

MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY FACE? EXAMINING THE INFLUENCE OF
ATTRACTIVENESS AND REPORTER/ATHLETE CONGRUITY ON
PERCEIVED CREDIBILITY

by

DUSTIN HAHN, B.A.

A THESIS

IN

MASS COMMUNICATIONS

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of Texas Tech University in
Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for
the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
Approved

R. Glenn Cummins
Chairperson of the Committee

Weiwu Zhang
Committee Member

Peggy Gordon Miller
Dean of the Graduate School

August 2012

Copyright 2012

Dustin Hahn

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I first want to thank my god and savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, for the hope and encouragement found in him through many academic and personal trials. I also want to thank my wife for not giving up on me and my son for his patience with his daddy's absence. I thank my brothers and sisters in Christ as well for their unending support.

I wish to give thanks to my Chair and friend, Dr. Glenn Cummins, for his invaluable guidance, correction, support, and direction throughout this project and others in my graduate career. He has helped me to grow as a writer, researcher, and person.

I also want to thank Dr. Weiwu Zhang for his helpfulness on my thesis and for his direction and motivation as a scholar. And finally, I want to thank the College of Mass Communications family at Texas Tech for their support and friendship. The faculty, staff, and fellow student colleagues have helped to make this challenging experience a joyful one.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	ii
Abstract	iv
I: Introduction	1
II: Literature Review	6
Source Credibility	6
Effects of Credibility	7
Determinants of Credibility	9
Sex and Credibility	9
Gender in Sports	11
Sexes and Sports Journalism	12
Gender, Competence, and Credibility	13
Congruence as a Mediator	15
Attractiveness, Gender, and Credibility	16
Attractiveness and Congruity between Reporter and Athlete	18
III: Method	19
Design and Independent Variables	19
Dependent Variables	20
Participants	21
Stimuli	21
Procedure	22
IV: Results	24
Table1: Means and Standard Deviations for Credibility Perceptions	24
Figure 1: Perceived Credibility of Reporters with Male Athletes	26
Figure 2: Perceived Credibility of Reporters with Female Athletes	26
V: Discussion and Conclusion	27
Implications	29
Limitations and Future Research	29
References	31
Appendix	40
A. Example Stimulus	40
B. Example Questionnaire	41

ABSTRACT

Research examining source credibility in mass communication has demonstrated how a source's gender and attractiveness can impact perceived credibility and, subsequently, how well messages are received. This experiment extends these findings to the context of mediated sports by examining them in conjunction with athlete gender. Although source attractiveness and gender appear to have no influence, data gleaned from this experiment demonstrate that these relationships are actually dependent upon incongruity with athlete gender. A 2x2x2 between-subjects, fully-crossed experimental design with 230 participants was utilized. Results indicate that sex of the reporter, level of attractiveness of the reporter, and athlete gender impact perceptions of credibility, such that, in terms of perceived credibility, reporters of the opposite sex of the athlete benefit most if they are viewed as unattractive. Results also indicate that reporters are perceived as more credible when interviewing male athletes as opposed to female athletes. Explanations are offered for these findings in addition to a discussion of the implications for academic investigation in source credibility and pragmatic directions that this study benefits.

Key words: credibility, sports, sex, attractiveness, reporting

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“The only thing that really bugs me about television’s coverage is those damn women they have down on the sidelines who don’t know what the hell they’re talking about” (“Women sportscasters bristle,” 2002). Andy Rooney’s disparaging comments are certainly not the first to express this sentiment. Former NFL coach, Bill Parcells, is also quoted as saying that female reporters “don’t know whether the ball is pumped or stuffed” (Kimball, 2001), not so subtly hinting at his belief that female sports reporters are inadequate for credible communication in this male domain.

Such comments are most certainly in response to the increase of women working in the field of sports reporting. Klaffe (2003) noted this increase of female sportscasters, as *Sports Illustrated* reported 50 female sportscasters in 1991, whereas *USA Today* counted 127 ten years later. While Skerski (2006) demonstrated that though there is an obvious growth in quantity of female sports reporters, the perception of the hyper-sexualized female sports reporters has served to undermine the way in which they are recognized as legitimate. For example, he cites as evidence erotic pictorials in *FHM* magazine featuring sports reporters Jill Barbarie and Lisa Guerrero. “Social systems dominated by masculinity, such as professional football, may incorporate the challenge of female participation by including women, without having to significantly alter the underlying masculine structure and value systems. This inclusion results in increased visibility – more women are sportscasters – but the underlying value systems remain

intact,” (Skerski, 2006, p. 89). Thus, although empirical data verifies that women have become more common within the typically male-dominated domain of sports reporting, hegemonic masculinity is perpetuated by emphasis on appearance of female sportscasters.

However, this emphasis comes at a potential cost: perceived credibility of these reporters. Although researchers interested in studying female participation in sports journalism have begun to examine the impact of attractiveness, greater attention needs to be paid to how viewers perceive female sportscasters as credible sources of sports information, and attractive female sportscasters in particular.

With the growth of television across America, potential for the news industry to grow and spread information has also evolved. Although today’s newscasts are a far cry from some original broadcasts, the format is slower evolving than others. The televised sports industry, for instance, has gone from covering an occasional popular sport with very few cameras, to all kinds of sports at many levels of competition with complicated camera equipment such as cable cameras and jibs. In addition, the televised sports industry has branched out to form networks entirely concerned with sports. There has, however, been an integration of traditional television news and sports coverage.

The growth of interest in sports nationwide is undeniable. Evidence can be seen in the allocation of sports stories within newspapers and other media outlets. With the rise of interest in sports such as baseball, football, and basketball, it became increasingly valuable to merge news coverage with sports stories both in print and on television.

Nowadays, sports reporters are commonplace at even the much smaller television news

stations. However, a shift in thinking and in coverage occurred when Title IX was passed. Title IX, the federal law guaranteeing females equal access to scholastic sports, has helped to increase growth in female athletics (Hardin et al., 2007).

However, sports has traditionally been recognized as a masculine domain. Debate continues for some as people question whether women are as strong, athletic, competitive, or simply as entertaining to watch in contact or non-contact sporting events. Nevertheless, there is simply no denying the increased role of women in all facets of organized sports. This rise of women in sports poses an often overlooked conundrum. How ought the television news industry address hiring sports reporters? Such decisions have import in terms of social responsibility, marketing, and competitive strategy. Should male reporters cover women's sports? Should female reporters cover male sports? Should the sex of the reporter even be taken into consideration? Are there implications for both the sports department of the news organization in addition to the news organization itself?

Such questions become of obvious concern given the critical role of the source of information in mass communication contexts. The source of information is an important variable in understanding how audience members receive information. Likewise, the credibility of that source has implications not only for the source, but whom or what the source represents. Thus, it is important to understand the credibility attributed to these sports reporters in order to better understand how audience members today perceive individuals as credible. Many factors of credibility have been examined, including sex of the source as well as even the attractiveness, but no study to date has investigated how

the sex of the reporter, the level of attractiveness of the reporter, and the sex of the athlete covered work in conjunction with one another to impact perceptions of source credibility.

Skerski (2006) explains how there has been hypermasculinity demonstrated in sports media with the pairing of certain petite female individuals who are highly aesthetically pleasing with large, muscular men. These images, she argues, have served to reinforce ideological messages about male strength as defined by muscle mass while females are deemed weaker.

In an article from *Sports Illustrated*, Morse (2001) described the early entry of attractive females into the professional football arena:

The year was 1972, and unbeknownst to anyone, a phenomenon had begun. The Dallas Cowboys had just completed a successful season that included their second straight Super Bowl appearance. Cowboys' president and general manager Tex Schramm wanted to take advantage of the spotlight that the team was enjoying. He understood that football wasn't only about X's and O's; it was also about entertainment. What better way to entertain men than with beautiful, dancing women in halter tops, short shorts and go-go boots?

Such statements validate the claim that numerous entities composing the sports media complex use attractive individuals on television or to use attractive women in sporting events (cheerleaders, dancers, half-time performers, etc.), but could using attractive female reporters ultimately undermine the credibility of the source and organization she represents?

In order to better understand how these variables interrelate, a 2 (sex of the reporter: male or female), by 2 (attractiveness of the reporter: high or low), by 2 (sex of the athlete: male or female), between-subjects, factorial design experiment was conducted. The results of this study should have impacts on how television news

industry leaders go about selecting appropriate sports reporters covering a wide range of sports to audience members that, at least historically, have been males.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Source Credibility

Source credibility has been identified and investigated for thousands of years. Aristotle and Isocrates analyzed how messages were delivered and how characteristics of the source impact perceptions of credibility (Benoit, 1984). Explorations into the nature and determinants of credibility launched the contemporary study of media effects in the 1950s (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953). Since then, many more studies have followed revealing the complex and multidimensional nature of the construct (Hong, 2006; Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953; Infante et al., 1980; O’Keefe, 2002; Schlenker, 1980).

Given the vastness of this research, crafting broad generalizations are a challenge. Nonetheless, evidence suggests that expertise and trustworthiness serve as the primary dimensions of credibility (Hong, 2006; Infante, 1980; O’Keefe, 2002). In addition to these two dimensions, source attractiveness, believability, likeability, similarity, dynamism, goodwill/caring, competence, and depth have been recognized as other factors impacting source credibility, although not necessarily components of the construct (Benoy, 1982; Davis, 2010; Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991; Hong, 2006; Hovland et al., 1953; Infante, 1980; O’Keefe, 2002; Patzer, 1983; Schlenker, 1980). Thus, credibility is not a universal judgment. Instead, the salient dimensions that craft

perceived credibility are dependent upon context. That is, the elements that influence perceived credibility in one situation may be less relevant in others.

Finally, it is important to assert that credibility is not directly chosen by the information source, but indirectly assigned by the receiver. Studies examining source credibility as a dependent variable began in the 1960s (e.g., Miller & Hewgill, 1964). That is, an individual does not choose his or her level of credibility; rather, the receiver of a message (intended or not) makes credibility judgments thereby determining the individual's credibility. That's not to say that the source of the information has no control over this process. The source of information sending the message can deliberately alter his or her attitude, characteristics, and behavior in order to try to increase others' perceptions of his or her credibility. Nonetheless, in the end, the receiver determines the credibility of the individual or organization by assigning judgment.

Effects of Credibility

The study of source credibility is integral to the field of mass communication because it can apply to almost every scenario in which messages are sent and received, impacting receiver response in a variety of ways. Accordingly, communication researchers have explored the myriad factors influencing credibility and the impact that it has on message receivers. In a seminal experiment, Hovland and Weiss (1951) employed eight different communicators presenting information on four different topics. For each topic, the authors affected a factorial variation of credibility such that each story was presented using either a high or low credibility source for each. Their topics were

relevant and somewhat controversial as to engage respondents. Here, they used credibility as an independent variable where information was more trustworthy if presented by *Fortune* magazine, for example, versus a female movie gossip columnist. The researchers discovered that audience members quickly forgot information coming from sources they deemed untrustworthy. This suggests that credibility impacts the longevity of information retained coming from certain sources. Their results also suggest that over time individuals disassociate sources and their information presented. Finally, they noted that individuals tend to remember lies longer than truths. In addition to these illuminating findings, the study's design also cast the mold for much of the systematic exploration of credibility that followed by affecting factorial variation of source elements to observe changes in reader response.

In the half century since Hovland and Weiss's (1951) study on source credibility in communication, countless studies have investigated a gamut of conditions, factors, and characteristics at play in credibility perception. Yoon's (2005) study on source credibility illustrates this point, as he demonstrated that source credibility is positively associated with audience members' perceptions of quality toward a news broadcast. Thus, the more credible a broadcaster appeared to be, the higher quality the broadcast stories and the subsequent newscast itself appeared to audience members. The implications of this for contemporary broadcasters is clear, as increased credibility could translate to greater viewership numbers and overall perceptions of the news station, in turn increasing the value of advertisements which could increase revenue to the organization.

Determinants of Credibility

This study focuses on three particularly salient dimensions or determinants of source credibility: source attractiveness, sex, and perceived competence. Regarding attractiveness, research has demonstrated that attractive sources are generally perceived as more credible than unattractive sources (Patzer, 1983), although as we will note later, this relationship is not absolute (e.g., Davis & Krawczyk, 2010). Studies have demonstrated that attractive individuals are perceived as trustworthy, socially competent, intellectually competent, and better adjusted than unattractive sources (Benoy, 1982; Eagly, Asmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991; Patzer, 1983).

Miller's (1970) results indicated that the benefits on credibility due to source attractiveness could be explained by a sense of internal locus of control ascribed to the source. That is, message recipients are likely to perceive a physically attractive source as an individual that is not easily influenced or manipulated by others. As such, this perceived imperceptibility to influence translates to higher faith in the person as a source of information. Likewise, he recognized that this sense of independence in thinking and personal convictions touted the qualities necessary for high perceptions of source credibility.

Sex and Credibility

In addition to attractiveness as a factor of source credibility, the sex of the source has also been shown to impact perceived credibility, largely based on paternalistic biases that persist in Western society. In one study by Weibel et al. (2008), male newscasters

were seen as more credible than female newscasters, a relationship supported by subsequent study (e.g., Brann & Himes, 2010). This relationship has been observed in other media as well. For example, Armstrong and McAdams (2009) reported that men are perceived as more credible than women generally on weblogs. The authors suggest that this may be due to traditional male heuristics tied to expertise in journalism. Again, the researchers pointed to psychology studies where schemas are used to help create short-cuts in information processing, and that gender is a common heuristic used to evaluate information (Armstrong & Nelson, 2005; Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Fiske et al., 1999; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Hastie & Park, 1986). Such heuristics privilege males over females, leading to higher credibility perceptions.

With respect to competence, its relationship with perceived credibility is intuitive. Ample studies have indicated that competence and expertise are dimensions of credibility (Benoy, 1982; Davis, 2010; Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991; Hong, 2006; Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953; Patzer, 1983; Schlenker, 1980). Hong (2005) recognized that competence and expertise aided in perceptions of credibility. A communicator's competence in a given domain then impacts the credibility assigned to that person. For example, Keene and Cummins (2009) performed a study demonstrating the importance of past experience in shaping perceived credibility in sports broadcasting. Specifically, their experiment tested how experience in the sport he or she was reporting on impacted how credible he or she was perceived when reporting on that sport. As expected, this study demonstrated that those individuals with more experience in the sport he or she was reporting on were perceived as more credible than those journalists

with less experience participating in the sport. Perhaps an even more interesting finding was that this experience also increased overall enjoyment of the game.

Gender in Sports

Although attractiveness, competence, and gender as determinants of credibility may have more global relevance, they are uniquely salient in the context of mediated sports. Gender issues in sports have been examined from a variety of epistemological and methodological perspectives. Such studies have spanned both quantitative and qualitative explorations of the nature of representation and biases present in coverage of female athletes (e.g., Allen, 2003; Hardin & Shain, 2005), biases in the sheer amount of representation (Billings & Eastman, 2000), the role of women in sports reporting (Hardin & Shain, 2005), and more.

Consider as one example the numerous studies demonstrating a consistent bias in televised coverage for men's versus women's sports (Billings, 2008; Billings & Eastman, 2000; Eastman & Billings, 2000; Huffman, Tuggle, & Rosengard, 2004; Kian, Mondello, & Vincent, 2009). For example, research has shown that more than 80% of collegiate sports broadcasts are of male athletics, whereas more than 40% of college athletes are women (Huffman, Tuggle, & Rosengard, 2004). Likewise, Eastman and Billings (2000) demonstrated that CNN and ESPN both have an unequal amount of coverage of women's sports compared to coverage of men's sports. Although they reported that ESPN's ratio of men's sports coverage to women's sports coverage was more proportionate to reality, their data revealed both ESPN and CNN gave more attention to men's sporting events

and news. Kian, Mondello, and Vincent (2009) reported that during March Madness—where women’s collegiate athletics were considered high in newsworthiness—38% of ESPN’s basketball coverage was of women’s sports, and CBS Sportsline’s coverage contained only 6% of its stories covering women’s sports. Finally, this bias has also been repeatedly reflected in coverage of men’s versus women’s events at the Olympic Games (Billings, 2008; Billings & Eastman, 2000).

One explanation scholars have tendered for this consistent bias is that media content reflects viewer demand. That is, networks are producing what an audience wants to see: male athletic competition. As an unintended byproduct, content producers are arguably perpetuating a bias that overshadows the potential publicity of female athletic events and competitions. Many studies have gone as far as to suggest that the media is shaping public perceptions regarding gender participation in sports (Daddario, 1994; 1997; Eastman & Billings, 1999; Halbut & Latimer, 1994; Higgs & Weiller, 1999; Toohey, 1997; Tuggle & Owen, 1999). These studies suggest that rather than simply presenting current practices or normative gender balances, biased coverage instead promotes the current (and thus likely continued) male sports reporter dominance.

Sexes and Sports Journalism

This preoccupation with gender is a natural byproduct of the increased presence of women in organized sports resulting after Title IX. Sports has long been viewed as a male domain (Hardin & Shain, 2005), and female participation in sports has challenged this historic bias. However, some have observed that female journalists entering the

field simply do not find sports reporting an appealing avenue for their careers (Strong, 2007). Male dominance in sports journalism continues to serve as a form of hegemonic control that is also present in sports journalism textbooks (Hardin, Dodd, & Lauffer, 2006).

Nonetheless, studies have shown that just as women have become more prevalent on the fields of organized sports, they have likewise made inroads into sports journalism (Davis & Krawczyk, 1984; Rubarth, 1992; Sheffer & Schultz, 2007). This could be the result of a deliberate emphasis on the part of content producers to hire underrepresented groups, such as women in sports reporting to correct for demonstrated disparity. However, this could also be the result of a strategic marketing decision to capitalize on attractive female reporters as a means of luring viewers in a competitive sports media landscape (Nitz et al., 2007).

Gender, Competence, and Credibility

Competence as a component of source credibility is of interest here due to this historic gender bias and increased presence of women in organized sport. The relationship between gender, competence, and credibility may be explained by gender schema theory (Bem, 1981). According to the theory, individuals depend on schematic processing by using sex typing in order to quickly digest information.

Gender schema theory proposes that the phenomenon of sex typing derives, in part, from gender-based schematic processing – a generalized readiness to process information on the basis of the sex-linked associations that constitute the gender schema. In particular, the theory proposes that sex typing results from the fact that the self-concept itself is assimilated in the gender schema. (Bem, 1981)

Thus, gender schema theory is likely to describe the phenomenon that occurs when associating male versus female sports reporters with certain levels of credibility. Individuals will use sex typing to more quickly process information and assign issue importance. By this perspective, males would be privileged as sources of sports-related information due to the assumption that sports are a masculine domain where males have greater familiarity and knowledge of the subject. As previously noted, research has demonstrated the role of past experience in crafting perceived credibility (Keene & Cummins, 2009). However, that study failed to incorporate gender as a salient source variable, instead controlling for gender by employing only male sportscasters.

Scholars have amassed a small but consistent body of research examining the role of gender in perceived credibility, both within and beyond mediated sports. As previously noted, research examining credibility and sex in the broader context of journalism in general has demonstrated males are rated as more credible sources of information (Armstrong & Adams, 2009; Brann & Himes, 2011; Weibel et al., 2009). Within the more specific arena of sports reporting, this gender bias is likewise evident both in terms of the number of male versus female reporters (Hardin & Shain, 2005), as well in studies examining the perceived credibility of male versus female reporters. In order to test the presence of a gender bias in perceived credibility, Ordman and Zillmann (1994) conducted an experiment where participants read sports stories that manipulated the sex of the reporter and the sex of the athlete. In their study, gymnastics was the sport for the female athletes, whereas basketball was the sport in which male athletes were involved. Their results showed that female reporters were perceived as generally less

competent. However, the use of differing sports for male versus female athletes introduces a possible confound. Arguably, a more internally valid comparison would hold the specific sport constant so that congruence between athlete and reporter can be examined without unnecessary variations in stimulus design.

Based on current research regarding gender roles in source credibility in journalism and sports reporting specifically (Armstrong & Adams, 2009; Brann & Himes, 2011; Weibel et al., 2009; Hardin & Shain, 2005; Ordman & Zillman, 1994), the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Gender of the reporter will have a main effect on credibility such that male sports reporters will be perceived as more credible than female sports reporters.

Congruence as a Mediator

The study of congruence in the fields of advertising, psychology, and marketing has been well documented (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955; Oakes & North, 2011; Nienstedt, Huber, & Seelmann, 2012; Fleck & Quester, 2007; Feiereisen, Broderick, & Douglas, 2009). These studies focus, however, on how individuals viewing ads may be impacted by how congruent they see themselves with a person or object in an advertisement. It is logical that there might be similar effects in sports media between how two actors in a mediated message relate to one another; in this case, the gender of a reporter and an athlete.

Indeed, this relationship between gender, competence, and credibility may be mediated by congruence between athlete gender and reporter gender. To return to the

logic of gender schema theory, it suggests that in the case of female athletics, female reporters should be privileged as sources of information. Thus, the following hypothesis is presented for this study:

H2: Reporter and athlete gender will interact to influence perceived credibility such that credibility will be highest when reporter gender is congruent with athlete gender and lowest when it is incongruent with athlete gender.

Attractiveness, Gender, and Credibility

In addition to competence, attractiveness is particularly salient in the context of sports journalism. Although females have gained in prominence in the world of sports reporting (e.g., Beck & Bosshart, 2003), many female sports reporters have become notable not solely for their journalistic skills but for their appearance (Skerski, 2006; Nitz et al., 2007; Clavio & Eagleman, 2011). Research has shown that television news places a considerable emphasis on the appearance of female newscasters (Allen, 2003; Engstrom & Ferri, 1998; 2000; Ferri & Keller 1986; Rakow & Kranich, 1991). Furthermore, judgments of an individual's attractiveness, likeability, trustworthiness, competence, and aggressiveness are made almost instantaneously (Willis & Todorov, 2006). The importance of attractiveness becomes clear in light of past studies that have found that attractive individuals are perceived as trustworthy, socially competent, intellectually competent, and better adjusted than unattractive people (Benoy, 1982; Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991; Patzer 1983). This would seemingly suggest that television producers would benefit from more attractive reporters. However, more recent evidence

of the role of attractiveness in sports journalism illustrates how this may not necessarily be the case.

Davis and Krawczyk (2010) recognized a direct relationship between both competence and expertness with attractiveness, stating, “If the only qualities media sources desire are competence and expertness, then the more attractive a female is, the better candidate she would be for the position, making highly attractive females the best candidates,” (p.16). However the authors later caution against using highly attractive females as they will be perceived as less trustworthy and less dynamic. This is to say, highly attractive sportscasters will increase in some aspects of credibility, but will overall be perceived as, “being less credible, facilitating some potential ‘blow-back’ loss of credibility to the medium source” (p.16).

Given the conflicting data regarding the impact of attractiveness on perceived credibility (Benoy, 1982; Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991; Patzer 1983; Davis & Krawczyk, 2010) the following research question and hypothesis is presented:

RQ1: In terms of perceived credibility, is there a significant main effect between attractive sports reporters versus unattractive sports reporters?

H3: Reporter attractiveness and gender will interact to shape perceived credibility such that male reporters will benefit from increased attractiveness while female reporters will benefit from increased unattractiveness.

Attractiveness and Congruity between Reporter and Athlete

Clearly, further exploration of the role of attractiveness in the perception of credibility in the context of mediated sports reporting is warranted, especially in light of evidence demonstrating that attractiveness impacts perceptions of source credibility (e.g., Benoy, 1982). Although insightful, findings reported by Davis and Krawczyk (2010) failed to acknowledge the potential role of congruity between reporter and athlete gender. As previously noted, congruity should be important, as females would logically be more knowledgeable regarding female athletics. However, source attractiveness could also be salient.

To date, extant research falls short in exploring the relationship between gender of a sports reporter, attractiveness of a sports reporter, and perceptions of credibility. This is especially true when holding the sport constant (male and female athletes playing the same sport, such as basketball; cf. Ordman & Zillmann, 1994) and taking into consideration the gender of the athlete. Thus, to examine the interrelationship between the three variables in this study, the following research question is presented:

RQ2: In terms of perceived credibility, is the relationship between reporter attractiveness and reporter gender moderated by a main effect of athlete gender?

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Design and Independent Variables

To address the hypothesis and research questions, a 2 X 2 X 2 (Athlete Sex [male, female] x Reporter Sex [male, female] x Level of Attractiveness [low, high]) fully crossed, between-subjects experimental design was conducted. In addition, two exemplars were employed at each level of reporter gender and attractiveness, and two different stories were also created as experimental stimuli to verify observed results were not anomalies based on characteristics of one unique stimulus. However, because these are methodological controls, they were not included in the statistical analysis.

The first two variables, *sex of athlete* and *sex of reporter*, were operationalized by manipulating the images used in the stimuli to depict distinctly male or distinctly female individuals. The nature of these variables is such that no manipulation check was necessary.

The third independent variable, *level of attractiveness*, was conceptually defined as the degree to which an individual was considered to be visually pleasing, delightful, or alluring regarding physical features. This was operationalized using a pre-test of 20 potential candidates (10 males and 10 females) found through an Internet search engine. Candidate headshots were professionally edited and similarly framed before implementing the pre-test. In the pretest, respondents rated individuals using a single-item measure of attractiveness on a 0 to 10 Likert-type scale. Candidate images were

viewed in one of two random orders to control for presentation order effects. Based on pre-test results, two males were used as the highly attractive male reporters ($M = 7.00$, $SD = 1.57$; $M = 8.00$, $SD = 1.36$), two females as the highly attractive female reporters ($M = 9.00$, $SD = .96$; $M = 7.50$, $SD = 1.16$), two males as the unattractive male reporters ($M = 2.43$, $SD = 1.60$; $M = 2.21$, $SD = 1.63$), and two females as the unattractive female ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 1.61$; $M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.49$). Repeated-measures ANOVA verified the success of the manipulation [$F(1, 13) = 141.33$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .92$].

Dependent Variables

The study gauged the impact of these independent variables on participants' perceptions of source credibility. Participants responded to several questions after the article designed to evaluate their perceptions of the reporter's credibility. Items were adapted from Ohanian's (1990) credibility scale, which he reports to include three dimensions: trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. In this study, participants were asked to respond to an 11-point response scale to indicate how well a series of adjectives described the article's author (0 = not at all, 10 = very much). Principle components analysis with varimax rotation suggested a two-factor solution based on these data. The first factor, labeled credible (Eigenvalue = 7.80) explained 55.73% of the variance and consisted of ten items: experienced, sincere, skilled, dependable, knowledgeable, honest, expert, qualified, reliable, and trustworthy). Reliability analysis indicated high internal consistency ($\alpha = .96$). The second factor, labeled attractive (Eigen value = 2.69) consisted of four items: attractive, sexy, classy, and handsome/beautiful. Again,

responses were highly consistent ($\alpha = .91$). One item, elegant, was deleted from the measure due to a high cross loading on both factors. Information regarding respondent's demographics, sports consumption, and general sports fanship (Wann, 2002) were collected as well.

Participants

Initial approval was given for the exempt study to be conducted by the Texas Tech University Institutional Review Board. A convenience sample of 230 undergraduate students enrolled in mass communications classes at a large Southwestern university were recruited for the study. Students were given extra credit toward the grade in the courses with which they participated in the study. Subjects participated in the experiment at the beginning of their class after the principle investigator prefaced the study, explained their rights, and ensured a quiet and respectful environment.

Stimuli

Stimuli were constructed for this study and consisted of a single-page magazine article featuring a question and answer interview with an athlete after a successful game and/or season (see Appendix). Stimuli were printed in full color for subjects to view. Participants were told the article was selected from an alumni magazine at a small private college in the Northeastern United States increase believability while controlling for pre-existing dispositional affiliations with the team. Photographs used in the article contained shots of the reporter (a single headshot, placed in the upper left) and the athlete (in action

during a game, placed in the lower right). The two-column layout of the articles was consistent across conditions. Stories included images of the reporter in the story (highly attractive female, unattractive female, highly attractive male, or unattractive male) with an athlete (male or female) who plays collegiate basketball. This study, then, used both male and female athletes on a small university basketball team.

Reporter names in the story were given one gender neutral name, Taylor, as well as a gender neutral athlete name, Alex. Because research has demonstrated that consistency across designs are both important and feasible (Seiter et al., 2010), the positioning, framing, posture, race, and general age of the reporters was consistent across the articles, and the placement of the photos within the article was consistent. The reporter's image appeared in the upper-left corner of the article, near the title (as an author's image might in a blog or online newspaper column), while the image of the athlete playing basketball appeared at the bottom-right corner of the article, toward the end. Thus, the only variations between the articles were the individuals (reporter and athlete) in the article.

Procedure

Data were collected in large group sessions, with randomization of assignment achieved by placing packets in a random order. An initial explanation about the participants' rights as well as a general explanation of the study was given. Students then began the study all at once. Upon the completion of the study by the last participant in the group, the students were debriefed, and the subjects were thanked for their time.

Participants in this study received extra credit for the course from which they were recruited.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

As an additional manipulation check, a between-subjects ANOVA was conducted with source level attractiveness serving as the fixed factor, and the attractive rating gleaned from the dependent measures used as the dependent variable. That test verified the experimental manipulation [$F(1, 228) = 48.83, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .18$]. Reporters in the high attractiveness condition ($M = 5.43, SD = 2.51$) were rated significantly higher than those in the low attractiveness condition ($M = 3.39, SD = 1.86$). Table 1 (see below) contains the means and standard deviations for the perceptions of credibility (ranked on a 0 to 10 Likert-type scale) assigned to the sports reporters.

Table 1

Table of Means and Standard Deviations of Credibility Perceptions for Sports Reporters

Athlete	Attractive		Unattractive	
	Male Reporter	Female Reporter	Male Reporter	Female Reporter
Male	$M = 6.68, SD = 1.48$	$M = 6.08, SD = 1.56$	$M = 6.32, SD = 1.92$	$M = 6.86, SD = 1.55$
Female	$M = 5.56, SD = 1.73$	$M = 5.94, SD = 1.85$	$M = 6.32, SD = 1.52$	$M = 5.88, SD = 1.75$

Investigation into H1 revealed that there was not significant relationship between reporter gender and athlete gender [$F(1, 222) = .00, p = .99, \eta^2_p = .00$]. Thus, the hypothesis was not supported. However, the study did demonstrate that athlete gender played a significant role in impacting perceptions of credibility [$F(1, 222) = 6.40, p = .01, \eta^2_p = .03$] such that reporters, regardless of his/her gender or level of attractiveness, who were reporting on male athletes were perceived as more credible than those reporting on female athletes. An explanation for this phenomenon is presented in the discussion.

In response to H2, the analysis failed to find the predicted interaction between reporter gender X level of attractiveness [$F(1, 222) = .00, p > .05$]. Again, the hypothesis was not supported.

However, in response to RQ2, a significant three-way interaction between reporter gender X level of attractiveness X athlete gender indicated that the predicted relationship between reporter attractiveness and gender is moderated by congruity with athlete gender [$F(1, 222) = 4.85, p = .03, \eta^2_p = .02$]. That is, for male athletes, unattractive female reporters were perceived as most credible, and attractive female reporters were perceived as the least credible whereas males benefitted slightly from increased attractiveness (see below). Likewise, for female athletes, unattractive male reporters were perceived as most credible while attractive male reporters were perceived as the least credible (see List of Figures). There was little change in perceptions of credibility for female reporters with female athletes.

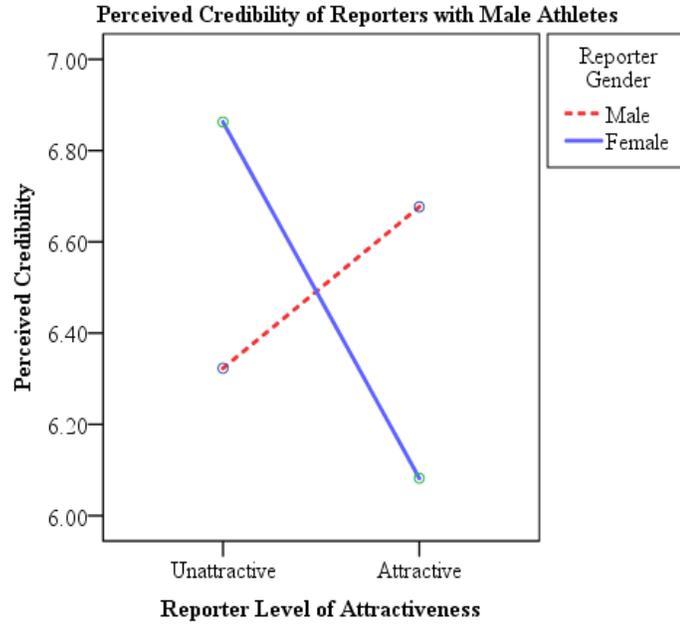


Figure 1: Perceived Credibility of Reporters with Male Athletes

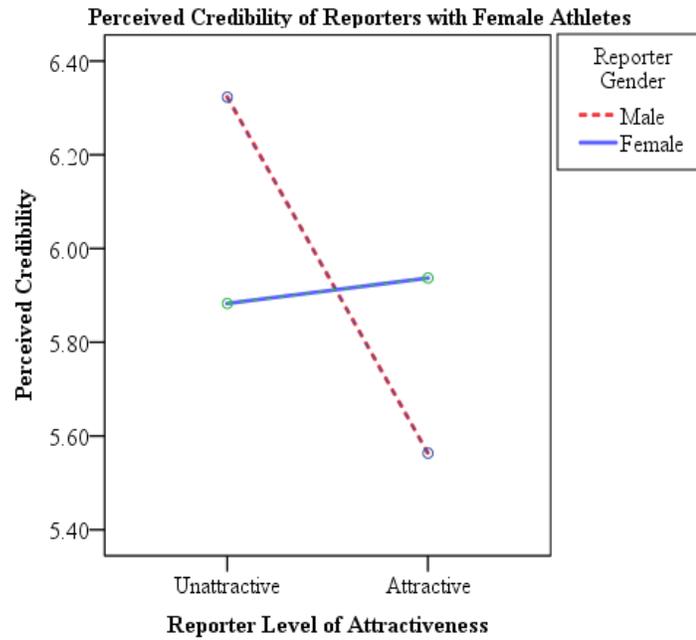


Figure 2: Perceived Credibility of Reporters with Female Athletes

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Thus, this study sought to illuminate the impact attractiveness of the reporter has on perceived credibility of both male and female reporters while taking into account the role of congruity between reporter and athlete gender. The controlled experiment allowed for significant causal relationships to be identified.

Results failed to support predicted relationships between reporter attractiveness and gender, as well as reporter gender and athlete gender. Instead, the data indicated that all three variables are of importance when crafting perceived credibility. Whereas credibility increased with attractiveness for male reporters when interviewing male athletes, an inverse relationship was observed for female reporters in the same scenario. That is, unattractive females were rated as more credible than attractive females. In fact, unattractive females were evaluated as most credible, whereas attractive female reporters were the least credible (see List of Figures).

Likewise, attractiveness seemed to play an integral role in perceptions of credibility for male reporters when interviewing female athletes. When reporting on female athletes, unattractive male reporters yielded the highest credibility rating, and attractive males yielded the lowest (see List of Figures).

The causes for this relationship are purely speculative, but intuitive post hoc explanations are possible. One possible explanation for this is that media consumers have been conditioned to see attractive reporters in the news. Likewise, congruity theory

and gender schema theory would suggest that there are cognitive connections made between athlete and reporter and their relatedness and role with one another (i.e., a female would be most knowledgeable of female athletics). However, one could argue that study participants noted that the unattractive sources were counter to expectations of typical reporters. Furthermore, incongruity of the reporter and athlete gender further challenged expectations. That is, because expectations are likely already conditioned into viewers that reporters are attractive and/or have close connections with a sport (perhaps even a former professional athlete him/herself) that an individual not capable of having experience in the sport (for instance, a man playing women's basketball) and not being traditionally attractive must need to compensate for these short coming with their expertise and trustworthiness or credibility. In short, incongruent reporters must "know his or her stuff."

Another unexpected and unhypothesized finding was the overall effect of athlete gender on perceived credibility. The presence of male athletes in a sports reporter's interview increased the reporter's credibility, despite the identical nature of story content across athlete gender. Given the research expounding upon the traditional connections individuals have with sports being a male dominated domain, it is possible that the mere presence of a female athlete struck viewers as almost disingenuous. Thus, this research reveals that even elements only loosely associated with a source (such as the interviewee) may have impacts on perceptions of credibility attributed to the source.

Implications

This research goes a long way in demonstrating the need for expansion in media credibility research. Sports media in particular presents challenges for research in credibility given its history and gender role associations. This study demonstrates how perceptions of credibility in the interrelationship of a reporter's level of attractiveness and a reporter's gender are moderated by the athlete's gender. Thus, it is important to recognize the dependency of these variables on one another in credibility perceptions in sports reporting.

News stations and sports media in general should take these results into consideration when seeking to determine how credible one's sports reporters are likely perceived. Being an experiment, the generalization of these results using specific magazine-like content should be treated with caution.

Limitations and Future Research

Though this experiment adds crucial information to credibility research, it is not without its limitations. First, this experiment used a magazine-like article with a larger than normal reporter/author image placed plainly in the upper-left corner of the printed page. This made the depiction of the reporter clear, but lacked certain ecologically valid traits. Future studies should consider using stimuli that utilizes video and audio. However, because attractiveness is largely a visual cue, single images in print media were warranted.

Future research could also benefit from a more qualitative approach. This would allow researchers the opportunity to explore what people think of reporters more broadly and why. Also, as with any study using university students as respondents, there is some question as to the validity of the data. Though the reliability has been statistically demonstrated, there is the potential that students could be tempted to respond to questionnaire material in a way that would appear reliable but might not be valid. Thus, it would be wise to replicate this study using a variety of demographics for participants in a more controlled setting in order to build upon these results.

Finally, another potential follow up to this study could include a change in story type. It is more common for female sportscasters to report feature-type stories as opposed to play-by-play. This context would allow for gender role schemas to be more salient. Thus, this study controlled for this confound by employing the feature-style question-and-answer format. However, future studies could employ stories that introduce factorial variation of story type.

REFERENCES

- Allen, C. (2003). Gender breakthrough fit for a focus group: The first women newscasters and why they arrived in local TV news. *Journalism History*, 28, 154-165.
- Armstrong, C. L., & McAdams, M. J. (2009). Blogs of information: How gender cues and individual motivations influence perceptions of credibility. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 14, 435-456.
- Armstrong, C. L., & Nelson, M. R. (2005). How newspaper sources trigger gender stereotypes. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82, 820-837.
- Aronovsky, A., & Furnham, A. (2008). Gender portrayals in food commercials at different times of the day: A content analytic study. *Communications: The European Journal of Communication Research*, 33, 169-190.
- Beck, D., & Bosshart, L. (2003). Sports and gender. *Communication Research Trends*, 22(4), 16-18.
- Bem, S. L. (1981). Gender schema theory: A cognitive account of sex typing. *Psychological Review*, 88, 354-364.
- Billings, A. C. (2008). Clocking gender differences: Televised Olympic clock time in the 1996-2006 Summer and Winter Olympics. *Television & New Media*, 9, 429-441.
- Billings, A. C., & Eastman, S. T. (2000). Selective representation of gender, ethnicity, and nationality in American television coverage of the 2000 Summer Olympics. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 37, 351-370.
- Brann, M., & Himes, K. L. (2010). Perceived credibility of male versus female television newscasters. *Communication Research Reports*, 27, 243-252.

- Clavio, G., & Eagleman, A. N. (2011). Gender and sexually suggestive images in sports blogs. *Journal of Sport Management, 25*, 295-304.
- Daddario, G. G. (1994). Chilly scenes of the 1992 Winter Games: The mass media and the marginalization of female athletes. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 11*, 275-288.
- Daddario, G. G. (1997). Gendered sports programming: 1992 Summer Olympic coverage and the feminine narrative form. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 14*, 103-120.
- Davis, D. C., & Krawczyk, J. A. (2010). Female sportscaster credibility: Has appearance taken precedence?. *Journal of Sports Media, 5*(2), 1-34.
- Deaux, K., & Lewis, L. (1984). Structure of gender stereotypes: Interrelationships among components and gender label. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 46*, 991-1004.
- Eagly, A. H., Ashmore, R. D., Makhijani, M. G., & Longo, L. C. (1991). What is beautiful is good, but...: A meta-analytic review of research on the physical attractiveness stereotype. *Psychological Bulletin, 110*, 109-128.
- Eagly, A. H., & Steffen, V. J. (1984). Gender stereotypes stem from the distribution of women and men into social roles. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 46*, 735-754.
- Eastman, S. T., & Billings, A. C. (1999). Gender parity in the Olympics: hyping women athletes, favoring men athletes. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues, 23*, 140-170.
- Eastman, S. T., & Billings, A. C. (2000). Sportscasting and sports reporting: the power of gender bias. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues, 24*, 192-213.

- Eastman, S. T., & Billings, A. C. (2001). Biased voices of sports: Racial and gender stereotyping in college basketball announcing. *Howard Journal of Communications, 12*, 183-201.
- Engstrom, E., & Ferri, A. J. (1998). From barriers to challenges: Career perceptions of women TV news anchors. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, 75*, 789-803.
- Engstrom, E., & Ferri, A. J. (2000). Looking through a gendered lens: Local U.S. television news anchors' perceived career barriers. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 44*, 614-634.
- Feiereisen, S., Broderick, A. J., & Douglas, S. P. (2009). The effect and moderation of gender identity congruity: Utilizing “real women” advertising images. *Psychology & Marketing, 26*, 813-843.
- Ferri, A. J., & Keller, J. E. (1986). Perceived career barriers for female television news anchors. *Journalism Quarterly, 63*, 463-467.
- Fiske, S. T., Lin, M., & Neuberg, S. L. (1999). The continuum model: Ten years later. In S. Chaiken & Y. Trope (Eds.), *Dual process theories in social psychology* (pp. 231–254). New York: Guilford.
- Fiske, S. T., & Neuberg, S. L. (1990). A continuum of impression formation, from category based to individualizing processes: Influences of information and motivation on attention and interpretation. In M. Zanna, P. (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 23, pp. 1–74). New York, NY: Academic Press.

- Fleck, N. D., & Quester, P. (2007). Birds of a feather flock together...definition, role and measure of congruence: An application to sponsorship. *Psychology & Marketing*, 24, 975-1000.
- Gaziano, C., & McGrath, K. (1986). Measuring the concept of credibility. *Journalism Quarterly*, 63, 451-462.
- Halbert, C. C., & Latimer, M. M. (1994). 'Battling' gendered language: An analysis of the language used by sports commentators in a televised coed tennis competition. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 11, 298-308.
- Hardin, M., Dodd, J. E., & Lauffer, K. (2006). Passing it on: The reinforcement of male hegemony in sports journalism textbooks. *Mass Communication & Society*, 9, 429-446.
- Hardin, M., Simpson, S., Whiteside, E., & Garris, K. (2007). The gender war in U.S. sport: Winners and losers of Title IX. *Mass Communication & Society*, 10, 211-233.
- Hardin, M., & Shain, S. (2005). Female sports journalists: Are we there yet? 'No.' *Newspaper Research Journal*, 26(4), 22-35.
- Hastie, R., & Park, B. (1986). The relationship between memory and judgment depends on whether the judgment task is memory-based or on-line. *Psychological Review*, 93, 258-268.
- Hong, T. (2006). The influence of structural and message features on Web site credibility. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science & Technology*, 57, 114-127.

- Hovland, C. I., Janis, I. L., & Kelley, H. H. (1953). *Communication and persuasion*. New Haven, CT, US: Yale University Press.
- Hovland, C. I., & Weiss, W. (1951). The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 15, 635-650.
- Huffman, S., Tuggle, C. A., & Rosengard, D. (2004). How campus media cover sports: The gender-equity issue, one generation later. *Mass Communication & Society*, 7, 475-489.
- Infante, D. A., Rancer, A. S., Pierce, L. L., Osborne, W., & Osborne, W. J. (1980). Effects of physical attractiveness and likeableness of first name on impressions formed of journalists. *Journal of Applied Communications Research*, 8, 1-9.
- Joseph, W. (1982). The credibility of physically attractive communicators: A review. *Journal of Advertising*, 11(3), 15-24.
- Keene, J. R., & Cummins, R. G. (2009). Sports commentators and source credibility: Do those who can't play . . . commentate?. *Journal of Sports Media*, 4(2), 57-83.
- Kian, E. M., Mondello, M., & Vincent, J. (2009). ESPN – The women's sports network? A content analysis of Internet coverage of March Madness. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 53, 477.
- Kimball, G. (2001, January 18). Familiar issue for female TV presenters. *Irish Times on the Web*. From <http://Ireland.com/newspaper/sport/2001/018/spo3.htm>.
- Klaffke, P. (2003, February 3). “Sports babes” are catching on. *Calgary Herald*, C9.
- McCroskey, J. C., & Young, T. J. (1981). Ethos and credibility: The construct and its measurement after three decades. *Central States Speech Journal*, 3224-3234.

- Miller, A. G. (1970). Role of physical attractiveness in impression formation. *Psychonomic Science, 19*, 241-243.
- Nguyen, A. The current status and potential development of online news consumption: A structural approach. *First Monday, 8*(9).
- Nienstedt, H., Huber, F., & Seelmann, C. (2012). The influence of the congruence between brand and consumer personality on the loyalty to print and online issues of magazine brands. *The International Journal on Media Management, 14*(1), 3-26.
- Nitz, M., Reichert, T., Aune, A., & Velde, A. (2007). All the news that's fit to see? The sexualization of television news journalists as a promotional strategy. *Journal of Promotion Management, 13*(1/2), 13.
- Oakes, S., & North, A. C. (2011). The impact of narrator age congruity on responses to a radio advertisement. *Journal of Marketing Communications, 17*, 183-194.
- Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising, 19*(3), 39-52.
- O'Keefe, D. J. (2002). *Persuasion: Theory and Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Ordman, V. L., & Zillmann, D. D. (1994). Women sports reporters: Have they caught up?. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues, 18*, 66-75.
- Osgood, C., & Tannenbaum, P. H. (1955). The principle of congruity in the prediction of attitude change. *Psychological Review, 62*, 42-55.

- Patton, T. (1999). Ethnicity and gender: An examination of its impact on instructor credibility in the university classroom. *Howard Journal of Communications, 10*, 123-144.
- Patzer, G. L. (1983). Source credibility as a function of communicator physical attractiveness. *Journal of Business Research, 11*, 229-241.
- Pogue, L., & Ahyun, K. (2006). The effect of teacher nonverbal immediacy and credibility on student motivation and affective learning. *Communication Education, 55*, 331-344.
- Pope, M., & Chapa, J. (2008). *The gender connection: Instructor credibility and gender in the classroom*. Paper presented at the National Communication Association conference.
- Rakow, L. F., & Kranich, K. (1991). Woman as sign in television news. *Journal of Communication, 41*, 8-23.
- Rubarth, L. L. (1992). Twenty years after Title IX: Women in sports media. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance, 63*(3), 53-55.
- Schlenker, B. R. (1980). *Impression Management: The Self-Concept, Social Identity and Interpersonal Relations*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Schmitt, B. H., Leclerc, F., & Dubé-Rioux, L. (1988). Sex typing and consumer behavior: A test of gender schema theory. *Journal of Consumer Research, 15*, 122-128.

Seiter, J. S., Weger, H., Merrill, M. L., Mark McKenna, R. R., & Sanders, M. L. (2010).

Nonsmokers' perceptions of cigarette smokers' credibility, likeability, attractiveness, considerateness, cleanliness, and healthiness. *Communication Research Reports*, 27, 143-158.

Sheffer, M. L., & Schultz, B. (2007). Double standard: Why women have trouble getting jobs in local television sports. *Journal of Sports Media*, 2, 77-101.

Skerski, J. (2006). From sideline to centerfold: The sexual commodification of female sportscasters. In T. Reichert and J. Lambiase (eds.), *Sex in Consumer Culture: The Erotic Content of Media and Marketing* (pp. 87-105). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Stone, V. A. (1973). Attitudes toward television newswomen. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 18, 49-62.

Strong, C. (2007). Female journalists shun sports reporting: Lack of opportunity or lack of attractiveness?. *Communication Journal of New Zealand*, 8(2), 7-18.

Toohey, K. K. (1997). Australian television, gender and the Olympic Games. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 32, 19-29.

Tuggle, C. A., & Owen, A. A. (1999). A descriptive analysis of NBC's coverage of the Centennial Olympics: The "Games of the women"?. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 23, 171-182.

Wann, D. L. (2002). Preliminary validation of a measure for assessing identification as a sport fan: The Sport Fandom Questionnaire. *International Journal of Sport Management*, 3, 103-115.

- Weibel, D., Wissmath, B., & Groner, R. (2008). How gender and age affect newscasters' credibility – An investigation in Switzerland. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 52, 466-484.
- Weiller, K. H., & Higgs, C. T. (1999). Television coverage of professional golf: A focus on gender. *Women in Sport & Physical Activity Journal*, 8, 83-100.
- White, H.A. & Andsager, J.L. (1991). Newspaper column readers' gender bias: Perceived interest and credibility. *Journalism Quarterly*, 68, 709-718.
- Widgery, R. (1974). Sex of receiver and physical attractiveness of source as determinants of initial credibility perception. *Western Speech*, 38, 13-17.
- Willis, J., & Todorov, A. (2006). First impressions: Making up your mind after a 100-ms exposure to a face. *Psychological Science (Wiley-Blackwell)*, 17, 592-598.
- Women Sportscasters Bristle at Commentator's Remarks. (2002, October 10). ESPN.com. From <http://espn.go.com/nfl/news/2002/1010/1443917.html>.
- Yeung-Jo, K., & June-Hee, N. (2007). Effects of celebrity athlete endorsement on attitude towards the product: The role of credibility, attractiveness and the concept of congruence. *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship*, 8, 310-320.
- Yoon, Y. (2005). *Who is Credible? An investigation of source credibility and news coverage*. Paper presented at the International Communication Association conference, 1-29.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE STIMULUS

15

SPORTS



Taylor Synche is the sports reporter and covers sporting events of all kinds.

Harbin College Guard Sets School Record



Over the weekend, Alex Cantrell broke the school career-high scoring record at Harbin College. Cantrell is a local who set out to play at Harbin as a child. Alex loved basketball and still does as much or more today. Out on the court when the record was broken was our own Taylor Synche. Taylor was able to catch up with Alex after the game for a brief Q&A.

Harbin College's basketball team has a new career-high leading scorer. Alex Cantrell and his fellow Bison teammates beat their rival cougars Friday night at home with Alex leading the charge, scoring 32

points in route to a 78-64 victory. Cantrell's final season at Harbin has been a great one, and Alex is a player who will not quickly be forgotten around this campus. Alex Cantrell is now Harbin's all-time leading scorer.

Taylor: So Alex, what are you feeling after a breaking this record?

Alex: I'm ecstatic. Cloud 9. I'm so thankful to have been able to be a part of this and to have accomplished this. It's a humbling position to be in, and I just want to thank my coaches, fellow players, and all my fans who have supported me all through this and helped to make this a reality.

Taylor: You seemed to be shooting lights-out tonight. Was there something on your mind that had you so focused?

Alex: That record (laughs). I'm excited to be playing this game, and I knew what could happen tonight if I played at the top of my game. It motivated me even more knowing that accomplishing this long-time goal in addition to beating these Cougars could happen out there. Again, this accomplishment was really a team effort, and my teammates played a huge role tonight.

Taylor: You've been a crowd favorite around here for some time. You grew up not far from here of course. Do you think being in your hometown added to this record in some way?

Alex: Absolutely. It motivated me even more. I love where I'm from, and I am who I am because of the people who have supported me. I have a lot of long-time fans out in the stands. Fans who watched me as a kid. It's really special. This is really a dream come true for me as an athlete, and I've loved being an icon for so many other local kids out there. They see me getting groceries, then out there on the court. It was important for me having an idol growing up, and being that for them has made this special.

Taylor: What's next for you Alex? Do you plan on remaining in the area? Are you planning on continuing in basketball?

Alex: Well, that's a good question. I've got a lot of possibilities. My coach has contacted a few other amateur leagues to try and get me noticed down the road. I'm not sure though. I love what I do, but I really want to inspire younger kids too. I want to help those that are growing up in tougher times and show them that sports is a great way to have fun and get your mind off of some bad stuff. I look forward to making that decision in a few months.

Taylor: Thanks so much for your time Alex, and on behalf of all your fans, thank you for the years of entertainment and inspiration. We wish you great success in whatever you choose next.

Alex: Thanks Taylor. I'm truly blessed, Harbin College and my education and involvement in this community really has set me up well for the future. I'd like to also say thanks again to the fans and to my friends and family here and those at the university who have helped me out along the way.

Written by Taylor Synche



During this game, Alex Cantrell (pictured) scored 32 points giving him just enough to break Harbin College's career high scoring record from 1992.

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE

Below you will see a list of words. Circle the number that reflects how much you think each word describes the reporter for the story. Please do not look back at the article at this point. For each word describing the reporter, let 0 represent “not at all,” and let 10 represent “very much.”

1. Experienced

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all very much

2. Sincere

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all very much

3. Skilled

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all very much

4. Dependable

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all very much

5. Knowledgeable

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all very much

6. Honest

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all very much

7. Expert

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all very much

8. Qualified

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all very much

9. Reliable

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all very much

10. Trustworthy

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all very much

11. Elegant

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all very much

12. Attractive

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all very much

13. Sexy

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all very much

14. Classy

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all very much

15. Handsome/Beautiful

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all very much

On average, how many sporting events do you attend per month? _____

On average, how many hours of actual sports do you watch per week? _____

On average, how many hours of sports-related programming (like SportsCenter) do you
watch per week? _____

On average, how many hours do you spend per week playing sports, either in an organized league, or just for fun: _____

For the remaining questions, please indicate your agreement with the following questions by circling the number that best represents how you feel:

My friends see me as a sports fan.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
strongly disagree strongly agree

My life would be less enjoyable if I were not allowed to follow sports.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
strongly disagree strongly agree

I consider myself to be a sports fan.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
strongly disagree strongly agree

I believe that watching sports is the most enjoyable form of entertainment.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
strongly disagree strongly agree

Being a sport fan is very important to me.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
strongly disagree strongly agree

Demographics

1. Age _____
2. Gender:
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
3. Ethnicity:
 - a. African-American
 - b. Caucasian
 - c. Hispanic
 - d. Asian
 - e. Other (Please Specify): _____