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# Pervasively Offside: A Gendered Analysis of Sportscasting

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# Pervasively Offside: A Gendered Analysis of Sportscasting

Michael Thomas Mudrick

University of Connecticut, 2015

Despite a growth in sports media, female sportscasters are often perceived with low credibility. Furthermore, though women have been included in sport-related broadcasts, they are seldom given the opportunity to exhibit credibility, a key ingredient toward establishing reputability. This conundrum is rooted in sexism and endorsements of sport as a male-congruent entity. The present study examines the influence of gender-norm endorsement and sexism on perceived sportscaster credibility with a sample of 544 individuals who watched a basketball debate between a male and a female sportscaster. Results suggest that gendered behavior beliefs and sexist attitudes had a negative effect on perceived credibility of a female sportscaster; discrimination toward female sportscasters appears to be extensive. Results also suggest that though the female broadcaster was lauded for possessing trustworthy features, the male broadcaster was inherently perceived to have greater sport-related expertise, thus was more persuasive in this setting. The male broadcaster was also praised for using authoritative tactics to garner favorability, confirming traditionally accepted behaviors associated with men in power. Such findings provide evidence of double standards, which favor men and hinder women from gaining acceptance in the sport media network.

Pervasively Offside: A Gendered Analysis of Sportscasting

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A Dissertation

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

A substantial amount of research has demonstrated that women are perceived and treated as if they are second-tier to men in the sport media setting (e.g., Davis & Krawczyk, 2010; Etling & Young, 2007; Mastro, Seate, Blecha, & Gallegos, 2012; Ordman & Zillman, 1994; Sheffer & Schultz, 2007). Some of the earliest work includes Ordman and Zillman's (1994) work in which sport media members made predictions involving upcoming college basketball and gymnastics seasons. Female reporters were seen as less competent and perceived as knowing less about sport in general than their male counterparts. However, they received a boost in ratings when covering gymnastics (Ordman & Zillman, 1994). While such findings arguably catalyzed a research agenda examining perceptions of credibility (or lack thereof) among women in sport media, researchers have also proposed that concepts of role congruency could apply to women in this area. That is, women in sport media may be more accepted when associated with athletic competition that is more traditionally feminine.

In sport participation, women have customarily been ostracized for partaking in what society deems a male activity (Kane, 1988). Ordman and Zillman's (1994) findings certainly suggest that similar mindsets may carry over for women in sport media. Their findings demonstrated that women face constant challenges. They are perceived as incongruent with male sporting venues, but also are judged differently based on their sex and the sex of the athletes they cover. Men face no such obstacles.

The aforementioned study begins to address the concept of social roles within sport media. Social role theory posits that societal constructs influence how individuals interpret human behavior based on gender (Eagly, 1987). In other words, schemas are internally developed that prescribe certain behaviors and roles as being favorable for men or women.

Thus, definitions of acceptable human behavior are aligned with such schematic prototypes (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000; Rudman & Glick, 2001). Over time, stereotypes develop with regard to the gendering of certain activities and behaviors. For instance, men are stereotyped as physical and aggressive thus perceived as a strong fit to participate in sport. Women, on the other hand, are stereotyped as compassionate and domesticated (Eagly & Mladinic, 1994), and are thus associated with activities such as cooking and cleaning. The confounding aspect of these gendered roles for women is that such activities and behaviors are perceived to require little skill, which equates to lesser societal status (Eagly & Mladinic, 1994). Simply put, such stereotypes de-value women.

Clearly, we can argue that women would be trespassing social roles not only for sport involvement, but also when attempting to provide analyses and demonstrate proficiency in discussing sport. However, little sport media research has used social role theory as a framework, nor an instrument measuring endorsements of behaviors as masculine and feminine, to assess perceptions of women in the field. Hence, it is essential to include these tenets as a means to explain the continued bias exuded against women in sport media.

The endorsement of gender-role stereotypes is also likely to be indicative of sexist attitudes, as both practices share an outcome of denigrating women. In fact, the term benevolent sexism was developed to refer to certain practices that connect women to incompetence. Per Glick and Fiske (2001), benevolent sexism portrays women as “pure creatures who ought to be protected, supported, and adored and whose love is necessary to make a man complete” (p. 109). However, it would be reasonable to suggest that blatant, overt sexist views likewise promulgate the discreditation of women in sport media. As a whole, sport has been a setting satiated with sexism at a multitude of levels. Women are perceived to lack the sport management

wherewithal, thus are seldom candidates for Division I athletic director positions (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). In addition, for years, Augusta National golf course, home of The Masters PGA TOUR event, forbade women from membership (Nylund, 2003). Researchers have also cited evidence that female athletes are more likely to be castigated on sport-televised broadcasts, while praise is more common for men (Halbert & Latimer, 1994).

Women in sport media have dealt with similar treatment. Some have been harassed by players (Pedersen, Miloch, & Laucella, 2007). Others have been the recipients of venom from fans, with claims of lacking qualification, while being accused of unchaste behavior in order to cultivate sources (Masters, 2014).

As such, the endorsement of gender norms and proliferation of sexist attitudes are viable influences toward perceptions that women in sport media lack credibility. To examine this two studies have been conducted utilizing a quasi-experimental design. In both studies, participants watched a debate between two ESPN sports personalities, Michael Smith (male) and Jemele Hill (female) over a hypothetical one-on-one contest between Hall of Fame basketball star Michael Jordan and the Oklahoma City Thunder's Kevin Durant. This forum (televised media) was chosen because of its relevance amongst media consumers. Prior studies have used less popular forms of media, such as newspapers and radio (Baiocchi-Wagner & Behm Morawitz, 2010; Etling & Young, 2007; Ordman & Zillman, 1994), and perhaps have not achieved anticipated outcomes as a result of the setting.

In study one, titled *Sportscasting 101: Gendered Prerequisites May Apply*, participants rated one of the sportscasters on tenets of credibility (attractiveness, dynamism, expertise, and trustworthiness), attitudes toward the sportscaster, and media consumption intentions, in addition to being asked about perceptions of gender norms and sexism. Structural equation modeling

tests revealed that endorsement of gender norms and sexist attitudes were, in fact, significantly related to perceived credibility, with a negative significant path when the sportscaster was a woman. Furthermore, credibility was significantly related to media consumption intentions. These results are noteworthy, as media studies involving credibility had yet to connect the variable to consequential consumer behaviors. This demonstrates the importance of establishing positive source credibility and the impact of gender norms and sexism on perception of source credibility.

In study two, titled *Double Standard: An Evaluation of Responses to a Televised Sport Debate*, participants from the same sample commented on the sportscasters during the debate, and afterward, were asked to elaborate on which was more persuasive. In general, the female sportscaster was seen as more prepared and trustworthy, yet the male was predominately perceived as more persuasive. It appeared that the male's use of aggressive tactics, such as talking over the woman, being overly dramatic and amusing, was of benefit. Furthermore, being a man boosted perceived credibility, as the woman dealt with derogatory comments based on her sex.

In all, these studies demonstrate that, though opportunities have increased for women in sport media, numbers are merely one component of the evaluation. Society continues to be ambivalent in its acceptance of women involved with sport. In particular, women are challenged with overcoming double standards that suppress their progression in the field. On the surface level, they may be disregarded as credible because of their sex. However, demonstration of sport knowledge may not be enough. Additionally, by embracing characteristics conventionally utilized by men, which prove to be successful in garnering credibility, women run the risk of being ostracized for incongruence.



## Part 1: Sportscasting 101: Gendered Prerequisites May Apply

### CHAPTER TWO: INTRODUCTION

Early sport media consumption studies reported that males spent greater amounts of time following sport and were more invested in pre- and post-game rituals (Gantz & Wenner, 1991). However, such behaviors have become less balanced from a gender perspective in recent years. At the high school level, girls are reportedly more involved in athletics than boys (Hardin, Simpson, Whiteside, & Garris, 2007). Opportunities for women have also increased substantially at the college level, as evidenced by increased scholarship applications (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014).

Overall female involvement in sport has been amplified in recent years. A 2014 Scarborough Research poll claimed that close to 40 percent of women comprise the fan bases of Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer, National Basketball Association, National Football League, and NCAA football (Stern, 2014). It is thus reasonable to expect a positive carryover effect from this female fan base on an increase in female sportscaster presence. However, this expectation appears to have not been materialized thus far. In fact, a study by Sheffer and Schultz (2007) noted that just seven percent of local sportscasters were female. That number was even smaller (six percent), based on a report on national sport news anchors (Duncan, Messner, Willms, & Watson, 2005). Due to the fact that women are often relegated to sideline reporting, which is considered to be a limited role in a broadcast, on-air camera time is significantly shorter for female than male sportscasters (Messner, Dunbar, & Hunt, 2000).

Newspaper industry reports have also mirrored gender inequity concerns. In 2012, less than 10 percent of sport columnists or editors were female (Lapchick et al., 2013). A rationale for this heavy imbalance involves a perception that females are not credible enough to perform

sport reporting duties, let alone serve in a supervisory function. Specifically, given the long-held tradition of sport as a male activity (Messner, 2002), women who are involved with the production and analysis of sport media content may be perceived as lacking appropriate fit for such a position (Mastro, Seate, Blecha, & Gallegos, 2012; Ordman & Zillman, 1994).

Ordman and Zillman (1994) presented some of the earliest research on the topic and found that, overall, females were perceived as possessing less knowledge than males when covering sports. However, given recent findings that demonstrate a robust level of female participation in sport (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Hardin et al., 2007), it is reasonable to assume that the idea of women being associated with sport has become more common. Nevertheless, given the aforementioned statistics, the reality of women's active participation in sport has yet to be translated into an increased number of female reporters covering a wide variety of female and/or male sport genres. Women who have assumed a sport reporter or sportscaster position also continue to be ostracized via harassment (Ricchiardi, 2004) or are simply deemed as unqualified (Sheffer & Schultz, 2007).

An extensive review of the relevant literature indicates that prior studies have either only examined a singular dimension of the source credibility construct (Ordman & Zillman, 1994) or failed to establish reliable source credibility assessments (Baiocchi-Wagner & Behm Morawitz, 2010). Given the necessity for numerous facets of credibility (i.e. appearance, expertise, reliability, vitality) in news media, this study seeks to include multiple dimensions of source credibility in the assessment of women in sport media. Other studies also have yet to examine the root causes for why female sport media professional lacked credibility (e.g., Mastro et al., 2012), an integral issue for why these appraisals persist. Thus, given what is known about the effect of perceptions of gender normed behaviors, particularly amongst women involved with

sport, in addition to continued presence of sexism, the purpose of the study is to examine the impact of perceptions of role congruity and sexism on the perceived credibility of women in sport media. This study also aims to assess the corresponding indirect effect of gender norm endorsement and sexism on attitudes toward and behavioral intentions related to media consumption. Specifically, this study expects to bridge the gap in the existing research literature on sexism toward women in sport media.

## CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### **Source Credibility**

Source credibility has been used as a framework to evaluate the effects of messages intended for audience persuasion (Addington, 1971). When the source is perceived as having ample credibility, is it likely to possess a reasonable amount of persuasive power on the consumer (Boyd & Shank, 2004), be it development of favorable brand attitude or impending consumption desires (Ohanian, 1990). Because attitudes have been found to have substantial influence on future usage and product loyalty, perceived source credibility can thus serve as an important link toward projecting consumer behaviors (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Historically, the study of credibility has examined several key factors. Some of the most commonly studied components include trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness (Amos, Holmes, & Strutton, 2008; Ohanian, 1990). With the advent of audio/visual messaging, others have included dynamism as a focal factor of source desirability (Berlo, Lemert, & Mertz, 1969; Carter & Greenberg, 1965; Whitehead, 1968).

Ohanian (1991) defined trustworthiness as “the consumer’s confidence in the source for providing information in an objective and honest manner” (p. 47). Trustworthiness has been found to be associated with likeability and goodwill (Whitehead, 1968). Trustworthy sources have been found to be especially vital with regard to opinion-based media content. Hovland and Weiss (1951) found that participants were more persuaded by a source that was deemed trustworthy when receiving messages based on opinion. Thus, audiences are more likely to seek trustworthy sources for topics that spark atypical thinking and seek audience persuasion. Within the media profession, trustworthiness may also be on display with regard to providing breaking

news. Research has claimed that when a journalist is the first to report on a story, audiences may be ambivalent to accept the content as fact (Schultz & Sheffer, 2010).

Source expertise involves the display of an ability to present topic or area knowledge to the audience (Ohanian, 1991). A key aspect to expertise is not necessarily whether the source is truly an expert, rather that they give off a perception that they are specialists in that area (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). While research has found trustworthiness to be vital toward inspiring positive brand perceptions (Amos et al., 2008), others have found expertise to be the strongest variable in explaining consumption intentions (Ohanian, 1991). This promulgates a need to truly establish the source as connected to the area that he/she is immersed in, so that association with topical expertise is unquestioned.

While facets such as trustworthiness and expertise are certainly valid components of credibility, Whitehead (1968) argued that additional dimensions are likely of influence when seeking to persuade. Specifically, in order to convince an audience, elements of personality and charisma must exist (Berlo et al., 1969; Whitehead, 1968). As a result, dynamism has been proposed as a factor of credibility. According to Berlo et al. (1969), dynamism allows the source to utilize knowledge and trustworthiness, in aggregation with persuading the audience in a gallant manner. The value of dynamism may vary by media broadcast, however. Carter and Greenberg (1965) felt that dynamism was more sought-after in conjunction with audio/visual-related positions such as television and radio, as opposed to newspapers.

Initial media credibility research neglected to include dynamism as a credibility factor, mainly due to the dominance of newspapers and radio as news sources at the time. However, as televised media became more prevalent, visual appeal gained more primacy. Per Eagly et al. (1991), people whom are conventionally good-looking induce attraction and positive mindsets.

Consequently, individuals in possession of visual appeal have been typically connected with competence (Eagly et al., 1991). Hence, attractiveness is a vital characteristic for individuals tasked with visual public broadcasts.

### **Social Role Theory**

Social role theory examines perceptions about the expected differentiating behaviors and personalities between groups, particularly that of men and women (Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000). The theory “argues that the beliefs that people hold about the sexes are derived from observations of the role performances of men and women and thus reflect the sexual division of labor and gender hierarchy of society” (Eagly et al., 2000, p. 124). Thus, individuals cultivate beliefs about how members of certain genders *should* behave and shape a schematic prototype of specific roles for men and women (Eagly, 1987).

Such beliefs are said to evolve via cultural influence and socializing agents (Mahalik, Morray, Coonerty-Femiano, Ludlow, Slattery, & Smiler, 2005). In American culture, males are typically taught that they must aspire to meet expectations of what it means to be a man (Mahalik, Locke, Ludlow, Diemer, Scott, Gottfried, & Frietas, 2003). These prospects often represent symbols of masculinity and are associated with power, such as dominance in athletics or possessing household dexterity. Thus, men are expected to possess agentic traits, such as competence and social dominance (Rudman & Glick, 2001).

Women, on the other hand, are socialized differently. They are taught to strive to radiate a pretty appearance, while demonstrating amicability in relationships (Mahalik et al., 2005). Likewise, women are projected to be communal individuals, showcasing compassion (Rudman & Glick, 2001). Additionally, because of these societal perceptions, stereotypes about each sex have been firmly established in society (Eagly & Karau, 2002). For instance, masculine

stereotypes include a need for men to play the role of family breadwinner, whereas women should be relegated to domestic duties (Hoyt, 2012). Due to these stereotypes, when individuals pursue activities that are typically associated with opposing genders, they are deemed to be role incongruent (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Harrison & Lynch, 2005).

Such typecasts can be problematic, particularly for women. Rudman and Glick's (2001) work found that communality is habitually linked with perceptions of being subordinate; when a woman was presented as agentic, she was less sought after for a position that required interpersonal communication skills (perceived as a communal trait). Furthermore, when men possessed similar agentic traits, perceptions of them being unfit for a communal trait position did not exist. Thus, to curb backlash when being perceived as behaving incongruently, women must demonstrate an appearance of competence, but also be nice in doing such. Hence, due to societal perception of sport as a masculine activity, it presents a troubling balancing act for female participants. To be successful in sport, a woman must embrace facets associated with masculinity, yet still maintain "culturally desirable aspects of femininity" (Steinfeldt, Zakrajsek, Carter, & Steinfeldt, 2011 p. 403), such as being pretty and curtailing aggressiveness.

Furthermore, conformity to one's own gender norms can be detrimental to the opposite sex, depending on the standard (Steinfeldt et al., 2011). For instance, Leath and Lumpkin (1992) found that male writers in a women's athletic magazine often engaged in "stereotypic language" (p. 124) in their portrayals of women. References were made involving female athletes lacking male genitalia, while women were castigated for playing like men, but being perceived as "ladylike" off the field. These findings provided clear evidence of backlash against women from men for violating role congruence. In the current study context, if sportscasting is perceived by

men as a male position, it is reasonable to assume that they will discredit the abilities of females employed in incongruent roles.

Based on these concepts, we hypothesize that:

H1: Gender-norm endorsement will be negatively related to perceived female sportscaster credibility.

## **Sexism**

Though the disparate treatment of women has appeared to dissipate in recent years (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995), the continued practice of gender-role stereotypes reinforces sexism in society (Rothenberg, 2004). Sexism is active when individuals continue to associate domestic activities with women and connect men to positions in which competence is regarded as a necessity (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Such practices have been deemed representative of benevolent sexism.

While benevolent sexism may not be egregiously caustic, it limits female progression and curtails gender equality (Swim et al., 1995). It also associates women with being incompetent at vital tasks (Glick & Fiske, 1996). To that extent, Swim et al. (1995) introduced a less overt measure, called “modern sexism.” It focused on perceptions of persistent bias and inequality, in addition to resentment toward women’s requests and conceptions that women receive favorable treatment in society. Swim et al. (1995) found that, on average, men scored higher than women on both old fashioned and modern sexism scales. However, Glick and Fiske (1996) claimed that men are not always the moderators of such prejudice. Rather, women who embrace stereotypical roles for males and females would also be considered to be benevolently sexist, which would provide “justifications for male structural control of society” (Glick & Fiske, 1996, p. 509).

### *Sexism Toward Women in Sport*



Though sport is often touted as a societal melting pot, historically, it has been one of the strongest entities to showcase masculinity and sexism toward women (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2012). Studies have attributed the inequality to the demographic makeup of those in upper management in sport (men), who retain such gender inequity to preserve their own power (Messner, 2004). For instance, in a study of an Australian sport organization, Sibson (2010) found that males used their power to limit the abilities of their female counterparts. Such acts aid to the creation of the perception that women, particular in a sport entity, do not provide the greater group with value (Sibson, 2010). For instance, in collegiate sport, women are significantly underrepresented as athletic directors, particularly at the Division I level (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014) but are more likely to be perceived as fits for communal positions in life skills (Burton, Grappendorf, & Henderson, 2011).

Furthermore, the mainstream media has been blamed for exacerbating the fascination of connecting aggression and masculinity in sport. Men are typically lauded for competing with belligerence, while those that appear lackadaisical are often scorned (Messner et al., 2000). However, female athletes tend to be portrayed differently, as they are often depicted as sexual objects for male desires, not for their athletic prowess. For instance, one of the most popular annual male magazine editions is *Sports Illustrated's* swimsuit issue, which showcases scantily clad female athletes in erotic poses (Fink & Kensicki, 2002).

Likewise, females in sport media have been subjected to similar objectivism, particularly via sexual harassment in masculine-laden settings such as the locker room (Creedon, 1998). This was evident in 1985, when an Orlando Sentinel reporter covering the USFL was verbally harassed, surrounded by players, and had a knife rubbed up and down her leg (Ricchardi, 2004). To make matters worse, the team's owner at the time watched the incident and condemned the

reporter for “being in the presence of naked men” (Ricchiardi, 2004, p. 56). Per Creedon (1998), such incidents may influence females to forego attempts at covering high-level male sports.

As such, we further hypothesize that:

H2: Sexism will be negatively related to perceived female sportscaster credibility.

### **Audience Attitude and Behavioral Intentions**

Source credibility has been found to be a valuable predictor of brand attitudes representing of a product (Ohanian, 1991). Per Azjen and Fishbein (1980), attitudes are a product of the sum of one’s salient beliefs toward a product, individual, or activity. These beliefs can be comprised of information from trusted outsiders, prior experiences, or self-generated interpretations. Attitude, thus, represents a vital form of assessing consumer judgment of products or activities. Therefore, if women in sport media are the recipients of being pervasively discredited, this is likely to have a detrimental effect on consumer attitudes toward the product. This presents a practical challenge, as attitudes have been found to be a strong predictor of future usage and exhibitions of loyalty (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006).

Furthermore, we propose that:

H3a: Perceived sportscaster credibility will be positively related to attitudes toward sport media consumption.

H3b: Perceived sportscaster credibility will mediate the relationship between gender-norm endorsement and attitudes toward sport media consumption.

H3c: Perceived sportscaster credibility will mediate the relationship between sexism and attitudes toward sport media consumption.

H4a: Attitudes toward sport media consumption will be positively related intentions to consume sport media.

H4b: Attitudes toward sport media consumption will mediate the relationship between perceived sportscaster credibility and sport media consumption intentions.

## CHAPTER FOUR: METHOD

Participants were recruited from Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk in exchange for payment. A total of 544 adults took part in this study. The sample consisted of 57.9% males and 42.1% females. With regard to ethnicity, 76.3% were Caucasian, followed by 7.1% African American, 5.5% Hispanic, 3.4% Asian-Pacific Islander, 3.2% Asian American, 1.9% mixed race, 1.8% Native American, and .9% the "other" category. The average participant age was 35.3 (SD = 11.2). Half of all participants (50.6%) reporting spending more than six hours weekly consuming sport media (via newspaper, internet, game telecasts, television show analysis, and radio). While 25% of study participants spent less than three hours per week with sport media, another 24.4% spent between three and six hours with sport media per week (see Table 1).

Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. A 2 (participant gender) x 2 (reporter gender) factorial design was employed for this study. Each condition involved watching a video of a discussion between two sportscasters (one male and one female). The video segment, which lasted approximately four minutes, starred ESPN sportscasters Michael Smith and Jemele Hill, from the show *Numbers Never Lie* (now known as *His & Hers*). This video involved a debate over which NBA star – Michael Jordan or Kevin Durant – would win a one-on-one contest. The use of a debate format, which is a popular format for sport talk shows, was deemed a viable way to gauge perceptions of communicator credibility.

A pre-test was conducted with a group of undergraduate students (N = 19) to confirm which of the three videos of the show selected was the most representative of sportscasters seeking to persuade an audience through a debate. The Jordan/Durant debate was the best option of three varying *Numbers Never Lie* segments ( $F(1,54) = 17.48, p < .001$ ). After watching the video, participants completed a set of items involving manipulation checks and variables tested

in the study. All variables were measured by a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*). A breakdown of each condition and its related means and standard deviations can be found in Table 2. Overall correlations, psychometric properties, and descriptive statistics amongst model variables can be found in Table 3.

## **Measurement**

*Perception of Gender Norms.* An 11-item measure for perception of gender norms was adapted from a revised scale of the Male Role Norms Inventory (MRNI-R) by Levant, Smalley, Aupont, House, Richmond, and Noronha (2007). Two subscales from the overall MRNI-R were selected: dominance (e.g. “Men should be the leader in any group”) and avoidance of perceived feminine activities (e.g. “Boys should play with action figures, not dolls”). The coefficient alphas for these subscales were .93 and .87, respectively.

*Sexism.* Eight items that measured sexism were adapted from Swim et al.’s (1995) modern sexism instrument to capture media representation and perceptions in settings related to sport. The scale consisted of eight items. An example item includes, “It is very common to see women treated in a sexist manner on television.” The coefficient alpha for this scale was .913.

*Source Credibility.* Sportscaster source credibility was tested via two scales totaling 15 items. The first scale, originated by Ohanian (1991), consisted of three factors measured with semantic differential adjectives: trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise. The second credibility scale, which assessed dynamism, was used from Berlo et al. (1969). Semantic differential examples of these items included “passive-active” and “tired-energetic.” The coefficient alpha for the four subscale were: attractiveness = .82, dynamism = .85, expertise = .96, and trustworthiness = .94.

*Attitudes.* Attitudes toward behavioral intentions were measured by adapting the attitudinal scale by Bagozzi, Lee, and Van Loo (2001). Items used semantic differentials (e.g. rewarding-punishing, useful-useless) in reference to statements involving media consumption behavioral intentions. An example item includes, “I feel that consuming media (i.e. watching on television, reading an article, following on social media, or listening to a podcast) involving Michael Smith/Jemele Hill in the future would be rewarding/punishing.” The coefficient alpha for this scale was .95.

*Behavioral Intentions.* Behavioral intentions were measured by items adapted from Sartore-Baldwin and Walker’s (2011) media consumption subscale. The scale consisted of five items. An example includes, “If given the opportunity, I would watch segments involving Michael Smith/Jemele Hill on television in the future.” The coefficient alpha for this scale was .92.

#### *Control Variables*

These measures included existing familiarity with each sportscaster and fandom of the players discussed in the video. Sample items include, “I am aware of Michael Smith/Jemele Hill as a sportscaster on ESPN”, and “I am a fan of Michael Jordan.” A measure of perception of social dominance (Kteily, Sidanius, & Levin, 2011) was included as a control for racial perceptions, as both sportscasters are African American. All control variables were found to have good scale reliability (sportscaster familiarity  $\alpha = .95$ , player fandom  $\alpha = .78$ , and social dominance  $\alpha = .89$ ). Additionally, t-tests were run on the means of each control variable between the two debate conditions in the video. These tests were found to be non-significant, an indication that all groups were equal on these variables.

## CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS

Before testing the hypotheses, a confirmatory factor analysis was employed as a mechanism to determine appropriate fit for the overall model. The analysis revealed that the overall model had sufficient fit: CFI = .956, TLI = .951, and RMSEA = .042 (90% CIs [.039, .045]). Confirmatory factor analyses were also conducted to assess the female and male sportscaster models. Overall, the female sportscaster model had adequate fit: CFI = .934, TLI = .927, and RMSEA = .054 (90% CIs [.05, .058]). Likewise, the male sportscaster model had sufficient fit: CFI = .930, TLI = .923, and RMSEA = .051 (90% CIs [.047, .055]). In each of the aforementioned models, the chi-square statistic was significant (overall model,  $\chi^2 = 1931.923$ ,  $df = 981$ ,  $p = .000$ ; female sportscaster model,  $\chi^2 = 1730.600$ ,  $df = 988$ ,  $p = .000$ ; male sportscaster model,  $\chi^2 = 1728.991$ ,  $df = 986$ ,  $p = .000$ ). However, the test has been known to be sensitive to projects of large sample size, to which this study would suffice. Fit statistics and standardized path coefficients for each model can be found in Table 4. A visual of direct path coefficients and significance levels can be found in Figure 1.

H1 proposed that gender-norm endorsement would be negatively related to perceptions of female sportscaster credibility. The path analysis indicates support ( $\beta = -.192$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Similarly, H2 proposed that sexist attitudes would be negatively related to perceptions of female sportscaster credibility; this hypothesis was also supported ( $\beta = -.162$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

H3a, which predicted that perceived sportscaster credibility would be positively related to attitudes toward sport media consumption, was supported ( $\beta = .867$ ,  $p < .001$ ). H3b and H3c posited that perceived sportscaster credibility would mediate the relationships between gender-norm endorsement and attitudes toward sport media consumption as well as sexism and attitudes

toward sport media consumption, respectively. Neither hypothesis was supported, due to a lack of significant statistical results.

H4a proposed that attitudes toward sport media consumption would be significantly related to sport media consumption intentions. This was supported ( $\beta = .822$ ,  $p < .001$ ). H4b posited that sport media consumption attitudes would mediate the relationship between perceived sportscaster credibility and sport media consumption intentions. Perceived credibility was found to have a significant direct effect on behavioral intentions without the presence of attitudes ( $p = .001$ ; 95% CIs [.635, .839]), in addition to a significant indirect effect with the inclusion of attitude ( $p = .001$ ; 95% CIs [.569, .828]). As the direct effect of perceived credibility on behavioral intentions was insignificant ( $p = .545$ ; 95% CIs [-.106, .177]). H4b was thus supported by these findings.



## CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

This study is the first to explore gender differences in sportscaster credibility and explain the reasons behind such differences with an experimental approach. Study findings established that stronger gender-role perceptions and sexist attitudes toward female sportscasters are related to their lower perceived credibility. Thus, the more participants endorsed selected gendered norms and sexist attitudes, the less they found a female sportscaster to be credible. As sport remains a sexist entity, gender-typed as masculine (Messner, 2004; Sibson, 2010), women will continue to face perceptual obstacles related to role congruence for working in sport. Given that endorsement of gender norms and sexism failed to impact the assessment of credibility for the male sportscaster in this study, this demonstrates the continued struggles women may face when working in sport media.

These results appear to support the rationale for the construction of the modern sexism scale (Swim et al., 1995). While old-fashioned, overt sexist views may have dwindled, individuals may feel that women like Jemele Hill may potentially hold their positions, due to industry need to display employment diversity. By implication, a female sportscaster may be perceived as less deserving of the position and thus, lacking in qualifications to warrant professional credibility. While these concepts do not represent explicit sexism, they may be indicative of instances unique to a sport, which can promulgate reactions that may result in a gender backlash.

The negative relationship between endorsement of gender norms and female sportscaster credibility appears to represent evidence of benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996), which, in essence, sanctions female inferiority. Such findings may be indicative of conservative mindsets, which may see tradition as a norm, and are less likely to embrace social changes (Manning,

1997). As a case in point, public displays of sport expertise by males on television represents just such a male-oriented tradition. This supports claims that masculinity is an important ingredient for the perception of what constitutes an expert or a successful sportscaster (Mastro et al., 2012).

While participants failed to heavily endorse gender normed behaviors and sexism in the female sportscaster conditions via their mean scores (see Table 2), these findings may be indicative of unconscious bias. This may occur on several fronts. Though individuals may develop newer attitudes with regard to social issues, unconscious bias may be displayed if conventional stances remain inherent in the back of their minds (Dovidio, 2001; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). These attitudes remain as implicit stereotypes and may be activated by certain symbols (Dovidio, 2001).

Collins (2007) cited unconscious bias as a rationale for why the NFL passed the Rooney Rule, which stipulates that teams must interview at least one minority for head coaching vacancies. According to Collins (2007), the dearth of African American coaches and executives were a product of matching desired characteristics for the job with stereotypes of Caucasian football players – rich in work ethic and mental proficiency. While league officials may not have endorsed pure racism, the interaction of perceptual stereotypes with the characteristics valued for a head coach, appeared to have an adverse effect on African Americans seeking NFL coaching jobs.

As such, in the context of this study, the female sportscaster, thus, may trigger an older conception that being a woman in sport is socially incongruent. Blatant endorsement of gender normed behaviors and sexist attitudes would likely be more indicative of disparate treatment. While individuals may not explicitly endorse gender normed behaviors or possess sexist

attitudes, the fact that such variables had a negative relationship with credibility for a female sportscaster indicates that such biases may be implicit, and thus, in existence in a sport context.

Displays of unconscious bias may relate to perceptual stereotypes and those in minority status, as well (Lee, 2005). That is, if a group consists of a dominant unit, individuals that represent a minority faction may provoke an irregularity within a perceiver's schema. As such, the perceiver is less likely to relate to the minority and more likely to revert to stereotypical norms, thus influencing a negative assessment of the minority.

Findings from this study also indicate that sport remains unique within media representation, due to gender being indicative of appropriate prototypes. While men once dominated journalism, a significant overall decrease has occurred since the late 1980s (Schmidt, 2013). Given the proliferation in female participation in athletics (Whiteside & Hardin, 2011) and in journalism at both the professional and university levels (Schmidt, 2013), it is rather discouraging that similar strides for women have yet to coincide with their opportunities to pursue a sport media career. Due to this study's findings, it is reasonable to suggest that sport is similar to other perceived aggressive, masculine products such as war, and thus, similar requisites are preferred when it comes to media depiction. In fact, men have been found to dominate airtime on national broadcasts of war coverage (Armstrong, Wood, & Nelson, 2006). Considering the large imbalance in offering sport coverage for male versus female sports (Duncan et al., 2005; Sheffer & Schultz, 2007), the gender-typing of sportscasters in sports coverage appears to be a by-product of this male-oriented sports-media industry bias.

Furthermore, consumers may discredit women in sport media due to the traditional role-casting in the sports that they are allowed to cover and to showcase their professional expertise. That is, when given opportunities, particularly in front of a camera, women are often relegated to

supporting roles, such as sideline reporting or panel-discussion moderation. As media outlets immerse the airwaves with incessant sports coverage, a demand exists for a more diversified pool of knowledgeable and dynamic hosts. Even though the industry embraced racial diversity in their on-air sports personalities for a wide variety of program offerings, gender diversity remains lacking in terms of the presence and roles of female sportscasters. For instance, popular shows such as ESPN's *Pardon the Interruption* and *First Take* habitually position male sportscasters against each other for sports debate. ESPN's postseason basketball on-air coverage team consists of one woman, Sage Steele, whose task is to merely provoke talking points amongst a group of men. Likewise, per Messner et al. (2000), women are most likely to be relegated to sideline reporting status, an element of the sport broadcast that receives little time. An important socio-cultural consequence of this lack of gender diversity, which restricts the opportunities for women to demonstrate their expertise and dynamism, could be that the audience attaches low credibility to women in sports media across all different online or offline media platforms

According to Twenge (1997b), exposure to an unfamiliar group can serve as a valued influence toward attitude change related to that faction. Specifically, popular media has been cited as a reliable influence on societal attitude change. In a study of attitude change amongst college students, Pettijohn and Walzer (2008) found that popular media, particularly television shows that highlighted a minority group in a positive light had a positive effect on mitigating attitudes related to sexism, racism, and homophobia.

Though attitude and behavioral changes are said to occur gradually (Hornik, 2004), change agents have been found to serve as catalysts within innovative undertakings (Haider & Kreps, 2004). The more viable and respected the change agent, the more likely consumers will

accept a persuasion attempt. Given the prominence and power of mass media on public perception (McCombs & Reynolds, 2009), it would beseem major networks (i.e. ESPN, NBC, Fox, CBS, to name a few) to serve as catalysts toward perceptual change. For example, if networks were more amenable in allowing women the opportunity to take on authoritative roles, such as that of Hill in *His & Hers*, we may see an increase in positive attitude change toward female sportscasters. Thus, if said networks sincerely seek to be perceived as bastions of acceptance, knowing their persuasive power, but also showcasing opportunities for minorities may have substantial positive ramifications. Such opportunities may also positively influence young women's enthusiasm toward entering or progressing in sport media. Schmidt (2013) found that females were less likely to be writers in sport sections for college newspapers because of perceived sexism in the sport field. Likewise, an increase in sport media representation could also mitigate female status as field "tokens" (Hardin & Whiteside, 2009).

Another implication of this study's findings involves a need to educate sport consumers of the existing biases toward women. Ben-Ari (1998) advocated for theoretical and experiential components as ingredients for attitude change. In an experiment, Ben-Ari (1998) found that the sharing of personal experiences by LGBT individuals was found to have a positive impact on prejudiced views of social work students. Per Sakalli and Ugurlu (2003), when individuals learn more about the reality of a situation involving marginalized groups, they may be enlightened to the lack of genuine differences between the two groups, to which attitude change is more plausible. Certainly, ESPN's *Nine for IX* series has served as a viable education resource for enlightening the public of the persistent challenges faced by women involved with sport. According to Rogers (2004), educational background is also a reliable predictor of adoption. Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that institutions possess mobilizing potential within this

initiative. Furthermore, students represent sensible factions for attitudinal and behavioral change initiatives.

Nonetheless, the mere promotion of stereotype awareness may not consistently translate to positive changes. According to Duguid and Thomas-Hunt (2014), while individuals may be cognizant that their thoughts are biased, they may continue to promote such views if they believe that others in society share similar opinions. In essence, if individuals are aware that their beliefs represent a norm, they may be compelled to act accordingly due to their desire to conform to the prevailing social norm. Duguid and Thomas-Hunt (2014) further noted that, though we regularly hear of organizations lagging behind with regard to minority representation at the executive levels, decision-makers may not feel compelled to act for necessary improvements. This is because, if the observed behavior norm among competitors is perceived to be similar, then individual organizations cannot be pinpointed as the major culprit. The scenario described here then seems to parallel the reality of the sports media industry, whose neglect of gender diversity is more of an industry-wide phenomenon rather than a unique situation that is found to exist with selected industry players only. This further reiterates the aforementioned call for sport media entities to serve as catalyzing change agents with regard to offering minority opportunities.

### **Limitations**

Several limitations of this study should be noted. First, due to the use of Mechanical Turk for sampling and data collection, the ages of the sample tends to skew younger. More inclusion of older adults would add increased diversity and may strengthen the generalizability of the results. Second, the scarcity of any television sports programs that position a male and female sportscaster as “equal” restricted the current study to select the only such shown that was on the air at the time of data collection as the experimental stimulus. Third, the use of two African

American sportscasters, even though both of them are well known to sports fans, could have helped produce study findings that are primarily applicable to only African American sportscaster credibility and gendered-norms. Lastly, in terms of the debate itself, the side the male or female sportscaster was advocating could also have an influence on audience perception of their credibility. It is possible that younger basketball fans may favor Durant and older basketball fans may prefer Jordan (who retired in 2003) in the debate.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study examined the relationship between gender and sportscaster credibility by integrating the concepts of social role expectation and modern sexism in the conceptual framework. Though female sport involvement has increased exponentially over the years (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014), the number and roles that female sportscasters play in the sports media industry remains small, restricted and gender-typed.

In sum, those who endorse specific gender-norm oriented behaviors – as distinguished by masculinity and femininity – tend to associate female sportscasters as lacking credibility. This notion is congruent to the thesis of social role theory. On balance, gender-based perceptions about women in sport media then represent a stubborn barrier for career development and advancement opportunities for women in the sports media industry. As long as an adherence to sexist beliefs toward women persist, perceived female sportscaster credibility will continue to negatively impact consumer attitudes and consumption intentions toward sport media coverage presented by women sports professionals.

Future studies could consider investigating the perceived credibility of female sideline reporters with male sideline reporters, in-studio female panel moderators and male panelists. In addition, studies could also compare perceived credibility of male and female college basketball color commentators for NCAA men and women's basketball tournament games, as at least one female commentator (Doris Burke) has been seen to provide commentaries on selected men's tournament games on ESPN. While televised media was selected for this study, sport radio, which is nearly completely dominated by male sportscasters, is another area for additional research to explore female sportscaster fit and credibility. The sport media industry should take into the consideration that their programming and content could benefit from cultivating higher



ratings, stronger readership and audience loyalty from women who make up the 40% of the fan base for all major sports. All told, gender equity in sports media is attainable, if women are given sufficient opportunities and a wider variety of roles to demonstrate their expertise, trustworthiness, dynamism and ability to attract audience interest and following.

## Part Two: Double Standard?: An Evaluation of Responses to a Televised Sport Debate

### CHAPTER EIGHT: INTRODUCTION

Women in sport media have traditionally faced a myriad of challenges. Though the expansion of the field has increased opportunities for employment (Pedersen, Miloch, & Laucella, 2007), women have been deemed “tokens” due to being significant minorities (Hardin & Whiteside, 2009). Those that are employed in sport media have long dealt with perceptions that, due to their sex, they inherently lack the necessary qualifications to adequately perform in a conventionally male-dominated field (Ordman & Zillman, 1994; Sheffer & Shultz, 2007). As a result, women are rarely given an opportunity to display their merits. Studies have also found that, the more attractive a woman in sport-televised media is, the less she is perceived as credible (Davis & Krawczyk, 2010). Men in sport media, on the other hand, have faced no such negative consequences (Toro, 2005).

However, the constant need to exhibit ample expertise is merely one factor toward acceptance of a woman in sport media. According to Creedon (1998), there is also a necessity to “stay within the bounds of the sports coverage hierarchy” (p. 95), meaning that women are more likely to be accepted if they defer to men in the field, be it athletes, personnel, or fellow members of the media. For example, *ESPNW* columnist Kate Fagan wrote about several experiences during her time covering the Philadelphia 76ers, in which the paradigm of male sport structures negatively effected her ability to perform her duties (Fagan, 2013). After writing a critical article on the state of the team, an executive referred to her as a conniving and deceitful woman. On another occasion, a player told Fagan that she would be blacklisted for publicly criticizing a teammate. This would be a way for the players to “uphold the bonds of brotherhood” (Fagan, 2013, p. 1). Per Fagan, these brotherhoods in sport, coupled with those in the media, “serve only

to deliver power to power” (Fagan, 2013, p.1). It is reasonable to suggest that such treatment of females in sport media relates to prototypical stereotypes associated with women, such as being communal and sympathetic (Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000).

These issues are alarming for women, given the growing popularity of sport media productions that prioritize argumentative debate and temperamental behavior (Nylund, 2004). Given the desire for both source expertise and entertainment, many popular programs on networks such as *ESPN* and *CBS Sports* utilize the aforementioned opinion-laden formats. However, in most cases, there appear to be clear gender-role divides, much to the detriment of women. Women frequently guide the discussion on these programs and are not tasked with showcasing expertise or vitality in an attempt to entertain and persuade the audience (Deutsch, 2015). Some programs, though, such as *ESPN's His & Hers* and *Around the Horn*, have given women such opportunities to debate sport in front of a national audience.

Therefore, it is of interest to assess the impact that the endorsement of traditional gender-role stereotypes have on consumer perceptions of male and female sportscasters. While research has examined consumer perceptions of men and women in sport media from a credibility perspective (Etling, Young, Faux, & Mitchell, 2011; Mastro, Seate, Blecha, & Gallegos, 2012; Ordman & Zillman, 1994), none have assessed such from the lens of traditionally accepted behaviors between men and women, in conjunction with a sport televised format. As such, the purpose of this study was to examine tactics of persuasion in a popular sport media setting, while assessing evaluative differences between sportscasters of dissimilar sex. This was done through a content analysis of participant comments made while watching a nationally televised sport debate between a man and a woman. Furthermore, this study will utilize two theoretical frameworks to examine the topic: social role and credibility.

## CHAPTER NINE: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### **Social Role Theory**

Social role theory has been a valuable and relevant framework for the study of perceptual differences involving behaviors between men and women. Per Eagly (1987), social role theory is rather intuitive, as *types* of individual qualities and actions are evaluated in congruence with preconceived notions about gender's role in the behavior. These expectations are developed over time, and standards are thus set for appropriate characteristics and behaviors, depending on gender (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Consequently, gendered stereotypes form (Eagly et al., 2000). For example, women whom embrace athletic participation may be negatively perceived and deemed incongruent by factions in society, given that sport has represented a traditional male activity (Wachs, 2005). As mentioned, individual characteristics may also be evaluated from this perspective. Eagly and Karau (2002) found that women were not looked upon as favorably when displaying agentic features (i.e. aggression, zeal), which are traditionally associated with men.

The endorsement of such stereotypes has stimulated much research on the challenges women face involving positions of authority (Burton, Grappendorf, & Henderson, 2011; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012; Sibson, 2010). Given that agentic qualities are associated with leadership positions, when women seek to behave in such fashion, they may run the risk of being ostracized for exiting the boundary of their congruous role (Rudman et al., 2012). According to Eagly and Karau (2002), these attempts to break normative barriers can lead to prejudice toward women in influential positions. As such, female leaders may have to choose between conforming to conventional norms associated with being a woman or risk backlash for adopting an atypical role.

However, these issues can be further problematic for women due to the fact that the stereotypes associated with them tend to lack value. In a study of an Australian sport organization, Sibson (2010) found that responsibilities such as catering and minute taking were recommended to be relegated to women, given their communal stereotype. In essence, this tells us that women should fulfill certain duties, those being low-level secretarial responsibilities, which relate to femininity. In similar fashion, Burton and colleagues (2011) studied the perception and prejudices of positions that are supposedly catered to women (life skills, support and academic advising) and men (athletic director) in a college athletics setting. They found that men were more likely to be hired as athletic directors, and women, perhaps because of warm and friendly stereotypes, were viable choices for life skills director positions.

On the surface, it would appear that concepts of social role theory would similarly have a negative impact on women in sport media, particularly on television. Given that a 2005 study indicated that close to 95% of national sports anchors were men (Duncan et al., 2005), males likely fit the prototype for these positions. However, individual qualities that are stereotyped may be just as detrimental for women. The prescription of agentic characteristics associated with men (Hoyt, 2012), may be of value in a broadcasting setting. In fact, Areni and Sparks (2005) claimed that commanding characteristics in television/radio are generally valued by consumers. Thus, it would appear that women are at a significant disadvantage in being perceived as reputable and as appropriate fits in a sport media setting, in conjunction with preferred behaviors associated with broadcasting. As such, it is of benefit to also examine concepts of source credibility theory to determine influential source characteristics, while keeping in mind the impact of gender.

### **Source Credibility**

The global media “arms race” has presented numerous opportunities, but also many challenges for news organizations. According to Bucy (2003), due to the pervasive and competitive nature of news programs, “networks are challenged with maximizing their believability, accuracy, fairness, and informational completeness across delivery platforms” (p. 250). Thus, an influx in media focus has placed key personnel under augmented scrutiny with regard to source credibility.

The study of source credibility has traditionally been applied in media contexts, particularly in settings of persuasion. In particular, it focuses on the effect a correspondent has on message dispensation, be it message acceptance (Slater & Rouner, 1996), in addition to a message receiver’s attitudes toward the product or future consumption intentions (Kioussis, 2001). Hence, if individuals are receptive to a message based on how it is conveyed to them, the framework behind that process presents substantial practical implications in both communication and marketing research. Furthermore, the examination of characteristics of quality sources is instrumental for credibility purposes.

Source demographic factors, particularly sex, may play an influential role in the evaluation of credibility (Armstrong & McAdams, 2009; Flanagin & Metzger, 2003). Findings from Armstrong and McAdams (2009) indicate that the outcome may not invoke favorable assessments of female sources, as amongst articles of similar topics, male authors were perceived as more credible than females. While it is reasonable to surmise that message acceptance is more likely if there is a perceived match between moderator and message content (Slater & Rouner, 1996), in Armstrong and McAdams’ (2009) case, all topics were related to gender neutrality, indicating concern for female sources.

Thus, given a segmented topic such as sport, which has traditionally been indicative of male association, it is not unreasonable to think that women would be at a greater disadvantage. As such, it is of interest to explore source factors related to credibility, which have previously been employed in persuasion contexts, while including the impact of source sex. Early explorations into the concept of credibility offered trustworthiness and expertise as vital components (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). While both elements have consistently been reliable factors in source credibility research, additional features have likewise been found to be influential source characteristics, particularly in media settings, such as dynamism (Etling et al., 2011) and likeability (Chaiken, 1980). Accordingly, the following dimensions of credibility will be examined: expertise, trustworthiness, dynamism, and likeability.

### *Expertise*

The demonstration of sufficient topical knowledge, known as expertise, has been found to be a reliable characteristic in persuasion (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953). Perceived expertise, though, may be a product of several elements of appraisal. Specifically, perceived experience and superiority within a given area has been found to be a critical component of expertise (Ohanian, 1991).

However, research has supported that when women are field or organizational minorities, they are at a greater disadvantage with regard to receiving opportunities for upward mobility, due to perceptions of lacking expertise (Lynnes & Thompson, 2000; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). Specifically, Lynnes and Thompson (2000) found that women had to actively persuade their superiors to give them assignments that would boost their potential for promotion, in comparison to males, who had many assignments given to them with the intention that it would help them progress. In essence, superiors felt giving important tasks to women was a risk, thus women had

to coax them to receive such tasks. Furthermore, Lynnes and Thompson (2000) contended that, to gain the trust of a supervisor, it often takes another individual to align with the minority, though securing said ally may be more difficult when considered an organizational token.

Sport journalism tends to present a dilemma in that, on the surface level, women are assumed to lack general familiarity with sport, let alone expertise, in comparison to men (Miller & Miller, 1995). This perception is perceived to carry over to an editorial mindset, as women have cited resistance when seeking to be assigned to sports predominately played by males (Hardin, 2005; Miloch, Pedersen, Smucker, & Whisenant, 2005). In some markets, if those sports include football and baseball, women are clearly at a handicap in terms of accruing opportunities to cover popular sports.

According to Liebler and Smith (1997) the designation of work assignments is a product of gendered matches with perceptions of topical expertise. Specifically, Liebler and Smith (1997) found that women were less likely to be tasked with reporting on content associated with male consumers or traditionally dispensed by male newscasters. For instance, an examination of the 2000 United States presidential campaign coverage on primary networks (ABC, CBS, NBC) found that 79% of reports were given by men (Zeldes & Fico, 2005). Thus, election coverage, which focuses on an area that is still predominately male, appears to have a corresponding male presentation in the media. In addition, males were more likely to be used as sources for presidential campaign coverage, which indicates the perception of men as more likely to be experts in said field (Zeldes & Fico, 2005).

Age, which is often indicative of experience and potentially expertise, has been another confounding issue that has plagued women's advancement, particularly in televised media. A shelf life appears to exist for female newscasters, likely due to a strong emphasis on their



physical appearance. Alesia (2002) suggested the existence of a glass ceiling, as women newscasters may be less likely to have their contracts renewed after the age of 40 upon finding that no women over 40 remained as local television anchors in a study of Wisconsin newscasts. However, several men older than 40 held anchor positions, evidence of an existing double standard. Armstrong and colleagues' (2006) content analysis of local and national news broadcasts found similarities in that, as women grew older, they also received significantly less time in front of the camera.

Based on the aforementioned challenges faced by women in terms of being perceived as experts in sport, we hypothesize that:

H1: Positive comments related to the perception of source expertise are anticipated to be significantly greater for a male sportscaster in comparison to a female sportscaster.

Comparably, negative comments related to the perception of source expertise are anticipated to be significantly greater for a female sportscaster in comparison to a male sportscaster.

### *Trustworthiness*

Trustworthiness is associated with the degree to which the audience attributes the validity of a source's message (Hovland et al., 1953). In persuasion settings, the use of evidence to substantiate one's argument boosts the perception that the source is not only competent, but also reliable in a topic area (Whitehead, 1971). Likewise, perceptions of overt demonstrations of bias have not been favorable toward garnering audience trust (O'Keefe, 1990). Though its establishment may be longitudinal, Erdogan (1999) claimed that audiences will be more amenable to a message if the source appears genuine and authentic. These elements are especially important with topics involving opinion change (Hovland & Weiss, 1951).

Appraisals of trustworthiness may oscillate, depending on the position and perceived intent of the source. According to Hovland et al. (1953), “when a person is perceived as having a definite intention to persuade others, the likelihood is increased that [they] will be perceived as having something to gain and, hence, as less worthy of trust” (p. 23). Thus, because the media provides the public with access to information that will otherwise remain dormant, judgments of sincerity are indispensable. While research has yet to specify that consumers overtly appraise as a woman in sport media as being less trustworthy, studies have certainly found that the perception exists from those in the field. A female sport journalist told Miloch et al. (2007) that, to suppress concerns over their work being perceived as illegitimate, women in the field must “work twice as hard” (p. 228) as male counterparts.

In consideration of the aforementioned literature on trustworthiness, we hypothesize that:

H2: Positive comments related to perception of source trustworthiness are anticipated to be significantly greater for a male sportscaster in comparison to a female sportscaster.

Relatedly, negative comments related to perception of source trustworthiness are anticipated to be significantly greater for a female sportscaster in comparison to a male sportscaster.

### *Dynamism*

While aspects such as expertise and trustworthiness are valid in measuring source proficiency, early studies on television and radio noted that it would be short sighted to not account for personality (McCroskey & Young, 1981). While displaying capability and appearing honest are worthwhile characteristics, the presentation of zeal is equally important in enticing the message receiver. Hovland et al. (1953) noted that a source with a salient persona “who holds

the attention of the audience can increase the likelihood of attentive consideration of the new opinion” (p. 20). These features are clearly beneficial for audio-visual media.

Results from work in voice credibility assertions, however, indicate that perceived source sex may serve as criteria for credibility evaluation. Etling and colleagues (2011) assessed the impact of voice on audience perceptions of a sport broadcast and found that male sportscasters were seen as more authoritative, and thus, more credible than women. It was speculated that such findings were a product of societal stereotypes -- men being perceived as appropriate fits for tasks that are agentic and aggressive (Eagly et al., 2000), both synonymous with displays of authoritativeness. These characteristics, thus, may serve as prerequisites for duties involving the offering of opinions (Carli, 1989). In fact, demonstrative and powerful behavior, coupled with the use of assertive language has been found to increase the receiver’s focus on the source (Burrell & Koper, 1998). Due to these stereotypes, women may be perceived as more appropriate fits in media roles that are less assertive.

In consideration of these points, we hypothesize that:

H3: Positive comments related to displays of source dynamism are anticipated to be significantly greater for a male sportscaster in comparison to a female sportscaster.

Likewise, negative comments related to displays of source dynamism are anticipated to be significantly greater for a female sportscaster in comparison to a male sportscaster.

### *Likeability*

According to Chaiken (1980), source likeability is crucial toward maintaining a positive image. In fact, O’Keefe (1990) argued that perceived likeability may be the strongest characteristic of persuasion, as it has been found to improve the perception of a communicator’s stance on a message. A study by Chaiken and Eagly (1983) found that likeable sources were

more persuasive, particularly when presenting video and audiotape messages. This provides credence that, depending on the form of media, physical features of the source may impact the audience. According to Chaiken (1986), attractiveness is an added benefit in the evaluation of source characteristics, as being aesthetically well regarded is known to induce positive perceptions. People may simply agree with a message from that type of source because they like the attractive person.

However, women in media are evaluated differently, much to their detriment, due to level of attractiveness. They are judged by consumers not only on their abilities, but also in conjunction with physical appearance (Engstrom & Ferri, 2000). Meanwhile, men are much more likely to be judged primarily on pure abilities. Engstrom and Ferri (2000) showed support for this notion, as a female newscaster in the study commented that, “women are supposed to appear attractive, perhaps even glamorous...the men just have to look trustworthy” (p. 623). Even male newscasters interviewed admitted said field biases, that viewers incessantly made comments about a woman’s appearance, but never toward them.

Based on these concepts associated with gender and likeability, we hypothesize that:

H4a: Positive comments related to the perception of source likeability are anticipated to be significantly greater for a male sportscaster in comparison to a female sportscaster.

H4b: Comments related to the perception of source physical features are anticipated to be significantly greater for a female sportscaster in comparison to a male sportscaster.

In all, given what has been found with regard to the perceptual differences between men and women in the media and positions of superiority in general, but specifically due to the variance in sport, the following research question is proposed:

RQ: How does source sex influence differences in consumer evaluations of sport media persuasion tactics?

## CHAPTER TEN: METHODS

### *Sample*

Participants were recruited through Mechanical Turk (mTurk), a marketplace affiliated with Amazon.com, in which questionnaires can be completed in exchange for monetary payment. In all, there were 544 participants for this study. Males comprised the majority of the sample (57.9%), while the average age was 35.3. The ethnicity breakdown was as follows: 76.3% Caucasian, 7.1% African American, 5.5% Hispanic, 3.4% Asian-Pacific Islander, 3.2% Asian American, 1.9% Mixed, and 1.8% Native American. Less than one percent indicated “other.” In general, the sample represented moderate media consumers. Approximately 51% reported that they consumed at least six hours of sport media content each week (i.e. radio, newspaper and web content, game broadcasts, and other television-based analysis). Twenty-five percent reported less than three hours of weekly sport media content, while 24.4% indicated they consumed such content from between 3 and 6 hours each week.

### *Methodology*

Participants watched a video of a debate between two *ESPN* sports show hosts, Michael Smith and Jemele Hill, which was featured on the program *Numbers Never Lie* (now known as *His & Hers*). The debate involved a hypothetical one-on-one basketball contest between former NBA star Michael Jordan and current Oklahoma City Thunder standout Kevin Durant. Smith took the stance of supporting Jordan’s victory in the matchup, while Hill posited that Durant’s attributes could potentially equate to success. The video was selected after a pre-test with a group of undergraduate students ( $N = 19$ ), which confirmed it as sufficiently representative of a debate, where sportscasters deliberately attempted to persuade an audience. The Jordan/Durant debate

was the best option of three varying *Numbers Never Lie* segments ( $F(1,54) = 17.48, p < .001$ ) presented to the group.

During the video, participants were given an opportunity to comment on the arguments made by each host. Upon conclusion of the debate, participants were also asked to identify which sportscaster was more persuasive, in addition to elaborating on their choice rationale. As a result, the data for this project included participant thoughts during the debate, persuasion rationale comments, and sportscaster “winner” frequencies.

Thus, a content analysis was employed to examine prevalent themes amongst the response data, particularly from a comparative analysis perspective between perceptions involving source gender. According to Krippendorff (1989), content analysis “is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context” (p. 403). It is frequently employed in the analysis of visual and written documentation, in addition to verbal dialogue. Content analyses enable researchers to provide a synopsis of a given data set (Neuendorf, 2002). Furthermore, the procedure has been utilized effectively in the past in analyses of gender depictions in televised media (Greenberg & Collete, 1997; Armstrong et al., 2006). However, most analyses have simply quantified content trends and not embraced the perspective of the media consumer, which this study aims to do. Furthermore, content analysis has been recommended as a valuable tool to examine sport communication, given the mass media’s growing ability to influence public thoughts and behaviors, particularly in the context of athletics (Andrew, Pedersen, & McEvoy, 2011).

#### *Data Analysis*

Participant comments served as units of analyses. In sum, 1,239 comments were made in reference to the debate. Each comment was extracted and pasted into a Microsoft Excel

spreadsheet and given an associated numeric value, based on the row it represented in the spreadsheet. Comments remained in tact from their original posting and were not altered if misspelled. This was done to distinguish each unit, similar to the use of pseudonyms in conventional qualitative research. In consideration of recent sport media content analysis research, which effectively analyzed units from a range of approximately 1,000 to 1,500 (Blaszka, Burch, Frederick, Clavio, & Walsh, 2012; Sanderson, 2013), the aggregate total of comments was deemed sufficient.

Similar to established qualitative research strategies, content analyses that are conducted with a theoretical framework and specific research questions in mind are regarded as deductive in nature (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Given this study's focus on gender's influence on perceptions of sport media, with an emphasis on source credibility and impressions involving persuasion, a deductive analysis was thus employed. Content analysis scholars have generally opposed inductive approaches, claiming that investigations must be predicated on prior guidelines (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Neuendorf, 2002).

A preliminary analysis was conducted prior to proposing official categories and themes. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) defined a category as an integral repetition evident and extracted from the data. While category overlap was expected in the comments, this study employed a nominal measurement approach, seeking "a set of categories that are distinct from one another" (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 120). The first step of the preliminary analysis involved multiple inspections of the data by study's primary researcher, to which notes were taken to describe the material. Schemes were developed a priori to official analysis, in conjunction with concepts of source credibility and persuasion.



Each unit that referenced an aspect related to one of the sportscasters and the aforementioned concepts was analyzed on multiple occasions and segregated into categories and specific themes. The initial data inspection revealed a total of 11 apparent themes. Nonetheless, upon continuous review of the data, while being cognizant of the deductive nature of analysis, units were re-classified to 9 themes with 4 over-arching categories. As a result, an electronic codebook was established for use of final analysis.

In heeding Neuendorf's (2002) recommendation, two coders were utilized to establish inter-coder reliability on the data set. These coders included the study's primary researcher and a doctoral candidate with ample experience in qualitative data coding. Neuendorf (2002) also claimed that it is acceptable for studies involving communication theory to use simple agreement between coders, targeting 80% solidarity as a mechanism to establish reliability. Both coders analyzed the data independently based on the established code sheet. Upon first comparison, the two coders reached 88.3% classification agreement. However, the remaining 11.7% of data that lacked accord was discussed and eventually re-classified upon bi-coder agreement. Nevertheless, simple agreement does not take into account any error. To account for this, a Cohen's Kappa test was conducted to test inter-coder reliability. According to Stemler (2001), Cohen's Kappa values above .60 are strong. Within this data set, a Kappa of .849 was calculated ( $p < .001$ ).

In all, the following categories were established: dynamism, expertise, likeability, and trustworthiness. Specific themes within dynamism included emotional display, use of humor, and aggressive tactics. Themes within expertise included source knowledge and references to age. Likeability was coded based on comments relating to general source amiability and physical features. Specific themes within trustworthiness included sportscaster citation of

evidence and exhibition of source bias. A breakdown of each category and definition for associated coding schemes can be found in Table 5. Furthermore, to truly examine the perceptual differences between the man and woman sportscaster, it was necessary to distinguish the *type* of comment within each theme. For instance, a remark involving display of aggression by the male sportscaster is noteworthy. However, we must further analyze the comment and distinguish whether or not it praised or rebuked the sportscaster. Subsequently, to examine the differences between positive and negative comments amongst sportscaster sex, tests of proportions were calculated.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN: RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

In terms of overall persuasion, descriptive statistics indicated that Smith was perceived as the more effective ( $N = 324, 59.6\%$ ;  $N = 220, 40.4\%$  for Hill) sportscaster. Smith was also seen as more effective amongst males ( $63.9\%$ ) and females as well ( $53.8\%$ ). Smith slightly edged Hill for reception of the most positive comments (214 to 205), but had 87 mentions of negative remarks, as opposed to just 32 for Hill. Of the source credibility factors, trustworthiness ( $52.9\%$ ) and authoritativeness ( $31.4\%$ ) were the two most prevalent assessments. Within these two categories, Hill received the most positive comments (173) for being perceived as trustworthy, and Smith was applauded on 106 occasions for displays of authoritativeness. Specific quantifications relating to positive and negative perceptions of each sportscaster and related themes can be found in Table 6. Frequencies and example items of each theme, be it positive and negative toward each sportscaster, can also be found in Tables 7 and 8.

### *Expertise*

H1 proposed that, of the two sportscasters, the male would receive significantly more positive comments with regard to perception of source expertise. Similarly, the female sportscaster would receive significantly more negative comments. A z-test of population proportionality indicates support on both accounts ( $z = 4.519, p < .01$ ).

Additional data analysis provides a richer description of the specific themes within expertise and their perceptual associations with each sportscaster. Of the 46 total comments made in reference to source possession of knowledge, 20 were positively directed toward Smith. In general, being a male seemed to generate comments relating to perceived possession of necessary basketball knowledge to work in sport media. Still, participants neglected to provide specific support for why they felt that Smith possessed elevated basketball knowledge.

Comments included: “He knows more about basketball than Jemele Hill” (940); “He seemed more knowledgeable in basketball and the numbers don't lie” (785); and “I feel he was more persuasive because he seemed more knowledgeable. He appeared to know more about the statistics.” (1197).

Hill, on the other hand, only received 9 such compliments. Moreover, praise was given with either trepidation, or in jest of her status as a woman. Comments included: “She seems very knowledgeable. To even speculate that Jordan is good because of his team members is ingenious...She seems to win this debate, I'm shocked!” (573), and “Interaction is very natural, woman is knowledgeable without being overbearing - which is not entirely common in sports broadcasting.” (424). Whereas zero negative comments over source knowledge were made toward Smith, Hill received five, most of which also referred back to her female status or a perceived lack of fit in a basketball debate. A supporting comment stated, “The female is not giving Jordan the credit he deserves. Anyone that watched basketball would realize that Jordan carried the team. His teammates just supported him. She is not a basketball fan.” (240). A participant also indicated feelings of apprehension toward accepting Hill's sport-related message, even though it seemed to be plausible: “For some reason, I don't totally buy the woman's ability to analyze sports, though I know I shouldn't feel that way” (39). In reference to Hill, another participant claimed, “This is why women shouldn't be sportscasters, lol.” (245)

Furthermore, Smith appeared to benefit from being perceived as the elder of the two sportscasters, and thus, was wiser. The support of an older player in Jordan perhaps expanded such impressions. Comments included: “I think the guy knows more about history, and she's focused too much on the present” (244); “She is too young to appreciate Jordan “ (37); “Jemele Hill has opposite views. She's a younger generation. She didn't grow up like Michael and I did,

watching the best ever play the game.” (241); and “I don't think she's old enough to remember the awesomeness that is Jordan.” (575). In fact, some speculated that Hill was a novice and simply interested in the discussion because it was mandated for her position. One participant said, “Michael clearly knew more about basketball, as though he followed it his entire life. The other person looked like she just became a fan because she got a job on TV” (945).

### *Trustworthiness*

H2 proposed that, of the two sportscasters, the male would receive significantly more positive comments with regard to perception of source trustworthiness. Similarly, the female sportscaster would receive significantly more negative comments. Neither postulations were supported, due to a lack of statistical significance. In fact, a z-test of population proportionality indicates the reversal of the hypothesis, in that the female sportscaster received significantly more positive and less negative comments ( $z = -7.063$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

A closer look at the data demonstrates that comments involving the use of supporting evidence, be it the offering of specific statistics or features about each player, were overwhelmingly in favor of Hill's arguments (138 pro-Hill; 77 pro-Smith). Overall, Hill was lauded for exceptional thinking, particularly when she stressed that Durant's size would serve as a mismatch for Jordan, given the setting of a one-on-one contest. Smith, on the other hand, cited statistics relating to Jordan's player efficiency ratings, and how they were consistently higher than Durant's. Nevertheless, a substantial amount of comments critiqued Smith for relying too heavily on Jordan's mythical status as the game's greatest player, rather than providing more concrete support. An example of a comment in support of these statements included:

I think Michael Smith's analysis is rather shallow. He relies on the fact that Michael Jordan is the greatest player of all time and just backs it up mostly by saying he is the

greatest of all time. Jemele Hill counters with facts about how the game has changed and that the players are different today. She points out that Kevin Durant is much taller than the players Jordan guarded, and uses a lot of facts in her argument. She makes more valid points overall. (21)

Another participant said, “She was giving actual reasons that Durant could be better than Jordan—persuasive arguments such as height and how he plays currently. There was nothing like that from Michael” (1166).

Detractors of Hill’s arguments also claimed that Smith’s facts were more superior. Similar to those that favored Smith’s perceived expertise, most neglected to elaborate on how the facts were, in fact, stronger. Comments included: “Michael Smith had the statistics on his side, which always strengthens your argument” (1050); and “He used statistics and valid information that backed up his position” (924). Another appeared to be caught off guard that a woman presented a quality argument and remarked, “I actually agree with her comment on 1-on-1 being different than playing on a team” (13). Furthermore, being a male may have benefitted Smith from this perspective, as one participant claimed, “to trust a man’s view on sports than a woman” (788).

Perceptions of being honest and objective are also rooted in trustworthiness. In terms of these characteristics, comments were likewise tremendously in favor of Hill (35 positive for Hill; 31 negative for Smith). Hill was consistently extolled for being the more objective sportscaster, while Smith was called a Jordan “idol-worshipper” (8). For those that sided with Hill in the argument, it appears that perception of bias played a significant role in her favor. In fact, while Smith benefited from being perceived as older and more judicious, his connection to nostalgia further instigated perceptions of being too biased toward Jordan. Comments included: “Michael

is blinded by his nostalgia” (218); “She was logical, and looked at the facts. The gentleman in the video, was a blind fan boy” (886); and “She was more realistic than Michael, he was more like an adoring fan that put his guy on a pedestal with blinders on” (1023).

### *Dynamism*

H3, which predicted that, of the two sportscasters, the male would receive significantly more positive comments for displays of dynamism, while the female sportscaster would receive significantly more negative comments, was not supported. However, a deeper exploration of the data provides valuable insight on how each sportscaster was perceived when it came to demonstrations of dynamism.

Smith accrued the majority of comments in relation to each theme within dynamism (106 out of 184 total), much of which included significant praise for displays of emotion and use of humor and aggression. Though some participants felt that Smith was excessive in coupling his arguments with emotion, for the most part, his passion was positively perceived (35 positive remarks; 10 negative remarks) toward selling his argument. Comments included: “He was also more engaging, which could be more of an emotional reason rather than logical reasoning for supporting him” (702); “The guy clearly is passionate about this, which makes the whole clip fun to watch. I do agree with him” (216); and “Primarily his passion- he may not be correct in an objective sense, but I paid more attention to him and was on his side rather than the other caster. Passion is very magnetic.” (801)

Essentially, it appeared that Smith’s dynamic display may have outweighed a lack of substantial citation of evidence. Additionally, Smith attempted to invoke humor into his argument by citing Jordan’s heroic role in the film, *Space Jam*. While these comments were fairly outlandish and would have no bearing on a one-on-one contest, Smith’s humor attempt

was successful, all things considered (34 positive comments; 10 negative comments). Comments included: “The superhero/space joke comment was funny” (402); “Michael Smith’s humor influenced me to feel that he is more persuasive” (1073); “I agree with everything Michael Smith said about Michael Jordan. I especially agree that Michael Jordan has ‘saved the world’” (580); and, “I thought this was entertaining. The man had a very funny argument about Michael Jordan saving the world in Space Jam” (248).

Not only was Smith perceived to be the more vivacious of the two sportscasters, he also seemed to dominate screen time and received significant praise for being aggressive (37 comments). Particularly, participants noted that his aggressive tactics, including talking over Hill throughout the broadcast, allowed for an influx of opportunities to present arguments. In general, this strategy favored Smith. Accompanying comments included: “He was more aggressive and consistent stating that Jordan would win. He did probably over half the talking and kept on hammering his point” (873); “He seemed to win the shouting match, so I mostly heard his points more while the woman didn't really get a chance to say much” (877); and

He seemed more persuasive mainly because he seemed to dominate the conversation. I didn't necessarily agree with what he was saying all the time, but he was kind of aggressive in his arguments, so I'd say he was somewhat more persuasive. Hill, on the other hand, seemed to back down a little bit from the argument, which made her seem less persuasive to me (693).

Several participants noted that Smith began the debate by telling Hill the onus was on her to win the argument. Likewise, Smith was commended for embracing such a tactic, as, in essence, Hill had to exceed expectations to win them over. This presented a disadvantage for Hill. A related



comment included, “He was just better overall. The girl was only trying to defend herself. She didn’t really make any good point” (1194).

Nevertheless, as mentioned, Smith drew a reasonable amount of ire for such bellicose antics, as evidenced by 20 negative comments. They included: “Smith did not seem to be at all open minded and was unwilling to take any other information into account” (1151); “The male seems to be delusional and refuses other's opinions” (212); and “He talked too much crap. I just stopped listening to him” (1120). While some participants clearly disapproved of his behavior, it should be noted that nearly twice as many comments (37 to 20) lauded such actions and claimed it was instrumental in his persuasion attempt.

In general, there was a dearth of comments directed toward Hill in reference to authoritativeness (23 total; 16 positive, 7 negative). Positive remarks included, “She had the most enthusiasm while making her point. She made some good observations on why who would win the match” (700) and “She seemed more confident. Her male counterpart was tumbling over his words a bit as well.” (862). However, while Smith was generally praised for exuding emotion and aggression, some participants did not care for similar behaviors by Hill. Supporting comments included, “He did not make faces like she did when he was talking. He also did not fall back on colloquialisms like she did, such as ‘y’all gotta stop’. He was more professional” (1020) and “He was calm and collected thru out the conversation where Jemele was very animated and loud” (1139).

### *Likeability*

H4a and H4b predicted that the male sportscaster would receive significantly more positive comments for being likeable, while the woman would be subjected to significantly greater comments about physical appearance. However, due to the dearth of total comments on

these themes, we were unable to conduct tests of significance. A further analysis of the data, though, demonstrates differences in perceptual judgments.

Twenty-six total statements were made pertaining to general sportscaster amiability. Eight, however, were detrimental to both sportscasters as a pair. Though few remarks were directed toward Smith's affability (three positive; three negative), Hill received twice as many negative comments. Being a woman, in conjunction with her argument, seemed to draw an irrational ire of a participant, who said, "The female sportscaster is the most frustrating person I've ever seen. Michael Jordan was not only one of the best scorers but his defense was out of this world" (50). Other comments included: "I cannot stand the woman's voice!!!!... there was more whine then debate. The girl is condescending" (591), and "He wasn't annoying. He had professional smooth voice. The lady whined and was annoying" (1201).

Physical appearance was an aspect that, while not a pervasive theme (four total statements), comments were only made in reference to Hill. In fact, some remarks, though indicating that Hill was attractive, were rather odd. They included: "I don't know if it is just me or not but swear that when Jemele talks sports she gets hotter" (54); and "As far as the announcers, the chick is hot, I like her" (55). Thus, attractiveness stimulated attention in reference to a woman, but not a man.

## CHAPTER TWELVE: DISCUSSION

This study sought to examine the role of source sex on stimulating perceptual differences in the evaluation of sport media persuasion tactics. Previous work exploring tactics in persuasion settings claimed that perceived expertise, likeability, and trustworthiness, and behaviors demonstrating confidence, certainty, and dominance have proven to be effective (O’Keefe, 1990). However, a closer examination into these findings suggests that source judgments unequivocally differ between sexes, much to the benefit of men. In all, the woman sportscaster was perceived as more trustworthy, while the man was more likeable and praised for being dynamic and inherently possessing a stronger sport-specific acumen. We can attribute these assessments to two concepts that have presented challenges to women in male-dominated environments like sport and broadcast media: sexism and adherence to role congruity.

Sexism toward women affiliated with sport is certainly not a new phenomenon. It is reasonable to suggest that sexist attitudes played a detrimental role in the evaluation of a woman sportscaster. Positive mentions with regard to perceived source knowledge were meager, while no references were made toward a man lacking expertise. This supports the notion that being a female in sport media often comes with perceptions of naturally lacking knowledge in comparison to men (Ordman & Zillman, 1994). This may be indicative of overt, hostile sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Comments that were specific to a sportscaster’s sex were made in reference to women and generally with ill will. In fact, one commenter was so disgruntled with Hill’s stance that they used it as rationale for why they felt women should not hold sportscasting positions. There also was expressed hesitation to accept the female’s message, purely due to source sex and the topic of sport.

The current study also presented additional instances in which a woman in sport dealt with overt sexism, via appearance. This was anticipated, given previous research on the challenges of constant physical appearance scrutiny in sport media (Davis & Krawczyk, 2010, Toro, 2005). In this study, the woman dealt with references to her physical features, all in perverse fashion, while no such comments corresponded to the male counterpart. While attractiveness is a valued component toward establishing likeability and public persuasion (Chaiken, 1986), for women in sport media, the lure of sexual juxtaposition is often common. Per Messner (2004), such portrayals are pervasive and represent utter demonstrations of the de-valuation of women. In essence, when women are fantasized in such fashion, they are being treated as objects (Messner, 2004).

However, with regard to settings in which perception of expertise is strongly valued, such focus on appearance for women in broadcasting can be further detrimental. Amongst women, younger, more attractive individuals are of desire (Toro, 2005). In this study, apparent age appeared to be associated with perception of expertise, much to the dismay of the woman sportscaster. The opinion that she was the younger of the two in the debate appeared to further mitigate possession of expertise. She appeared to lack the historical insight that the man possessed. Ironically, Hill is four years older than Smith.

While perception of age can be purely subjective, these comments can be interpreted in two ways. One, given sport's long-standing connection with men (Messner, 1988), this may represent a sexist assumption that a woman likely inherently lacks the *historical* sport pedigree that a man can possess. Furthermore, due to age being associated with wisdom and knowledge in this context, this may suggest a form of de-valuation of a woman in that position. Early credibility research by Whitehead (1968) called for the measurement of perceived experience as

an essential component toward measuring competence in an individual. Hence, being professed as young certainly may be disadvantageous in establishing credibility and attempting to persuade an audience. Given what is known though about the backlash directed toward female newscasters upon eclipsing the age of 40 (Alesia, 2002; Armstrong et al., 2006), this presents a rather precarious double-edged sword position for women on television, particularly in sport. Discernment of youth may de-value expertise and competence, while the appearance of advanced age may result in visual disinterest.

Furthermore, these findings indicate that tenets of trustworthiness may not be as valued in this setting, likely to source demographics. The female sportscaster received substantially more compliments for displays of argument evidence, and a lack of demonstrating player bias. Still, the majority of participants perceived the male sportscaster to be more persuasive. This contradicts the findings of one of the earliest explorations into trustworthiness by Hovland and Weiss (1951), which posited that subjects tend to be persuaded by honest and sincere sources when it comes to opinion-based messages. The setting of this study was predicated on exchange of opinions. Nevertheless, the male sportscaster received substantial negative critique for exhibiting too much bias in support of Jordan, yet it did not appear to be damaging enough to deter overall persuasion.

Other instances of less overt sexism appear to have been displayed in this analysis. A male sportscaster's knowledge and supportive evidence were noted, but participants were less likely to expound upon such strengths in connection to persuasive power. He "seemed more knowledgeable" and "knows more about basketball," however, there was a dearth of support for such sentiment. In general, participants noted how the woman seemed to effectively utilize such

strategies, and not only offered more support for her side, but also in conjunction with debate specificities.

These instances of subtle sexism may be indicative implicit bias. Per Greenwald and Banaji (1995), implicit attitudes indicate the presence of “traces of past experience that mediate favorable or unfavorable feeling, thought, or action toward social objects” (p. 8). In other words, individuals may not overtly purport sexist attitudes, however, socializing influences or past experiences may trigger retention of such feelings intrinsically. They may subsequently ascribe these feelings while not realizing actual intent. Thus, a woman in a sport media setting, particularly in a pivotal role, regardless of performance, may be slighted due to traditional perceptions of being unqualified.

It should also be noted that the woman sportscaster was perceived as the more trustworthy of the two, much due to the strong positive acknowledgement of her use of argumentative evidence. However, from her perspective, this tactic may be indicative of perceived field sexism. That is, due to an opinion that women as minorities in sport lack competence and expertise, it may have been necessary for Hill to actively rely on more statistics and factual support than Smith, knowing that audience judgments likely vary by sex. This is not uncommon for women in male-dominated environments, as women have to adopt additional measures to prove their merit in areas of male supremacy (Eagly & Karau, 2002). For instance, Huddy and Terkildsen (1993) argued that, because masculine traits are associated with competent leadership, women may be at a greater likelihood to be elected for national office if they convinced the populace that they were proficient in areas stereotyped as male, such as economics and national defense. It is plausible to suggest that sport media would represent a similar field, to which a woman must work “over and above” to sustain a reasonable level of

perceived expertise. In fact, in a survey of female sport journalists, reporters claimed to encounter ambivalence toward acceptance of their work, as co-workers and readers were keen on regularly double checking their work, indicating a lack of confidence (Miller & Miller, 1995). Men, meanwhile, received a greater margin of error.

Adherences to concepts of role congruity also appear to buoyed the perceived credibility of the male sportscaster. Similar to previous research, which found that men in positions of authority may be positively appraised based on congruence with stereotypical characteristics (Rudman et al., 2012), these findings indicate that perceptions of prototypical-gendered behaviors have likewise served as a catalyst toward male approval. In this study, displays of agentic behavior were beneficial toward a man's ability to persuade. The male's domination of exposure had a positive influence on viewers. Such findings support claims that demonstrations of aggression and powerful language have been found to induce a perception of competence and success (Burrell & Koper, 1998). While Hill appeared to not act in such fashion, when Smith talked over her, some participants cited such assertive tactics as criteria for their endorsement of him.

While the data unquestionably provided concerning evidence for women attempting success in sport media, we are not bereft of areas for potential progress. The female sportscaster received twice the amount of positive (compared to negative) comments for displaying dynamism. This may serve as evidence that, though men are still more likely to be accepted when behaving in authoritative fashion, women may not be castigated for similar actions. This may suggest that perceptions of traditional perceptions of behavioral incongruity for women may, in fact, be waning. In addition, these findings may demonstrate that Areni and Sparks' (2005) claim that dynamism in televised media, may, in fact, work for both men and women.

Overall, participants claimed to find the banter between Smith and Hill to be entertaining and indicated they would watch the show in the future. This serves as proof that women can be a *part* of a successful sport talk show. It would, however, be of interest to assess viewing desires if the show was only comprised of women. Early studies that examined the power of content on television noted its ability to showcase roles for each sex, which subliminally impacts perceptions of reality (Reardon, 1981). Thus, those that claim that women may not be credible enough to serve as expert analysts for sport, by showcasing those whom are a part of a successful production, we may persuade the public into realizing that notions of women being incapable of these tasks is not the norm. Over time, such increased exposure to depictions of women in positions of equal power to male counterparts may stimulate an increase in accepting attitudes. Having a spot at the sport conversation table is arguably a step in a progressive direction.

### *Limitations*

While using authentic sportscasters ensured a professional debate for participant viewing, it was not utilized without concern. The employment of a content analysis, however, does not allow for a control measure for genuine players or sportscasters. Supporters of the elaboration likelihood model (Gunther, 1992) claim that increased involvement in a topic will lead to greater cognitive stimulation in relation to the message. Furthermore, augmented participation with a polarizing topic would seem to have a detrimental effect on the source supporting an oppositional stance. Thus, the use of real sportscasters, in addition to a debate about two actual NBA players, one being a popular, yet, at times, controversial player in Jordan, may have skewed participant perceptions, depending on the persuader's stance.

### *Future Research*



Future researchers could conduct a similar experiment, but quantitatively examine the strength of each tactic of persuasion. Within that context, a comparison of criteria amongst differing media settings may provide intriguing findings. For instance, in a comparison of newspapers and television, would non-visual factors take precedent, and if so, what impact would that have on perceptions of source gender? Additionally, due to the fact that women lack a presence in sport “analyst” positions, a content analysis could explore the number of women in sport broadcasting and assess the quantity of those positioned in roles that demonstrate expertise.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN: CONCLUSION

The current study used a content analysis to evaluate consumer perceptions of sportscasters of differing sex through the lens of persuasion theory. Though opportunities in sport media continue to increase for women, until society regresses on perpetuating double standards that suppress female advancement, challenges will remain. This study used an authentic experiment to examine the relationship between sport consumer psychographics and sportscasters, thus, demonstrating the practical value of its results. Given the importance of this topic, we hope that this study will serve as influence for future topical explorations.

## Appendix

### A. TABLES

Table 1  
*Sample Descriptive Statistics*

		Frequency	Frequency %
Sex	Male	310	57
	Female	244	43
Age	18-25	95	17.5
	26-31	203	28.8
	32-39	133	24.5
	40-45	55	10.1
	46-50	31	5.7
	Over 50	73	13.4
Ethnicity	Caucasian	419	77
	Hispanic	27	5
	African American	38	7
	Native American	10	1.8
	Asian-Pacific	19	3.5
	Islander	17	3.1
	Mixed	9	1.7
	Other	5	0.9
Sport Media Consumption (Weekly)			
	Less than 3 hours	136	25
	3-6 hours	133	24.4
	More than 6 hours	274	50.6

Table 2

*Means and standard deviations by condition on variables*

Condition	Mean (SD) GN	Mean (SD) Sexism	Mean (SD) Credibility	Mean (SD) Attitude	Mean (SD) Behavioral Intentions
Male Participant/Male Sportscaster (N=170)	2.75 (.80)	2.70 (.78)	3.83 (.68)	3.61 (.84)	2.97 (1.03)
Male Participant /Female Sportscaster (N=140)	2.42 (.83)	2.50 (.87)	3.81 (.81)	3.49 (1.04)	2.77 (1.13)
Female Participant/Male Sportscaster (N=115)	2.03 (.71)	2.13 (.73)	3.95 (.68)	3.67 (.89)	2.93 (1.01)
Female Participant/Female Sportscaster (N=119)	1.79 (.80)	2.06 (.77)	4.09 (.74)	3.71 (.90)	2.96 (.99)

Table 3

*Correlation, Psychometric Properties, and Descriptive Statistics (Overall Model, N=544)*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
Endorsement of Gender Norms	---	.509**	-.184**	-.100*	-.084*
Sexism	.509**	---	-.213**	-.139**	-.116**
Perceived Credibility	-.184**	-.213**	---	.720**	.544**
Attitudes	-.100*	-.139**	.720**	---	.727**
Behavioral Intentions	-.084*	-.116**	.544**	.727**	---
M	2.30	2.39	3.91	3.61	2.91
SD	.87	.83	.73	.92	1.05
CR	.75	.77	.75	.88	.85
AVE	.53	.56	.52	.77	.70

\*\* p &lt; .01.

\* p &lt; .05.

Table 4

*Fit Statistics and Standardized Path Coefficients*

	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA	Associations			
					1 $\beta$	2 $\beta$	3 $\beta$	4 $\beta$
Female					-	-		
Sportscaster	0.926	0.919	0.076	0.054	0.174*	0.163*	0.735***	0.689***
Male								
Sportscaster	0.922	0.915	0.071	0.051	0.071	0.004	0.711***	0.664***
Overall Model	0.954	0.949	0.077	0.041	-0.032	-0.095	0.721	0.681

Note. 1 = endorsement of gender norms to credibility path, 2 = sexism to credibility path,  
 3 = credibility to attitudes path, 4 = attitudes to behavioral intentions path.

\*\*p < .001.

\*p < .05.

Table 5  
*Operational Definitions*

Category	Coding Rationale
Dynamism	Comments indicating sportscasters showing emotion, humor, or the use of commanding or aggressive tactics in conjunction with persuasion (e.g. dominating the conversation).
Expertise	Coded when participants referred to the appearance of source knowledge, in addition to references involving source age.
Likeability	Coded when participants lauded or denounced the amiability of the sportscaster. This category also includes comments that referenced physical features related to the source.
Trustworthiness	Coded when participants made reference to sportscaster use of evidence (e.g. specific statistics, player features) to support argument and bias, in which a sportscaster was accused of allowing personal favorability to cloud their argument.

Table 6

*Source Appraisal Totals*

Theme	Male/Positive	Female/Positive	Male/Negative	Female/Negative
Emotion	35	2	10	2
Humor	34	4	12	1
Aggression	37	10	20	4
Knowledge	20	9	0	5
Age	5	0	0	8
Amiability	3	3	3	6
Appearance	0	0	0	4
Evidence	77	138	11	3
Bias	3	35	31	4
Total	214	201	87	37



Table 7

*Participant Themes: Male Sportscaster*

Theme	Frequency	Example
Age (P)	5	"He was arguing for Jordan and looks old enough to remember Jordan." (1198)
Age (N)	0	N/A
Aggression (P)	37	"He seemed to win the shouting match, so I mostly heard his points more while the woman didn't really get a chance to say much." (877)
Aggression (N)	20	"He talked too much crap. I just stopped listening to him." (1120)
Amiability (P)	3	"He wasn't annoying, he had professional smooth voice." (1201)
Amiability (N)	3	"He is annoying! It is all about him not about the basketball players." (588)
Appearance (P)	0	N/A
Appearance (N)	0	N/A
Bias (P)	3	"He is able to focus the information objectively but put his own opinion well done." (726)
Bias (N)	31	"Mr. Smith was more enthralled with the legend of Jordan, rather than the facts of his career." (1031)
Emotion (P)	35	"He was also more engaging, which could be more of an emotional reason rather than logical reasoning for supporting him." (702)
Emotion (N)	9	"The male caster's surprise reaction comes off a bit too fake." (215)
Evidence (P)	76	"The way in which he supports his own point is nice and good. She couldn't able to overcome the explanations of Smith." (734)
Evidence (N)	11	"The guy defending Jordan doesn't seem to have too many good arguments compared to the lady." (25)
Humor (P)	32	"Michael Smith's humor influenced me to feel that he is more persuasive." (1073)
Humor (N)	12	"Michael Smith lost me with Space Jam." (44)
Knowledge (P)	20	"I feel he was more persuasive because he seemed more knowledgeable." (1197)
Knowledge (N)	0	N/A

Note. P = positive comments, N = negative comments

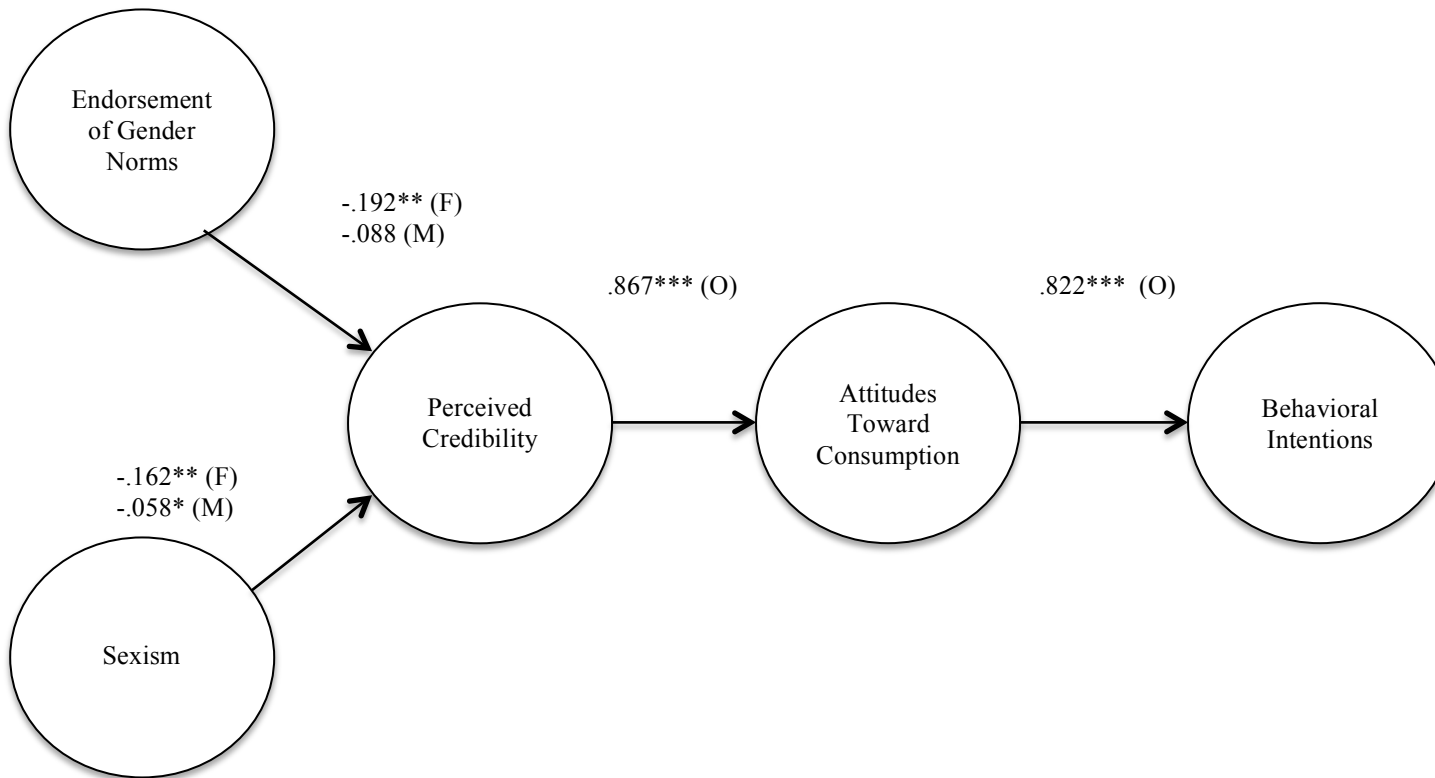
Table 8

<i>Participant Themes: Female Sportscaster</i>		
Theme	Frequency	Example
Age (P)	0	N/A
Age (N)	8	"She is too young to appreciate Jordan." (37)
Aggression (P)	10	"She made logical points and was assertive about her point of view." (1126)
Aggression (N)	4	"Jemele is argumentative She keeps interrupting Michael Smith." (207)
Amiability (P)	3	"I like Jemele Hill - never seen her before." (52)
Amiability (N)	6	"I cannot stand the womans voice!!!!... there was more whine then debate. the girl is condescending." (591)
Appearance (P)	4	"The woman sportscaster is attractive." (263)
Appearance (N)	0	N/A
Bias (P)	35	"The woman seems more objective." (551)
Bias (N)	4	"She was just biased towards Kevin Durant." (1029)
Emotion (P)	2	"She had the most enthusiasm while making her point." (700)
Emotion (N)	2	"I dislike her facial expressions." (211)
Evidence (P)	136	"She was giving actual reasons that Durant could be better than Jordan- persuasive arguments such as height and how he plays currently. There was nothing like that from Michael." (1166)
Evidence (N)	3	"The woman only talks about the physical aspects." (27)
Humor (P)	4	"The female sportscaster is funny in the way that she delievrs her thoughts and facts/statistics." (427)
Humor (N)	1	"Chuck Norris? Aaaand now we're getting ridiculous". (45)
Knowledge (P)	9	"I love the fact that the woman knows her stuff." (572)
Knowledge (N)	5	"The female is not giving Jordan the credit he deserves. Anyone that watched Basket Ball would realize that Jordan carried the team. His teammates just supported him. She is not a basketball fan." (240)

Note. P = positive comments, N = negative comments

## B. FIGURES

Figure 1. Path Coefficients and Significance



\*  $p < .10$ .

\*\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Note. F = female sportscaster path coefficient and significance, O = overall model path coefficient and significance, M = male participant/female sportscaster path coefficient and significance.

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