

Running Head: ATHLETES IN MEDIA

Athlete or Sex Symbol: What Boys Think of Media Representations of Female Athletes

Elizabeth A. Daniels

Heidi Wartena

University of Oregon

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Correspondence to: Elizabeth A. Daniels, University of Oregon, Chandler Lab, 1027 NW  
Trenton, Bend, Oregon 97701, Email: daniels.psychology@gmail.com

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### Abstract

Little research has investigated males' reactions to non-objectified media images of women, including those that depict women in instrumental activities like playing a sport. Using a survey methodology, this study examined U.S. adolescent boys' open-ended responses to images of performance athletes, sexualized athletes, and sexualized models. Participants were 104 adolescent boys from California (ages 12-17, primarily European-American). They remarked on the performance athletes' physical competence and focused on the athletic context depicted in the photograph. In contrast, participants focused on the physical appearance and attractiveness of the sexualized athletes and sexualized models. Overall, findings suggest that performance images of women evoke instrumental evaluations of women from male viewers, while sexualized images induce objectified appraisals.

Key words: males, media images, objectification, body image, sports, female athletes

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### Introduction

Past research has shown that the mass media in Western contexts generally portray stereotypical and sexualized representations of women and femininity that transmit the notion that women are sexual objects to be viewed and evaluated by men (Ward & Harrison, 2005). A large body of research with primarily Western samples has examined how these images affect girls and women (e.g., Field et al., 1999; Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008; Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002; Levine, Smolak, & Hayden, 1994; Ward & Harrison, 2005), yet only a small body of research has examined how they affect males (e.g., Aubrey & Taylor, 2009; Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2002, 2003). Further, little research has investigated what male viewers think of performance-focused images of women, such as an athlete in action, rather than idealized and sexualized images of women (exceptions with U.S. samples include Heywood & Dworkin, 2003; Knight & Guilano, 2001). Media images of female athletes playing their sport (performance-focused) provide the potential for depicting women in instrumental ways. These images may prompt male viewers to focus on women's physical abilities rather than their physical appearance. However, female athletes are also sexualized in media, which may elicit similar responses in male viewers as other objectified portrayals of women (e.g., Messner, Duncan, & Cooky, 2003). In the present study, U.S. adolescent boys' responses to media images of female athletes, both performance-focused and objectified, were investigated. Research cited in this report is with Western samples unless otherwise noted.

In 2007, the American Psychological Association issued a Task Force Report on the Sexualization of Girls documenting the pervasive practice of objectifying female bodies in Western media and detailing the numerous negative effects associated with this practice (see

American Psychological Association [APA], 2007 for a review). Much of mainstream popular media is created in the United States and distributed around the world by media conglomerates, making its content relevant to individuals in the U.S. and globally (McChesney, 1997; Shah, 2009). Psychologists have theorized and found empirical evidence that the constant sexualization of females in Western societies can lead to self-objectification and other negative outcomes (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). Given the extent of this practice of sexualizing females in media, it is especially important to investigate how male viewers, in this case U.S. adolescent boys, assess *non-objectified* media images of women, such as female athletes, as these images may encourage instrumental as opposed to objectified evaluations of women.

Because very little research has been done focusing on non-objectified media images, an open-ended questionnaire methodology was used in the present study to investigate which aspects of the women in the photographs viewers focused on and to learn which images were perceived positively or negatively by boys. A goal of the present study was to assess if U.S. adolescent boys make instrumental evaluations of female athletes. An additional goal was to determine whether adolescent boys make objectified or instrumental evaluations of female athletes who are depicted in a sexualized manner in media. This study provides a novel contribution to the research literature on the effects of objectified media images of women on viewers. It also extends earlier work examining young adults reactions' to media featuring athletes (e.g., Knight & Giuliano, 2001 described below).

### *Female Athletes*

Since the passage of Title IX legislation in 1972, female participation in sport has skyrocketed in the U.S. Before Title IX was passed 1 in 27 girls played high school sports,

whereas today 1 in 2.5 do (LaVoi & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2007; National Federation of State High School Associations [NFSHSA], 2010). In addition, the 1990s brought new professional sport leagues in the U.S. for women including the WNBA and the now-defunct WUSA (Women's United Soccer Association). Some have argued that select female athletes have become cultural icons in the twenty-first century (Heywood & Dworkin, 2003). Indeed, select female athletes, such as Mia Hamm, are household names and visible in today's media. Hamm is often referred to as the greatest female soccer player of all time. Some research has investigated reactions to media images of female athletes. Heywood and Dworkin (2003) showed U.S. grade school and high school girls and boys a photograph of soccer player Brandi Chastain in action getting ready to kick a ball coming at her. Participants described her as "sporty," "powerful," and "talented" (p. 137). Both boys and girls reported that they "admired her athleticism" and liked that she "represented confidence" (p. 138). These findings suggest that youth make instrumental evaluations of female athletes when they are portrayed playing a sport.

While Hamm and select other female athletes are heralded as accomplished athletes and portrayed in ways that highlight their athleticism in media, other female athletes are portrayed as sex objects. This year's *Sports Illustrated's* swimsuit edition which came out just as the Winter Olympics began, for example, featured several Olympic athletes in skimpy bikinis and semi-nude poses. Very little is known about boys' reactions to these portrayals of female athletes. In the present study, we examined how adolescent boys respond to media images of female athletes, both those that feature them as athletes (performance-focused) and those that represent them as sex objects (sexualized). Our aim was to understand boys' responses to these contradictory representations.

### *Theoretical Framework*

Objectification theory holds that Western societies routinely sexually objectify the female body (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Women's bodies are scrutinized as objects for the pleasure and evaluation of others, specifically males. This objectification can occur within interpersonal and social encounters as well as individuals' experiences with visual media. There is substantial evidence documenting the widespread objectification of women in mainstream Western media including television, music videos, music lyrics, movies, cartoons and animation, magazines, sports media, video/computer games, internet, advertising, and commercial products (APA, 2007). When looking at magazines directed especially toward men, such as *Maxim*, a focus on women's sexual attractiveness is especially prominent (Aubrey & Taylor, 2009; Krassas, Blauwkamp, & Wesselink, 2003; Taylor, 2005). As a result, engagement with virtually any type of media is likely to involve objectified portrayals of women which send the message to viewers that women are sexual objects.

The majority of research on objectification theory focuses on the impact of sexual objectification on individuals' own self-perceptions (see Morandi & Huang, 2008 for a review). The present study uses objectification theory as a lens to consider how boys might view media images of female athletes. Specifically, we suggest that objectification theory helps explain whether boys will objectify female athletes given the pervasive practice of objectifying the female body. Indeed, correlational studies demonstrate that the volume of adult men's media consumption is positively associated with attitudes stressing the importance of a slim figure in women (Harrison & Cantor, 1997) and the belief that women are sex objects (Ward, 2002). It appears that as media objectifies women, so do male viewers. A question arises, however, when we consider the sexual objectification of female athletes. Do male viewers focus on the *athleticism* or the *sexual attractiveness* of the female athlete? In essence, are sexualized female

athletes perceived as athletes or as sex objects? We predict that boys will *not* focus on the athleticism of sexualized athletes, but instead objectify the athletes because the objectification of women is such a dominant practice in Western culture and in the media.

### *Effects of Media Images of Female Athletes on Male Viewers*

Sexualized images depict an individual in provocative clothing or photograph an individual in such a way as to focus solely on sexual attributes; for example, centering attention on an athlete's breasts (Fink & Kensicki, 2002). In keeping with the broader cultural tendency to sexualize women in media, today's female athletes are often sexualized in print and visual media as well as color commentary (e.g., Christopherson, Janning, & McConnell, 2002; Daniels & LaVoi, in press; Messner, Duncan, & Cooky, 2003; Schultz, 2005; Shugart, 2003). In addition, numerous female athletes, like swimmer Amanda Beard, have posed in sexually provocative layouts for men's magazines such as *Playboy*, *Maxim*, and *FHM*. Indeed, the sexualization of female athletes may be on the rise. Over the past several years, men's magazines have featured numerous bikini-clad female athletes, for example, race car driver Danica Patrick and golfer Natalie Gulbis in *FHM* and beach volleyball player Misty May and swimmer Dara Torres in *Maxim* (www.popcrunch.com, 2009). Despite this anecdotal evidence, a systematic investigation of the prevalence of sexualized images of female athletes across various media sources has not been conducted to date.

There is very little empirical research on males' responses to media images of female athletes. Only three studies were found investigating this issue and only one of the three used an adolescent sample. Knight and Giuliano (2001) examined U.S. female and male college students' perceptions of male and female athletes portrayed in print media, which emphasized either the physical attractiveness or athleticism of the athlete. Athletes (both female and male)

whose attractiveness received more attention than their athleticism were perceived as less talented, less aggressive, and less heroic than athletes whose athleticism received more attention. Readers liked the articles that focused on the athlete's attractiveness less than the articles that focused on athleticism. Further, participants who read the story emphasizing the female athlete's beauty rated her attractiveness higher than did participants who read the article focusing on her athleticism. A similar pattern was *not* found regarding the attractiveness of the male athlete. This study demonstrates that the type of coverage (attractiveness versus athleticism focus) as well as the gender of the athlete influenced people's perceptions of the athlete. Importantly, coverage of athletes that focuses on their athleticism was perceived more positively by the audience.

In an audience reception study with focus groups, researchers found that U.S. adult men and women reported being more likely to read about and watch women's sports after viewing media in which a female athlete's athletic competence was on display as compared to viewing other representations of female athletes (Kane & Maxwell, in press). Viewers were least likely to report wanting to read about or watch women's sports after seeing sexualized images of female athletes. The authors found that "sexy images" of female athletes do not lead to increased interest in or support of women's sports. Thus, it seems that adult viewers do not focus on the athleticism of female athletes when they are depicted in a sexualized manner.

We located only one study investigating responses to media images of female athletes using an adolescent sample. In focus group research, Heywood and Dworkin (2003) found that U.S. boys and girls (ages 10-17) had positive reactions to an action photograph of soccer player Brandi Chastain. They commented positively on her athleticism and reported that the image made them want to play a sport. While the dominant reaction was positive and focused on

Chastain's athleticism, a minority of boys appeared threatened by the image and said things like "she's asking me: can you kick as hard as me, and I feel funny" and "I'll just run away and watch her score" (p. 138). These comments from a small number of boys suggest a lack of experience with female athleticism. These boys seemed uncomfortable with displays of athletic power from a woman.

In short, the limited research on male viewers' responses to media images of female athletes suggests that imagery highlighting the athlete's physical competence is perceived more positively than imagery focusing on the athlete's attractiveness or sexiness.

### *Study Aims and Predictions*

In the present study, adolescent boys' (hereafter referred to as boys) open-ended responses to performance versus sexualized images of female athletes were investigated. Sexualized images of (non-athlete) models were also part of the study design. This allowed us to assess whether boys' responses to sexualized athletes were more similar to performance athletes or sexualized models. The three photograph conditions were: (1) performance athletes, (2) sexualized athletes, and (3) sexualized models.

A mixed-method approach was used to investigate (a) whether boys perceive sexualized female athletes as athletes or as sex objects, and (b) how boys respond to non-objectified media images of women, specifically performance athletes. We adopted an open-ended question approach in the study design because we were particularly interested in which aspects of the women, e.g., physical appearance or physical competence, were most salient to viewers. Accordingly, we chose not to present viewers with a set of researcher-constructed questions about the photographs, e.g., rate the attractiveness of the woman in the photograph, which would focus participants' attention in particular ways. Patton (2002) summed up the value of

qualitative data in this type of study by explaining that “the purpose of gathering responses to open-ended questions is to enable the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories” (p. 21). Further, these data reveal “respondents’ depth of emotion...and their basic perceptions” which may be especially useful in examining understudied questions (p. 21). In order to capture which aspects of the women were most salient to viewers, we chose to quantify the prevalence of statements, which we systematized into inductively-derived coding categories (described in the Method section). This allowed us to determine the frequency of particular types of statements by photograph condition. In short, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was best suited for the present study.

*Predictions.* Objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and the extensive research literature on the objectification of women’s bodies in media (APA, 2007) are the basis for our first prediction. Boys were expected to focus on the appearance and attractiveness of the sexualized images, both athletes and models, in the present study. To test this prediction, we planned three specific comparisons. First, we compared boys’ responses in the sexualized and performance athletes conditions. We expected that boys who saw the sexualized athletes would make more statements about those women’s appearance and attractiveness than would boys who saw the performance athletes (Hypothesis 1). Second, we compared boys’ responses in the sexualized athletes and sexualized models conditions, but we did not predict a direction. Both types of images objectify women, but it is unclear if one type of image elicits more objectified responses than the other. Third, we compared boys’ responses in the performance athletes and sexualized models conditions. We expected that boys who saw the sexualized models would

make more statements about those women's appearance and attractiveness than would boys who saw the performance athletes (Hypothesis 2).

Very little is known about boys' responses to non-objectified media images of women, like athletes. However, some research suggests that youth focus on the physical abilities and skills of performance-focused images of female athletes (Heywood & Dworkin, 2003).

Therefore, we expected boys to focus on the athleticism of the performance athletes. We did not expect boys to make statements about the athleticism of the sexualized athletes. Instead, we expected them to treat these images as they would general sexualized images of women and focus on their appearance and attractiveness. Accordingly, we predicted that boys who saw the performance athletes would make more statements about those women's athleticism than would boys who saw the sexualized athletes (Hypothesis 3).

Given that this study employed an inductive coding process, a number of themes emerged from the responses which we could not make predictions about a priori. Participants, for example, expressed emotional responses to the images, both positive (like) and negative (dislike) reactions. We expected that adolescent boys might report liking sexualized images of women. However, we also considered that some might object to sexualized images of athletes, viewing these depictions as disrespectful to the women's athleticism. In addition, we were unsure if boys would spontaneously report liking the performance athlete images or not. Therefore, we compared the prevalence of emotional reaction statements between (a) sexualized and performance athletes, (b) sexualized athletes and the sexualized models, and (c) performance athletes and sexualized models. However, we did not predict directions for these tests.

Similarly, an advertising/marketing theme emerged from participants' responses which reflected commentary that the image was an advertisement of some sort. We did not make

predictions about the prevalence of these statements across photograph conditions. We compared the prevalence of advertising/marketing statements between (a) sexualized and performance athletes, (b) sexualized athletes and the sexualized models, and (c) performance athletes and sexualized models. However, we did not predict directions for these tests.

*Summary of predictions:* Hypothesis 1: Boys who saw the sexualized athletes would make more statements about those women's appearance and attractiveness than would boys who saw the performance athletes. Hypothesis 2: Boys who saw the sexualized models would make more statements about those women's appearance and attractiveness than would boys who saw the performance athletes. Hypothesis 3: Boys who saw the performance athletes would make more statements about those women's athleticism than would boys who saw the sexualized athletes.

## Method

### *Participants*

A convenience sample of 113 high school boys (ages 12-17;  $M = 14.48$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ) was part of the present investigation which was part of a larger study. Nine boys were dropped from the study ( $n = 1$  did not follow the directions;  $n = 8$  did not take the survey seriously). Boys were in grades eight through 12 in schools located on the central coast of California. They received a nutritional bar and a media literacy workshop on body image for their participation in the study.

The sample was primarily White/European American (55%). Nine percent of participants were Latino, 4% were Asian, 2% were Black, and 2% did not report ethnicity. Almost a third of participants reported being of multiple ethnic backgrounds or reported being from an ethnic background not provided as a response option in the survey (i.e., White, Latino, Asian, Black, Native American) (29%).

Participants were asked to report their mother's education level. Over half of the sample reported that their mother graduated from a 4-year college (26%) or completed post-graduate studies (27%). Twenty percent of participants reported that their mothers attended some college. Five percent of participants reported that their mothers graduated from high school. Four percent of participants reported that their mothers attended some high school or less and 19% were not sure how much schooling their mothers had. Similar patterns were found in father's educational attainment (27% post-graduate studies; 20% 4-year college; 15% attended some college; 7% graduated from high school; 7% attended some high school or less; 24% unsure about level of father's schooling).

### *Materials*

Fifteen color photographs of white women (five per each of the three experimental conditions) were used in the present study. Photographs of white women were used because they are the dominant racial group portrayed in media, especially media of female athletes, and are positioned as the ideal that girls and women should be striving to emulate (Berry, 2003; Davis & Harris, 1998). Photographs were selected from a variety of popular magazine such as *Sports Illustrated*, *Sports Illustrated for Women*, *Glamour*, and *Marie Claire*. Images of women in *Glamour* and *Marie Claire* are representative of images of women found in any popular press outlet and other types of media which males and females see on a regular basis (APA, 2007).

The three experimental conditions contained photographs of women who were: (a) sexualized athletes, (b) performance athletes, and (c) sexualized models. The majority of photographs depicted the woman's entire body. The photographs of female athletes were labeled with the athlete's name and sport. The sexualized models were not famous. Their photographs

were labeled with a fictional woman's name, and her occupation was listed as a model. No text appeared on any of the photographs except for name and occupation.

Pilot testing with a pool of 40 photographs was conducted with college students ( $n = 28$  women,  $n = 10$  men) prior to data collection to ensure that women in the photographs were similar on level of attractiveness, affect, and age. Photographs were excluded from use if: (a) the woman depicted was considered unattractive or unhappy, and; (b) the woman depicted was considered to be older than 30 or younger than 20.

Different sets of photographs, all of which were pilot tested, were used for the three experimental conditions. To increase the ecological validity of the study, photographs of female athletes were selected based on the way that the athlete is typically portrayed in the media, that is, *either* as an athlete *or* as a sex object. For example, at the height of her career, Anna Kournikova was frequently portrayed in sexualized photographs in contrast to the more limited media imagery of her actually playing tennis. In contrast, the opposite pattern is true of Mia Hamm, who is rarely depicted in an overtly sexualized manner. An alternative approach would be to present the same female athlete in each of the two athlete photograph conditions, but such matched sets were not available at the time this study was designed. Because ecological validity was a priority and photographs were not digitally altered beyond removing text, there is some variability (noted below) in whether images were full or three-quarter shots.

The *sexualized athletes condition* was comprised of photographs of five athletes including Lauren Jackson (basketball player), Ekaterina Gordeeva (ice-skater), Jenny Thompson (swimmer), Jenny Finch (softball player), and Anna Kournikova (tennis player) posed in bathing suits. Jackson, Finch, and Kournikova were wearing bikinis and their photographs covered three-quarters of their body. Thompson was wearing swim trunks and covering her breasts with

her hands. Gordeeva was wearing a one-piece bathing suit and was posed with her backside facing forward as she looked over her shoulder at the camera. Thompson and Gordeeva's entire bodies were captured in the photographs.

The *performance athletes condition* was comprised of photographs of five athletes including Anne Strother (basketball player), Jen O'Brien (skateboarder), Jennifer Capriati (tennis player), Lisa Anderson (surfer), and Mia Hamm (soccer player) engaged in their sports. These were action photos of them playing their sports in sporting attire. Strother and O'Brien were wearing sleeveless jerseys and shorts that extended to their knees. Capriati was wearing a sleeveless shirt and skirt. Her photograph showed three-quarters of her body, cutting off the lower portion of her legs therefore her skirt covered all of her legs shown in the photograph. Anderson was wearing a short-sleeve wetsuit top with long pants. Hamm was wearing a short-sleeve jersey and shorts that extended half-way down her thigh.

The *sexualized models condition* was comprised of photographs of five models given the fictional names of Mary Donald (model), Sarah Mitchell (model), Elisa Jacobs (model), Megan Jones (model), and Tara Anderson (model) posed in bikinis or lingerie. Donald, Mitchell, and Anderson's entire bodies were shown. The photographs of Jacobs and Jones were three-quarter shots.

In each condition, photographs were presented to participants in the same order described here.

### *Procedure*

A between-subjects design was used. Boys from 14 different classes in six different schools were tested in group administrations during one class period. Each class was randomly assigned to a photograph condition. Due to varying class sizes, sample sizes differed by

experimental condition ( $n = 35$  sexualized athletes,  $n = 23$  performance athletes, and  $n = 46$  sexualized models).

Classroom teachers distributed an informational letter and consent form to students to take home to their parents. Parents were told that the first author was conducting a project about adolescents' thinking about photographs they see in popular magazines. If a parent signed the consent form, the adolescent was eligible to participate in the study. On the day of data collection, the first author asked individuals who had parental consent if they wanted to participate in a study about media images. If they agreed, they signed an assent form indicating their willingness to be in the study. After the data collection session, participants and other students in the class were presented with a media literacy workshop. A debriefing letter was sent home with each participant with more information about media and body image concerns.

All participants viewed five photographs and completed a short writing exercise after each of the five photographs. For two of the five photographs (the first photograph and the last photograph in the survey packet), participants were instructed, "after looking at this photograph, please write one paragraph describing the woman in the photograph and discuss how this photograph makes you feel." For the other three photographs, participants were instructed, "give the photograph you've just seen a title that captures the theme of the photograph." Analyses of the photograph captions are not presented here. The present paper involves analyses of the longer, open-ended responses to two of the five photographs. These longer responses provided more information about the participants' perceptions than the short captions did.

The number of photographs viewed and the type of writing exercise (caption versus paragraph) were based on time constraints for survey administration which was conducted in high school classrooms during instruction.

### *Open-Ended Coding*

Thematic analysis was used to code the open-ended responses. This is a widely used qualitative analytic method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes present in participants' responses to the photographs were inductively-derived, a "bottom-up" process in which themes "are strongly linked to the data themselves" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). Thus, the development of themes (described in detail below) was based primarily on participants' responses rather than prior research. By using this approach, we allowed for the possibility that boys would respond to the photographs in ways we could not predict a priori. However, we did rely on objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) to the extent that we expected boys' responses to contain reference to the sexualized women's appearance and attractiveness. In addition, based on Heywood and Dworkin's (2003) work, we expected references to the physical abilities and skills of the performance athletes. An alternative approach would be a deductive or "top down" process which would rely on previous research to identify expected themes in participants' responses and exclude participants' statements that fell outside of those expected themes. Because very little research has been done investigating viewers' perceptions of female athletes, especially ones depicting a female athlete in-action, the inductive approach was selected for data analysis in the present study. We decided that this approach would allow us to capture the full range of boys' reactions to the photographs.

The development of themes was conducted by the first author and an undergraduate researcher (both European-American women) and involved: (a) a close read of all responses to identify recurring concepts, (b) extensive discussion about recurring concepts including the boundaries between one concept and another, (c) formation of specific themes based on recurring

concepts, and (d) creation of a coding manual with definitions of themes. Throughout this process, the authors engaged in back and forth dialogue about recurring concepts and emergent themes. Through these discussions, they came to consensus on the definitions for each theme. Due to space constraints, only themes (with one exception) which were present in at least 10 percent of participants' responses were included in the present paper ( $n = 10$  out of 29 original themes). One theme, *gender marking* of the athlete, was a lower frequency theme (present in 5.8% of responses). It was specifically retained because of its low frequency rate.

Using the coding manual, two raters (the first author and a second undergraduate researcher who is also the second author) coded the open-ended responses independently and subsequently compared their ratings. Responses were coded for the presence (1) or absence (0) of each theme. The emotional tone of statements in particular themes (noted below) were coded as positive, neutral, and negative. A response could contain multiple themes, for example, a statement about the appearance of the woman in the photograph *and* a statement about the woman's physical competence. Discrepancies between coders were resolved through discussion. A final decision was jointly reached based on these discussions. Inter-rater reliability between coders ranged from acceptable to excellent across all themes ( $\kappa$ s = .79 to 1.00). Specific kappa ( $\kappa$ ) coefficients for intercoder reliability for each theme are listed below. Individual themes were organized into three super-ordinate themes including: (a) *Woman's Appearance and Attractiveness*, (b) *Woman's Athleticism*, and (c) *Personal Perceptions*.

#### *Woman's Appearance and Attractiveness*

Five individual themes encompassed *woman's appearance*. All focused on various aspects of the physical appearance of the woman in the photograph. The *appearance* ( $\kappa = .93$ ; e.g., "pretty"), *body shape/size* ( $\kappa = .93$ ; e.g., "good body"), and *weight* ( $\kappa = .98$ ; e.g., "thin")

themes captured statements that focused on the woman's body. The emotional tone of the *appearance* and *body shape/size* statements was also coded including positive (e.g., "beautiful"), neutral (e.g., "tall"), or negative (e.g., "ugly") statements (*appearance* tone  $\kappa = .93$ ; *body shape/size* tone  $\kappa = .94$ ). The emotional tone of *weight* statements was coded as positive (e.g., "skinny") or negative (e.g., "looks a bit fat") (*weight* tone  $\kappa = 1.00$ ).

The *female ideal/male gaze* theme involved comparisons of the woman in the photograph to an idealized standard of how women should look and/or comments on the perspective of male viewers ( $\kappa = .86$ ; e.g., "she looks exactly like the stereotypical girl should look like today"). The *sexy* theme included statements about the woman's sexiness ( $\kappa = .91$ ; e.g., "she's hot").

#### *Woman's Athleticism*

Three individual themes encompassed *woman's athleticism*. The *physicality* theme captured statements about the woman's physical activity involvement or competence ( $\kappa = .79$ ; e.g., "athletic"). The emotional tone of the statements in this theme was also coded including positive (e.g., "talented athlete"), neutral (e.g., "athletic"), or negative (e.g., "doesn't seem like an athlete") statements (*physicality* tone  $\kappa = .89$ ). The *play by play* theme focused on statements about what was happening in the athletic context ( $\kappa = 1.00$ ; e.g., "she just got past another player"). The *gender marking* theme captured statements that specifically marked the gender of the athlete ( $\kappa = .83$ ; e.g., "Mia Hamm is one of the best woman soccer players out there").

#### *Personal Perceptions*

Two themes encompassed *personal perceptions*. The *emotional reaction* theme captured statements about participants' emotional responses to the photograph ( $\kappa = .88$ ; e.g., "makes me feel happy"). The emotional tone of the statements in this theme was also coded including positive (e.g., "makes me feel good") or negative (e.g., "makes me feel uncomfortable")

statements (*emotional reaction* tone  $\kappa = 1.00$ ). The *advertising/marketing* theme included statements that the photograph was some kind of advertisement ( $\kappa = .85$ ; e.g., “seems like she’s selling something”).

#### *Data Analysis Plan*

Open-ended responses to the two photographs participants were asked to write about in paragraph form were collapsed to facilitate analysis of the large volume of statements contained in these responses. Therefore, if a theme was present in either of the two responses each boy provided, that theme was coded as present (1). If a theme did not appear in either of the two responses, it was coded as absent (0). See Table 1 for differences in the frequency of themes across conditions.

A goal of the present study was to determine which aspects of the woman in the photo were most salient to viewers in each photograph condition, i.e., which themes were most prevalent for each type of image. Therefore, a series of chi-square tests were conducted to determine if the frequency of themes varied by photograph condition. Omnibus chi-square tests comparing all three photograph conditions are reported in Table 1. Pair-wise comparisons testing the study’s hypotheses are reported below in text. Effect sizes are reported where appropriate. Examples of participants’ open-ended responses are provided in addition to the chi-square analyses.

Chi-square analyses were also conducted to investigate if the emotional tone of statements in particular themes, including the *appearance*, *body shape/size*, *weight*, *physicality*, and *emotional reaction* themes, varied by photograph condition. Percentages of positive, neutral, and negative statements are reported in Table 2. (Note, due to rounding percentages may add up

to 101 percent.) Following Cox and Key (1993), post hoc pair-wise comparisons for emotional tone were also conducted.

## Results

### *Sexualized Athletes Compared to Performance Athletes*

*Woman's appearance and attractiveness.* We expected that boys who saw the sexualized athletes would make more statements about women's appearance and attractiveness than would boys who saw the performance athletes (Hypothesis 1). We found support for this hypothesis. Boys who saw the sexualized athletes (74%) made more statements about the women's *appearance* than did boys who saw the performance athletes (17%),  $\chi^2(1, n = 58) = 17.99, p < .01$ , Cramer's  $V = .56$ . Planned chi-square analyses to investigate if the emotional tone of *appearance* statements varied by photograph condition were not possible because the expected frequencies for some cells were less than five. This was a problem for all planned chi-square tests for emotional tone. Accordingly, descriptive statements about emotional tone are presented in text and percentages of responses by tone are reported in Table 2. The majority of the *appearance* statements about the sexualized athletes were positive in tone, while the majority of the statements about the performance athletes were neutral in tone. A positive *appearance* statement about a sexualized athlete was, "after looking at the photograph I thought that she was really attractive because she has nice eyes, nice smile, and nice body" (16-year-old, Latino). A neutral *appearance* statement about a performance athlete was, "she has brown hair and is wearing a blue uniform" (16-year-old, multiple ethnicities).

Boys who saw the sexualized athletes did *not* make more statements about the *body shape/size*,  $\chi^2(1, n = 58) = 1.54, p = .22$ , of the athletes as compared to boys who saw the performance athletes. Similarly, it appears that there was no difference in the number of *weight*

statements between conditions. However, a chi-square test was not appropriate for the *weight* theme because the expected frequencies for some cells were less than five.

Boys who saw the sexualized athletes (23%) made more *female ideal/male gaze* comments as compared to boys who saw the performance athletes (0%). A chi-square test was not appropriate for this comparison because the expected frequencies for some cells were less than five. An example *female ideal/male gaze* comment was, “she is what the media and most people think is good looking and how they think most women should be like” (14-year-old, European-American). The same pattern was found for *sexy* statements. Boys who saw the sexualized athletes (60%) made more statements about the athlete’s sexiness than were boys who saw the performance athletes (0%),  $\chi^2 (1, n = 58) = 21.63, p < .01$ , Cramer’s  $V = .61$ . In response to the sexualized athletes, one boy remarked, “this blonde, tan, thin woman is appealing to males, which causes us to be turned on” (17-year-old, European-American).

*Woman’s athleticism.* We predicted that boys who saw the performance athletes would make more statements about women’s athleticism than would boys who saw the sexualized athletes (Hypothesis 3). Unexpectedly, we found only a marginally significant difference in the prevalence of *physicality* statements between conditions,  $\chi^2 (1, n = 58) = 3.14, p = .08$ . However, it appears that there was a difference in the emotional tone of statements made in the two conditions. The majority of *physicality* statements about the performance athletes were positive in tone; for example, “Mia Hamm is a great soccer player who has been in the MLS, World Cup, and the Olympics” (14-year-old, multiple ethnicities). In contrast, *physicality* statements about the sexualized athletes were varied in tone (neutral, negative, and positive). A neutral *physicality* statement about a sexualized athlete was “the woman in the photograph is a fit basketball player” (14-year-old, Asian American). A negative *physicality* statement about a

sexualized athlete was, “she sucks at tennis but she makes a hot model” (15-year-old, multiple ethnicities).

Boys who saw the performance athletes (61%) made more *play-by-play* statements than did boys who saw the sexualized athletes (0%),  $\chi^2(1, n = 58) = 28.08, p < .01$ , Cramer’s  $V = .70$ . An example *play-by-play* statement was, “it looks like Mia Hamm is either going to head-butt or kick the ball that is falling out of the air. The expression on her face looks like she is concentrating on the ball, and not going to let it out of her sight” (14-year-old, multiple ethnicities).

When describing the women’s athleticism, boys overwhelmingly did not specifically mark the athlete’s gender (*gender marking* theme). In only six instances did boys label the woman in the photograph as a *female* athlete, for example, “Mia Hamm...will go down in history as one of the best female soccer players in recent memory” (14-year-old, African-American, performance athletes). Only boys who saw the performance athletes (26%) marked the athlete’s gender (sexualized athletes, 0%). A chi-square test was not appropriate for this comparison because the expected frequencies for some cells were less than five.

*Personal reaction.* No specific predictions were made about the prevalence of statements capturing boys’ *emotional reactions* to the photographs they viewed. There was no difference between boys who saw the sexualized athletes and those who saw the performance athletes in the prevalence of these statements,  $\chi^2(1, n = 58) = 2.56, p = .11$ . In addition, the emotional tone of the statements did not appear to differ between the two conditions. In both conditions, *emotional reaction* statements were primarily positive. A positive *emotional reaction* statement made about the sexualized athletes was, “I feel good and she is pretty hot” (15-year-old, European-American). A positive *emotional reaction* statement made about the performance athletes was,

“the photo makes me happy because it reminds me of when the USA women won the world cup in I think 1999” (14-year-old, multiple ethnicities).

No specific predictions were made about the prevalence of statements about *advertising/marketing*. Boys who saw the sexualized athletes (23%) made more *advertising/marketing* statements than did boys who saw the performance athletes (0%). A chi-square test was not appropriate for this comparison because the expected frequencies for some cells were less than five. An example *advertising/marketing* statement from a boy who saw the sexualized athletes was, “well, seriously, I think they are trying to advertise something, and it may not be sports. I don’t know how girls think, but I would definitely not think about tennis after looking at it first glance. No “relevance”...in the photo” (16-year-old, Latino).

*Summary.* Boys who saw the sexualized athletes made more *appearance, female ideal/male gaze, sexy, and advertising/marketing* statements compared to the boys who saw the performance athletes. Boys who saw the performance athletes made more positive *physicality, play-by play, and gender marking* statements as compared to boys who saw the sexualized athletes. There were no differences between boys in these two conditions in the prevalence of *body shape/size, weight, physicality* (the emotional tone of *physicality* statements appeared to differ by condition), and *emotional reaction* statements.

#### *Sexualized Athletes Compared to Sexualized Models*

*Woman’s appearance and attractiveness.* We compared the prevalence of appearance and attractiveness statements in the sexualized models and the sexualized athletes conditions, but we did not predict a direction. There were no differences between conditions in the prevalence of *appearance*,  $\chi^2 (1, n = 81) = 3.39, p = .07$ , *body shape/size*,  $\chi^2 (1, n = 81) = 0.03, p = .86$ , or

*weight* statements,  $\chi^2 (1, n = 81) = 2.89, p = .09$ . It appears there were also no differences in the emotional tone of *appearance, body shape/size, or weight* statements.

In contrast to the patterns above, boys who saw the sexualized athletes (23%) made more *female ideal/male gaze* comments as compared to boys who saw the sexualized models (4%). A chi-square test was not appropriate for this comparison because the expected frequencies for some cells were less than five. Boys who saw the sexualized athletes (60%) were *not* more likely to make *sexy* statements than were boys who saw the sexualized models (41%),  $\chi^2 (1, n = 81) = 2.78, p = .10$ .

*Woman's athleticism.* No comparisons about athleticism were tested between the sexualized athletes and models.

*Personal reaction.* No specific predictions were made about the prevalence of *emotional reaction* and *advertising/marketing* statements. There were no differences between boys in these conditions for either theme,  $\chi^2 (1, n = 81) = 0.97, p = .32$  and  $\chi^2 (1, n = 81) = 3.16, p = .08$  respectively. In addition, the emotional tone of the *emotional reaction* statements did not appear to differ between the two conditions.

*Summary.* Boys who saw the sexualized athletes were more likely to make *female ideal/male gaze* comments as compared to boys who saw the sexualized models. There were no differences between boys in these two conditions in the prevalence of *appearance, body shape/size, weight, sexy, emotional reaction, and advertising/marketing* statements. In addition, the emotional tone of the *appearance, body shape/size, weight, and emotional reactions* statements did not appear to differ between conditions.

*Performance Athletes Compared to Sexualized Models*

*Woman's appearance and attractiveness.* We expected that boys who saw the sexualized models would make more statements about women's appearance and attractiveness than would boys who saw the performance athletes (Hypothesis 2). We found support for this hypothesis. Boys who saw the sexualized models (54%) made more statements about the women's *appearance* than did boys who saw the performance athletes (17%),  $\chi^2 (1, n = 69) = 8.60, p < .01$ , Cramer's  $V = .35$ . The majority of the *appearance* statements about the sexualized models were positive in tone, while the majority of the statements about the performance athletes were neutral in tone.

Boys who saw the sexualized models did *not* make more *body shape/size*,  $\chi^2 (1, n = 69) = 2.09, p = .15$ , or *weight*,  $\chi^2 (1, n = 69) = 2.50, p = .11$ , statements as compared to boys who saw the performance athletes. The majority of the *body shape/size* statements about the performance athletes were neutral in tone, while the statements about the sexualized models were both positive and neutral in tone. The emotional tone of the *weight* statements was primarily positive in both conditions.

*Female ideal/male gaze* statements were infrequent in both the sexualized models and performance athletes conditions. A chi-square test was not appropriate for this theme because the expected frequencies for some cells were less than five.

Boys who saw the sexualized models (41%) were more likely to make *sexy* comments as compared to boys who saw the performance athletes (0%),  $\chi^2 (1, n = 69) = 13.11, p < .01$ , Cramer's  $V = .44$ .

*Personal reaction.* No specific predictions were made about the prevalence of *emotional reaction* and *advertising/marketing* statements. The prevalence of these themes was similarly

low in both conditions. Chi-square tests were not appropriate for these themes because the expected frequencies for some cells were less than five.

*Summary.* Boys who saw the sexualized models made more *appearance* and *sexy* statements than did boys who saw the performance athletes. The *appearance* statements from boys who saw the sexualized models were primarily positive in tone, while the *appearance* statements from boys who saw the performance athletes were primarily neutral in tone. There were no differences between boys in these two conditions in the prevalence of *body shape/size*, *weight*, *female ideal/male gaze*, *emotional reactions*, and *advertising/marketing* statements. The majority of the *body shape/size* statements about the performance athletes were neutral in tone, while the statements about the sexualized models were both positive and neutral in tone. The tone of *weight* and *emotional reactions* statements did not appear to differ between the conditions.

### Discussion

The present study sought to extend the limited research on male viewers' responses to media images of women by investigating adolescent boys' responses to images of female athletes, both performance-focused and sexualized. The goals of the study were to investigate (a) whether boys perceive sexualized female athletes as athletes or as sex objects and (b) how boys respond to non-objectified media images of women, specifically performance athletes. As expected, the sexualized images of female athletes elicited comments about their physical appearance and attractiveness. The same pattern was found in boys' responses to sexualized models, suggesting that boys view sexualized athletes and models similarly. However, boys appeared to objectify sexualized athletes *more* than sexualized models as evidenced by the effect sizes for the *appearance* and *sexy* themes in the sexualized athletes to performance athletes and

sexualized models to performance athletes comparisons. These patterns demonstrate that sexualized images of females athletes are especially problematic and may contribute to the devaluation of female athleticism. In contrast to these patterns, the majority of responses to the performance athlete images focused on the athlete's athleticism and the athletic context.

### *Perceptions of Sexualized Athletes*

That boys respond to sexualized athletes and models in similar ways is consistent with objectification theory's premise that female bodies are routinely objectified in Western societies (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The appearance and attractiveness of the sexualized athletes were extremely salient to boys in this study, suggesting that these images elicit objectified appraisals from male viewers. Similar to sexualized models, sexualized athlete images prompt the viewer to focus on the appearance and attractiveness of the woman in the photograph rather than on what she does (sport). Emotional reactions to sexualized athletes, like those about models, tended to be positive and linked to the physical attractiveness of the women in the photographs. Again, there was an objectified focus to these statements.

Interestingly, boys were more likely to label sexualized athletes, rather than sexualized models, as the ideal standard for female beauty or comment that men would be especially attracted to these women. Boys did not comment at different rates on the appearance, body shape/size, weight, and sexiness of the models and athletes, and the majority of these statements were positive in both conditions. Further, there was no difference in boys' emotional reactions to the photographs between conditions. These patterns suggest that boys used some other criteria in citing the sexualized athletes as the ideal. Future research is necessary to better understand this preference.

Boys did comment on the sexualized athletes' athleticism, but these statements tended to be neutral or negative in contrast to the positive comments about the performance athletes' physical competence. About the sexualized athletes, boys either made vague or general statements about these athletes' physical abilities or outright questioned/critiqued their athleticism. These statements were largely not positive comments about the athlete's skills or accomplishments. Kane and Maxwell (in press) found a similar pattern in which sexy images of female athletes did not lead to increased interest in or support of women's sports. In general, sexualized images of athletes do not seem to elicit positive assessments of women's athleticism.

A minority of boys remarked that the sexualized athlete images were advertisements of some sort. Most of these statements were general in nature, e.g., "it looks like she is trying to sell something. It makes me feel like it's an ad" (15-year-old, multiple ethnicities), or referenced a vague marketing intent, e.g., "I feel that she is very attractive and now that I think about it, that is probably what I am supposed to feel" (17-year-old, European-American). It seems that some boys are interpreting sexualized athlete images as a marketing ploy, suggesting awareness that sexualizing women is a means to sell products. Most boys who made *advertising/marketing* statements did not provide elaborated explanations of their perceptions. Two boys, however, were expansive and their reactions were very different from each other. One boy cited a structural reason for why an athlete would pose in a sexualized manner and he expressed empathy for the athlete. He said, "this photograph makes me feel kind of sorry for her. She has to publicize something for her sponsors by displaying her body otherwise they'll probably leave her" (15-year-old, European-American). The other boy cited individual choice as the motivation for posing in a sexualized manner and criticized the character of the athlete. He said, "it makes me feel disgusted. She is downgrading herself and selling sexual image to men. I don't like her"

(16-year-old, multiple ethnicities). The first statement indicates that some boys are aware of the inequalities between male and female athletes' opportunities and are aware that female athletes are specifically commodified through sexualization. The second statement demonstrates that boys may blame the athletes themselves for allowing themselves to be sexualized. In both cases, boys believe that women's bodies are being used to sell something.

This focus on appearance and the tendency to objectify women in media may have far reaching implications in terms of how boys think about women. Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2002) investigated the effect of appearance-focused media on Australian boys' cognitive processes. They experimentally exposed boys to television commercials that were either appearance-related (i.e., advertised products such as clothing, cosmetics, and cars with ultra-thin, exceptionally attractive women) or non-appearance-related (i.e., similar products, but women depicted were *not* ultra-thin and *not* exceptionally attractive). Appearance-related commercials activated boys' appearance schemas, which are cognitive structures concerning appearance. Boys who viewed the appearance-related commercials remembered significantly more commercials and generated more appearance words in a word stem completion task than boys who saw the non-appearance-related commercials. These findings suggest that appearance-focused media may influence boys to use appearance as an organizing category in memory. However, the effect of this media on cognitive processing may depend in part on the extent to which boys typically tend to focus on appearance (appearance schematicity) (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003). These findings suggest that appearance-focused media may heighten attention to appearance in at least some boys' cognitive processing. Sexualized athlete images, presumably, trigger the same focus on appearance in cognitive processing as general sexualized or appearance-focused images do.

### *Perceptions of Performance Athletes*

Findings from the present study suggest that performance athlete images can positively impact male viewers' perceptions of women. Consistent with Heywood and Dworkin's (2003) findings, the majority of responses to these images focused on performance aspects of the woman depicted (*physicality* theme) and they tended to be positive evaluations. Some boys also became engaged in the athletic context depicted in the photograph, reporting the athlete's next move or commenting on the game (*play-by-play* theme). This pattern was somewhat surprising. Coverage of women's sports is minimal compared to coverage of men's sports (Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles & ESPN, 2001; Kane & LaVoi, 2007). Further, respectful media coverage of women's sports that focuses on their athleticism has been an enduring struggle since Title IX legislation was passed in 1972, which increased funding to girls' and women's sports (Kane, 1996; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Messner, Duncan, & Jensen, 1993). However, the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) has now been in operation for over a decade and select female athletes, including Mia Hamm, are household names. Perhaps social change in the past decade is elevating the visibility of some female athletes, and boys are relating to these athletes in similar ways as they would male athletes.

Some boys noted the gender of the athlete depicted in the performance athlete photographs (*gender marking* theme). But most boys did not. This pattern is intriguing because while there are more collegiate and professional opportunities for women's sports today than ever before, the status of women's sports is quite different from that of men's sports. In 2009, the Super Bowl drew 95.4 million viewers and generated 206 million dollars in advertising revenue (Seidman, 2009; www.popcrunch.com, 2009). In contrast, the most-attended women's sporting event in history was the 1999 U.S. Women's World Cup soccer game which drew

90,000 spectators and a television audience of 40 million (Plaschke, 2009). No women's sporting event before or since then has come close to generating that large an audience. Further, on average, coverage of women's sports only constitutes six to eight percent of sport media (Kane & LaVoi, 2007). As a result, boys do not have regular access to women's sports through the media. Therefore, it is somewhat surprising that boys did not, on average, mark the gender of the athletes they viewed as a way to differentiate them from male athletes. Perhaps the fact that girls' involvement in sports is more similar to boys' today helps explain this pattern (NFSHSA, 2010). Boys today likely know skilled and accomplished female athletes in their own lives and therefore might be less likely to reserve the term 'athlete' for males. Future research should investigate this possibility.

Assessing boys' exposure to, and interest in, women's sports is important for future research on males' perceptions of female athletes. Parker and Fink (2008) found that U.S. college students (male and female), who reported being a fan and following women's basketball, had more positive attitudes towards female athletes and their athletic abilities as compared to less involved viewers. It is possible that boys and men who follow women's sports or particular female athletes are more likely to respect female athlete's athleticism and respond positively to media coverage of female athletes.

#### *Limitations and Future Directions*

A limitation of the present study was that boys were not randomly assigned to a photograph condition. Instead, given constraints of classroom space and the small size of the data collection team, a classroom of students was randomly assigned to a condition. It is possible that there were classroom effects driving differences in types of statements between experimental conditions.

Another potential limitation was that the athlete photographs were not matched in the performance and sexualized conditions. Because we prioritized ecological validity in selecting images, we cannot rule out the possibility that participants' differing responses to the images were driven by differences among the athletes rather than the performance or sexualized manner in which they were depicted. Future research could address this concern by using matched images.

Future research on male viewers' responses to images of women should consider individual difference variables such as media diet, sports viewing habits, and attitudes toward appearance. As prior research has shown, individual difference variables can interact with type of media image to impact viewers' attitudes (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003).

### *Conclusion*

A large body of research has focused on female viewers' responses to objectified media images of women, but far less research has investigated the impact of this type of media on male viewers. The present study contributes to the research literature by demonstrating that performance images of female athletes prompt instrumental evaluations of women, rather than objectified appraisals in adolescent male viewers. Conversely, sexualized images of female athletes evoke a focus on physical appearance and attractiveness, much like sexualized images of models. They also prompt negative or neutral commentary on women's athleticism, suggesting that boys do not regard these athletes' physical skills with much esteem.

As awareness about the prevalence of the sexualization of girls and women in media increases among parents, educators, and concerned citizens (APA, 2007), it is especially important to document which alternative imagery elicits non-appearance-based appraisals about women. Here, we presented evidence that boys comment positively on the athletic skills and

accomplishments of female athletes when presented with such imagery. These findings provide a basis for advocacy efforts aimed at challenging the content of our media. Further, they suggest that media literacy educators could usefully incorporate performance images of female athletes into their curricula.

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Table 1

*Frequencies of Themes in Participants' Responses By Photograph Conditions*

| Appearance Theme | Performance Athletes | Sexualized Athletes | Sexualized Models | Total |
|------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------|
| Present          | 4                    | 26                  | 25                | 55    |
| Absent           | 19                   | 9                   | 21                | 49    |
| Total            | 23                   | 35                  | 46                | 104   |

The overall chi-square for this comparison is:  $\chi^2 (2, n = 104) = 18.10, p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .42.

| Body shape/size Theme | Performance Athletes | Sexualized Athletes | Sexualized Models | Total |
|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------|
| Present               | 5                    | 13                  | 18                | 36    |
| Absent                | 18                   | 22                  | 28                | 68    |
| Total                 | 23                   | 35                  | 46                | 104   |

The overall chi-square for this comparison is:  $\chi^2 (2, n = 104) = 2.20, p > .05$ , Cramer's V = .15.

| Weight Theme | Performance Athletes | Sexualized Athletes | Sexualized Models | Total |
|--------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------|
| Present      | 3                    | 5                   | 14                | 22    |
| Absent       | 20                   | 30                  | 32                | 82    |
| Total        | 23                   | 35                  | 46                | 104   |

An overall chi-square for this comparison could not be conducted because the  $f_e = 4.87$ .

| Female ideal/male gaze Theme | Performance Athletes | Sexualized Athletes | Sexualized Models | Total |
|------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------|
| Present                      | 0                    | 8                   | 2                 | 10    |
| Absent                       | 23                   | 27                  | 44                | 94    |
| Total                        | 23                   | 35                  | 46                | 104   |

An overall chi-square for this comparison could not be conducted because the  $f_e = 2.21$ .

| Sexy Theme | Performance Athletes | Sexualized Athletes | Sexualized Models | Total |
|------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------|
| Present    | 0                    | 21                  | 19                | 40    |
| Absent     | 23                   | 14                  | 27                | 64    |
| Total      | 23                   | 35                  | 46                | 104   |

The overall chi-square for this comparison is:  $\chi^2 (2, n = 104) = 21.39, p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .45.

| Physicality Theme | Performance Athletes | Sexualized Athletes | Sexualized Models | Total |
|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------|
| Present           | 14                   | 13                  | 3                 | 30    |
| Absent            | 9                    | 22                  | 43                | 74    |
| Total             | 23                   | 35                  | 46                | 104   |

The overall chi-square for this comparison is:  $\chi^2 (2, n = 104) = 23.84, p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .48$ .

| Play-by-play Theme | Performance Athletes | Sexualized Athletes | Sexualized Models | Total |
|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------|
| Present            | 14                   | 0                   | 0                 | 14    |
| Absent             | 9                    | 35                  | 46                | 90    |
| Total              | 23                   | 35                  | 46                | 104   |

An overall chi-square for this comparison could not be conducted because the  $f_e = 3.10$ .

| Gender marking Theme | Performance Athletes | Sexualized Athletes | Sexualized Models | Total |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------|
| Present              | 6                    | 0                   | 0                 | 6     |
| Absent               | 17                   | 35                  | 46                | 98    |
| Total                | 23                   | 35                  | 46                | 104   |

An overall chi-square for this comparison could not be conducted because the  $f_e = 1.33$ .

| Emotional reaction Theme | Performance Athletes | Sexualized Athletes | Sexualized Models | Total |
|--------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------|
| Present                  | 3                    | 11                  | 10                | 24    |
| Absent                   | 20                   | 24                  | 36                | 80    |
| Total                    | 23                   | 35                  | 46                | 104   |

The overall chi-square for this comparison is:  $\chi^2 (2, n = 104) = 2.73, p > .05$ , Cramer's  $V = .16$ .

| Advertising/marketing Theme | Performance Athletes | Sexualized Athletes | Sexualized Models | Total |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------|
| Present                     | 0                    | 8                   | 4                 | 12    |
| Absent                      | 23                   | 27                  | 42                | 92    |
| Total                       | 23                   | 35                  | 46                | 104   |

An overall chi-square for this comparison could not be conducted because the  $f_e = 2.65$ .

Table 2  
*Percentages of Emotional Tones of Themes in Participants' Responses By Photograph*

*Conditions*

|                           | Performance<br>Athletes | Sexualized<br>Athletes | Sexualized<br>Models |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
|                           | %                       | %                      | %                    |
| <b>Appearance</b>         |                         |                        |                      |
| Positive                  | 0%                      | 78%                    | 68%                  |
| Negative                  | 25%                     | 4%                     | 8%                   |
| Neutral                   | 75%                     | 19%                    | 24%                  |
| <b>Body shape/size</b>    |                         |                        |                      |
| Positive                  | 20%                     | 69%                    | 53%                  |
| Negative                  | 0%                      | 8%                     | 5%                   |
| Neutral                   | 80%                     | 23%                    | 42%                  |
| <b>Weight</b>             |                         |                        |                      |
| Positive                  | 100%                    | 80%                    | 71%                  |
| Negative                  | 0%                      | 20%                    | 29%                  |
| <b>Physicality</b>        |                         |                        |                      |
| Positive                  | 71%                     | 23%                    | 0%                   |
| Negative                  | 0%                      | 31%                    | 33%                  |
| Neutral                   | 29%                     | 46%                    | 67%                  |
| <b>Emotional reaction</b> |                         |                        |                      |
| Positive                  | 67%                     | 64%                    | 60%                  |
| Negative                  | 33%                     | 27%                    | 40%                  |
| Neutral                   | 0%                      | 9%                     | 0%                   |