Public Perceptions, Sport Ideologies and Journalism.

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Title: **PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS, SPORTS IDEOLOGIES AND JOURNALISM**

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Abstract

This paper examines the public images that sports journalists in San Luis, Argentina and sport ideologies to understand how these images influence the agenda in the development and news sources. We were working with qualitative tools interviewing a small group of sport journalist (25) of the central region of Argentina.

We examine how influences the construction of the news and on the other hand the public image of sports journalists seek to establish what the ideas of local sports journalism sport as adjunctive ingredient in news processing. The idea of knowing who believe that journalists are directed - learn about their perceptions of the public, in contexts where public are not fully known and consider which are the imaginary and sports beliefs is novel in the literature on communication and contributes to studies news production, sociology of issuers. A broad idea of polysemic concept of "sport" understood this as culture

Images and sports journalists imaginary influence and determine the production of sports news in the media.

Key words: Perception, audiences, sport ideologies, journalists

Introduction

Traditional media have been thoroughly studied from the most varied perspectives and theories. Traditionally, journalism studies has supported that ambiguous and conventional premise stating that the radio has to report events, the television has to show them and

newspapers have to explain them lately. The media influence our life in many different ways, they produce "ideas of reality" and they are mediators between the different social groups and publics created or that "are created" by their own action. Marita Mata (2003) has pointed out that we live in a "society of publics". Today we speak of active audiences, the power of the audience and their ability to participate in emerging media - online - from their mobile devices by Internet.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the influence of image of audience and the influence of sports ideologies in the construction and contents of their sport agendas. Here we report as the public images of sports journalists in San Luis, Argentina and how sport ideologies influence the agenda of programs and news sources. We were working with qualitative tools interviewing a small group of sport journalist (25) of the central region of Argentina.

We examine how influences the construction of the news and on the other hand the public image of sports journalists seek to establish what the ideas of local sports journalism sport as adjunctive ingredient in news processing. The idea of knowing who believe that journalists are directed - learn about their perceptions of the public, in contexts where public are not fully known and consider which are the imaginary and sports beliefs is novel in the literature on communication and contributes to studies news production, sociology of issuers.

News and Social Construction of Reality

Information can be defined as a way to construct social reality made up of different factors according to the paradigms adopted by reporters. The news is a social construction and is imbricated by newsworthiness condiments and productive routines even when journalists have stubbornly resisted this idea. The construction of social reality has been defined by several specialists like the production of sense by means of the action of productive practices, the organization routines of the journalistic production and professional specialized in the production of fiction (Saperas, 1987:149). Newsworthiness, productive routines and sources have been recurrently pointed out by the specialized bibliography like the elements deserving the attention of journalism specialists and communication researchers to learn how news is built. The construction of social reality has also been defined like the production of sense by means of the action of productive practices, the organization routines of the journalistic production and professional specialized in the production of fiction (Saperas, 1987: 149) and Luckman (1979:75) have highlighted that the habituation comes before any

institutionalization and institutionalization itself is made when a reciprocal classification of habitual actions done by social actors takes place. Habits, institutionalization and classification of actions combine themselves to elaborate the news. Nevertheless, there exists an unsteady relation between the journalists' professional culture and the elements of newsworthiness and the sources activity where the organization of work in the media and the elements of professional culture are linked and they exhibit the set of qualities necessary for the events to be presented by journalists as mediators between reality and the news. But, what is newsworthiness? Newsworthiness is established by the set of qualities demanded to the events to be transformed into current public occurrences; that is to say, to appear in the public agenda through the media like "news events".

Nevertheless, many years ago, Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948) talked about the functions of the media: status, restatement of social norms and their narcotic malfunction. The media confer categories on people, organizations, public subjects or subjects belonging to the community and social movements. They also restate social norms and display information flows doping rather that quickening their audiences (Lazarsfeld y Merton, 1948 and Moragas Spa 1982:177-180). Besides, they have enlightened us about how the transformations of the time and space of organizations originate unknown ways to exercise the power and new forms of action and interaction produced by the use of the media (Thompson, 1998:17).

The Study of news

According to Saperas (1987), the study of the news was originated in *phenomenological sociology* created by Alfred Shutz during 1940 and 1950. These studies gave birth to various developments like Peter Berger and Tomas Luckman's sociophenomenology and Aaron V. Cicourel's (Saperas 1987:145) ethnomethodology carried out in communicative research.

Gaye Tuchman (1983) write the incredible *"Making News: a study in the construction of reality"* as of interesting study and contributions of journalist sociologist and a pioneer study of the news in the American context. Tuchman (1983) has studied those elements that are characteristic of the events lately transformed in news and analyses the work that establishes the journalists' productive routines, the relation between the different media, communication companies and the market of information and more recently, the image of the public had by the journalists. Tuchman (1983) saw the news as a window on the world, news a frame and stressing news as knowledge.

Giorgio Rossi is known as a remarkable investigator on the studies about cognitive effects, the role played by journalists and the news as a means of everyday knowledge. Grossi identifies three causes motivating the development of these studies:

- The study of the cognitive dimension of the mass media expressed in a higher interest towards the observation of the professionals' activity and their behavior in the presence of current events.

- The media events, happenings, have a referentiality function and an own collective symbolism due to the presence of the media and its journalistic treatment determining the events known publicly.

- The investigation about the journalist and the social function integrated to the study of the effects where the theories dealing with social construction of reality contributes with new views to solve the duality reality-information as well as debating the subject of objectivity within the framework of the contributions of sociophenomenology and ethnomethodology (Grossi, 1985.37 and Saperas 1987:48).

The journalistic work and the elaboration of reality done by the media have been subjected to several analyses from the framework known as sociology of transmitters and the newsmaking. The newsmaking is the generic name given to a set of contemporary studies joining two tendencies of analysis: the sociologic one and a tendency called communicative. The newsmaking essentially proposes to study about transmitters and productive processes of mass communication. It examines the journalists' professional culture, the organization of work and the productive processes giving rise to the study of these phenomena to produce a wide number of investigations beginning from the trend of investigation named sociology of transmitters that examines the news production in the media.

The most outstanding investigators in this field are Tuchman (1983), Golding-Elliot (1979), Golding-Murdock (1978), Gans (1970, 1979), Fishman (1980) and Grossi (1985). Wolf (1996:203) states that the communicational informational model placing the attention on the study of the message and its effects neglected studying the communicators. According to the author this shift in acknowledgement is due to the recognition of social centrality of the media and to the shift of the communicative theory with two basic perspectives: on the one hand a perspective where the producer is perceived as a middleman moving between different and continuous negotiations and on the other a perspective referred by the studies analyzing the

logic of the processes with the organization of work where "the construction of messages" takes place (Wolf, 1996:203).

In addition to this, the conception of journalists as mediators and speakers of "the reality" they perceive and the publics to whom they address have become a subject of attention and investigation for the specialists in communication. Journalists are perceived as makers of reality because they choose which events will be included in the media agenda. This construction of social reality done by the media and the journalists has been distinguished as the production of sense by means of the action of productive practices, the organization routines of the journalistic production and professional specialized in the production of fiction (Saperas, 1987:149). We also recognize as antecedents within this trend of study, the analyses about gatekeeper (a controller). Within this field we find the studies about filter zones under the control of rules codes of the gatekeepers themselves. The studies done by Kurt Lewin (1947) and White (1950) are taken as paradigms within this line of investigation. These studies linked the media to the news selection work done by the news controller.

The studies about "involuntary distortion" where the investigative attention is placed *"on the image of the social reality provided by the media with an organization and an everyday production of the journalistic devices"* (Wolf, 1996: 208) have resulted in a minority line in this trend of analyses.

Generally speaking, the above mentioned points of view have been transformed from a merely quantitative vision to the development of a qualitative vision where the media and the journalists are seen from this investigative frame that provides another view about the phenomena previously examined and contributes to enrich the object of study.

Rosa Martín Sabaris (1999:196) posed a qualitative study about news production examining the relations between the image of the world shown by the information services belonging to the Spanish television, the daily demands of the journalistic organization and the journalists' professional culture.

Other studies about the news from another trend of investigation have shown a treatment from different perspectives; for example, the news has been studied as discourse (Van Dijk, 1996). Van Dijk has warned about the different theoretical and ideological points of view employed that provide a critical evaluation of the media and the news production in general but place the accent on the ideological nature of the reconstruction medias makes of social reality. The

previously mentioned points of view function as reproductive patterns of dominant forces and current ideologies.

Aims of the research

However, knowledge about the influence of image of audience and the ideology of journalist the influence of sports ideologies in the construction and contents of their agendas has not been sufficiently investigated. The image of the public as an influence in the production of information: the effects of the images of publics on the journalist and its influence on the news production has not been worthy of the privileged attention from specialists in communication and the trend named sociology of transmitters and that is the reason why it has captivated the investigative interest to treat this topic.

By means of this paper, we pretend to know public perceptions, sports ideologies in sport journalism in a small groups of the sports journalists of San Luis; Argentina and how this view influence on news elaboration, who their sources are and what their own ideas are about sports. We were working with qualitative tools interviewing a small group of sport journalist (25) of the central region of Argentina.

On one hand, we aspire to examine how "the sport journalists' perceptions of public" influences on the construction of the news and on the other hand, what sport ideologies had the sport journalist as a concomitant ingredient on news elaboration. This aim to know to whom journalists address, recognize their perception of the public – in a context where publics are not completely known – and consider the sports unrealities and beliefs understanding sport as culture, contributes on the one hand to studies of news production which have forgotten and poorly inquired about how these journalist's "perceptions of public" influence the sport agenda.

Historical Development of Sport

Sport has strongly influenced and interacted in the knowledge of man through his virtue to generate communication and to determine the informative process of the media creating a journalistic and communicative specialty. It has been pointed out that sport has been the most relevant cultural phenomenon in contemporary society. The sport is marvelous but it is not innocent (Eichberg, 1998).

In 1900, the Lumiere brothers' invention arrived at the Olympic Games of Paris (1900) and later in the Olympic Games of Berlin (1936) an experimental demonstration of the new

technology of television was carried out. The process of arrival of the new media to the sports went on constantly until the present day with the coming of webcasting. The Olympic phenomenon is a wide and rich field for social investigation transcending the merely rigid sport frames and Olympism as well as sport in a general meaning erect themselves as points of view from where we can recognize and rethink these social phenomena.

In the approach towards the field sports-media, we find:

- The history, communication, sociology and psychology elements and the connection of sport.
- The sport as social science and a mass media phenomenon and its synergies.
- The interaction and contradiction between sport spectacle and the popular games of a small towns.
- Sport as a social ritual with the dramatization (Rodríguez, 1995:8).
- The elements of identity and popular culture.

Modern sport has been considered as a relevant phenomenon of the 20th century. In spite of having been born in England in the 19th century as an expression of distinction of the higher classes, sport comes to professionalism during the 20th century as a counterproposal of amateurism and the traditional mass media (newspapers, radio, television) that consider it as a news ingredient of great influence, value and interest for a large sector of the audiences. The media have been allies from the birth of sport with a different force and influence. In the first modern Olympic Games in Athens (Greece) in 1896 the covering was done by newspapers and magazines and later the cinema. In 1936 during the Olympic Games of Berlin, the television appeared as an experiment. The modern sport that comes from the game has a strong Anglo-Saxon content (Elias-Dunning, 1992) and it has been considered as a consequence of the development of the capitalist productive forces resulting from the decrease in the working day, urbanization and modernization of transports (Brohm, Jean-Marie 1993:48). The process of standardization, globalization and systematization has made possible an increasing presence in the mass communication media and has turned the relation between sports and the media in a phenomenon intimately bound. Miquel de Moragas Spa (1998) talks about the *synergies* created between communications and sport and distinguishes four main levels of symbolic sport practice in contemporary society: sport as physical activity, sport as entertainment, sport in the mass media and virtual sport.

There are undoubtedly different definitions of sport and different classifications. The word *sport* turns out to be a polysemic concept and not a word defining a unique concept. In this matter, the Italian sport specialist Ferruccio Antonelli has pointed out that *"any human activity can be called sport if it includes three integrated elements: play, agonism and movement*[7]*"* and the argentine researcher María Rodríguez (1995) has classified sport into: sport as physical education, sport as output, sport as part of the community and sport as entertainment. In an analysis about the development of sport in European societies, Bart Crum (2001:10) states that the sport culture of society is the consequence of the internal differentiation in the bosom of sport and it has as distinct signs two opposite developments: "the sportification of sport" and "the de-sportification" of sport. Crum (2001:11) points out that in post-modern culture observing is the most important form of perception and the new media turn out to be catalysts and distributors of new fashions, images and styles of life. The sport as entertainment or mediatic sport or "non sport" (Moragas Spa, 1998) appears as opposite to the traditional sense of sport as physical activity (Moragas Spa, 1998) and the sport as culture. Nevertheless, new synergies have been established between the media and sport and especially between television and sport. At present, the sport of the 21st century travel through the ideology of entertainment. The television and sport seem to have been created for each other. They go together to dressing rooms, tracks, screens and stadiums. The presence of sport on the Argentine television has strongly increased in the last years.

The screens cover not only the most traditional sports like soccer, boxing and motoring but also the national team games, the world volleyball league, Latin American soccer cups, the NBA, the World Championships, the Pan American Games and the Olympic Games. The relation between TV and sport is so intimate that it has changed some regulations. The NBA was demanded to have more dead times to include more commercials; the *tie-break* was created in tennis to shorten the matches; the *rally point* system in volleyball allows to add points in spite of not having the service and the feminine teams wear attractive and reduced singles; and even soccer players have to change their singles to improve the line of sight. The process and connection between the organized sport and the most important sport federation was increased in the last year. A small group of world sports organizations brings together major sponsor companies and sell the TV rights from the sport turned an attractive element for the audience. Corruption cases have grown in world sport, the most paradigmatic case is the corruption scandal of Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA).

Sport Journalism

Within the conception of specialized journalistic information, the phenomenon of specialization in its infrastructure is also taken into account. Since 1976 we witness a constant growth in sport programs, especially soccer, in the television all over the world. Sport as a privileged ambit of social reality has a wide covering on the media and a privileged place within the public's priorities. The complexity in sport modalities has resulted in journalistic processes that were provoking the division of information into sport niches and areas particularly concerning to different groups of fans. This situation generated a transformation in the structures of journalistic companies that had to incorporate a high number of specialists dedicated to each and every sport and had to make use of a higher number of pages to deal with massified information. Sport journalism has acquired more supporters and social prestige and sport fields has become a usual setting for everyday journalism. Telling and reporting about a sport event means to talk firstly about the outcome. This constitutes the logic of a sport recognized as "production of results" (Eichberg, 1998). Then the consequences of this result and the most brilliant and interesting moves will be explained and the strengths and weaknesses of each team and sportsman on the field will be compared. A traditional characterization about sport journalism suggests that any sport news concerns first about the result; second about who played the best and finally why it happened. These principles would be the three essential elements concerning sport information but it definitely means a poor journalism. Readers of any written media want to remember the best moves seen on television or heard on the radio. It is possible that they wish that the sport event would be told again.

Journalism Sources

On the one hand, Wolf (1996:253) states that sources are "a decisive factor concerning the information produced by the media"; and on the other hand, Pepe Rodríguez (1994:67) on *Periodismo de Investigación: Técnicas y Estrategias* distinguishes sources as "every person who voluntarily and actively provides any kind of information to a journalist". On *Manual de Estilo Clarín* (1997:24-25), the sources are pointed out as follows 1) personal testimonies belonging to protagonists, witnesses, officials and public people, 2) official or institutional documents, 3) correspondents, special correspondents, international agencies and foreign

media exclusive services and 4) radio and television broadcastings, photographs, videos and recordings and Internet material.

In the elaboration of information, we have on the one hand the journalists' professional culture understood as "a confusing mixture of rhetoric facades and tactic tricks, codes, stereotypes, symbols, latent standardizations, roles representations, rituals and conventions concerning the functions of media and journalists in society and the conception of product-news and the modalities controlling their making" (Garbarino 1982:10); and on the other hand, the limitations belonging to their own journalistic work linked to the organization of work and professional conventions (Wolf, 1996:215). These restrictions and limitations in the journalistic work determine what is newsworthy and the quality and journalistic force an event has to be transformed into news. The notion of newsworthiness can be defines as "the set of elements through which the informative apparatus controls and negotiates the quantity and type of occurrences from which the select the news" (Wolf, 1996:222). Newsworthiness is also associated to the process of routinization and standardization of productive practices (Wolf, 1996:216). A traditional and classic definition of mass communication characterizes it as an organization through which certain technical resources produce and transmit a public message addressed to a heterogeneous audience who is generally scattered geographically speaking (Dominick, 1999).

Generally newsworthiness are influenced by conditions interns and externs at the newsroom:

- The development of event in the mass media and the possibility of their evolution (Gans, 1979).
- The number of people implicated in the public event. (Gans,1979, Wolf,. 1996:228-231-232)
- The accessibility of the events in the mass media and the journalists(Wolf, 1996:232).
- The news as result of process of production and negotiating
- The power of sources in journalism.
- The journalists and emitter´s tensions and interactions
- The increased of institutionalization of journalist front of audiences.
- The influences of other media in the conformation of journalistic agenda
- The effects of public's images of journalists (Quiroga, 2008).

Publics' Images:

The topic about audiences has constantly worried the specialists in communication and the studies about reception. We have gone from receptors highly influenced by the transmitter's message (hypodermic theory) to an absolutely opposite idea where the public carries out semiotic terrorism using the messages of media. Another current concern is to know whether the media and the programs are in line with their publics or we witness nomadic and carefree audiences who employ the radio or television zapping when they have to choose their media proposals.

The effects of the publics' images on the journalist and its influence on the news production have been a topic not deserving the privileged attention by communication specialists. Regarding this topic, Stevenson (1998:144) points out in *Culturas Mediáticas*

> *"transmitters constantly make suppositions about the way in which audiences organize their day, and most important, about who belongs to their public"* Stevenson, Nick (1998:144)

Journalists hardly know their public, they present their news report and they do not try to satisfy their public, and as they hardly know the public, they put more emphasis and attention on the news (Gans, 1979). Not only journalists show this ignorance. Frequently, directors themselves, managers and owners of the media ignore the distinctive characteristics of their audiences and this information is vital and strategic for the media organization in a complex, dynamic and restless world. Knowing the audience's nature, the media will be able to characterize its programming according to the audience's demands and will be able to offer an appropriate channel for the media announcers. Reality fragmentation and mediatic representation serve as images of the world and reference for different publics. Bettetni and Fumigalli (2001) called this media procedure reinforcements and mirrors game.

The influence of sport ideology in the agenda must be a thematic to future study. The ideology and social cognitions shared by members of a group, that is, systems of ideas and especially the social, political or religious ideas. In it the social dimension explains what groups and what relationships exist between the groups and institutions involved in the development and reproduction of ideologies in which plays a key role discourse, structures whose levels are determined by the same (Kaenel S/F). Jean Marie Brohm (1982) in *"Political Sociology of Sport"* (1982) argues, since the positions of Western Marxism that the process of historical formation of modern sport that has developed a global sports system

where there is a sports institution regulated under mode capitalist industrial production. Brohm describes the sports system as a total institution, combining all sports, political, social, ideological and symbolic instances of social relations of production.

The sports system in terms of Brohm constitute a network of equivalence between values and actions, a system of symbolic relationships sorted, which condenses specifically the set of objective social relations of capitalist society (Mederos Aguirre, 2013).

It's possible think that the influence of sport ideology in of sport journalist in the building their mass media agendas.

Methodology

We employed qualitative tools on this research: participating observation and questionnaires done to sport journalists belonging to the most important written media, radio and television from one group of sport journalist in San Luis during 2014-2015.

Results and some conclusions

The entering journalists answered that the most consulted sources are the athletes themselves and the sports managers and other sources. The most used institutional sources are firs the institutions' press news items and second the press news items coming from state organizations. The third position is hold by public officials. When inquired about spontaneous sources, most journalists said they did not use them and more than 60 per cent of the interviewees answered they did not employ confidential sources. Inasmuch as the use of alternative sources they mentioned the most important newspapers of the region, the official information and their own colleagues.

The Public's Image

All the journalists coincide with the fact that there is an audience that is interested in sports; that is to say, public interested in a kind of specialized information: sport. Sports programs have their own public integrated by sportsmen and sport managers. The public's perception is basically recognized by phone calls and secondarily by the audience's letters and their participation in contests. Journalists consider they have a public interested in sports and almost half of them believe it is a nomadic public; that is, they tune different radio sport proposals. The characterization of the public is described as a public of different ages who

likes to know traditional sportsmen, is fond of local sport and listens to or watches the program even when it changes its schedule.

Influences on the sport news elaboration

Journalists recognize as the most important influences on the news elaboration the following factors: the quantity of daily information, the local information, the sport agenda – fixtures, events – journalistic needs, people's opinion and the idea that the program contents have to satisfy everyone. Journalists had different opinions about the sponsors' influence on the news production. More than a half answered it did not influence, but a high percentage of them pointed out that sponsors do influence on the news elaboration of their programs. They also pointed out that the influence of the public's alleged sport preferences is taken into account when elaborating the programs and think the sports audience has a higher preference for "traditional" sports (soccer, basketball, volleyball) and their local perspective. The public's idea influences on the dairy, the contents, the granting of a longer or shorter segment given to any information and even the way of informing itself.

Sport Ideology

The predominant sport definitions that we can connect with the sport ideology are the following:

- Sport is a profitable, regulated, organized and growing activity. It is a beneficial physical activity.
- It is a physical-mental activity whose aims are competence and distension.
- It is an activity to be respected, cared and improved in order to grow.
- It the best physical and cultural expression, a policy that joins different cultures by means of competition. It can be divided into competitive or highly performed and amusing and healthy activities.
- It is a competitive and non-competitive activity that generally benefits society.
- It is a very healthy activity that should be performed as such, without drugs and without violence. It has to transmit joyfulness, feelings, passions and festivity.
- It is a physical activity that can be performed individually or in a group.
- Sport appears as a physical-mental, healthy, organized, beneficial, competitive and non-competitive activity.

The participant journalists declared that there exists a strong relation between sport and community and that this relation refers to the population's health, the possibility of social promotion and the cultural growth but consider that spectacle or elite sport are the most important in the screens.

The presence on their programs of local sport as opposed to national and international sport is the consequence of a lack of resources and support for local sportsmen and organizations; local sport is amateur and improvised whereas it has a superior growth in bigger metropolis. It was curious to know that local sportsmen's are seen as weird and amateur people who fight to stand out in an adverse environment with scarce recognition and a lack of conscientiousness about training, health, prevention, etc.; who have outstanding conditions but they lack the necessary mentality to make the big step into the national level. Journalists also stated that local athletes are courageous and vigorous fighters who have to perform their sport activity as well as their job lacking in almost all cases of support.

More than a half of the journalists answered affirmatively about each ideologies of sport as opposed to the ideas of sport broadcasted on the program. Besides it was pointed out that although there is no any noticeable group imaginary, local sport journalism does not think about it; each journalist has an idea of sport that talks about a regulated, competitive activity with fixtures that eventually lengthen and each one of them tries to exhibit this idea on the sport program.

Sports ideologies and public image of sports journalists have an influence on the construction of the agenda and content of sports programs. The ideology that organized sport or elite sport (sport screens) is very strong in the sports journalists, as well as the perception that audiences expect more information on popular sports.

Diagram 1: The dynamic of construction of reality of sports agenda.
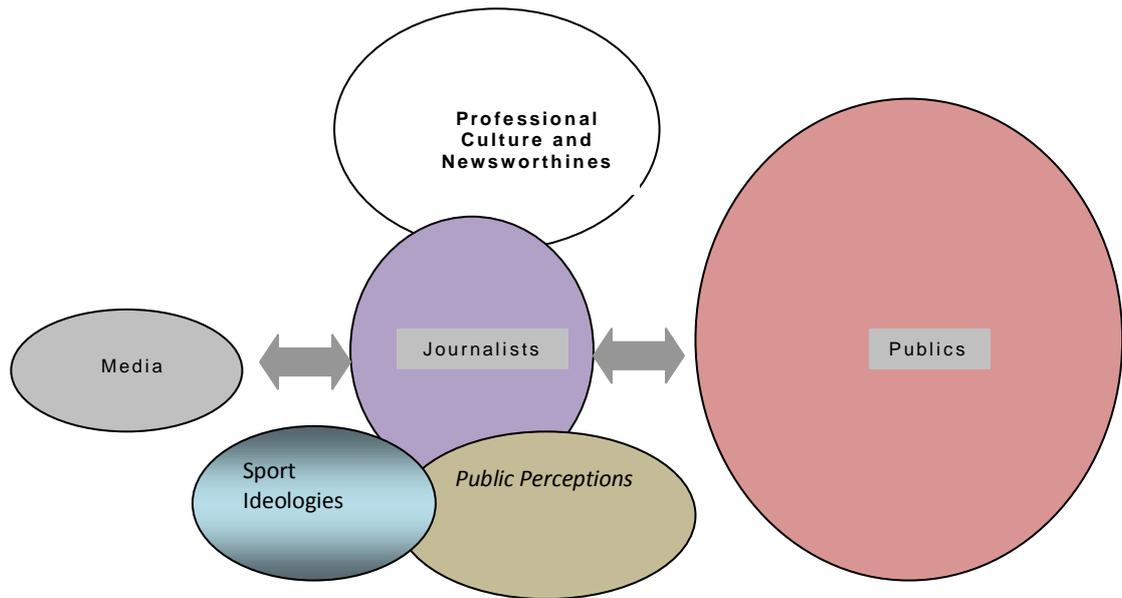
The "publics' perception" of sport journalism are present. The perception that the public watches and pays attention to the more well-known sports and that the audience interested in sports is mainly made up of men – data not checked by the media where this type of programs are broadcasted – causes that the dairy and contents of the sport proposals of written media, radio and television are directed towards this sense denying the diversity of agenda, contents and culture of a journalistic specialization in constant growth like sport.

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