, sports journalist, broadcaster and network coordinator of several Olympic Games at TV Slovenija, former President of the Association of Sports Journalists of Slovenia ("Društvo športnih novinarjev Slovenije") from 2002 until 2010. We interviewed him on January 25, 2010.

We approached all semi-structured interviews with a pre-organized list of questions regarding sports journalism and broadcasting in general. From there, we developed the interview depending on an interviewee's answers, role within the network, individual issues and quotes we came upon during our analysis, etc.

The following set of questions was used:

- Do you find objectivity in sports journalism possible?
- Do you find objectivity in sports journalism necessary?
- Do you find impartiality or neutrality in sports journalism possible?
- Do you find impartiality or neutrality in sports journalism necessary?
- What are the differences in the approach to sports broadcasting between TV Slovenija as a public service broadcaster and commercial (sports) networks?
- Do you abide by the journalistic code of ethics? Do you think the code (published by the Society of Journalists of Slovenia) applies to sports journalists?
- Do you think it would be necessary to prepare a code of ethics for sports journalists (perhaps within the Association of Sports Journalists of Slovenia)?
- Why do sports broadcasters refer to Slovenian athletes as “ours?” As a comparison, why do journalists in other fields not refer to, for instance, Prime Minister Borut Pahor as “our Prime Minister?”
- Do you take it into account that the audience of TV Slovenija’s sports programs includes foreigners, as well as people who enjoy watching sports for the sake of the game itself and do not necessarily cheer for Slovenian teams or competitors?
- Are bias and cheering acceptable features of sports broadcasting? Why?
- Why are bias and cheering acceptable in reporting about sports, but are not acceptable in reporting about politics or the economy?
- Do you think professional sports is also an economic category/industry?
- Do you find it insulting to describe some competitors as “exotics?” Do you regard such terminology as a missed opportunity to inform and educate viewers?
- Does TV Slovenija have any guidelines or editorial policies regarding commenting on sports broadcasts?



## Appendix B: Original quotations

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### 7 Methods

#### *Metode*

- <sup>1</sup> Pred vsakim skokom si je vzela nekaj časa za koncentracijo (gym, Aug 13).
- <sup>2</sup> Še eno močno rusko orožje (ath, Aug 22).
- <sup>3</sup> Izjemno talentiran, nadarjen tekač čez ovire (ath, Aug 20).
- <sup>4</sup> Mislim, da Tirunesh Dibaba ne bo dovolila, da bi jo tekmice ogrožale v finišu (ath, Aug 15).
- <sup>5</sup> Poskusila bo narediti vse, da bo [sic] prišla do tega odličja (sw, Aug 15).
- <sup>6</sup> Lahko rečemo, ena izmed junakinj tega maratona (ath, Aug 15).
- <sup>7</sup> Lesourd je mlad tekmovalec, star komaj 20 let (ath, Aug 23).
- <sup>8</sup> Shawn Crawford letos 19,86, drugi rezultat sezone na svetu (ath, Aug 20).
- <sup>9</sup> Sara se je pametno odločila (sw, Aug 13).
- <sup>10</sup> Prvak je postal, verjeli ali ne, Surinamec Anthony Nesty (sw, Aug 16).
- <sup>11</sup> To pa je že eden od kandidatov za zelo visoko uvrstitev danes (ath, Aug 16).
- <sup>12</sup> Obe so pred igrami ujeli pri jemanju nedovoljenih poživil (ath, Aug 23).
- <sup>13</sup> Z Ryanom Lochtejem se šalita (sw, Aug 10).
- <sup>14</sup> Danes nekega silnega veselja pri tej tekmovalki še nismo videli (gym, Aug 15).
- <sup>15</sup> Razočaranje je še bolj očitno (gym, Aug 9).
- <sup>16</sup> Coventryjevo in Zujevo pa se spleča pogledati (sw, Aug 16).
- <sup>17</sup> Tule Bernard, tista široka ramena povedo vse (sw, Aug 13).
- <sup>18</sup> Hanae Ito ima 23 let, druga japonska predstavnica (sw, Aug 11).
- <sup>19</sup> ZDA prva [sic], Rusija druga in Jamajka tretja (ath, Aug 23).

### 8 Results and discussion: 2008 Olympic Games telecasts

#### *Rezultati in razprava: prenosi olimpijskih iger 2008*

- <sup>20</sup> Odličen dosežek Marije Abakumove (ath, Aug 21).
- <sup>21</sup> Brez težav seveda Rybakov (ath, Aug 17).
- <sup>22</sup> Prvi favorit (multiple times)
- <sup>23</sup> Favoritov je kar precej: Taher, Kipruto, Tarhi in Hachlaf so favorizirani (ath, Aug 16).

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- <sup>24</sup> Mislim, da bo Čavić zmagovalec (sw, Aug 14).
- <sup>25</sup> Po številu medalj na vrhu Združene države (sw, Aug 16).
- <sup>26</sup> Zadovoljen otroški obraz (gym, Aug 13).
- <sup>27</sup> Gre za peresno lahko dekle, kajti tehta samo 30 kilogramov (gym, Aug 18).
- <sup>28</sup> Naš študent na Berkeleyu (sw, Aug 10). Op.: Berkeley je univerza v ameriški zvezni državi Kalifornija.
- <sup>29</sup> Naš Damir (sw, Aug 10).
- <sup>30</sup> ... prvina Pegan po našem asu (gym, Aug 9).
- <sup>31</sup> Naš rekorder Matic Osovnikar (ath, Aug 15).
- <sup>32</sup> Naša šampionka (ath, Aug 15).
- <sup>33</sup> Naš up za medaljo v atletiki (ath, Aug 15).
- <sup>34</sup> Naša šampionka (ath, Aug 15).
- <sup>35</sup> Ali bo Marija Šestak torej nova junakinja v ženski reprezentanci? (ath, Aug 17).
- <sup>36</sup> Slovenci seveda z balkanskimi igrami od leta '91 nimamo več ničesar skupnega (ath, Aug 20).
- <sup>37</sup> Verjetno je [napovedovalec v dvorani] dodal tudi, da je to svetovni prvak na bradlji, in požel manjši aplavz (gym, Aug 9).
- <sup>38</sup> Kot vidite, jo tudi kamerman [sic] kaže več, v središču pozornosti seveda, kot tista z najhitrejšim časom v polfinalu (sw, Aug 13).
- <sup>39</sup> Zdaj pa naj se vsuje plaz (sw, Aug 13).
- <sup>40</sup> Mislim, da se [...] tam bori za prvo mesto (sw, Aug 10).
- <sup>41</sup> Ki jo bomo seveda [zlato medaljo] proslavljali vsi na svoj način... (ath, Aug 17).
- <sup>42</sup> Upamo, da je to tudi spodbuda kakšnemu slovenskemu plavalcu, da bo še bolj trdno delal, treniral, da bo nekoč, morda že v [sic] olimpijskih igrah v Londonu čez štiri leta, doživljal takšne trenutke, kot jih tukaj plavalci (sw, Aug 11).
- <sup>43</sup> Nočem biti škodoželjen, toda danes seveda navijam, sam in tudi cela Slovenija, za Primoža Kozmusa (ath, Aug 17).
- <sup>44</sup> Stisnimo torej pesti za Kranjčanko (ath, Aug 15).
- <sup>45</sup> Jutri bo za nas dan D, jutri bomo stisnili pesti za našega junaka Mitjo Petkovška (gym, Aug 18).
- <sup>46</sup> Sedaj seveda se bomo vsi skupaj malo potresli [sic]; tisti, ki lahko stopicate, stopicajte; jaz ne morem na svojem komentatorskem mestu, vendar sem napet kot struna na kitari (ath, Aug 17).
- <sup>47</sup> Imamo medaljo! (ath, Aug 17)
- <sup>48</sup> Najmanj srebrna medalja je naša! (ath, Aug 17)
- <sup>49</sup> Imamo srebrno kolajno, bravo Sara! (sw, Aug 13)
- <sup>50</sup> (...) smo doživeli prvo plavalno kolajno v zgodovini (sw, Aug 13).

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<sup>51</sup> Trideset let prenašam atletiko, tudi moje želje so bile, lahko rečem, nekako usmerjene k temu, da bi bila nekoč slovenska atletika na samem svetovnem in olimpijskem vrhu (ath, Aug 17).

<sup>52</sup> Tudi zame je to vrhunec moje reporterske kariere (ath, Aug 17).

<sup>53</sup> Kar ne gre [sic] mi Sara Isaković in njena srebrna kolajna iz glave (sw, Aug 14).

<sup>54</sup> V naslednji minuti, po metu Vadima Devyatovskega, bom lahko tudi jaz zavreščal tako kot japonski kolega... Če bo krik morda nepričakovan za naše televizijske razmere, mi že kar vnaprej oprostite (ath, Aug 17).

<sup>55</sup> Vrešči, kot da bi ga rezali pri živem telesu z britvico ob izmetu Murofushija... (ath, Aug 17)

<sup>56</sup> Zlata medalja za Slovenijo! (ath, Aug 17)

<sup>57</sup> Takrat bomo vsi skupaj zapeli našo Zdravljico (ath, Aug 17).

<sup>58</sup> (...) našo ljubljeno Zdravljico (ath, Aug 17).

<sup>59</sup> Velik trenutek za slovenski šport, za slovensko plavanje predvsem (sw, Aug 13).

<sup>60</sup> Z velikim veseljem bomo seveda spremljali tole podelitev, prve slovenske olimpijske plavalne kolajne (sw, Aug 13).

<sup>61</sup> To, da so plavalci končali s tekmovanjem v bazenu in da se je Phelps z osmimi zlatimi olimpijskimi kolajnami vpisal v zgodovino, je za Slovence obrobnega pomena (sw, Aug 17).

<sup>62</sup> Imeli smo jo [Cheng Fei] čast gledati tudi v Mariboru v preteklem letu (gym, Aug 13).

<sup>63</sup> Anastasia Zuyeva, letos evropska prvakinja (...) bila je na pripravah v Kopru, želela se je dobro pripraviti. (...) Zuyeva, pripravljala se je letos pri nas v Kopru (sw, Aug 11).

<sup>64</sup> Slovenska disciplina (sw, Aug 11).

<sup>65</sup> Plavalni superstar (sw, Aug 10).

<sup>66</sup> O njem bi lahko govorili celotne olimpijske igre (sw, Aug 10).

<sup>67</sup> Tule največje ime, ne samo plavalnega dela, pač pa tudi celih iger (sw, Aug 17).

<sup>68</sup> Škoda, da ni bilo še malce hitreje, da bi videli še svetovni rekord, kajti potem bi bil tale dosežek še veliko večji (sw, Aug 16).

<sup>69</sup> Korak do športne večnost, do največjega športnega dosežka, kar jih je videl ta svet (sw, Aug 17).

<sup>70</sup> ... dosežek, ki ga morda ne bomo videli ne samo v stotih, ampak celo v tisočih letih (sw, Aug 14).

<sup>71</sup> V središču pozornosti (sw, Aug 13).

<sup>72</sup> Letos kar nekako ruši rekord za rekordom (sw, Aug 13).

<sup>73</sup> Seveda Sara najbolj nasmejana (sw, Aug 13).

<sup>74</sup> Ko vprašamo ljudi, pravijo vsi, pridna, delovna, simpatična, prijazna, prisrčna, vedno nasmejana, komunikativna, pozitivna, prizadevna, dosanjala [sic] je svoje sanje, torej sami superlativi o tej mladi plavalki (sw, Aug 13).

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- 75 Zdaj je dobila Hoffova pravo lekcijo (sw, Aug 13).
- 76 Tista, ki je dejala, da ne pozna Sare Isaković (sw, Aug 13).
- 77 Junak dneva (ath, Aug 22).
- 78 ... [slišali boste] velikega junaka slovenske športne odprave v Pekingu (ath, Aug 17).
- 79 ... enega največjih junakov teh olimpijskih iger (ath, Aug 20).
- 80 Nov kralj šprinta (ath, Aug 15).
- 81 Kot da je Usain Bolt šprinter, ki so ga Jamajčani uvozili recimo iz Saturna ali Neptuna. Na Zemlji tako hitrega človeka še ni bilo, kot je Usain Bolt (ath, Aug 15).
- 82 Nekoliko ponižujoči (ath, Aug 20).
- 83 ... vaje Kitajk [so] naravnost božanske (gym, Aug 13).
- 84 Američanka je sicer potem športno tekla do konca, ampak kaj preveč to ne bo pomagalo; Američanke ne bodo osvojile nove medalje na teh olimpijskih igrah (ath, Aug 21).
- 85 Res nekaj fantastičnega je prenašati takole, tako atletiko, ko padajo svetovni rekordi praktično vsak dan; pet smo jih videli, pa še tri evropske in dva svetovna mladinska (ath, Aug 22).
- 86 Ali je res mogoče, da bomo danes prav v vseh disciplinah videli svetovni rekord? (sw, Aug 13)
- 87 Rezultati so za čimprejšnjo pozabo (ath, Aug 22).
- 88 Tako počasnega teka na pet kilometrov ne pomnim (ath, Aug 22).
- 89 Tele kvalifikacije v skoku v višino so vse prej kot reklama za atletiko... skakljanje na 2,15... seveda pa je potrebno opraviti tudi to nadlogo za mnoge atlete, kvalifikacije (ath, Aug 17).
- 90 Moldova [sic] nima prav veliko vrhunskih atletov, takšnih nima, ki bi lahko posegli po medaljah (ath, Aug 15).
- 91 Tule pa vodeča tekmovalka iz Lesota, za katero stavim, da seveda ne bo med najboljšimi ob koncu (ath, Aug 15).
- 92 Izjemno slab rezultat (ath, Aug 16).
- 93 To je bilo kar, lahko rečemo, neprijetno presenečenje (ath, Aug 16).
- 94 Žal je Tajnikarjeva povsem odpovedala s tem res skromnim, skromnim dosežkom (ath, Aug 16).
- 95 Toda podrl je letvico, neverjetno. Pet metrov 15 je Jurij Rován podrl... Upam samo, da bo v nadaljevanju teh kvalifikacij skakal bolj zbrano (ath, Aug 20).
- 96 Tudi drugič ni uspel! Joj, joj, joj, joj, joj. Pet metrov 15, že dvakrat neuspešno. Ahhhh. Nekaj stavkov sem želel povedati, pa se bom raje ugriznil v jezik (ath, Aug 20).
- 97 Če bo [sic] izpadel brez preskočene višine, potem bo tole res turistično potovanje na olimpijske igre v Peking (ath, Aug 20).
- 98 To se pravi, jaz sem rekel pogojni: »Če ne preskoči, je to turistično potovanje.«

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- <sup>99</sup> Tudi atlet iz Saudove Arabije ni kaj prida hiter (ath, Aug 20).
- <sup>100</sup> Predstavnik Mjanmara ima osebni rekord, takole, povprečen za žensko konkurenco, 15:16,23. Tudi na slovenskem državnem prvenstvu verjetno ne bi zmagal (ath, Aug 20).
- <sup>101</sup> Američan Horton (gym, Aug 14).
- <sup>102</sup> Boštjan Buč, Slovenija (ath, Aug 16).
- <sup>103</sup> 16,475 ocena za Francoza (gym, Aug 9).
- <sup>104</sup> Yang Wei celo 16,625 (...) Vsekakor nov korak Kitajca proti novemu olimpijskemu naslovu (gym, Aug 14).
- <sup>105</sup> Tudi temnopolta uvožena Norvežanka Ezinne Okparaebo je zelo hitra. Okparaebova sicer prihaja iz Nigerije in je ena od skoraj dveh milijonov priseljencev iz drugih celin na Norveško. Ko se sprehajaš po ulicah Osla, imaš občutek, kot da si v Nairobiju in ne v skandinavski prestolnici (ath, Aug 16).
- <sup>106</sup> Najboljši azijski tekač Yoshitaka Ivamizu, azijski najboljši tekač. Tu mislim seveda iz tiste prave Azije, ne pa tistih uvoženih tekačev iz Afrike, ki nastopajo za zalivske države (ath, Aug 16).
- <sup>107</sup> Sedaj slovenska državljanka (ath, Aug 17).
- <sup>108</sup> Prvi dve skupini nič posebnega, če omenim samo države, katere so plavale: Kongo, Bolivija, Liberija, Mavricijus, Armenija, Bermuda, Fidži, Aruba, Združeni Arabski Emirati, potem vam je jasno (sw, Aug 13).
- <sup>109</sup> Gledali smo države, kot so recimo Kirgizistan, Deviški otoki, Gvajana, Nizozemski Antili, Mikronezija, Turkmenistan, Ameriška Samoa, Mjanmar, Kambodža, Sudan, Palestina, Tadžikistan, Ruanda, Gvineja, Malavi, Sejšeli, Tanzanija, Antigva in Barbuda, Laos, Jemen, Nigerija, Burkina Faso, Kongo, Togo – cel kup nekih, bi lahko rekli, neplavalnih držav (sw, Aug 14).
- <sup>110</sup> Tokrat recimo znana šprinterska država Bangladeš nima nobenega predstavnika, pa Tajvan, tudi Tajska brez, pa recimo Madagaskar, ki je imel vselej kakšnega atleta med najboljšimi šprinterji (ath, Aug 15).
- <sup>111</sup> Na štartni listi so nekatere atletinje tudi iz bolj eksotičnih atletskih držav, kot so recimo iz Bosne in Hercegovine (...) (ath, Aug 15).
- <sup>112</sup> Tohi je pravi, kot večkrat rečem, Coubertinov športnik (ath, Aug 15).
- <sup>113</sup> Vendar bi težko rekli, da je to kakšen od favoritov za najvišja mesta (sw, Aug 14).
- <sup>114</sup> Ali pač, tale olimpijski rekord Dunforda govori drugače (sw, Aug 14).
- <sup>115</sup> Lani se je nekako pojavil in zablestel (sw, Aug 14).
- <sup>116</sup> Prav veliko Kenijcev v plavanju nismo vajeni (sw, Aug 14).
- <sup>117</sup> Recimo na državnem prvenstvu deklet v Sloveniji se ne bi uvrstil med prve tri (ath, Aug 15).
- <sup>118</sup> Atletinja iz Afganistana teče (...) odeta v ruto (ath, Aug 16).
- <sup>119</sup> Afganistanka pa je nastopila seveda po tistih izvornih pravilih olimpizma (ath, Aug 16).

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<sup>120</sup> Kateri [sic] bo ženski Phelps, ali bo to Katie Hoff, ali Alessia Filippi, ali Elizabeth Beisel? (sw, Aug 10)

<sup>121</sup> V slogu včerajšnje zmagovalke Olge Kaniskine iz Rusije smo videli tudi prvi pobeg; Alex Schwazer se je odločil, da bo poskusil priti do prednosti že v teh uvodnih metrih (ath, Aug 22).

<sup>122</sup> Moški/ženski rezultat.

<sup>123</sup> Še eno iz tistega otroškega gimnastičnega vrtca (gym, Aug 18).

<sup>124</sup> Reiko Tosa pa sicer prihaja iz prave atletske družine, kajti oče je bil japonski reprezentant na srednjih progah, mati pa se je, zanimivo, ukvarjala z metom kopja (ath, Aug 15).

<sup>125</sup> Natallia Koronenko poročena Mikhnevich, poročena je seveda s suvalcem krogle, ki je na teh olimpijskih igrah že osvojil bronasto medaljo (ath, Aug 15).

<sup>126</sup> ... je tudi najbolj takole, najbolj »twiggy« metalka kladiva na svetu (...) pri meter 81 ima samo 71 kilogramov (ath, Aug 20).

<sup>127</sup> Clarissa Claretti ima najbolj, takole, seksi postavo od vseh metalk kladiva, najmanj telesne teže si je nabrala (ath, Aug 20).

<sup>128</sup> Najbolj, takole, atletske razvite metalka krogle (ath, Aug 15).

<sup>129</sup> Tekmovalke so sicer že slečene. Ne povsem, ampak pripravljene na tek ... (ath, Aug 18).

<sup>130</sup> Imela je izjemno dobro kombinacijo, tisto dobitno kombinacijo težavnosti in ženske elegance, ki pač prinaša dodatne točke, morda ne samo sodnicam, temveč tudi vsem gledalcem in gimnastiki nasploh (gym, Aug 15).

<sup>131</sup> Šarmantni finalist (gym, Aug 18).

<sup>132</sup> Poglejte tega mišičnjaka, res ga je čez rame toliko kot kakšne omare. To ni samo moja, pač pa jo lahko preberemo tudi v kakšni plavalni reviji (sw, Aug 14).

<sup>133</sup> Latinoameričani so čustveni in svoja čustva je pokazal tudi Cielo Filho (sw, Aug 16).

<sup>134</sup> Barvita štafeta Nemčije (ath, Aug 22).

<sup>135</sup> Sam imam črnino, kot da bi srečal recimo Keneniso Bekeleja v tunelu (ath, Aug 20).

<sup>136</sup> Vedno sem občudoval tele temnopolte tekače s sončnimi očali ob 22h skoraj po lokalnem času, ko sonca seveda že zdavnaj ni več. Morda so samo reklamni agenti za kakšno tovarno sončnih očal (ath, Aug 20).

<sup>137</sup> Zelo podobna takole v obraz Falilat Ogunkoya, nigerijski rekorderki (ath, Aug 17).

<sup>138</sup> Latinoameričani so čustveni ... (sw, Aug 16).

<sup>139</sup> Ponavadi krasijo obraz Japoncev in Japonk nasmejani zobje; nasmejan obraz je po navadi japonski obraz (gym, Aug 14).

<sup>140</sup> Jonesova je definitivno prva favoritinja (sw, Aug 11).

<sup>141</sup> Če bi tekel okoli recimo osebnega rekorda, recimo okrog 4:25 Sitar, bi zbral kakšnih 770 točk in to bi bil končni rezultat okoli 7400 točk (ath, Aug 22).

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- <sup>142</sup> Mislim, da je sposoben teči blizu svetovnega rekorda (ath, Aug 21).
- <sup>143</sup> Bolt se je dal premagati (ath, Aug 18).
- <sup>144</sup> Seveda nima prav nobene možnosti za visoko uvrstitev (ath, Aug 15).
- <sup>145</sup> Tvoj tihi favorit (gym, Aug 18).
- <sup>146</sup> Lani svetovna prvakinja, letos neporažena (ath, Aug 23).
- <sup>147</sup> Ima kar 34 zaporednih zmag (ath, Aug 23).
- <sup>148</sup> Je tik pred osvojitvijo zlate medalje v skoku v višino (ath, Aug 23).
- <sup>149</sup> Mislim, da je sedaj že povsem blizu zlate medalje! (ath, Aug 23).
- <sup>150</sup> Morda bo Vlašičeva danes naskakovala celo svetovni rekord (ath, Aug 23).
- <sup>151</sup> Če sedajle skoči to višino, bo po vsej verjetnosti olimpijska prvakinja (ath, Aug 23).
- <sup>152</sup> Če je LaShawn Merritt prvi favorit ... Ja, za polovico ljudi, zame seveda Jeremy Wariner! (ath, Aug 21)
- <sup>153</sup> Veliki poraženec pa je seveda Jeremy Wariner; pričakoval je zmago, osvojil pa srebro (ath, Aug 21).
- <sup>154</sup> Trickettova, ki je veljala za favoritko, svetovna rekorderka, na koncu celo brez kolajne (sw, Aug 17).
- <sup>155</sup> Olimpijski prvak pa je, tako kot smo napovedali, Chen Yibing (gym, Aug 18).
- <sup>156</sup> Beloruski reprezentant Denis Savenkov, star 24 let (gym, Aug 9).
- <sup>157</sup> Šlo je za premet, iztegnjeni salto naprej z dvema obratoma. Ta skok je zelo težko doskočiti, kar smo tudi videli iz Botellovega skoka (gym, Aug 18).
- <sup>158</sup> V kvalifikacijah je kar precej grešila (gym, Aug 18).
- <sup>159</sup> Morda ji sem in tja noge uidejo nekoliko narazen, kot sedaj pri tem zamahu proti stoji (gym, Aug 13).
- <sup>160</sup> Dopingirani, drogirani, prevaranti.
- <sup>161</sup> Eden iz plejade mladih angleških sprinterjev, ki so vse boljši ... Pravi nasledniki dopingiranega Chambersa (ath, Aug 15).
- <sup>162</sup> Danes pa so seveda metalke diska ob močnih in pa resnih dopinških kontrolah za približno 10 do 15 metrov krajše od olimpijske prvakinja (ath, Aug 18).
- <sup>163</sup> To pa je seveda za te prevarantske prevarante najhujša kazen, da bi bili ob ves denar. Za medalje jim je tako ali tako v glavnem malo mar (ath, Aug 22).

## **9 Results and discussion: Slovenian teams in international competitions**

### ***Rezultati in razprava: slovenske ekipe v mednarodnih tekmovanjih***

- <sup>164</sup> Očitno bo treba malce globlje pokriti to temnopolto rokometiško s Kanarskih otokov (hb, Jan 20).
- <sup>165</sup> Šesti gol Madžarke Mehlmannove (hb, Feb 17).

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- 166 Lungu poizkuša, prekršek nad Romunko (hb, Mar 18).
- 167 Je dobro videl zdaj prazen prostor pod obročem CSKA-ja (bb, Jan 2).
- 168 Na srečo je bila Tureyeva premalo natančna (hb, Mar 24).
- 169 Zdaj so Krimovke dvakrat zapored zapravile napad (hb, Feb 17).
- 170 Daleč najboljša strelka Krimovk vseh časov v evropskih pokalih (hb, Feb 10).
- 171 Ljubljancani imajo že dve zmagi in en sam poraz (bb, Nov 15).
- 172 Med favoriti tudi za končno krono letos v Evroligi (bb, Jan 2).
- 173 Morda še ni vse izgubljeno (bb, Nov 15).
- 174 To pa pomeni, da ima Union Olimpija zagotovo še nekaj rezerve za drugih 20 minut (bb, Nov 15).
- 175 Španke v rumenih dresih (hb, Jan 20).
- 176 Lepa akcija Špank (hb, Jan 20).
- 177 Danski Slagelse (hb, Feb 24).
- 178 Dobro zdaj na črti Ljubljančanke (hb, Jan 20).
- 179 Ljubljancani so že izkoristili bonus (bb, Nov 7).
- 180 Španke (hb, Jan 20, Feb 24).
- 181 Nemci (bb, Jan 10).
- 182 »Naše šampionke« (90-krat) in »naše prvakinja« (24-krat)
- 183 Pri Špankah, ki so prvo tekmo pred domačimi gledalci izgubile z našimi šampionkami z 31 : 36 (hb, Feb 24).
- 184 ... v vratih pri Slovenkah (hb, Jan 20).
- 185 Krim Mercator je še edini slovenski predstavnik v evropskih pokalih, ko gre za našo domovino (hb, Feb 17).
- 186 Naš najuspešnejši roketni olimpijec Ronaldo [sic!] Pušnik (hb, Feb 17).
- 187 ... tekmo, na kateri Union Olimpija lovi svojo prvo zmago na gostovanjih v letošnji Evroligi (bb, Jan 30).
- 188 Kljub temu pa lahko rečem, da smo lahko zadovoljni s temi prvimi desetimi minutami, kajti Union Olimpija proti Prokomu vodi z dvema točkama razlike (bb, Jan 30).
- 189 Tudi mi imamo seveda igralca za met iz razdalje (...) Toda pomembno je, da je žoga seveda naša in da imamo nov napad (bb, Jan 30).
- 190 Naša kapetanka Odrova (hb, Feb 10).
- 191 Njeni nastopi za naš klub (hb, Feb 10).
- 192 Veliki CSKA (bb, Nov 7).
- 193 Znameniti CSKA (bb, Nov 7).
- 194 Ruski velikan (bb, Nov 7).
- 195 Velikan evropske košarke (bb, Nov 7).



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- <sup>196</sup> Ekipa, o kateri se govori samo v superlativih (bb, Nov 7).
- <sup>197</sup> Ena najboljših ekip v tem trenutku zagotovo, v Evropi in tudi v svetu (bb, Nov 15).
- <sup>198</sup> Preveč sem torej govoril o rezultatih Žalgirisa v letošnji sezoni; Union Olimpija je pa v prvih treh tekmah igrala takole: v Sieni poraz, 52 : 80, potem pa dve sijajni zmagi, pravzaprav pravi senzaciji, najprej v Ljubljani proti Olympiacosu 87 : 78 za Union Olimpijo in potem še neverjetna zmaga proti moskovskemu CSKA-ju, eni najboljših ekip v tem trenutku zagotovo, v Evropi in tudi v svetu, 74 : 72 (bb, Nov 15).
- <sup>199</sup> Kdo je favorit na tej tekmi, ali Krim ali Slagelse. Rekel bi, možnosti petdeset-petdeset (hb, Mar 18).
- <sup>200</sup> Lov na zmago (e.g., bb, Nov 15, hb, Feb 10).
- <sup>201</sup> Morda bo zvenelo malce premalo skromno, vendar je Krim Mercator za razred boljši od Ribarroje (hb, Feb 24).
- <sup>202</sup> Izenačeno (hb, Mar 18).
- <sup>203</sup> Morda se zdi poraz s sedmimi zadetki zares visok, a v naslednjih sekundah vas bomo skušali prepričati, da je za preobrat na današnji tekmi vendarle še dovolj povsem realnih možnosti (hb, Mar 24).
- <sup>204</sup> Ne glede na to, ali bo Union Olimpija danes izgubila ali zmagala, kar si zagotovo vsi skupaj želimo ... (bb, Jan 10).
- <sup>205</sup> Union Olimpija danes če drugega ne mora pokazati dobro igro, srčno, borbena, in vsi verjamemo, da tako bo. In potem tudi če bo prišel morebitni poraz, ki ga večina pričakuje, ne bomo preveč razočarani (bb, Nov 7).
- <sup>206</sup> Union Olimpija bo naslednjo tekmo Evrolige igrala naslednji teden v Vitorii proti Tau Ceramicu. Tam verjetno težko pričakujemo, da bi Ljubljčanec presenetili, čeprav je športno, da seveda vedno upamo, da vedno želimo seveda tudi presenetiti (bb, Jan 10).
- <sup>207</sup> Obeta se namreč pravi košarkarski spektakel (bb, Nov 7).
- <sup>208</sup> Vsak trenutek torej začetek tega velespektakla, lahko rečemo, veleboja, boja za titane (hb, Mar 24).
- <sup>209</sup> Tekma nima tistega pravega prvenstvenega naboja (hb, Feb 24).
- <sup>210</sup> Zaostajamo za 12 (bb, Nov 15).
- <sup>211</sup> Trije goli prednosti (hb, Jan 20).
- <sup>212</sup> Naše šampionke zaostajajo za štiri gole (hb, Feb 10).
- <sup>213</sup> Zdaj Krimovke ves čas zaostajajo za tri ali štiri gole, ali drugače povedano, tekma je še popolnoma odprta, še je dovolj časa za preobrat (hb, Feb 10).
- <sup>214</sup> Napaka Šarićeve, ki ni prišla do zaključnega strela, oziroma bolje rečeno, dobra obramba Krimovk (hb, Feb 24).
- <sup>215</sup> Tudi tokrat je bila zelo blizu Palingerjeva (hb, Jan 20).
- <sup>216</sup> No, tudi Hukić seveda ne more vedno zadeti (bb, Nov 7).
- <sup>217</sup> Žukauskas pa je na srečo zgrešil prvi prosti met (bb, Jan 10).

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<sup>218</sup> In potem, tudi če bo prišel morebitni poraz, ki ga večina pričakuje, ne bomo preveč razočarani (bb, Nov 7).

<sup>219</sup> Union Olimpija, ki na žalost danes ne bo prišla do tiste zelene četrte zmage (bb, Jan 10).

<sup>220</sup> Ljubitelji košarke, ne pozabite, Union Olimpija je pred začetkom letošnje sezone praktično bila ekipa brez igralskega kadra, ekipa brez denarja, brez prave perspektive, brez, seveda, kot so nekateri menili, prave možnost, da se sploh še postavi na noge (bb, Jan 10).

<sup>221</sup> Vsi tisti ljubitelji košarke, ki ste morda zelo kritični do tega, kar je Union Olimpija letos pokazala v Evroligi, moram reči, da se spomnite seveda lanskega poletja, spomnite se tistega časa, ko je Union Olimpija bila seveda ekipa z ogromnim, ogromnim dolgom, z velikim minusom na bančnem računu, ko je imela pod pogodbo enega samega igralca, ko ni imela trenerja, ko ni imela pravzaprav nič od tistega, kar imajo sicer tudi povprečne ekipe, kaj šele tiste, ki igrajo v tej najelitnejši evropski konkurenci. Na srečo so se potem zgodile nekatere stvari, ki so začele stvari reševati oziroma pospešile reševanje Uniona Olimpije. Zdi se mi, da je prišlo do nekakšnega gospodarsko-političnega konsenza, da je Union Olimpija tako velika, seveda ne samo košarkarska, ampak kar športna institucija, in ne samo ljubljanska, ampak kar slovenska, da jo seveda velja rešiti, da bi bilo dobro, če bi seveda naredili prav vse, da bi Union Olimpija še naprej obstajala, da bi še naprej seveda lahko igrala v tej najelitnejši evropski konkurenci.

Prišlo je novo vodstvo, prišel je nov upravni odbor in rekel bi, upravni odbor, eden najkompetentnejših in po mojem mnenju tudi eden najkvalitetnejših v zadnjih letih. Še posebej bi tu izpostavil tiste člane tega upravnega odbora, ki prihajajo iz gospodarstva, pa ne samo zato, ker njihova podjetja seveda podpirajo finančno Union Olimpijo in jo bodo, upam, tudi v prihodnje, temveč seveda zato, ker so ti ljudje predvsem vložili ogromen trud, vložili so vse svoje znanje, vložili so energijo, vložili so seveda tudi veliko svojega prostega časa zato, da bi to našo Union Olimpijo rešili in lahko rečem, da je seveda Union Olimpija v tem trenutku na dobri poti, da se to tudi zgodi.

Če bo temu tako, potem boste ljubitelji košarke v naslednji sezoni seveda lahko ponovno gledali Olimpijo, ki nam bo vsem v čast. Olimpijo, ki se jo bodo, če se je že ne bali, pa vsaj spoštovali vsaj tisti največji evropski klubi, tudi tisti z najbolj zvenečimi imeni. Olimpijo, ki bo v naslednjih sezonah, seveda, ne samo v naslednji, še naprej igrala v Evroligi. Olimpijo, ki bo še naprej polnila dvorano Tivoli, pozneje, oziroma kmalu, upam da, tudi novo dvorano v Stožicah. In Olimpijo seveda, ob, Olimpijo, ob igrah katere bomo vsi skupaj, predvsem vsi ljubitelji košarke v Sloveniji, lahko še naprej uživali (bb, Jan 30).

<sup>222</sup> Sveta seveda ne bo konec tudi po izpadu Krima (hb, Mar 24).

<sup>223</sup> Ne bodite preveč žalostni (hb, Mar 24).

<sup>224</sup> Tako se to dela, to je bil izvrsten strel Anje Frešer. To čakamo, to si želimo (hb, Mar 24).

<sup>225</sup> To je tisto, kar pričakujemo od Jasmina Hukića! (bb, Nov 7).

<sup>226</sup> Derepasko zdaj mimo, žal (hb, Jan 20).

<sup>227</sup> Daleč je bil sicer, na žalost, od uspeha (bb, Nov 7).

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- <sup>228</sup> Tako da je na srečo to izgubljena žoga za Prokom (bb, Jan 30).
- <sup>229</sup> Zgrešila je Tatjana Medved, na srečo (hb, Jan 20).
- <sup>230</sup> Upamo na uspešno nadaljevanje Krimovk in novi točki (hb, Jan 20).
- <sup>231</sup> CSKA ima točko prednosti, petinpetdeset štiriinpetdeset, toda upajmo, da to ne bo dovolj za zmago v dvorani Tivoli (bb, Nov 7).
- <sup>232</sup> Upajmo, da se Popovičeva ne bo razigrala (hb, Mar 24).
- <sup>233</sup> Pa še eno posredovanje Bodnjeve iz hrbta, na robu izključitve je bilo to. Sodnika na srečo tega nista videla (hb, Jan 20).
- <sup>234</sup> Zadetek naših šampionk z igralco manj in zdaj seveda lažje dihamo, lažje dihamo (hb, Feb 10).
- <sup>235</sup> Še vedno nepopustljiva igra Uniona Olimpije, lahko smo navdušeni (bb, Nov 7).
- <sup>236</sup> (...) smo s tistim, kar so prikazali Ljubljanci v prvem polčasu, lahko kar zadovoljni (bb, Jan 23).
- <sup>237</sup> Priložnost za polprotinapad (hb, Mar 24).
- <sup>238</sup> Gledalci bodo jasno spodbujali ljubljanske košarkarje (bb, Jan 23).
- <sup>239</sup> Prihodnjo soboto, upam da pred polnim Tivolijem (...) Tisti, ki lahko, pridite v Tivoli in skupaj s Krimovkami se bomo po šestem kolu veselili uvrstitve v četrtfinale (hb, Feb 17).
- <sup>240</sup> Matjaž Smodiš je vrhunski košarkar (...) trenutno najboljša »štirka« v Evropi (bb, Nov 7).
- <sup>241</sup> Matjaž Smodiš, jasno, eden najboljših slovenskih reprezentantov (bb, Nov 7).
- <sup>242</sup> Slovenski trener David Dedek (bb, Jan 30).
- <sup>243</sup> Naš rojak Dušan Olaj (hb, Feb 10).
- <sup>244</sup> Mogoče ima letos Siena tudi majhen slovensko-makedonski priokus, kajti za to ekipo igra tudi Vlatko Ilievski, makedonski reprezentant, ki je nekdaj igral pri Unionu Olimpiji (bb, Dec 13).
- <sup>245</sup> Vratarka Slagelseja, nekdanja vratarka Krime Cecilie Leganger (hb, Mar 18).
- <sup>246</sup> Tole je Papaloukas, ki se ga seveda z grenkobo spomnimo, kaj je naredil slovenski reprezentanci na Evropskem prvenstvu (bb, Nov 7).
- <sup>247</sup> Prvi met in takoj Hukić! To je tisto, kar pričakujemo od Jasmina Hukića! (bb, Nov 7)
- <sup>248</sup> Izvrstna akcija, potem zaključek z levo roko, značilna akcija Dragića (bb, Nov 7).
- <sup>249</sup> Lavrinovič v težkem položaju, vendar lepo je to zadel, moramo priznati, Litovec Ksistof Lavrinovič (bb, Dec 13).
- <sup>250</sup> Marko Milić zdaj pri metu, ki mu sicer ni pisan ravno na kožo, to ste lahko tudi videli (bb, Dec 13).
- <sup>251</sup> V napadu sem ter tja tudi nekaj napak, vendar kdaj napak ni (bb, Dec 13).
- <sup>252</sup> Tudi Hukić seveda ne more vedno zadeti (bb, Nov 7).

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- <sup>253</sup> Na srečo tam osebna napaka Ksistofa Lavrinoviča. Kar dobro se je tole končalo, kajti Saša Dončić je bil tam pravzaprav brez prave rešitve (bb, Dec 13).
- <sup>254</sup> Danes zaenkrat ljubljanski košarkarji takega dneva v Kaunasu preprosto nimajo (bb, Nov 15).
- <sup>255</sup> Senegalec (bb, Jan 30).
- <sup>256</sup> Sicer po rodu Nigerijec, doma iz Lagosa (bb, Dec 13).
- <sup>257</sup> Torej Romain Sato, kot sem dejal, doma iz Centralnoafriške republike (bb, Dec 13).
- <sup>258</sup> To (...) temnopolto rokometiško iz Kanarskih otokov (hb, Jan 20).
- <sup>259</sup> Igralke tako Krima kot Ribarroje [so] pokazale, da znajo igrati rokomet, da znajo igrati privlačno (hb, Feb 24).
- <sup>260</sup> Tule Legangerjeva (...) ob njej pa njen intimni prijatelj in trener ... (hb, Mar 18).
- <sup>261</sup> Popović, nekateri se je bolj spomnite po njenem dekliškem priimku Petrović (hb, Mar 18).
- <sup>262</sup> Najboljša krožna napadalka na svetu (hb, Feb 10, Mar 18).
- <sup>263</sup> Dober nos je imel (hb, Feb 10).
- <sup>264</sup> Naša kapetanka (hb, Feb 24).
- <sup>265</sup> Z velikimi črkami je zapisana v bogato, uspešno zgodovino tega kluba (hb, Feb 24).
- <sup>266</sup> Resda gre za vrhunsko igralko, vendar ne igralko tiste posebne kategorije (hb, Feb 24).
- <sup>267</sup> Odlična Cecilia Leganger. Očitno uspešna samo v skandinavskem prostoru, ni ji šlo v Ljubljani. Imela je preveč težav, potem pa je iz Ljubljane odšla z izgovorom, češ da ne more študirati medicine. Dejstvo je, da tudi sedaj ne študira medicine; bolje bi bilo, če bi pošteno priznala, da se pač preprosto ni znašla pri ljubljanskem prvoligašu (hb, Mar 24).
- <sup>268</sup> Tanja Logvin je iz Ljubljane odšla zaradi hčere, ki je začela hoditi na Dunaju v šolo. Tak je bil takrat njen uradni razlog; mnogi pravijo, da je bilo marsikaj drugega (hb, Feb 17).
- <sup>269</sup> Muhasta dama (hb, Mar 18).
- <sup>270</sup> Taylor, tole ni najboljša podaja ... Prehitra, nespametna, netočna podaja, žal, Ronella Taylorja (bb, Nov 7).
- <sup>271</sup> Izkušeni maček (bb, Nov 7).
- <sup>272</sup> Eden ostrostrelcev pri CSKA-ju (bb, Nov 7).
- <sup>273</sup> Znameniti Theodoros Papaloukas (bb, Jan 2).
- <sup>274</sup> Treba je priznati, da gre zaenkrat Juraku zelo dobro (bb, Jan 10).
- <sup>275</sup> Sicer pa Jurak pri Žalgirisu kar uspešen (...) Rekel bi takole, če je Jurak seveda lahko skoraj najboljši igralec Žalgirisa, potem to ni več tisti Žalgiris, ki je nekoč pokoril tudi celotno Evropo (bb, Nov 15).

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<sup>276</sup> Prav zanimive so reakcije sodnikov. Ko ga polomijo, potem hitro poizkušajo dokazati, da imajo prav. Nadaljujejo z neumnostmi. Zdaj sta Madžara potem, ko ni bilo prekrška za izključitev, dosodila še rumeni karton Begušu (hb, Feb 17).

<sup>277</sup> Nemca spet ne piskata. Zdaj popravljata svojo napako z rumenim kartonom trenerju Begušu. Tako je ponavadi – ko sodniki naredijo napako, potem iščejo krivce pri drugih (hb, Mar 18).

<sup>278</sup> Kaj piskata Nemca, prestop. Nemca piskata prestop (hb, Mar 18).

<sup>279</sup> Pustimo sodnikom, da so sodili, kar pač so (bb, Nov 7).

<sup>280</sup> Avstrijca tam ne dovolita dogovora v taboru Dinama (hb, Feb 10).

<sup>281</sup> Madžara pa sta dosodila prekršek (hb, Feb 17).

<sup>282</sup> Popolnoma jasno je, običajno je tako, da sodniki domači ekipi vsaj nekajkrat piskajo v njen prid, vendar nocoj to ne velja (bb, Dec 13).

<sup>283</sup> Iliovski proti Taylorju (bb, Dec 13).

<sup>284</sup> Zdaj dvoboj Žukauskas-Begić (bb, Nov 15).

<sup>285</sup> Milić in Stonerook (bb, Dec 13).

<sup>286</sup> Dobro je posredovala Katja Kurent (hb, Jan 20).

<sup>287</sup> Na tleh je Khmyrova (hb, Feb 10).

<sup>288</sup> Bodnjeva je že nekako vajena dobivati take udarce (hb, Feb 27).

<sup>289</sup> Katja Kurent bo počivala dve minuti (hb, Feb 24).

<sup>290</sup> Takole moško, trdo je Dončić seveda ukrepal ob poskusu Ezeja, ki bo imel prosta meta. Vendar bolje tako, kot da gostje dosežejo prelahke, neovirane koše (bb, Dec 13).

<sup>291</sup> Nešportna osebna napaka Gorana Dragića. Očitno Goran Dragić iznerviran (sic) na tej tekmi. Tule ga vidite, še naprej se Dragić jezi. Zdaj tam v pogovoru z Brownom. Brown seveda dovolj izkušen, da zna izprovocirati [sic] nasprotnega igralca, mladega igralca, kot je Goran Dragić. Vprašanje je, kaj se je tu vse dogajalo. No, tule je dragić res s komolcem udaril Browna, toda zagotovo je bilo pred tem še kaj, morda je Brown kaj povedal Dragiću, morda ga je kako drugače sprovciral (bb, Jan 10).

<sup>292</sup> Sow in Milić, uuu, zdaj je Milić tam udaril Sowa. Resda se je razjezil, tam, zaradi tistega udarca s komolcem; Sow je tam grdo seveda s komolcem krenil proti glavi Marka Milića. Milić je potem seveda reagiral v trenutku. Zdaj je Milić seveda bil tudi izključen, tako da je tekma zanj končana.

Milić se seveda še naprej jezi; rekel bi, da kar upravičeno, sodniki bi morali seveda že tisti prvi poskus udarca s komolcem Sowa proti Miliću, morali bi na tisti prvi poskus reagirati. Tule ste videli, tule na srečo je Milić glavo umaknil, potem pa seveda prav nobenega dvoma o tem, da si je Milić za to svojo potezo tule zaslužil, seveda, najprej nešportno osebno napako, potem pa tudi izključitev. Toda tule pogledjte tole, tole je bila zares izjemno nevarna igra Sowa, Milić je potem seveda samo odgovoril, reagiral na provokacijo, reagiral na udarec. Ni to seveda nikakršno opravičilo za to, kako je Milić reagiral, toda verjemite mi, velikokrat na tekmi se take stvari dogajajo, ko so živci napeti, ko recimo sodniki ne sankcionirajo potezo enega igralca, igralec preprosto izgubi živce, to se je tokrat zgodilo Marku Miliću. (...)

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Milić bo sedaj seveda igro zapustil, jasno. Sow seveda ni tako hudo poškodovan, kot je to kazalo v tistem prvem trenutku, ko je takole padel po parketu, kot da bi ga Milić nokavtiral. Zdaj se je celo vrnil na parket, tako da bo lahko nadaljeval z igro. Ne en ne drugi ne bi smela narediti tega, kar sta storila v tej zadnji akciji. Mislim, da bi si kazen pravzaprav zaslužil tudi Sow, pa čeprav bi mu sodniki seveda recimo vsaj nešportno napako ali pa izključitev dosodili naknadno (bb, Jan 30).

<sup>293</sup> Mislim, da si zdaj že kar nekoliko preveč, seveda, upa Senegalec na tej tekmi. Kakor koli obrnemo, in seveda se ne moremo strinjati s tem, da je Milić Sowa udaril, pa je bil Sow tisti, ki je seveda vse skupaj začel. On je bil tisti, ki je s komolcem udaril Milića in pravzaprav je samo sreča, da ni bil Milić tisti, ki bi jo v tisti akciji skupil (bb, Jan 30).

<sup>294</sup> Sicer pa je Beguš eden od tistih mlajših trenerjev, ki zagovarja agresivno igro v obrambi. In se seveda strinjam z ugotovitvijo, da dobra obramba pomeni kasneje tudi učinkovit napad (hb, Feb 24).

<sup>295</sup> Izstopa, tako kot smo že napovedali pred tekmo in tudi vedeli, kaj bo, Bojana Popović, ne. Šest golov je dala samo v prvem polčasu ... (hb, Mar 24).

<sup>296</sup> Zagotovim vam lahko, kajti imam komentatorsko mesto povsem ob igrišču, takole kakšnih pet metrov od mene se je vse skupaj dogajalo, da mu je Dragić povsem čisto, brez osebne napake ukradel tisto žogo (bb, Nov 15).

<sup>297</sup> Mislim, da je bilo povsem brez potrebe dosojena [sic] ta druga nešportna osebna napaka Miliću (bb, Jan 10).

<sup>298</sup> Hitro so sodniki piskali prvo osebno napako Hasanu Rizviću. No, tule je seveda bil udarec po roki, z levo roko je Ilievskega udaril Hasan Rizvić (bb, Dec 13).

<sup>299</sup> Milić je dober izvajalec prostih metov v tej sezoni. (Zgreši met.) No, vedno se takole zgodi, ko nekoga pohvališ, prav obratno se zgodi (bb, Jan 23).

<sup>300</sup> Obeta se namreč pravi košarkarski spektakel, ki ga bosta zagotovo priredila Union Olimpija in moskovski CSKA (bb, Nov 7).

<sup>301</sup> Upajmo seveda vsaj na plus sedem za Krim, ane? (hb, Mar 24).

<sup>302</sup> Torej, Slagelse nas ni spustil na svoj trening. Je to še ena muha Anje Andersen, ane? (hb, Mar 24).

<sup>303</sup> Golubićeva je kot prvič nastopila v vaši ekipi. Tudi kar nekajkrat je zadela. Verjetno je vaša ocena tudi, da se je tudi ona dobro vklopila v to ekipo (hb, Feb 17).

## **10 Results and discussion: National soccer league**

### ***Rezultati in razprava: državna nogometna liga***

<sup>304</sup> Potem pa s peto Amel Mujaković (soc, May 2).

<sup>305</sup> Džinić je z roko zaustavil pot žogi (soc, Oct 3).

<sup>306</sup> Elsner najvišji v skoku (soc, May 13).

<sup>307</sup> Nogometaš, ki je storil to, kar je bilo potrebno (soc, May 2).

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- 308 Zdaj morda priložnost za Rakoviča ... Ni šlo (soc, May 2).
- 309 Kreft je dobil žogo (soc, May 16).
- 310 Do zamenjave bo prišlo pri Primorju (soc, May 13).
- 311 Tudi Rakovič je bil dobro postavljen (soc, May 2).
- 312 Dobra podaja Knezovića proti Džukiču (soc, May 2).
- 313 Knezović zdaj v lepem prodoru (soc, May 2).
- 314 Ni šlo (soc, May 2).
- 315 Je nekoliko poniknil v drugem polčasu (soc, May 2).
- 316 Džukiča ni bilo nikjer (soc, May 2).
- 317 Mezga ... Mezga ima zelo natančen strel od daleč. Priložnost zdaj Bačinovič, priložnost! Brani Hasič ... Gol! S številko dve Dragan Čadikovski! Zadetek od koncu 23. minute srečanja, Mariborčani so torej vendarle kapitalizirali ta manjši pritisk proti vratom Hasiča! Po nekaj napadih so prišli do zadetka ... Najprej Bačinovič, potem tam gneča. Hasič je šel po žogo, ki pa je prišla do Čadikovskega, ki pa jasno, da take priložnosti pri vseh svojih izkušnjah ne izpušča. Maribor vodi z ena proti nič. Za Dragana Čadikovskega je to že 31. zadetek v prvi slovenski nogometni ligi, sicer pa drugi v letošnji sezoni (soc, Oct 3)
- 318 Tule je 28-letni Čeh, ki je mariborskega prvoligaša okrepil potem, ko je prišel iz Banika na Češkem (soc, Oct 3).
- 319 V napadu Damir Pekič in Bolgar Makriev (soc, May 2).
- 320 Senegalski Francoz ali francoski Senegalec, kakor koli hočete, temnopolti branilec s številko pet (soc, Aug 18).
- 321 Nogometaš Slonokoščene obale (soc, May 2, May 16).
- 322 Nogometaš iz Afrike (soc, May 2).
- 323 Že kot mladinec je prišel v Evropo, nič nenavadnega (soc, May 16).
- 324 Seveda še daleč od nastopanja za svojo reprezentanco, ki je ena izmed najboljših na svetu (soc, May 2).
- 325 Tu oba kapetana, oba tudi državna reprezentanta, Fabijan Cipot, branilec Maribora, in pa Ermin Rakovič, napadalec Domžal (soc, May 2).
- 326 Tu pa Darko Džukič, Ljubljčan (soc, May 2).
- 327 Tu pa Dejan Nemeč, eden številnih Prekmurcev na današnji tekmi (soc, May 2).
- 328 Po prekrasnem prostem strelu Primorca (soc, May 2).
- 329 Delilci pravice (soc, Oct 3).
- 330 Tule napačna odločitev stranskega sodnika (soc, Sep 26).
- 331 Potem je to velika napaka glavnega sodnika (soc, Sep 26).
- 332 To je dobro videl sodnik Matjaž Bohinc (soc, May 5).
- 333 Dobra odločitev sodnika Huselje (soc, May 16).

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334 Zdaj bi lahko vsem na igrišču zaželeli nekoliko več zbranosti v nadaljevanju (soc, Sep 26).

335 Žvižgi, ki jih slišite, so po mojem namenjeni vsem, ki so na igrišču, in Mariborčanom, in Koprčanom, in tudi vsem trem sodnikom (soc, Oct 3).

336 Tu pa Marijan Pušnik, kot rečeno v dvojni vlogi, recimo neke vrste angleški vlogi pri Mariboru – trener, kakor tudi športni direktor, torej menedžer (soc, May 2).

337 Pri Liverpoolu znajo to bolje (soc, May 2).

338 To sicer ni Liga prvakov, vendar pa si želimo, da bi ustrezno napredoval tudi slovenski nogomet, da bi videli kakovostne tekme z več tempa kot zdaj. V primerjavi s tekmami Lige prvakov nogometaši v Prvi ligi Telekom pretečejo približno polovico toliko; Gattuso in tovariši tam okrog 12 kilometrov, naši nogometaši nekaj manj (soc, May 2).

339 Damir Pekič, nekateri mu pravijo večni talent. Bolje večni talent kot nikakršni talent (soc, May 2).

340 Tu predstavitev izjemno obetavnega napadalca Hita Gorice Tima Matavža. In z zadnjimi moči jo je [žogo] poslal z igrišča Fabijan Cipot, sicer kapetan Mariborčanov (soc, May 5).

341 ... Je dobil priložnost v zaključku tega srečanja Tim Lo Duca, dobro znan domačim gledalcem, nogometaš, ki velja za izjemno obetavnega napadalca, kar je dokazoval tudi na tem stadionu, gre namreč za nekdanjega igralca ajdovskega Primorja. Tim Lo Duca je star šele 21 let in kot zelo perspektivnega napadalca ga je seveda želel imeti v svoji vrsti trener Slaviša Stojanovič, zato je po lanski sezoni tudi zapustil ajdovsko Primorje in se podal v domžalskega prvoligaša (soc, May 13).

342 Sedaj priložnost za Škerjanca ... Škerjanc ... Toda neodločnost domačega napadalca (soc, May 13).

343 Sedaj velika priložnost, Nikezič. Nikezič se je odločil zafintirati in potem strel, natančno v vratarja Marka Pridigarja. Huda napaka tokrat sicer mladega slovenskega reprezentanta Mirala Samardžiča, ki je izgubil žogo. Matavž je nesebično podal Nikeziču, ki je morda celo preveč okleval, želel preveč, na koncu pa ni več imel prave moči, streljal preveč po sredini vrat natančno v Marka Pridigarja (soc, May 5).

344 Teinovič ima dober *pass* (soc, May 13).

345 Dvoboj med dvema kluboma, ki sta vladala na slovenski nogometni sceni v zadnjih desetih letih. Aktualni prvaki Novogoričani proti izzivalcem iz Maribora. Dvoboj, ki je izjemno pomemben v boju za naslov slovenskega podprvaka v letošnjem prvenstvu. (...). Obe ekipi sta napovedali boj za zmago, domačini lov na plus pet, torej pet točk prednosti pred Mariborčani (soc, May 5).

346 (...) v četi Bojana Prašnikarja (soc, May 13).

347 Nevarnejši pa vsekakor gostitelji (soc, May 13).

348 Pet domžalskih nogometašev juriša proti trem domačim branilcem (soc, May 13).

349 In eni in drugi so napovedali igro na zmago in upajmo, da bomo videli veliko zadetkov (soc, Oct 3).



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<sup>350</sup> Še dobro, da smo videli zadetek za ena proti nič. Prav ta zadetek bo morda v nadaljevanju pomenil, da bodo morali Koprčani nekoliko bolj napadati in morda bomo zaradi tega spremljali zanimivejšo nogometno predstavo (soc, Oct 3).

<sup>351</sup> Igra se je povsem razživila. To za nas seveda pomeni še boljše, atraktivnejšo nogometno predstavo. Upajmo, da bo tako napeto in zanimivo vse do 90. minute (soc, Sep 26).

<sup>352</sup> Žinko ... Aljančič. Aljančič; Aljančič, podaja v kazenski prostor! Tam je bil Ljubijankič, poskusil je Kirm ...S številko 16 je Tomažič ... Tu Janez Aljančič ...Iz avta je metal Panikvar. Potem pa Tomažič, zdaj priprava napada. Na desni strani Popovič. Dolga podaja proti Makrievu, odbil je Elsner ... Aljančič ... Panikvar ... Aljančič ... Samardžič ... Panikvar ... Prekršek je napravil Jankovič ... Poglejte še enkrat, takole ga je s komolcem odrinil Jankovič ... In prekršek res Panikvarja. Lungu ... Lungu. Pa s številko 16 Tomažič ... Fondja. Senegalski Francoz ali francoski Senegalec, kakorkoli hočete, temnopolti branilec s številko 5. Zdaj Makriev, ali je to priložnost za Mariborčane? Makriev je v kazenskem prostoru. Makriev je padel v kazenskem prostoru. In kaj je dosodil Skomina? Ali je bil to prekršek za najstrožjo kazen? Zagotovo bomo videli to akcijo še enkrat ... Brezič pripravlja napad Domžal. Pa Apatič ... Elsner ... Aljančič ... Jankovič ... Ni še čas za ponovljeni posnetek akcije Makrieva. To je mariborski kapetan [Rene Mihelič]. Poglejmo še enkrat, Knezović je bil tisti, ki je odrinil Makrieva. In mirno bi lahko Skomina pokazal tudi na najstrožjo kazen (soc, Aug 18).

<sup>353</sup> Sodnik pušča prednost (soc, Aug 18).

<sup>354</sup> Prekršek nad Miheličem, vendar Skomina ni piskal (soc, Aug 18).

<sup>355</sup> Vendar tako kot je to jasno, vedno velja odločitev Skomine (soc, Aug 18).

<sup>356</sup> Ne prav veliko gledalcev danes v Ajdovščini, 600, morda 700. Nasploh (...) torej slab obisk v Ajdovščini (soc, May 13).

<sup>357</sup> Ne vem, če je 1000 gledalcev na derbiju slovenske lige. Seveda, to je tista slaba stran slovenskega nogometa, gledalcev ni in ni. Verjetno je več vzrokov, zakaj ni več obiskovalcev na tekmah slovenskega državnega prvenstva (soc, Aug 18).

<sup>358</sup> Zdaj poslušamo neokusno navijanje domačih navijačev. Zanje so Domžalčani seveda nekakšna zamenjava za Olimpijo, gostovanje kluba vsaj iz bližine glavnega mesta (soc, May 2).

<sup>359</sup> (...) Se tudi na tribunah nekaj dogaja. Nekaj domačih navijačev, če jim lahko tako rečemo, zdaj izzivajo gostujoče navijače oziroma ljubitelje nogometa, ki so prišli iz Ljubljane in okolice. V zadnjih minutah celo malce preveč pozornosti posvečamo temu, kaj se dogaja na tribunah, pogledjmo rajši, kaj se dogaja na igrišču (soc, May 2).

<sup>360</sup> Bolje bi bilo, če bi se ti navijači obrnili in spremljali tekmo, kot da izvajajo show, ki seveda ni zanimiv za nikogar (soc, Aug 18).

<sup>361</sup> Senegalski Francoz ali francoski Senegalec, kakor koli hočete (soc, Aug 18).

<sup>362</sup> (...) k našemu asu šprinta Maticu Osovnikarju (gym, Aug 18).

<sup>363</sup> Prva favoritinja naših za visoko uvrstitev (sw, Aug 9).

<sup>364</sup> Naše šampionke.

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- <sup>365</sup> Kot veste, bo naša reprezentanca odigrala prijateljsko tekmo s Črno Goro (soc, Aug 18).
- <sup>366</sup> Nočem biti škodoželjen, toda danes seveda navijam, sam in tudi cela Slovenija, za Primoža Kozmusa (ath, Aug 17).
- <sup>367</sup> Veseli nas, da Union Olimpija vodi devetintrideset [proti] šestintrideset (bb, Dec 13).
- <sup>368</sup> Tisti, ki lahko, pridite v Tivoli in skupaj s Krimovkami se bomo po šestem kolu veselili uvrstitve v četrtfinale (hb, Feb 17).
- <sup>369</sup> Držimo pesti in gremo po zmago (TV Slovenija, June 13, 2010).
- <sup>370</sup> Zdaj pa vsi skupaj stisnimo pesti in navijajmo (TV Slovenija, June 18, 2010).
- <sup>371</sup> Našeg boksera Svetomira Belića, dragi gledaoci, prepoznate po belim gaćicama, a njegovog protivnika Motungua iz Kenije po crnim gaćicama. (Sl. Našega boksarja Svetomirja Delića, dragi gledalci, boste prepoznali po belih kratkih hlačah, njegovega nasprotnika Motungua iz Kenije pa po črnih hlačah.)
- <sup>372</sup> Rojena v Vukovarju (sw, Aug 15).
- <sup>373</sup> Nastopa za našo severno sosedo (sw, Aug 15).
- <sup>374</sup> Tudi naši sosedje, hrvaški reporter, ki že dolgo let spremlja plavanje, je dejal: srebrna bo (sw, Aug 13).
- <sup>375</sup> Vrsto let igralec ajdovskega Primorja, pred tem pa je nosil tudi dres slavnega mostarskega nekdanjega prvoligaša jugoslovanske lige Veleža (soc, May 5).
- <sup>376</sup> Nekdaj zvezdnik Crvene zvezde in Partizana (soc, Oct 3).
- <sup>377</sup> Daniel Bailey je sicer iz Antilov, ampak iz državice Antigva. Antili so pač nekakšen otoški lok, Antigva pa mala državica, ki pa ima nekaj zelo dobrih šprinterjev tudi pri dekletih (ath, Aug 15).
- <sup>378</sup> Spet smo videli trg Tiananmen, ki je ostal v spomin mnogim po svetu po pokolu študentov pred desetletji, ko so takrat kitajske varnostne sile na zelo krvav način zatrle demonstracije kitajskih študentov. Nekaj sto so jih bojda pregazili kar s tanki in tako vzpostavili spet red in disciplino, ki velja še danes (ath, Aug 15).