“We still have a long way to go”: A comparative study of Swedish and Brazilian women sports journalists’ challenges and perspectives

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Abstract

Sports journalism is a traditionally male-dominated environment. Previous research has shown that women sports journalists were outnumbered in newsrooms, had less career opportunities, have been exposed to harassment and must negotiate identity contradictions in order to succeed in their career. Most previous studies have explored English-speaking countries and little was done in Scandinavia and Latin America. This study aimed to analyze the perceptions and experiences of Swedish and Brazilian women sports journalists from gendered journalism cultures perspective, drawing a comparison between these countries. Through qualitative approach, this study conducted semi-structured interviews with seven women sports journalists from Sweden and Brazil and found that there are more similarities than differences between the two countries. Despite the different contexts, Swedish and Brazilian women sports journalists who participated in this study are overall satisfied with newsroom environment, they claimed that women journalists have gained more space, respect and voice in sports departments in comparison to when they started working in the field. However, they also pointed to some remaining issues such as sexist jokes and a feeling of having to prove their knowledge and capability. Another similarity observed was the perception that sports journalism has highly improved in relation to gender equality and, although the challenges still exist, they are less visible now. This study also found that the biggest difference observed between participants from Sweden and Brazil was the understanding of sexism and woman identity. While Swedish interviewees showed a more complex awareness of these concepts, Brazilians participants demonstrated some confusing comprehension, exposing more contradictions regarding these matters.

Key words: Sports journalism, women sports journalists, gender, sexism
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Chapter 1 - Introduction

The representation and role of women journalists in mass media have been debated among communication researchers, sociologists and feminists. The number of women journalists has grown significantly worldwide over the past decades (Franks and O’Neils, 2016; Laucella et al., 2017). However, the number of women journalists covering sports remains low mainly due to the field’s characteristic of being a traditionally male domain (Antunovic and Hardin, 2015; Coakley, 2007; Hardin and Shain, 2005). Sports journalism is predominantly produced by men and for men (Rowe, 1999). Women sports journalists are outsiders by virtue of their gender and “must negotiate identity contradictions (woman, journalist) to succeed in male-dominated workplaces” (Hardin and Shain, 2006:323). They use different strategies and tactics in order to fit the profession (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming, 2004; Melin, 2008; Van Zoonen, 1994, 1998).

Previous research have demonstrated that women had less career opportunities in sports journalism (Mloch, Smucker and Whisenant, 2005; Shoch and Ohl, 2011), while other studies have exposed harassment, concerns in the locker room and a perception that male colleagues resent their presence as “quota” (Chen et al., 2018; Hardin and Shain, 2006). Women sports journalists were expected to know less, ask the foolish and dull questions, accept more minimal assignments and feel invisible to their colleagues (Hardin, Shain and Shultz-Poniatowski, 2008; Miller and Miller, 1995). They stood in a context of “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 2001), a type of non-physical violence expressed in power relations between social groups. Nevertheless, research have also showed through surveys (Miller and Miller, 1995; Smucker, Whisenant and Pedersen, 2003) that there was an overall satisfaction by women in sports journalism with their employment, payment, supervision, coworkers and type of work, but not with their promotional opportunities.

Most of the studies concerning women journalists in sports are related to English-speaking countries, little was done in Europe or South America. Therefore, there is still remaining questions regarding the reality of women sports journalists in other parts of the world. This study
will conduct semi-structured interviews with women sports journalists from Sweden and Brazil in order to analyze their perceptions, to find out their tactics to overcome challenges, and to investigate differences and similarities between these two countries. The comparison between Sweden and Brazil is grounded on the difference of gender equity present in both countries, which have been exposed by different studies (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2019; Social Watch, 2012; United Nations Development Programme, 2019). This research wants to explore the differences and similarities in the sports newsrooms in relation to the effects of gendered structures in society, and it hopes to contribute to a better understanding of gender issues in sports newsroom.

1.1 Aim and research question

The purpose of this thesis is to understand the perceptions of Swedish and Brazilian women sports journalists on their experience in a male-dominated environment such as sports newsroom. It also aims to analyze how they cope with challenges from a gendered journalism perspective, drawing a comparison between their views in Sweden and Brazil. Similarities and differences will be highlighted as well as the “tactics” (Melin, 2008) used to overcome challenges in relation to the symbolic dimension of male domination (Bourdieu, 2001). My research questions are the following:

1. What are the Swedish and Brazilian sports journalists’ perceptions of their experiences as women in sports newsrooms?
2. How do they cope with gender-related challenges?
3. What are the similarities and differences in the point of view and experience regarding gender issues of Swedish and Brazilian women sports journalists?

1.2 Disposition

Following this introductory chapter, the background brings an overview of gender equality and media systems in Sweden and Brazil. Literature review is presented next and it is followed by
theoretical framework chapter, focusing on gendered journalism cultures. Chapter five consists of a description of the methodological approach and scientific research method chosen for this study, a gendered research approach in a cross-national comparison and semi-structured interviews. Chapter six presents the findings of this study and analysis of the data. The last section brings conclusions and discussion.
Chapter 2 - Background

This chapter contextualizes the current scenario for gendered issues and media system in Sweden and Brazil. It starts by outlining the different approaches to gender equality in these two countries and specifically in journalism and sports department. The media systems are discussed next with specific focus on press freedom in order to shed light on the context that Swedish and Brazilian women sports journalists are inserted in.

2.1 Gender equity

Gender inequality is a major barrier to human development (United Nations Development Programme, 2019). According to European Institute for Gender Equality (2019), Sweden has been improving gender equality since 2005, when the country first ranked the highest position in the European Union on the Gender Equality Index (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2019). In 2012, Social Watch (2012) published the gender equity index where Sweden is ranked 4th while Brazil is ranked 51. In United Nations Development Programme’s (2018) gender inequality index from 2018, Sweden appears second and Brazil is ranked 89.

In Brazil, machismo is still strong and it is rooted in societal traditions from colonial times where men dominated many environments, including family life (Kent, 2016). However, significant improvements regarding gender equality were achieved in the last two decades in the country (Näsman and Hyvönen, 2016). According to Stocco et al. (2007), the creation of a National Plan for Women’s Policies (NPWP) in 2004 reaffirmed the commitment by the Brazilian Federal Government to incorporate a gender perspective in public policies. Brazil’s first woman president, Dilma Roussef, promised to make gender equality a priority when elected in 2010 (BBC, 2010). However, “there has been limited effort to quantify the impact of gender-based policies on gender inequality” (Agénor and Canuto, 2013:4) and, after the election of president Jair Bolsonaro, less improvements have been achieved (Assis and Ogando, 2018).
Meanwhile, Sweden has the world’s first feminist government, meaning a commitment to “building a society in which women and men, girls and boys can live their lives to their full potential” (Government Offices of Sweden, 2019). According to Government Offices of Sweden (2019), gender equality in the country is a matter of human rights, democracy and justice. Although the goal is that women and men must have the same power to shape both society and their lives, the government acknowledges that there are remaining challenges and work to fully achieve gender equality (Government Offices of Sweden, 2019).

Swedish women won the right to vote in 1919 (Bohlen, 2019) while Brazilians were allowed to vote in 1932 (Hahner, 1979). Currently, women represent 15 percent of the parliament, 14 percent of the senate and 9.1 percent of the government’s cabinet in Brazil (Galvani, 2019). In Sweden, women represent 46 percent of the parliament and 50 percent of the government’s cabinet in the country (Bohlen, 2019).

2.1.1 Gender issues in journalism

There is an increasing appeal on media to step up and take measures to ensure women’s access to the media industry and to combat gender stereotypes around the world (International Federation of Journalists, 2009). However, according to Stoll (2019a) Swedish women reporters were majority in only five departments in 2018: entertainment, environment, lifestyle, culture and science. The same research exposes a gendered pattern of 82 percent of sports news being covered by male reporters. Another study conducted by Stoll (2019b) shows that from 2016 to 2018 the share of women invited to discuss sports news fluctuated between 20.5 percent to 22 percent, highlighting that women are underrepresented in terms of gender distribution in sports news in Sweden.

In Brazil, women are majority in newsrooms, they represent 64 percent of professionals in this space “while they continue being a minority in sports desks” (Brum and Capraro, 2015:960). The International Sports Press Survey (Horky and Nieland, 2011) states that only 8 percent of journalistic texts in sports coverage in the world are written, or signed, by women. In Brazil, this
number is 7 percent (Brum and Capraro, 2015:960). In 2018, a group of 52 women sports journalists in Brazil created a manifest called “Deixa ela trabalhar” (let her work) on social media (Globo Esporte, 2018). The goal of this project is to fight against moral and sexual harassment suffered by them in stadiums, on the streets and in newsrooms (Rossi, 2018).

2.2 Media systems

Swedish and Brazilian media landscapes are very different. The Swedish media can be characterized, according to Hallin and Mancini’s model, as a democratic corporatist model with strong press, strong political parallelism, a high degree of professionalization and a strong state role in media policy making (Wadbring and Ohlsson, 2017). On the other hand, the Brazilian media system can be classified as mediterranean or polarized pluralist model with high political parallelism, weaker professionalization and strong state intervention (Hallin and Mancini, 2004).

2.2.1 Swedish Media

Sweden has about 150 printed papers, almost all with an online edition (Wadbring and Ohlsson, 2017). In the radio system, the public service company Sveriges Radio leads the market with 75 percent of the radio audience (Wadbring and Ohlsson, 2017). The public service television organized by Sveriges Television (SVT) is the main actor in the broadcasting system and the main commercial television channel is TV4. The public services of broadcasting are funded through taxes rather than a license fee (Reporters Without Borders, 2020a). According to Wadbring and Ohlsson (2017), the public services are still comparatively strong in Sweden, with a daily audience of media consumers for television of 1/3 and 3/4 for radio. Regarding the content of public service broadcastings, there is a political debate ongoing nowadays about how broad or narrow in terms of topics the content should be. However, Wadbring and Ohlsson (2017) argue that the content of Swedish public media is very broad in comparison to the content of public service broadcasting in other countries.

Sweden was the first country in the world to put in force a press freedom law in 1776 (Sweden.se, 2020). Freedom is granted for the content of radio and television by a parallel basic
law, the Freedom of Expression Act (Sweden.se, 2020). There are legal freedoms to establish sites and no restriction when it comes to content (Wadbring and Ohlsson, 2017). The basic laws on press freedom also grant citizens access to public documents (Wadbring and Ohlsson, 2017). Sweden appears in 4th in the 2020 World Press Freedom Index (Reporters Without Borders, 2020a).

2.2.2 Brazilian media

Historically, the media system in Brazil is characterized by family monopolies of mass media, very low diversity when it comes to political point of view, conservatism bias and low circulation of newspapers due to low readership (Azevedo, 2006). As a result, Azevedo (2006) argues, journalism is primarily oriented towards elites in the mainstream press, and television holds hegemony in the Brazilian media system.

According to Media Ownership Monitor (MOM, 2017), the 50 media with the largest audience in Brazil belong to 26 business groups: nine are from Grupo Globo, five are from Grupo Bandeirantes, five are from Edir Macedo (a Brazilian bishop), four are from RBS, and three are from Grupo Folha. Still according to MOM (2017), in total, 80 percent of these media outlets are located in the south and southeast of Brazil. Media conglomerates are often accused of being biased towards political parties or politicians (Monitor de Mídia, 2004; Ramos, 2015; Spuldar, 2010).

Reporters Without Borders (2020b) reported that Bolsonaro’s election as president in 2018, after a campaign marked by hate speech, disinformation, contempt for human rights and violence against journalists, has set Brazil in a “particularly dark era for democracy and press freedom”. Brazil is currently ranked 107 in the 2020 World Press Freedom Index (Reporters Without Borders, 2020b).

The press freedom is a reflect of a fair, equal, and accountable society. The media plays an important role in shaping attitudes and opinions, it is a powerful tool to induce social changes
through, for example, representativeness. Therefore, press freedom is a key factor when it comes to gender issues. As Equality Now (2020) states, the gender stereotypes and discrimination in the media remains as one of the major challenges to women’s empowerment and gender equality. The different levels of gender equality and press freedom in Sweden and Brazil were highlighted in this chapter in order to later be discussed with the findings of this study.
Chapter 3 - Literature review

This literature review consists of three parts. It begins by revising and discussing the role of women in journalism, followed by an analysis on sports media. A particular emphasis is put on previous research on the challenges women sports journalists face in their job, which is the third and last part of this chapter.

3.1 Women in journalism

Women were not seen as news producers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, rather they were understood as consumers of media (Franks and O’Neill, 2016). From the mid-19th century, some women were able to set foot in newspaper journalism, but they started to enter the field in higher numbers only when advertising revenue became increasingly imperative for a newspaper’s success in USA and UK (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming, 2004; Franks and O’Neill, 2016). However, women were confined to some areas of journalism, mainly fashion and society news. According to Chambers, Steiner and Fleming (2004:17), in this sense, a new kind of journalism was created, the “women’s journalism”. Women’s purpose was to write stories to attract female audiences, while other topics remained produced by and to men (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming, 2004). Even after the turn of the 20th century and women journalists growing in numbers, they were still expected to cover soft topics in USA and UK (Franks, 2013), such as fashion, society gossips and domestic issues which are until nowadays stereotyped as “female subjects”.

Women eventually became the majority of graduates from journalism schools in many countries (Franks and O’Neill, 2016; Melin, 2008), yet they remain a minority in top managerial positions in media organizations and they have not achieved equity in serious fields of news such as economics and politics (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming, 2004). Some scholars argue that newsroom hierarchies disguise masculine values (“objectivity”, detachment and independence, for instance) as neutral (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming, 2004; de Bruin and Ross, 2004). On the other hand, “feminine” values go against the qualities expected from journalists such as "a
certain amount of directness, distrust, and toughness” (Van Zoonen, 1994:54), the “macho” culture of newsrooms which is supported by news values (de Bruin and Ross, 2004). According to Chambers, Steiner and Fleming (2004:33), women journalists are expected to be “different” from their male colleagues in both what they write and the way they write it. However, the same study points to women’s denying that gender has a major impact on their way of doing journalism, except for their inclination to report on subjects that impact other women (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming, 2004).

The number of female journalists in newsrooms does not represent their actual visibility in the field (Strong and Hannis, 2007). Statistical surveys that focus on the number or proportion of women journalists do not inform the audience of the gender balance in different roles in the newsroom neither the effects on the media product and if there are women in senior positions (Strong and Hannis, 2007). In 2011, a Women in Journalism (WIF) survey (Cochrane, 2011) analyzed the bylines of female and male journalists in seven national UK newspapers in a period of four weeks. The study revealed that 78 percent of the articles in a typical month were written by men. Another study by WIF a year later displayed more evidence of this disproportional trend (Martinson et al., 2012). Analyzing the front page of all major national dailies in the UK for a period of four weeks, WIF found that (the same) 78 percent of all bylines on the front page were written by male and 22 percent female (Martinson et al., 2012). The same research claims that there has been only two percent increase in the average number of women bylines counts on the front pages of national newspapers in UK in the past five years (Martinson et al., 2012).

Research have revealed that women journalists face gendered harassment online and in their jobs that influence how they do their work (Chen et al., 2018; Harp et al., 2014; Harris et al., 2016; North, 2016). Harassment is a manifestation of power relations. Women are more likely to be victims of harassment because they more often than men lack power, are in more vulnerable positions or have been socialized to suffer in silence (Bhattacharyya, 2016). According to Bureau for Gender Equality (2000, cited in Bhattacharyya, 2016), women are also subject to harassment when they are seen to be competing for power. Jemieson (1995) suggests that gendered
harassment of women journalists place them in a double bind: if they succeed, they are viewed as getting special favors due to their gender or sexuality, but if they fail, their mistakes are seen as an indictment of women in general. Chen et al. (2018) revealed that female journalists face particular online harassment when writing about topics associated with men. Scholars argue that gendered harassment happens especially when women journalists cross the invisible line between what men and women are supposed to do (Byerly, 2013; Milestone and Meyer, 2012).

3.2 Sports media

Sport is predominantly a male space (Wellard, 2009:13). According to Coakley (2007), women’s participation in sport will not increase naturally, there is a tendency in most cultures to prioritize male athletes and sports. Kluger (2016) argues that the interest and participation in sports are still a predominantly male subject. However, when there is an effort to level the playing field of opportunities, women participation rises substantially (Kluger, 2016). As an example, Title IX, the 1972 federal law in United States that guarantees girls and women access to scholastic sporting opportunities, was the responsible for an explosive growth in female athletics (Hardin et al., 2007). Coakley (2007:246) states that “this is because the world of sports is usually dominated by, identified with and centered on men”. The contemporary understanding of sport reflect masculine norms (Antunovic and Hardin, 2015:673; Claringbould, Knoppers and Elling, 2004; Melin, 2008; Van Zoonen, 1998).

Therefore, sports media is an “information system produced by men, for men and is about male athletes” (Rowe, 1999). Traditionally, sports media has marginalized women and women’s sports, “perpetuating a hierarchy that privileges men and denies women equal exposure and opportunities” (Hardin, Dodd and Lauffer, 2006:431). In the 1920’s women started joining the ranks of sports journalism in USA and UK (Franks and O’Neill, 2016:476), but gender disparity remains as a big issue in the field (Strong, 2007).
The male-domination trend remains predominant all over the world (Claringbould, Knoppers and Elling, 2004; Hardin and Shain, 2005; Horky and Nieland, 2011; Schoch, 2013). Chambers, Steiner and Fleming (2004:98) argue that sports media has one of the most intense and, historically, enduring gender divisions in journalism, in terms of who covers which sports, how athletes are covered and also in terms of which genders are served as audiences. Certainly, women sports journalists have grown in numbers over time. However, they are still underrepresented in sports talk radio (Hardin et al, 2013), sports broadcasting (Mudrick, Burton, and Lin, 2017), and in newspapers (Franks and O’Neill, 2016; Laucella et al., 2017). In UK and USA, women constitute respectively around 9 percent and 13 percent of the sports journalists (Boyle, 2006; Hardin and Shain, 2005). The Institute of Diversity and Ethics in Sports (TIDES) published an evaluation (APSE, 2018) of 75 American newspapers and websites done by the Associated Press Sports Editors Racial and Gender Report Card in 2018, the numbers are the following: 90 percent of the sports editors, 69.9 percent of the assistant sports editors, 83.4 percent of the columnists, 88.5 percent of the reporters and 79.6 percent of the copy editors/designers are men.

In sports, women journalists work as symbols in gendered organizations where masculinity is an intrinsic part of hierarchical logic and news-work processes (Hardin and Whiteside, 2009). More evidences of this gender division are found in many research across the world (Horky and Nieland, 2011; Schoch, 2013; Strong and Hannis, 2007). Hardin, Dodd and Lauffer (2006:441) found that the textbooks reinforce the dynamic of sports departments, “by their symbolic annihilation of some as sports journalists, as pillars of patriarchy”. Women then must negotiate their identity as woman and journalist in order to succeed in the male-dominated sports department (Hardin and Shain, 2006:323). They strive to fit in this male environment where many see them as “quotas” hires (Kian, cited in Hardin and Shain, 2006:326). Women sports journalists are also sometimes seen as being too “mannish” (lesbian) or they are accused of using sexual attractiveness to get advantages over male sources (Hardin and Shain, 2006:326).
Editors seem to believe that women treat news differently from men, focusing on the emotional and human aspects which captivate a new readership that is less familiar with sport (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming, 2004; Schoch, 2013). Schoch (2013:708) argues that female journalists use a “subversive strategy and play with the stereotypical images of their professional competences”. Therefore, they reaffirm the definition of masculine and feminine journalistic values and practices, perpetuating gender imbalance in sports journalism (Schoch, 2013).

Nevertheless, Laucella et al. (2017) shows that improvements have been achieved regarding awareness on gendered structures in sports and sports journalism in recent years. The authors (Laucella et al., 2017:772) also suggest that when sports editors are committed to hire women, they focus on women, who they believe, can move up within media corporation and can become leaders. Other recent studies (Liu, 2017; Unesco, 2019) show that there is a slow but steady increase of women journalists in sports coverage around the world.

3.3 Women sport journalists

Some women sports journalists discovered early on that they loved sports and writing, and sports journalism was a great way to combine the two passions (Cramer, 1994:160). However, they often strive to fit the male-dominated environment of sports newsrooms (Hardin and Shain, 2006; Van Zoonen, 1994, 1998). In addition to being the minority in sports departments around the globe (Pope, 2017), they also face different gendered challenges as exposed by the studies below.

Hardin and Shain (2006) conducted five focus-group interviews with 20 women sports journalists who attended the 2004 annual convention of the Association for Women in Sports Media (AWSM) in USA. Participants said that the “toughness” required to work in sports media is necessary and desirable, they also described sports department as less diplomatic and more demanding than other parts of the newsrooms, “the strictest deadlines, the most pressure, the most chance for error” (Hardin and Shain, 2006:331). The interviewees pointed “thick skin”,

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“cool head”, and “aggressiveness” as qualities of successful sports journalists. Participants mentioned situations that made them uncomfortable, “an athlete playing a sexually explicit video in the locker room during an interview, male reporters in the press box looking at pornography, colleagues on the copy desk making jokes about female athletes or commentators” (Hardin and Shain, 2006:332). However, Hardin and Shain (2006) showed that the participants did not characterize these situations as sexual harassment, but accepted these behaviors as normal.

Schoch and Ohl (2011) conducted 27 semistructured interviews with female sports journalists in the French-speaking Swiss daily press and also observations in the field. They drew on Bourdieu’s theory of habits and field to analyze how structures of power shape these journalists’ lives and found that participants were conformed with the dominant male environment. As Hardin and Shain (2006) and Miloch, Smucker and Whisenante (2005), Shoch and Ohl (2011) also found that Swiss women sports journalists have less career opportunities and are at the bottom of their profession hierarchy, “there is only one woman Chief Editor of a newspaper in Switzerland and while women constitute 21 percent of the section heads of newspapers none are chiefs of a sports section” (Shoch and Ohl, 2011:191). However, Schoch and Ohl (2011) claim that Switzerland faces an increasing number of women sports journalists and a slow change in the field of sports journalism.

Back in the 1990s, Miller and Miller (1995) carried out a survey with 215 participants in order to explore the condescension in the workplace, equal opportunity in their career, perceived performance, and job satisfaction by these women. The results indicate that “although females are appearing in sports newsrooms across the nation in increasing numbers, women feel they are, in many ways, invisible to their colleagues, expected to know less and accept more menial assignments, while being the target of sexist language. In spite of the discrimination, approximately three-fourths of the respondents said that they are satisfied with their jobs” (Miller and Miller, 1995:883). Another survey was conducted by Smucker, Whisenant and Pedersen (2003) with 78 participants from AWSM. They found that the women sports journalists who
answered the survey were generally satisfied with their job, payment, supervision, and colleagues, but they were dissatisfied with their promotions opportunities.

Bruce (2002) interviewed 33 American women sports journalists that felt the locker room’s interviews were an important place for sports journalism and even a decisive moment for female journalists. American scholars have given attention to the locker room interviews. According to Cramer (1994:163), the locker room is “a necessary evil in the sports journalism field”. American women sports journalists say it is primordial to beat and/or game coverage, however they also say it is the place where they spend the least amount of time (Cramer, 1994:163). Without access to the locker room interviews, women sports journalists are at disadvantage with their male colleagues and cannot do the job they were hired to do. Therefore, locker room interview is a must go, but it is not a comfortable situation for women sports journalists, “there is only one reason a woman would want to go into a men’s locker room - to get information” (Cramer, 1994:163).

Nevertheless, Hardin, Shain and Shultz-Poniatowski (2008) suggest that it no longer takes locker room harassment to turn women away from sports journalism, “it simply takes the prospect of having a family” (Hardin, Shain and Shultz-Poniatowski, 2008:68). Hardin and Shain (2005b) conducted a survey and found that 72 percent out of 144 participants had considered to leave their careers due to long hours, lack of advancement or family obligations. The same study says that many women who had been on the job for 6 to 10 years reported that their careers had negatively impacted their families, “this point may be the ‘critical window’ for dropping out of sports journalism” argue Hardin, Shain and Shultz-Poniatowski (2008:69). Another study by Hardin and Shain (2005) found through focus group interviews with AWSM members that participants mentioned frustration over sacrificing time and family relationships as their primary reason they consider leaving the field. In 1994, Cramer discovered similar results. Out of 20 female sports journalists interviewed by Cramer (1994:162), 11 have never been married, three were divorced and six were married. Only three had children.
Women sports journalists understand their roles in negative terms. Hardin, Shain and Shultz-Poniatowski (2008) conducted interviews with 10 young American sports journalists who had less than two years full-time experience in sports newsroom. The results showed that they believe they got into the field through the “back door”, because they were hired in an unfair way, “what is fair, of course, is defined in patriarchal terms” (Hardin, Shain and Shultz-Poniatowski, 2008:76). Since they are not “natural” to fit the profession of sports journalists, the women interviewed by the researchers believed it was their burden to “fit in” on men’s terms. They also believed they are more likely to ask the “dumb questions”. All participants pondered and come to expect the ending of their careers in sports media, the ones who saw a possibility of combining sports journalism career with family predicted it would depend on the spouse, hoping they would be “willing to be flexible” (Hardin, Shain and Shultz-Poniatowski, 2008:76).

Hardin, Shain and Shultz-Poniatowski (2008) claim that the idea of these young women sports journalists is grounded in patriarchal ideology, which implies that sport and related institutions (such as media) rightfully belong to men and that “gender roles, which will force these women from their careers, are natural” (Hardin, Shain and Shultz-Poniatowski, 2008:76).

Women sports journalists face different obstacles in the course of their careers. The literature presented in this chapter showed studies from different parts of the world. While most of them found similar results, which sets a general environment for women journalists in sports media in different countries, little has been explored about the perceptions and experiences of Swedish and Brazilian women sports journalists. The literature review presented in this chapter will later be used in the analysis and discussion of this research’s findings in order to verify if they are comparable to the reality of Swedish and Brazilian women sports journalists.
Chapter 4 - Theoretical framework

The key theoretical concept of this thesis is gendered journalism cultures. This chapter establishes ground for the following analysis and discussion in chapters six and seven in relation to the research questions.

4.1 Gendered journalism cultures

The concept of journalism, its tools and definition are male constructions (Melin, 2008). It is an area in which the power of male domination appears with “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 2001), which is characterized as a gentle violence that is imperceptible and invisible to its own victims. Bourdieu (2001) argues that this type of violence is exercised primarily by the purely symbolic paths of communication, knowledge, discovery or in less visible structures such as recognition and, in the final instance, feeling. “Symbolic violence” is structured by habitus and is used to keep women in place, legitimizing the male domination in our society (Bourdieu, 2001).

Bourdieu (1998) claims that a social field consists of a system of competing social relations where people and institutions compete for the same stakes, using different strategies to reach positions and influence. They aim for success, prestigious, status and the power to decide who should be recognized as a member of the profession and the idea of good and valuable journalism (Bourdieu, 1998). In order to understand masculine domination one must resort modes of thought that are the product of domination. Bourdieu (2001:5) claims that we can only break out of the circle by finding a practical strategy “for objectifying the subject of scientific objectification”.

The strength of masculine order is noticed in the fact that it is not required to have justification, “the androcentric vision imposes itself as neutral and has no need to spell itself out in discourses aimed at legitimating it” (Bourdieu, 2001:11). The social order works as a symbolic machine which is inclined to ratify the masculine domination. Thus, the male domination is grounded on different levels and it can be found on sexual division of labour, highly strict distribution of
activities assigned to each sex, while it is also noticed in the structure of space, which englobes the divisions of places, time and instruments (Bourdieu, 2001).

The field of journalism has been and still is grounded on hierarchies and segregation based on gender (Löfgren Nilsson, 2010). The male-dominance characteristic in the field remains while gender equality arises as a modern issue to be debated. As mentioned previously, the number of female students in journalism schools has increased and so has their presence in the journalism workforce in the US, Germany, UK and the Nordic countries (Edström, 2007; Franks and O’Neill, 2016; Melin, 2008; Robinson, 2005; Van Zoonen, 1994). University degrees gave women the possibility of a formal and professional recruitment system in comparison to the subjectivity decision of an editor in a more craftsman way (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming, 2004).

However, the number of women graduating from journalism schools does not reflect the reality in newsrooms, suggesting that these students hit the “glass ceiling” and migrate to another field in search of work (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming, 2004; Robinson, 2005). Edström (2006:146) exposed that in Swedish television, despite the increasing number of women journalists, they are not equally distributed in power-positions.

Similar situation takes place in Brazil, where women started to gain access to newsrooms in the 1970s but until now not many have reached the higher positions within news organizations. De Jorge and Adghirni (2013) analyzed survey data from 15 media companies (print and TV) from 11 out of 25 Brazilian states. They found that women outnumber men in the routine news-reporting and other newsroom jobs, but men are majority in leading (89,7 per cent) and top-level management (73,5 per cent) positions (de Jorge and Adghirni, 2013):

Female journalists in Brazil have not yet broken through this glass ceiling, where only a few have entered the level where strategic decisions are made. Furthermore, this trend perpetuates the culture of exclusion that exists throughout
the profession. In other words, Brazilian women are part of the media workforce but they are still not fairly recognized, meritoriously paid or positioned to be able to influence company decision-making. (Jorge and Adghirni, 2013:212)

Strong and Hannis (2007:115) believe that more must be done in order to create a working environment that encourages women to stay in the journalism industry long enough to develop deep and strong connections so they are able to move into traditionally male areas of journalism and, finally, rise to senior positions.

Melin (2008), who conducted analysis of Swedish and British journalists’ strategies and tactics in the fields of journalism, claims that the situation for women journalists is still comparable to the 1970s. Women journalists are behind men when it comes to promotion, female editors are paid significantly less than their male colleagues, men dominate senior managerial positions and also middle positions, and female journalists tend to work in types of media with the lowest status such as magazines, organizational media or as freelancers while men tend to work in higher status media such as TV and national newspapers (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming, 2004; Djerf-Pierre, 2007; Löfgren Nilsson, 2007; Robinson, 2005; Van Zoonen, 1994).

As Moi (1999) argues, gender has different values in different fields, meaning that the hierarchical distinction also applies to topics, better known as hard and soft news. The first is “considered male and is the area dominated by male journalists, and consequently, soft news is female unimportant news, and thus female journalists dominate the area” (Melin, 2008:36). Moi’s argument (1999) can also be applied to sports journalism itself. Sports such as football, boxing and ice hockey englobe and reinforce values connected to the hegemonic notion of masculinity (Messner and Sabo, 1990), therefore there is a male-dominance tendency. However, there are also sports that are understood as appropriated to women, even more than for men, as ballet and gymnastics (Metheny, 1967) which, according to Wiley, Shaw and Havitz (2000), clearly affects participation choices, and who covers each sports and for which audience. In this
sense, “soft sports” are easier for women journalists to fit in than the ones associated with masculine norms.

The rise of market-driven journalism required the industry to be more “humanized”, which implies to be more “feminized” according to Van Zoonen (1998). Hereupon, Van Zoonen (1998) and Wrigley (2002) claim that the perception of women as possessing this kind of communication skills may be an advantage, at least in the hiring process. Yet, not many differences have been found in the way female and male journalists approach the news (de Bruin and Ross, 2004; Van Zoonen, 1994, 1998).

Löfgren Nilsson (2010) argues that the dominant cultural organization of gendered symbolism and expectations support the continuation of the gender-typing process, meaning "the social construction of masculinities and femininities provides an understanding of the gendered division of labour" (Löfgren Nilsson, 2010:3). Certeau (1984) emphasized two concepts to define unseen resistance acts of individuals in everyday life, strategies and tactics. Strategies are power mechanisms and regulations which create ground for establishing force-relationships, while tactics are temporary acts of the weak which are not easily defined since “they appear and disappear in a short time, for just getting used victory over the powerful one’s strategies” (Gokalp Yilmaz, 2016).

These concepts were further explored by Melin (2008) and Van Zoonen (1994, 1998). Melin (2008) reiterates that strategy “is the the suppression of women’s opportunities through the very structure and of the production process” (Melin, 2008:106). According to Melin (2008), women are belittled with derogatory attributes under the guise of compliments or, when dealing with successful women, anti-feminine attributes are employed. When lacking in place and power (Certeau, 1984), women journalists react to experiences of “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 2001) by using different tactics to cope (Melin, 2008).
Melin (2008) and Van Zoonen (1994, 1998) argue that women journalists develop two main tactics to gain respect and recognition in their jobs: “being one of the boys” which means to adjust themselves to the expectation of a male-dominated environment. It is an attempt to be one of them (the boys) in order to achieve status, power and career in journalism. The other tactic is “being one of the girls” meaning they adopt what is expected to be a woman by society (Melin, 2008:110; Van Zoonen, 1994, 1998). Melin (2008:151) argues that, the ones who choose to be “one of the girls” understand journalism as more than just a job, but as a way they can express and develop their personality. Thus, they do not align themselves with the boys, but with those like them, they then become “one of the girls” (Melin, 2008).

For instance, Chambers, Steiner and Fleming (2004) found that women in journalism management positions usually adopt a thick-skinned approach in order to be respected by colleagues. By adopting “masculine” values and practices, they are not seen as outsiders (due to their gender) but as “one of the boys” (Hardin and Shain, 2006). However, Melin (2008) shows that this attempt of becoming “one of the boys” to protect themselves from being recognized as the “different from the norm” do not save them from becoming targets of sexism. Sexism itself can be understood as prejudice or discrimination based on a person’s gender. It also refers to traditional gender role stereotypes and in the inherent inequality between men and women (Hannam, 2012). Sexism can affect anyone, but in patriarchal societies (which are the vast majority of cultures around the world), where men are more likely than women to hold positions of social, economic and political power, sexism tends to impact mainly women. Feminism rises from this context as a belief that women and men should have equal opportunities in all spheres.

Sweden and the other Nordic countries are often understood as pioneers on questions related to gender equality, however gendered journalism culture remains as an issue (Djerf-Pierre, 2010, 2011; Edström, 2013). Löfgren Nilsson (2010) interviewed 25 women and 20 male journalists in Sweden and found that gender expectations were embedded in both routines and rituals on SVT News, supporting the gender typing of assignments. Many women journalists identified the gendered nature of the organization and journalism, however their problems were considered to
be caused by their own behavior. “Passive, unreliable and insecure female journalists constituted a problem and therefore needed to change their behavior and ‘learn how to become like the boys’” (Löfgren Nilsson, 2010:14). In Sweden, male journalists earn substantially more than women in almost all of the average high ranges of many occupational levels (Edström, 2013:83), in senior and top management positions in news outlets, men earn twice as much as women (Byerly, 2011; Journalisten, cited in Byerly, 2011:83).

Gender identity shapes and maintains work structures in a mutual relation (Acker, 1990). Van Zoonen (2003:62) states that the gendered structure of media production goes from micro and meso to macro levels. De Bruin (2004) points out to the ways women journalists minimize their feminine identities to fit in with men and succeed in their careers, noting that “(over)identification with traditional male work ethos and professional values (…) seemed to be instrumental in avoiding gender tensions and polarization” (de Bruin, 2004:13). Van Zoonen (1998) argues that it is less about fitting in and more about adjusting to male-established rules, values and norms.

Gendered journalism cultures emerge as an outcome of sexism in patriarchal societies. In order to understand the perceptions, opinions and experience of the participants of this study, these concepts will be used in the analysis and discussion of data.
Chapter 5 - Methodology

This chapter will present the methodology of the research. The chapter begins by outlining the cross-national comparison approach followed by a description of semi-structured interviews method, why and how it was applied in this study. The process of data collection and how the analysis of the data was carried out will follow next. After that, I reflect on ethical considerations on my role as a researcher. This chapter ends with the delimitations of this study.

5.1 Cross-national comparison

The process of globalization means that “comparative research is no longer a choice but rather a necessity” (Livingstone, 2012:415). Comparative research in media has become one of the most interesting areas in the field of journalism studies (Hanitzsch, 2013). As Hanitzch (2013) argues, the predominantly dominant approach to comparative research is cross-national. While in the social sciences cross-national comparisons are both accused of being impossible and defended as necessary, within the field of media the “study that compares two or more nations with respect to some common activity” (Edelstein, 1982:14) is much promoted. Hanusch and Hanitzsch (2017) claim that this type of research in communication has been thriving in the past two decades.

Cross-national studies look beyond national borders in order to achieve a more universal understanding of different phenomena, forms of production, content and uses of journalism around the world (Hanitzsch, 2017). Livingstone (2003:478) states that in times of globalization “one might even argue that the choice not to conduct a piece of research cross-nationally requires as much justification as the choice to conduct cross-national research”, because communication study reach many countries across the globe and basing a research in one country provokes general claims that are not accurate about other nations.

Cross-national research’s aims are diverse but include “improving understanding of one's own country; improving understanding of other countries; testing a theory across diverse settings; examining transnational processes across different contexts; examining the local reception of
imported cultural forms; building abstract universally applicable theory; challenging claims to universality; evaluating scope and value of certain phenomena; identifying marginalized cultural forms; improving international understanding; and learning from the policy initiatives of others” (Livingstone, 2003:477).

The aims are achieved through the identification of similarities and differences. According to Livingstone (2003), comparative study is challenging exactly because the researcher must balance and interpret similarities and differences “while avoiding banalities and stereotypes” (Livingstone, 2003:491). Some argue that the search for differences can exacerbate national stereotypes underplaying heterogeneity, ambiguity and borderline phenomena (Livingstone, 2003). However, the search for similarities might challenge stereotypes since they require an explanation (Sarana, 1975).

Researchers (Esser and Hanitzsch, 2012; Esser et al., 2012; Hanitzsch et al., 2011; Shoemaker and Cohen, 2006) have exposed that there are some similarities among journalism cultures around the world, but also significant differences that still persist in political, economic, cultural, technological and historical spheres (Hanusch and Hanitzsch, 2017:525). Hanitzsch (2009) argues that the increasing understanding that cross-national research is indispensable for creating theories and findings applicable in much wider scope has enabled the growth in comparative journalism studies.

5.2 Semi-structured interviews

This research focuses on investigate experiences, individual views and observations. In order to achieve its aim, the study needs to give voice to women sports journalists to have a better understanding of the context and dynamic of their personal experiences. For this purpose, I chose to use a qualitative method of semi-structured interviews, I interviewed four Brazilian journalists and three Swedish journalists.
Some research done in the field (Miller and Miller, 1995; Smucker, Whisenant and Pedersen, 2003) have used surveys as method, which generate answers that can be coded, counted and processed quickly. However, in qualitative interviewing, the researcher wants detailed answers and interviewees’ own perspectives. It aims to obtain descriptions of the interviewee’s world in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomenon, highlighting human experiences (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014:143). A semi-structured interview is guided by a set of open-ended questions, allowing the interviewer to enter into a dialogue with the interviewees. In this way, it gives the informants more room to develop their thoughts (May, 2011). On semi-structured interview, Bryman says:

The researcher has a list of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered, often referred to as an interview guide, but the interviewee has a great deal of lead the way in how to reply. Questions may not follow on exactly in the way outlined on the schedule. Questions that are not included in the guide may be asked as the interviewer picks up on things said by interviewees. But, by and large, all the questions will be asked and a similar wording will be used from interviewee to interviewee. (Bryman, 2012:471)

Still according to Bryman (2012), the semi-structured interview has become a popular method among feminism researchers due to “a high level of rapport between interviewer and interviewee; a high degree of reciprocity on the part of the interviewer; the perspective of the women being interviewed; a non-hierarchical relationship” (Bryman, 2012:492).

5.2.1 Selection of respondents
The selection of participants was made after searching for different profiles of journalists on internet. My criteria was to invite women sports journalists with different backgrounds, years of experience and from diverse media platforms so that I had participants with different working settings. I contacted 11 Brazilians and 13 Swedish sports journalists by email. Only four Brazilians replied, all agreeing to participate in my research. Seven Swedish journalists answered
the email and four of them were willing to participate (later, one of them could no longer engage in this study due to schedule issues). Three Swedish sports journalists praised the importance of this study but because of the coronavirus situation they have been reassigned from sports desk to cover the current crisis. All three of them said they were overwhelmed by the work and they would have participated in this research in another moment.

The seven women sports journalists who participated in this study have worked in radio and tv stations, newspapers and online publications. Their working experience with sports journalism ranges from a few decades to four years. The journalists interviewed in this study were not identified and no personal information that could lead to their identification was published. I chose confidentiality so that participants could feel completely comfortable in sharing their opinion and experiences without fearing any kind of setback. I also chose to give pseudonym to participants in order to keep confidentiality at the same time it helps the reader to follow the presentation of my findings and analysis. See table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Type of media</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>TV, online</td>
<td>19 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Zoe</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>Beatriz</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>TV, radio</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>Ida</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>TV, online</td>
<td>18 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>Moa</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>31 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 7</td>
<td>Siri</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

5.2.2 The interviews
The interviews were carried out in April 2020. The initial idea was to conduct the interviews face-to-face both in Brazil and in Sweden, however my plans had to change due to coronavirus
situation so all interviews were carried out in digital meetings. The interviews were mainly conducted by phone or video call on Skype, FaceTime and/or WhatsApp and lasted between 35 to 50 minutes. Three interviews were made by email due to timezone or schedule issues, but follow-up questions were asked in an attempt to keep some kind of dynamic in these interviews.

I conducted all interviews on my own, in English, Portuguese and Swedish, and later I translated all of them to English. Following the recommendations on GDPR from Södertörn University, I wrote and sent an information letter of consent and explained to the respondents that their participation was entirely voluntary and confidential, that the information gathered from the interviews would be used only in my master thesis and that they could change their minds about taking part in this study at any moment. All seven participants wrote their consent in emails, which together with the audios, emails, transcriptions and translations were stored accordingly to the recommendations from GDPR. With their consent, I used a recording device during the interviews so later I could transcribe them, but I also had a pen and paper for notes. I had written down an interview guide with semi-structured questions, but in most of the interviews the order of the questions varied as the participants developed more along the lines of a conversation and some journalists brought up questions even before I had asked them. The interview guide can be found in Appendix.

5.3 Strategy for analyzing data

The analysis of my data was carried out with inspiration from Bourdieu (1998, 2001), Melin (2008) and Van Zoonen (1994, 1998, 2003). The interview guide was structured around the perceptions of women sports journalism on their experience and the questions were both of a descriptive and reflective character, for example I asked the respondents how long they had been working with sports journalism but also their view on their profession. For the analysis of the data, I started by listening to the interviews once, then again while transcribing them. The process was time-consuming but at them same time it allowed me to start interpreting the interviews at an early stage, as I could identify patterns, similarities and differences among the
respondents. As Bryman (2012:577) argues, parts of transcripts become seen as belonging to certain topics, codes. When reading through the transcribed and emailed interviews, I highlighted key phrases and words in their narratives, pairing them together in themes and sub-themes, see Table 2 in Appendix. Themes are categories identified by the researcher through his/her data (Bryman, 2012:580).

The following themes were outlined as a first structuring of my data, they are based on the answers given by participants as mentioned above:

• Sports Lovers
• Newsroom culture
  - Male domain
  - Division of labor and conflict of generations
• Sexism
  - New times, but some old prejudice
  - Challenges
  - Tactics
• Improvements
  - Contradictions
• “Symbolic Violence”

Sport lovers is an introductory theme where similarities and differences of general informations about participants are highlighted. The other four themes were organized into similarities or differences found in the perceptions and ideas of participants. For instance, the newsroom culture theme shows mostly similarities while sexism subchapter exposes great differences between Swedish and Brazilian participants’ views and experiences. The findings and analysis of my data will be presented in chapter six.
In the next phase I analyzed the interviewees’ answers in relation to my aim, research questions and theoretical framework, allowing me to draw on new categories (sub-themes) around the structure for the discussion of findings, which will be carried out in chapter seven. I used an interpretative and reflexive approach to the data I collected, as the study departs from the assumption that knowledge is constructed through experiences, as for example interviews (Mason, 2002:78, 149).

5.4 Methodological discussion

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the reading of my data will be interpretative and reflexive, meaning that I as a researcher am inevitably implicated in the data and need to reflect on and explore my role in the process of generation and interpretation of data. Maynard and Purvis (1994:16) claim that reflexivity is a main element in feminist methodology and in the commitment of feminist qualitative research. It is needed to be constantly aware of how my experiences and baggage affect the way I both conducted the research and how I analyzed my results. I do not think that it is possible to distance myself from the study so I did not desire to strive for or to do so, but instead the main importance is to reflect upon my role and be aware of how I interfere with the results through the analysis.

I am a woman who interviewed other women, I am a journalist who interviewed other journalists, which means that I did not come from a neutral or independent position. As the majority of the participants of this study, I also love sports and communication and I became journalist because I wanted to be sports journalist. This, actually, has not happened yet. It was only during the process of writing this thesis that I understood a few situations that I have been through. As for instance, once when I was working as producer of city news at a tv channel in Brazil and a producer spot became available in the sports department. I asked my boss to reassign me to sports, but he answered me looking a bit confused “but there’s a girl there already”, who was actually the reporter. Or even when I was in my first day at journalism school and said, in the presentation, that I wanted to become a sports journalist and my professor,
laughing, said “you? Never, but Vogue maybe”, exactly the same situation that one of the participants of this study described during the interview. Now I can understand gender roles in a better sense and visualize the gendered structures of newsrooms.

It is important to reflect on my own engagement in the research topic and my commitment to the women that I interviewed. Listening to my participants’ experiences regarding their identity as women and sports journalists was a very enlightening moment. The gender issue in journalism is a complex and subjective matter. This study can contribute to improvements for future women sports journalists, shedding light on remaining issues that must be changed in order to give further steps towards gender equality.

5.5 Delimitations

This study has chosen to analyze seven women sports journalists’ perspectives on their experience as women and professionals in a male-dominated environment and to verify the similarities and differences between Sweden and Brazil on this topic. It does not intend to make any kind of generalizations from this small sample, but it is interested in understanding the world as it is experienced by these seven women. In order to draw further conclusions, it could be interesting to conduct deeper interviews with more women from both countries. Another intersectionality approach and methodology could furthermore be of interest, to analyze women sports journalists’ experiences in relation to sources and family matters; and with such categories as ethnicity and sexuality in focus.

The choice of digital meetings was an alternative to overcome the social distancing recommended by the Swedish government and the quarantine rule in Brazil applied in the current moment this thesis was carried out. Digital interviewing is an alternative for geographical or social reach of the researcher (Bampton and Cowton, 2002). While scholars argue that participants are more responsive to phone (or video) interview compared to email, this process can also become a “scheduling quagmire that takes as much time as conducting the interviews
themselves” (Burke and Miller, 2001) and transcribing them. Email was my main communication channel with respondents and three interviews were conducted by email, which decreases the level of exchange between researcher and interviewee (Bryman, 2012). However, the participants interviewed by email were able to answer follow-up questions in an attempt to maintain dynamics and collect more data.
Chapter 6 - Findings and analysis

In this chapter, I will share and analyze the outcomes of the interviews. The theories and the literature previously presented in the thesis are applied to this data in order to be able to discuss and draw conclusions in the following chapter. As presented earlier, the data was divided in five themes.

6.1 Sports lovers

The seven participants were women sports journalists from Sweden and Brazil, being three Swedish and four Brazilian respondents. Their average working experience with sports journalism is 13 years. Differences between the two countries can already be noticed in the professionalization of chosen participants. All four Brazilian interviewees are graduated and only one Swedish respondent holds a journalism degree. The other two Swedish journalists have been to university, but they have not graduated. One of them said she was headhunted to work as sports journalist in 2016 after two years in university. The other participant explained that when she started, some decades ago, it was very common to find your way to sports journalism by working in smaller newspapers.

The interviewees have experience in different media platforms, but mostly in tv broadcasting and newspapers. Among participants are reporters, producers, commentators and hosts, who have covered many national and international events such as Olympic Games, World Cup, UEFA Champions League and UFC. When asked about how they started working with sports journalism, six out of seven respondents referred to their passion for sports since they were children. “I knew since I was a small kid that I was meant to be sports journalist” (Moa), mentioned one of them. “I’ve always wanted to work with sports” (Laura), “sports have always been in my life” (Beatriz), and “I have strong interest for sports since I was a very small kid” (Ida) were some of their answers. This significant similarity between Sweden and Brazil can be compared to Cramer’s study (1994) with American women sports journalists.
The spontaneous mention of their passion to sports may be seen as “unnatural” (Coakley, 2007). Shoch and Ohl (2011) showed in their study that the male journalists interviewed often and spontaneously talked about their passion for sport, which “defined the professional ethos that constitutes the legitimate model for belonging to the profession” (Shoch and Ohl, 2011:195), while the women participants claimed a vocation for journalism instead. One Brazilian and one Swedish participants mentioned their enthusiasm with journalism besides the love for sports, “I’ve always been passionated about communication and sports” (Zoe) and “I love sports, love meeting people and love writing” (Siri), they said.

Another similarity is that most participants from both nationalities entered the field as interns and trainees. “I started really early, when they hardly had female at all writing in sports journalism”, observed Moa. Indeed, all participants with more than 15 years of experience in the field described similar impression, pointing to few women sports journalists in newsrooms and mostly of them were in tv broadcasting: “When I started it was more common to have a woman as host, like having her physical appearance reading teleprompter, not giving her opinion or really covering sports”, said Laura. The same interviewee remembered her first day at university and her first internship in sports journalism:

I was super preppy back when I started journalism school. But I was already super into sports. In the first day of class, we had a presentation where we had to say what we wanted to do in journalism. Then I said my name and said I wanted to become sports journalist. Everyone laughed, ‘you will work at Vogue, Marie Claire’. (…) I told them I would be the first to get an internship and it would be in sports journalism. And I did it. (Laura)

If sport is a male-dominated field so is the power to decide who is recognized as a member of the profession (Bourdieu, 1998). Moi (1999) brings the idea that gender has different value in different fields which can be applied to journalism. Depending on how you look, you fit in fashion coverage but not in sports journalism. It is decided by patriarchal terms. These women
have gone against norms in society and in journalism. By entering areas dominated by masculine values, where masculinity is an inherent and natural part of hierarchical logic and news-work processes, these women work as symbols in gendered organizations, striving to succeed as professionals and as women (Hardin and Whiteside, 2009).

6.2 Newsroom culture

One of the biggest similarities noticed in the interviews is how participants perceive the sports newsroom culture. Interviewees from both countries shared the same impressions of having to prove their knowledge, the experience of being the minority and the feeling that there are unresolved matters for women in sports departments.

6.2.1 Male domain

All interviewees claimed that the culture of sports department has largely changed over time, but most of them also pointed to some remaining issues. “I think it’s been a lot of changes in the latest years and, I mean, sports desks are kind of a representation of how sports are in general. If you go out to a football team, even if there’s a lot of young men, you kinda have the old culture of sports guys anyway”, said Moa. As Hall et al. (1991) and Messner and Sabo (1990) argue, historically, the sports world developed as a distinctly male institution and, in many ways, it remains a male domain.

Zoe and Siri said “there is a difference” (Zoe) in being a woman in a sports environment. “It could be anything from not being respected for your knowledge or your opinion, in a conversation among colleagues, to male athletes making inappropriate jokes in interviews”, Siri explained. Indeed, a common complaint among most participants from both countries was some kind of need to prove their knowledge in sports. “The feeling is that I have to prove my ability and knowledge everyday” (Zoe), as if they need to be validated by male colleagues. Bourdieu (2001) implies that we can understand the strength of the masculine order by noticing that it dispenses justification. They do not need to be validated as the masculine order “imposes itself as
neutral and has no need to spell itself out in discourses aimed at legitimating it” (Bourdieu, 2001:10).

As Zoe highlighted, culturally, men predominate in sports journalism in Brazil. It is easily noticed by comparing the numbers of men and women in sports newsrooms. Participants were asked about how many women and men journalists work in their sports departments. They were unanimous in saying there was far less women than men. The average number of women in the sport newsrooms of participants is around nine (or 25.7 percent) while the average number of men is 26 (or 74.3 percent). The largest newsroom among the participants had 110 people working (including freelancers), 38 being women, while the smallest newsroom had two women and five men. Moa shared her perception, though, that the quality of women journalists is as important as their representativeness in the newsrooms. “We are eight persons there, we are eight very good profile journalists doing the same job as men do, there’s nothing holding back. Maybe in one part it is not as good as it could be… Our bosses are men but still…”, Moa argued. Ida also made some remarks, ”it can be more a guy culture (in sports newsrooms) but it’s also quite open minded and equal in both the way we treat each other and the responsibility you get from editors or higher in the hierarchy”. They imply that numbers do not necessary represent sexism.

Among all participants, only Beatriz has had a woman editor-in-chief in a sports newsroom. Another Brazilian interviewee shared her view, “in the newsroom, men occupy better positions, but we have women in the leadership who are highly respected” (Maria). Moa said “when they were deciding the boss for the sports desk, I said that it was a pity they didn’t choose me because it would have been good having a woman in this position”. It suggests that these women are willing to achieve leading positions as much as men are, but the opportunities are different for each gender.

6.2.2 Division of labor and conflict of generations

Even if their bosses are men, the participants claim there is no such a thing as gendered divisions of coverage in their newsrooms and they were unanimous about the division of tasks being
related to ability, skills and knowledge. “It’s more about your knowledge. It’s not the boss deciding, it’s more the context of your experience. (...) You work yourself into an area, a sport, and if you liked it you hang on to it and you become more and more responsible for covering it”, Moa explained her view. Beatriz also mentioned working shifts as part of this dynamic in her newsroom at a Brazilian tv channel:

We don’t have divisions where I work, we go around to all areas and sports. Of course it also goes according to your interest. There’s someone that likes live coverage more, another one has a good writing style and likes to tell stories. It’s not defined by gender, but by abilities. The editor-in-chief sees what each of us do the best and divides the tasks. Sometimes (it is divided) by shifts, whoever worked until late, only start to work in the afternoon the next day. (Beatriz)

Some Swedish and Brazilian participants mentioned disrespectful colleagues, especially older ones, as a remaining issue in sports newsrooms. Siri has the feeling that people from older generations have a harder time to deal with the new gendered structures of newsrooms. Maria shared the same impression:

The work itself is not in doubt, at least in my experience, but the content of the conversations is sexist. The culture of jokes, not only about gender but also about sexuality, are very cultivated among men, especially older men. But I believe that this is a reflection of society in general, which in an environment that once was very masculine, ends up by extending (to sports newsrooms). A criticism that I have and that also bothers me is that I see in some cases, women themselves end up becoming sexists, to enter the world of men. I have heard sexist comments from women who try to be respected by replicating the behavior of misogynists. (Maria)
The feeling of belonging might have taken these women to blend in a conversation with male colleagues by repeating sexist jokes. Melin (2008) points to the choice of becoming one of the boys as a tactic. They want to be accepted as one of them in order to not suffer prejudice. However, as Melin (2008) shows, this tactic does not save them from becoming the objects of several comments from their male colleagues.

Another aspect mentioned during the interviews was the idea of femininity and “feminine” journalism. Moa said that “sometimes I think I have male colleagues that are more female than I can be in the thinking. They kinda of notice things, they kinda see things in a different way”, a way that she is expected to follow due to her gender, some kind of established characteristics for women. This statement exposes that she knows she is expected to fit the idea of being a woman, which was created and maintained by a patriarchal society. But she does not recognize herself under these terms, she does not fit the features expected by society for her, or not all of them.

6.3 Sexim

Substantial differences are observed in how Swedish and Brazilian participants experienced and understood sexism. Differences are also noticed in the way they deal with challenges.

6.3.1 New times, but some old prejudice
Participants shared a general feeling that, although there are challenges, it had been worse before. Moa said that it is very common nowadays to have women covering sports in Sweden and that she believes athletes, coaches and people from sports federations are very respectful towards them. However, she pointed to readers being disrespectful sometimes, “you get naughty emails (such as) ‘you should stay at home’, ‘stick to the kitchen’ and things like that, especially (when) writing football and hockey I should say, but it’s not as common as before”. She was not the only journalist who highlighted remaining gender issues in football (in both countries) and hockey, this problematic could be noticed in the experience and perception of participants from both nationalities. “There is still preferences that (in) football they will put more men than women to cover it. We see one (women journalist) being pioneer as commentator, but one for
how many men? The challenge, for me, is still this… it also includes the acceptance of the audience”, Laura explained.

Football and ice hockey are two sports where values such as toughness, aggression and competition are part of their essence, reinforcing hegemonic notions of masculinity (Messner and Sabo, 1990). Maria described an impression that sports regularly personify the masculine culture of society, “the culture, especially when it comes to football and for a group of older journalists, is still very masculine. Here in Brazil, sport and especially football ends up by personifying all the macho culture that we have in other areas”. She continued by saying that this situation has been changing, mentioning that in the world of sports in Brazil there are now women commentators, journalists, valued athletes and fans of women’s teams. “But I believe that it still goes slowly. Men's football, for example, is what ‘sells’ to major media outlets, to major sponsoring companies, it is where we find the highest salaries”, Maria concluded. The “macho” culture of newsrooms is supported by news values such as objectivity and toughness (de Bruin and Ross, 2004; Van Zoonen, 1994), reflecting the same values shared by sports (Messner and Sabo, 1990).

Laura argued that if one takes a look at gymnastics world championship it will be produced for women and it will be usually made by women, she argued that “there are many sports that attract female audience” (Laura). As long back as in 1967, Metheny (1967) claims that, although the majority of sports are considered “masculine”, some sports are seen to be more appropriated to women than men, as dance, gymnastics and figure skating, because they are consistent with traditional ideologies of femininity. Even today, the same seems to apply to sports coverage, some sports are believed to attract more female audience than male, while others appeal to men spectators and readers more than for women. This dynamic is also decided by patriarchal terms, which own the criteria to decide what is female and male characteristics and what fits women and men.

Zoe who mainly covers football for a Brazilian tv channel shared her experience:
We are used to questions such as: do you know the lineup? What’s offside? I bet you don’t know the name of this player or that coach. Most of these questions come from people with sexist thought. I’ve been harassed in stadiums, when you hear that you’re beautiful and hot, and you have to watch out so they don’t touch your body. You will meet good people that respect your work, but you also face these not ‘so nice’ people. You must learn how to deal with it. The important thing is not to keep bad experiences. We have several examples of successful women in the profession and that’s what gives you fuel to follow. (Zoe)

Similar situations were experienced by Swedish participants. One of them told a story from her early career:

One of my first experiences, I was quite young 19 or early 20’s, I came to a mixed zone after a football game where we had a group interview. One of the coaches in the first league in Sweden, he got a question about if it was offside or not, and the reporter started to describe the situation to the coach and suddenly he stopped talking, turned to me and said “offside? Do you know what it is?”. Everyone turned to me and I kinda said “ok, you can go on, I know the most grounded elements in football”. (Moa)

However, Moa does not believe that young women journalists face the same kind of situation nowadays. She described the current environment in the Swedish football as less sexist and more used to women working in the sport’s coverage.

6.3.2 Challenges
Participants were asked if they have felt uncomfortable from a perspective of gender in any moment of their careers. All four Brazilians answered no, one of them mentioned that in the newsroom no but in football stadiums yes. “No, I have never felt (uncomfortable). I have heard
pick up lines, I have gotten many (sexual) ‘proposals’. I don’t think it only happens in journalism, but it happens in other areas too” (Beatriz), this statement exposes some inconsistency or a misunderstanding of the concept of sexism. Beatriz claims that she has heard pick up lines and has gotten (sexual) “proposals”, but those situations did not make her feel uncomfortable or embarrassed because she understood them as a natural part of being a woman.

Maria explained that her personality makes her feel comfortable among colleagues, she continued by saying “I don’t feel direct prejudice. I have learned to take a stand, to be respected and to ignore jokes”. Similar answer was giving by the only Swedish participant who said she has never felt uncomfortable while working. “No. I think I’m not that kind of person. I don’t think about it. For my job it is so natural” (Ida), but not to think about it does not make harassment or sexism in general disappear. It seems more like a personal choice of creating a “thick skin” in order to not let these things affect them. Adopting such a perspective, women journalists aim at not being seen as outsiders (Hardin and Shain, 2006; Melin, 2008; Van Zoonen, 1994, 1998).

The other two Swedish participants said they have felt uncomfortable in many situations, one of them told about one of her experiences:

I’ve also had players dropping their towels in the dressing rooms in front of me, (they) just wanted to make fun of a young female reporter or something. So yeah, I’ve felt very uncomfortable… I was in a small dressing room, I was very young, among many players around 25. It used to be in men’s dressing room (which) is very uncomfortable because it’s a situation where you should be there and you are embarrassed, but I felt like I had to have my quotes. (Moa)

Moa continued sharing her experience, “it was a very uncomfortable situation (being harassed in dressing rooms) for me and it’s been with me. I think it (having been harassed in dressing rooms while working) even became stronger after #MeToo movement that I realized that ‘ok, I didn’t
know that’s been like a really hard situation for me”. Maria and Zoe also mentioned a similar movement to #MeToo, #DeixaElaTrabalhar (let her work) as a turning point for the visibility on the women sports journalists’ situation in Brazil.

6.3.3 Tactic
All Swedish participants and one Brazilian journalist described that the best tactic to overcome challenges is to be well prepared and informed, to be knowledgeable. Knowledge once again appears in their answers. If before they described a feeling of having to prove their knowledge in everyday situations in their newsrooms while their male colleagues take it for granted, now they name the same skill as main tactic to cope with challenges. Laura shared her impressions:

I always say that I never stop studying. (…) It’s a thing about me, I like to inform so I need to be informed. I like to give different informations. As reporter and now as commentator, I’ve always enjoyed telling stories behind the scenes, stories that can inspire myself and others. So I believe above all you must have knowledge, domain over your topic, be well informed. And then it doesn’t matter if you’re man, woman, your race, social class… The most important thing is to know what you’re talking about. (Laura)

The other three Brazilians answered they have no tactic, instead they demonstrate their work with dedication. “The essential is to check well all informations, read a lot about anythings, not only sports but all other subjects too. The good journalist is the one who can talk about everything”, claimed Zoe after saying she does not use any tactic, but her statement also meets the average answer to this question, knowledge is the key to overcome challenges. Another Brazilian journalist pointed to “it doesn’t matter, I think we got to a moment where your capability, ability prevails and that sports department already requests to not have only men or

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1 #MeToo movement aims to bring awareness about sexual harassment and assault. It was created in 2006 by Tarana Burke, but it was only in 2017 that it became a bigger movement, following Harvey Weinstein’s sexual abuse allegations.
only women. It happens in a way that depends on the ability, not gender” (Beatriz), yet women are highly outnumbered in newsrooms both in Brazil and Sweden.

The two other Swedish participants said they have changed their tactics over time. One of them said that “from the beginning I thought I had to be ‘the man’ a little bit. Like coming to the football arena, walking to the dressing room as anyone else because the news were in there. So I kinda of thought ‘ok, I have to do as the man does’ because I wouldn’t miss anything, (for) just being a woman. So that’s what I did in the beginning” (Moa). By realizing she was not being accepted or seen as “one of the boys” (Melin, 2008), the journalist decided not to go to locker rooms anymore, instead she asked the coach to “get the players out with some clothes on” (Moa).

Melin (2008) and Van Zoonen (1994, 1998) argue that “being one of the boys” is a common tactic among journalists beginners. They first tend to try to adjust themselves to the expectation of a male-dominated territory. The turning point for the Swedish journalist was when she realized that she needed to change her tactic and assumed her identity as woman, or as she said “the kind of journalist (that) is best for me”:

I started to get different things from the other guys (male colleagues) because I was doing the interviews by myself instead of being in the group in the dressing rooms, and things like that. I think I’ve been through situations where it has been negative for me to be a woman, like you don’t get trusted (among colleagues and sources) with the things and you don’t get believed in the way you should. But I was have been in situations where I got advantages because people kinda remember you in a different way and you are not so many, one woman and 10 guys, they will remember you. Maybe sometimes you get them to trust you in another way. (…) I’ve had quite some years (in international football), I think it was easier to get questions because they can be 75 men and two women. They kinda see you because of your gender, you’re different (from the other 75 guys in the same room). (Moa)
Laura mentioned that she believes she had some benefits due to her gender. By assuming her identity as “one of the girls” (Melin, 2008), Laura believes she can succeed as sports journalist:

Maybe I’ve been used, but being a woman I got a few advantages such as ‘we need to do a movement to show that we want more women in higher positions’, so among all people, I had competence and, besides that, I am woman. So it was published in a big column something like ‘she has an angel face but she knows it all about combat sports’. In a sense it is sexism, but they use me as much as I use them to succeed in my career. (Laura)

6.4 Improvements

Another similarity is noticed when all participants agreed that sexism in sports journalism has been decreasing over time. “I think the industry is getting more and more used to women in the world of sports. For me, it feels like the arena for women sports journalists is getting bigger and bigger. And it is sickly exciting to be on this trip!”, Siri shared her feeling. Ida noticed that there are more women sports journalists and more women in leading positions within sports departments. Maria shares similar thoughts, “from what I see, women have gained more voice and are occupying their space more and more. I realize that the new generations of men who enter the sport (sportsmen and sports journalists) have a much greater awareness of gender equality than the older ones” (Maria).

Zoe shared her opinion that they are more respected now in general, including among athletes, and that they have more space and occupy now “the frontline, presenting, commenting and reporting. Participating in roles that men used to take”. Two Brazilian journalists mentioned the women’s football world cup 2019 as a prominent signal of improvement, “the record attendance at the games has already shown that this vision is changing and gives us more hope for a future with more equality in general” (Maria). The other one said “I work at a company that transmits
women’s football, which is getting stronger, growing, gaining prominence and has big names from both athletes and women journalists covering it” (Zoe).

6.4.1 Contradictions
Inconsistency and contradictions can be noticed in the participants’ speeches from both countries, but mostly in the Brazilians’ thoughts. Beatriz shared her impressions on improvement for women sports journalists but also made remarks regarding the feminist movement, “now we go to football clubs’ training centers and we have a female bathroom, before we had only common bathrooms that everyone went to. Now we have female bathrooms. I don’t know if there’s a specific improvement, something that has to be specific for women. I don’t like much this ‘mimimi’, feminism… I think what we need to understand is (that what counts are) our attitudes, our ability, our intelligence, how we position ourselves, and not a movement, and this thing of fighting too much”. She does not understand social movements as an essential part of social changes, or that it is acknowledging the existence of inequalities that we are able to work on changing realities.

The same participant continued by saying “I think that female football is many times made for women, who enjoys… Even if we have… It’s more men who watch it (female football). I even got shocked when I started working directly with women’s football, I got to know women’s football pages and I believed they would have been created by women. But no, it’s men who are the owners of these pages about women’s football” (Beatriz). As mentioned many times earlier in this study, the experience of participants from both countries reinforces the idea of football as a remaining male-territory, even when it comes to women’s football. The journalist exposes inconsistency when she argues that women’s football is made for women but the fan pages found by her were owned by men, which shows that significant part of women’s football audience, the one who engages and creates fan pages, is constituted by men.

Laura showed some contradiction regarding representativeness when asked about improvements for women sports journalists. She said that “there is no use to put them (women) there (in leading
positions)” (Laura), and at the same time claimed that having more women in sports coverage encourages other women to pursue similar path because they see themselves represented:

What I think is essential (for sports journalism) is the quality. So there’s no use just to put them there. That’s my opinion, there are people who think differently, that you break the cycle by representativeness. But I think that if you’re good at what you do, you can do whatever you want. So… It got better since I started, now we have way more women. And it’s that thing, if you have more women, more women on tv covering sports… You encourage more women who see themselves represented. So I believe that even the interest increases. (Laura)

More inconsistency was found in another Brazilian participant’s answer. When Zoe was asked about if she believed that sport coverage is made by men and for men, she answered “sports journalism is an information system produced for everyone who loves sports. My view is that a woman's place is where she wants to be, not where others think she needs to be. No man should determine our will. We women have to prove all the time that we can discuss about football or any other sport, we are tired of this rooted macho culture”. If sports journalism is made for everyone who loves sports, but women still have to prove they can discuss about sports, that makes sports journalism a mirror of our gendered society.

Moa does not believe that the characteristic of sports journalism as a male-dominated environment is, in general, a gender problem, “it could also be a structural problem of how we look to sports, what kind of readers we have. It’s not meant to be only a gender problem. I think it’s too easy to make it a gender problem. It’s also a problem of tradition” (Moa). Yet the tradition is rooted in gendered cultures (Bourdieu, 2001; Coakley, 2007; Melin, 2008). Her notion of tradition results in a limited view over the problem. Tradition is historically grounded on gendered structures, so if the problem of sports journalism is tradition this naturally means that it is a problem of gender.
Only one participant mentioned an aspect of vanity when asked about her general view over women in sports coverage. Among other things, the Brazilian tv commentator said she is not hypocrite to say she does not care about her look when on air:

My favorite compliment is… It’s not only ‘you’re pretty’. Of course I like to hear that, I won’t be hypocrite and say that I don’t like to hear I’m pretty and say I’m not worried about how my hair looks, I’m sorry I do care about my hair looking good. I’m live on TV and I’m worried about how my hair looks. I want it to be a package of success. But the best compliment is the one that says ‘you bring something different, you gave a different information, you made the difference’.

“I started enjoying this sport because of you”, “I want to be like you”… These are examples showing that… with representatives and a good work you inspire people. (Laura)

6.5 “Symbolic violence”

Lastly, another similarity is observed when most participants from both countries claimed that the challenges now are less easy to recognize. Interviewees agreed that the notorious and overtly exposed sexism are rarer nowadays. “That disrespectfulness that belongs to children’s daycare common when I started has disappeared. You know, the thing on men pointing, whistling or commenting on your looks…”, described Siri. Instead, they shared a common impression of veiled sexism. Or, as Bourdieu (2001) states, a "symbolic violence” which is exercised by recognition or feeling. During interviews, it was possible to spot common impressions among all participants, such as an initial mistrust because of their gender, male coworkers taking the careers as a natural course while women have to work harder to be equally respected, and, once again, the need to prove their capability and knowledge.

Maria reflected on the beginning of her career in sports journalism and compared her experience with male colleagues, “at first sight, there is a suspicion for you being a woman, something
veiled, a different look, but after I take a stand, I soon managed to take a stand. (...) I know that until a person gets to know me they can make a miss-judgment because I am a woman or because I am young. Perhaps for men there is no such a thing” (Maria). Zoe and Siri shared the same thoughts, “I believe that for you to be valued and respected in such an environment (sports newsroom), it takes more time than for men” (Zoe) and “it is hard to be equally respected in your profession (sports journalist) as your male colleagues” (Siri).

Moa shared the feeling that women sports journalists in Sweden tend to have slightly lower salary than men, “I also think a lot of young men coming through the big newspapers take the prestige in another way, more natural like they should have the position. In general, of course. We (women sports journalists) are not taking things for granted and we kinda don’t see ourselves as woman in first, we kinda look more to the team work”, meaning they must prove their competence and knowledge while their male colleagues have a “rightful” path to their position in sports newsroom. Ida believes that the sexist structure of sports journalism where men dominate remains, but she also believes women are gaining more space and assuming different positions and covering different sports. “This automatically means that we are involved in changing the view on the industry. But there is also a long way to go”, continued Ida.

Maria shared similar thought, “I think the sport is getting more and more feminine (more women athletes and more women journalists in sports media). Women finding their space (in the business). Women athletes and journalists have never been more valued, but we still have a long way to go. I still think that in some sports (coverage) the sexism is veiled, but it is very strong”. Siri summarized her perception by saying “now it’s other less visible structures that has to change”. Their impressions expose that, although women journalists gained more space and voice, sports journalism remains as a male-dominated environment.
Chapter 7 - Conclusions and discussion

This final chapter includes conclusions and discussion about this study, it also gives suggestions for further research within gendered journalism cultures topic. The purpose of this thesis was to analyze how Swedish and Brazilian sports journalists perceive their experience in a male-dominated environment and how they cope with remaining challenges in their profession, highlighting similarities and differences between their perceptions in Sweden and Brazil. In order to achieve its purpose, this study used qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews as method. Seven women sports journalists, four Brazilian and three Swedish participants, were interviewed by video, phone calls and email.

This study was reflexive and interpretative in nature, and the purpose was to address three research questions, the first of them being the following:

• What are the Swedish and Brazilian sports journalists’ perceptions of their experiences as women in sports newsrooms?

The results of this study indicate that Swedish and Brazilian participants perceive the environment in newsroom as overall friendly. They claim that sport desks today are more used to women, who has gained more voice and space as compared to before, which was especially highlighted by participants with many years of experience. They also described the division of labor being related to experience and knowledge rather than gender. Despite the space already conquered, all participants are the minority in their newsrooms. Other remaining issues in sports newsrooms mentioned during interviews were sexist jokes, especially from older colleagues, and a feeling that they need to prove their knowledge and capability more often than their male colleagues. The survey dated from 1995 conducted by Miller and Miller exposed that women sports journalists in United States are expected to know less than men, similar result was found by Hardin, Shain and Shultz-Poniatowski (2008) thirteen years later, and Swedish and Brazilian sports journalists who participated of this research shared the same feeling in 2020. As
Antunovic and Hardin (2015), Coakley (2007) and Hardin and Shain (2005) claimed previously, the participants from both nationalities interviewed in this study identified sports journalism as still a male-dominated environment, but they repeatedly argued that the situation for women sports journalists has highly improved over time.

The second research question addressed by this study was the following:

• How do they cope with gender-related challenges?

The results of this study points to a common tactic shared by all participants, which it is to be well prepared and have knowledge. Mainly Swedish participants shared the embarrassing moments they have faced while working in sports coverage. Similar situations to the ones described by Chen et al. (2018) and Hardin and Shain (2006) about online and locker room harassment or struggles at press conferences described by Swedish journalists during interviews while all four Brazilian participants claimed they have never felt uncomfortable while working as sports journalists. However, contradictions were observed in their speech, such as when they argued they take a stand, ignore jokes and (sexual) “proposals” in order to be respected, but they do not see this as tactics to overcome harassment because they do not perceive these situations as harassment in the first place. Similar result was found by Hardin and Shain (2006) with American sports journalists. As Hardin and Shain (2006), Melin (2008) and Van Zoonen (1994,1998) argue, in order to protect themselves from gendered challenges they created a “thick skin”.

All participants agreed that sexism has decreased since they have started working with sports journalism. They mentioned that there is more respect among colleagues and athletes now. Further contradiction was found in the speech of Brazilian participants regarding feminism, women representativeness in sports journalism and sports culture when they acknowledged gendered challenges but at the same time they denied them by saying that everything relies on women’s “posture” and capability. They reproduce arguments used by patriarchal society to
maintain sexism. However, all participants of this study shared a common feeling that the gendered challenges nowadays are harder to recognize. Their impression is that the path for men in sports journalism is seen as more natural while women have to deal with an initial distrust due to their gender in a masculine-dominated environment, and being equipped with knowledge is the way they found to show their value in an attempt to stand as equals. The situation described by them reveals veiled sexism, or as Bourdieu (2001) argues, a “symbolic violence” of male domination. A different look, a pre-judgment, a feeling that it takes more time for women to be valued and respected in sports newsroom than for men. Most participants stated that there is still a long path to achieve gender equality in sports journalism.

The third and last research question addressed by this thesis is:

• What are the similarities and differences in the point of view and experience regarding gender issues of Swedish and Brazilian women sports journalists?

This research found that there are more similarities than differences between Swedish and Brazilian women sports journalists, despite the very different political and media context in the two countries. The similarities were observed in the way the participants identified gendered structures in sports newsroom, described the culture in sports departments, pointed out remaining problematic issues, such as far fewer women than men working in the area, but also a common feeling that sports journalism is less sexist nowadays yet veiled prejudice can still be felt. However, significant differences were noticed in the way participants understood sexism and woman identity. Brazilian interviewees exposed some contradictions when asked about feeling uncomfortable due to their gender while working or tactics to overcome challenges, which most of them did not even recognize in the first place. The expressed perceptions of most Brazilian participants show that, on the one hand, they are very critical to the observed situations of male domination, but on the other they are very critical to the feminist movement. They also seem reluctant to accept that there are several situations and structures in sports that are inherent sexist (which does not imply to be a natural part of being woman), such as choosing to ignore (sexist)
jokes from colleagues and harassment. Swedish participants were more critical towards sexism, which was spotted and reflected upon the situation for women sports journalists in Sweden and their own experiences.

This outcome can be understood as a reflection of the different levels of gender equality present in the Swedish and Brazilian societies. While Brazil struggles to have women representativeness in many levels in the government and also faces a weak press freedom, Sweden is more advanced when it comes to these matters. Brazil has some societal traditions rooted in the colonial times, such as the media systems being owned by family monopolies. Machismo is another characteristic that plays a role in the level of gender equality in the country. Sexism in Sweden can be understood as more veiled, which is harder to recognize. At the same time Sweden self-declares a “feminist government”, Swedish women journalists still earn less than men in the same position (Byerly, 2011; Edström, 2013:83; Journalisten, cited in Byerly, 2011:83).

In conclusion, this study points to improvements in sports journalism in relation to gender issues in Sweden and Brazil, but it also sheds light on less visible challenges, or as this study emphasizes, “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 2001).

7.1 Future research

This research is based on semi-structured interviews with a sample of seven participants in a qualitative approach, which limits its findings. There is a possibility to conduct similar or further research by using quantitative methods such as surveys. One of the findings of this research is that both Swedish and Brazilian women sports journalists experience what can be understood as “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 2001). It can be further explored by other studies in order to verify, for example, in what extent this less visible sexism affects women's work in sports newsroom. The relation between women sports journalists and their sources and their experiences of online harassment can also be investigated to analyze other gendered structures.
they might face in Sweden and Brazil. Finally, I conducted a study of the most-different contexts, but it could be relevant to conduct other cross-national comparisons of the most-similar contexts, as for instance among Nordic countries and South America countries.
References


Appendix

Interview guide

Q1 When did you graduate in journalism?

Q2 For how long have you worked with sports journalism?

Q3 Can you give a short description of your career?

Q4 How come you started working with sports journalism?

Q5 How many women journalists work in your sports department? Roughly, how many men?

Q6 How do you describe the culture in a sports newsroom from a gendered perspective?

Q7 How would you describe the attitude towards women sports journalist in the newsroom?

Q8 What strategies do you use or have used to succeed as a sports journalist?

Q9 How would you describe the challenges women sports journalists face?

Q10 How do you deal with these challenges or attitudes?

Q11 What kind of gendered structures can you identify in the sports newsroom?

Q12 What kind of improvements, developments for women sports journalists can you identify during the time you have worked with sports journalism?
Q13 How’s the division of coverage in your work? Do you cover the areas/sports you want, such as “noble sports” (football, hockey…)?

Q14 Have you ever felt uncomfortable (in a gendered sense) while working?

Q15 “Sports journalism is an information system produced by men, for men and is about male athletes”. Do you agree or disagree? What’s your view of sports journalism?
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Tactic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>“Particularly, I can’t say much about it, because I’ve always had…I’ve never had problems like ‘oh she’s woman so she knows less than me’” Q9</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Having knowledge about what I’m doing, covering” Q10</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>YES - knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>“I don't feel a challenge in relation to gender directly in my case, when I work in the newsroom or report on some training” Q9</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“There’s not different strategy. I showed my work with dedication. I do my part and I always seek for the best. Every opportunity I had came after I worked hard” Q10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoe</td>
<td>“There are many, but it has been worse” Q9</td>
<td>YES - also contradictions Q9 - Q14</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“I’ve never used strategies, but showed my work” Q10</td>
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<td>NO - also contradictions</td>
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<td>Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beatriz</td>
<td>“No, I have never felt (uncomfortable). I have heard pick up lines, I have gotten many proposals. I don’t think it only happens in journalism” Q14</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ida</td>
<td>“It’s so many different things that is expected by you” Q9</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moa</td>
<td>“I’ve been through a couple of things that I didn’t realize were problems when I was 25. Proving myself, harassment by athletes and male colleagues…” Q9 - Q14</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siri</td>
<td>“Yes, but there are fewer and fewer occasions when I experience it” Q9</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>