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Mixed Messages: The Role of Media and Feminism in the Promotion of Sport for Women

How are we to understand the role of the media in the promotion of women's sport? How are we to understand the role of feminism in the promotion of women's sport? While these two questions are interesting and independent of one another, this investigation will focus on the complicated interconnections between these important avenues for promoting women's sport.

The analysis will be based on the investigation of several sources of evidence. First, a review of relevant literature on the role of media in the promotion of sport will be presented. Second, an assessment of contemporary mass media's coverage of women's sports will be conducted. Third, an analysis of feminist critiques on media coverage will be examined for its implication on women's sport. It will be an important aspect of this analysis to address the different motivations and aims of mass media and

feminism in the arena of women's sport. Finally, because the promotion of women's sport can be understood as a matter of social justice, a brief analysis of the historical processes for enacting social change will be introduced to contextualize feminist critiques of the media.

Several conclusions can be drawn from this evidence. First, by comparing the role of the media in promoting sport and actual media coverage of women's sport, it becomes evident that the media has underutilized its own resources for the promotion of women's sport. Second, by analyzing the role of media in promoting sport in relation to the feminist critiques of media, it seems that well-intentioned feminist critiques of media representations of women's sport have been in some measure a hindrance to the promotion of women's sport. Third, comparing the feminist critiques with other historical processes of enacting social change will be used to help identify opportunities for promoting women's sport (and social justice) that have not yet been implemented. Finally, despite different motivations for promoting women's sport, the interdependency of the media and feminist interests in promoting women's sport will be examined. The significance of this paper on the understanding of the history of sport goes beyond the conclusions above. The assessment of women's sport media coverage is historically important in its own right. Also, the juxtaposition of the media and feminist thought will help focus and influence future debates on these competing, yet mutually informing, aspects of promoting women's sport. The complicated history of women's sport is more fully known when the various factors in all their complexity and complicity are elucidated.
