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March madness for men

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MARCH MADNESS FOR MEN

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Mass Communication

in

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
CHAPTER	
1 – INTRODUCTION.....	1
2 - REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	4
The Inception of Title IX.....	4
Media Coverage of Women’s Athletics.....	8
Hegemony.....	12
Gender Schema Theory.....	14
Priming.....	17
Sports Enjoyment.....	23
Sports Fandom of Viewers.....	25
3 – HYPOTHESES.....	27
4 – METHODOLOGY.....	28
Procedure.....	28
Measures.....	28
Participants.....	29
Stimulus.....	31
5 – RESULTS.....	33
Hypothesis 1.....	33
Hypothesis 2.....	33
Hypothesis 3.....	34
Other Findings.....	34
6 – DISCUSSION.....	36
Hegemony.....	37
Gender Schema Theory.....	39
Priming.....	40
Limitations and Future Research.....	41
Conclusion.....	44
REFERENCES.....	46
APPENDIX 1.....	54
APPENDIX 2.....	57
VITA.....	60

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the manner in which the media covers men's and women's athletics and how it may affect the public's perception of women's athletics. The study also seeks to examine how the hegemonic devices and primes that the sports media use can affect viewers' enjoyment of women's athletic coverage as well as the effect that sports fandom plays on viewers perceptions. Using an experiment exposing participants to heavy men's college and women's college basketball coverage, the results showed that sports media coverage did not elicit negative perceptions toward women's athletics.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On December 21, 2010 the women's basketball team of the University of Connecticut beat the Florida State Seminoles and became the first college basketball team, men or women, to win 89 consecutive basketball games. With the victory, the UCONN Huskies broke the 88-consecutive win record of the UCLA Bruins Men's Basketball team from 1971-1974. Both the UCONN women and the UCLA men had great teams and were similar in many ways.

Both teams were led by legendary coaches who built premier programs at their respective schools. Coach John Wooden, coach of the UCLA Bruins from 1948 to 1975, is known to many as the best coach in college basketball history (Richard, 2010). He influenced many basketball minds and spread his coaching philosophy to numerous college programs. Wooden won 10 NCAA National Championships, seven of them consecutively. The UCONN Huskies women's basketball team is also led by a great coach. Coach Geno Auriemma is currently in his 28th season as head coach of the UCONN Husky women. He has won seven NCAA National championships and has made the UCONN women's basketball program the premier program in the country (Amacher, 2011; Reynolds, 2010). Both basketball programs also had excellent players. During the UCLA men's 88-game winning streak, the team included talented players such as Bill Walton (20.3 points per game [ppg], 15.7 rebounds per game [rpg] while at UCLA) and Henry Bibby (drafted to the NBA in 1972), while the UCONN team featured such players as Maya Moore (19.7 ppg, 8.2 rpg) and Tina Charles (15.4 ppg, #1 overall WNBA draft pick in 2010). The two teams even ran the same offense. Even with all these similarities, much of the media argued that the UCONN record, while impressive, could not compare to UCLA's streak. Many said the women's game isn't as competitive as the men's game (Potash, 2010; Reynolds,

2010; Sterling, 2011). Even though the UCONN women set a higher standard, the UCLA men seem to have remained the standard of college basketball excellence.

With these types of opinions being conveyed to the public, Auriemma spoke out about his team constantly being negatively compared to the UCLA men. He also expressed displeasure with sports journalists constantly asking him what his team breaking the NCAA basketball consecutive game winning record means in the grand scheme of college basketball. In a post-game interview Auriemma said the record could mean anything, and that nobody would care about what his team was doing if they had been chasing a women's record. He told reporters:

The reason everybody's in this room, the reason everybody's having a heart attack the last four or five days is a bunch of women is threatening a men's record and everybody is all up in arms about it. All the women are happy as hell and they can't wait to come in here and ask questions, all the men who love women's basketball are all excited, and all the miserable bastards that follow men's basketball and don't want us to break the record are all here because they are pissed so that's just the way it is. If we were breaking a women's record everyone would go aren't those girls nice, just give them two paragraphs in *USAToday*, give them one line at the bottom of ESPN and let's send them back where they belong, in the kitchen (Gatormagraw, 2010).

The comments sparked much discussion among sports journalists. Some argued Auriemma's statements were presumptuous. They said sports fans were not speaking badly of the UCONN women, when making the UCLA comparison, and that Auriemma was simply resentful because he wanted more publicity for his team's feat. Other journalists believed Auriemma's comments made sense due to the fact that when UCONN broke the women's consecutive game winning record there was no media fanfare or attention. No one seemed to care.

As more and more women become involved in sports, the more accepting society becomes toward women athletics to some degree (Suggs, 2005). Though the availability of women's athletics continues to increase there are still many obstacles women athletes have to overcome. For instance, women athletes still struggle with the perception that sports are reserved

for men and that it is not “lady-like” for women to participate (Tuggle & Owen, 1999). Women also struggle with the perception that women’s athletics are not as interesting, competitive, or entertaining as men’s athletics (Hardin, 2005).

These obstacles continue to plague women athletes even as their participation in athletics is at an all-time high. In a longitudinal study Carpenter and Acosta (2005) tracked the improvement of female athletics and coaching at the high school and college levels over 29 years. The study found that in 1971 females accounted for approximately 5% of all high school athletics. In 2002 that number had risen to 56%. And this improvement has not come at the expense of male athletics. During the 2002-2003 academic year 3.9 million boys participated in high school athletics which was a record number.

Just as the participation in women’s sports has increased over the years, so has media coverage of women’s athletic competition. However, the amount of media coverage that women’s athletics receive does not compare to the amount of media coverage of men’s athletics. More important is the way the media covers female athletics, which is much different from the way they cover men’s athletics. The type of media coverage that women’s athletics receive perpetuates the stereotypes of women athletes spoken of earlier which can in turn affect the public’s perception. The purpose of this study is to examine how media coverage of men’s and women’s athletics may affect the public’s perception and enjoyment of women’s athletics.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Inception of Title IX

Many people view Title IX as one of the most controversial gender issues of the last forty years (Rietmulder, 2010; Suggs, 2005). Congress passed Title IX in 1972 as an amendment of the Higher Education Act. The law states “no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance” (Suggs, p. 42, 2005). As stated earlier, the act applies to all aspects of education including admissions, hiring, gender equity in science and math classes, and any other department found within the realm of education. The law also applies to all schools receiving any type of federal funding which basically covers all schools.

During the inception of Title IX, most government officials thought of it as a law which would address the unfair admission practices of college and university undergraduate and graduate programs regarding female students. In the 1960’s many programs had habits of admitting only a few females and rejecting most who applied, while admitting almost all male applicants. For example, “state universities in Virginia had turned away 21,000 women in the early 1960’s; during the same time period not a single man was turned away” (Blumenthal, p. 30, 2005). “Quotas at many medical and law schools limited females to just five or ten students out of every one hundred. Consequently, just 7 percent of the doctors in the United States at the end of the 1960’s were women” (Blumenthal, p. 30, 2005). These were common occurrences and many thought Title IX would put an end to such situations, and in many ways it did. However, Title IX is currently known more for the impact it has had on women’s athletics.

One might think that a law making educational opportunities for women equal to that of men would pass relatively easily. However, Title IX was met with much opposition. U.S. Representative (Oregon) Edith Green, first introduced the idea of Title IX in the late 1960's. After hearing a superintendent speak about the success of an educational program that helped disadvantaged boys only, Green decided that this was unacceptable. She held congressional hearings to present to Congress and the public. In order to do so, Mrs. Green enlisted the help of Dr. Bernice Resnick Sandler. Dr. Sandler received her doctorate in educational counseling at the University of Maryland. When trying to receive a job at her university she was turned down, hearing from a colleague that she "comes off too strong for a woman" (Blumenthal, p. 29, 2005). Needless to say Sandler felt strongly about the opportunities that women didn't seem to get. She began to collect accounts from female graduate students and faculty members who had similar experiences. Her research led to other women from all around the country (over two hundred universities) who experienced discriminatory behavior such as women being hired for only the lowest level teaching positions and some universities who hadn't hired a woman professor in decades. Sandler sent her findings to select members of Congress, one being Green. With this information, Green had the information she needed to hold the Congressional hearings concerning Title IX. The hearings were held in June and July of 1970 with no media coverage and only four of the fifteen male congressmen invited to the hearings actually attending at one time. Congress just didn't seem to care about changing the law. However, 1971 brought in a collection of new legislators. Green figured that this was her chance to pass the new law.

The year of 1971 also brought up the need to replace an education law that was expiring. Green being one of the authorities in education legislation at the time became the main author and sponsor of the House version of the bill. She used this position to ensure that discrimination

against females would be outlawed. However she wanted to camouflage that particular part of the bill.

During a 1971 Senate debate over the education bill, the topic of equitable sports resources was mentioned for the first time. Opponents of the education bill mentioned sports in order to present a dilemma for its advocates. They figured if Senate members thought of the bill as a law that would make it mandatory for males and females to share athletic facilities, equipment, and even the football field, the bill would be immediately rejected. What was initially mentioned to be a joke would be a starting point for applying Title IX to sports.

While Green was fighting to pass the education in the House, Bill Bayh, a senator from Indiana, was fighting to pass a bill to stop discrimination against females in schools in the Senate. Bayh's bill had plenty of support including that of President Nixon. However when it was determined that the bill called for the Citadel, a state funded all-male military college, to start admitting women the bill lost most of its support. In 1972 Bayh had another chance when education came up again in late February. Bayh was still dedicated to eliminating discrimination in schools but he decided that it would be prudent if the bill didn't include the Citadel or any military school. He would tackle that problem later. Finally Title IX was in both the House and the Senate, yet Green still had a huge problem.

The Senate and House versions of the bill differed tremendously, the main difference being different approaches to financial aid for college students. Green felt that the Senate's approach was too expensive and unfeasible. After weeks of discussion about the differences in the bill the committee that was charged with ironing out the details decided that they agreed with the Senate's version in that it would include all state universities and it agreed with the Senate's financial aid package. The committee agreed with the House in excluding private universities.

Green felt so strongly about the fact that the financial aid package was too costly that on the day the that law was to be voted on Green spoke against her own bill. She was also forced to vote against it. Despite her efforts the House approved the bill 218-180. On June 23, 1972, President Nixon signed the bill into law (Blumenthal, 2005).

After Title IX was approved there was still some confusion about whether the law would pertain to men's and women's athletics. The government charged the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) with the task of enforcing Title IX. HEW was not anxious to enforce the law seeing as how it had never enforced a sexual discrimination law. HEW was also not sure if Title IX regulations would apply to sports. However, after hearing of the disparities between men's and women's athletic programs, Casper W. Weinberger, secretary of HEW, decided that women deserved equal opportunities in education as well as in athletics and that Title IX would apply to sports (Suggs, p. 70, 2005).

In order to help colleges and universities better understand and apply Title IX, HEW issued a set of regulations pertaining to the law. In 1979 HEW drafted and implemented a "three-part test" which would be the deciding factor for whether an institution was in compliance with Title IX. There are three guidelines under which an institution can be deemed to be in compliance with the law:

1. Have substantially the same proportion of female athletes on varsity teams as the proportion of female students in the undergraduate population
2. Be able to demonstrate a "history and continuing practice" of expanding programs for women
3. Be able to show that the institution is fully and effectively accommodating the interests and abilities of women on campus

An institution is deemed compliant with Title IX if it can prove that it fulfills one of the three guidelines listed above. Institutions do not have to comply with all three guidelines at once. After

HEW began enforcing the “three-part test” investigators began to review athletic departments all over the country. This was especially true for athletic departments that HEW had received complaints regarding. Many schools were brought to court because of Title IX.

Through Title IX the government displayed the importance of athletic opportunities for both men and women. Now that the number of athletic opportunities is becoming more evenly distributed among men and women (National Federation of State High School Athletic Association, 2002; National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2002), one must examine the distribution of media exposure to male and female athletic competition.

Media Coverage of Women’s Athletics

Many researchers have studied media coverage of women’s athletics and much of the research shows that on average, coverage of women’s athletics is inferior to coverage of men’s athletics in a myriad of ways. Much of the research dedicated to media coverage of men’s and women’s athletics examines the disparity between the amounts of coverage given to each group. Duncan and Messner (1998) found that men receive 93.8 percent of television sports coverage in the U.S. This domination of sports coverage is not exclusive to the U.S. Tuggle (1997) examined two nightly cable sports highlight shows, ESPN’s *SportsCenter* and CNN’s *Sports Tonight* which were two of the most popular sports programs at the time of the study. Tuggle found that both programs only devoted about five percent of air time to women’s athletics. Adams and Tuggle (2004) replicated Tuggle’s original study in order to determine whether the existence of two professional women’s sports leagues (the WNBA and the WUSA) would increase the amount of coverage of women’s athletics on ESPN’s *SportsCenter*. Results of the study showed that the addition of two professional women’s leagues did not help to increase coverage of

women's athletics, in fact there was less media coverage than there was during the original study.

There has been some improvement in some areas. Starting in 2003 ESPN aired all 63 women's college basketball games from the NCAA tournament. The 2004 NCAA women's basketball championship became the second most watched basketball game, male or female, in the network's history (Rodgers, 2004). This was a bright spot in women's athletics ratings in usually bleak ratings. For instance, in 2009 the NCAA Division I women's soccer championship was aired on a Sunday afternoon against a highly publicized NFL game.

Other types of media seem to cover more women's athletics but not nearly as much as men's athletics. Newspapers also underreport female athletics just as bad as television coverage (Duncan, 2006). Eastman and Billings (2000) found that newspapers give more attention to women's athletics than television yet the coverage still does not compare to that of men's athletics. The *New York Times* and *USAToday* devoted 13% of the sports pages to women's athletics. However, *USAToday* devoted twice as much coverage to women's athletics than the *New York Times* did, which many believe to be the most respected newspaper in the country. Byers and Eikenmeyer (1994) conducted a study of three Midwestern city papers and found that less than one-third of coverage was devoted to women. This was especially interesting given the record number of women winning gold medals at the Winter Olympics that had just finished. However, the Byers and Eikenmeyer study did not focus solely on women's athletics; it focused on how the newspapers covered women's events in general. Using content analyses French (2013) found that print media in New Zealand female athletics only received 6.1% of coverage. This is interesting since 80.3% of women in New Zealand participate in at least one sporting activity per week (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2005). French also found a discrepancy in length of

articles on male athletics (an average of 461 words per article) and female athletics (an average of 432 words per article).

Internet coverage of women's sports follows suit with other types of media in the amount of coverage dedicated to women's sports. In examining the CBS SportsLine, CNN SI, and ESPN websites Kachgal (2001) found that women's athletics received remarkably less coverage than men's athletics. In a study examining the sports sections of college websites, researchers found that the sites covered baseball more often and in greater detail than softball (Sagas, Cunningham, Wigley, & Ashley, 2000). However, Cunningham (2003) found that university websites cover women's tennis more often than men's tennis. So the disparity in the amount of coverage may depend upon the sport being covered which will be discussed later. In a content analysis studying the 2008 Olympic Games online coverage from four national public broadcasters, Jones (2013) found that "the gender gap in story numbers favored male athletes by a margin of four to one. Men's achievements were given more prominence than women's with twice as many lead stories and photographs of male athletes taking top spot on the websites' splash pages" (p. 244).

Quantity is not the only way that women's athletics receive insufficient coverage. The quality of coverage that women's athletics receives when it does receive coverage is also detrimental. For instance, Tuggle and Owen (1999) examined the Centennial Olympic Games of 1996 and found that for the most part, women's events received as much airtime as men's events. Yet they did find some notable differences between the coverage of men's events and the coverage. Though NBC covered women's events almost as much as men's events, most of the women's coverage was devoted to three sports: swimming, diving, and gymnastics. Many researchers argue that the women's sports that receive most of the media coverage are sports that are "socially acceptable" for women to participate (Tuggle, et al., 2007). In the case of the 1996

Olympic Games, 61 % of airtime dedicated to women's sports covered swimming, diving, and gymnastics with gymnastics receiving one third of the coverage. Another study examining the same Olympic Games concluded that NBC was only concerned with the appearance of gender equity in coverage of the Olympics (Eastman & Billings, 2000). Kane (1989) and Alexander (1994) had similar findings in terms of the media covering "socially acceptable" sports for women. Both studies found that the bulk of media coverage of men's athletics focuses on team sports while the bulk of women's coverage focuses on individual sports such as gymnastics and track and field. Contact sports such as basketball or field hockey are viewed as masculine and thereby unacceptable for women. This advances the belief that women shouldn't participate in contact sports but can participate in sports that aren't as stressful on the body and illustrates a woman's grace.

Sports commentating in men's and women's athletics also differ. For instance, researchers have found that sports commentators, as well as sports writers, describe female athletes in terms of their attractiveness, grace, femininity, and even their heterosexuality. Male athletes on the other hand are usually described in terms of their athletic ability and power (Hilliard, 1984; Messner, 1988; Sabo & Jansen, 1992; Trujillo, 1991). In examining 2,367 lines of broadcast commentary Billings, Halone, and Denham (2002) found that male athletes were primarily evaluated by athleticism and physicality. Commentators evaluated females primarily by looks and appearance, personality, positive consonance, and background. The study also found that male commentators monopolize airtime even when covering a game alongside a female commentator. Commentators trivialize females in other ways as well. Halbert and Latimer (1994) conducted a content analysis examining broadcast commentators during an exhibition tennis match between Martina Navratilova and Jimmy Connors. Results showed that

commentators evaluated Connors more favorably than Navratilova and that the naming practices employed to describe each athlete was different. Commentators referred to Connors as “Connors” however commentators referred to Navratilova as “Martina.” Commentators also referred to Navratilova as “the best in women’s tennis” yet referred to Connors as simply “the best in tennis.”

Media production also differs in men’s and women’s athletics. Hallmark and Armstrong (1999) analyzed the men’s and women’s NCAA basketball championships from 1991 to 1995. The study found that the women’s championship used fewer camera angles and fewer graphics than the men’s championships.

The inconsistencies in the amount of coverage and the quality of coverage that men’s and women’s athletics receive can lead to many implications. Hegemony can explain some of these findings and how the inconsistencies in the amount of coverage and the quality of coverage can affect the public’s perception of female athletics.

Hegemony

Hegemony attributes much influence of the mass media to the public. Developed by Antonio Gramsci, hegemony suggests that “the routine, taken for granted structures of everyday thinking contribute to a structure of dominance” (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992, p. 381). In other words, societal elites have the ability to impress upon the mass public their ideological beliefs, making the beliefs of societal elites the beliefs of the mass public. Gramsci was clear in explaining that with hegemony he was not proposing that the dominant class was brainwashing the public. He argued that the dominant class simply has greater resources to present their ideological beliefs to society. In relation to sports, males have greater resources and access since they are the dominant class in athletics.

Societal elites continually attempt to gain the consent of the public to accept the views of the dominant class. However, Gramsci does make the point that in extreme circumstances the dominant class will resort to force in imposing its will and ideas on the public. Yet, consent is a more effective way of control than force.

The dominant class uses institutions such as family, church, education, and especially media in gaining control of the mass public. Hegemony illustrates the vital role that the media play in society in that the media not only repeats hegemonic ideas but are also the sites where hegemonic struggle takes place. The dominant class influences the media in presenting ideas and beliefs to the public while allowing ideas contrary to the dominant class to also be presented to the public. Though the media can allow both sides of any issue to be presented, hegemony still suggests that the dominant class has the advantage in gaining access to the media.

In the case of the sports media, the dominant class perpetuates an ideology of women being athletically and competitively inferior to men. Much of the sports media deem it common knowledge that women are biologically incapable of performing at high levels athletically and are not as naturally competitive as men. This can lead the public to believe such statements, thus, also leading the public to believe that female athletics are inferior to male athletics in many aspects (Kane, 1989). The sports media spread this ideology through a myriad of ways, from scorning members of the media who propose opposing views to simply ignoring female athletic competition altogether (Seligman, 1998). The media also uphold standard gender definitions commenting negatively about female athletes who do not conform to conventional roles of femininity (Davis, 1997). Hardin (2005) conducted a survey of 285 sports editors in order to examine which factors they consider when deciding to cover women's sports. She found that many editors do not systematically attempt to fulfill the interests of readers. She also found that

many sports editors believe that females do not have as much athletic potential as males do and feel no responsibility to cover women's sports or hire women journalists.

Messner, Duncan, & Wachs (1996) conducted an ethnographic study in which they analyzed the text of televised coverage of the 1993 NCAA men's and women's Final Four. The purpose of the study was to address the concern that the "choices of televised sports producers and commentators might serve to actively build audiences in ways that support masculine hegemony, while undercutting any potential challenge posed by women's sports" (p. 423). The study found this to be so in that the sports media presented the men's Final Four to the public as "the must watch event" while presenting the women's Final Four as "just another game."

Negative comments are not the only hegemonic devices that the sports media use to contribute to the belief of the inferiority of women's athletics in relation to men's athletics. As stated earlier the quality of women's athletics media coverage can be just as detrimental to women's athletics as the lack of coverage that women's athletics receives. The difference in the quality of men's and women's athletics is a part of the hegemonic process. By increasing the amount of coverage of women's athletics, the dominant group, men's athletics, shows the appearance of change without having to give up control to the less dominant group, women's athletics. This leads the less dominant group to believe that there is some type of improvement. These hegemonic presentations in the sports media can have an effect on sports viewers in that sports coverage can have priming effects on viewers, especially when primes are easily and chronically assessable. The types of primes that can be present in sports media coverage can be explained through an understanding of gender schema theory.

Gender Schema Theory

Many researchers have used gender schema theory to explain the effect of sex-role based media content on media viewers. Graeber (1988) defined the concept of schema as “a cognitive structure consisting of organized knowledge about situations and individuals that has been abstracted from experiences. It is used for processing new information and retrieving stored information” (p. 28). In other words, media viewers use schemas to simplify complex concepts when trying to process information.

Some scholars argue that without schemas people would be unable to process complex, and in some cases simple, information. Fiske and Kinder (1981) describe schemas as “serviceable although imperfect devices for coping with complexity” (1981, p. 173). They call people that use schemas “cognitive misers” who use schemas for “cognitive economy” by developing different types of mental models to simplify information.

Graber (1988) found that people use schemas to process information from both television news as well as news from newspapers. Graber also found that news consumers use different types of strategies in processing news stories. One strategy Graber discussed was a type of association strategy where news consumers associated a news story to a schema. For instance, some news consumers associated political candidates as another Nixon as a shortcut in learning about the candidate.

Individuals develop gender schemas at very young ages (Huston, 1983). “Such schemas steer individuals’ cognitive processing of real world and mediated information about males and females” (Smith & Granados, 2009, p. 349). According to Huston (1983), females are more likely to accept counter stereotypical actions and to have more flexible gender schemas than

males. Calvert (1999) argues that this is due to the fact that females who engage in “masculine” behavior are less likely to receive social ridicule than males who engage in “feminine” behavior.

Gender schemas within individuals determine what types of actions and behaviors are gender appropriate. After gender schemas are formed, some individuals seek out content that is consistent with the gender schemas that now exist. Martin and Halverson (1981) stated “by observing same-sex models, children learn about what members of the in-group do, thereby learning what things are sex appropriate...by observing opposite-sex models, children learn about what members of the in-group do not do, thereby learning what things are sex-inappropriate” (p. 1129). Since “masculinity is often defined as the opposite of femininity,” (Whiteside & Hardin, 2011 p. 125) research has implied that men identify watching women’s sports as threatening to their masculinity which can add to resistance to women’s athletics (Lenskyj, 2003; Griffin, 1998).

Individuals can find content that is consistent with their gender schemas in real world interactions as well as through the media. According to gender schema theory, when individuals view media content that is inconsistent with what they deem as gender norms, they will distort the information that they are viewing or they will simply ignore it (Calvert 1999). Drabman et al. (1981) conducted an experiment in which they exposed preschool and elementary aged students to a short video clip of children visiting a doctor’s office with a female doctor and a male nurse. After watching the clip the children were asked to connect names and pictures with medical professionals. The children identified male names and pictures as doctors and female names and pictures as nurses.

According to gender schema theory there are some intervening variables that can affect the impact gender schema has on a viewer. One of these variables is the nature of the message.

Many researchers have found that when characters are shown in “counter stereotypic” roles the gender schema effect can diminish (Geis et al., 1984; Johnston & Ettema, 1982; Wroblewski & Huston, 1987). These effects can also depend on repeated exposures to “counter stereotypic” roles as well as how much the actions of the “counter stereotypic” characters deviate from gender norms.

The age of the viewer (chronologically or his/her cognitive level) is another intervening variable that can impact the effects of gender schema. Kohlberg (1966) found that “a child’s cognitive development organization of gender will change during the early childhood years” (Smith & Granados, p. 350). Around age three a child will classify his/her gender. During pre to early childhood a child will attempt to act in a way that is gender appropriate. In regards to media effects children identify same sex characters in the media and imitate these characters. This is especially true in the case of boys (Luecke-Aleksa, Anderson, Collins, & Schmitt, 1995; Slaby & Frey, 1975).

Sports coverage can have lasting effects on the audience by creating gender schemas that can be primed every time an individual is exposed to certain types of coverage. One can trigger a schema, by priming it, which can impact what information is used to retrieve memories.

Priming

Priming is a theory “which refers to the short-term impact of exposure to the media on subsequent judgements or behaviors” (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen, & Carpentier, 2009, p. 74). Researchers determine what should be considered short-term based on what is being researched. For instance, many research studies that focus on the effects of violence in the media have found that effects fade rather quickly, sometimes before the actual experimental period has lapsed (Farrar & Kremer, 2006; Josephson, 1987; Roskos-Ewoldsen, Klinger, & Roskos-

Ewoldson, 2007). On the other hand, political priming research has found that effects can last for two months after media coverage of a politician.

“Priming refers to the effect of some preceding stimulus or event on how we react, broadly defined, to some subsequent stimulus. As applied to the media, priming refers to the effects of the content of the media on people’s later behavior or judgements related to the content that was processed” (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen, & Carpentier, 2009, p. 74). Priming effects take place due to cognitive associations that occur when media content activates mental nodes, which can be thoughts, feelings, or memories. These mental nodes trigger pathways which are connected to related thoughts. For example, media violence can prime or activate violent thoughts. This can result in an individual interpreting new stimulus as aggressive which can result in aggressive behavior.

Early research on priming focused on whether priming effects actually existed. There was then a shift in focus to testing specific theories. More recently however, researchers have begun to focus on the different contexts in which priming occurs such as violence and politics, as well as how priming works. Josephson (1987) used violent and non-violent television programs in order to examine the priming effects of media violence on adolescent boys’ behavior. The study found that boys with high levels of trait aggressiveness who viewed the violent television programming were primed to act violently during the first period of play in social situations with other children. Carnagey and Anderson (2005) studied the priming effects of video game violence by testing reward and punishment in video games and the effect it has on people’s affect, cognitions, and behavior. Through a series of three studies they found that rewarding violence in video games resulted in an increase in aggressive affect, more availability of aggressive cognitions, and an increase in aggressive behavior.

In order for researchers to apply priming to different research topics, two main mental models were developed as acceptable explanations for the cognitive associations that take place during priming. The first mental model is Anderson et al.'s (1995) which is an affective aggression model. Anderson et al.'s affective aggression model is based on a combination of the Berkowitz (1990) model (which predicts that uncomfortable conditions prime hostile thoughts and feelings), and Zillmann's (1983) theory of excitation transfer which overlaps with Berkowitz's model but adds that arousal from uncomfortable conditions "may be transferred or 'misattributed' to a more salient anger-producing source, such as an insulting interaction partner" (Anderson et al., 1995). In the development of the affective aggression model researchers set out to prove that hot temperatures can prime hostile feelings by priming hostile cognitions. There are three levels in the affective aggression model which are basic input, primary appraisal, and secondary appraisal. Basic input involves researchers entering the model with direct situational variables or anything that can influence an individual's current state. Anderson et al.'s research used uncomfortably hot as such a variable. These situational variables influence the state of an individual by influencing how that individual will interpret incoming information. Schematic processes make some interpretations more likely while making others less likely.

The second level of the affective aggression model, primary appraisal, involves the cognitive schemata that individuals have available in processing information, the affective state which an individual uses to filter information, and the state of arousal of an individual. It is immediate and needs no effort or thought in that in primary appraisal an individual interprets information quickly. However, in primary appraisal the affective state of an individual, whether it is malice, anger, or intent, affects how information and situations are interpreted. An individual's state of arousal also affects how that individual will interpret information. A state of

arousal from an obscure source can be misattributed to an event or situation that is more salient at the time.

The third and final level of the affective aggressive model, secondary appraisal, consists of the careful and effortful thought that goes into information interpretation when time and cognitive resources become available. Time and cognitive resources allow for information that is not available during the primary appraisal to be evaluated. This can lead the individual to completely override the original cognition formed during the primary appraisal. During the secondary appraisal an individual's behavioral responses and thoughts of the consequences are also taken into account.

The second mental model is Price and Tewksbury's (1997) network model for political priming. Price and Tewksbury's (1997) priming model contains three major elements: the knowledge store, active thought, and current stimuli. The term knowledge store refers to all constructs in memory. There are three variables that determine if a construct will be activated: the chronic accessibility of the construct, the temporary accessibility of the construct, and the applicability to the current stimuli. These variables interact together and a construct has a better chance of being activated when at least two of these variables are operating at high levels. The first two variables that determine whether a construct will be activated deal with accessibility. Higgins (1996) defines accessibility as the activation potential of knowledge. Activation is dependent upon the excitement level connected to a particular construct, the higher the level of excitement for a construct, the higher the probability for the construct to be activated.

The recency and frequency of activation establishes whether the accessibility of a construct is temporary. Higgins et al. (1985) found that when there was a short time delay between priming and evaluating what was primed, the construct that was most recently primed

was activated. However, when the time delay increased, the most frequently primed construct was activated. The researchers attributed this shift in activation to differences in excitement recognizing that when a construct is recently primed it elicits a high level of excitement that diminishes quickly while a frequently primed construct elicits a lower level of excitement which is sustained for a longer period of time.

When a construct maintains a high level of excitement at all times its activation is chronically accessible. Chronically accessibility constructs can be activated instead of constructs that may have been primed recently. Lau (1989) found that when making political evaluations people tend to refer repeatedly to constructs that have been primed over time, even when evaluating different issues. Chronically accessible constructs are not activated through a temporary state of excitement but is a stable characteristic of constructs in memory.

The third variable in the knowledge store, the construct's applicability to current stimuli, effects activation when the construct directly applies to the situation at hand. "A construct is deemed applicable, and is likely to be activated, when its key features correspond to the salient features of the stimulus. Determination of the fit between stored constructs and the environment occurs at the intersection of existing knowledge and attributes of the stimulus situation noted by the perceiver" (Price & Tewksbury, 1990). Higgins (1996) suggests that the applicability of the knowledge to the stimulus will greatly affect the activation of a construct.

The second major element of Price and Tewksbury's model, current stimuli, represents the environment surrounding a perceiver. Price and Tewksbury (1997) make it clear that current stimuli should not be classified as static. However, current stimuli are constantly changing and interacting with the perceiver. All attributes of current stimuli are not attended for assessment and classification because there are far too many features of a stimulus to effectively process all

of them. Which features are attended depends largely upon which ones are most salient. Researchers have defined salience as an attribute of stimuli as well as the perceiver's dispositions. In political issues, the party a perceiver belongs to will greatly affect what a perceiver deems as salient. How the media presents the news to the public affects the salience of certain issues which in turn plays a part in which construct in the perceiver's knowledge store will be applicable.

Active thought is the third and final element of Price and Tewksbury's model. Active thought "represents the thinking with which perceivers are actively and consciously engaged as they interpret and respond to the external environment. Within active thought are the real-time processes of construct activation, evaluation of construct relevance, and the use of constructs in the evaluation of stimuli" (Price and Tewksbury, 1992). In other words, active thought deals with the way perceivers process and interpret information in relation to their environment in reference to short-term and working memory.

Both the affective aggression model and Price and Tewksbury's (1997) network model have been tested in relation to media violence and researchers believe that these models will be tested in the future in regards to political priming. Network models of priming help researchers to understand how media priming can affect viewers' perceptions and behavior concerning different issues.

Priming research has also branched out to the area of stereotype priming. This is especially true in the areas of gender and race with much research focusing on priming effects on viewers' perceptions of these categories. Hansen & Hansen (1988) found that exposure to rock music videos with stereotypical images of men and women resulted in a stereotypical view of men and women interacting in a second video, perceiving women as less dominant. Dixon

(2006) also studied stereotypical priming, finding that participants who viewed newscasts with African American crime suspects more strongly supported the death penalty than those that viewed the newscasts with suspects whose ethnicity was unidentified. Priming in sports media can be classified as stereotype priming in that sports coverage can activate negative mental nodes concerning female athletics such as claims that it is less interesting and competitive than male athletics. This study seeks to examine how the hegemonic devices and primes that the sports media use can affect viewers' enjoyment of women's athletic coverage.

Sports Enjoyment

Enjoyment, specifically sports enjoyment, is a variable that researchers have begun to study quite frequently and much literature has been published on the subject. Researchers have defined enjoyment "alternatively as an emotion, an attitude, a combination of cognition and affect, or some other unspecified positive reaction to media content" (Tamborini 2009, p. 3). Nabi and Kremer (2004) argued that enjoyment is equivalent to attitude and should be treated as such saying that it "should be comprised of three underlying: affective, cognitive, and behavioral" (Nabi & Tsay 2006, p. 4) (though there is minimal research on behavioral enjoyment). The cognitive aspect of enjoyment refers to one's thoughts and perceptions focusing mostly on what an individual deems as morally acceptable. The affective aspect of enjoyment consists of feelings and emotions focusing mostly on empathy. The behavioral aspect of enjoyment refers to the type of action provoked by a type of enjoyment. However for the purpose of this study enjoyment will be thought of as "a positive affective state that reflects feelings such as pleasure, liking, and fun" (Wankel 1993, p. 162).

A significant amount of the literature on sports enjoyment has been dedicated to the influence of perceived violence in sports on enjoyment. In a study where researchers compared

football plays that were either low, intermediate, or high in levels of aggression researchers found that in the case of televised football as the level of aggression increased so did viewers' levels of enjoyment (Bryant, Comisky, & Zillmann, 1981). Similarly Depalma & Raney (2002) found that sports viewers, particularly males, enjoy aggressive sports especially unscripted aggressive sports such as football and hockey. Viewers enjoyed scripted sports aggression such as professional wrestling significantly less.

Researchers have found many other factors that affect viewers' sports enjoyment. For example, Deneui and Sachau (1996) found that in intercollegiate hockey games the amount of penalty minutes charged during the game effected viewer enjoyment, not how close or competitive the game turned out to be. Another study found that sports commentary can be a determinant of enjoyment. Bryant, Comisky, and Zillmann (1977) showed respondents what they considered to be normal hockey plays and abnormally violent hockey plays both with and without commentary. The researchers found that respondents viewed the hockey plays with commentary as more violent than those plays without violence. Furthermore, respondents enjoyed the plays with commentary more than those without commentary. This finding is interesting in that, as stated earlier, research on differences in men's and women's athletics coverage says that commentary for women's athletics is inferior to that of men's athletics coverage which seemingly can effect enjoyment level. Researchers have also found that the way commentators present competitors to viewers can affect the enjoyment of the competition (Bryant, Brown, Comisky, & Zillman, 1982). During a tennis match researchers presented opponents to viewers as being a part of three relationships: players who were extreme enemies or rivals, players who were best friends, and players whose relationships weren't stated. They

found that respondents expressed more enjoyment when commentators presented opponents as enemies or rivals saying that the match was intense and exciting.

Suspense and drama are well-known determinants of enjoyment in all types media and especially in the case of sports media. In athletic competition the more suspense associated with a competition the more enjoyable spectators view it. In a study where participants rated 1 of 7 basketball games Peterson & Raney (2008) found that suspense in mediated sports is a stronger predictor of enjoyment than many previously thought. Researchers have also found that commentary adds a sense of suspense to athletic competitions (Zillmann, 1991) because it adds a level of uncertainty to the outcome of the competition.

Sports enjoyment also differs among the genders of spectators. One of these differences is found in the types of sports as well as the different aspects of sports that males and females enjoy. Males enjoy aggression and violence in athletic competition which attracts them more to sports like football, ice hockey, and boxing. Females tend to enjoy sports that emphasize style and beauty which attracts them more to gymnastics, swimming, and figure skating (Sargent, Zillmann, & Weaver, 1998).

For many people sports enjoyment of live or mediated sporting events is dependent on watching a favored team win over a rivaled opponent or a favored sporting activity. This can be better described through an explanation of sports fandom.

Sports Fandom of Viewers

Sports fandom has not been clearly defined in research but usually refers to the state or attitude of being a fan or spectator. Wann (1995; 1997) argues that sports fandom consists of both sports fans and sports consumers. Sports fans have a deep interest in and follow a particular sport, team, or athlete. Sports consumers either watch or listen to mediated sports, directly or

indirectly, or attend a game in person. Gantz and Wenner (1995) found three distinct levels of fandom: (a) fans, or people who are heavily involved with a sport, team, or athlete; (b) spectators, or people with minimal interest; and (c) non-fans, or people who are not personally invested in sports, yet watch to be in the presence of others.

Fanship is also important in researching sports fandom. Arpan and Raney (2003) define fanship as the act of being a fan. The term “fan” comes from “fanatic,” which means “marked by excessive enthusiasm and often intense uncritical devotion” (Merriam-Webster, 2010). However, in research the concept of fanship has been defined in many ways. Crawford (2004) views a fan “as an obsessed individual: someone who has an intense interest in a certain team, celebrity, show, band, or something similar” (p. 19). Anderson (1979) suggests that a fan is someone that is devoted to a sport or an individual with excessive enthusiasm. Spinrad (1981) goes as far as defining fanship as someone whose life is consumed by sport even when the person is not actually doing anything sports-related. A fan can also be someone who has emotional and value significance towards a sport or team and is committed to consuming sporting events (Guttman, 1986; Hunt, Bristol, & Barshaw, 1999; Madrigal, 1995).

Consumption is also important in researching sports fandom. Sports consumers (spectators) can be subdivided into two groups: direct and indirect sports consumers. Direct sports consumption is when an individual attends a game in person, whereas indirect sports consumption is when an individual watches or listens to a sporting event through a form of mass media, such as radio, television, or the Internet (Kenyon, 1969; McPherson, 1975).

CHAPTER 3

HYPOTHESES

Based on hegemony literature, the dominant class of men in the sports media perpetuates an ideology of women being athletically and competitively inferior to men. Therefore the following hypothesis will be tested:

H1: Sports media coverage of men's college basketball will cause viewers to believe that women's basketball is inferior to men's basketball.

Priming in sports media can be classified as stereotype priming in that sports coverage can activate negative mental nodes concerning female athletics such as claims that it is less interesting and competitive than male athletics. This study seeks to examine how the hegemonic devices and primes that the sports media use can affect viewers' enjoyment of women's athletic coverage, therefore the following hypothesis will be tested:

H2: Sports media coverage will encourage viewers to believe that men's athletics is more enjoyable than women's athletics.

Since fanship is defined as "an obsessed individual: someone who has an intense interest in a certain team, celebrity, show, band, or something similar" the following hypothesis will be tested:

H3: The level of fanship of women's college basketball of viewers will affect how viewers will perceive sports media coverage of women's college basketball.

This hypothesis measures perception based on participants' fandom score which is found through self reporting and not by how much they consume sports in general.

CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

Procedure

This study was a between subjects experiment. Participants in condition one viewed a *SportsCenter* episode with heavy college men's basketball highlights. Participants in condition two viewed a *SportsCenter* episode with heavy college women's basketball highlights. Participants in condition three did not view an episode of *SportsCenter* and simply answered the questionnaire. After viewing the *SportsCenter* episodes participants answered a questionnaire testing the participant perceptions of men's and women's college basketball. Episodes were edited to contain the number of highlights needed for each condition (see Stimulus section). Each episode was about 20 to 25 minutes in length.

The experiment was administered in the Media Effects Lab at Louisiana State University. Participants were allowed to view *SportsCenter* episodes and answer questionnaires at their own pace. Sports fandom of women's college basketball and enjoyment are dependent measures and were measured using a 7-point Likert scale.

Measures

The items for enjoyment, fandom, and perception were all converted into a scale representing each concept. Six questions were developed to measure enjoyment using a 7-point Likert scale from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 7 ("Strongly Agree"): The sports clip was exciting to watch, I enjoyed watching the clip, I want to watch the rest of the episode. The items were averaged to create an enjoyment scale ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 1.4661$). The scale proved to be reliable ($\alpha = .949$).

Five items were adapted from Wann's (2002) Sport Fandom Questionnaire to determine a person's level of women's college basketball fandom. A 7-point Likert scale from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 7 ("Strongly Agree") was used for fandom: I consider myself to be a women's college basketball fan, being a women's college basketball fan is very important to me, my friends see me as a women's college basketball fan. The five items were averaged to produce a fandom scale ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 1.295$). The scale proved to be reliable ($\alpha=.923$).

Perception was measured using five items on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 7 ("Strongly Agree"): This measure included items such as, Women's athletics are NOT as competitive as men's athletics, men and women are equal in athletic ability, I'd rather watch women's athletics than men's athletics. The questions were developed to accommodate the study. The items were averaged to create a perception of women's college basketball scale ($M = 2.21$ $SD = 1.2958$). The scale proved to be reliable ($\alpha=.718$) (See Table 1).

Table 1: Variable Scale Statistics

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Enjoyment	4.53	1.4661	.949
Fandom	2.21	1.2958	.923
Perception	3.80	1.2878	.718

Participants

The researcher recruited participants from mass communications undergraduate classes at Louisiana State University. In exchange for participation in this study participants received course credit. Participants read a consent form before participation outlining the details of the study. The researcher viewed participation in the study as consent. There was no more than 14 participants in the testing lab during each testing period.

Ninety-seven subjects participated in this research study. Most participants (58) were between 18-20 years of age which accounted for 59.8% of participants. 34% of participants were between 21-24 years of age (33), 5.2% of participants were between 25-29 years of age (5), and 1% of participants were 40 years of age or older (1). 57.7% of participants were Caucasian (56), 30.9% were African-American (30), 5.2% were Hispanic or Latino (5), 2.1% were Asian (2), 1% were Native Hawaiian or a Pacific Islander, and 3.1% of participants classified themselves as other. 50.5% of participants were male (49) and 49.5% of participants were female (48). Freshmen and sophomores accounted for 59.8% of participants (58), while 33% were either juniors or seniors (32). 22.7% were juniors (22). 4.1% were graduate students (4), and 3.1% of participants classified themselves as “other” (See Table 2).

Table 2: Participants Descriptive Statistics

	Percentage
AGE	
18-20	59.8
21-24	34.0
25-29	5.2
40+	1.0
GENDER	
Female	49.5
Male	50.5
ETHNICITY	
Asian	2.1
Black	30.9
Hispanic or Latino	5.2
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1.0
White	57.7
CLASS RANK	
Freshman	28.9
Sophomore	30.9
Junior	22.7
Senior	10.3
Graduate Student	4.1

When asked about the amount time spent watching *SportsCenter*, ESPN, ESPNU, Fox Sports, or online sports information 55.7% of participants (54) said they watched 1-5 hours a week. 23.7% of participants claimed to watch 5-10 hours per week (23), 5.2% watch 10-20 hours (5), and 15.5% (15) watch 20 or more hours of the previously discussed programs. Subjects were also asked to rate their enjoyment of a number of sports as well as their fandom for women's college basketball (See Table 3 and 4).

Table 3: Enjoyment of Viewing Sports

Sport	Mean	Std. Deviation
baseball	3.91	1.882
basketball	5.00	1.791
football	6.29	1.181
hockey	2.35	1.541
tennis	2.86	1.658
track	3.20	1.863
volleyball	2.93	1.660

Table 4: Fandom Score for Women's College Basketball

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
fandom	Female	48	2.4667	1.49685
	Male	49	1.9551	1.01593

Stimulus

Participants viewed edited versions of ESPN's (The Entertaining and Sports Programming Network) *SportsCenter* episodes. ESPN markets itself as "the Worldwide Leader in Sports" and the network is respected as such. Since its inception in 1979 ESPN has been the premier location for everything in sports news. ESPN's flagship program is *SportsCenter*, a daily sports highlight show featuring the day's sports scores, both college and professional, previews of future sporting events, commentary, analysis, and feature stories. The show has aired more

times than any other show in American television airing up to 12 times a day. *SportsCenter* celebrated its 30,000th episode in 2009.

It must be stated that there were slight differences in conditions one and two. In order to make the experiment as realistic as possible ESPN's *SportsCenter* was used as the main stimuli. However, seeing as how *SportsCenter* seems to cover men's college basketball a lot more frequently than women's college basketball the video clip within condition two (high women's highlights) had to be edited more than the video clip in condition one (high men's highlights). With that being said the video clip in condition one is more fluent and more accurately resembles an actual *SportsCenter* episode more than that of the video clip in condition two. For example, the video clip in condition one contains footage from two episodes of *SportsCenter* which were then edited together. It contained an actual *SportsCenter* show opening. The video clip in condition one included highlights from seven men's college basketball games, six of which included post game interviews with players or coaches. Condition one also contained coverage of two women's college basketball games which lasted for about two minutes and twenty-two seconds of the clip 20-minute clip.

The video clip in condition two contained women's college basketball highlights from about four different episodes. The highlights in condition two included coverage of some of the same teams more than once. This is due to the fact that the same women's college teams seem to receive the bulk of women's basketball coverage. Condition two also contained coverage of one men's college basketball game which lasted for about one minute and thirty-five seconds of the nineteen minute clip.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 was presented under the assumption that participants primed with heavy sports media coverage of men's college basketball would view women's college basketball as inferior to men's college basketball. Thus a factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was ran in order to determine whether heavy men's coverage would negatively affect participants' perception of women's basketball. Results showed that this hypothesis was not supported and that there was no significant affect on participants' perception of women's college basketball $F(2,94)=1.87, p>.05, \text{partial } \eta^2=.04$.

However participants in condition 2 (heavy women's coverage/ $M=3.83$) had a higher perception than participants in 1 (heavy men's coverage/ $M=3.48$). Participants in the control condition who weren't primed with heavy men's or women's college basketball coverage had the highest perception of women's college basketball ($M=4.08$). The control was expected to be higher than that of participants in condition 1 yet lower than participants in condition 2.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 was presented under the assumption that participants that view sports media coverage with heavy men's college basketball highlights will have a higher enjoyment level than those participants that view sports media coverage with heavy women's college basketball highlights. Thus a t-test was run to determine whether women's coverage would negatively affect participants' enjoyment levels. Results showed that this hypothesis was not supported and that there was no significant affect on participants' enjoyment based on which type of coverage the participant viewed (heavy men's or heavy women's). The enjoyment levels of viewers who

viewed heavy men's coverage ($M=4.5260$) was about the same viewers who viewed heavy women's coverage ($M=4.5313$) $t(62)=-.014$, $p>.05$.

Hypothesis 3

The study presented hypothesis 3 under the assumption that the level of fanship of women's college basketball of viewers would affect viewer perception of sports media coverage of women's college basketball. A correlation test was run to determine if a viewer's fanship would in fact be associated with the viewer's perception of women's college basketball coverage. Results showed that this hypothesis was supported illustrating that as fanship of a viewer increases so did the positive perception of viewers in regards to women's college basketball coverage ($r=.48$ $p<.001$).

Other Findings

Besides the hypotheses presented, this study rendered other significant findings. Gender played a major part in the results of this study. For example, the results yielded a significant interaction effect for gender of the participant and the video prime, $F(1, 60) = 11.81$, $p<.01$, partial $\eta^2 = .16$. The study found that women enjoy seeing women's athletic sports coverage ($M=5.32$, $SE = .33$) more than men did ($M=3.63$, $SE = .35$). Men enjoyed seeing men's coverage ($M= 4.82$, $SE = .33$) more than women did ($M=4.19$, $SE = .35$). The difference between men and women was larger for the heavy female coverage prime, than for the heavy male coverage prime (See Table 5).

Table 5: Enjoyment of Coverage

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Women's Coverage	Female	48	5.32	.33
	Male	49	3.63	.35
Men's Coverage	Female	48	4.19	.35
	Male	49	4.82	.33

Another interesting finding was the fact that there was a significant gender main effect, in regards to perception of women's sports, $F(1,91) = 17.41$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .16$. Women had a much more positive perception of women's sports ($M = 4.288$, $SE = .17$) than men did ($M = 3.294$, $SE = .17$). This is illustrated in Table 6.¹

Table 6: Perception of Coverage

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Women's Coverage	Female	48	4.288	.17
	Male	49	3.294	.17

¹ Besides the tests discussed in the results section, gender interaction tests were conducted. However no significant results were found.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

It was obvious to some at the time of Title IX's inception, that the government needed to pass such a law in order to ensure that women in this country receive the same opportunities in sports and academics as men did. It could be argued that in today's society, where the media plays an enormous role in forming the opinions of the public, that it is necessary for media organizations to be held to the same standards that the government demands of colleges, universities, and other organizations. Just as universities, colleges, and other organizations must make a concerted effort to make both men and women athletic programs equitable, so should media organizations in making news coverage of men's and women's sports equitable. This is especially true because of the consequences that come along with minimal and inadequate coverage. Sports media is one of the primary institutions that encourage the ideology of female inferiority to men. Research studies on past Olympics coverage shows that some steps have been taken toward covering women's sports more often. "However, the day to day coverage, routine coverage – which is less covered – still has a long way to go before it reflects in a more realistic manner the sporting activity of women in the sport realm" (Bernstein, 2002, p.425). The way the media covers female athletics can affect how interested the public is concerning women's athletics which can affect attendance of women's games, financial support for female athletics, and the interest of athletics for little girls.

This study argued that exposure to heavy coverage of men's basketball would negatively affect the perception of the viewer to believe that women's college basketball is inferior to that of men's college basketball. Although there was no significant effect on the perception when exposed to heavy men's coverage it was interesting to find that participants that weren't primed

with either heavy men's or heavy women's coverage had the most positive perception on women's college basketball. Perhaps being primed with either heavy men's or women's coverage has some type of negative effect on a viewer's perception of women's college basketball. This may be true seeing as how much research has found that the quality of women's sports coverage is oftentimes worst than that of men's sports coverage (Hallmark & Armstrong, 1999; Tuggle & Owen, 1999; Sabo & Jansen, 1992; Trujillo, 1991). It could be said that heavy men's coverage primed a low perception of women's college basketball due to the lack of appearance of women's basketball. Heavy women's coverage may have primed a low perception of women's college basketball due to a worst quality of coverage.

The study also argued that as a person's fanship increased so would their positive perception of women's college basketball. This statement was supported which maintains the notion that more coverage of women's athletics should be broadcasted in the media. If more images of women's athletics were shown in the media there would be more interest in women's athletics creating more fans. According to the results of this study as more people become fans of the women's athletics, particularly women's basketball, an overall positive perception of women's athletics will be developed. A positive perception of women's athletics can lead to more playing opportunities and can take society closer to true equity in sports.

Hegemony

As previously stated, hegemony suggests that societal elites have the ability to impress upon the mass public their ideological beliefs, making the beliefs of societal elites the beliefs of the mass public. The media is one of the main platforms used by the dominant class to influence the less dominant class with its thoughts and beliefs. Elites generally have more access to the media and it to disseminate different ideals to the mass public. In the case of the sports, male

athletes and athletics are considered the dominant class while female athletes and athletics are deemed inferior.

In this study hegemony is not necessarily being tested but serves as backdrop laying a foundation for the notions that are being tested. Hegemonic norms seem to hold strong throughout this research. This is first demonstrated in the creation of the stimuli in the experiment. The clips used in the experiment were actual *SportsCenter* clips which aired during the 2011 men's and women's NCAA basketball tournament. The differences in the clips that covered the men's NCAA tournament from the clips covering the women's tournament show some hegemonic principles. The clips used in the study covering the men's tournament included much more extensive coverage of the event than that of the women's tournament coverage. Men's college basketball being the dominant class, receives thorough coverage while women's basketball receives minimal coverage. The description of the stimuli used in this study and its contents are consistent with other hegemony studies (Messner, Duncan, & Wachs, 1996), and shows that even with the positive strides that have been made in terms of covering female athletics the dominant class is still dictating what is important to the public.

Though the study's stimuli was consistent with past hegemonic research the results seem to contradict past research in that the stimuli did not significantly influence the beliefs of viewers. Seeing sports media coverage did not necessarily invoke negative thoughts or beliefs regarding women's college basketball. This was surprising since the mass majority of hegemony research finds that hegemonic principles are rampant in sports media coverage. However, perhaps the increase in the amount of women's athletics coverage has begun to shift the ideals of the public in reference to gender and sports. Some research has found that "women have reached a powerful position" (Mean & Kassing, 2008, p. 127). The media coverage of the 1999 FIFA

Women's World Cup is one example of this which was presented as a "new era for women and women's empowerment" while still describing female athletes as traditionally feminine (Christopherson, Janning, & McConnell, 2002, p. 171). No the matter the reason, the experiment finding that media coverage did not incite negative beliefs concerning female athletics may hurt the idea that men rule the world of sports coverage causing a false sense of equality in men's and women's sports coverage.

Emphasis must be placed on the point that much has changed since the release if much of the research cited in this study. Many areas of sports coverage has improved in regards to the appearance of women in sports. There are noticeably more female commentators calling both male and female athletics, some even calling football games. Women are being placed on high-ranking college football committees and are hired as sideline football reporters. However, what is also noticeable is the attractiveness of the women hired as sideline reporters. It seems that only beautiful women are hired for these positions due to their appeal to male sports fans. This is an attribute of hegemony, giving the illusion of improvement and equality while not really giving up control.

Gender Schema Theory

The results of this study are consistent with other gender schema research in some ways. Researchers describe schemas as a method of individuals simplifying information in an effort to easily process complex information. Similarly, gender schema theory helps individuals process information in determining what types of actions and behaviors are gender appropriate. In regards to this study, there are some consistencies with past research. Many researchers have found that when characters are shown in "counter stereotypic" roles the gender schema effect can diminish (Geis et al., 1984; Johnston & Ettema, 1982; Wroblewski & Huston, 1987). These

effects can also depend on repeated exposures to “counter stereotypic” roles as well as how much the actions of the “counter stereotypic” characters deviate from gender norms. As previously discussed, many studies have shown that there has been an increase in the amount of media coverage that women’s athletics. This increase in female athlete images may explain hypothesis 1 not being supported. The gender schemas of the participants may have diminished due to “counter stereotypic” roles being more available causing the images shown in condition 1 to have little to no effect on the participants in this study.

Another factor that makes this study consistent with other gender schema theory studies is the fact that this study found that women enjoy seeing women’s athletic sports coverage more than men did. Men enjoyed seeing men’s coverage more than women did. This coincides with past gender schema theory studies which found that females are more likely to accept counter stereotypical actions and to have more flexible gender schemas than males (Huston, 1983). The female participants in this study accepted female athletics more than male participants thus enjoying the heavy women’s clips more than the male participants did. The same can be said for the perception of female athletics seeing as how the female participants in this study had a more positive perception of female athletics than the male participants. However, this contradicts the Whiteside and Hardin (2011) study which found that even women are not watching women sports. The study found that this lack of female viewership is not due to lack of enjoyment but due to the fact that the men in their in lives do not watch women’s sports.

Priming

This study was not consistent with much of the other priming research in that there was no significant priming effect from the stimuli used in the experiment. Priming refers to the effect of some preceding stimulus or event on how we react, broadly defined, to some subsequent

stimulus. As applied to the media, priming refers to the effects of the content of the media on people's later behavior or judgements related to the content that was processed" (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen, & Carpentier, 2009, p. 74). Simply put "which refers to the short-term impact of exposure to the media on subsequent judgements or behaviors" (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen, & Carpentier, 2009, p. 74). Hypothesis 1 made the assumption that participants primed with heavy sports media coverage of men's college basketball would view women's college basketball as inferior to men's college basketball. There was no significant effect on participants' perception of female athletics. After careful consideration of why this study did not yield any lasting priming effects, the third and final level of the affective aggressive model of priming, secondary appraisal, may offer some explanation for these findings. As explained earlier, secondary appraisal consists of the careful and effortful thought that goes into information interpretation when time and cognitive resources become available. Time and cognitive resources allow for information that is not available during the primary appraisal to be evaluated. In reference to this study, during secondary appraisal participants may have carefully interpreted the information being presented. Since stereotyping is not considered socially acceptable behavior by many, participants may have used the time during secondary appraisal to consider their answers on the questionnaire thus not labeling female athletics as inferior to that of male athletics.

Limitations and Future Research

There were a number of limitations within this study that are worth pointing out. Obviously the issues that come along with all research experiments were present in this experiment. The fact that participants watched the clips and answered the questionnaires in a media lab makes for a testing environment that is not as comfortable as a participant's home.

This can cause unrealistic test findings since the study aimed to gather real world perceptions of female athletics. It can be argued that participants in a media lab testing environment are more aware of the fact that they are research subjects. A future research study looking for similar findings could send surveys home with participants asking them to watch a certain amount of time of ESPN's *SportsCenter*. This would create a more realistic and real world atmosphere.

It is also worth mentioning that this study utilizing a convenience sample of university undergraduate and graduate students. Ninety-seven students participated in this research study. Initially the target number of subjects for each condition was 40 to 45 students in order to observe small effects. However due to the lack of participation from students the study was forced to resort to about 33 participants in each condition. Using mostly college students also made the study less generalizable as it could have been if older subjects were included.

The experiment's design could also be viewed as somewhat of a limitation. This study was a between subjects factorial experiment with three separate conditions. A within subjects design in which every participant is exposed to all conditions may have led to more significant findings since after exposure to each condition the researcher could specifically ask participant which clip presented a more positive perception of women's college basketball. This is especially in regards to hypothesis 2 where the enjoyment levels of participants after watching each clip was taken into account. Asking participants which clip they enjoyed the most after seeing each clip may have yielded some significant effects.

The differences in the stimuli used for each condition can also be viewed as a limitation. As previously stated, in order to make the experiment as realistic as possible ESPN's *SportsCenter* was used as the main stimuli. However, seeing as how *SportsCenter* seems to cover men's college basketball a lot more frequently than women's college basketball the video clip

with in condition two (high women's highlights) had to be edited more than the video clip in condition one (high men's highlights). With that being said the video clip in condition one is more fluent and more accurately resembles an actual *SportsCenter* episode more than that of the video clip in condition two. For example, the video clip in condition one contains footage from two episodes of *SportsCenter* which were then edited together. It contained an actual *SportsCenter* show opening (which maybe should have been taken out in order to make condition one and two more closely resemble each other). The video clip in condition one included highlights from seven men's college basketball games, six of which included post game interviews with players or coaches. Condition one also contained coverage of two women's college basketball games which lasted for about two minutes and twenty-two seconds of the clip twenty minute clip.

The video clip in condition two contained women's college basketball highlights from about four different episodes. The highlights in condition two included coverage of some of the same teams more than once. This is due to the fact that the same women's college teams seem to receive the bulk of women's basketball coverage. Condition two also contained coverage of one men's college basketball game which lasted for about one minute and thirty-five seconds of the nineteen minute clip.

These differences in stimuli may have had a small bearing on the results in this study. One could argue that the presence of after game press conferences may insinuate that men's college basketball is more important than women's college basketball in that of women's college basketball. However one could also argue that the press conferences in the heavy men's basketball clip was less enjoyable due to a stop in the action and game highlights. In a future

study, the researcher may want to consider completely creating the stimuli making them as close to real media coverage as possible while also making the clips as identical as possible.

The final limitation may be the fact that the researcher conducting the experiment was female. Having a female conducting the experiment may have made some participants hesitant to admit that they feel female athletics is inferior and less enjoyable to male athletics.

Future research on this topic may want to focus on other sports shows besides ESPN's *SportsCenter* including shows on and off the ESPN network. It could also be useful to study other types of media such as Internet websites, newspaper coverage, sports magazines, and/or sports talk radio coverage.

Examining other sports may be another route for future research. The researcher in this study chose to examine coverage from the men's and women's NCAA national basketball tournament because the events are practically identical in sport and format. However, since basketball is dominated by mostly African Americans, using the popular sport may have been limiting due to the possibility of the issue being conflated with race. Tennis is sport worth examining seeing as how progress has been made in leveling the playing field between male and female tennis players (fees, awards, and equivalence in men's and women's purses). Beyond tennis, examining other female sports which some don't consider sports such as gymnastics or cheerleading may lead to significant findings in terms of perception and enjoyment.

Conclusion

This study does add some insight in better understanding the relationship between sports fandom of women's college basketball and enjoyment. This positive correlation between fandom of women's college basketball and enjoyment infers that the media's capability of influencing fandom could thus increase overall enjoyment of women's college basketball. This could lead to

more equity in the amount of media coverage between men's and women's college basketball as well as equity in the quality of coverage. These findings are very much connected to Title IX in that the point of Title IX was to create equity in athletics between males and females.

This study also suggests that gender plays a major role in the enjoyment levels and perceptions associated with women's college basketball. The fact that women enjoy seeing women's college basketball more than men while logic would surmise that men are the majority of sports fans, particularly that of basketball, implies that though there has been some improvement in the equity of coverage, males still view female athletics differently from male athletics. One way these views can be discontinued and replaced with more unbiased ones is by the media continuing to strive to cover women's athletics in the same ways and with the same amount of significance. This would lead to more women's athletics fans which would in turn lead to people enjoying women's athletics more and could also lead to more positive perceptions of women's athletics. More female programming on existing sports channels can continue the exceeding progress of equality of male and female sports. The suggestion of creating channels solely for female athletics can be stifling to the advancement of the popularity of women's sports. Marketing female athletics to new audience, when there is already an audience for athletics is counterproductive.

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APPENDIX 1

MEL #: _____

Condition #: _____

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please read the instructions prior to answering questions.

We must remind you that your participation is completely voluntary and greatly appreciated. Your responses will remain completely confidential. When answering the following questions, it is important that you thoroughly read the instructions provided.

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions contained in this survey, and we would simply like you to give your honest opinion. This is NOT a test, so please do **NOT** return to previous questions to change or revise your answers.

Women's College Basketball Fandom

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1. _____ I consider myself to be a women's college basketball fan.
2. _____ My friends see me as a women's college basketball fan.
3. _____ I believe that following women's college basketball is the most enjoyable form of entertainment.
4. _____ My life would be less enjoyable if I were not allowed to follow women's college basketball.
5. _____ Being a women's college basketball fan is very important to me.

Women's College Basketball Enjoyment

6. _____ The sports clip was exciting to watch.
7. _____ I enjoyed watching the sports clip.
8. _____ I want to watch the rest of the episode.
9. _____ The clip made me feel good.

10. _____ I found the clip to be interesting.

11. _____ I appreciated the clip.

Perception

12. _____ Women's college basketball is NOT as enjoyable as men's college basketball.

13. _____ Women's athletics are just as enjoyable as men's athletics.

14. _____ Women's athletics are NOT as competitive as men's athletics.

15. _____ Men and women are equal in athletic ability.

16. _____ I'd rather watch women's athletics than men's athletics.

Demographics

17. How often do you watch the following networks or sports shows: SportsCenter, ESPN, ESPN2, Fox Sports, or go online for sports information?

- a. 1-5 hrs. _____
- b. 5-10 hrs. _____
- c. 10-20 hrs. _____
- d. 20+ hrs. _____

18. How much do you enjoy watching EACH of the following sports?

- | | Not at all enjoy | | | | | Very much enjoy | |
|---------------|------------------|---|---|---|---|-----------------|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| a. Baseball | _____ | | | | | | |
| b. Basketball | _____ | | | | | | |
| c. Football | _____ | | | | | | |
| d. Hockey | _____ | | | | | | |
| e. Tennis | _____ | | | | | | |
| f. Track | _____ | | | | | | |
| g. Volleyball | _____ | | | | | | |

19. How old are you?

- a. _____ 18-20
- b. _____ 21-24
- c. _____ 25-29
- d. _____ 30-39

e. _____ 40+

20. What is your race/ethnicity?

- a. _____ American Indian or Alaska Native
- b. _____ Asian
- c. _____ Black or African American
- d. _____ Hispanic or Latino
- e. _____ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- f. _____ White
- g. _____ Other (_____)

21. Are you

- a. _____ Female
- b. _____ Male

22. Are you a

- a. _____ Freshman
- b. _____ Sophomore
- c. _____ Junior
- d. _____ Senior
- e. _____ Graduate student
- f. _____ Other (_____)

Thank you for your participation!

Have a nice day!

APPENDIX 2

Application for Exemption from Institutional Oversight

Unless qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, ALL LSU research/ projects using living humans as subjects, or samples, or data obtained from humans, directly or indirectly, with or without their consent, must be approved or exempted in advance by the LSU IRB. This Form helps the PI determine if a project may be exempted, and is used to request an exemption.

LSU
Institutional Review Board
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair
131 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.6792
irb@lsu.edu
lsu.edu/irb

-- Applicant, Please fill out the application in its entirety and include the completed application as well as parts A-E, listed below, when submitting to the IRB. Once the application is completed, please submit two copies of the completed application to the IRB Office or to a member of the Human Subjects Screening Committee. Members of this committee can be found at <http://www.lsu.edu/screeningmembers.shtml>

-- A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:

(A) Two copies of this completed form and two copies of part B thru E.

(B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2)

(C) Copies of all instruments to be used.

*If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.

(D) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)

(E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: (<http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>.)

(F) IRB Security of Data Agreement: (<http://www.lsu.edu/irb/IRB%20Security%20of%20Data.pdf>)

1) Principal Investigator: Gabrielle P. Jones

Rank: Graduate Student

Dept: Mass Communications

Ph: 504-450-8014

E-mail: gjone19@tigers.lsu.edu

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each

Dr. Meghan Sanders, Assistant Professor, 225-578-7380, msand@lsu.edu
Dr. Andrea Miller, Associate Professor, 225-578-3146, almill@lsu.edu
Dr. Craig Freeman, Associate Professor, 225-578-7381, cfreem1@lsu.edu

IRB# <u>ES475</u>	LSU Proposal #
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Complete Application
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Human Subjects Training <u>on file</u>

3) Project Title:

March Madness for Men: How ESPN's SportsCenter Coverage of Men's and Women's NCAA Basketball Effects Perceptions of Women's Athletics

Study Exempted By:

Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
225-578-8692 | www.lsu.edu/irb
Exemption Expires: 4-5-2014

4) Proposal? (yes or no) no

If Yes, LSU Proposal Number

Also, if YES, either

☐ This application completely matches the scope of work in the grant

OR

☐ More IRB Applications will be filed later

5) Subject pool (e.g. Psychology students)

Mass Communications Students

*Circle any "vulnerable populations" to be used: (children <18; the mentally impaired, pregnant women, the aged, other). Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

6) PI Signature

Gabrielle P. Jones

Date

4/6/11

(no per signatures)

** I certify my responses are accurate and complete. If the project scope or design is later changes, I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of all non-LSU institutions in which the study is conducted. I also understand that it is my responsibility to maintain copies of all consent forms at LSU for three years after completion of the study. If I leave LSU before that time the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Screening Committee Action: Exempted ☒ Not Exempted ☐ Category/Paragraph

Reviewer

Lisa Lyndy

Signature

Lisa Lyndy

Date

4-6-11

IMPLIED INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR
SOCIAL SCIENCE

Louisiana State University

Title of Project: March Madness for Men: How ESPN's
SportsCenter Coverage of Men's and Women's NCAA
Basketball Effect Perceptions of Women's Athletics

Person in Charge: Gabrielle P. Jones
Manship School of Mass Communication
Master's Students
Louisiana State University
(504) 450-8014
gjone19@tigers.lsu.edu
Chair, Dr. Meghan Sanders
211 Journalism Building
(225) 578-7380
msand@lsu.edu

1. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to examine the manner in which the media covers men's and women's athletics and how it may affect the public's perception's of women's athletics. The study will be within subjects experiment with three separate conditions.
2. Procedure to be followed: Each participant will view a 35-40 minute video clip of a popular television show. Following the clip, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire asking you to rate the perception and enjoyment of women's athletics. You will also be asked to report your level of fandom for women's athletics.
3. Discomforts and Risks: There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.
4. Benefits:
 - a. You might learn more about yourself by participating in this study. You may have a better understanding of how the media can affect your perception of women's athletics.
 - b. You may gain insight into how the ways individuals in their discipline explore communication-related phenomena.
5. Duration: It will take about 40 minutes to complete the study, including the questionnaire.
6. Statement of Privacy: No identifying information will be included on any of the answers that you provide. If this research is published, no information that would identify you will be included since your name is no way linked to your responses. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by third parties.

7. **Right to Ask Questionnaire:** You have the right to ask questions at any point and time about the research. The person in charge will answer your questions. Contact Gabrielle P. Jones at 504-450-8014 or gjone19@tigers.lsu.edu with questions. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, contact Robert C. Matthews, Chairman, LSU Institutional Review Board, 225-578-8692.
8. **Compensation:** Participation is purely voluntary and no compensation will be provided for participation.
9. **Voluntary Participation:** You do not have to participate in this research nor do you have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. You can stop your participation at any time.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study.

Completion and return of the survey implies that you are 18 years of age or older, have read the information in this form, and consent to participate in the research.

Study Exempted By:

Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
225-578-8692 | www.lsu.edu/irb

Exemption Expires: 4-5-2014

VITA

Gabrielle P. Jones-Hayes is from New Orleans, LA. She attended St. Mary's Academy High School in New Orleans. She received a dual undergraduate degree from Alabama A&M University in English and Telecommunications. She attended Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication in order to receive her master's degree. Upon graduation Gabrielle plans to pursue a career in women's collegiate basketball coaching as well as sports journalism.