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GENDER STEREOTYPES IN SPORTS DISCOURSE

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The article is devoted to the study of gender stereotypes in sports discourse. Despite the fact that institutional analysis has already penetrated gender studies, there are very few studies devoted to such a truly "masculine" activity as professional sports. This determines the relevance of the topic of this work. Sport as a social institution is an ideal opportunity to study male and female stereotypes. Gender stereotypes permeate every aspect of human personality and appearance, and dictate how men and women should act, think and behave. Gender embodies a pattern of relations that evolves over time to define masculinity and femininity, structuring and regulating people's relation to society. Gender stereotypes are especially clearly visible in professional sports. Professional sports is seen as an activity in which the differences between males and females are manifested, as well as the dominance of the former over the latter. The study was conducted on the material of sports press in the period from 2018–2023.

Keywords: *gender stereotypes, sports discourse, masculinity, femininity.*

Introduction

Gender decides what is expected, permitted and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. Gender roles and expectations are socially constructed and learned. They are likely to change over time and they differ within and between cultures. Some stereotypes about gender differences are common to all cultures such as ideas about aggression which is considered as a distinguishing feature of males, and weakness, obedience, sensuality as characteristic features of females (Knyazyan, 2015). No doubt, the world is filled with different ideas about gender – and these ideas are so usual that we take them for granted. It goes without saying that gender issues are opposed to the problem of gender stereotypes in society (Knyazyan, 2018). The objective of our research is to investigate gender

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stereotypes in sports discourse from the gender perspective. The importance of the sports discourse study is confirmed by the fact that sporting events increasingly reflect social and political processes, therefore, strategies of speech behavior form certain media images to present an objective picture of the world or to manipulate public opinion. The methodological basis of the study is an interdisciplinary combination of discursive, linguocultural and gender approaches. The methods used in the work include content and linguopragmatic analyses. To achieve these objectives, we use a dataset from various UK Sports News Websites Blogs, and newspapers: *The Guardian*; *The Independent*; *The Mirror*; *Sky Sports*, *World in Sport*; *The Sporting Blog - Interviews, Stories, Opinions & Reviews*; *Boxing New*. In total, about 400 contexts were selected.

In the age of new technologies, women keep pace with the “stronger sex”. This is reflected not only in clothing and behavior, but also in the entire lifestyle in general. Nowadays there is practically no field of activity that a woman has not mastered. Progress has not bypassed such a mass phenomenon as sport. More and more female athletes are appearing in the pages of the press. Many of them, despite their young age and fragility, have achieved no less success in the sports field than men. The language of the sports press is a special language that uses a number of special means. In order to captivate the reader and make the message more vivid and effective, many journalists use unusual images and even invent new words, very often resorting to traditionally established stereotypes.

The relevance of such a study lies in the fact that with the development of electronic and print media, sport received the name of “mass culture”. If earlier sport was a purely male sport, today there are more and more female athletes. For this reason, one of the promising areas of modern linguistics is the study of gender vocabulary in sports discourse. Such research seems especially relevant when it comes to written types of discourse, since in this way it is possible to trace the development and change in the meaning of a particular lexical unit, the change or preservation of stereotypes.

Modern gender theory does not try to dispute the existence of certain biological, social, psychological differences between women and men. The gender approach is based on the idea that what is important is not the physical differences between men and women, but the cultural and social meaning that society attaches to these differences. Gender studies do not simply describe the difference in roles and other aspects of the lives of men and women, but analyze the power and dominance asserted in society through gender roles and relationships (Gapova, 2000).

The concept and main functions of stereotypes

Stereotype is any widely held public belief about a certain social group or an individual. Stereotypes are often confused with prejudices, because, like

prejudices, a stereotype is based on a prior assumption. Almost every culture or race has a stereotype. Nevertheless, stereotypes are not just focused on different races and backgrounds. Gender stereotypes also exist. For example, if you say that men are better at math than women, you're stereotyping all men and all women.

There are three groups of gender stereotypes (Eckes, 1994):

- Stereotypes of masculinity-femininity which are associated with personality traits. Men and women are assigned very specific psychological qualities and personality traits. Different types of temperaments and styles of behavior are imposed. Typically feminine qualities are passivity, indecision, dependence, lack of logical thinking, lack of aspirations for achievement, and emotionality. Masculine qualities include activity, aggressiveness, determination, desire to compete, achieve, and low emotionality. Sport fosters personality traits that are stereotypically perceived as masculine.
- Gender stereotypes concern the consolidation of family and professional roles in accordance with gender. It is customary to evaluate men by their professional success, and women by the presence of a family and children. While men are expected to be achievement-oriented, women are expected to be people-oriented and strive to form close interpersonal relationships. Thus, sport, in which achievement is very important, is not consistent with the image of femininity.
- Gender stereotypes are associated with differences in the content of labor and the nature of the work performed (female sphere - expressive, male - instrumental). Hence the division of sports into "male" and "female" arises. Those that require gentleness, emotionality, and artistry are considered favorable for women's activities.

In any society the ideal man is seen as confident, strong, competent, stable, tough, ambitious, brave, insensitive, aggressive. The ideal woman is seen as emotional, warm, affectionate, kind, polite, caring, sensitive, friendly, gentle, and soft and is the follower. These stereotypes may cause dangerous consequences that limit a person's full potential and well-being. Because of these stereotypes men and women are made to ignore their personality traits, unique characteristics that make them who they are (Eckes, 1994). The following gender stereotypes are most widespread in any culture and society : *"women are only concerned about their appearance; blonds are stupid; men are insensitive; women are bad drivers; men love sports; women love shopping and gossiping; women aren't as smart as a man; women are not good at sports; men are untidy; women make less money than men; women are supposed to be submissive; men are brave and confident; women are supposed to cook, do housework and take care of children; men enjoy working on cars; as husbands, men tell their wives what to do; men work in technical fields;*

men do not cook, sew". All these gender stereotypes mentioned above exist in every society and culture (Hoffman & Hurst, 1990). They are the fundamental facts of social life and human differences. Gender stereotypes reproduce naturalized gender differences and sustain male dominance and female subordination. Men and women have different status and play different roles, thus they have different duties and different rights. Gender differences own a rich cultural background, historical connotation and profound social reality, reflect the social psychology and cultural value orientation. For a long time men were considered as the dominators of the status and power. They ruled the external world and went out to make a living, while women were considered to be weak and only did activities in the family. Females' duty was to serve husband, children, do housework, and they didn't take part in social activities.

The influence of mass information on people's consciousness is often achieved through stereotypes. In the media, the formation of a stereotype goes through three stages: leveling, strengthening and assimilating. First, a complex differentiated object is reduced to several ready-made, well-known features, and then the selected characteristics of the object are given special significance. Finally, the aligned and enhanced features of the object are selected to build an image that is close and meaningful to the individual. A person accustomed to the situation reacts automatically. The intensity of the reaction will depend on the intensity of the emotional impact, on the art of manipulating stereotypes (O'Hara, 2012).

Researchers do not have a clear view of the nature of the stereotype. Some believe that the stereotype of public consciousness is always specially organized. It depends on the tasks of socialization, and not on the nature of perception. Others place importance on sensory experience in forming a stereotype. Still others, who believe that the stereotype was formed spontaneously, emphasize that they are supported consciously, with the help of special and historical judgments that gradually permeate all areas of life (Cameron, 1996). Despite its "survivability," the stereotype is not eternal. It is formed under the influence of two factors: unconscious collective processing and the individual sociocultural environment, as well as targeted ideological influence with the help of the media. Among the first-order conditions are the level of education, intelligence, personal experience, as well as norms, habits, social roles, and living environment. Considering the social functions of a stereotype, people easily give rude and biased assessments to others. These characteristics are stable over a long period of time. And they change depending on social and political changes, but this process occurs extremely slowly. A social stereotype becomes more pronounced and hostile when hostility arises between groups. Very often, children learn about stereotypes very early and use them long before they develop clear ideas about the groups to which they belong (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Stereotypes form the basis of myths. The media in any society, using the method of stereotyping, introduce various myths and illusions into the minds of readers (Azhgikhina, 2001). To consolidate stereotypes in the minds of the masses, the same words and phrases are repeated persistently, and in the end they become symbols. Press stereotypes are also expressed in clichés. In the process of stereotyping language carries a large propaganda load. With its help, an emotional, negative or positive attitude towards an object or phenomenon is formed. Thus, stereotyping in the media leads to manipulation of public opinion. Since the 60s, research into stereotypical ideas about the abilities of men and women, their competence in various fields of activity and the reasons for their professional success has become increasingly popular. In accordance with gender role stereotypes, a good performance of a task, a high result in something achieved by a man, is most often explained by his abilities, whereas exactly the same result achieved by a woman is explained by her efforts, random luck or other unstable reasons. When explaining a woman's success, the factor of effort is most often considered as unstable and generally has some negative connotation, while in relation to a man's professional success this factor is interpreted as stable and has a positive assessment.

Today, in the modern world, the pace of life has noticeably increased, and the flow of information has increased, therefore stereotypes are of great importance for the normal functioning of society and the person in it, because, first of all, they perform the function of "economy of thinking", contribute to a certain "shortening" of the process of cognition and understanding what is happening in the world and around a person, as well as making the necessary decisions. Their role in communication processes in general is extremely great: they consolidate information about homogeneous phenomena, facts, objects, processes, people, etc.; allow people to exchange information, understand each other, participate in joint activities, develop common views, the same value orientation, and a common worldview; accelerate the emergence of a behavioral reaction based primarily on emotional acceptance or non-acceptance of information. If we compare the female and male images in the sports press, we get the following picture:

Masculine image: a set of traits associated with authority and activity, efficiency, and so on. Men are presented in business, formal or informal attire. Men are most often associated with success. The facial expression of men is neutral or serious. **Female image:** a typical female image includes a number of traits associated with passivity, excessive emotionality, and social and communication skills. Women are presented with an interested attitude towards the clothes they wear and the gestures that correspond to them. Women have a more friendly facial expression; they are most often presented smiling (Dudareva, 2003).

Thus, the images of men and women appear to us as quite stereotypical, and the majority believe these images. Gender stereotypes are a phenomenon that distorts mass consciousness and hinders the development of society as a whole. Today, when we have entered the 21st century, centuries-old gender stereotypes are outdated, but they are still very tenacious. Therefore, it is very important that the media do not reinforce these stereotypes, but help change them.

Analysis of gender stereotypes in sports press

Sport is a complex social phenomenon that affects various manifestations of modern social life, such as economics, politics, art, education, and healthcare. Sport is a popular, complex, multi-valued social phenomenon that occupies a very important place in public life. Sports discourse is very often intertwined with other types of discourse, for example, sports and business (a contract between a coach or an athlete), sports and advertising, sports and law. Among the genres listed above, oral and written can be distinguished: articles about competition participants, athletes' diaries, various kinds of sports announcements, comments on sports competitions, sports sites on the Internet. Like any social phenomenon, sport is reflected in human communicative activity, i.e. language.

Sports discourse is characterized by a whole system of features, in the center of which is mass participation, as a basic feature reflecting the connection of sport with social institutions. Sports discourse occurs between participants in a sports event (Holowchak, 2002).

Sports media is an integral part of any modern person, even if he/she is not interested in sports. Events such as the World Cup and the Olympic Games have become phenomena of popular culture and affect the lives of many people. The media basically creates our ideas about sports. When a sporting event takes place somewhere far away, in another country, the media become the only source of information. The integration of sporting events and television has become so ubiquitous and accepted that we do not notice the great influence that television and other media have on the games. Despite the fact that television has a strong influence on sports, sports competitions and mass media is by no means a new type of relationship.

Sports discourse is a multi-level communicative constructor. It reflects the communicative intentions of sports subjects - athletes, coaches, competition referees, sports administrators, fans, both real (spectators of sports competitions) and virtual (TV viewers and radio listeners receiving visual and auditory information about a sporting event through television and radio), as well as sports commentators who provide fans with detailed information about the sporting event. Big sport, being one of the most important manifestations of modern mass culture,

has powerful entertainment potential. The latter is a necessary condition for not only presenting sports competitions, but also values, patterns of behavior and gender stereotypes. By gender stereotypes we mean ideas about masculinity and femininity formed in the culture of a given society, which imply opinions about the qualities, attributes and patterns of behavior of both sexes. Despite the fact that sport is a masculine activity, the media portrays male and female athletes in traditional gender roles. Sexism is individual prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behavior towards representatives of one gender or another. Sports media often reduces women to the level of sex objects. Most of the space and time that the media devotes to sports is taken up by information about men's sports. Of the sports in which women participate, those that are more feminine, such as figure skating, receive more media coverage. Reports on men's sports are dominated by descriptions of physical strength and dominance. When it comes to women's sports, descriptions often revolve around appearance, attractiveness, grace, and little mention of strength. As a rule, a male athlete is presented as physically strong and dominant, while a female athlete is described as attractive, graceful and passive. Such sports where women can show artistry, emotionality, grace (that is, traditionally feminine qualities) are: figure skating, synchronized swimming, gymnastics, etc. Among the sports that are dangerous for women are those that mostly require masculine traits and behavior: boxing, weightlifting, wrestling, ski jumping, etc. Men are more likely portrayed as powerful, heroic images. Their actions are described as *attacking, winning, crushing, beating, dominating, battling, taking control, ripping up*, while women are presented as *fashionable, sexy, charming, dynamic, enigmatic* personalities. They are often called simply by name or *young lady, girl or big girl*. Such nominations diminish the role of women in sports. Masculinity in sports is praised, while femininity is an alien element. UK Sports News Websites Blogs provide evidence confirming the difference in the linguistic representation of men and women in sports discourse: a woman is not perceived as a subject of sport. Women's sport gets gender labeling as insignificant. In the language of coaches and players, there is a glorification of masculine characteristics, the possession of which leads to a good game. Coaches and athletes quite often use phrases like "*This is a man's game!*", "*If you haven't got the balls for it, there's a women's team you can play in.*" On the other hand, phrases related to femininity are intended as insults. You can often hear phrases like "*I'm a Referee, Not a Female Referee*", "*Man up*", "*Play Like a Girl*", "*Stop playing like a pussy*", "*Get back in the kitchen*" on the playing field. Masculine behavior becomes the gold standard of what athletes should strive for.

An analysis of newspaper sports discourse has shown the dominance of information about male athletes. When creating the image of a male athlete, the following is emphasized:

1) physical ability:

“Endowed with exceptional qualities, with the ball in his boots he is unpredictable, unexpected, magical, devastating and accurate.”

“Despite his young age, his 1.83 m. tall and 75 kg. weight have made him a big star.”

“He is the ‘crack’ of world football and the successor of the great stars of the eighties.”

“Zinedine is fast, physically powerful and has exceptional technical quality and game vision. He usually scores a good number of goals thanks to his very hard shot”.

2) skills:

“Considered one of the most talented players on the circuit, he is also known for his continuous lack of concentration on the court. He has one of the best services on the circuit, capable of reaching 230 km/h and stands out for its good stroke.”

“He is one of the most successful footballers in the history of this sport and is considered one of the best forwards in the history of world football, the great figure, the best player in the world.”

“...it’s phenomenal.”

“...one of the best soccer players of all time. He is included in the list of the 125 greatest living players.”

“The Best European Footballer of the Last 50 Years.”

“Zidane was a midfielder with great technique, beautiful, with great vision of the game and great touches.”

3) psychological qualities, the description of which includes an assessment:

“...he had cold blood, as well as exquisite quality...”; “...in love with his qualities as a player and as a person, including his modesty...”; “A shy and introverted person, thanks to his personal effort.”

4) aggressiveness, the ability to suppress an opponent:

“The offender”; “The beast”; “...it is among the best now and ever”; “...leave K.O. (knock-out)”; “...like an enraged tiger”; “...his rival was left without the possibility of winning.”

Sometimes metaphors and similes are used to describe the athletes: *...the king of football was out; he has been left with honey on his lips on two occasions;...the*

king of the earth;...floats like a butterfly, stings like a bee; ...conquered those of Berlin, Los Angeles, Montreal and Tokyo;...took the reins of the party; Rome is left without its queen; ...seed №13.

The experience of athletes plays an important role in sports: *the master of his craft; he trained in tennis; my triumphs are many years of permanent work; the old dog.*

Men are most often described in action, to emphasize their strength and athleticism: *...deals the decisive blow; ...corner kick; ...with an impressive volley; ...he landed two very hard blows.*

Very often the press places emphasis on the highly paid athletes: *The most expensive signing in the history of football; The highest paid in the world; ...Golden Fleece.*

Social activities and charity are also in the spotlight of the press: *Zidane is a UN ambassador in the fight against hunger;...allocated \$1,000,000 to the Peace Fund; ...he participated in the inauguration of the Center for orphans.*

Physical strength is becoming the most important attribute of women's sports in our time, as evidenced for the presentation of female athletes: *She is a strong Russian professional tennis player; ...her tremendous physical strength.*

The professional qualities of women are very common in the pages of the English press: *...kept a wonderful record; ...her game is not an imitation of any player"; ...obtaining the silver medal in the individual category; ...developed a strong and intelligent game; ...be the first in its category in junior; ...will become the next number one in the world; The Russian racket tennis player in history; ...a great honor to become number one; It is a dream that every woman who embarks on a career in professional tennis has; The beautiful Russian tennis player; ...she was overwhelmed; ...Colgate smile; ...skinny as a noodle.*

In UK Sports News attention is drawn to marital status and the family as a whole: *Mother; The daughter; The woman; ...my family is the important thing in my life; ...my son is everything to me,* which indicates the maintenance of traditional views on the social role of women.

Unlike articles about male athletes, "women's" articles pay attention to the emotions of female athletes to show that, despite sports, a woman remains a woman and cannot always control her feelings: *...a great honor to become number one; It is a dream that every woman who embarks on a career in professional tennis has; Safina screamed, she got angry with herself; I was trying to control my emotions; I was tense; ...made people shout for joy; I need energy and emotion to play better; But I just couldn't stand this pain; ...he left with tears in his eyes; It wasn't that easy for me at the beginning; ...he was never in danger and showed himself superior to his rival.*

They also touch on the topic of defeat: *...she was the last of the favorites to fall; ... fell from third place in the world ranking to fifth on Monday; ...today he said goodbye to the possibility of revalidating his victory; ...made too many mistakes; ...running out of a trophy; ...fell before the Russian; ...did not face the shock; ...she was successful; ...losing the first set in the tie-break.*

The above-mentioned examples allow us to emphasize the important role of newspaper sports discourse in the construction of dominant models of masculinity and femininity in modern mass culture. Despite the fact that currently women in sports can provide significant competition to men, the influence of stereotypes is clearly visible throughout the analysis of sports articles. Even if a female athlete has achieved high results, journalists still focus on her weaknesses, shortcomings, and her emotions. As for male athletes, strength and masculinity come to the fore in their descriptions, while shortcomings most often remain in the shadows. According to the press, women most often, starting from childhood, achieve success thanks to the support and help of influential friends and relatives, while men do so due to their strength and perseverance. The above examples once again confirm the stereotype about the “weaker” and “strong” sexes. It was formed many centuries ago and will live for thousands of years, which indicates that stereotypes are, in most cases, eternal.

Conclusion

The strongest factor in the formation of public consciousness is the media of mass communication. They reinforce certain concepts and stereotypes in the public consciousness. In the modern world, the pace of life has noticeably increased, and so has the flow of information, so stereotypes play an important role in the process of functioning of society and people in it, because, first of all, they contribute to the understanding of everything that happens in the world and around a person, as well as the adoption of the necessary decisions. A study conducted on gender stereotypes in sports discourse showed that the mass media write in much greater detail and more often about men’s sports than about women’s sports; most of sports reports are about men’s sports. Men’s sports and competitions attract more spectators than women’s sports. However, there is a complex relationship between reporting and fan interest. Only in professional tennis and the Olympics do mass media broadcast reports from women’s competitions and female athletes receive as much attention as men. Even in reports about women athletes, the event is described asymmetrically, and practically no attention is paid to such “male” attributes as strength and success. Female athletes are more likely than male athletes to be referred to by name, and their strengths are described in ambivalent terms, such as “*small but very effective*”, “*a big girl*”, “*her little quick kick*”.

In articles about male athletes, such lexemes as *strength, masculinity, aggressiveness, diligence, willpower* predominate. Particular attention is paid to victory over an opponent (stereotype - a man is a winner and a hunter), physical qualities, patriotism. These aspects have remained masculine at all times. As for female athletes, we can observe a significant decrease in the description of physical qualities. The attention is paid to the beauty and marital status of the athletes. Almost every article contains a description of feelings and emotions. This confirms the stereotype that throughout time a woman is a mother, a housewife, fragile and tender, and sometimes very sentimental.

In conclusion, we would like to note that over time, the way of our lives is changing, and women are increasingly becoming equal to men. The “weaker sex” does men’s work, wears men’s clothes, and even borrows many typically “male” habits. In sports, as in everyday life, women stand on the same line as the stronger sex. But no matter how progress influences us in the consciousness of any person, a woman always remains a woman, with her own weaknesses. Stereotypes are ingrained in us from childhood and haunt us throughout our lives.

Thus, we can conclude that, despite the fact that in our time men and women are equal in sports, stereotypes regarding both sexes remain in people’s minds.

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Աննա Կնյազյան
Լուսինն Հայթյան

Հողվածը նվիրված է գենդերային կարծրատիպերի ուսումնասիրությանը սպորտային դիսկուրսում որպես հանրամշակութային և լեզվաբանական երևույթ: Նկարագրվում են կարծրատիպերի տեսակները, հատկությունները և գործառույթները: Կարծրատիպերից շատերը շարունակում են ապրել՝ չնայած այն բանին, որ վաղուց դադարել են արտացոլել հասարակության իրական վիճակը: Դրանք ըստ էության վերածվել են կանանց և տղամարդկանց վարքի չափանմուշների, որոնց շնորհիվ ստեղծվում է տվյալ մշակույթին բնորոշ բարոյական փոխհարաբերությունների տիպը կանանց և տղամարդկանց միջև: Ավանդաբար, կարծրատիպ այսելով, հասկանում են ինչ-որ կաղապար, որի հիման վրա տեղի է ունենում տեղեկատվության ընկալումն ու գնահատումը: Մարդկանց գիտակցության մեջ գոյություն ունեն որոշակի կարծրատիպեր, որոնք կայուն հատկանիշներ են վերագրում տղամարդկանց և կանանց: Հասարակության կողմից պարտադրվող որոշ կարծրատիպերի արտահայտությունը կարելի է հստակորեն տեսնել սպորտային դիսկուրսում: Գենդերային կարծրատիպերը հատկապես հստակ տեսանելի են պրոֆեսիոնալ սպորտում: Պրոֆեսիոնալ սպորտը դիտվում է որպես գործունեություն, որտեղ դրսևորվում են տղամարդկանց և կանանց միջև տարբերությունները, ինչպես նաև առաջինի գերակայությունը երկրորդի նկատմամբ: 2018-2023թթ. սպորտային մամուլի բովանդակության վերլուծության հիման վրա վեր են հանվել թեմաներ, որոնցում արտացոլված են կանանց և տղամարդկանց բնորոշ գծերի կամ գործողությունների վերաբերյալ ամենատարածված կարծրատիպային պատկերացումները:

Բանալի բառեր՝ *գենդերային կարծրատիպեր. սպորտային դիսկուրս, իզականություն, արականություն:*