

SEXUALITY, SPORTS, AND BODY IMAGE:  
PERCEPTION OF FEMALE ATHLETES

By

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PERCEPTION OF FEMALE ATHLETES

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In the completion of this thesis, I believe it is appropriate to say, “Pistols firing!”

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Abstract: Throughout history, both women and homosexuals have been marginalized and subjected to ideals of appearance and gender roles of the patriarchal society of Western culture. Because some people may believe lesbians should exude a masculine appearance, and female athletes challenge traditional gender roles by their participation in sports, the two groups intersect in the world of athletics. The media often emphasize the sexuality of female athletes by focusing on their sexual orientation or femininity. This thesis sought to understand how sexual orientation or appearance of female athletes may influence perceptions about the athletes. The thesis used two photos of female athletes to examine perceptions about the sexuality and appearance of female athletes. A total of 344 participants, including college students at a Midwest university and participants on social media websites, responded to an online survey that used fictitious magazine features with pictures of hypothetical female athletes (hyper-feminine, neutral) in which the feature focused on the heterosexuality or homosexuality of the athlete, or did not focus on the athlete's sexual orientation at all. In answering six research questions posed about participant attitudes toward women, female athletes, sexual orientation beliefs, and perceptions about the athletes pictured, independent *t*-tests and analysis of variance tests were conducted to analyze participant responses. Consistent with examined literature, participants perceived the sexualized athlete to be more feminine and more likely to be straight, and the neutral athlete as more masculine and more likely to be a lesbian. Interestingly, participants believed that both athletes were equally skilled, regardless of their appearance or sexual orientation. These findings suggest that although the media may focus on a female athlete's appearance or sexual orientation, people are more likely to focus on the athlete's skill and athleticism.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

“When I entered college as a 17 year old, I was not consciously aware that I was a lesbian. I was recruited to play basketball, and several other female basketball players and I would meet each evening to play informally in preparation for the upcoming season. One evening at the gym, a male player on the opposing team (we often played with and against men) said very accusingly to me, ‘Don't you know that 80% of all women athletes are homosexual?’ I smiled at him and merrily retorted, ‘Yeah — and we're proud of it!’ When I told the other women players what I had said, they turned scarlet and were mortified that I had said such a thing. Because my lesbian identity was undeveloped at that time (as was my internalized homophobia/homonegativism), I did not perceive any threat or negative social stigma. However, most of the other women players reacted with embarrassment and fear due to the negative social stigma of being labeled a lesbian female basketball player. Obviously, soon after this episode I began to understand and become affected by the negative stigma when I ‘came out’ to myself as a lesbian, and I continued to hide my identity and engage in behaviors designed to help me ‘pass’ as



being heterosexual for many years.”

(Vealey, 1997, p. 165)

WNBA player Brittany Griner acknowledged that she was gay in 2013, even though her sexuality had long been debated during her four-year career at Baylor, where she finished as the second all-time scorer in women’s NCAA history. However, given her illustrious career, people seem to be more focused on her sexuality, as rumors spread that six-foot-eight Griner was actually a man due to her appearance. Megan Greenwell, senior editor at *ESPN: The Magazine*, said about Griner, “Girl is six-foot-eight and has hands that are bigger than LeBron’s. That is not something she can change. She could make an attempt to present more feminine. God forbid if you look the least bit butch, you’re going to be assumed to be a lesbian” (“Brittany Griner,” 2013; Friedman, 2013).

Images of athletes are ubiquitous in American society; from the cover of *Sports Illustrated* to the front of a Wheaties cereal box, athletes are revered and even idolized in American culture. Sporting events such as the Super Bowl have become a holiday in American culture. Men and women alike cheer on their favorite teams and fill the stands at sporting events. Athletes, however, do not seem to experience the same gender neutrality enjoyed by fans. Even with the advent of women’s leagues such as the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA), the Women’s United Soccer Association (WUSA), the Women’s Pro Tennis Tour (WTA), and the Ladies’ Professional Golf Association (LPGA), female athletes are still not receiving the same kind of attention and are being praised for different things than their male counterparts (Knight & Giuliano, 2001). Male athletes are showcased in the media for their athletic accomplishments (Daniels, 2009; Knight & Guiliano, 2001), while female athletes are praised for their attractiveness (Duggan & McCreary, 2008; Krane, 2001).

Knight and Guiliano (2001) believed that the media “tend to represent female athletes as women first (i.e. through focusing on their hair, nails, clothing, and attractiveness) and as athletes

second” (p. 220). Krane (2001) found that the femininity of female athletes is accentuated and praised. The researcher asserted, “the underlying message is that athleticism and femininity are contradictory” (Krane, 2001, p. 116). Female athletes must highlight their femininity in order to show that they are culturally acceptable women even though they may exude a muscular and athletic appearance. Knight and Guiliano (2003) found that the media also often emphasize the heterosexuality of female athletes.

Many researchers believe that the media is to blame for the stereotypical images of women prevalent in society (Duggan & McCreary, 2004; Fernandez & Pritchard, 2012; Grogan, 2008; Wolf, 1991). Many studies have been conducted on the issues of images in the media and body image in women (Grogan, 2008; Pope, Phillips, & Olivardia, 2000; van Der Berg, et al., 2007; Wolf, 1991) and on how female athletes are represented in the media (Daniels, 2009; Daniels & Warten, 2011; Fink, 1998). According to Lenskyj (1987), to be a female athlete is to act in a manner inconsistent with traditional gender roles. In a patriarchal society, the understanding of gender is that a person’s sexual characteristics establish one’s gender, beliefs, displays, identity, and sexual orientation (Lorber, 1996; Sartore-Baldwin, 2012).

Therefore, a man would have masculine roles, beliefs, displays, identity, and would only be attracted to women. Likewise, a woman would have feminine roles, beliefs, displays, identity, and would only be attracted to men (Lorber, 1996). According to Lorber (1996), any crossing of these characteristics has traditionally been viewed as “unacceptable and suspect” (p. 141). Although traditional gender roles have historically been reinforced in sport, anything, or anyone that challenges sport’s dominant patriarchal ideals or crosses gender boundaries may be met with negativity (Sartone-Baldwin, 2012; Anderson, 2002). Therefore, it is apparent that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) athletes may face opposition and negative stereotypes based on their appearance or sexual orientation.

Although many studies have been conducted on the images of women in sport in the media, very little research has investigated the difference in people's reactions to the appearances of female athletes depending on the athletes' sexual identity, or the beliefs about female athletes based on their appearance. It is important to study this, because in a world that attempts to make sense of a person's identity based on his or her sexual orientation (Areseneau, Grzanka, Miles, & Fassinger, 2013), lesbian athletes may be stigmatized due to their sexual identity. Areseneau, et al. (2013) found that people tend to believe that sexual orientation is important, regardless of what may be the basis of differing sexual orientations.

Sexual orientation may define how people see themselves. Vealey (1997) believed that "ignoring the significance of sexual orientation as it impacts the psychological development and behavior of girls and women in sport" (p. 166) could have dangerous social and intellectual consequences. Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, and Azrael (2009) found that LGBT youth were more likely to report thoughts of suicide and self-harm, and tended to be more depressed than their heterosexual counterparts. Because sexuality is an integral part of being a human, it is important to study how the sexual orientation of a female athlete may influence what people think about the athlete.

The present study examined the relationships between sexuality, sports, and body image, and how people perceived images of heterosexual and lesbian female athletes. Research participants were asked to look at two different photographs of female athletes. There were three conditions: in one condition, participants were told the female athletes were lesbians, in the second condition they were told the athletes were straight, and in the final condition, the sexual orientation of the athletes was unknown to the participants. By making the athletes in the photographs straight, lesbian or unknown, the researcher hoped to uncover participants' bias against female athletes based on the athletes' sexual orientation and physical appearance. Straight and lesbian were the only sexualities used, instead of terms such as bisexual or transgender,

because people tend to be unfamiliar with identities that are neither heterosexual or homosexual (Callis, 2014.) The reactions of the participants and how they rate the appearance of the athletes were assessed to find any differences in how the participants perceived the images based on sexual identity.

This study seeks to further what is known about society's perceptions of female athletes based on the athletes' sexual orientation. It does not matter whether a woman is straight or a lesbian; homophobia in sports may discourage women and girls from pursuing sports due to fear of being labeled a lesbian. Focusing on the sexual orientation of female athletes may unfairly deny women opportunities in sports due to personal preferences that are irrelevant to their involvement with sports or athletic ability ("Empowering women," 2014).

Objectification theory suggests that women are judged solely for their physical attractiveness, despite other accomplishments and attributes the woman may possess (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). This study is relevant in assessing how the media perpetuates feminine stereotypes in sports and how media consumers view female athletes. This study will discuss the background of the representation of female athletes in the media, explain the theory of objectification in explaining the portrayal of female athletes in the media, take a look at homosexuality in the media, explore stereotypes of women in the media, and present research methodology and findings.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many theories have been proposed to explain why female athletes are celebrated in the media more for their looks rather than their athletic achievements. Although the literature covers a wide variety of such theories, this review will focus on four major themes that emerge repeatedly throughout the literature reviewed. These themes are: (a) the theory of objectification in explaining why the media emphasizes the femininity of female athletes, (b) the portrayal and stereotypes of women in the media, (c) the framing of homosexuality in the media, and (d) female athletes in the media concerning the media's emphasis on femininity and heterosexuality. Although the literature presents these themes in a variety of contexts, this review will primarily focus on their application to female athletes and sexuality, sports, and body image.

#### **Theory of Objectification**

Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object—and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.

(Berger, 1972, p. 41)

## **Background**

In Western societies, women are “defined, evaluated, and treated more often as objects than men are” (Calogero, Tantleff-Dunn, & Thompson, 2011, p. 4). This behavior is known as objectification. The phenomenon of objectification most familiar in society is the viewing of women as sex objects, or as “instruments for the sexual servicing and pleasure of men” (Calogero, et al., 2011, p. 4). For example, referring to a woman as a “nice piece of ass” separates a body part from her whole person and makes her an object (Bartky, 1990). Although the study of the objectification theory of women is nothing new, the development of a theoretical framework has encouraged the study of objectification and the effects of objectification on women (Bartky, 1990; Calogero, et al., 2011; Henley, 1977; Mulvey, 1975). Many theories have been developed by researchers to explain the objectification of women in American society, but objectification theory concentrates on how a woman may suffer from being celebrated solely for her appearance. The theory asserts that girls and women are taught through cultural influences to view themselves as an outside observer may view them (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 173).

Frederickson and Roberts (1997) said that although the physical body is the basis for the distinction between the sexes, it has historically been explored by its anatomical, genetic, and hormonal influences on personality, experience, behavior, and ignored that the body is constructed from more than just biology. The researchers believed that non-biological explanatory schemes for gender distinctions, such as sociocultural influences, have been largely ignored, garnering the suspicions of feminists and other groups (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). Objectification theory is deeply rooted in feminist psychology. Feminist models of women’s psychological distress mainly blame a patriarchal society for female mental health problems and have encouraged therapists to explore sociocultural factors, such as violence against women, experiences of objectification, and gender role socialization. (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997; Szymanski & Henning, 2006). In the theory of objectification, sexual objectification may

contribute to health problems of women two different ways. The first involves the internalization of objectification experiences or self-objectification. The second is more extreme and is comprised of sexual victimization, such as sexual harassment, sexual assault, and rape (Szymanski & Henning, 2006).

Even though the idea of objectification had been explored by other scholars, Frederickson and Roberts (1997) proposed the theoretical framework of objectification theory that placed “female bodies in a sociocultural context with the aim of illuminating the lived experiences and mental health risks of girls and women who encounter sexual objectification” (p. 174). The researchers asserted that although objectification is only one form of gender oppression, it factors into other forms of oppression that women face, ranging from sexual violence to the trivialization of women’s work and accomplishments (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). According to this theory, a woman’s worth is based on how much her body reflects cultural standards of attractiveness (Morrison, Morrison, & Sager, 2004). Essentially, the closer a woman’s body adheres to the sociocultural ideal of beauty, the more value she is seen as possessing.

According to Bartky (1990), “Sexual objectification occurs when a woman’s sexual parts or functions are separated out from her person, reduced to status of mere instruments, or else regarded as if they were capable of representing her. To be dealt with in this way is to have one’s entire being identified with the body” (p. 35). Therefore, under objectification theory, women are appreciated only for their sexuality and physical attractiveness, regardless of their personality or intellect (Bartky, 1990).

Miller (1986) said, “When one is an object, not a subject, all of one’s own physical and sexual impulses and interests are presumed not to exist independently. They are to be brought into existence only by and for others — controlled, defined, and used” (p. 60). Objectification theory attempts to reveal the consequences of being female in a culture that emphasizes women’s bodies are for the viewing and pleasure of others (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). The researchers

posited that the sexual objectification of women's bodies is extremely prevalent in Western society and can have dire consequences for the woman being objectified, including shame, anxiety, depression, sexual dysfunction, and eating disorders (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997).

The most deleterious consequence of objectification may be that the object of scrutiny will eventually begin to internalize how others are viewing her, or she begins to self-objectify (Davis, Dionne, & Shuster, 2001; Morrison et al., 2004). Society's objectification of women tends to make women view themselves from the perspective of an outsider (Daniels, 2009). Davis et al. (2001) said, "Because of the manner in which women are regarded in our society, they learn to see themselves primarily as objects designed for visual inspection and assessment" (p. 22). Women begin to place more importance on their physical appearance, because objectification causes them to believe their inherent worth lies in how they look in the mirror (Davis et al., 2001).

Philosopher Martha Nussbaum (1995) proposed that objectification involves seven ways of using another person: (a) as a tool for one's own purposes; (b) as lacking in autonomy and self-determination; (c) as lacking in agency in activity; (d) as interchangeable with others of the same or different types; (e) as permissible to break, smash, or break into; (f) as something that is owned by another; and (g) as something whose experience and feelings do not need to be considered. From a feminist account of objectification, to treat another human being in any of those ways is to objectify them. Therefore, being objectified means to be "treated as an object that can be used, manipulated, controlled, and known through its physical properties" (Calogero, et. al, 2011, p. 5).

Frederickson and Roberts (1997) proposed that although all women do not experience objectification in the same way, "having a reproductively mature female body may create a shared set of psychological experiences" (p. 175). Research in objectification theory has primarily focused on the male gaze (Engeln-Maddox, Miller, & Doyle, 2011, p. 519). Although women are



susceptible to sexual gazes from both men and women (Engeln-Maddox et al., (2011), the male gaze is more prominent and appears to have more of an impact on a woman's body image (Calogero, 2004).

Although Frederickson and Roberts are credited with the development of objectification theory in 1997, Engeln-Maddox et al. (2011) suggested that the idea of the male sexualized gaze being both “frequent and objectifying” (p. 519) was discussed decades earlier in the context of art and film history. In 1973, Berger discussed what is now known as self-objectification: “A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself... From earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually” (p. 46). Berger (1973) concluded with the idea that women are constantly watching themselves being gazed at by men. Horney asserted that “the socially sanctioned right of all males [is] to sexualize all females, regardless of age or status (Westkott, 1986). The theory is important because women cannot control a sexually objectifying gaze or decided when or when not she is to be objectified by men (Kaschak, 1992).

### **Objectification Theory and Lesbian Women**

If this is accurate, then it might be assumed that lesbian women will not be subject to the same consequences of objectification as heterosexual women since they are assumedly not interested in the gazes of the opposite sex. Calogero, et. al (2011) posited that because Western societies are saturated with heteronormativity and gender often acts as an organizer of culture, objectification is most apparent in those with a heterosexual sexual orientation. Therefore, since lesbian women are not trying to attract male attention, then they should not be subject to the same sociocultural beauty norms as heterosexual women, and consequently, experience less objectification and self-objectification. However, this may not be accurate.

Studies conducted on this topic have produce mixed research (Hill & Fischer, 2008).

Myers, Taub, Morris, and Rothblum (1999) had conflicting results in their study of women and beauty mandates. One respondent in the study said she believed traditional standards of beauty were the same for all women, regardless of sexual orientation, and another respondent said that as a lesbian, she was able to celebrate her body, regardless of size (Myers et al., 1999). In their study, Hill and Fischer (2007) found that lesbian women were just as likely to report being sexually gazed at and harassed by men as heterosexual women; both lesbian and heterosexual women are subject to a society that sexually objectifies women. Morrison et al. (2004) reported similar results. In comparing rates of eating disorders between lesbian and heterosexual women, Hefferman (1996) found that both groups of women experienced similar pressures to attain a certain body type and stated, “gender ‘trumps’ sexual orientation” (p. 134). Research tended to suggest that all women are bombarded with the same messages about beauty, regardless of sexual orientation (Hill & Fischer, 2007; Morrison et al., 2004).

### **Objectification and the Media’s Representation of Female Athletes**

When applying objectification theory to the topic of the portrayal of female athletes in the media, Harrison and Fredrickson (2003) found that white adolescents tended to experience higher levels of self-objectification after viewing images of athletes involved in lean sports, such as gymnastics, in which weight and appearance are important for success. In a study of how adolescent boys view images of female athletes, Daniels and Wartena (2011) found that boys were more likely to make appearance-related comments about images of sexualized athletes than images of performance athletes. Daniels (2009) discovered that adolescent girls who viewed images of sexualized athletes showed higher levels of self-objectification than girls who viewed images of performance athletes.

Greenleaf (2001) found that body shame in physically active women “mediated the relationship between self-objectification and disordered eating” (p. 51). Krane, et al. (2001) found

that many female athletes and exercisers desired a toned body with minimal fat; the women in the study emphasized being toned, yet said they avoided being too muscular. In an attempt to achieve their ideal physiques, the women balanced their physical activity and eating: if they exercised, they allowed themselves to eat, and if they felt as though they ate too much, they would punish themselves with exercise (Krane, et al., 2001). The researchers asserted that the women in the study based their bodies on social context. Their body satisfaction and mental states were dependent on if they were considering their bodies in the context of being an athlete or as culturally female (Krane, et al., 2001). The portrayal of female athletes in the media is troublesome not only for the athletes, but for females as a whole (Salwen & Wood, 1994). The underrepresentation and sexualized images of female athletes in the media may increase the ubiquitous thin ideal in Western society and teach female audiences to view themselves in a specific way, increasing self-objectification (Harrison & Frederickson, 2003).

## **Portrayal and Stereotypes of Women in the Media**

### **Background**

Interest in the portrayal of women in the media was resurrected during the women's movement in the 1960s (Rakow, 1985). Although images of women in the media spurred criticism from scholars and feminists alike (Ferguson, Kreshel, & Tinkham, 1990), the images of scantily clad woman in various forms of media have steadily increased since the 1980s (Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008). Sex is ubiquitous in modern media — appearing everywhere from prime time television to advertisements and the pages of magazines (Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008). It is important to study the media's portrayal of women in the media, because images of women are omnipresent in the American media-saturated society. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will focus on advertising in examining how the media have encouraged objectification, and perpetuated stereotypes of women, in advertising and in politics.

## **Women in advertising**

The questionably ethical nature of advertising has long been debated by scholars (McLuhan, 1951; Pollay, 1986). Some are concerned that contemporary advertising is focused on maximizing profitability with little regard for social responsibility or its influence on an impressionable public, especially women (Patterson, O'Malley, & Story, 2009). Advertisers seem to be unconcerned when using "simplistic and reductive stereotypes to appeal to the largest audience" (Patterson, et al., 2009, p. 10). Since the rebirth of the women's movement in the 1960s, the representation of women in advertisements has become a concern of critics and scholars. Studies of advertisements featuring women have categorized women in the following roles: housewife, sex object, and dependent on men (Ferguson, Kreshel, & Tinkhaw, 1990; Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008); housewife, concerned with physical attractiveness, sex object, career oriented, and neutral (Lysonski, 1983); alluring objects of sexual gratification (Mayne, 2000); and erotic and suggestive stimuli (Henthorne & LaTour, 1995).

The sexual imagery of women in advertisements has become more explicit throughout the history of advertising (Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008). In 1958, magazines mostly showed women as housewives in "decorative roles and idle situations or as low-income earners with limited purchasing power" (Lindner, 2004). There were more overt portrayals of women as sexual objects in advertisements in the mid-1990s than compared to the 1960s (Henthorne & LaTour, 1995; Mayne, 2000; Reichert, et al., 1999; Soley & Kurzbard, 1986; Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008). By treating a woman as an object, advertisers deny her personhood, resulting in objectification. In advertising, women are objectified in four basic ways: (a) as symbols for an object; (b) as a fragmented object made up of separate component parts that are not bound together in any coherent way to create a personality; (c) as an object to be viewed; and (d) as an object to be used (Maurice, O'Malley, & Story, 2009).

Jhally (1989) believed that Western culture is obsessed with gender and sex: “Never in history has the iconography of a culture been so obsessed or possessed by questions of sexuality and gender. Through advertising, questions of sex and gender have been elevated to a *privileged* position in our cultural discourse” (p. 316). Advertisements often depict women as being dependent on a man (Wagner & Banos, 1973) and as unintelligent consumers, more concerned with the social consequences of buying something than men, who are represented as being intelligent, rational decision maker (Furnham & Skae, 1997; Patterson, et al., 2009). In a content analysis of advertisements in women’s magazines spanning from 1973 to 1987, Ferguson, Kreshel, and Tinkham (1990) found that although images of women being subordinate to men and female as decoration decreased over the years, there was an increase in advertisements that featured alluring images of women and sexually objectified women.

Courtney and Lockeretz (1971) conducted a content analysis of advertisements in general interest magazines and found the following sexual stereotypes for women: (a) that a woman’s place is in the home; (b) that women do not make important decisions; (c) that women are dependent on men; and (d) that men regard women primarily as sex objects. Lindner (2004) found, despite criticism and the influence of the women’s movement, only a slight decrease in the stereotypical depictions of women in magazine advertisements occurred from 1955 to 2002. She discovered that 78% of the magazine advertisements studied portrayed cultural stereotypes of women (Lindner, 2004). Advertisements in *Time* tended to feature women as “smaller, weaker, inferior, or as dependent on man” (Linder, 2004, p. 419) and advertisements in *Vogue* reinforced “an inferior and weak image of women” (Linder, 2004, p. 419).

Sexual objectification of women in advertisements is troubling because research suggests a relationship between how advertisements depict women and how media consumers believe women are supposed to behave and what roles they should occupy in society (Lindner, 2004). Kilbourne (1990) found that after viewing images of advertisements featuring women in

stereotypical roles, people tended to have significantly more negative attitudes toward women than after viewing advertisements that featured women in professional roles. McCay and Covell (1997) discovered that both sexes demonstrated greater role stereotyping and acceptance of rape and sexual aggression against women after being exposed to sexually explicit advertisements.

### **Women and politics**

Women in politics, and even how different political parties and affiliations view women, is useful to study, because it can help understand how Americans view women based on political beliefs and ideals. Heflick and Goldenberg (2010) examined the extensive coverage that the media gave to Sarah Palin's physical appearance during the 2008 presidential election. The researchers believed that the focus on Palin's appearance may have been detrimental to the Republican ticket because it undermined the public's perceptions of Palin's competence, warmth, and morality. At the same time, it may have increased Palin's own self-objectification, impairing the competency of her actual performance (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2010). Heldman and Wade (2011) argued that advances in communication technology have enabled a "new era of objectification" (p. 156), and the acceptance of sexual objectification in the media is more likely to influence the success of female politicians (and, assumedly, other women that are in the public eye) than it was in the 1970s, when researchers realized that the sexual objectification of women was becoming an increasingly pervasive issue in American society.

Winter (2010) posited that during the last three decades, political parties in America have become identified with genders due to "controversial shifts in women's rights and in men's and women's roles" (p. 589). He believed that images of political parties have taken on gendered characteristics, with Democrats, or those of a liberal persuasion, being identified as the more feminine party and Republicans, or those of a conservative persuasion, identified as more masculine. This may be due to the issues that are associated with each political party. For example, Republicans are known for their champion of issues such as defense, terrorism, and

controlling crime, issues that people may associate with being more masculine (Kahn & Fridkin, 1996; Petrocik, 1996; Winter, 2010). In contrast, Democrats are known to focus on education, healthcare, protecting the environment, and promoting peace, which are associated with women (Winters, 2010). Through a sample of college students, Winters (2010) found that gender stereotypes tended to shape political cognition, and that gender and party categories may derive meanings from their relationship from the other. If this is true, it may be assumed that those who identify as more liberal will be more favorable toward women, while those who consider themselves to be conservative may not be as favorable to women and their role in society.

### **Portrayal of Homosexuality in the Media**

#### **Background**

Although depictions of homosexuality are becoming more prevalent in the media (Himberg, 2013) this has not always been the case. Not only have gays and lesbians not always been represented in media, but code words were often used to refer to nonheteronormative sexual practices and identities.. Kulick (2000) said, “What to collectively call people whose sexual and gendered practices and/or sexual identities fall beyond the bounds of normative heterosexuality is an unavoidable and ultimately unresolvable problem” (p. 243). It is a commonly held belief among scholars that the use of the term “gay” as meaning homosexual did not appear before the 1950s (Butters, 1989). In 1941, Legman published a glossary of terms that exclusively referred to homosexuality (Legman, 1941). Some of his terms such as “drag” and “straight” are not only still used, but they have become more general use (Kulick, 2000). Cory (1951) conducted a study on homosexual language, because he believed homosexuals needed terms that did refer to them negatively. He posited that homosexual slang had “failed to develop in a natural way” (p. 103), because it could only exist in secretive communication due to societal taboos about homosexuality (Cory, 1951). Stanley (1970) examined the knowledge of homosexual terms and found that most participants knew the following terms: trick, basket, box, camp, queen, drag

queen, butch, femme, gay, straight, closet queen, dyke, queer, kiki (p. 46). Some of these terms, such as lesbian, gay and queer, no longer have negative connotation but are the terms that those attracted to the opposite sex prefer (Kulick, 2000). Caisullo (2001) argued that the binary terms of “butch” and “femme” that were prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s no longer apply to a changing lesbian community.

Much discussion on gay slang has focused on the “substitution of feminine pronouns and titles for properly masculine ones” (Legman, 1941, p. 1155). Although historians believe “homosexual” was first used by a Hungarian journalist who wrote in opposition to Germany’s anti-sodomy laws in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, by the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the term was being used as a mental disorder for those attracted to the same sex (Peters, 2014). The term has been placed on GLAAD’s list of offensive terms. “Gay” and “lesbian” are now the preferred terms (“GLAAD,” 2014). Caisullo (2001) argued that although homosexuality may be becoming more visible in the media, archaic terms and perceptions of gays and lesbians still permeate mainstream culture.

Similarly to women, homosexuals have been marginalized in, and often excluded from, the media throughout history. Studying homosexuality in media is important, because the media may influence people’s perceptions about homosexuality (Calzom & Ward, 2009; Chomsky & Barclay, 2010; Bonds-Raacke, Cady, Schlegel, Harris, & Firebaugh, 2007; Wright, 2009). Ward (2003) asserted that the media, television and magazines in particular, are the most critical educators about sexual relationships for adolescents. Through their study of how informal socialization may influence the attitudes of young people toward homosexuality, Calzom and Ward (2009) found that many children and adolescents receive the majority of their information about homosexuality from the media. Wright (2009) asserted that the media are responsible for sexual socialization in adolescents because they spend a large amount of time indulging in mass media that possessed sexual content such as music videos and television. Another reason for the importance of studying homosexuality in the media is that media may influence media consumers



about minority groups, including gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transsexuals, because some consumers may not have personal experience with minorities (Gross, 1994).

### **Homosexuality in the news**

Lesbians and gays have not historically received much attention from newspapers (Chomsky & Barclay, 2010). From the end of World War II through 1965, homosexuals were virtually invisible in newspapers and their concerns were not considered important enough to be included in the public opinion (Gross, 2001). When they did appear in the pages of newspapers during that time period, lesbian and gays were often seen as security threats during the Cold War (Johnson, 2004). Compelling events that concerned homosexual individuals received little attention from mainstream media as the years progressed. The AIDS epidemic did not receive a large amount of attention from the media; as the death toll rose during the early years of the epidemic, news outlets remained surprisingly silent (Chomsky & Barclay, 2010). Eventually, the news media started to pay attention to sexual minorities. Lisa Bennett (1998) found that the instances of stories in newsmagazines concerning homosexuality steadily rose over the decades.

### **Homosexuality on film**

One of the most notable mediums that can be studied to understand the representation of homosexuality in the media throughout history is film, mainly movies and television. Although it has often been ignored, homosexuality has existed in films since movies began. But homosexuality has a sad history in cinema, as homosexual characters “have been taunted, ridiculed, silenced, pathologized, and more often than not killed off in the last reel” (Smelik, 1998, p.135). Vito Russo wrote *The Celluloid Closet* in 1981, and explored the history of homosexuality in media. His pioneering study resulted in the rediscovery of forgotten directors, scriptwriters, producers, actors, actresses, and films from early Hollywood (Smelik, 1998). From the earliest movies, Smelik (1998) posited that the presence of homosexuality in film was often

rife with negative stereotypes: “stereotypes of gays and lesbians such as the queen and the dyke reproduce norms of gendered heterosexuality because they indicate that the homosexual man or woman falls short of the heterosexual norm: that they can never be a ‘real’ man or woman” (p. 136).

These stereotypes have permeated another medium. Since its inception in the 1950s, American television has changed substantially, especially in sexual programming. In the beginning, sexuality was almost non-existent on television and topics such as pregnancy and contraception were considered too sensitive to be portrayed on television shows (Fisher, Hill, Grube, & Gruber, 2007). The theme of homosexuality was especially ignored in the early stages of American television (Fisher, et al., 2007; Himberg, 2013). Wolf and Kielwasser (1991) called television programming compulsory heterosexual. The Production Code of 1934 in Hollywood included the voluntary exclusion of all homosexual characters from films, and that exclusion was adhered to until the advent of television fifteen years later (Bonds-Raacke, et al., 2007; Russo, 1981). Before the 1970s, the presence of gay characters on television was practically nonexistent (Wyatt, 2013). In the 1960s and 1970s, some television programming included lesbian and gay themes, but networks were reluctant about introducing a recurring homosexual character (Bonds-Raacke, et al., 2007).

As time progressed, the regular inclusion of gay or lesbian characters became more frequent, although Wyatt (2013) noted that although many shows have “dealt” with the issue of sexual orientation in a single episode or story line, few have historically included gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered characters on a regular basis. Fisher, et al. (2007) believed that “sexual minorities are often ignored by the mainstream media and treated as if they do not exist” (p. 169). This exclusion may contribute the “keeping sexual minorities invisible and without power” (Fisher, et al., 2007, p. 169), a process Gross called “symbolic annihilation” (Gross, 1991). If

homosexuals do not have a voice in the media, it symbolically annihilates them from culture, rendering them powerless and voiceless in society.

The lack of homosexuality in television programming may lead television viewers to believe that homosexuality is rare or abnormal (Fisher, et al., 2007). Fisher, et al. (2007) found that portrayals or discussions of sex related to homosexuality is still infrequent, especially when compared to the amount of sexual content on television that is associated with heterosexuals; commercial broadcast networks featured less content including non-heterosexuals than premium cable movie channels, although prime-time shows had a higher proportion of sexual-related talk to non-heterosexuals than shows that came on other times of the day.

The portrayals of gay people on television have historically been rare and often negative (Gross, 1991). Gay characters on television are rarely shown in romantic contexts, but are instead presented as asexual creatures (Fejes & Petrich, 1993; Fisher, et al., 2007). On the popular series *Will & Grace*, the gay characters, Will and Jack, were rarely shown being physically affectionate with men, but the heterosexual female lead was often shown in sexual situations with men (Fisher, et al., 2007). In 1997, *Ellen* became the first show on television to feature a female character that was gay (Fisher, et al., 2007). Since then, other television shows have begun to regularly include gay characters.

Although gay and lesbian characters are beginning to regularly appear in mainstream media, they are often portrayed as though they belong to a “clearly defined racial or ethnic group” (Altman, 2008, p. 25). For example, the popular ABC show *Desperate Housewives* featured an African-American family one season that was replaced by a gay couple in the next season (Altman, 2008). Talk shows regularly feature episodes about sexual issues such as pregnancy, rape, infidelity, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, and safe sex, but discussions about sexual orientation only occurred approximately every tenth episode and were usually catalyzed by the

guest revealing that he or she is gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, or a transvestite (Greenberg & Smith, 2002; Greenberg, Sherry, Busselle, Hnilo, & Smith, 1997).

In recent years, commercial networks have begun to target gay and lesbian audiences in that same way that they target other niche audiences (Himberg, 2013; Ng, 2013). Cable network executives asserted that the inclusion of gay characters on television is no longer for the sake of diversity, but rather to reflect a changing society. Andy Cohen, Bravo's openly gay executive vice-president of original programming and development, said incorporating a gay character into a show for the sake of diversity "is sort of a ten-year ago sensibility" (Himberg, 2013, p. 11). Himberg (2013) found that one network executive believed the gay and lesbian characters on her network were a reflection of her own reality in which gays and lesbians were in her personal and professional life. Although cable shows such as *The L Word* and *Queer as Folk* became popular for their ensembles of gay characters, workers involved with the development, marketing, and production of lesbian programming believed that future shows will include gay characters as "part of the fabric of shows" (Himberg, 2013, p. 11), and not be made entirely of gay characters.

## **Portrayal of Female Athletes in the Media**

### **History**

Since the beginning of women's sports, the media have emphasized the femininity and appearances of women rather than their athletic ability and success (Daniels, 2009; Kane, 1989; Knight & Guiliano, 2001). Although women's sports can be traced back to 1000 BC, George, Hartley, and Harris (2001) noted, "throughout the years society has sought to legitimize the argument that sports are the 'natural' domains of men due to the innately different biological and psychological natures of men and women" (p. 94). In ancient Greece, women were not allowed to view the Olympic Games (George et al., 2001; Griffin, 1992). In England, only upper class women were allowed to participate in sports such as tennis, riding, and hunting (George et al.,

2001). During the Renaissance, women were briefly encouraged to participate in physical activity, as it was believed to encourage healthy child bearing (George et al., 2001).

Women's sport in the United States was virtually unheard of not even a century ago. In 1966, Roberta Gibb's entry form for the Boston Marathon was rejected with a note stating that her gender rendered her physically unable to run a marathon (Weber, 2001). Undiscouraged, Gibb hid behind a bush near the starting line of the race, joining her male counterparts in the marathon (Weber, 2001). Women basketball players were also not given the same opportunities as male players; female players did not play the full-court five-player game nationwide until 1971. Female players that excelled at the sport of basketball had no league to join after college. Basketball legend Cheryl Miller grew up beating her little brother at basketball and was named "player of the year" three years during her collegiate career. After she graduated from college, her basketball career was over, but her little brother Reggie Miller enjoyed a successful career with the Indiana Pacers (Weber, 2001).

The 1970s brought the beginning of change for female athletes in the United States. Title IX was implemented in 1972 and required that federally funded programs, including athletics, provide men and women with equal opportunities. High schools and public universities became required to spend the same amount of time and money on men's and women's sports (Daniels, 2009; Knight & Guiliano, 2002). There was optimism that female athletes would gain societal acceptance and be recognized for their athleticism (Fink, 1998). A content analysis of women featured on *Sports Illustrated* covers from the 1950s to 1980s revealed that as time progressed, female athletes were less likely to be portrayed in active poses than their male counterparts (Salwen & Wood, 1994). The researchers also found that more female athletes were featured on the covers of *Sports Illustrated* in the 1950s than in the post-Title IX decades of the 70s and 80s (Salwen & Wood, 1994).

Has the depiction of female athletes in the media improved at all? It would appear as though the answer is no. Consistent with Western society's tendency to sexualize women, female athletes are sexually objectified in print and visual media (Daniels & Wartena, 2011; George et al., 2001). According to Knight and Guiliano (2002), "although Gabrielle Reese, Anna Kournikova, Katarina Witt, and Jan Stephenson are all exceptional athletes, the media often focuses on the attractiveness, a problem that is much less common for male athletes" (p. 219). In addition to being recognized more for their physical appearance, female athletes are often featured for their other roles such as wife, mother, or feminine role model (Fink, 1998).

Critics also claim that women's sports are vastly underrepresented in the media, which hinders the advancement of women's sports (George et al., 2001). Some critics believe the sexualization of female athletes in the media work to reinforce a patriarchal society and hinder the advancement of women's sports (Daniels, 2009; Kane, 1989). Daniels (2009) noted "women athletes themselves contribute to their own sexualization in media by posing nude or provocatively for national magazines" (p. 203). While some images depict female athletes as strong and powerful, most images emphasize their "sexiness" and physical appearance. Angelini (2008) found that male viewers do not wish to view masculine female athletes participate in feminine sports such as figure skating, due to masculine female athletes being represented negatively in the media. Jones and Greer (2011) found that, regardless of the appearance of the female athlete, participants tended to assign masculine characteristics to athletes that played a masculine sport. Jones and Greer (2011) believed that understanding audience interest in sport is crucial to changing the way the media portray female athletes.

### **Paradox of being a female athlete**

Krane (2001) stated that a common theme among female athletes is "we can be athletes and feminine too" (p. 116). Examples of this can be seen in advertising of women's products and clothing featuring female athletes and female athletes posing in revealing clothing in men's

magazines. In 2012, CoverGirl signed two Olympic athletes to be the new faces of the cosmetic company: boxer Marlen Esparza and beach volleyball player Jennifer Kessy (“CoverGirl,” 2012). Swimmer and Olympic medalist Amber Beard has posed in men’s magazines *Playboy*, *Maxim*, and *FHM* magazines (Daniels, 2009).

Because sports have historically been considered an activity for males, athleticism and masculinity became synonymous in the Western world (Kane, 1989). Because masculinity and femininity are opposites, women that played sports were, historically, considered unfeminine (Kane, 1989). As female athletes became more accepted in American culture, the pressure to conform to the sociocultural feminine ideal remained (Krane, 2001). Female athletes must exist in both a sport culture that emphasizes masculinity and the social culture that celebrates femininity (Krane, Choi, Baird, Aimar, & Kauer, 2004). Krane et al. (2004) found that female college athletes believed that being athletic contrasted with being feminine; the college female athletes said they had been treated differently from other women due to their participation in sports. Being an athlete contradicts a woman’s traditional gender role and female athletes must emphasize their femininity in order to be considered culturally acceptable (Knight & Guiliano, 2003; Krane, 2001).

### **Heterosexuality in sports**

In addition to emphasizing the femininity and traditional female roles of women in sports, the media often emphasize the heterosexuality of female athletes (Knight & Guiliano, 2003). Homophobia in sports is nothing new, however. Around the turn of the 20th century, women began to challenge Victorian gender roles and sought to break down the barriers to male-dominated areas such as sport (Cahn, 1993). While women began to experience a freedom not previously afforded to them, critics made up of physicians, physical educators, and sportswriters believed female participation in sports threatened the status quo and that sports would cause

women to adopt masculine characteristics and become uninterested in men (Cahn, 1993).

Journalists began to refer to female athletes as “amazons,” signaling women in sports as having a mannish appearance and being failed heterosexuals (Cahn, 1993).

After World War II, working class women and female athletes were accused of being homosexuals as widespread panic of challenged gender roles occurred in the post-war world. While most lesbians remained hidden from the majority of Americans, the masculine figures of female athletes “were visible representatives of the gender invasion often associated with homosexuality” (Cahn, 1993, p. 351). In response, the media began to focus on the sexual accomplishments and sexual “normalcy” of female athletes to combat the perceived link between female athletes and lesbianism (Cahn, 1993).

Knight and Guiliano (2003) believed that “there is still a ubiquitous yet tacit stigma surrounding issues of lesbianism in women’s sports” (p. 273). Despite the emergence of openly lesbian athletes, such as Martina Navratilova, female athletes continue to face homophobia (Cahn, 1993; Knight & Guiliano, 2003; Wellman & Blinde, 1997). Because of the paradox faced by female athletes, women in sports must act feminine off the field to apologize for their masculine behavior while engaged in sports (Knight & Guiliano, 2003; Krane, 2001). Femininity is a trait associated with heterosexuality; sociocultural ideals of femininity are constructed from the appearance and behavior of heterosexual women (Lenskyj, 1997). The media emphasize the femininity of female athletes by portraying them in sexualized images and showcasing their relationships with men (Knight & Guiliano, 2003). Griffin (1998) believed that the mostly heterosexual media works to emphasize heterosexuality in an attempt to emphasize power over homosexuality.

The existence of homophobia is widespread in the world of sports. The stigma of being gay also affects male athletes. For example, Butterworth (2006) suggested that dialogue used by



the media regarding the sexual orientation of former baseball player Mike Piazza illustrated the hegemonic masculinity of baseball culture. “Piazza’s behavior and the discourse surrounding gay identity in baseball call attention to the ways gender is used to mark bodies in sport, to perpetuate normative standards of masculinity, and to discipline those who do not adhere to these norms...Because being gay is equated to being feminine, which in turn is equated to weakness” (Butterworth, 2006, pp. 138-139). Messner (1992) concluded, “The extent of homophobia in the sport world is staggering. Boys [in sport] learn early that to be gay, to be suspected of being gay, or even to be unable to prove one’s heterosexual status is not acceptable” (p. 34). Male athletes are expected to be the embodiment of the hegemonic ideals of masculinity and sexual identity. Anderson (2011) posited that the male sports culture has an unspoken “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy regarding gay athletes.

Athletes are not the only ones subjected to scrutiny regarding their sexual orientation. Wellman and Blinde (1997) found that unmarried women basketball coaches were often perceived to be lesbians simply due to their profession. Because of the stigma concerning lesbianism in sports, many women admitted to shying away from coaching positions to avoid being associated with lesbians, because being a lesbian was considered a bad thing (Krane, 1997; Wellman & Blinde, 1997). The selection of coaching staff and recruitment of athletes was also influenced by homophobia, as evident in the actions of athletic directors and university administrators (Wellman & Blinde, 1997).

Greendorfer and Rubinson (1997) posited that homophobia is prevalent in women’s sports because female athletes challenge cultural beliefs regarding femininity, masculinity, and power. Female athletes challenge a traditionally patriarchal society and homophobia works to resist change to a male-dominated culture (Greendorfer & Rubinson, 1997). Although lesbians have historically held a strong presence in the world of women’s sports, the extent of their efforts

and contributions to women's sport may never be known due to the homophobia of Western society and the media's emphasis on heterosexuality in female athletes (Krane, 1997).

### **Summary and Conclusions**

From the review of literature, it is apparent that female athletes are both objectified and stigmatized for their appearance by the media. Both women and those with a homosexual orientation have felt the prejudice and shame imposed on them by a media in a patriarchal and male-dominated society. Female athletes are expected to maintain a culturally acceptable feminine ideal of beauty while performing as an athlete. Heterosexuality saturates the world of sports and female athletes are either assumed to be a lesbian because of their muscular appearance, or shunned because of the heteronormative culture of sports. One issue that needs to be examined, however, is how the general public view images of female athletes according to the athletes' sexual orientation, or how they view the athletes' sexual orientation based on appearance.

### **Research Questions**

Objectification theory stems from the belief that Western culture encourages the sexual objectification of women's bodies and that women's bodies exist solely for the viewing and pleasure of others, mainly men (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). The literature review suggested that the media tend to focus on the femininity and heterosexuality of female athletes rather than their athleticism. Because the media produce written and visual material for the public, it can be suggested that the public view lesbian athletes differently than heterosexual female athletes (Knight & Giuliano, 2003). Therefore, the research questions examined how sport may influence what people believe about the sexuality of female athletes, how an athlete's physical appearance may influence what people think about her sexuality, strength, and skills, and if exposure to an athlete's sexual orientation influences perceptions about the athlete.

RQ1: How do demographic characteristics influence attitudes toward sexuality, femininity, and female athletes?

RQ2: Does the physical appearance of a female athlete automatically bias perceptions of that athlete's sexuality, strength, and skills?

RQ3: Does exposure to an athlete's sexual orientation influence perceptions about that athlete?

The final three research questions will address how attitudes toward female athletes, attitudes toward woman and attitudes toward sexuality influence perceptions about the skills, sexuality, and body image of female athletes.

RQ4: How do attitudes toward female athletes influence perceptions about the skills, sexuality, and body image of female athletes?

RQ5: How do attitudes toward women influence perceptions about the skills, sexuality, and body image of female athletes?

RQ6: How do attitudes toward sexuality influence perceptions about the skills, sexuality, and body image of female athletes?

RQ7: How do male and female athletes differ in their attitudes toward sexuality, femininity, and female athletes?

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine what role the appearance and sexual orientation of female athletes has in how the public perceives female athletes. Through the parameters of objectification, these variables were examined to determine how the appearance of female athletes influences the public's opinion of the athletes' sexual orientation, and how sexual orientation influences the public's opinion of the athletes' appearance. This study examined the independent variables of Attitudes Toward Women Scale, Sexual Orientation Beliefs Scale, and Female Athlete Respect and Perceived Femininity Scale, and then used a 2 (body type) x 3 (sexual orientation) factorial, within subject design measuring the dependent variable of perception of the athletes. The following section explains the measures used in the study, as well as the data collection process.

Experimental research was used in this study to explain how the media's representation of lesbian and heterosexual female athletes influences public perception. Knight and Giuliano (2001) used experimental research to explain the consequences of the portrayals of male athletes versus female athletes and the extent of the media's influence on the public perceptions of athletes. The researchers used articles of fictional male and female athletes that either focused on the attractiveness of the athlete or the athlete's athletic accomplishments to explore the media's influence on the perceptions of athletes (Knight & Giuliano, 2001). Experimental research proved helpful in the study and resulted in results consistent with examined literature (Knight & Giuliano, 2001). A similar pattern was utilized in this study.

## **Sample**

Cluster sampling and a random sample was used. For this research study, data was collected from undergraduate students at a large public university in the Midwest, and participants on social media websites and forums such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Reddit in order to have a more representative sample of the population as a whole. Students were recruited primarily from introductory strategic communication and mass communication classes. All together, 344 people participated in the study.

## **Variables and Stimuli**

The independent variables in the experiment were the images of the athletes and the demographic variables. The independent demographic variables included gender, sexuality, whether the participant was an athlete, age, and political affiliation. Gender was categorized as male, female or transgendered. Sexuality was identified as straight, gay, bisexual or asexual. Age was grouped as 17 years and younger, 18-25 years, 26-35 years, 36-45 years, 46-55 years, 56-65 years, and 66 years or older. Athlete status was simply yes or no. Political affiliation was divided as very liberal, liberal, moderate, conservative, and very conservative.

The dependent variables were the participants' reactions to the images of the athletes and scales used to gauge participant attitudes on sexual orientation and toward women and female athletes. Several scales were used to understand the public's perceptions of female athletes based on the athletes' appearance and sexual orientation. Following is a brief discussion of each variable.

### **Attitudes Toward Women**

The Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS) is a 15-item scale, which measures an individual's attitudes toward women, and what people believe about gender roles and women's place in society, (Spence & Helmreich, 1972). This section required participants to read statements about women and gender roles, and respond according to a 5-point Likert-type scale.

Previous research in culture and women's studies has often used the AWS to measure beliefs about women and gender roles (Bailey, Less, & Harrell, 1992; Swim & Cohen, 1997; Walker, 1992). The use of the AWS was useful in this survey, because it aided in identifying what participants believed about women and gender roles.

### **Beliefs about sexual orientation**

The 34-item Sexual Orientation Beliefs Scale (SOBS) (Areseneau, et al., 2013) was utilized to assess how the participants feel about sexual orientation and their beliefs about homosexuality. The scale utilizes statements that are indicative of commonly held beliefs about sexual orientation in modern society. Participants were asked to gauge how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statements using a 5-point Likert-type scale. This scale was useful when analyzing participant responses to the stimuli.

### **Attitudes toward female athletes**

The Female Athlete Respect and Perceived Femininity of Female Athletes Scale (Royce, Gebelt, & Duff, 2003) was used to assess how the participants feel about female athletes. This scale assessed how much participants respect female athletes, and if they believed female athletes are feminine and masculine. Participants recorded their answers according to a 5-point Likert-type scale. This scale has been used to determine negative stereotypes that may persist about female athletes (Royce, et. al, 2003). The scale proved useful in this study, because it helped identify any negative feelings that participants may have exhibited toward female athletes, and how that may have influenced participant answers.

### **Treatments**

The final part of the survey was comprised of two photographs of female athletes. Research participants were asked to look at two different photographs of female athletes. There were three conditions: in one condition, participants were told the female athlete was lesbian, in

the second condition they were told she was straight, and in the final condition, the sexual orientation was unknown to the participants. The sample for this study was selected using definitions from previous studies (Jones & Greer, 2011; Knight & Giuliano, 2001; Koivula, 2001).

Two photos of hypothetical female athletes were used in this study (hyper-feminine and neutral) and there were three conditions that alluded to the sexual orientation of the athlete (See appendix A). The photos were made to appear as a spotlight of the athletes in a magazine. Their age, body statistics, birthplace and career highlights were featured, along with a “who knew” that alluded to their sexual orientation. One photo was of a hyper-feminine female, dressed in revealing clothing and holding a basketball. She was given the name Samantha Prahalis. For the heterosexual condition, her “who knew” said, “When she’s not on the road, Prahalis and her husband, Shawn, enjoy going to the farmer’s market and cooking together at their Detroit home”; for the homosexual condition, the “who knew” said, “When she’s not on the road, Prahalis and her partner, Alyssa, enjoy going to the farmer’s market and cooking together at their Detroit home”; and the neutral condition said, “When she’s not on the road, Prahalis enjoys going to the farmer’s market and cooking for friends at her Detroit home.” The photo of the neutral athlete featured a woman in a basketball uniform in a performance stance. She was named Maya Moore. For the heterosexual condition, her “who knew” said, “When Moore isn’t traveling, she likes to unwind with her husband, James, and their two dogs by hiking on the trails near their Seattle home”; for the homosexual condition, the “who knew” said, “When Moore isn’t traveling, she likes to unwind with her partner, Sarah, and their two dogs by hiking on the trails near their Seattle home”; and the neutral condition said, “When Moore isn’t traveling, she likes to unwind by hiking with her two dogs on the trails near her Seattle home.”

Each photograph was followed by a response sheet that assessed the participant’s opinion of the athlete pictured. A 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5

(strongly agree), was used to rate perceived characteristics of the athlete, including how feminine, masculine, attractive the participants perceive the athlete to be, and if the participants believe the athlete in the photograph appears to be straight or lesbian.

### **Instrument**

An online survey was used for this study. The survey used the online survey tool Survey Monkey to help collect data. Each survey included a series of questions related to attitudes about female athletes and sports, attitudes toward women and beliefs about sexuality. Participants were asked to record their reactions and thoughts regarding photographs of two female athletes. The survey also included a section of demographic questions that included age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and origin.

### **Procedure**

Before conducting this study, the researcher consulted with the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and received approval for the research design and consent form to continue with the study utilizing undergraduate students and website visitors as participants. Before the survey commenced, participants read a consent section that informed them that IRB approval was granted. Participants were asked to check off an information box that confirmed their voluntary participation rights and signified their agreement. Participants were informed that the information given in the study would remain anonymous. They were also informed that at the end of the study, they would be asked demographic information, including sexual orientation. If the participant did not wish to participate, he or she could quit at any time.

Potential participants were told that the current study was "an investigation of the media's representation of female athletes." All participants viewed identical photographs, but received different treatments through a Graeco-Latin square technique (Cochran & Cox, 1957). In each treatment, copy from one of the two images (hyper-feminine, neutral) indicated whether the athlete in the photographs was lesbian, straight or not give any information pertaining to the



sexual orientation of the athlete. The images were designed to look like a magazine pictorial that was featuring the “best female athletes of the year” and the order presented was randomized during the study to prevent recency and primacy effects.

**Table 1**  
*Sexual orientation and appearance of female athletes*

3 x 2		
S1	S2	S3
N2	N3	N1

*Note.* S = Sexualized Image; N = Neutral Image; 1 = Lesbian; 2 = Straight; 3 = None

After viewing the photographs and completing the corresponding response sheets, participants were given background questionnaires and asked to record their answers to demographic questions (e.g. age, gender, and sexual orientation). After completion of the questionnaire, participants were given the opportunity to make any comments they had about the experiment. Participants were thanked for their participation.

### **Design and Analyses**

The data was collected in three experimental conditions for 3 x 2 mixed-model ANOVA. Sexual orientation (lesbian, heterosexual, none) was the between-subjects factor and independent variable; appearance (hyper-feminine, neutral) was the within-subjects factor and dependent variable. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to input the data received from the Likert scales. The rejection level for all analyses was set at  $p = .05$ . For each Likert scale item, the researcher recorded the participant’s answer. The researcher wanted the majority of participants to be in agreement about the appearance of the athletes in the photographs.

To analyze the data,  $t$ -tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were conducted in SPSS to analyze participant responses to the independent and dependent variables. The results of the study will be discussed in Chapter 4. Limitations and implications will be discussed in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

The purpose of this research was to expand on the knowledge of how the appearance of female athletes influences what the public perceives about the athletes' sexual orientation.

#### **Participants**

A total of 344 participants completed the survey. Of the 338 respondents who reported their gender, 191 (56.5%) of the respondents were female, 146 (43.2%) of the respondents were male, and 1 (0.3%) respondent identified as transgender. The majority of participants ( $n=303$ ) identified themselves as heterosexual, 2.7% ( $n=9$ ) identified as homosexual, 2.4% ( $n=8$ ) identified as bisexual, 0.9% ( $n=3$ ) identified as asexual, and 4.5% ( $n=15$ ) selected none of the above or prefer not to answer. Nearly two-thirds ( $n=210$ ) of the participants said they were athletes in high school or college, while 37.3% ( $n=125$ ) said they did not play sports in high school or college. Almost half ( $n=163$ ) of the participants were between the ages of 18 and 25, 2.7% ( $n=9$ ) were under the age of 17, 22.2% ( $n=75$ ) were between the ages of 26-35, 11.5% ( $n=39$ ) were between 36 and 45, 5.9% ( $n=20$ ) were between 46 and 55, 7.4% ( $n=25$ ) were between 56 and 65, 1.8% ( $n=6$ ) were between 66 and 75, and 0.3% ( $n=1$ ) was more than the age of 76.

In regards to ethnicity, 78.3% ( $n=264$ ) identified themselves as Caucasian/White, 5.3% ( $n=18$ ) identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native, 3.9% ( $n=13$ ) identified as African-American/Black, 3.9% ( $n=13$ ) identified as Asian or Asian-American, 3.3% ( $n=11$ ) identified as Hispanic/Latino, 2.4% ( $n=8$ ) identified as Multi-Racial, 2.1% ( $n=7$ ) declined to answer, 0.3% ( $n=1$ ) identified as Pacific Islander and 0.6% ( $n=2$ ) selected other. Of the 336 participants who reported their political ideology, most of the participants (38.1%,  $n=128$ ) identified as moderate, 27.4% ( $n=92$ ) identified as conservative, 21.1% ( $n=71$ ) identified as liberal, 7.4% ( $n=25$ ) identified as very conservative, and 6.0% ( $n=20$ ) identified as very liberal.

## Results

**RQ1: How do demographic characteristics influence attitudes toward sexuality, femininity and female athletes?** In order to better understand how people view female athletes' sexuality, the first research question examined how demographic characteristics impact attitudes of participants. This was gauged by running independent sample  $t$ -tests on the Sexual Orientation Beliefs scale, Attitudes Toward Women scale, and Female Athlete Respect and Perceived Femininity Scale with the dependent variables of gender, sexual orientation, and if the participants were athletes.

### Gender, Sexual Orientation, Athletes

First, an independent sample  $t$ -test compared how the gender of the participants influenced their attitudes. When compared with gender, the mean Sexual Orientation Beliefs scale score for female ( $\mu = 3.15$ ,  $SD = .38$ ) and male ( $\mu = 3.23$ ,  $SD = .39$ ) participants. This comparison was not found to be statistically significant,  $t(335) = -1.8$ ,  $p > .066$ . This result indicated that gender does not influence the Sexual Orientation Beliefs scale. When compared with gender, the mean Attitudes Toward Women scale score for female ( $\mu = 3.79$ ,  $SD = .57$ ) and male ( $\mu = 3.71$ ,  $SD = .61$ ) participants. This comparison was not found to be statistically significant,  $t(335) = 1.03$ ,  $p > .196$ . This result indicated that gender does not influence the Attitudes Toward Women scale.

When compared with gender, the mean Female Athlete Respect and Perceived Femininity scale score for female ( $\mu = 3.71, SD = .58$ ) and male ( $\mu = 3.52, SD = .57$ ) participants. This comparison was found to be statistically significant,  $t(334) = 3.03, p < .003$ . This result indicated that gender does influence the Female Athlete Respect and Perceived Femininity scale.

Next, an independent sample *t*-test was conducted to compare how the sexual orientation of participants impacted the attitudes of the participants. First, an independent sample *t*-test compared the mean Sexual Orientation Beliefs scale score for heterosexual ( $\mu = 3.16, SD = .38$ ) and not heterosexual ( $\mu = 3.40, SD = .39$ ) participants. This comparison was found to be statistically significant,  $t(336) = -3.45, p < .001$ . This result indicated that sexual orientation does influence the Sexual Orientation Beliefs scale. When compared with sexual orientation, the mean Attitudes Toward Women scale score for heterosexual ( $\mu = 3.74, SD = .59$ ) and not heterosexual ( $\mu = 3.89, SD = .62$ ) participants. This comparison was not found to be statistically significant,  $t(336) = -1.39, p > .166$ . This result indicated that sexual orientation does not influence the Attitudes Toward Women scale. When compared with sexual orientation, the mean Female Athlete Respect and Perceived Femininity scale score for heterosexual ( $\mu = 3.63, SD = 0.6$ ) and not heterosexual ( $\mu = 3.62, SD = .43$ ) participants. This comparison was not found to be statistically significant,  $t(335) = .034, p > .973$ . This result indicated that sexual orientation does not influence the Female Athlete Respect and Perceived Femininity scale.

Finally, an independent sample *t*-test compared how if the participant was an athlete of the influenced their attitudes. When compared with if the participant was an athlete, the mean Sexual Orientation Beliefs scale score for yes ( $\mu = 3.19, SD = .36$ ) and no ( $\mu = 3.19, SD = .42$ ). This comparison was not found to be statistically significant,  $t(333) = .064, p > .949$ . This result indicated that athlete status does not influence the Sexual Orientation Beliefs scale. When compared with if the participant was an athlete, the mean Attitudes Toward Women scale score for yes ( $\mu = 3.75, SD = .57$ ) and no ( $\mu = 3.79, SD = .62$ ) participants. This comparison was not

found to be statistically significant,  $t(333) = -.521, p > .603$ . This result indicated that athlete status does not influence the Attitudes Toward Women scale. When compared with if the participant was an athlete, the mean Female Athlete Respect and Perceived Femininity scale score for yes ( $\mu = 3.65, SD = .59$ ) and no ( $\mu = 3.59, SD = .55$ ) participants. This comparison was found to not be statistically significant,  $t(332) = .883, p > .378$ . This result indicated that athlete status does not influence the Female Athlete Respect and Perceived Femininity scale

**Table 2**

<i>Descriptive Statistics for Scales by Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Athlete</i>				
	$\mu$	$SD$	$t$	$p$
Sexual Orientation Beliefs Scale				
Gender			-1.84	0.066
Male	3.23	0.39		
Female	3.15	0.38		
Sexuality			-3.45	0.001
Hetero	3.16	0.38		
Not Hetero	3.4	0.39		
Athlete			0.064	0.949
Yes	3.19	0.36		
No	3.19	0.42		
Attitudes Toward Woman Scale				
Gender			1.03	0.196
Male	3.71	0.61		
Female	3.79	0.57		
Sexuality			-1.39	0.166
Hetero	3.74	0.59		
Not Hetero	3.89	0.62		
Athlete			-0.521	0.603
Yes	3.75	0.57		
No	3.79	0.62		
Female Athlete Respect and Perceived Femininity Scale				
Gender			3.03	0.003
Male	3.52	0.57		
Female	3.71	0.58		
Sexuality			0.034	0.973
Hetero	3.63	0.6		
Not Hetero	3.62	0.43		
Athlete			0.883	0.378
Yes	3.65	0.59		
No	3.59	0.55		

## Age

To determine how age influenced the attitudes of participants on their attitudes toward sexual orientation, a one-way ANOVA was conducted comparing the participants' answers from the Sexual Orientation Beliefs scale and their age category. A significant difference was found among the age categories,  $F(6, 331) = 2.98, p < .008$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .051$ . Tukey's *HSD* was used to determine the nature of the differences between the ages. This analysis revealed that participants aged 26-35 ( $\mu = 3.28, SD = .40$ ) were significantly more positive in their attitudes on the Sexual Orientation Beliefs scale than those aged 66 and older ( $\mu = 2.88, SD = .19$ ). The other age groups, 17 and younger ( $\mu = 3.43, SD = .40$ ), 18-25 ( $\mu = 3.18, SD = .37$ ), 36-45 ( $\mu = 3.20, SD = .39$ ), 46-55 ( $\mu = 3.02, SD = .33$ ), and 55-65 ( $\mu = 3.09, SD = .40$ ) were not significantly different from the other groups.

To determine how age influenced the attitudes of participants on their attitudes toward women, a one-way ANOVA was conducted comparing the participants' answers from the Attitudes Toward Women scale and their age category. A significant difference was found among the age categories,  $F(6, 331) = 2.82, p < .010$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .049$ . Tukey's *HSD* was used to determine the nature of the differences between the ages. This analysis revealed that participants aged 26-35 ( $\mu = 3.89, SD = .54$ ) were significantly more positive in their attitudes on the Attitudes Toward Women scale than those aged 66 and older ( $\mu = 3.20, SD = .57$ ). The other age groups, 17 and younger ( $\mu = 4.05, SD = .66$ ), 18-25 ( $\mu = 3.69, SD = .60$ ), 36-45 ( $\mu = 3.86, SD = .61$ ), 46-55 ( $\mu = 3.63, SD = .37$ ), and 55-65 ( $\mu = 3.78, SD = .63$ ) were not significantly different from the other groups.

To determine how age influenced the attitudes of participants on their attitudes toward female athletes, a one-way ANOVA was conducted comparing the participants' answers from the Female Athlete Respect and Perceived Femininity scale and their age category. A significant difference was found among the age categories,  $F(7, 329) = 3.12, p < .003$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .058$ .

Tukey's *HSD* was used to determine the nature of the differences between the ages. This analysis revealed that participants aged 56-65 ( $\mu = 3.94$ ,  $SD = .56$ ) were significantly more positive in their attitudes on the Female Athlete Respect and Perceived Femininity scale than those aged 18-25 ( $\mu = 3.53$ ,  $SD = .57$ ). The other age groups, 17 and younger ( $\mu = 3.83$ ,  $SD = .45$ ), 26-35 ( $\mu = 3.69$ ,  $SD = .58$ ), 36-45 ( $\mu = 3.50$ ,  $SD = .59$ ), 46-55 ( $\mu = 3.89$ ,  $SD = .43$ ), and 66 and older ( $\mu = 3.64$ ,  $SD = .79$ ) were not significantly different from the other groups.

**Table 3**  
*SOB scale, AWS scale and FARPF scale by age*

	<17		18-25		26-35		36-45		46-55		56-65		66+		
	$\mu$	SD	$\mu$	SD	$\mu$	SD	$\mu$	SD	$\mu$	SD	$\mu$	SD	$\mu$	SD	$p$
SOBS	3.43	.40	3.18	.37	3.23	.40	3.20	.39	3.02	.33	3.09	.40	2.88	.19	.008
AWS	4.05	.66	3.69	.60	3.89	.54	3.86	.61	3.63	.37	3.76	.63	3.20	.57	.01
FARPF	3.83	.45	3.53	.57	3.69	.58	3.50	.59	3.89	.43	3.94	.56	3.64	.79	.003

### Political Affiliation

To determine how political affiliation influenced the attitudes of participants on their attitudes toward sexual orientation, a one-way ANOVA was conducted comparing the participants' answers from the Sexual Orientation Beliefs scale and their political affiliation. A significant difference was found among the political affiliation categories,  $F(6, 331) = 2.98$ ,  $p < .008$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .351$ . Tukey's *HSD* was used to determine the nature of the differences between political affiliations. This analysis revealed that participants who identified as very liberal ( $\mu = 3.64$ ,  $SD = .36$ ) were significantly more positive on the Sexual Orientation Beliefs Scale than moderate ( $\mu = 3.22$ ,  $SD = .29$ ), conservative ( $\mu = 2.93$ ,  $SD = .28$ ), and very conservative ( $\mu = 2.85$ ,  $SD = .41$ ). Those who identified as liberal ( $\mu = 3.44$ ,  $SD = .34$ ) were significantly more positive than moderate ( $\mu = 3.22$ ,  $SD = .29$ ), conservative ( $\mu = 2.93$ ,  $SD = .28$ ), and very conservative ( $\mu = 2.85$ ,  $SD = .41$ ). Those who identified as moderate ( $\mu = 3.22$ ,  $SD = .29$ ) were significantly more negative than very liberal ( $\mu = 3.64$ ,  $SD = .36$ ) or liberal ( $\mu = 3.44$ ,  $SD = .34$ ), but significantly

more positive than conservative ( $\mu = 2.93, SD = .28$ ), and very conservative ( $\mu = 2.85, SD = .41$ ). Likewise, those who identified as conservative ( $\mu = 2.93, SD = .28$ ) were significantly more negative than very liberal ( $\mu = 3.64, SD = .36$ ), liberal ( $\mu = 3.44, SD = .34$ ) and moderate ( $\mu = 3.22, SD = .29$ ). Those who identified as very conservative ( $\mu = 2.85, SD = .41$ ) were significantly more negative than very liberal ( $\mu = 3.64, SD = .36$ ), liberal ( $\mu = 3.44, SD = .34$ ), and moderate ( $\mu = 3.22, SD = .29$ ).

To determine how political affiliation influenced the attitudes of participants on their attitudes toward women, a one-way ANOVA was conducted comparing the participants' answers from the Attitudes Toward Women scale and their political affiliation. A significant difference was found among the political affiliation categories  $F(4, 331) = 22.76, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .216$ . Tukey's *HSD* was used to determine the nature of the differences between the ages. This analysis revealed that participants who identified as very liberal ( $\mu = 4.28, SD = .55$ ) were significantly more positive on the Attitudes Toward Woman than moderate ( $\mu = 3.83, SD = .52$ ), conservative ( $\mu = 3.50, SD = .45$ ), and very conservative ( $\mu = 3.20, SD = .76$ ). Those who identified as liberal ( $\mu = 4.02, SD = .52$ ) were significantly more positive than conservative ( $\mu = 3.50, SD = .45$ ) and very conservative ( $\mu = 3.20, SD = .76$ ). Those who identified as moderate ( $\mu = 3.83, SD = .52$ ) were significantly more negative than very liberal ( $\mu = 4.28, SD = .55$ ), but significantly more positive than conservative ( $\mu = 3.50, SD = .45$ ), and very conservative ( $\mu = 3.20, SD = .76$ ). Likewise, those who identified as conservative ( $\mu = 3.50, SD = .45$ ) were significantly more negative than very liberal ( $\mu = 4.28, SD = .55$ ), liberal ( $\mu = 4.02, SD = .52$ ), and moderate ( $\mu = 3.83, SD = .52$ ). Those who identified as very conservative ( $\mu = 3.20, SD = .76$ ) were significantly more negative than very liberal ( $\mu = 4.28, SD = .55$ ), liberal ( $\mu = 4.02, SD = .52$ ), and moderate ( $\mu = 3.83, SD = .52$ ).

To determine how political affiliation influenced the attitudes of participants on their attitudes toward female athletes, a one-way ANOVA was conducted comparing the participants' answers from the Female Athlete Respect and Perceived Femininity scale and their political



affiliation. No significant difference was found among the political affiliation categories,  $F(4, 330) = 3.12, p > .671$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .007$ . Tukey's *HSD* was used to determine the nature of the differences between the ages. The participants who identified as different political affiliations did not differ significantly in their attitudes toward female athletes.

**Table 4**

*SOB scale, AWS scale and FARPF scale by political affiliation*

	Very Liberal		Liberal		Moderate		Conservative		Very Conservative		<i>p</i>
	$\mu$	<i>SD</i>	$\mu$	<i>SD</i>	$\mu$	<i>SD</i>	$\mu$	<i>SD</i>	$\mu$	<i>SD</i>	
SOBS	3.64	.36	3.44	.34	3.22	.29	2.93	.28	2.85	.41	.008
AWS	4.05	.66	3.69	.60	3.89	.53	3.86	.61	3.63	.37	<.001
FARPF	4.28	.55	4.02	.52	3.83	.52	3.50	.45	3.20	.76	.671

**RQ2: Does the physical appearance of a female athlete automatically bias perceptions of that athlete's sexuality, strength and skills?** Paired samples *t*-tests compared the difference in attitudes toward each of the photos used in the survey. The first *t*-test compared how attractive the participants rated the athlete in each photo. This test was found to be statistically significant,  $t(341) = 19.35, p < .001$ , indicating that participants found the hyper-feminine athlete ( $\mu = 3.89, SD = .86$ ) more attractive than the neutral athlete ( $\mu = 2.79, SD = .99$ ). The second *t*-test compared how masculine the participants rated the athlete in each photo. This test was found to be statistically significant,  $t(342) = -15.64, p < .001$ , indicating that participants found the neutral athlete ( $\mu = 3.18, SD = .97$ ) more masculine than the hyper-feminine athlete ( $\mu = 2.25, SD = .85$ ). The third *t*-test compared how feminine the participants rated the athlete in each photo. This test was found to be statistically significant,  $t(341) = 16.74, p < .001$ , indicating that participants found the hyper-feminine athlete ( $\mu = 3.88, SD = .69$ ) more feminine than the neutral athlete ( $\mu = 2.98, SD = .91$ ). The fourth *t*-test compared if the participants believed the athlete in each photo was straight. This test was found to be statistically significant,  $t(342) = 9.72, p < .0001$ , indicating that participants more often believed the hyper-feminine athlete ( $\mu = 3.46, SD$

=.71) to be more straight than the neutral athlete ( $\mu = 3.02$ ,  $SD = .79$ ). The fifth  $t$ -test compared if the participants believed the athlete in each photo was lesbian. This test was found to be statistically significant,  $t(342) = -9.64$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating that participants more often believed the neutral athlete ( $\mu = 2.98$ ,  $SD = .795$ ) was lesbian than the hyper-feminine athlete ( $\mu = 2.52$ ,  $SD = .72$ ). And finally, the last  $t$ -test compared how strong the participants rated the athlete in each photo. This test was found to be statistically significant  $t(343) = -15.64$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating that participants found the neutral athlete ( $\mu = 3.92$ ,  $SD = .67$ ) to be more strong than the hyper-feminine athlete ( $\mu = 3.81$ ,  $SD = .72$ ). There was no significant difference in what athlete the participants believed to be more highly skilled.

**Table 5**  
*Difference in attitudes toward photos based on physical appearance*

Descriptor	Treatment	$\mu$	$SD$	$t$	$p$
Attractive	Sexualized	3.89	.855	19.346	<.001
	Neutral	2.79	.996		
Masculine	Sexualized	2.25	.848	-15.639	<.001
	Neutral	3.18	.965		
Feminine	Sexualized	3.88	.687	16.764	<.001
	Neutral	2.98	.906		
Straight	Sexualized	3.46	.707	9.722	<.001
	Neutral	3.02	.791		
Lesbian	Sexualized	2.52	.721	-9.639	<.001
	Neutral	2.98	.795		
Skilled	Sexualized	3.70	.760	.166	.868
	Neutral	3.70	.773		
Strong	Sexualized	3.81	.722	-3.517	<.001
	Neutral	3.92	.666		

**RQ3: Does exposure to an athlete’s sexual orientation influence perceptions about that athlete?** The descriptors of the female athletes were analyzed by means of a two-way mixed design ANOVA having two levels of photo type (hyper-feminine, neutral) as a between-subjects factor and three levels of treatment type (heterosexual, homosexual, neutral) as a within-subjects factor.

For whether the athlete was attractive, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found not to be statistically significant  $F(2, 339) = .594, p > .553$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .003$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 339) = 374.35, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .525$ , indicating difference between the perceived attractiveness of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 3.89, SD = .855$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 2.79, SD = .996$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was found to not be statistically significant,  $F(2, 339) = 2.19, p > .114$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .013$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multicomparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results shows that the heterosexual ( $\mu = 3.43, SE = .070$ ), homosexual ( $\mu = 3.22, SE = .073$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 3.36, SE = .070$ ) treatment type means did not differ significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was masculine, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found not to be statistically significant  $F(2, 340) = .764, p > .466$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .004$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 340) = 4847.33, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .934$ , indicating difference between the perceived masculinity of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 2.25, SD = .848$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 3.18, SD = .965$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was found to not be statistically significant,  $F(2, 340) = .255, p > .775$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .001$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multicomparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results shows that the heterosexual ( $\mu = 2.65, SE = .066$ ), homosexual ( $\mu = 2.78, SE = .069$ ), and neutral ( $\mu = 2.74, SE = .067$ ) treatment type means did not differ significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was feminine, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found not to be statistically significant  $F(2, 339) = .860, p > .424$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .005$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 339) = 10041.91, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .967$ , indicating difference between the perceived femininity of

the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 3.88$ ,  $SD = .687$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 2.98$ ,  $SD = .906$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was found to not be statistically significant,  $F(2, 339) = 2.22$ ,  $p > .11$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .013$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multi-comparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results showed that the heterosexual ( $\mu = 3.52$ ,  $SE = .059$ ), homosexual ( $\mu = 3.34$ ,  $SE = .061$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 3.43$ ,  $SE = .058$ ) treatment type means did not differ significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was straight, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found to be statistically significant  $F(2, 340) = 24.38$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .125$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 340) = 95.14$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .219$ , indicating difference between the perceived heterosexuality of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 2.52$ ,  $SD = .721$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 2.98$ ,  $SD = .795$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was found to not be statistically significant,  $F(2, 340) = .80$ ,  $p > .45$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .005$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multicomparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results showed that the heterosexual ( $\mu = 2.46$ ,  $SE = .053$ ), homosexual ( $\mu = 3.04$ ,  $SE = .055$ ), and neutral ( $\mu = 2.77$ ,  $SE = .053$ ) treatment type means did not differ significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was lesbian, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found not to be statistically significant  $F(2, 340) = .69$ ,  $p > .502$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .004$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 340) = 8037.95$ ,  $p > .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .959$ , indicating difference between the perceived homosexuality of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 2.52$ ,  $SD = .721$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 2.98$ ,  $SD = .795$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was found to be statistically significant  $F(2, 340) = 93.27$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .215$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multi-comparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results showed that the heterosexual ( $\mu = 2.46$ ,  $SE = .053$ ),

homosexual ( $\mu = 3.04, SE = .055$ ), and neutral ( $\mu = 2.77, SE = .053$ ) treatment type means differed significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was strong, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found not to be statistically significant  $F(2, 341) = 1.47, p > .231$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .009$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 341) = 13025.21, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .974$ , indicating difference between the perceived strength of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 3.81, SD = .722$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 3.92, SD = .666$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(2, 341) = 12.317, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .035$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multicomparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results shows that the heterosexual ( $\mu = 3.89, SE = .058$ ), homosexual ( $\mu = 3.88, SE = .060$ ), and neutral ( $\mu = 3.84, SE = .058$ ) treatment type means differed significantly from one another. There were no significant differences in the perceived skills of the athletes, as seen in Table 6.

**Table 6**

*Difference in attitudes toward photos based on sexual orientation*

Descriptor	Heterosexual		Homosexual		Neutral	
	$\mu$	SD	$\mu$	SD	$\mu$	SD
Attractive	3.43	0.07	3.22	0.073	3.36	0.07
Masculine	2.65	0.066	2.78	0.069	2.74	0.067
Feminine	3.52	0.059	3.34	0.061	3.43	0.058
Straight	2.46	0.053	3.04	0.055	2.77	0.053
Lesbian	2.46	0.053	3.04	0.055	2.77	0.053
Skilled	3.77	0.064	3.64	0.067	3.78	0.064
Strong	3.89	0.058	3.88	0.06	3.84	0.058

**RQ4: How do attitudes toward female athletes influence perceptions about the skills, sexuality and body image of female athletes?** Before running the results to research question 4, the participants' responses on the 5-point Likert-type scale for the Female Athlete Respect and Perceived Femininity scale were combined into the variables of low, medium, and

high. The participants' answers to the Female Athlete Respect and Perceived Femininity scale were analyzed by means of a two-way mixed design ANOVA having two levels of photo type (hyper-feminine, neutral) as a between-subjects factor and three levels of answers (low, medium, high) as a within-subjects factor.

For whether the athlete was attractive, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found to be statistically significant  $F(2, 338) = 4.75, p < .009$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .027$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 338) = 321.97, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .488$ , indicating difference between the perceived attractiveness of the sexualized ( $\mu = 3.89, SD = .856$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 2.79, SD = .997$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was also found to be statistically significant,  $F(2, 338) = 16.97, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .091$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multicomparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results shows that low ( $\mu = 2.90, SE = .089$ ), medium ( $\mu = 2.62, SE = .048$ ), and high ( $\mu = 2.61, SE = .087$ ) answer means differed significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was masculine, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found not to be statistically significant  $F(2, 339) = .635, p > .531$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .004$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 339) = 194.22, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .364$ , indicating difference between the perceived masculinity of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 2.25, SD = .848$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 3.18, SD = .965$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was also found to be statistically significant,  $F(2, 339) = 12.85, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .070$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multi-comparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results showed that low ( $\mu = 3.09, SE = .084$ ), medium ( $\mu = 2.62, SE = .048$ ), and high ( $\mu = 2.61, SE = .087$ ) answer means differed significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was feminine, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was not found to be statistically significant  $F(2, 338) = 2.61, p > .075$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .015$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 338) = 244.98, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .004$ , indicating difference between the perceived femininity of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 3.88, SD = .686$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 2.99, SD = .906$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was also found to be statistically significant,  $F(2, 338) = 30.38, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .152$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multi-comparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results shows that low ( $\mu = 2.95, SE = .071$ ), medium ( $\mu = 3.52, SE = .040$ ), and high ( $\mu = 3.66, SE = .073$ ) answer means differed significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was straight, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found to be statistically significant  $F(2, 339) = 4.70, p < .010$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .027$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 339) = 93.49, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .152$ , indicating difference between the perceived heterosexuality of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 3.46, SD = .708$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 3.02, SD = .790$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(2, 339) = 4.28, p < .015$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .025$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multicomparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results shows that low ( $\mu = 3.06, SE = .074$ ), medium ( $\mu = 3.31, SE = .043$ ), and high ( $\mu = 3.21, SE = .077$ ) answer means differed significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was lesbian, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found to be statistically significant  $F(2, 339) = 3.94, p < .020$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .023$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 339) = 90.28, p > .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .210$ , indicating difference between the perceived homosexuality of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 2.52, SD = .721$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 2.98, SD = .795$ ) athletes. The within-

subjects main effect of treatment type was found to not be statistically significant  $F(2, 339) = 1.59, p > .205$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .009$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multi-comparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results showed that low ( $\mu = 2.46, SE = .053$ ), medium ( $\mu = 3.04, SE = .055$ ), and high ( $\mu = 2.77, SE = .053$ ) answer means did not differ significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was skilled, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found not to be statistically significant  $F(2, 339) = .899, p > .408$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .005$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was not found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 339) = .041, p > .841$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .000$ , indicating no difference between the perceived skills of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 3.70, SD = .760$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 3.70, SD = .773$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(2, 339) = 10.18, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .062$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multi-comparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results showed that low ( $\mu = 3.89, SE = .058$ ), medium ( $\mu = 3.88, SE = .060$ ), and high ( $\mu = 3.84, SE = .058$ ) answer means differed significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was strong, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found not to be statistically significant  $F(2, 340) = .259, p > .772$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .002$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 340) = 10.21, p < .002$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .029$ , indicating difference between the perceived strength of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 3.81, SD = .760$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 3.92, SD = .667$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(2, 340) = 8.30, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .047$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multicomparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results shows that low ( $\mu = 3.65, SE = .074$ ), medium ( $\mu = 3.88, SE = .042$ ), and high ( $\mu = 4.08, SE = .077$ ) answer means differed significantly from one another.



**Table 7**

*Difference in attitudes toward female athletes based on Female Athlete Respect and Perceived Femininity scale*

Descriptor	Low		Medium		High	
	$\mu$	SE	$\mu$	SE	$\mu$	SE
Attractive	2.90	0.089	2.62	0.048	2.61	0.087
Masculine	3.09	0.084	2.62	0.048	2.61	0.087
Feminine	2.95	0.071	3.52	0.04	3.66	0.073
Straight	3.06	0.074	3.31	0.043	3.21	0.077
Lesbian	2.46	0.053	3.04	0.055	2.77	0.053
Skilled	3.89	0.058	3.88	0.06	3.84	0.058
Strong	3.65	0.074	3.88	0.042	4.08	0.077

**RQ5: How do attitudes toward women influence perceptions about the skills, sexuality and body image of female athletes?** Before running the results to research question 5, the participants' responses on the 5-point Likert-type scale for the Attitudes Toward Women scale were combined into the variables of low, medium, and high. The participants' answers to the Attitudes Toward Women scale were analyzed by means of a two-way mixed design ANOVA having two levels of photo type (hyper-feminine, neutral) as a between-subjects factor and three levels of answers (low, medium, high) as a within-subjects factor.

For whether the athlete was attractive, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was not found to be statistically significant  $F(39, 302) = 1.16, p > .248$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .130$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 302) = 240.726, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .403$ , indicating difference between the perceived attractiveness of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 3.89, SD = .855$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 2.79, SD = .996$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was found to not be statistically significant,  $F(39, 302) = 1.16, p > .248$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .130$ . The nature of this effect was

determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multi-comparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results showed that low ( $\mu = 2.94$ ,  $SE = .102$ ), medium ( $\mu = 3.36$ ,  $SE = .050$ ), and high ( $\mu = 3.61$ ,  $SE = .092$ ) answer means did not differ significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was masculine, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was not found to be statistically significant  $F(2, 340) = .978$ ,  $p > .377$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .006$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 340) = 147.72$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .303$ , indicating difference between the perceived masculinity of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 2.25$ ,  $SD = .848$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 3.18$ ,  $SD = .965$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was also found to be statistically significant,  $F(2, 340) = 7.02$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .040$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multi-comparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results showed that low ( $\mu = 2.98$ ,  $SE = .096$ ), medium ( $\mu = 2.71$ ,  $SE = .047$ ), and high ( $\mu = 2.49$ ,  $SE = .088$ ) answer means differed significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was feminine, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found to be statistically significant  $F(2, 339) = 3.37$ ,  $p < .036$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .019$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 339) = 162.99$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .325$ , indicating difference between the perceived femininity of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 3.88$ ,  $SD = .687$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 2.98$ ,  $SD = .906$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(2, 339) = 11.35$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .063$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multi-comparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results showed that low ( $\mu = 3.13$ ,  $SE = .084$ ), medium ( $\mu = 3.43$ ,  $SE = .041$ ), and high ( $\mu = 3.67$ ,  $SE = .077$ ) answer means differed significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was straight, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found not to be statistically significant  $F(2, 340) = 2.04$ ,  $p > .132$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .012$ .

The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 340) = 54.81, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .139$ , indicating difference between the perceived heterosexuality of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 3.46, SD = .707$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 3.02, SD = .791$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was found to not be statistically significant,  $F(2, 340) = 1.23, p > .293$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .007$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multi-comparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results showed that low ( $\mu = 3.20, SE = .085$ ), medium ( $\mu = 3.27, SE = .041$ ), and high ( $\mu = 3.14, SE = .078$ ) answer means did not differ significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was lesbian, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found not to be statistically significant  $F(2, 340) = 1.26, p > .284$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .007$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 340) = 57.66, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .145$ , indicating difference between the perceived homosexuality of the sexualized ( $\mu = 2.52, SD = .721$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 2.98, SD = .795$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was not found to be statistically significant  $F(2, 340) = .977, p > .378$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .006$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multi-comparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results showed that low ( $\mu = 2.83, SE = .084$ ), medium ( $\mu = 2.72, SE = .041$ ), and high ( $\mu = 2.80, SE = .076$ ) answer means did not differ significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was skilled, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found not to be statistically significant  $F(1, 340) = .66, p > .519$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .004$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found not to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 340) = .032, p > .858$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .000$ , indicating no difference between the perceived strength of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 3.70, SD = .760$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 3.70, SD = .773$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(2, 340) = 13.51,$

$p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .074$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multi-comparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results showed that low ( $\mu = 3.34$ ,  $SE = .092$ ), medium ( $\mu = 3.70$ ,  $SE = .045$ ), and high ( $\mu = 3.99$ ,  $SE = .083$ ) answer means differed significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was strong, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found to not be statistically significant  $F(2, 341) = 1.51$ ,  $p > .222$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .009$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 341) = 6.59$ ,  $p < .011$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .019$ , indicating difference between the perceived strength of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 3.81$ ,  $SD = .722$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 3.92$ ,  $SD = .666$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(2, 341) = 14.78$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .080$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multi-comparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results showed that low ( $\mu = 3.51$ ,  $SE = .082$ ), medium ( $\mu = 3.88$ ,  $SE = .040$ ), and high ( $\mu = 4.11$ ,  $SE = .075$ ) answer means differed significantly from one another.

**Table 8**

*Difference in attitudes toward female athletes based on Attitudes Toward Women scale*

Descriptor	Low		Medium		High	
	$\mu$	SE	$\mu$	SE	$\mu$	SE
Attractive	2.94	0.102	3.36	0.05	3.61	0.092
Masculine	2.98	0.096	2.71	0.047	2.49	0.088
Feminine	3.13	0.084	3.43	0.041	3.67	0.077
Straight	3.20	0.085	3.27	0.041	3.14	0.078
Lesbian	2.83	0.084	2.72	0.041	2.80	0.076
Skilled	3.34	0.092	3.70	0.045	3.99	0.083
Strong	3.51	0.082	3.88	0.04	4.11	0.075

**RQ6: How do attitudes toward sexuality influence perceptions about the skills, sexuality and body image of female athletes?** Before running the results to research question 6, the participants' responses on the 5-point Likert-type scale for the Sexual Orientation Beliefs scale were combined into the variables of low, medium, and high. The participants' answers to the Sexual Orientation Beliefs scale were analyzed by means of a two-way mixed design

ANOVA having two levels of photo type (hyper-feminine, neutral) as a between-subjects factor and three levels of answers (low, medium, high) as a within-subjects factor.

For whether the athlete was attractive, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found not to be statistically significant  $F(2, 339) = 1.58, p > .207$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .009$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 339) = 211.21, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .384$ , indicating difference between the perceived attractiveness of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 3.89, SD = .856$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 2.79, SD = .997$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was also found to be statistically significant,  $F(2, 339) = 7.66, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .043$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multi-comparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results showed that low ( $\mu = 3.12, SE = .107$ ), medium ( $\mu = 3.31, SE = .049$ ), and high ( $\mu = 3.67, SE = .099$ ) answer means differed significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was masculine, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found to not be statistically significant  $F(2, 340) = 1.60, p > .204$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .009$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 340) = 143.04, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .296$ , indicating difference between the perceived masculinity of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 2.25, SD = .848$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 3.18, SD = .965$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was also found to be statistically significant,  $F(2, 340) = 8.71, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .049$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multi-comparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results showed that low ( $\mu = 2.93, SE = .101$ ), medium ( $\mu = 2.75, SE = .046$ ), and high ( $\mu = 2.39, SE = .093$ ) answer means differed significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was feminine, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found to be statistically significant  $F(2, 3339) = 6.28, p < .002$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .036$ . The

between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 339) = 183.62, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .351$ , indicating difference between the perceived femininity of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 3.88, SD = .686$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 2.99, SD = .906$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(2, 339) = 8.023, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .045$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multicomparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results shows that low ( $\mu = 3.17, SE = .089$ ), medium ( $\mu = 3.43, SE = .040$ ), and high ( $\mu = 3.66, SE = .083$ ) answer means differed significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was straight, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found to be statistically significant  $F(2, 340) = 6.55, p < .002$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .037$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 340) = 76.49, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .184$ , indicating difference between the perceived heterosexuality of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 3.46, SD = .707$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 2.02, SD = .791$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was found to not be statistically significant,  $F(2, 340) = .118, p > .889$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .001$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multicomparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results shows that low ( $\mu = 3.22, SE = .089$ ), medium ( $\mu = 3.25, SE = .040$ ), and high ( $\mu = 3.21, SE = .083$ ) answer means did not differ significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was lesbian, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found to be statistically significant  $F(2, 340) = 6.32, p < .002$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .036$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 340) = 80.13, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .191$ , indicating difference between the perceived homosexuality of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 2.52, SD = .721$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 2.98, SD = .795$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was not found to be statistically significant  $F(2, 340) = .228, p > .796$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .001$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni

adjusted multicomparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results shows that low ( $\mu = 2.79, SE = .089$ ), medium ( $\mu = 2.75, SE = .040$ ), and high ( $\mu = 2.71, SE = .082$ ) answer means did not differ significantly from one another.

For whether the athlete was strong, the interaction effect of Treatment Type x Photo Type was found not to be statistically significant  $F(2, 341) = 2.38, p > .093$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .014$ . The between-subjects main effect of photo type was not found to be statistically significant,  $F(1, 341) = 2.286, p > .131$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .007$ , indicating no difference between the perceived strength of the hyper-feminine ( $\mu = 3.81, SD = .722$ ) and neutral ( $\mu = 3.92, SD = .666$ ) athletes. The within-subjects main effect of treatment type was found to not be statistically significant,  $F(2, 341) = 2.00, p > .137$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .012$ . The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni adjusted multicomparison test ( $p < .05$ ). Results showed that low ( $\mu = 3.82, SE = .089$ ), medium ( $\mu = 3.84, SE = .041$ ), and high ( $\mu = 4.02, SE = .083$ ) answer means did not differ significantly from one another. There were no significant differences in the perceived skills of the athletes, as seen in Table 9.

**Table 9**

*Difference in attitudes toward female athletes based on Sexual Orientation Beliefs scale*

Descriptor	Low		Medium		High	
	$\mu$	SE	$\mu$	SE	$\mu$	SE
Attractive	3.12	0.107	3.31	0.049	3.67	0.099
Masculine	2.93	0.101	2.75	0.046	2.39	0.093
Feminine	3.17	0.089	3.43	0.04	3.66	0.083
Straight	3.22	0.089	3.25	0.04	3.21	0.083
Lesbian	2.79	0.089	2.75	0.04	2.71	0.082
Skilled	3.67	0.10	3.67	0.045	3.85	0.092
Strong	3.82	0.089	3.84	0.041	4.02	0.083

**RQ7: How do male and female athletes differ in their attitudes toward sexuality, femininity, and female athletes?** Before running the results to research question 7, the participants' responses for gender, and those that said they were athletes were split into male and female, and yes and no, respectively. The researcher wanted to know if significant differences existed between male athletes and female athletes. To determine if male and female athletes differed significantly in their beliefs toward sexual orientation, a one-way ANOVA was conducted comparing the participants' answers from the Sexual Orientation Beliefs scale to their gender and athlete status. A significant difference was found between male and female athletes in their attitudes toward sexual orientation,  $F(1, 330) = 5.03, p < .026$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .015$ , indicating difference between male athletes ( $\mu = 3.20, SD = .040$ ), and female athletes ( $\mu = 23.19, SD = .035$ ).

To determine if male and female athletes differed significantly in their attitudes toward women, a one-way ANOVA was conducted comparing the participants' answers from the Attitudes Toward Women scale to their gender and athlete status. A significant difference was not found between male and female athletes in their attitudes toward sexual orientation,  $F(1, 330) = 1.94, p > .165$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .006$ , indicating no difference between male athletes ( $\mu = 3.67, SD = .061$ ) and female athletes ( $\mu = 3.82, SD = .054$ ).

To determine if male and female athletes differed significantly in their attitudes toward female athletes, a one-way ANOVA was conducted comparing the participants' answers from the Female Athlete Respect and Perceived Femininity scale to their gender and athlete status. A significant difference was not found between male and female athletes in their attitudes toward sexual orientation,  $F(1, 329) = 1.34, p > .247$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .004$ , indicating no difference between male athletes ( $\mu = 3.52, SD = .059$ ), and female athletes ( $\mu = 3.76, SD = .053$ ).



## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

#### **Summary**

This study used the theory of objectification, which posits that women are treated and looked upon as sex objects and body parts, instead of a whole person who has a personality and intellect (Calogero, et. al, 2011; Frederickson & Roberts, 1997; Szymanski & Henning, 2006). Objectification can be especially troubling when it comes to the world of sports. Female athletes may struggle to exist in a world that expects them to maintain their femininity, while embracing masculine characteristics commonly associated with sports (Kane, 1989; Krane, 2001). Some female athletes have posed in revealing clothing in men's magazines, further emphasizing their femininity, and likely increasing objectification (Daniels, 2009). In addition to emphasizing the femininity of female athletes, the media may also emphasize their heterosexuality, or conversely, label those with a masculine appearance as a lesbian (Cahn, 1993; Knight & Guiliano, 2003; Wellman & Blinde, 1997).

In an effort to understand how people view female athletes based on their appearance and sexual orientation, this study utilized an experimental methodology based on Knight and Guiliano's 2001 study assessing the media's representation of male and female athletes.

Experimental research proved helpful in the study and resulted with results consistent with examined literature (Knight & Guiliano, 2001). The goal of this present study was to

examine what role the appearance and sexual orientation of female athletes has in how the public perceives female athletes. This research tested participants' reactions to two photographs of female athletes (hyper-feminine, neutral). A cluster and random sampling of 344 participants, including students at a large public university in the Midwest and participants on social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Reddit, was gathered in March, 2014.

Respondents were shown one of three variations of the two photographs (homosexual, heterosexual, neutral). The design for each treatment was identical, except the homosexual treatment referenced the athletes' partners, the heterosexual treatment referenced their husbands, and the neutral treatment made no mention of a significant other. Participants were asked to respond to a series of descriptors of the athletes on a 5-point Likert-type scale, including how masculine and feminine they believed the athlete to be, and if they believed the athlete pictured was straight or a lesbian. During the survey, each participant filled out a survey that measured attitudes toward female athletes, attitudes toward women, beliefs about sexual orientation, and some demographic variables.

Participant attitudes toward female athletes were measured by the Female Athlete Respect Scale and Perceived Femininity of Female Athletes Scale. This scale assessed how much participants respect female athletes, and if they believed female athletes are feminine and masculine (Royce, et. al, 2003). The Attitudes Toward Women scale was used to measure participants' attitudes toward women. The 15-item scale measures an individual's attitudes toward women, and what people believe about gender roles and women's place in society, (Spence & Helmreich, 1972). Beliefs about sexual orientation was measured by the 34-item Sexual Orientation Beliefs Scale (SOBS) (Areseneau, et. al, 2013), which assessed how participants felt about sexual orientation and their beliefs about homosexuality. The final portion of the survey collected demographic data including: gender, age, sexual orientation, place of origin, political affiliation, and if participants were athletes in high school or college.

## **Discussion**

Overall, participants were more likely to label the sexualized athlete as attractive, feminine, and straight, and label the neutral athlete as masculine, lesbian, and strong. Although this was not surprising due to cultural ideals and beliefs, the appearance or sexual orientation of the female athletes had nothing to do with how skilled the participants perceived the athlete to be. This would suggest that sexual orientation is starting to become just another part of a person, such as hair or eye color. Perhaps the stigma of homosexuality in sports is beginning to wane, and people are starting to concentrate more on the skills and athleticism of athletes, rather than their appearance or sexual orientation.

Research question 1 asked how demographic characteristics influenced attitudes toward sexuality, femininity, and female athletes. When it came to gender, women tended to be more favorable in their beliefs toward sexual orientation, their attitudes toward women, and their attitudes toward female athletes, which was not surprising. While there was no significant difference in how participants of differing sexual orientations felt about women and female athletes, those who identified as not heterosexual were significantly more favorable in their beliefs about sexual orientation than those who identified as heterosexual, which again was not surprising. When it came to whether or not a participant had been an athlete, there was no significance when it came to beliefs about sexuality, femininity, and female athletes. When it came to age, there was a significant difference between those aged 66 and older and those aged 26-35 in beliefs about sexual orientation. The younger group was significantly more positive in their beliefs toward sexual orientation. This was interesting, because it showed a shift in beliefs over a period of two generations in how people think about different sexual orientation. Those aged 66 and older grew up during a time of civil unrest and most likely remember when interracial relationships were taboo. Perhaps when the 26-35 group is older, having a same sex partner will no longer be a shocking or controversial issue. When it came to attitudes toward

women, those aged 26-35 were once again more favorable toward women and gender roles than those aged 66 and older. This once again demonstrates a shift in culture; when those aged 66 and older were younger, women stayed home and took care of the house and children. Today, women have options and can pursue whatever it is they wish to pursue. They are no longer bound to societal norms of a patriarchal society that those in older generations are familiar with.

Conversely, when it came to attitudes toward female athletes, those aged 56-65 were more favorable in their beliefs about female athletes than those aged 18-25. Although it is surprising, perhaps the younger group regards women's sports as "boring" or uninteresting, while the older group views women's participation in sports as a positive activity. When it came to political affiliation, not too surprising, those who identified as very liberal were more favorable in their views toward women and beliefs about sexual orientation than those who identified as very conservative. For each scale, it was almost a continuum; the more conservative a person was, the less likely they were to be favorable toward women and in their beliefs about sexual orientation. This comes as no surprise, as the Democratic party is known for causes such as women's rights and the legalization of same-sex marriage, while the Republican party has taken a stand against abortion and maintains traditional views of marriage. When it came to the Female Athlete Respect and Perceived Femininity Scale and the political affiliation of participants, there was no significant difference among the parties.

Research question 2 asked if the physical appearance of a female athlete automatically biased perceptions of the athlete's sexuality, strength, and skills. This question just compared the female athletes in the photographs, regardless of sexual orientation. While significant differences existed for whether the participants found the women in the photos to be attractive, masculine, feminine, straight, lesbian, and strong, there was no difference in how skilled the participants believed the athletes to be, based on physical appearance. Interestingly enough, the mean for how skilled the participants believed the athletes to be was exactly the same for both the sexualized

and neutral athlete. Not surprising, participants found the sexualized athlete to be more attractive, feminine, and straight, and the neutral athlete to appear to be more masculine, lesbian, and strong. Still, the fact that participants believed both athletes to be equally skilled is an important finding, and may indicate shifts in how people view female athletes, contrary to examined literature.

Research questions 3 asked if exposure to an athlete's sexual orientation influenced perceptions about that athlete. While significant difference existed between the two pictures, there were no significant differences in how the participants viewed the athletes based on their sexual orientation. Similar to the results of research question 2, this is important, because it suggests that people are beginning to care less about the sexual orientation of an athlete. The results of this question suggest that it does not matter what orientation the athlete identifies with; people still view her the same way, regardless of if she is straight or lesbian.

Research question 4 asked how do attitudes toward female athletes influence perceptions about the skills, sexuality, and body image of female athletes. Respondents who had a low view of female athletes tended to rank the characteristics such as masculine and lesbian, as higher than other characteristics not commonly associated with female athletes such as feminine, as lower. This showed that those that have a lower respect and perceived femininity of female athletes tend to associate "mannish" characteristics with athletes, which is consistent with examined literature. They tended to believe that the women in the pictures were more masculine and less strong than those who had a more favorable view toward female athletes.

Research question 5 asked how do attitudes toward women influence perceptions about the skills, sexuality, and body image of female athletes. Similar to the results of research question 4, those who were more favorable toward women were more likely to regard the athletes as feminine, skilled, and strong.

Research question 6 asked how do attitudes toward sexuality influence perceptions about the skills, sexuality, and body image of female athletes. Once again, those who were more favorable in their attitudes toward sexuality were more likely to consider the athletes to be feminine and strong. Those who were less favorable in their beliefs about sexual orientation were more likely to consider the neutral athlete in the picture to be a lesbian, but they were also more likely to consider the hyper-feminine athlete to be straight than those who were more favorable in their beliefs about sexual orientation.

Research question asked how male and female athletes differed in their attitudes toward sexual orientation, attitudes toward woman and attitudes toward female athletes. While there was no significant difference in the attitudes of male and female athletes toward women and female athletes, there was a significant difference in their beliefs about sexual orientation. Perhaps this is because male athletes are supposed to be the embodiment of everything masculine, which includes being attracted to women. Male athletes may have more negative attitudes toward sexual orientation, because they may believe being gay makes a man less “manly,” therefore undermining the masculinity of sports. This is evident in modern sports: when a female athlete publicly comes out as a lesbian, most people are not surprised, but when a male athlete tells the world he is gay, it becomes a big deal, such as the case of Michael Sam (Mandel, 2014).

Because participants were more likely to label the neutral athlete as “masculine” and “strong,” it was interesting that they believed both athletes to have the same level of skill. The old notion that women have to either be smart or pretty seems to be fading, as participants believed that hyper-feminine athlete could be “attractive,” “feminine,” and “skilled.” If the researcher had made predictions about the results of the survey, she would have posited that participants would have perceived the neutral athlete to be significantly more skilled than the hyper-feminine athlete. Yet, there was no significance. Participants appeared to believe that feminine women can also be skilled. This finding is in opposition to examined literature that suggested women who appear to be more masculine are “better” at sports. It could be due to how the athletes were represented.

Since they were presented as players worthy of a spread in a magazine that highlighted their ability, participants may have assumed they were equally skilled, or they would not have been featured in a magazine. This finding may also be due to the race of the female athletes used in this study. According to a 2013 study of race in the WNBA, 72% of WNBA players were African-Americans (Lapchik, 2013). Since African-Americans are associated with the WNBA more than any other race, participants may not have questioned the athletes' skill level, instead of assuming that obviously, they are skilled athletes.

Race may also have influenced the overall findings of the study. The population was mainly white, young, and heterosexual. A small percentage of populations identified as ethnicities other than white. While this was indicative of the society in which most of the respondents live, the findings cannot be generalized to other populations. White people will look at African-American culture and African-American women differently than African-Americans and other ethnicities will. Similarly, if a larger percentage of the population had been African-American, the results of the study may have been different.

Another area that may have been beneficial to look at is whether or not the participants were fans of women's sports. If the participants were fans of, and regularly watched, women's sports, they may have had different attitudes toward female athletes and different perceptions of the female athletes.

### **Implications**

Though the results of this study are not generalizable to the entire United States population, the results of this study can still be valuable to those in sport industries and for lesbian athletes. Vealey (1997) discussed the stigma she felt when she was a college athlete struggling with the realization that she was a lesbian, and explored the pressures for lesbians in sport to remain silent about their sexual identity. She said that she and her teammates engaged in

behaviors to avoid the stigma of being labeled a lesbian female basketball player. This study suggests that lesbian athletes no longer have to fear the stigma that Vealey felt as a lesbian student-athlete. Perhaps now, just as female spectators are able to enjoy their sport of choice alongside their male counterparts, female athletes will be able to excel in their sport of choice without being worried about how people view them by their appearance or sexual orientation. The results suggest that sexual orientation is longer a taboo subject in women's sports, and it does not affect how spectators view athletes. On a larger scale, perhaps this study suggests that people are beginning to be more accepting, or at least not so judgmental, of those that have a sexual orientation that challenges traditional gender beliefs.

In a NCAA survey, 51% of women coaches, and 46% of female athletes said that their involvement in sports led other to assume that they were lesbian ("Empowering women," 2014). Although Cothren (2014) asserted that homophobia in sports is "far from dead" (para. 11), perhaps this study can be beneficial in demonstrating that although homophobia in sports may not be dead, it is hopefully on the decline. This study offers a foundation in understanding how people view female and lesbian athletes, which can be beneficial in furthering the extinction of homophobia in sports.

### **Limitations**

Several limitations should be considered when analyzing the results of this study, including population, imagery, and experimental conditions.

### **Population**

This study used cluster sampling, and a random sample from participants from social media websites. Consequently, the results cannot be generalized to the U.S. population as a whole. While the literature does support some of the results, and the study does add to the literature in the representation of female and lesbian athletes, the results should be restricted to



those who live in the Midwest. Roughly 39.5% of respondents identified with Oklahoma as their state of origin. In future studies, measures should be taken to ensure that respondents are normally distributed across the 50 states for a better sample and results that are indicative of the United States as a whole. Also, although more than 500 participants responded to the survey, only 344 completely answered every questions, rendering some responses unusable. A larger sample size may have rendered different results.

### **Imagery**

This study used African-American athletes in the photographs used in the survey. Since the population was mainly white, there may have been limitations in how participants perceived the African-American females. Whites may view “black culture” and African-American women differently than they view their own culture. It is unclear what kind of implications the race of the athletes may have had in how participants responded to the questions. For example, a respondent may have not said either athlete was attractive, simply because he or she might not be attracted to African-Americans. The researcher wanted the athletes in the photographs to appear similar in appearance, because she wanted to eliminate as many variables as she could that might influence participant perception. It was difficult to find two stock photos of female athletes in the desired situation (i.e., hyper-feminine, neutral) that appeared similar in eye color and hair color. Consequently, the researcher believed the photographs used presented two females in the desired states that appeared similar in appearance (skin color, eye color, hair color). One of the findings was that participants believed both athletes were equally skilled. Since the athletes were presented as features in a magazine, people may have assumed that they were skilled since they were talented enough to be featured in a magazine, regardless of the athletes’ appearance.

### **Experimental Conditions**

Another potential limitation of this study was that some of the conditions in the study lacked external validity. The media seldom discuss the partners of lesbian athletes, since examined literature suggests that the media concentrate on the heterosexuality of athletes. The way in which the photographs of the athletes were shown to participants and how they responded to the stimulus and the questions on the survey cannot be generalized to how people view images in a magazine. The type of methodology cannot truly replicate the long-term consequences of the media as a tool of socialization (Knight & Guiliano, 2001). It is unclear if participants would respond to the photographs in the same manner if they were to see them in a magazine. The results may not be similar.

### **Conclusion**

This study was primarily concerned with how the media represents female athletes, and what role the appearance and sexual orientation of female athletes has in how the public perceived female athletes. Future research should further investigate the portrayal of homosexual athletes in the media by focusing on differences in gender. For example, are lesbian athletes represented differently than openly gay male athletes? Previous research has noted that the media portray male and female athletes differently in the media (Daniels, 2009; Duggan & McCreary, 2008; Knight & Guiliano, 2001; Krane, 2001). Future research might also focus on athletes that identify with a sexuality that exists between the borders of heterosexuality and homosexuality, such as bisexual, queer, and pansexual. Callis (2014) asserted that the “sexual binary of heterosexual and homosexual is shifting and becoming less hegemonic” (p. 64). As the binary becomes less hegemonic, it may be useful to study its existence in the world of sports. Exploring how the media represent homosexual athletes depending on gender and sexual identity may be an important step in sport literature. Future research could also explore people’s perception of female athletes using a different race than African-American. As noted in the limitations, it is

unclear how the race of the African-American women used in the study affected the answers of participants. Using different photographs of women may yield different results.

The results confirm that the media may influence how people view lesbian and female athletes based on appearance and sexual orientation. Interestingly enough, although the participants tended to view the sexualized athlete as being more feminine and representative of feminine ideals, the looks or sexual orientation of an athlete did not affect how skilled or talented people perceived the athlete to be. When comparing the two photos, there was no difference in how skilled participants found either athlete to be based on their appearance or sexual orientation. This is exciting, because it suggests that participants believe that feminine women can also be skilled.

The stereotype of female athletes as masculine did not seem to permeate the opinions of the participants. This suggests that the appearance of female athletes does not matter to people; a female can be good at sports, regardless of her outside appearance. However, the more favorable participants tended to be toward women, female athletes, and in their beliefs toward sexual orientation, the more likely they were to equate feminine characteristics and strength with the athletes. This was important, because it suggested that those who were more favorable in their opinions were more favorable overall toward the athletes. Those that were less favorable tended to reinforce stereotypes of how people view female athletes and sexual orientation.

The main finding of this study is that it appears as though people are no longer concerned about the sexual orientation or appearance of female athletes. The results of the study suggested that people are becoming more accepting of homosexual athletes, and are beginning to pay more attention to the skills and talent of female athletes, rather than their appearance or sexual orientation. This finding is important, because in a society that tends to evaluate women on their attractiveness and that evaluates sexuality due to one's gender, it suggests a shift in traditional

rigid beliefs of sexuality and gender roles. Women, and lesbians, are not shackled by societal expectations and traditional gender roles.

As the results suggests, attitudes toward women and sexuality are becoming increasingly favorable with younger generations. It will be exciting to see the changes that take place in society and the media as those generations that are more accepting of others become older. The trend of favorable beliefs among younger generations suggest that future generations will also be more accepting of challenging gender roles and varying sexual identities. The study suggests that as people grow older, the level of acceptance of other people will continue to increase, hopefully dispelling things such as racism and sexism.

The current study extends the literature by considering how people view female athletes depending on the athletes' appearance of sexual orientation. The findings reveal that people seem to be unconcerned about appearance and sexual orientation. Further exploration of this issue may allow researchers to replicate, with athletes of different races, the perceptions of female athletes. This study demonstrates that it is critical to consider issues of appearance and sexual orientation, as they both apply to female athletes and the world of sports.

Although the results were hopeful, they revealed that there are still populations in the U.S. that have negative views regarding sexual orientations and gender roles. When football star Michael Sam told the world he was gay in early 2014, *Sports Illustrated* discussed the backlash Sam received, but noted "it could be a momentous step on the long road toward the not-too-distant day when a person's sexuality is no longer considered news at all" (Mandel, 2014, para. 3). The results of generational beliefs and the general consensus of participants offer hope that tis may indeed become a reality in the future. Hopefully, the world of sports will eventually become unconditionally accepting of athletes, regardless of sexual orientation or gender, and spectators will learn to focus on the strengths and skills of athletes, instead of their appearance or whom they fall in love with.

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# APPENDICES

## Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Monday, February 17, 2014  
IRB Application No AS1411  
Proposal Title: Sexuality, Sports, and Body Image: Perception of Female Athletes

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

**Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 2/16/2017**

Principal Investigator(s):  
Cynthia Nichols                      Brittany Chanel Scott  
316-A Paul Miller                      8321 E 81st St #1528  
Stillwater, OK 74078                      Tulsa, OK 74133

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The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Shelia Kennison, Chair  
Institutional Review Board

## Appendix E

### Social Media Posts

Example posts for social media include:

- Have a few minutes? Like sports? We'd love to hear your opinion on your attitudes toward female athletes (link)
- Please help us collect information about how people view female athletes. (link)
- Have some spare time? Have an opinion on women's participation in sports? Take this survey! (link)
- Please help us collect information on women and sport by taking this survey. You'd make our day! (link)

Updated: November, 2012



## Appendix C

Participant Information Sheet  
(this will be placed on the first page of the online survey)

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

**Title:** Sexuality, Sports, and Body Image: Perception of Female Athletes

**Investigators:**

Dr. Cynthia Nichols, Assistant Professor, School of Media & Strategic Communications  
Brittany Chanel Scott, Mass Communications graduate student

#### Informed Consent "Cover Letter" for Online Survey

It is no secret that the media may influence the way the public thinks or believes. It is interesting to study how they media may influence how the public feels, or what they think or believe, about women and female athletes. The proposed research study seeks to understand the effects that such media may have on the perceptions of the public. Specifically, this research study will measure the attitudes and perceptions of participants by asking them to rate their feelings and attitudes toward women, female athletes, and sexuality.

Participation in this research study includes completing a survey on female athletes and sexuality and evaluating two photographs, which will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

**Participation is completely anonymous and voluntary.** Your survey answers will not be connected to you or your name in any way. You will not be asked to give your name or any identifying characteristics. If you have any questions concerning the research project, interviews or observation, please contact the principal investigator, Dr. Cynthia Nichols.

Dr. Cynthia Nichols, Assistant Professor  
School of Media & Strategic Communication  
Oklahoma State University  
206A Paul Miller Building, Stillwater, OK 74078,  
Cynthia.Nichols@okstate.edu, (405) 744-8271

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, Dr. Shelia Kennison at 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or [irb@okstate.edu](mailto:irb@okstate.edu).

Thank you for your consideration of participating in this research study.

I agree to participate

Updated: November, 2012



## Appendix B

### Material Used for Recruitment of Student/Participants

Hello,

We are from the School of Media & Strategic Communications at Oklahoma State University, and are conducting a research study examining how people perceive female athletes. Specifically, we are looking for participants ages 18 and over.

The research study takes about 10-15 minutes to complete. If you are interested in the research study please visit the link below.

http://\_\_\_\_\_

If you know of someone who may be interested in this study, please feel free to share the link.

We appreciate your help.

Sincerely,

Dr. Cynthia Nichols, Assistant Professor ([Cynthia.Nichols@okstate.edu](mailto:Cynthia.Nichols@okstate.edu))  
Brittany Snapp, Graduate Student ([Brittany.Snapp@okstate.edu](mailto:Brittany.Snapp@okstate.edu))

Updated: November, 2012





# SAMANTHA PRAHALIS

**STATS:**

Age: 25

Body Stats: 6'1", 150 pounds

Birthplace: Detroit

Career Highlight: Being drafted first round

**WHO KNEW:**

When she's not on the road, Prahalis and her husband, Shawn, enjoy going to the farmer's market and cooking together at their Detroit home.

*"I feel like I'm really young and I'm only thinking about my career and continuing playing."*



# MAYA MOORE

**STATS:**

Age: 30

Body Stats: 6' 2", 175 pounds

Birthplace: Richland, Wash.

Career Highlight: Making the winning shot in the NCAA womens' finals

**WHO KNEW:**

When Moore isn't traveling, she likes to unwind with husband, James, and their two dogs by hiking on the trails near their Seattle home.

*"I contribute my best in my sport and I also have a ton of respect for myself and my family."*



# SAMANTHA PRAHALIS

**STATS:**

Age: 25

Body Stats: 6'1", 150 pounds

Birthplace: Detroit

Career Highlight: Being drafted first round

**WHO KNEW:**

When she's not on the road, Prahalis and her partner, Alyssa, enjoy going to the farmer's market and cooking together at their Detroit home.

*"I feel like I'm really young and I'm only thinking about my career and continuing playing."*



# MAYA MOORE

**STATS:**

Age: 30

Body Stats: 6'2", 175 pounds

Birthplace: Richland, Wash.

Career Highlight: Making the winning shot in the NCAA womens' finals

**WHO KNEW:**

When Moore isn't traveling, she likes to unwind with partner, Sarah, and their two dogs by hiking on the trails near their Seattle home.

*"I contribute my best in my sport and I also have a ton of respect for myself and my family."*



# SAMANTHA PRAHALIS

**STATS:**

Age: 25

Body Stats: 6'1", 150 pounds

Birthplace: Detroit

Career Highlight: Being drafted first round

**WHO KNEW:**

When she's not on the road, Prahalis enjoys going to the farmer's market and cooking for friends at her Detroit home.

*"I feel like I'm really young and I'm only thinking about my career and continuing playing."*



# MAYA MOORE

**STATS:**

Age: 30

Body Stats: 6' 2", 175 pounds

Birthplace: Richland, Wash.

Career Highlight: Making the winning shot in the NCAA womens' finals

**WHO KNEW:**

When Moore isn't traveling, she likes to unwind with her two dogs by hiking on the trails near her Seattle home.

*"I contribute my best in my sport and I also have a ton of respect for myself and my family."*



Investigators:  
Dr. Cynthia Nichols, Assistant Professor, School of Media & Strategic Communications

Brittany Chanel Scott, Mass Communications graduate student

It is no secret that the media may influence the way the public thinks or believes. It is interesting to study how they media may influence how the public feels, or what they think or believe, about women and female athletes. The proposed research study seeks to understand the effects that such media may have on the perceptions of the public. Specifically, this research study will measure the attitudes and perceptions of participants by asking them to rate their feelings and attitudes toward women, female athletes, and sexuality.

Participation in this research study includes completing a survey on female athletes and sexuality and evaluating two photographs, which will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Participation is completely anonymous and voluntary. Your survey answers will not be connected to you or your name in any way. You will not be asked to give your name or any identifying characteristics. If you have any questions concerning the research project, interviews or observation, please contact the principal investigator, Dr. Cynthia Nichols.

Dr. Cynthia Nichols, Assistant Professor  
School of Media & Strategic Communication  
Oklahoma State University  
206A Paul Miller Building, Stillwater, OK 74078, Cynthia.Nichols@okstate.edu, (405) 744-8271

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, Dr. Shelia Kennison at 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.



**\*1. Thank you for your consideration of participating in the research study.**

I agree to participate in this study.

We would like to get a sense of your opinion of the media's representation of female athletes. Please read each of the following items and select the number that best reflects your agreement with the statement.

**2. I have especially high respect for female athletes.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**3. Female athletes receive more attention (from the media, fans, etc.) than they should.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**4. Female athletes are not very feminine.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**5. Physically strong women are feminine.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**6. We would like to get a sense of your beliefs about sports that women participate in. For each sport, select the words that best describe the characteristics of the typical female athlete.**

	Grace	Precision	Style	Speed	Strength	Aggressiveness
Gymnastics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volleyball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Basketball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cross-Fit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Swimming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diving	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Soccer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Equestrian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tennis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Softball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cheerleading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cross Country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ice Skating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Running	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**7. We would like to get a sense of your beliefs about the sexual orientation of women who play sports. For each sport, select the words that best describe the characteristics of the typical female athlete.**

	Straight	Lesbian	Undecided
Tennis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ice Skating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Running	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Basketball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volleyball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diving	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cheerleading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cross-Fit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gymnastics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Swimming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Equestrian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Soccer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cross Country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Softball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

We would like to get a sense of your attitudes toward women. Please read each of the following items and select the number that best reflects your agreement with the statement.

**8. Swearing and obscenity are more repulsive in the speech of a woman than a man.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**9. Under modern economic conditions, with women outside the home, men should share in household tasks such as washing dishes and doing laundry.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**10. It is insulting to women to have the “obey” clause still in the marriage service.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**11. A woman should be as free as a man to propose marriage.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**12. Women should worry less about their rights & more about becoming good wives & mothers.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree



**13. Women earning as much as their dates should bear equally the expense when they go out together.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**14. Women should assume their rightful place in business & all the professions along with men**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**15. A woman should not expect to go to exactly the same places or to have quite the same freedom of action as a man.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**16. Sons in a family should be given more encouragement to go to college than daughters.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**17. It is ridiculous for a woman to do construction work and for a man to wash dishes.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**18. In general, the father should have greater authority than the mother in raising children.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**19. The intellectual leadership of a community should be largely in the hands of men.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**20. Economic and social freedom are worth far more to women than acceptance of the ideal of femininity, which has been set up by men.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**21. There are many jobs in which men should be given preference over women in being hired or promoted.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**22. Women should be given equal opportunity with men for apprenticeship in various trades.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

We would like to get a sense of your attitudes toward sexual orientation behaviors. Please read each of the following items and select the number that best reflects your agreement with the statement.

**23. Sexual orientation is innate.**

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**24. Individuals choose their sexual orientation.**

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**25. Biology is the main basis of an individual's sexual orientation.**

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**26. Social and environmental factors are the main basis of an individual's sexual orientation.**

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**27. People have control over changing or keeping their sexual orientation.**

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**28. Something deep inside of a person determines her or his sexual orientation**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**29. The existence of different sexual orientations is natural.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**30. If someone comes out as gay or lesbian they were probably attracted to the same sex all along.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**31. The percentages of people in different sexual orientation groups are roughly the same all over the world.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**32. It is impossible to truly change one's sexual orientation.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**33. The idea that individuals have a “sexual orientation” is a social invention.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**34. Sexual orientation is set early on in life.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**35. Sexual orientation is a category with distinct boundaries: A person is either gay/lesbian or heterosexual.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**36. Sexual orientation is a category with clear boundaries: A person is either gay/lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual, or transgender.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**37. People who identify as bisexual are confused about their true sexual orientation.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**38. A person has only one true sexual orientation.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**39. It is possible to be “partially” or “somewhat” gay or straight.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**40. People may reasonably identify as two sexual orientations at the same time.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**41. Individuals with the same sexual orientation seem to be connected to one another by some invisible link.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**42. People who have the same sexual orientation are very similar to one another.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**43. There are more similarities than differences among people who have the same sexual orientation.**

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**44. It is possible to know about many aspects of a person once you know her or his sexual orientation.**

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**45. It is usually possible to know a person's sexual orientation even without being told.**

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**46. People tend to have a sense of group belonging based on their sexual orientation.**

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**47. People who share the same sexual orientation pursue common goals.**

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**48. Knowing a person's sexual orientation tells you a lot about them.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**49. People who have the same sexual orientation interact frequently with one another.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**50. People with the same sexual orientation share a common fate**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**51. Sexual orientation is an important characteristic of people.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**52. A person's sexual orientation is an important attribute. Using terms like "lesbian," "gay," "bisexual," "heterosexual," and "transgendered" only reinforces stereotypes.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree



**53. If you don't know a person's sexual orientation you can't really say that you know that person.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                                                                                       

**54. Most people view their sexual orientation as important to them.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                                                                                       

**55. It's useful to group people according to their sexual orientation.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                                                                                       

**56. People have access to different amounts of social power depending upon their sexual orientation.**

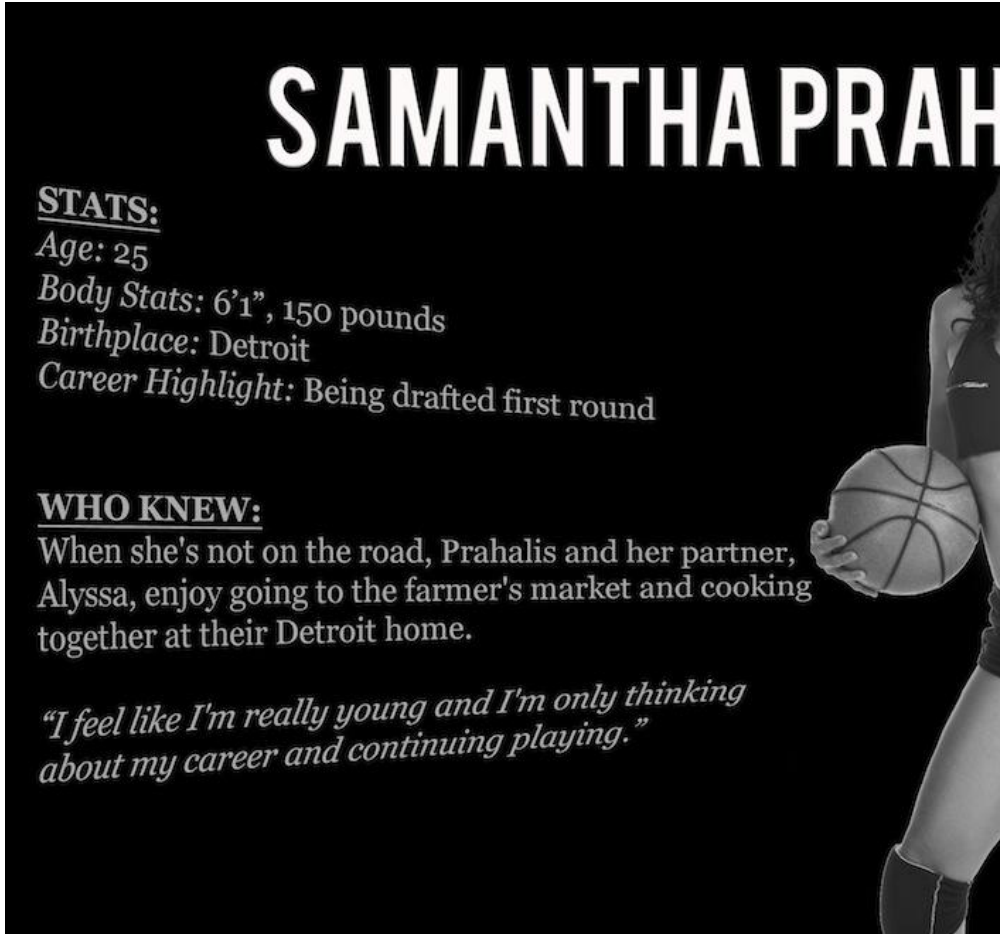
Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**\*57. Please indicate the month of your birth.**

- January
- February
- March
- April
- May
- June
- July
- August
- September
- October
- November
- December

For the following section, please read the stats of the top WNBA players this year. These images will be included in an upcoming post on a sport blog. After examining the image, please answer the questions below.

**Please mark each statement below, according to how much you agree or disagree with it.  
Please do not leave any blank.**



# SAMANTHA PRAHALIS

**STATS:**  
Age: 25  
Body Stats: 6'1", 150 pounds  
Birthplace: Detroit  
Career Highlight: Being drafted first round

**WHO KNEW:**  
When she's not on the road, Prahalis and her partner, Alyssa, enjoy going to the farmer's market and cooking together at their Detroit home.

*"I feel like I'm really young and I'm only thinking about my career and continuing playing."*

**58. The athlete in this photograph is attractive.**

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**59. The athlete in this photograph is masculine.**

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**60. The athlete in this photograph is feminine.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**61. The athlete in this photograph appears to be straight.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**62. The athlete in this photograph appears to be a lesbian.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**63. The athlete is highly skilled.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**64. The athlete is strong.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

# MAYA MOORE

## STATS:

Age: 30

Body Stats: 6' 2", 175 pounds

Birthplace: Richland, Wash.

Career Highlight: Making the winning shot in the NCAA womens' finals

## WHO KNEW:

When Moore isn't traveling, she likes to unwind with partner, Sarah, and their two dogs by hiking on the trails near their Seattle home.

*"I contribute my best in my sport and I also have a ton of respect for myself and my family."*

**65. The athlete in this photograph is attractive.**

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**66. The athlete in this photograph is masculine.**

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**67. The athlete in this photograph is feminine.**

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**68. The athlete in this photograph appears to be straight.**

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**69. The athlete in this photograph appears to be a lesbian.**

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**70. The athlete is highly skilled.**

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**71. The athlete is strong.**

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

For the following section, please read the stats of the top WNBA players this year. These images will be included in an upcoming post on a sport blog. After examining the image, please answer the questions below.

**Please mark each statement below, according to how much you agree or disagree with it.**

**Please do not leave any blank.**

**SAMANTHA PRAHALIS**

**STATS:**  
Age: 25  
Body Stats: 6'1", 150 pounds  
Birthplace: Detroit  
Career Highlight: Being drafted first round

**WHO KNEW:**  
When she's not on the road, Prahalis and her husband, Shawn, enjoy going to the farmer's market and cooking together at their Detroit home.

*"I feel like I'm really young and I'm only thinking about my career and continuing playing."*

**72. The athlete in this photograph is attractive.**

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**73. The athlete in this photograph is masculine.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**74. The athlete in this photograph is feminine.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**75. The athlete in this photograph appears to be straight.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**76. The athlete in this photograph appears to be a lesbian.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**77. The athlete is highly skilled.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**78. The athlete is strong.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree



# MAYA MOOR

## STATS:

Age: 30

Body Stats: 6' 2", 175 pounds

Birthplace: Richland, Wash.

Career Highlight: Making the winning shot in the NCAA womens' finals

## WHO KNEW:

When Moore isn't traveling, she likes to unwind with husband, James, and their two dogs by hiking on the trails near their Seattle home.

*"I contribute my best in my sport and I also have a ton of respect for myself and my family."*

### 79. The athlete in this photograph is attractive.

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### 80. The athlete in this photograph is masculine.

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### 81. The athlete in this photograph is feminine.

Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**82. The athlete in this photograph appears to be straight.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                       

**83. The athlete in this photograph appears to be a lesbian.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                       

**84. The athlete is highly skilled.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                       

**85. The athlete is strong.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

For the following section, please read the stats of the top WNBA players this year. These images will be included in an upcoming post on a sport blog. After examining the image, please answer the questions below.

**Please mark each statement below, according to how much you agree or disagree with it.  
Please do not leave any blank.**

# SAMANTHA PRAHALIS

## STATS:

Age: 25

Body Stats: 6'1", 150 pounds

Birthplace: Detroit

Career Highlight: Being drafted first round

## WHO KNEW:

When she's not on the road, Prahalis enjoys going to the farmer's market and cooking for friends at her Detroit home.

*"I feel like I'm really young and I'm only thinking about my career and continuing playing."*



**86. The athlete in this photograph is attractive.**

Completely disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Completely agree

**87. The athlete in this photograph is masculine.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**88. The athlete in this photograph is feminine.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**89. The athlete in this photograph appears to be straight.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**90. The athlete in this photograph appears to be a lesbian.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**91. The athlete is highly skilled.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                                                                                       

**92. The athlete is strong.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

# MAYA MOOR

## STATS:

Age: 30

Body Stats: 6' 2", 175 pounds

Birthplace: Richland, Wash.

Career Highlight: Making the winning shot in the NCAA womens' finals

## WHO KNEW:

When Moore isn't traveling, she likes to unwind with her two dogs by hiking on the trails near her Seattle home.

*"I contribute my best in my sport and I also have a ton of respect for myself and my family."*

### 93. The athlete in this photograph is attractive.

Completely disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Completely agree

### 94. The athlete in this photograph is masculine.

Completely disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Completely agree

### 95. The athlete in this photograph is feminine.

Completely disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Completely agree

**96. The athlete in this photograph appears to be straight.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                       

**97. The athlete in this photograph appears to be a lesbian.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                       

**98. The athlete is highly skilled.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree  
                       

**99. The athlete is strong.**

Completely disagree      Disagree      Neither agree nor disagree      Agree      Completely agree

**100. What is your gender?**

- Female
- Male
- Transgendered

**101. Do you consider yourself to be heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual or something else?**

- Heterosexual
- Homosexual
- Bisexual
- Asexual
- None of the above
- Prefer not to answer

**102. Were you an athlete in high school or college?**

- Yes
- No

**103. If yes, what sport/s did you play?**

**104. Which category below includes your age?**

- 17 or younger
- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 66-75
- 76 or older

**105. Please describe your race/ethnicity.**

- African-American/Black
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian or Asian American
- Caucasian/White
- Hispanic/Latino
- Pacific Islander
- Multi-racial
- Decline to Answer
- Other

Other (please specify)

**106. In what state or U.S. territory do you live?**

**107. Describe your political ideology.**

Very Liberal	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Very Conservative
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**108. If you are a college student completing this for extra credit, put your professor's last name, your initials ONLY, and the last 3 number in your CWID here.**



Thank you for participating in this study on the perception of female athletes. Your answers will contribute to the body of knowledge on this subject. If you have questions or concerns about this project or survey, please ask the principal investigator, Dr. Cynthia Nichols (Cynthia.Nichols@okstate.edu) at 405-802-7612.

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, Dr. Shelia Kennison at 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Again, thank you and have a nice day.

**109. Please enter any comments or questions here.**

VITA

Brittany Chanel Scott

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: SEXUALITY, SPORTS, AND BODY IMAGE: PERCEPTION OF FEMALE  
ATHLETES

Major Field: MASS COMMUNICATION

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in mass communication  
at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2014.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in communications at  
Southeastern Oklahoma State University, Durant, Oklahoma in December,  
2010.

Experience: Graduate teaching assistant: August 2012-May 2014  
Reporter and editor at Stillwater Newspress in Stillwater, OK 2012  
Reporter at Durant Democrat in Durant, OK 2011-2012