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# Public Perception of Male Athletes Vs. Female Athletes in the Media

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PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF MALE ATHLETES VS. FEMALE ATHLETES IN THE MEDIA

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Abstract

In this experiment, my goal was to determine if public perception of female athletes differed from public perception of male athletes. Female athletes are underrepresented in the media (Eastman and Billings, 2000), and because of this, public perception of male athletes might differ from their perceptions of female athletes in the media. I hypothesized that my respondents would best remember the female athletes appearance, best remember the male athletes interview content and that the female and male respondents who took my experiment would evaluate each athlete differently based on their own gender and the athletes' gender. My results indicated that the respondents who watched the female student-athletes' interview were more likely to write more detailed responses about dress and appearance, while at the same time, adding negative and malicious comments about them. Those who watched the male student-athletes' interview were simpler in their dress and appearance descriptions, and the male student-athlete rarely received negative comments. Additionally, female respondents were more likely to pay attention to the male student-athletes' interview than the female student-athletes interview. The male respondents were less diligent than the female respondents in recalling the interview content from both the male and female student-athletes, but more likely to recall the information from the male student-athletes' interview. Female respondents were also more likely to detect emotions over the male student respondents. I believe, the results from my research boils down to female athletes being more critically judged in the media because of their underrepresentation (Eastman and Billings, 2000). In order to help stop this negativity female athletes receive, like the female in my experiment, I believe having more media training that provides insights on what to wear and how to look could lead to more positive comments for viewers watching female athletes on television. My vision is that the content of this thesis sparks further research so female athletes can be viewed the same way as male athletes

Introduction

        As a former female collegiate gymnast, I was in constant contact with the media during competition season. I was fearful of what the public thought of me after they watched my interview. I worked hard as an athlete and was passionate about my sport. I wanted the content of my message to speak to viewers, and the passion in the tone of my voice to grab their attention. I wanted my message to be taken seriously, and I wanted people to listen to my fellow female teammates and me. This led me to several questions about public perception of female athletes. Are they looking at female athletes as just a pretty face? Or, is the public genuinely interested in what a woman has to say about her sport? Therefore, my thesis will explore the differences between female and male athletes and how the public perceives them after on-camera interviews.

        This problem is important in our world today because, I believe, female athletes are not seen as equals to male athletes. Although Title IX made great strides for female athletics, as Mary Jo Kane (1988) explains in her research, the passage of Title IX does not necessarily mean treatment between genders is equal. The success of Title IX will not be complete until public attitudes about female athletes equal public attitudes about male athletes (Kane, 1988).

        Female athletes are underrepresented in the media, as demonstrated by studies conducted by Janet S. Fink (2014) and Susan Tyler Eastman and Andrew Billings (2000). When people do see female athletes on television, I believe, they may not take them seriously or pay attention to the content of their interview because they are too distracted by the athletes' appearance. This problem boils down to inequalities that women face. According to statistics that Barack Obama's website Organizing for Action (2015) demonstrates, females still struggle for equality in all aspects of life. In the job market, in sports and in salaries, women suffer disadvantages strictly because of gender (Organizing for Action, 2015; Fink, 2014; Eastman and Billings, 2000). According to The Women's Sports Foundation (2011), men receive 55% of collegiate athletic

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scholarships, while women receive only 45%. Venturing out past collegiate athletics, and into professional sports, unequal pay between male and female athletes is also an issue (Women's Sports Foundation, 2011). The Women's Sports Foundation (2011) says that the PGA tour prize money is $256 million. The LPGA prize money is five times less at $50 million. This is only one example of many that exist between male and female athletics.

This problem is vital to women everywhere because each female athlete deserves to have equal representation in the media and be taken seriously by viewers. If female athletic events receive more on-air coverage, then maybe viewers will take female athletes more seriously and be more likely to pay attention to the content of the interview rather than the athletes' appearance. Our world is changing, and women no longer belong in the kitchen, they belong on the playing field.

Additionally, I would like to add a disclaimer about social media. Instagram, Twitter, SnapChat, Facebook, and many more social media sites allow people to gain access to the lives of famous actors, actresses, comedians, collegiate athletes, professional athletes, singers, and whomever else the general public would like to "follow." The general public can browse through photos, videos, posts, comments, tweets, and re-tweets. These posts can make a person feel as though they personally "know" the public figure. Although these sites can potentially alter public perception of public figures, social media is not the topic of this thesis. I am only exploring public perception of male athletes versus female athletes through the medium of television— specifically, television interviews. I am only exploring television interviews because this is the medium in which on-air videos originated. Videos on social media came long after television interviews, so I want to explore the most "basic" form of the televised interview. Additionally, a lot of online video has been produced for television, or in the style of television interviews.

Although social media is not my method of exploration for this thesis, the results of this

experiment, however, could fuel research for video interviews through various social media sites.

Literature Review

The formation of thoughts and perceptions about people, places, things, and ideas continually change as we change and mold to new experiences we encounter. Every person is built with certain feelings and expectations about people, places, things, and ideas. Schema theory is important to explore for this experiment because it involves public perception and how they may view female athletes. Susan Tyler Eastman and Andrew Billings (2000) found that male athletes and their sporting events are broadcasted more frequently than female sporting events. I believe that because we are more conditioned to seeing male athletes and male sports, we develop certain schemas about female athletics. Although times are changing, and more women are receiving equal opportunities, there is still more room for improvement.

These feelings we encounter are formed in our minds and are called schemas. In order to understand schema theory, we must first understand schemas and what they are and how they are formed for each individual. Stanley J. Baran and Dennis K. Davis define schema in their book *Mass Communication Theory* as "cognitive structures built up as people interact with the environment in order to organize their experience" (Baran & Davis, 2015). Schemas are formed from memories that "are new constructions cobbled together from bits and pieces of connected experiences and applied as situations demand" (Baran & Davis, 2015, p.236). Mary B. McVee. Kailonnie Dunsmore and James R. Gavalek (2005) also quote Jeremy Campbell (1989) in saying that schemas are biases in each person's mind. Experiences shape and form our individual schemas (McVee et al., 2005). Baran and Davis (2015) cite William F. Brewer and Glenn V. Nakamura (1984) when they write that schemas are generic. Brewer and Nakamura (1984) continue this explanation by saying that after a particular encounter, schemas begin to cognitively build. Also, after a person has one experience, all other incoming experiences related

to the previous encounter becomes processed by that particular schema. Schemas are also considered "generative," which means they can handle an endless amount of new experiences because people are constantly building and revising their schemas as new information is received (Brewer and Nakamura, 1984).

From this research about people's schemas came theories about schemas. As defined by Baran and Davis (2015), schema theory is an "information processing theory arguing that memories are new constructions constructed from bits and pieces of connected experiences and applied to meaning making as situations demand" (p. 236).

More specifically, gender-schema theory is also useful in this research. According to Sandra L. Bem (1981), "the gender schema theory proposes that the phenomenon of sex typing derives, in part, from gender-based schematic processing, from a generalized readiness to process information on the basis of the sex-linked associations that constitute the gender schema" (p. 354).

This concept of schema theory and gender schema theory is especially important in my research because I think that the general population's biases about female athletes will not be positive. I think most people would rather watch male sports because that is what is most popular on television (Eastman and Billings, 2000). From young ages we watch baseball games, football games or basketball games with our parents. As a result, we may develop schemas about women and their roles. Yes, it is socially acceptable for women to play sports, but that idea is not reflected on television and in the media (Eastman and Billings, 2000). Male and female differences in societal roles do not start with their differences in sport broadcasts. Underrepresentation of female athletes (Eastman and Billings, 2000) in the media is just a mere reflection of other aspects of life where gender segregation exists.

Although males and females are biologically different, society impacts genders, reinforces societal expectations and helps cultivate gender stereotypes as Vishal K. Gupta, Daniel B. Turban, S. Arzu Wasti, and Arijit Sikdar demonstrate in their 2009 study. Gupta et al. quotes Brian A. Nosek, Mahzarin R. Banaji and Anthony G. Greenwald when he writes that men "are assumed to and tend to be more inclined to participate and excel in math and science, while women, compared with men, are more inclined toward arts and languages (Nosek, Banaji, and Greenwald, 2002). Those who have studied gender differences and occupations note that a persons' career is often a reflection of what society says about that particular job (Gupta et al., 2009). These gender-role stereotypes tell males and females what career society thinks a person should have, solely based on gender (Gupta et al., 2009).

In the Gupta et al. study, the researchers explored gender stereotype differences on the two genders and their intentions to go into entrepreneurship (2009). The authors quote Donald L. Sexton and Nancy Bowman-Upton (1990) by writing that society categorizes women has having lower "energy level" and having significantly less "risk taking propensity" than males have (Gupta et al., 2009).

The results of the Gupta et al. study supports the ideas of Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman (1987) and also the ideas of Linda Miller and Jacqueline Budd (1999). These ideas are that children learn stereotypes associated with each gender. As they grow older, they better understand characteristics associated with each sex. (Miller and Budd, 1999; West and Zimmerman, 1987). Gupta et al. explains that this process of gender stereotyping in society remains a prominent reason of why males and females are supposed to obtain certain careers (2009). As it relates to this study, the exploration of gender differences in pursuing a career in entrepreneurship, Gupta et al. quotes Candy Brush and Robert Hisrich (1984) while explaining

the results. The results suggest "that women lack certain characteristics, traits, and skills that are needed to become entrepreneurs" (Hisrich and Brush, 1984, p.413). The authors write that men and women willingly participate in this segregation because of cultural norms and stereotypes that society reinforces (Gupta et al., 2009).

At young ages, our schemas are formed to think about our gender a certain way because of society (Gupta et al., 2009). These facts carry over into other areas of life as well. However, society may not be the only reason men and women have different skill sets, thought processes and careers.

Alan and Barbara Pease's book, *Why Men Don't Listen and Women Can't Read Maps,* expands on gender differences and why males and females have different perceptions and thought processes (2000). Pease and Pease (2000) explain that the biological makeup of male and females are what create differences. In order to test differences between males and females, the authors obtained the information and results presented in their book by interviewing experts, reading numerous articles and papers and also by conducting neurological tests (Pease and Pease, 2000). This evidence demonstrates that our attitudes, behaviors and preferences stem from our hormones and brain. The authors describe that if females grew up alone without the guidance of anyone, they would still be affectionate, play with dolls and make friends. In this same situation, boys would still be competitive both mentally and physically, "and form groups with a clear hierarchy" (Pease and Pease, 2000, p.9). Male and female brain functions and hormones dictate how humans think and act before birth (Pease and Pease, 2000). The authors explain how our instincts are what make humans act a certain way in certain circumstances (Pease and Pease, 2000). The authors write that our biology determines our thought processes and perceptions and that causes males and females to view the world differently (Pease and Pease, 2000). Pease and

Pease (2000) continue to say that society exacerbates male and female innate qualities by giving action figures to little boys and dolls to little girls.

Males and females also perceive and detect situations in a different way (Pease and Pease, 2000). Women, as opposed to males, can detect emotions and details much better. Pease and Pease (2000) explored this and conducted resting brain scans of both a male and female with Neuropsychologist Professor Ruben Gur from the University of Pennsylvania. The results showed that in a resting state, the male brain's electrical activity is shut down by at least 70 percent. During the females resting state, the brain scan showed about 90 percent activity, which confirms, "that women are constantly receiving and analyzing information from their environment" (Pease and Pease, 2000, p. 19). The authors add that women detect their children's emotions, fears, thoughts, dreams, etc. Men are not as diligent in that type of detection (Pease and Pease, 2000). Women will also describe colors more descriptively than males. Instead of saying red, green, or blue like males would say, females will say periwinkle, teal, or apple green (Pease and Pease, 2000). The same situation goes for illustrations. Pease and Pease (2000) discovered from researcher Edward Boring's illustration that males and females detect completely different things in the same picture.

Additionally, females have been accused of having a "sixth sense" due to their abilities to predict outcomes, detect lies and unveil truths (Pease and Pease, 2000). Pease and Pease (2000) conducted an experiment in 1978, which proved women's ability to detect emotions. The women watched ten-second clips of crying babies with no sound. The mothers quickly defined the crying babies "emotion from hunger and pain to tiredness or gas" (Pease and Pease, 2000, p. 23). Fathers took the same test, and results showed that less than ten percent of the men could not

detect more than two emotions. The most common response from the men was that the baby was crying for its mother (Pease and Pease, 2000).

Today, we have the technology and research to back up our biological evidence, which depicts differences between male and females and why each gender acts a certain way. After much research and study, researchers determined that biological differences are enhanced by how society treats males and females (Pease and Pease, 2000). But, how were men and women treated at the beginning of time? What about the era when this research, science and exploration of genders were not present?

Since the beginning of time, as Jo Anne Preston (1999) writes in her research, male and female differences resulted in unequal treatment and different societal roles for different genders. Although the topic of this thesis encompasses the discriminations women face in the world of sports, it should be noted that women in sports receive unequal treatment as a result of societal "norms." Segregation exists in all facets of life. If we, as members of society, cannot treat women exactly like men in the workplace, how can we change the problematic gender issues in sports and other facets of life where women receive unequal treatment?

In exploring sex segregation and where it began, Preston writes about this topic in her 1999 article titled, "Occupational Gender Segregation Trends and Explanations." Preston (1999) writes that women tend to work in fields that are predominantly filled with women, and that men are drawn to careers where men are the predominant gender. This line of thought dates back to the earliest human societies, and it still continues into today (Preston, 1999). Divisions of labor and allocation of tasks based on gender are traced back to hunting and gathering societies (Preston, 1999). Preston (1999) writes that in the early hunting and gathering societies, women were in charge of smaller tasks such as gathering plants and hunting small animals. Men, in this

same society, were in charge of hunting much larger animals (Preston, 1999). Preston (1999) attributes this division of labor to the division of careers in the work place between men and women that we have today.

The division of labor where men hunt the large game, and women gather plants and hunt small animals, contributes to not only the titles of "male careers" and "female careers," but also trickles down to segregation in other facets of life (Preston, 1999). Preston (1999) talks about this "trickling" down effect of gender segregation in the work place. She says that, "jobs are an important source of social and economic well-being" and women not receiving equal pay and equal working conditions creates even more inequalities in the workplace (Preston, 1999).

Preston (1999) also attributes gender inequalities in the workplace to a combination of numerous social and economic issues. Preston (1999) quotes Solomon Polachek (1979) in explaining reasons for occupational segregation. Polachek (1979) says that because women tend to leave their jobs for family reasons, they are more likely to choose "occupations where their skills depreciate" (Preston, 1999).

With the "trickle" down effect starting from the beginning of time and existing even today, Carol J. Auster and Susan C. Ohm explore the growth females received in careers and education. In Auster and Ohm's study entitled, "Masculinity and Femininity in Contemporary American Society: A Reevaluation Using the Bem Sex Role Inventory," they described changing sex roles which emerged in the 1970's. The authors write that unlike previous times, women were becoming prevalent in the workforce (Auster and Ohm, 2000). In 1970, according to the U.S Bureau of the Census (1999), only 40% of married women with children were in the workforce (Auster and Ohm, 2000). In the late 1990's, the Bureau of the Census (1999)

determined that more than 70% of married women with children joined the workforce (Auster and Ohm, 2000).

Women also began diving into professions previously dominated by males (Auster and Ohm, 2000). In the 1990's, women received 35% more law degrees than they did in 1970 (Auster and Ohm, 2000). Men's societal roles have also changed.  The authors write that with changing times, it became more "socially acceptable" for men to venture into professions previously made up of mostly females. Although dramatic changes and developments have occurred, traces of "traditional gender role expectations for women and men remain a part of the cultural fabric…" (Auster and Ohm, 2000, p.500).

Auster and Ohm (2000) described the great changes America faced from the 1970's through the end of the 1990's. Today, women can obtain many jobs and educational degrees that were once only dominated by males.  However, although women receive more opportunities, inequalities in these opportunities still exist in 2015.

According to Barack Obama's website, barackobama.com/women, women are excelling in the workforce, but not being compensated for their work with economic security and pay equality (Organizing for Action, 2015). The website states that 40% of women with children are the breadwinners of the family, but still, certain companies do not compensate women accordingly. Barack Obama's site shows that today, a full time working woman earn about 77 cents for every dollar a full time working man receives (Organizing for Action, 2015). Statistics also show that two thirds of those receiving minimum wage are women (Organizing for Action, 2015). This leaves women earning only $14,500 per year (Organizing for Action, 2015). Additionally, Obama's website says that "only 51% of women have access to paid leave after

having their first child, and 40% of private-sector employees work at a company that does not offer sick pay" (Organizing for Action, 2015).

Although women's rights have come a long way since the 1970's, as my previous evidence suggests, inequalities are still present. These inequalities are not only present in the job market, but extend into other facets of women's lives, like sports. As Mary Jo Kane (1988) explains in her research, the passage of Title IX does not necessarily mean treatment between genders is equal.

Kane (1988) conducted a study on Title IX and its impact on female athletics. Kane (1988) wanted to determine if female athletes' media coverage was straying away from negativity, and moving toward socially acceptable. Title IX prohibited the discrimination of sex in athletics (Kane, 1988). The author describes that prior to the Title IX passage, females had little sport involvement because history defined sports as being gender specific (Kane, 1988). Kane (1988) says that although participation of females in athletics rose, that did not mean that females' participating in these sports was socially acceptable.

This push for greater female involvement was important because as Kane (1988) says, sports were considered gender-specific, which means males "should" play sports, not females. Additionally, Title IX did increase the number of female athletic participation, as Kane (1988) also says, but attitudes about female athletics may be difficult to change. This issue is necessary to discuss because Title IX marked an important venture for female athletics. Although we have more female athletes and female athletic programs, this does not mean that public perception of these female athletes will be positive as Kane (1988) suggests.

Even 40 years after the passage of Title IX, we still struggle with equal representation of female athletes in the media. Several studies were conducted to find the differences between

male and female athletics in the media. Exploring these studies and the researchers findings is vital to understand where female athletics is in the media today and where it needs to go in the future.

The 2012 London Olympic Games was said to be the "Year of the Woman," according to Janet S. Fink (2014), because almost 45% of athletes participating in the games were women. Fink's (2014) study explores the qualitative and quantitative differences between male and female athletics and media coverage of this negatively skews the public's perception of female athletics.

Fink (2014) explains that female athletes are breaking records and exhibiting outstanding athletic ability. However, media coverage of women in sports is declining. In a most recent study, Fink says that female athletes only receive about 1.6% of television coverage (2014). Additionally, in a study conducted by Susan Tyler Eastman and Andrew Billings in 2000, they also analyzed sports televisions' coverage of female athletics. They examined ESPN, CNN, *The New York Times*, and *USA Today*'s coverage of women. Eastman and Billings (2000) found a high degree of favoritism toward male athletics. After analyzing ESPN and CNN's coverage of female athletes, the researchers concluded, "out of about 177.5 hours, 95% of *SportsCenter's* coverage and 93% of *Sports Tonight's* coverage was devoted to men's sports" (Eastman and Billings, 2000, p.200). Eastman and Billings (2000) also concluded that there was some variation from week to week, but for the most part men's sports dominated both ESPN and CNN's sports coverage over women's sports coverage by about a 15:1 ratio. Female athletics received about 4% and 6% of coverage from the two networks (Eastman and Billings, 2000).

After analyzing *USA Today* and *The New York Times*, the researchers also found the underrepresentation of female athletes in print news (Eastman and Billings, 2000). Eastman and

Billings (2000) found "that men received almost five times as much space as women in *USA Today* and a staggering 10 times as much space as women in *The New York Times*" (p.202). The researchers also determined in *USA Today*, on average, male athletics received approximately 134.6 inches to 28.8 inches per page for female athletics (Eastman and Billings, 2000). Eastman and Billings (2000) also found *The New York Times* posted an average of 172.0 inches for male athletics and about 17.4 inches per page for female athletics.

Photography was also important in Eastman and Billings study because they had a similar pattern of male dominance. A total of 641 photographs were published on *The New York Times* sports page. Of the 641 photographs published, men received 86% of the photographs; women 11% and 3% were non-gendered photographs (Eastman and Billings, 2000). In addition to dominating the photographs, men also dominated the 951 articles studied by the researchers. Out of the 951 articles on the sports page, men received 85%, women 11% and 4% was considered other (Eastman and Billings, 2000). The results of the *USA Today* study were only slightly better. According to Eastman and Billings (2000), only 14% of 2,491 articles were about female athletics.

The fact that women receive slightly more of the percentage of photographs than they do articles suggests, "a bias toward using pictures of women athletes to attract attention without consistently providing some accompanying information about women's sports" (Eastman and Billings, 2000, p.204). This fact attributes to the idea that female athletes do not receive adequate attention because of her sport, but because of her attractive appearance.

Gender marking is also an important issue when speaking about athletics on television (Fink, 2014). Fink (2014) quotes Michael A. Messner, Margaret Carlisle Duncan and Kerry Jensen (1993), by stating that the term "gender marking" creates inequalities between men and

women's sports by making it seem as though male athletics is the norm. With gender marking, female athletics is deemed as secondary (Fink, 2014). Titles of women's championships are an example of gender marking. Fink (2014) notes examples such as "Women's World Cup, the Women's NCAA Final Four, the United States Open Championship." The male championships equivalent to those mentioned, do not have titles like "Men's World Cup." Therefore, men's athletic events are looked to as the "standard" while female athletic events are considered "other" because of gender marking (Fink, 2014).

Sports commentators are also guilty in severing the ties of equality in men and women's athletics. Commentators are often involved in gender marking when they say things such as "she is a great women's basketball player," or that "sets her apart in women's golf" (Fink, 2014, p.4). Calling female athletes by first name also creates issues because commentators rarely do that to male athletes (Fink, 2014). Fink (2014) writes that commentators "infantilize" female athletes by just using first names. As an example of this, Fink quotes Messner et al. (1993) by saying that in a study, female tennis players "were referred to by their first names 304 times, but this occurred with the male players only 44 times" (Fink, 2014, p.4). Fink (2014) also quotes the Messner et al. (1993) study by saying this language reflects the "lower reputation of female athletes and reinforce existing negative, or ambivalent, attitudes about women's sport" (p.4). Also, Fink (2014) quotes Andrea N. Eagleman (2013) when she writes that media coverage of female athletes seems positive at first, but then words and phrases are used that belittle women (p.4).

Eastman and Billings also examined the commentators of ESPN and CNN's hit sports television shows. The researchers noted several noteworthy differences between the commentators while talking about male athletes versus female athletes. Eastman and Billings noted that the dating habits and family lives are talked about with female athletes more than male

athletes. The researchers found that while talking about play, commentators on *SportsCenter* say things like "He got out the whooping stick," "He's a monster," "Don't mess with him," and "He is the man" (Eastman and Billings, 2000, p.208). When female athletics were aired, commentators said things like "Just not ready for this kind of competition," and "Necessity was the mother of invention for her" (Eastman and Billings, 2000, p.208). Charts and graphs created by Eastman and Billings (2000) can be found in the Appendix.

In the *Handbook of Sports and Media* (2006), Margaret Carlisle Duncan writes a chapter exploring female athletes in the media. Most of what Duncan expresses is consistent with the other information presented in previous studies. However, Duncan (2006) writes about how the AAF research found "asymmetries in the qualitative coverage of female athletes and women's sports (Duncan, 2006, p.239). The theme the AAF found in female athletics was sexual humor, and that female athletes are victims of this humor. Because women do not receive as much sports coverage as males, Duncan (2006) expresses, the effects of this sexual humor and objectification were great. The gag features that presented women in this "laughable" and sexual manner were often saved for nightly broadcasts on *SportsCenter* (Duncan, 2006). Duncan quotes the AAF (2000) by explaining the kinds of stories broadcasted that sexualized women. AAF (2000) found one of the gag stories broadcasted featured a naked women bungee jumping with her body completely painted for St. Patrick's Day (Duncan, 2006). Another AAF (2000) example was a gag interview with a female pro-wrestler, who was formerly featured in *Playboy* (Duncan, 2006).

Not only are male and female athletes represented differently in the media, but as demonstrated by recent studies, male and females reasoning for tuning into sports also differs. Women's motives for tuning in to sports is different than males' motives for watching sports, as demonstrated in a study conducted by John S. Clark, Artemisia Apostolopoulou and James M.

Gladden (2009). Clark et al. (2009) writes that over 93 million viewers tuned into the 2007 Super Bowl broadcast, but not all viewers were men. Just under half, or 45%, of the viewers were females (Clark et al., 2009). Clark et al. (2009) cites Susan Hofacre (1994) and Jeffrey D. James and Lynn L. Ridinger (2002) when he says that professional organizations are beginning to realize that a larger female fan base is emerging, and to suffice this target market, different strategies are being implemented to encourage and increase female involvement.

Clark et al. (2009) examined a study by Beth Dietz-Uhler, Elizabeth A. Harrick, Christian M. End, and Lindy Jacquemotte (2000) regarding sport consumption differences between males and females. The Deitz-Uhler et al. (2000) study results indicated that while both male and females attended the same amount of live sporting events, males watched more sports on television. The study also indicated that females' main reason for being sports fans were for social purposes (Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000). Also cited by Clark et al. (2009) was a study regarding gender and sports fandom in men and women's intercollegiate basketball. James and Ridinger (2002), determined from their study that males are more likely to watch sports because of the "activity's alignment with male identity" (p. 168). Also, James and Ridinger found that males feel greater empathy than females feel when a team loses. However, their study also indicated that both genders found motivation and enjoyment in "the action, escape, and drama that college basketball games provided" (James and Ridinger, 2002, p.169).

Clark et al. also cited a study by Walter Gantz (1981), which explored college students' reasoning for watching sports. Gantz (1981) noted that while the study was not meant to discover gender differences, results indicated that females were more likely to watch sports "as a last resort" (p.169). Gantz conducted a follow-up study in 1991 with Lawrence Wenner. The results also determined that males were interested in watching sports on television (Gantz and Wenner,

1991). Males indicated they felt "more knowledgeable about their favorite sport than female respondents" (Gantz and Wenner, 1991, p.169). Gantz and Wenner's 1995 study on this topic also found that females were often more likely to watch sports over males because of social reasons, tending to household chores during the segment and females were also more likely to continue watching the broadcast after it was over.

Due to an increased interest in sports among females, professional organizations developed many female events and clubs for that particular sports team (Clark et al. 2009). On the web, female sports fan pages emerged. FemmeFan.com, a female sports-lover page, writes about why women love sports on their introductory page. The front page reads, "women, although avid about sports, are not clearly as intrigued by the unending statistics and scores as men are…" (About Us, 2008). The quote goes on to explain how women want to know more about the personal lives of each player, not just who they are on the field, but off the field (About Us, 2008).

Through their study, Clark et al. (2009) aimed to discover gender differences and their motivations to watch the Super Bowl. Additionally, the researches also wanted to gain insight on viewers' opinions of the entertainment portion of the game. Clark et al. (2009) found that 52% of males watched approximately three to four games per week, while 53% of females watched about one to two games per week.

Along with previous studies, the Clark et al. (2009) study also revealed differences in motivations for watching sports among males and females. While males watched for "the love of the game itself," females tended to watch for shared experiences among family members and friends. Females also stressed the importance of social experiences while tuning into the game (Clark et al., 2009, p.175). Additionally, this study indicated that both genders enjoyed the

competitiveness of the games, but males regarded competitiveness higher than the female respondents. Also, more results determined that females tuning into the Super Bowl appreciated "the multi-faceted experiences of the broadcast more than males" (Clark et al., 2009, p. 179). The Clark et al. (2009) study demonstrated that females enjoy the "pageantry" of the game more so than male. Contrarily, this study indicated that because males are more likely to be bigger sports fans than females, the male viewers do not necessarily like the entertainment portions of the game as much as females (Clark et al., 2009). Clark et al. (2009) says that males "may view ancillary broadcast elements such as the halftime extravaganza as 'fluff' or a 'necessary evil'… (p. 179). The authors determined that male viewers feel as though this "fluff" takes away from the sporting event itself (Clark et al., 2009, p.179).

Hypotheses

Through this research, I expect to find that the public perceives female athletes differently than they perceive regard male athletes. I will explore the public perception of female and male athletes after on-camera interviews.

I am curious to find out if the appearance of a male or female athlete during an on-camera interview affects the public perception of the athlete's responses. I am interested to see if the gender of the athlete influences the attention the public gives to the content of the interview. I hope to find evidence that the public perceives female and male athletes in the same way and that appearance and gender are not factors.

Although I hope to find that the public perceives male and female athletes close to identically, I hypothesize the opposite, based on the information in the literature review and my own experiences. My hypotheses for this experiment are as follows:

H1: The female athlete will be remembered based on her appearance, not based on the content of her interview responses.

I hypothesize that the female athlete will be best remembered on her appearance because females are underrepresented in the media (Eastman and Billings, 2000). Additionally, Eastman and Billings (2000) found that female athletes receive more percentage of photographs than they do written articles. Eastman and Billings (2000) suggested that the reason female athletes receive more photographs than articles is to attract readers attention without having to provide information about women's athletics. Therefore, I believe that when a female athlete is doing an on-camera interview, she will be remembered based on her looks and her dress. Also, since males are heavily aired in the media (Eastman and Billings, 2000), the public may think that

what the female athlete is says is not credible because the sight of female athletes in the media is not as prominent as male athletes.

H2: The male athletes' interview content will be best remembered.

I hypothesize that the male athletes' interview will be best remembered because male athletes are seen on-camera more often than women (Eastman and Billings, 2000). Viewers who watch *SportsCenter* will see male athletics 95% of the time, and those who watch *Sports Tonight* will see male athletics broadcasted 93% of the time (Eastman and Billings, 2000). Because of this, I believe the public is more conditioned to seeing male athletes in the media, so they might deem him as more credible.

H3: Female and male student respondents will evaluate the male and female student-athlete differently.

I hypothesize that female and male student respondents will evaluate the male and female student-athletes differently because of gender differences. As demonstrated by Pease and Pease (2000), females and males are biologically different. Additionally, everyone has different schemas (Baran & Davis, 2015), so when a female and male respondent watch either a female or male athlete, what they think about the athlete could be different based on their past experiences.

Methods

In order to test public perception of male student-athletes versus female student-athletes, I conducted an experiment. I conducted this experiment in the Media Effects Lab on Louisiana State University's campus.

In Jason Barabas and Jennifer Jerit's 2010 article, *Are Survey Experiments Externally Valid?*, the authors wrote that survey experiments are used to determine causal effects for the experiment's representative sample. A survey experiment is the best way to test public perception of male athletes versus female athletes because I wanted to gain information from my population after they watched a particular stimulus. After the student watched the male or female interview, I wanted to be able to compare survey responses among my population in order to determine public perception of the male athlete versus the female athlete. By giving open-ended survey response options, the student can respond without restrictions. The Likert Scale and multiple-choice questions gave the respondent a chance to choose the best response among an assortment of answer choices. With open-ended, Likert Scale and multiple choice questions in my survey experiment, I compared responses from those who received the female athlete interview to those who received the male athlete interview. No other method would offer the comparisons needed in order to establish the differences between public perception of male and female athletes.

At LSU, athletics are an important part of school culture. The students are involved in LSU athletics, so that is why I chose to use students as my population for this experiment. The student population that participated in the experiment is also similar in age to the LSU "athletes" in the videos they watched. I wanted the "athletes" to be relevant by being close in age and close in proximity to the student population. The student population at LSU will or should be LSU

fans, so they should have positive attitudes toward the LSU "athletes" featured in the interviews. By choosing to have LSU "athletes" featured and using the LSU student population, I am trying to eliminate any preconceived negative biases people might have about the "athletes" they will see in the interviews. In doing this, I feel as though I will receive answers that are solely based on the gender of the "athlete" the student watched in the video and nothing else.

I recorded two interviews: one with a male who posed as an LSU "athlete" and one with a female that also posed as an LSU "athlete." The interviews were designed to be typical post-game interviews. I had the "athletes" sitting in front of an LSU backdrop and wearing a typical LSU warm-up jacket. I designed the interview to be set up this way because it is the most common way a viewer might see an athlete on TV.

The male and female chosen to play the "athletes" in this experiment were chosen for specific reasons. Both "athletes" are in their twenties, have similar facial features, coloring, and both have similar educational background. I chose these particular "athletes" because neither of them would tip the "attractive" scale enough to skew my results. The "athletes" are average looking people. Additionally, both "athletes" are highly educated with undergraduate degrees and graduate degrees from LSU. Both "athletes" were also involved in collegiate athletics throughout their college careers.

 It is important that the male and female that portrayed the role of the "athletes" are similar so the results of the experiment can be as accurate as possible. The goal was to have the male and female "athlete" be close to identical so that the only difference gender. For this reason, the "athletes" were filmed in the same location and wearing the same LSU sports jacket. They followed a script to the questions the interviewer asked. Although the male and female "athletes" did not read directly from the script, each of their answers contained the main points of the

answers in the script. To view the script, please see the Appendix. Having the female and male "athletes" somewhat stick to the script gave them the opportunity to show the viewer their individual personality and made the interview look as natural as possible. However, having the "athletes" not read the script word for word, made the male and female "athletes'" interviews different lengths. The interviews not being the same length is a limitation for this experiment.

Additionally, the male and female "athletes" were portrayed as just "athletes" in general, so they were not tied to a particular sport. All questions and answers were general questions that could apply to any sport played by either males or females. I did not assign a sport in order to keep as many things constant as possible. I wanted to avoid the viewers having any pre-conceived feelings about a particular sport.

The survey created for this experiment was developed using Qualtrics and then considered live to students when they signed up for research learning requirements at the MEL lab. The students were asked a series of twenty survey questions. To begin, the student had to answer five pre-test questions. After they completed the first series of questions, they moved on to the next page of the survey where it was randomly assigned in Qualtrics for them to receive either the male or female "athlete" interview.  After the video, the students answered questions about the interview, the "athletes'" appearance, likeness, trustworthiness, education level, success rate, etc. The survey questions asked can be found in the Appendix. Regardless of interview the student received, each student received the same survey questions for pre and post-test.

The survey questions contained Likert Scale questions, multiple-choice questions and a series of open-ended questions. The first five questions in the pre-test portion of the survey asked the students basic questions about their age, gender and year in school. The last two questions

were about sports. The first was a multiple-choice question, which asked how often the student watches sports. The second was an open-ended question asking which sport they most often watch. I asked these questions because I wanted to get a basic idea of how involved the student is in sports.

The post-test questions consisted of questions that were based on the "athletes" interview. The first questions asked about the "athletes" appearance. The question asked the student to describe the "athletes" appearance, and the next question asked the student to describe the "athletes" dress. Both questions were open-ended, so the student could write what exactly he or she wants with no limitations. From the dress and appearance questions, I aimed to find how the public visually perceives female and male "athletes" when in the same setting and identical clothing.

The survey then asked a series of Likert Scale questions in order to gage how the students perceived the "athletes" attitude, friendliness, education level, level of trustworthiness, and level of athletic performance. I also asked an additional Likert Scale question to ask the students how successful he or she thinks the "athlete" will be in their future career. After, I asked why the student chose that specific success rate.

The final two questions of the survey asked the students' feelings on women playing sports. The first question was multiple-choice asking the student if they thought women should play sports. The second was an open-ended questions asking why or why not women should play sports.

From the students' answers, I coded his or her responses and then had two other coders also code the responses. First, I coded the over all tone of the open-ended responses regarding the appearance by coding them with either "positive," "negative" or "indifferent." Next, I

categorized each word of the students' responses in the open-ended appearance and dress question as "positive," "negative" or "indifferent." While coding, I noticed my respondents used emotion words, so I created "positive" and "negative" word columns for questions asking about the appearance. Next, I went on to the open-ended dress question. I coded the overall statement as either "positive," "negative" or "indifferent. Then, I broke down the sentence by each individual word and recorded those words in either a "positive," "negative" or "indifferent" word column. Additionally, if I found any "positive" or "negative" emotion words in the responses, I recorded those words in the appropriate columns.

To avoid any bias, I assigned these exact tasks to two coders. I split the comments for the open-ended appearance and dress questions up between them, and had some questions overlap. If the coders and I disagreed on a particular code, then a third coder was brought in to break the tie. Bringing in a third coder was vital in order to verify the outcome of the code. Reliability is essential, so bringing in the third coder to determine the code was the method I felt was best to make sure the results were reliable.

First, the coders went through and coded the students' answers for appearance as entirely "positive," "negative" or "indifferent." After, the coders were asked to break the students' appearance responses up by word and place the "positive," "negative" and "indifferent" words they used for appearance in those columns. Additionally, if they found any "positive" or "negative" emotion words in the appearance responses, then they put those words in the appropriate column.

Next, the coders moved to the open-ended dress question. The same method was used for coding the appearance question as the dress question. They coded each student response as entirely "positive," "negative" or "indifferent." Then, they broke down the student response by

word and coded each word as either "positive," "negative" or "indifferent." They also recorded "positive" or "negative" emotion words and placed them in the appropriate columns.

After I received their responses, I compared all of my coding to all of their coding. I began with the overall tones for the appearance question. When our codes agreed for the overall tone for the appearance question, either "positive," "negative" or "indifferent" became the final code. If any of our codes disagreed, a third coder was brought in to determine the final code for the tone. Next, I examined the individual words I broke down for the appearance question as "positive," "negative" and "indifferent" and compared them to the coders "positive," "negative" and "indifferent" words for appearance. When we agreed on the placement of the word, that particular "positive," "negative" and "indifferent" column became the final code for the word. If we disagreed on any word placement in the three categories, a third coder was brought in to break the tie. While coding the "positive" and "negative" emotion words for appearance, if we agreed, the "positive" or "negative" coding became the final code. If we disagreed, a third coder was brought in to break the tie and determine the final code.

After coding the appearance questions, I went on to compare my codes for the open-ended dress question and my coders. The same exact method that I used to determine the final codes for the open-ended appearance question was used for the open-ended dress questions. For the detailed instructions given to my coders about this process please see the Appendix.

The Likert Scale questions were averaged for the male and female "athlete" interview and the multiple-choice questions were coded. I analyzed the students' responses to the content questions, which tested the content recall of the interview. I picked five key words and phrases and determined how many of those key words the student used in their responses that matched what the athlete said. A detailed list of the key words and phrases can be found in the Appendix.

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Additionally, I compared responses that male students wrote while evaluating the female "athlete" and then the male "athlete." I will do the same thing with the female students. By evaluating their responses for the male and female "athlete," I determined ways in which males and females evaluate the male and female "student-athlete" the same or differently.

In order to determine if the public pays more attention to the females' appearance over the males' appearance, I conducted a word count and character count for the dress and appearance question. Also, I took percentages of how many students gave additional information about the female and male appearance when the question only asked to describe the "athletes'" dress.

I also determined the amount of positive, negative or indifferent words and/ or phrases used to describe the male and female "athletes'" appearance, dress and emotions. Additionally, I took percentages of the positive, negative and indifferent words used in the students' responses about the "athletes'" appearance and dress.

I also conducted statistical analysis for some of the results of this data. I conducted t-tests and difference of means tests to determine statistical significance. Tables with the statistics can be found in the Results.

In order to obtain an equal representation of genders in this study, the same experiment was conducted in February 2015 for a second time in order to obtain 50 more male student responses. The same methods of coding were used.

Results

The total number of undergraduate students who took the survey was 157. However, 16 respondents did not answer some or all of the questions. One hundred and fourteen females and 43 males took this survey. The results of this population's perception of male athletes versus female athletes are as follows.

Hypothesis One:

In my first hypothesis, H1, I believed that students who watched the female student-athletes' interview would be more likely to remember her dress and appearance. Below, you will find the results and statistical significance I found while exploring H1.

When asked to describe the athletes dress and appearance, the students who watched the female athletes' interview used more words and characters than those who watched the male athletes' interview. The total words both male and female student respondents used to describe the female student-athletes' appearance and dress was 1,464. Those who watched the male student-athletes' interview described his appearance and dress in a total of 1,130 words. When comparing the number of characters the students used to describe the female versus male student-athletes' appearance and dress, the students used almost 2,000 more characters to describe the female athlete than the male athlete.

Table 1: Word Count for Dress and Appearance Responses:

| **Female Student-Athlete** | **1,464** |
|---|---|
| **Male Student-Athlete** | **1,130** |
| **P-Value** | **.0016** |

Table 2: Character Count for Dress and Appearance Responses:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Female Student-Athlete** | **8,724** |
| **Male Student-Athlete** | **6,811** |
| **P-Value** | **.0012** |

When the tone of the appearance question was coded, my coders determined that both male and female student respondents who saw the female student-athletes' interview wrote 33 indifferent responses, nine negative responses and 25 positive responses. The male and female student respondents who saw the male student-athlete interview had 38 indifferent responses, five negative responses and 27 positive responses.

Table 3: Tones Coded for Appearance Responses:

| Athlete Gender | Positive Tone | Negative Tone | Indifferent Tone |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Female** | **25** | **9** | **33** |
| **Male** | **27** | **5** | **38** |

After determining the overall tone of responses, my coders deciphered the positive, negative and indifferent words embedded in those responses. For the 69 responses from those who watched the female student-athletes' interview, an average of about 13% of the words were coded as negative. These responses consisted of statements such as, "strange facial expressions…" and "homely, dirty hair, lazily pulled back…"

For the 69 students who watched the male student-athletes' interview, an average of 6% of the words were coded as negative. The responses consisted of statements such as, "not prototypical student-athlete," and "didn't seem athletic or look like a football player."

The coders also coded positive appearance words for the responses of those who watched the female student-athletes' interview. For the 69 responses, an average of approximately 27% of the words used were coded as positive. These responses consisted of words and phrases such as, "athlete, athletic, feminine, mature," and "pretty, organized and focused."

Sixty-nine respondents answered the question about appearance for the male student-athletes' interview. From the responses, an average of about 31% of positive words were found. The responses consisted of words and phrases such as, "very professional," and "strong build, good looking."

Approximately 59% indifferent appearance words were coded for the 69 respondents who answered the appearance question for the female student-athlete. These indifferent words and phrases consisted of statements like, "hair pulled back into a pony tail, earrings, minimal make-up, LSU sports jacket." For the 69 respondents who answered the question about appearance, an average of 62% of the words were coded as indifferent. Responses consisted of, "white male, black hair" and "regular athlete."

Table 4: Percentage of Positive, Negative and Indifferent Words Used:

| Athlete Gender | Positive | Negative | Indifferent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Female | 27% | 13% | 59% |
| Male | 31% | 6% | 62% |

Even though the students were not asked to comment on the emotions of the student-athletes, some student respondents added emotion words when describing the student-athletes' appearance. An average of approximately 3% of positive emotion words were coded from the 69 students who answered this question about male student-athlete. The words were "happy" or "calm." Students who watched the female-student-athlete were more likely to use emotion words when describing her appearance. The coders found an average of 9% positive emotion words embedded in the 69 student responses. These consisted of words like, "relaxed and confident" or "confident, sure of herself." Negative emotions were also detected by our student respondents, but results show they were more likely to detect negative emotions if they watched the female student-athlete than if they watched the male student-athlete. Only .6% negative emotion words were coded for students who watched the male student-athletes' interview. The two negative words were "nervous" and "upset." An average of about 3.3% of negative emotion words were coded from the 69 students' comments about the female-athletes appearance. Some of the negative emotion words were, "cocky," "stern" and "flustered, nervous."

Table 5: Percentage of Emotion Words Used:

| Athlete Gender | Positive Emotion | Negative Emotion |
|---|---|---|
| Female | 9% | 3.3% |
| Male | 3% | 0.6% |

For the open-ended description of the dress of the student-athlete, my coders coded the overall statements about dress as 54 indifferent, 15 positive and no negative tones from the students that watched the male student-athletes' interview. For the female student-athletes' interview, 58 indifferent, two positive and 4 negative statements were coded.

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Table 6: Tones Coded for Dress Responses:

| Athlete Gender | Positive | Negative | Indifferent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Female | 2 | 4 | 58 |
| Male | 15 | 0 | 54 |
| P-Value | .0001 | .0076 | N/A |

As with the appearance responses, my coders broke down each student response and placed the words in positive, negative or indifferent categories for both the male and female open-ended "dress" question. For the students who watched the male student-athletes' interview, there were 43 positive words or phrases that consisted of statements like, "decked-out," and "put together, business in line." Only one word, "plain," was coded as negative for the male student-athlete. There were 222 words and or phrases coded as indifferent for the male student-athlete. "Purple LSU jacket" and "casual almost as if the camera caught him right after the team was dismissed" are two examples of indifferent words and or phrases that were used to describe the dress of the male student-athlete.

Only three students included positive emotion words to describe dress for the male student-athletes' interview. The emotion words and phrases were "charismatic and open to expressing his feelings" and "relaxed." The student respondents recorded no emotion words if they watched the female student-athletes' interview.

Table 7: Number Dress Emotion Words Used:

| Athlete Gender | Positive Emotion | Negative Emotion |
|---|---|---|
| Female | 0 | 0 |
| Male | 3 | 0 |

Results coded for the students who watched the female student-athletes' interview were slightly different. Although seven more students watched the male student-athletes' interview, those who did watch the female student-athletes' interview used 94 more words to describe the female's dress. Although this difference was not considered statistically significant, I believe that this trend in using more words to describe a female student-athlete should be studied further.

Forty-five positive words were used to describe the female student-athletes' dress. These words and phrases consisted of statements like, "athletic, sporty," and "face of LSU sports." While the male and female athlete were wearing the same LSU sports jacket, the students who watched the male student-athletes' interview regarded him with mostly positive praise by saying how professional he looked. Contrarily, the female student-athletes' dress was never described as professional. In fact, 19 negative words were coded for the female student-athlete. Her dress was described as "casual, not very professional," "expensive Nike gear" and "not the best dressed." The coders found 270 indifferent words and or phrases used to describe the female student-athletes' dress. These words and phrases consisted of statements like, "LSU jacket, hair in a ponytail," "LSU sweats jacket," small loop earrings," and "clothing dressed for pre-game."

Table 8: Positive, Negative and Indifferent Dress Words Used:

| Athlete Gender | Positive | Negative | Indifferent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Female | 45 | 19 | 270 |
| Male | 43 | 1 | 222 |

Although those who watched the female student-athletes' interview decided her dress was not "professional," they did deem her "professional" when the students were asked to describe the appearance of the student-athlete. In fact, the word "professional" is seen in

respondents' answers four more times more than those who watched the male student-athletes' interview.

Additionally, along with the female student-athletes' dress not being deemed as "professional" as dress of the male student-athlete was, respondents were two times more likely to associate the male student-athlete with a particular sport than the female student-athlete. Some student responses consisted of statements like, "he was dressed in what appeared to be football warm-up attire." Whereas comments about the female student-athletes' dress were generic, never mentioning a specific sport she could possibly play. Descriptions of her dress consisted of statements like, "very casual…she was dressed like a normal person on a team would dress."

While coding the answers to the open-ended question that asked the students to describe dress of the male or female athlete, I found that students watching the female athlete were more likely to comment on other aspects of the athletes' appearance in addition to her dress. Out of the 68 responses of the students who watched the female athletes' interview, 15% of the answers commented on her appearance in addition to her attire. Students commented that her "hair was up," and "she had on small loop earrings," etc. For the 69 students who responded about the dress of the male athlete, only one student respondent responded with an additional statement about his appearance. The one response was that the male athlete looked "well-groomed."

Table 9: Percentage of Comments on Appearance in Addition to Dress:

| Athlete Gender | Additional Comments |
|---|---|
| Female | 15% |
| Male | 1.5% |
| P-Value | < .05 |

Hypothesis Two:

The next section of my results will examine my second hypothesis. In H2, I stated that I believed that respondents would be more likely to recall the content of the male student-athletes' interview. To test H2, I asked respondents to write what they remembered the student-athlete saying about blaming a teammate for a loss, how the student-athlete feels about the rest of the season and the recent coaching change. A list of the key words and phrases used to code these responses can be found in the Appendix.

In the first open-ended question that asked students to recall what the student-athlete said about blaming a teammate for the recent loss, about 70% of the responses from those who watched the male student-athletes' interview had key words or phrases in their answers. The students who received the female student-athlete treatment recalled keywords or phrases 65% of the time.

Table 10: Percentage of Correct Key Words in "Blame Teammate" Question:

| Athlete Gender | Key Words |
|---|---|
| Female | 65% |
| Male | 70% |

For the same question about blaming the teammate, students' responses were also coded if they were completely wrong. Students who received the male student-athletes' interview had incorrect responses 6% of the time. While 9% of the students who watched the female student-athletes' interview were coded as having incorrect responses.

Table 11: Percentage of Incorrect Key Words in "Blame Teammate" Question:

| Athlete Gender | Key Words |
|---|---|
| Female | 9% |
| Male | 6% |

In the second open-ended content question about the student-athletes' last season on this collegiate team, key words and phrases were also coded and accounted for. Those who watched the male student-athletes' interview were coded as having the key words and phrases 47% of the time. While 21% of students who watched the female student-athletes' interview had the key words or phrases embedded in their answers. When I conducted a difference of means test to determine the statistical significance of this open-ended recall question, the analysis was statistically significant. This supports my hypothesis, H2, because people who watched the female student-athlete were not as diligent in being able to recall her content, but more diligent in writing descriptively about her dress and appearance (H1). For the male student-athlete, the opposite situation is supported with these statistics.

Table 12: Percentage of Correct Key Words in the "Final Season" Question:

| Athlete Gender | Key Words |
|---|---|
| Female | 21% |
| Male | 47% |
| P-Value | <.05 |

Additionally, 7% of students who watched the male student-athletes' interview were coded as answering incorrectly. The students who watched the female student-athletes' interview were coded as writing the wrong answer 6% of the time.

Table 13: Percentage of Incorrect Key Words in the "Final Season" Question:

| Athlete Gender | Key Words |
|---|---|
| Female | 6% |
| Male | 7% |

For the final open-ended content question, the students were asked to recount the information they heard in the student-athletes' interview regarding the recent coaching change. For all student respondents who watched the male or female student-athlete, the percentages of key words and phrases in their responses greatly diminished. For those who watched the male student-athlete, 36% of respondents had key words or phrases in their answers. Only 28% of students had key words or phrases in their responses if they watched the female student-athletes' interview.

When I ran a statistical analysis on these results it was not statistically significant. I believe the content recall of the interview dwindled because respondents who watched the male student-athletes' interview were restless and not paying attention. As I asked students to recall the content, the number of key words from the students who watched the male student-athletes' interview declined from the first question to the last.

Table 14: Percentage of Correct Key Words in the "Coaching Change" Question:

| Athlete Gender | Key Words |
|----------------|-----------|
| Female | 28% |
| Male | 36% |

While the numbers of key words and phrases in each response plummeted, the number of incorrect responses grew. Twenty-four percent of the responses from those who watched the male student-athletes' interview were not correct. The student's who watched the female student-athletes' interview were coded as having incorrect responses 28% of the time.

Table 15: Percentage of Incorrect Key Words in the "Final Season" Question:

| Athlete Gender | Key Words |
|----------------|-----------|
| Female | 28% |
| Male | 24% |

Hypothesis Three:

My third hypothesis stated that I thought I would find differences in how my male and female student respondents evaluated the male and female student-athlete based on the students' own gender. To begin the evaluation of this hypothesis, I examined the days per week respondents said they watched sports. When asked how often the student watches sports, most of the responses were "everyday," "once per week" or "two days per week." These results show that even though the majority of my population was female, they take somewhat of an interest in sports. Majority of the female respondents said they watch sports at least once per week, and 21 female respondents said they do not watch at all. Twenty-two males were recorded as watching

sports everyday, while nine females recorded watching sports everyday and six males said they do not watch sports at all.

Table 16: Student Frequency in Watching Sports:

| Student Gender | Everyday | Three Times/Week | Two Days/Week | Once per Week | I don't Watch at All |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 22 | 12 | 5 | 4 | 6 |
| Female | 9 | 14 | 24 | 53 | 21 |

When breaking down the tone of the responses by gender of student respondents to explore H3, I found that an average of 33% of male respondents had an overall positive tone when speaking about the female student-athletes' appearance, while about an average of 38% of female respondents possessed a positive tone while writing comments about the female student-athletes' appearance. Both male and female respondents responded with an average negative tone 13% of the time for the female student-athletes' interview. For the male student-athletes' interview, male respondents responded with a positive tone 37% of the time. Female respondents were 40% more positive in tone when speaking about the male student-athlete. For negative tones, males were coded as having this tone about 10.5% of the time when speaking about the male student-athletes' appearance. The female respondents were less negative when speaking about the male student-athlete, as they were only negative about 6% of the time. This breakdown concludes that although respondents who watched the female student-athletes' interview had some differences than those who watched the male student-athletes' interview, the numbers were similar.

Table 17: Student's Percentage of Appearance Tones for Female Student-Athlete:

| Student Gender | Positive Tone | Negative Tone |
|---|---|---|
| Female | 38% | 13% |
| Male | 33% | 13% |

Table 18: Student's Percentage of Appearance Tones for Male Student-Athlete:

| Student Gender | Positive Tone | Negative Tone |
|---|---|---|
| Female | 40% | 6% |
| Male | 37% | 10.5% |

To further show support H3, I found that as a whole, the female student respondents were 78.5% more likely to comment on emotion than the male student respondents. Additionally, another interesting difference among the male and female respondents was that all male students who watched the male student-athletes' interview only used positive emotion words to describe his appearance. While female respondents, were more likely to detect negative emotions from both the male and female student-athletes.

While coding the responses for dress, I also found support for H3. The coders determined that no male student response had a negative tone for either male or female student-athletes' interview. Results determined that 12.5% of male respondents were coded as having positive tones while speaking about the female student-athletes' dress. Additionally, female respondents were also coded as not having any negative tones while speaking about the male student-athletes' dress. However, the female student respondents who watched the female student-athletes' were coded as having an overall negative tone for about 82% of responses about dress. No female

student was coded as delivering a positive tone for dress if they watched the female student-athletes' interview. For the male student-athletes' interview, about 22% of the female students statements were coded as having a positive tone. The male student respondents were coded as having positive tones about the male student-athletes' dress for 20% of the time.

Table 19: Percentage of Tones Coded for the Female Athletes' Dress Responses by Student Gender:

| Student Gender | Positive | Negative |
|---|---|---|
| Female | 0% | 82% |
| Male | 12.5% | 0% |

Table 20: Percentage of Tones Coded for the Male Athletes' Dress Responses by Student Gender:

| Student Gender | Positive | Negative |
|---|---|---|
| Female | 22% | 0% |
| Male | 20% | 0% |

To obtain support for H3, the coding of content was also broken down by the student respondents' gender. For the males who watched the male student-athletes' interview, when asked to recall what he said when he was talking about blaming his teammate for the recent loss, 65% of these male respondents had the key words and phrases woven into their answers. The male students who watched the female student-athletes' interview for this same question about blaming her teammate for the recent loss, 69% of the male responses contained the key words or

phrases. For this open-ended content question, no male student respondents were coded as giving incorrect responses.

Table 21: Percentage of Male Students' Correct Key Words for the "Blame Teammate" Question:

| Athlete Gender | Key Words |
|---|---|
| Female | 69% |
| Male | 65% |

Table 22: Percentage of Male Students' Incorrect Words for the "Blame Teammate" Question:

| Athlete Gender | Incorrect Words |
|---|---|
| Female | 0% |
| Male | 0% |

While coding for female students who watched the male student-athletes' interview about the student-athlete blaming the teammate, 69% of these females answered with key words or phrases if they watched the male student-athletes' interview. Four female respondents were coded as having incorrect responses for this particular question and student-athlete. For the female student respondents who watched the female student-athlete, 71% of the answers contained key words and phrases. Additionally, five of the female respondents answers were coded as being incorrect.

Table 23: Percentage of Female Students' Correct Key Words for the "Blame Teammate"

Question:

| Athlete Gender | Key Words |
|---|---|
| Female | 69% |
| Male | 71% |

Table 24: Percentage of Female Students' Incorrect Words for the "Blame Teammate" Question:

| Athlete Gender | Incorrect Words |
|---|---|
| Female | 10% |
| Male | 25% |

Out of the 20 males who answered the open-ended question about how the male student-athlete feels about their senior season, only 4% of respondents had key words or phrases in their answers. Two of the male respondents answered with incorrect responses for the question as well. Only 16 male students responded to the open-ended question about the female student-athletes' remainder of the season. Out of the 16 responses, only one male student responded with a key word or phrase and one had an incorrect response.

Table 25: Percentage of Male Students' Correct Key Words for the "Final Season" Question:

| Athlete Gender | Key Words |
|---|---|
| Female | 6.25% |
| Male | 4% |

Table 26: Percentage of Male Students' Incorrect Words for the "Final Season" Question:

| Athlete Gender | Incorrect Words |
|---|---|
| Female | 10% |
| Male | 10% |

Switching over to the female student-respondents, those who watched the male student-athlete interview regarding the remainder of his senior season were coded as having key words and phrases 48% of the time. Three out of the 48 female student responses for this question were coded as being incorrect. The females who watched the female student-athletes' interview were coded as having less than half as many key words and phrases in their responses than the female students who watched the male student-athletes' interview. About 26% of female students wrote key words and phrases for the female student-athletes' interview about the rest of the season. Three of the 50 female students were coded as answering incorrectly.

Table 27: Percentage of Female Students' Correct Key Words for the "Final Season" Question:

| Athlete Gender | Key Words |
|---|---|
| Female | 26% |
| Male | 48% |

Table 28: Percentage of Female Students' Incorrect Words for the "Final Season" Question:

| Athlete Gender | Incorrect Words |
|---|---|
| Female | 6% |
| Male | 6.25% |

The final open-ended question asked about a recent coaching change. Out of the 20 male students who responded about the male student-athletes' interview, 30% of their answers had key words or phrases. However, 25% of male respondents were coded as answering incorrectly. Sixteen male students responded about the female student-athletes' reaction to the coaching change. It was determined that 19% of these respondents had key words and phrases in their responses, while 31% had incorrect responses.

Table 29: Percentage of Male Students' Correct Key Words for the "Coaching Change" Question:

| Athlete Gender | Key Words |
|----------------|-----------|
| Female | 19% |
| Male | 30% |

Table 30: Percentage of Male Students' Incorrect Words for the "Coaching Change" Question:

| Athlete Gender | Incorrect Words |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Female | 31% |
| Male | 25% |

Out of the 46 female students who watched the male student-athletes' interview, 39% of them had the key words or phrases in their answers. It was determined that 22% of the female students answered incorrectly. Out of the 48 females who watched the female student-athletes' interview, 29% of the answers contained key words and phrases, while 35% had incorrect responses.

Table 31: Percentage of Female Students' Correct Key Words for the "Coaching Change"

Question:

| Athlete Gender | Key Words |
|---|---|
| Female | 29% |
| Male | 39% |

Table 32: Percentage of Female Students' Incorrect Words for the "Coaching Change" Question:

| Athlete Gender | Incorrect Words |
|---|---|
| Female | 35% |
| Male | 22% |

Although I was not coding for negative responses while coding the content recall, I did stumble upon four negative responses, all of which occurred when students watched the female student-athletes' interview. Three of these negative responses came from female students, and one from a male student. The negative response for the question about blaming a teammate for a recent loss was, "though she looked dead eyed and miserable, her words seemed supportive of her teammate." For the next question about the rest of the season, the negative comments were "she seemed to be saying the same things over and over," and the one male respondent said, "…the whole conference seemed pretty insincere." For the final question about how the athlete feels about the coaching change, a female student commented and said, "Unenthusiastic…I couldn't read this girl based on her commentary, her body language was so negative. I couldn't focus on anything else."

The Likert Scale questions asked about the female and male athletes' friendliness, trustworthiness, performance in sports, success rates in life after college, and education level of the particular athlete. The results were surprising. For the most part, the students' responses for both athletes were similar. When asked about the attitude of the athletes, students who watched the male and female athletes' interviews generally thought they both had an "okay attitude" to "good attitude" (female student-athlete= 3.8; male student-athlete=3.8). For education, the results for both male and female athletes were approximately 3.8. This averages between "somewhat educated" and "educated" (female student-athlete=3.8; male student-athlete=3.79). When asked to rate the student-athletes' "friendliness," those who watched the male student-athletes' interview gave him a better rating than those who watched the female student-athletes' interview. Those who watched the male athletes' interview, on average, felt that he was "friendly." For those students who watched the female athletes' interview, they averaged her as "somewhat friendly" (female student-athlete=3.4; male student-athlete=3.9). The results for level of performance showed that, on average, students thought the female athlete was more of a top performer on the team than the male athlete. Students who watched the male athletes' interview thought he ranged from an "okay performer" to "a good performer." For the female athlete, the students averaged her as a "good performer" (female student-athlete=3.15; male student-athlete=2.53). For trustworthiness, both athletes averaged at approximately 2.9, which translate to "pretty trustworthy" (female student-athlete=2.88; male student-athlete= 2.84). Success rates for both athletes ranged from "somewhat successful" to "pretty successful" (female student-athlete=2.8; male student-athlete=2.73).

Table 33: Likert Scale Results:

| Athlete Gender | Attitude | Education | Friendliness | Performance | Trustworthy | Success Rate |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Female | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.4 | 3.15 | 2.88 | 2.8 |
| Male | 3.8 | 3.79 | 3.9 | 2.53 | 2.84 | 2.73 |

The students were then asked to describe why they gave the student-athlete the success rating they did in the previous Likert Scale question. Although most of the students rated the male and female student-athletes as "somewhat successful" to "pretty successful," some of their reasoning's did not reflect the rating provided.

When asked about the success rate of the student-athlete in their future careers, most respondents explained their reasoning for the success rate they gave to the athlete as if they knew the student-athlete. A male respondent, while explaining his reasoning for giving the male student-athlete a "pretty successful" success rating, said, "he is a professional athlete that has talent." Another male respondent also coded the male student-athlete as "pretty successful" by saying, "I don't think he will be a star football player later in his career, but in what ever career path he chooses his character, personality, appearance and desire to maintain a positive attitude is ideal of a person who will be successful in life." Additionally, a female respondent explains her reasoning for a "very successful" rating when she explains, "I think the athlete has a good head on her shoulders and I think she is level-minded. She seems very determined to tackle any task appointed to her." Respondents also pointed out that because the student-athlete was interviewed, they must be a good athlete and great performer. Other responses for positive

success rates included things like positive tone of voice, positive attitude, never speaking negatively about the organization, driven, confident, speaking well, etc.

Negative success rates were also given from a few student responses. While rating the success of the male student-athlete, a male respondent said that he would not have a successful future career because, "he seems too nonchalant and doesn't have the competitive fire under his belt." A female respondent noted that the female student-athlete shown in the video will only be "somewhat successful" because "no one wants to be around that looks the way that girl did…." Other negative responses consisted of commenting on the small size of the student-athlete, professional sports are hard for girls and the student-athlete not seeming as though they have enough confidence.

Although some respondents expressed that the male student-athlete might not make a career out of athletics, respondents that expressed that about the female student-athlete said it in less delicate way. One respondent said, "professional sports are hard," "she might have to work harder" and "she's a girl and you can't really make a living off of going professional as a woman."

Following the Likert Scale questions, the students were asked if females should be allowed to play sports. All but two respondents said yes females should be able to participate in sports. The same respondent that said the female student-athlete will not be successful because "she's a girl and you can't really make a living off of going professional as a woman," said that women should play sports "because girls like to play sports too." The respondent who said the female athlete would have to work harder to succeed in life after college also responded to this question that females should be able to play sports. The respondent defended her answer by

saying, "both women and men should be able to play sports. Athletes come in all shapes and sizes. Sports are not just for men. Women can be good, or even better than men at some sports."

Almost all students, both female and male, answered that women should be allowed to play sports. When asked for their reasoning on why or why not they think women should play sports they said, "Women are just as capable of playing sports as men. They all have great physical abilities and sometimes can be stronger than men," or "because they should be able to play sports if they want to. Sports have nothing to do with gender." The two respondents who answered that women should not play sports did not provide reasoning for their answer.

Discussion

There is a lot to be said about how the public perceives female student-athletes in the media, and this thesis is a mere building block in the investigation process of this perception. I hope the results and conclusions drawn from this thesis will spark further research and further positive changes in public perception of female student-athletes in the media.

From these results, I've gained new insights on how the public views female student-athletes in the media. Majority of my results demonstrated that people tend to be more negative when watching the female student-athlete and answering questions about her. Even when I was least expecting people to answer negatively, such as for the content questions, people did so. Additionally, the negative comments, in my opinion, were malicious and personal toward the female student-athlete. Respondents did have negative things to say about the male student-athlete, but the comments were not malicious or personal, or occur as frequently.

My personal reasoning for the negative responses the female student-athlete received is that women are underrepresented in the media as Eastman and Billings (2000) demonstrate in their study. I believe that when people do see female athletes in the media, they might pick them apart and have negative comments about the female because it is not something a viewer frequently sees (Eastman and Billings, 2000).

Until female athletes are equally represented in the media, I believe they will still face negativity. For now, in order to eliminate the rude, malicious and personal attacks against female student-athletes, I believe we should work on improving media training. Media trainers need to speak to student-athletes about the importance of body language, tone and presentation. Although it may be difficult for a female student-athlete to look their best immediately after an

intense game, I think the student-athlete should be able to spend a few minutes freshening up before the on-camera interview.

Additionally, most sports have generic unisex warm-up suits that are given to both male and female athletic teams. Instead of wearing the unisex jacket, like my "athletes" did during their interviews, I suggest the female student-athlete have a women's sport-fit jacket. Male and female sports are different, and just because males used to be the only gender that was socially acceptable to play sports (Kane, 1988), that does not mean that females should have to wear the same athletic gear as males. My results indicated that the female student-athlete received numerous negative comments about her dress. I believe, in order to limit the negative comments on female student-athletes' dress, media trainers should advise the female student-athletes to wear women's sport-fit athletic jackets.

We need to continue to stray away from people believing that sports are male oriented (Kane, 1988), and in order to do this, I believe we need to make female student-athletes feel like strong and beautiful competitors that have the ability to do whatever male athletes can do. I believe this starts with media training. Allowing females to freshen up for a few minutes before the interview and wearing women's style sport jackets are two small changes that may drive the amount of negative comments down.

Aside from the negative comments, those who watched the female student-athletes' interview did seem to recall her appearance and dress better than those who watched the male student-athletes' interview. These results indicated support for my first hypothesis. As stated in my results, respondents were more likely to write more words and phrases about the female student-athlete, than those who watched the male student-athletes' interview. These results were interesting to me because it appears that students took more time to analyze the female student-

athletes' dress and appearance than the male student-athletes' dress and appearance. The words used to describe the female athletes dress and appearances were descriptive adjectives, while those describing the male student-athletes' dress and appearances were simpler and straightforward.

The female athletes' appearance and dress seemed to generate the most conversation among respondents. With those results, I believe that the public deems the female student-athletes' appearance and dress important. Respondents, in this experiment, paid close attention to the female student-athletes' dress, so I believe incorporating appearance and dress into media training could generate more positive conversation among publics.

In exploring my second hypothesis, which stated that students would best remember content from the male athletes interview, I also found interesting results. I noticed that if students received the male student-athletes' interview, they were more likely to recall information from his responses. For the second content question about the student-athletes' final season with the team, there were significantly more key words recalled from the students who watched the male student-athletes' interview than those who watched the female student-athletes' interview. Again, in my opinion, this goes back to Eastman and Billings (2000) study which indicated that female athletics are not broadcasted as much as male athletics in the media. I believe that people were too busy looking at the female student-athletes' appearance and dress rather than paying attention to what she was saying. Significantly more words and phrases were used to describe her dress and appearance, so my statement seems to have support.

I believe that in order to grab viewers' attention when a female student-athlete is in the media, changes need to be made. Female athletes need to gain more on-air time. I believe if

female athletes are seen in the media more often, than people's schemas will build up and they will be more likely to pay attention to what they're saying.

Additionally, my results indicated that those who watched the male student-athletes' interview were more likely to associate the male with a sport. I also believe this coincides with the fact that female athletes are not broadcasted enough (Eastman and Billings, 2000), so respondents might not have a sport in their schema to associate her with. Whereas with the male student-athlete, respondents automatically associated him with football, even though no sport was specified. This concept goes back to schemas and what people are conditioned to seeing, and the respondent's answers reflect and support that thought.

In exploring my third hypotheses about student respondents evaluating the male and female student-athletes differently because of their own gender, I found interesting results. The females who took my study were attributed to writing more descriptively when describing the student-athlete. This result is supported by Pease and Pease (2000) who said that women's brain activity at a resting state has about 90 percent activity, while males resting brain activity is shut down by approximately 70 percent. Pease and Pease (2000) also attributed this brain activity to women gathering more information than men, detecting emotions and describing colors more descriptively than men. Males and females detect situations differently, and females detect more from a situation than males, which could be why females wrote longer responses about the appearance and dress of the athlete.

Females also detect emotions better than males, as proven by Pease and Pease (2000) experiment in 1978 with crying babies. Males could not detect the emotion of the crying child as well as the female. The information gathered in my study reflects Pease and Pease's (2000) experiment results. Although I never asked respondents to detect the student-athletes emotions

when describing their appearance or dress, female respondents were more likely to comment on the student-athletes emotions than the male respondents. Additionally, male students who watched the male student-athletes' interview only used positive emotion words, but female respondents watching the same interview were more likely to detect negative emotions. Thus, reinforcing that females are keener in detecting various emotions.

I believe that female respondents were more likely to respond with negative comments toward the female student-athlete because of gender schemas. At a young age, girls are mostly introduced to dolls and more "girly" things, while males are introduced to action figures and such (Pease and Pease, 2000). Because of this, I believe women are conditioned to seeing other women in feminine roles. All the while completing these tasks wearing makeup, having their hair perfectly done, nails painted, wearing feminine clothing, etc. The female student-athlete in this video was wearing little makeup, her hair was pulled back in a ponytail and she was wearing a generic purple LSU windbreaker jacket. For women, seeing another female not dressed to the nines and "done up" from head to toe made them think poorly of this female athlete because in the viewers eyes, she was not fulfilling her female gender role. Females are used to seeing male athletes dressed this way and in this setting, but not females.

I also determined which gender paid more attention to the respective interviews they watched. Overall, if a female student received the male student-athletes' interview, the results suggest she is more likely to pay attention to the content of his statements than a male student respondent. Additionally, although the male student respondents were not as diligent at recalling information as the female students who received the male and female student-athlete interviews, the male students were more likely to recall information if they received the male student-athletes' interview.

As Pease and Pease (2000) mention in their book, females being able to grasp numerous amounts of information is an innate trait women posses. This reason supports my results that the female respondents were diligent in recording detail about the student-athlete, detecting emotions and recalling information from the student-athletes interviews.

The male student respondents were not so quick to detect details because as the Clark et al. (2009) indicated, males tend to watch sports for the "love of the game," and not the extra "fluff" that surrounds it. From this, I believe the males who watched the interviews saw them as "fluff" because they would rather be watching highlights from the student-athletes last game rather than hearing them talk about it. Women, enjoy the fluff of sporting events (Clark et al., 2009), which could be why their responses were coded as being more descriptive and better at recalling content.

Although the student respondents gave negative comments to the female student-athlete, they regarded her as a better player when asked if they thought the athlete was the top performer on the team. On average, the students rated her as a solid "good performer," while those who watched the male student-athlete rated him in between an "okay performer" and "good performer." I believe they regarded her as a top performer because, in their minds, respondents might think that you have to be a top performer to get interviewed. Because you do not see female athletes on television as much as male athletes (Eastman and Billings, 2000), my respondents might have thought that the female athlete must be extraordinary at her sport because they are not used to seeing female athletes' interviews. For the most part, those who watched the male athletes' interview said he did not look like an athlete, so that could be why they did not mark him as a top performer.

Another interesting find among the Likert Scale questions, was the question regarding the athletes friendliness. Those who watched the female student-athlete only regarded her as "somewhat friendly," while those who watched the male student-athlete rated him at a solid "friendly." From these results, I draw a similar conclusion as before. People are not used to seeing female athletes in the media talking about sports because they are underrepresented (Eastman and Billings, 2000), so the role of a female as an athlete is unfamiliar to their schemas. When people watched the female student-athlete on the video in this experiment, I believe they were negative and regarded her as unfriendly because she was in what is traditionally a "males role" because male athletes broadcasted more frequently than women on television (Eastman and Billings, 2000).

Additionally, the Likert Scale question that asked how successful the student-athlete would be in life after collegiate athletics generated interesting results. This portion of the experiment showed the importance of media interviews and how viewers perceive the person they are watching. The athletes' tone of voice, appearance, content of answers, and gender are all taken into account while viewers watch and judge the student-athlete. The respondents felt as though they could judge the student-athletes athletic ability solely by their media interview and appearance. The male student-athlete featured in the video was an actor, not a football player and never was. Most respondents assumed he was a football player. Few respondents said that he would not be successful in his future football career because he did not appear to be your prototypical player. The female student-athlete featured in the video was also an actor, but was previously a collegiate soccer player. Those who received her interview never tried to guess her sport and determine her future success from the sport they thought she played. Respondents either said she was going to be successful, or that she will not. It is also interesting that some

respondents said the female athlete would not be successful only because she is a female, while no respondents said the male athlete would not be successful because he is a male.

The respondent also regarded negative tones, fumbling of words or lack of enthusiasm as an indicator of poor success for the athlete for the future. The respondents also commented about education levels, knowledge of the sport, working hard, and clearly speaking while answering questions as reasons to give the student-athlete favorable success rates.

This portion of the experiment exemplifies the importance of on-camera presence for both male and female athletes. Viewers, in this case student respondents; determined success rates from the way the student-athlete spoke, appearance, tone of voice, attitude, and confidence. From these qualities, or lack of these qualities, student respondents felt as though the student-athlete would or would not be successful.

From these results, I believe my hypotheses are supported. Students wrote more descriptively about the female student-athletes' dress and appearance, and remembered more of the male student-athletes' interview content. Additionally, my third hypothesis was supported because the male and female student respondents did evaluate the student-athletes differently. However, more research should be done in order to further validate the results in this thesis.

From this research, I have drawn conclusions on the importance of on-air presence for student-athletes, especially female student-athletes. In order to have impeccable on-air presence, student-athletes need intense media training. The results of my thesis show that viewers are paying attention, and sometimes too much attention to every aspect of the student-athletes being. I believe that with the results of my thesis, we can better improve media training so that the viewer will have positive feelings about the student-athlete no matter the gender.

Media training is vital for student-athlete not only to improve communication skills and to teach them what to say and what not to say, but also to teach on-camera body language. As demonstrated by my results, it is especially important for female athletes to look and sound their best on camera. Although some people will still react negatively no matter how perfect the female athlete is on camera, it is important these athletes are trained to strive for perfection.

As with any experiment, there were a few limitations. First, more female students took this survey than males. In an attempt to close this gender gap, a second survey experiment was conducted. Only 13 additional male respondents took the experiment, still leaving a gap between genders. Another limitation would be the length of the student-athletes' interviews. The female student-athletes' interview was approximately two minutes longer than the male student-athletes' interview. Additionally, as with any online survey, some respondents may not have paid full attention in order to answer the questions to their best ability. Therefore, some of these limitations could have had some effect on my results.

Moving forward, there is a lot that can be done to further this research in order to help female athletes receive the positive recognition they deserve. My results serve as a small stepping-stone for the connection between the underrepresentation of female athletes in the media (Eastman and Billings, 2000), and the negative comments the female student-athlete received in my experiment. Further research should be conducted to further make this connection. With that being said, I've compiled a few suggestions for further research.

In order to further this research, in the future, researchers could conduct an experiment in a different setting. Place the athletes in an on-the-field interview, instead of a typical press conference setting. Additionally, in the on-the-field interview, have the athlete dressed in their sport specific game uniforms. If researchers like the post-game conference room setting, I would

suggest having the athletes wear business attire. Another suggestion would be having athletes of different races be involved in the experiment. I chose to use two Caucasian athletes, but using different ethnicities could provide interesting results.

Choosing a different population could also be an important suggestion in moving forward with this research. I conducted the experiment with undergraduates at Louisiana State University. I think it would be important to reach out to other demographics to further enhance results.

Additionally, separating out the casual sports fan respondents from the avid sports fans respondents could also be important in further research. These groups might have different insights to male and female athletics, so deciphering differences and similarities among these respondents could be vital.

It is my hope that the content of this thesis sparks further conversation about female athletes in the media. With conversation beginning, change can occur and the negativity female athletes receive, as demonstrated in my experiment, can slowly diminish.

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Appendix A

## TABLE 1
Length or Percentages of Genderized Coverage in *SportsCenter* and *Sports Tonight* (overall *N* of coverage = 10,636 minutes = 177.5 hours)

| Week | N | Men's Sports Minutes | Men's Sports %/week | Women's Sports Minutes | Women's Sports %/week | Other (nongendered) Minutes | Other (nongendered) %/week |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ESPN's *SportsCenter* | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 915 | 870 | 95 | 27 | 3 | 18 | 2 |
| 2 | 865 | 839 | 97 | 17 | 2 | 9 | 1 |
| 3 | 888 | 852 | 96 | 27 | 3 | 9 | 1 |
| 4 | 920 | 874 | 95 | 28 | 3 | 18 | 2 |
| 5 | 795 | 755 | 95 | 24 | 3 | 16 | 2 |
| 6 | 418 | 410 | 98 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | 818 | 720 | 88 | 90 | 11 | 8 | 1 |
| 8 | 671 | 651 | 97 | 13 | 2 | 7 | 1 |
| 9 | 940 | 855 | 91 | 85 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| 10 | 754 | 716 | 95 | 30 | 4 | 8 | 1 |
| 11 | 290 | 275 | 95 | 14 | 5 | 1 | 0 |
| Total | 8,274 | 7,817 | 95 (average) | 363 | 4 (average) | 94 | 1 (average) |
| CNN's *Sports Tonight* | | | | | | | |
| 7 | 554 | 499 | 90 | 55 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 | 538 | 516 | 96 | 16 | 3 | 6 | 1 |
| 9 | 531 | 511 | 96 | 16 | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| 10 | 505 | 449 | 89 | 51 | 10 | 5 | 1 |
| 11 | 234 | 220 | 94 | 12 | 5 | 2 | 1 |
| Total | 2,362 | 2,195 | 93 (average) | 150 | 6 (average) | 17 | 1 (average) |

65
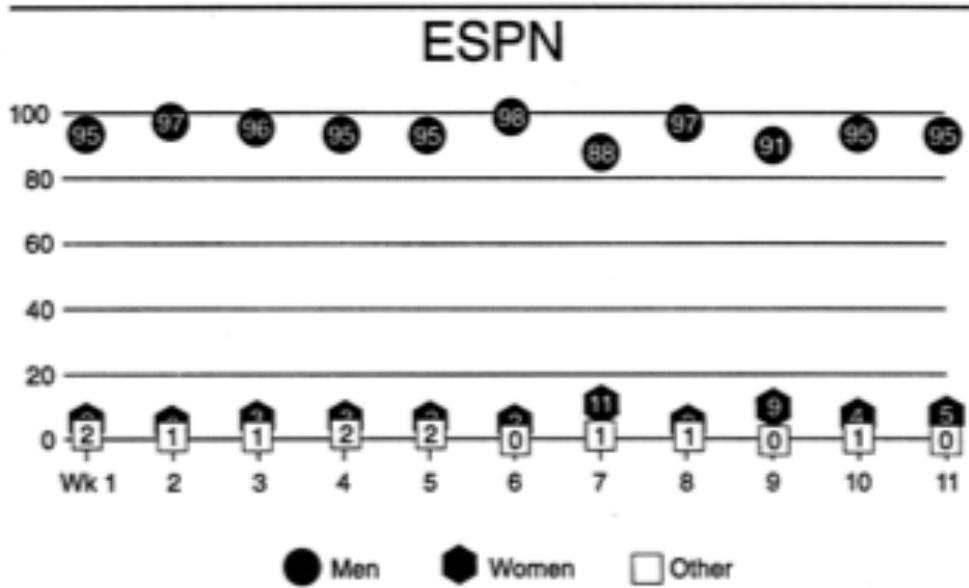
## ESPN



Figure 1.    Weekly Proportions of Gender-Related Coverage on ESPN's *SportsCenter*

TABLE 2
1998 Newspaper Coverage by Gender (May-September)

| | Men | | Women | | Other | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| *USA Today*: 940 sports pages | | | | | | |
| May 11–June 16 | | | | | | |
| N of pages = 512 | | | | | | |
| Photographs | 686 | 73 | 181 | 19 | 68 | 8 |
| Articles | 1,035 | 80 | 167 | 13 | 95 | 7 |
| Inches of space | 64,188 | 73 | 14,782 | 17 | 9,760 | 10 |
| July 1-7 | | | | | | |
| N of pages = 92 | | | | | | |
| Photographs | 72 | 77 | 20 | 22 | 1 | 1 |
| Articles | 203 | 84 | 34 | 14 | 6 | 2 |
| Inches of space | 16,531 | 84 | 2,929 | 15 | 92 | 1 |
| August 24–September 13 | | | | | | |
| N of pages = 336 | | | | | | |
| Photographs | 571 | 78 | 135 | 18 | 25 | 4 |
| Articles | 787 | 83 | 143 | 15 | 21 | 2 |
| Inches of space | 45,818 | 82 | 9,330 | 17 | 812 | 1 |
| Average N of photos per page | 1.4 | | 0.4 | | 0.1 | |
| Average N of articles per page | 2.2 | | 0.4 | | 0.1 | |
| Average N of inches per page (%) | 134.6(77) | | 28.8(17) | | 11.3(6) | |
| *New York Times*: 310 sports pages | | | | | | |
| May 11–June 16 | | | | | | |
| N of pages = 148 | | | | | | |
| Photographs | 270 | 89 | 24 | 8 | 10 | 3 |
| Articles | 370 | 85 | 41 | 9 | 24 | 6 |
| Inches of space | 26,265 | 89 | 1,955 | 6 | 1,420 | 5 |
| July 1-7 | | | | | | |
| N of pages = 27 | | | | | | |
| Photographs | 53 | 85 | 9 | 15 | 0 | 0 |
| Articles | 61 | 81 | 11 | 15 | 3 | 4 |
| Inches of space | 4,570 | 84 | 792 | 15 | 64 | 1 |
| August 24–September 13 | | | | | | |
| N of pages = 135 | | | | | | |
| Photographs | 226 | 82 | 40 | 15 | 9 | 3 |
| Articles | 375 | 85 | 53 | 12 | 13 | 3 |
| Inches of space | 22,495 | 87 | 2,648 | 10 | 733 | 3 |
| Average N of photos per page | 1.8 | | 0.2 | | 0.1 | |
| Average N of articles per page | 2.6 | | 0.3 | | 0.1 | |
| Average N of inches per page (%) | 172.0(87) | | 17.4(9) | | 7.2(4) | |

NOTE: *USA Today* publishes five times per week, whereas *The New York Times* is a 7-day publication. Six bonus sports sections were included in the *USA Today* analysis.
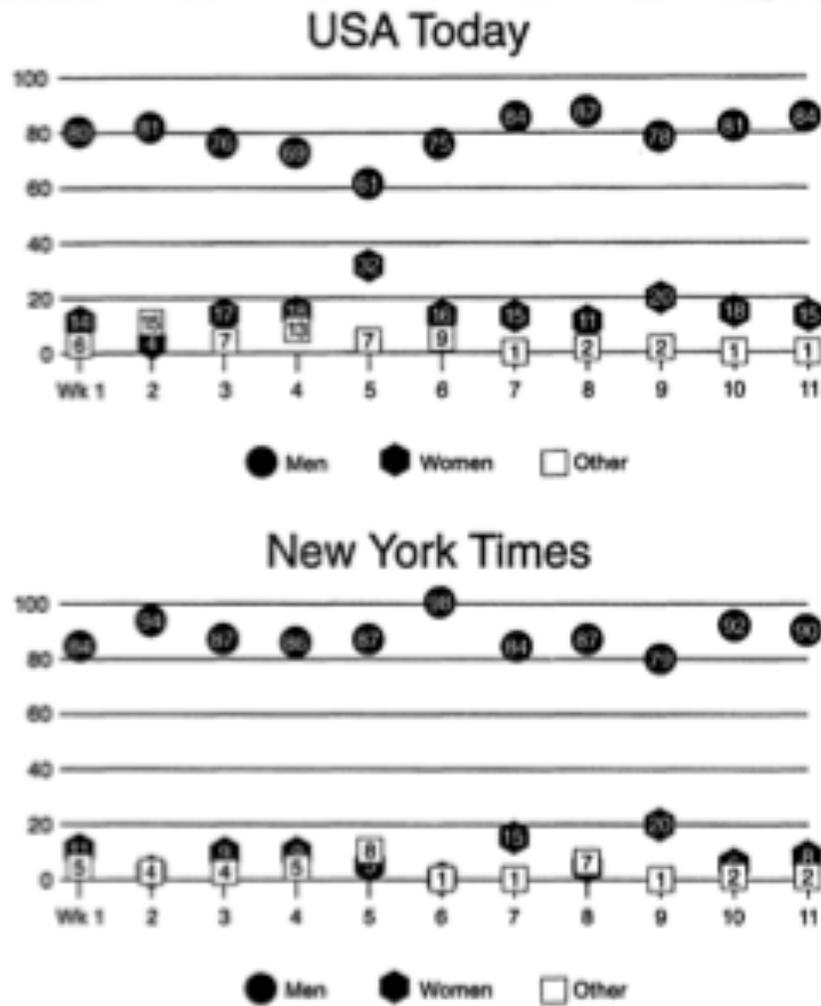
## USA Today



## New York Times



Figure 2.    Graphs of the Allocation of Space in *USA Today* and the *New York Times*

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Coding Instructions:

Thank you for agreeing to code responses in order to help me complete my thesis on "The Public's Perception of Female Athletes Vs. Male Athletes in the Media."

I conducted this experiment in the MEL in the fall and 144 students took it. The students were to watch either a female athletes interview or a male athletes interview. Then, the respondents were asked to answer a series of open-ended, Likert Scale or multiple-choice questions.

Due to time constraints, I coded the open-ended responses the first time through. In order to eliminate bias, I want you to code the same responses I coded. I went through each open-ended response about dress and appearance, and dissected each response. I pulled out words from each sentence and coded them as positive/negative/indifferent for appearance and positive/negative/indifferent for dress. While coding, I noticed I had a lot of emotion words used, so I decided to make a category for that also even though I never asked about the athletes' emotional state. I began coding these "emotion" words as positive or negative. Below, you will find a chart of words for appearance, dress and emotion. Each of the words will be in a positive, negative or indifferent category so you can see how I interpreted the word. Look at the chart if you need guidance, but do not feel the need to agree with how I coded the students' responses.

In order to code this information to figure out how the public views female athletes vs. male athletes, I am asking you to do a few things in this order:

Part One:

1. Open the Excel document named "Combined Coding Response Sheet."
2. The "Combined Coding Response Sheet" should be on the **Appearance Responses** tab.
3. In the first column in the workbook "Combined Coding Response Sheet" write your answer in the column titled "Overall Appearance."
4. In this column, write **positive**, **negative** or **indifferent** to indicate the overall tone of the students' response.
5. If the student did not respond, please note write the word **"blank"** that in the column and row for each section.
6. Re-read each open-ended response for **appearance** in the "Combined Coding Response Sheet" workbook.
7. Go to the next column in the "Combined Coding Response Sheet" workbook.
8. You will use three columns in the "Combined Coding Response Sheet" workbook titled "Positive Appearance Words, "Negative Appearance Words" and "Indifferent Appearance Words."
9. Write ALL **positive**, **negative** or **indifferent** words in the indicated column used to describe the athletes' appearance in the students' response.
10. Write these words in the rows of the columns named **"Positive Appearance Words," "Negative Appearance Words" or "Indifferent Appearance Words."** Write all words that apply.
11. If the student did not respond, please note write the word **"blank"** that in the column and row for each section.
12. Re-read each open-ended response for **appearance** in the "Combined Coding Response Sheet."

13. Go to the next column in the "Combined Coding Response Sheet" workbook.
14. You will use the three columns labeled "Positive Emotion Words" and "Negative Emotion Words."
15. Write ALL the **positive** or **negative** words in the indicated column used to describe the athletes' **emotion** (NOTE: not all responses will contain emotion words).
16. Write these words in the rows of the columns named **"Positive Emotion Words," or "Negative Emotion Words."** Write all words that apply.
17. If the student did not respond, please note write the word **"blank"** that in the column and row for each section.

    Part Two:
18. Next, go down to the **Dress Responses** tab in the Excel document "Combined Coding Responses"
19. Read through each open-ended response for **dress** in the document titled "Combined Coding Experiment Responses."
20. In the first column in the **dress** tab, write your answer in the column titled "Overall Dress Rating."
21. Decide whether or not you think that response was **positive**, **negative** or **indifferent**.
22. Only write positive, negative or indifferent in the column to indicate the tone of the entire response about dress.
23. If the student did not respond, please note write the word **"blank"** that in the column and row for each section.
24. Re-read each open-ended response for **dress** in the "Combined Coding Response Sheet" workbook.
25. Go to the next column in the "Combined Coding Response Sheet" workbook.
26. You will use three columns in the "Combined Coding Response Sheet" workbook titled "Positive Dress Words, "Negative Dress Words" and "Indifferent Dress Words."
27.  Write ALL **positive**, **negative** or **indifferent** words used to describe the athletes' appearance in the students' response.
28. Write these words in the rows of the columns named **"Positive Dress Words," "Negative Dress Words" or "Indifferent Dress Words."** Write all words that apply.
29. If the student did not respond, please note write the word **"blank"** that in the column and row for each section.
30. Re-read each open-ended response for **dress** in the "Experiment Responses workbook.
31. Go to the next column in the "Combined Coding Response Sheet" workbook.
32. You will use the three columns labeled "Positive Emotion Words" and "Negative Emotion Words."
33. Write ALL the **positive** or **negative** words the student used to describe the athletes' **emotion** (NOTE: not all responses will contain emotion words).
34. Write these words in the rows of the columns named **"Positive Emotion Words" or "Negative Emotion Words."**
35. If the student did not respond, please note write the word **"blank"** that in the column and row for each section.
36. Once completed, on workbook, click File and Save As.
37. Name the Document "YOUR LAST NAME-Dickson Thesis Coding"
38. Once saved, e-mail your coding responses to me at kdicks4@tigers.lsu.edu

NOTE: On the next few pages you will find four charts: one for appearance words, one for appearance emotion words, another for dress, and another for dress emotion words. These charts will show you how I categorized the response words for appearance, dress and emotion as positive, negative and indifferent. You do not have to agree with my responses, but I wanted to give you an idea of how I looked at some of the responses I received.

| Appearance | Positive | Negative | Indifferent |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Student Response Words:** | Engaged, well groomed, put together, poised, professional, athletic, strong, spoke confidently, prepared, sporty, educated, good looking, strong build, little bit of makeup, put together, slightly interactive, prepared, pretty, organized, focused, collegiate, athletic, feminine, mature, fit, muscle, clean, knowledgeable, well composed, young, etc. | Short, not happy, not professional, widen face, apprehensive, didn't look like a student-athlete, pale, short, stockier, did not look athletic, average looking, shorter, chubby, Strong facial features, serious face, strange facial expressions, large face, tired, could've been better, homely, dirty hair, lazily pulled back hair, little to no makeup, grimace, dead look in eyes, mouth breather, LSU fan, not prototypical student-athlete etc. | Male, medium skin tone, dark hair, white male, purple jacket, regular guy, regular athlete, brunette, white or Hispanic, brown hair and eyes, dark short hair, male student-athlete, wearing LSU jacket, normal, LSU polo, indention in chin, normal looking, pierced ears, white, senior, Caucasian, ponytail, athletic attire, earrings, looked as expected, curly hair, nothing unusual, just finished game, LSU sports jacket, windbreaker, athletic looking, etc. |

| Emotion Appearance | Positive | Negative |
|---|---|---|
| **Student Response Words:** | Calm, conservative, nice, thorough, composed, collected, confident, relaxed, happy, kind, team spirited, mellow, confident, relaxed, doesn't care what people think, dedicated, ready and willing to answer, calm, seemed fine, sure of herself, collected, cool, careful of what she said, objective, comfortable, honest, confident in team, etc. | Upset, nervous, hesitant, uncomfortable, fidgety, depressed, cocky, solemn, nervous, flustered, annoyed, unsure of answers, uncomfortable, timid, etc. |

| Dress | Positive | Negative | Indifferent |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Student Response Words:** | Athletic, put together, had his business in line, looked well presentable, professional, dressed like a professional athlete, sporty, clothes looked like issued by an athletic on campus, looked official, well-groomed, modest, sporty and very well put together, etc. | Plain, wearing what every athlete wears: expensive Nike gear, no makeup, okay could've been better, not the best dressed in the game, not very professional, etc. | LSU purple rain zip-up, LSU Nike sports jacket, very comfortable, purple athletic jacket with LSU logo, LSU colors, LSU tracksuit/warm-ups, sports oriented, team sweat suit, normal attire, LSU windbreaker, Casual like camera caught him after team was dismissed, LSU attire, LSU athletic gear, LSU sweats jacket and small loop earrings, purple LSU windbreaker, hair pulled back in low ponytail, LSU athletic suit, LSU zip-up athletic jacket, athletic attire, LSU tracksuit jacket, like a normal person on a team would dress, looked comfortable, LSU jacket zipped all the way up, represented LSU, etc. |

| Emotion Dress | Positive | Negative |
|---|---|---|
| **Student Response Words:** | Conservative, relaxed, spirited, and charismatic. | None. |

Blame Teammate Key Words and Phrases:

| Female Student-Athlete | Blame, Teammate, All of us, Championship, Win and lose as a team |
|---|---|
| Male Student-Athlete | Blame, Single individual, Team effort, Cut down on mistakes, Have talent to go all the way |

Remainder of Season Key Words and Phrases:

| Female Student-Athlete | We've had adversity, Loss made us tougher, Better team if we learn, We've had losses, Run for the title |
|---|---|
| Male Student-Athlete | Good about rest of season, Adversity made us tougher, Hardships made us stronger, Looking forward to the rest of season |

Coaching Change Key Words and Phrases:

| Female Student-Athlete | Tough, New coach did a great job, Helped us come together, Great fit, Huge difference in our success |
|---|---|
| Male Student-Athlete | Adjustment, It's been tough, We click, He's embraced us and we've embraced him, Excited moving forward |

Thesis Script:

1. You recently suffered a loss to rival Alabama, what are you guys working on as a team to get ready for Florida next weekend?

   Answer: Well, we did lose, but it was a learning experience for our team. Alabama was the better team that night, but we're using that loss as motivation this week in practice to get ready for Florida. We need to work on the little things and the details this week because we've got the talent to beat Florida.

2. You had a teammate make a crucial mistake in the game. Do you think that was the reason you suffered a loss?

   Answer: You know, we don't like to place the blame on any single person because at the end of the day it's a team effort. We win as a team and we lose as a team. I do think we individually need to get better so that mistakes like that don't happen again. We can't afford another loss or mistakes because championship caliber teams don't make those kinds of mistakes. So, we just have to get better individually for the team.

3. You're half-way through your senior season, and you've got some big games left. How do you feel about the rest of this season?

   Answer: I feel great about the rest of the season. We've had our losses, but they only make us stronger. We've had adversity, but that makes us tougher. I think those hardships will help us as we move into post-season games. We'll be prepared, tougher and have worked hard enough to take the title.

4. Your team recently had a coaching change before the start of the season, how did this impact you being a senior and the rest of your team?

   Answer: It was definitely tough adjusting to a new coach after I've had the same coach for my three previous years, but I think we're all clicking really well. We've learned new things from coach and I feel like he's been a very positive impact for my team and myself this year. He's really embraced us and we've embraced him. It's been a great fit.

5. It's your senior season, what are your hopes for the end of your career?

   Answer: I want to enjoy every minute I have left with my team and enjoy every second of playing the sport I've loved since I was a little kid. I don't want to have any regrets at the end of the season, so I want to accomplish all the team goals we've set. We've got the talent to go all the way this year, so there's no reason any of the seniors should leave on a bad note. I'm excited to see what the rest of the season has in store for this team because I know it's going to be nothing short of amazing.

Survey:

1. What is your age?

2. What is your gender?
   A. Male
   B. Female

3. What is your year in school?
   A. Freshman
   B. Sophomore
   C. Junior
   D. Senior
   E. Graduate student
4. How often do you watch sports?
   A. Everyday
   B. Three times a week
   C. Two days a week
   D. Once a week
   E. I don't watch sports at all
5. If you do watch sports, what sport do you watch most frequently?

6. What was the gender of the athlete in the interview you watched?
   A. Male
   B. Female

7. Describe the athlete's appearance you saw in the interview.

8. Describe the dress of the athlete.

9. Do you think the athlete had a good or bad attitude about the game? One being bad attitude, five being great attitude?

| Very Bad Attitude | Bad Attitude | OKAY Attitude | Good Attitude | Very Good Attitude |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

10. How friendly does the athlete seem? One being very unfriendly, five being very friendly.

Very Unfriendly   Unfriendly   Somewhat Friendly   Friendly   Very Friendly
    1            2            3            4            5

11. One of the athletes' teammates messed up during the game, what is the athletes response to this? Do they blame their teammate?

12. How does the athlete feel about the rest of their season?

13. How does the athlete feel about the coaching change?

14. On a scale from 1-5, one being least educated five being very educated, how educated do you think the athlete is?

Not Educated   A little Educated   Somewhat Educated   Educated   Very Educated

    1            2            3            4            5

15.  Do you think this athlete is one of the top performers on their team? One being not the top former, four being the top performer.

Not the Top Performer   OKAY Performer  A Good Performer  A Top Performer

    1            2            3            4

16. How successful do you think this athlete will be in their future careers? One being  not successful, four being very successful?

Not Successful   Somewhat Successful      Pretty Successful   Very Successful

    1            2            3            4

17. Based on your answer from question 15, why did you pick that success rate for the athlete?

18. Rate the athlete on their trustworthiness. One being not trustworthy, four being very trustworthy.

Not trustworthy    Somewhat Trustworthy        Pretty Trustworthy    Very Trustworthy

1                      2                       3                    4


19. Do you think women should play sports?

A. Yes

B. No


20. If yes, why should they play sports? If no, why should they not play sports?

## Appendix B

**ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST**

**LSU**

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb

**TO:**  Martin Johnson
Mass Communication

**FROM:**  Dennis Landin
Chair, Institutional Review Board

**DATE:**  November 10, 2014

**RE:**  **IRB#** E9039

**TITLE:**  Graduate Student Research Projects for MC 7005: Public Affairs & Public Opinion

**New Protocol/Modification/Continuation:**  New Protocol

**Review Date:**  11/8/2014

**Approved**_____X_____  **Disapproved**_____

**Approval Date:**  11/8/2014  **Approval Expiration Date:**  11/7/2017

**Exemption Category/Paragraph:**  2a

**Signed Consent Waived?:**  Yes for the projects involving online or phone data collection. No for projects involving in-person or repeated interviews.

**Re-review frequency:**  (three years unless otherwise stated)

**LSU Proposal Number** (if applicable): _____

**Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal:** (if applicable) _____

**By:** Dennis Landin, Chairman _____
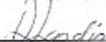
**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –**
**Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:**
1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE:**
*All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at http://www.lsu.edu/irb

Vita

Kaleigh Dickson, of Tampa, Florida received her bachelor's degree in broadcast journalism in 2013 from Louisiana State University. During her time as an undergraduate at LSU, she was on the gymnastics team and became a two time Athletic All-American in the All-Around. Due to a season-ending injury her freshman year, she was forced to redshirt and received another year of eligibility. Because of this, she applied to the Manship School of Mass Communications at LSU to obtain her master's degree while pursuing her last year of athletics. Her eligibility ended in 2014, but her love for gymnastics and her love of journalism continues. She will receive her master's degree in May 2015, and hopes to pursue a career in sports journalism or communications following graduation.