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THE INFLUENCE OF SPORTS MAGAZINES AND THIN-IDEAL IMAGES ON THE BODY IMAGE OF DIVISION IA FEMALE ATHLETES

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THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

THE INFLUENCE OF SPORTS MAGAZINES AND THIN-IDEAL IMAGES
ON THE BODY IMAGE OF DIVISION IA FEMALE ATHLETES

by

Ashley Kristin Gibson

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Studies Office
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Approved:

August 2007
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ABSTRACT

THE INFLUENCE OF SPORTS MAGAZINES AND THIN-IDEAL IMAGES ON THE BODY IMAGE OF DIVISION I A FEMALE ATHLETES

by Ashley Kristin Gibson

August 2007

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact that sports magazines and thin-ideal images have on the body image, as identified by appearance, weight, and attribution, of female collegiate athletes. The secondary purpose of this study was to determine what role race plays in the development of body image dissatisfaction as a result of viewing sports magazines and thin-ideal images.

Collegiate athletes (N=87) were surveyed using the Body-Esteem Scale for Adolescents and Adults developed by Mendelson, B., Mendelson, M., and White (2001). African-Americans scored higher on all 3 sub-scales, which was indicative of an overall more favorable account of body-esteem than other racial groups. Of the three racial groups, the White/Euro-American athletes scored the lowest on all 3 sub-scales, indicating an overall lower account of body-esteem than other racial groups. Descriptive statistics were performed regarding the frequency of exposure to different genres of magazines. The genre that received the highest percentage for all racial groups of always engaging in reading was fashion magazines (20.7%). For all racial groups the genre that received the highest percentage (59.8%) of never engaging in reading was sport-specific magazines. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to assess the differences between the means of racial groups with regard to thin-ideal magazine exposure. With regard to general magazine reading, the test was significant, $t(79) = -2.441, p = .017$. 

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White female athletes (M = 13.71, SD = 3.61) have higher exposure to magazines than non-White female athletes (M = 11.59, SD = 3.08). With regard to fashion and entertainment magazine reading, there was a significant difference, $t(79) = -3.222$, $p = .002$. White female athletes have higher exposure to fashion and entertainment magazines (M = 7.19, SD = 2.07) than non-White female athletes (M = 5.54, SD = 1.94).

Twenty female athletes who completed a survey instrument were selected to participate in individual interviews pertaining to (a) body image, (b) the importance of having a healthy body image, (c) body image and athletic performance, and (d) athletes portrayal in the media. The primary data source for analysis in the qualitative component of the study was individual interviews. Each interview was digitally recorded and professionally transcribed. Data transformation occurred via (a) displaying findings, (b) identifying patterned regularities in the data, (c) comparing cases with one another, and (d) critiquing the research process. A graphical depiction was used to display themes. In identifying themes in this study, interview transcripts were read and coded. Coding, in turn, was used to collapse the interview transcripts into five major themes and fourteen sub-themes. The major themes that emerged during analysis were: (a) Feel Pressure, (b) Still Fighting for Respect, (c) Portrayed as Gods, (d) Must Have Healthy Body, and (e) It’s All We See. The coalescence of the major themes and sub-themes provided insight in the extent that perceptions in body image were influenced by viewing sports media in selected Division I female athletes attending a major university in the southeastern United States.
Dedicated to the memory of

my uncle

Edward Lewis McNeil

(1945-2002)
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

"...I think a lot of it has to do with our media. Like magazines...if you are not perfect...it
like poisons you to think there's something wrong with you. So it gives you a bad sense
of your body." (Southern Miss soccer player, 2007)

Female sports participation at the NCAA level has seen a 150% increase from the
1981-1982 academic year to the 2003-2004 academic year (Wolverton, 2006). The
burgeoning number of collegiate female athletes, as a result of opportunities from the
advent of Title IX, has lead to an increase in scholarships, which has directly affected the
level of competition. Essentially, as competition for female athletes grows in intensity,
attention to athletic dexterity is on the rise. An athlete’s body is the instrument through
which the sound of performance takes place. As the body represents, in many cases, the
crux of athletic performance, having a healthy image of the physique lends an advantage
in the immensely competitive nature of sports.

There is a general consensus among researchers that the media has an impact
upon the body image of young women (e.g., Bissell, 2004a; Bissell, 2004b; Bissell &
Zhou, 2004; Botta, 2000; Harrison, 2000; Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Harrison &
Fredrickson, 2003). However, the exact relationship between the media and body image
is unclear; studies have often found contradictory results. But the engine that has driven
most researchers to consider that media consumption leads to body image dissatisfaction
was that content analyses of entertainment media found the body shape and size of
women to be focused on thinness (e.g., Garner, & Olmstead, 1984; Gagnard, 1986;
Frith, Ping, & Cheng, 2005). In fact, research with entertainment media developed the
term, “thinness-depicting and thinness-promoting” (thin-ideal) media, which was used in classifying certain genres, such as entertainment, of television and magazines that place a specific emphasis on thin body shapes (Harrison & Cantor, 1997).

Moreover, research suggested that sports media fell under the umbrella of the thin-ideal (Bissell, 2004a; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003). The rationale of considering sports media to be thin-ideal was based on the assumption that the foci of sports media messages were often geared toward the shape and size of the physique, as with entertainment media. However, in sports media, bodies were often seen as instruments rather than objects as many sports media messages often placed an emphasis on the body’s function rather than appearance (Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003). This has led some researchers to believe that sports media messages may have a positive impact on body image (Tiggemann & Pickering, 1996); however others have found sport media messages to have a negative impact on body image (Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003). Thus, literature was inconclusive with the effects that sports media has on body image. The studies that have specifically examined sports media and body image were scant among the literature; and of the few, only one (Bissell, 2004a) examined sport media in relationship to the body image of female athletes.

Currently, there is a small trend in the media to advocate larger body types. For example, in 2005, Nike and Dove launched campaigns that portrayed slightly larger women in roles that would once be considered taboo in mainstream media. Nike, a sports advertising juggernaut, developed a new campaign slogan which portrayed slightly “fleshier” female body parts in a positive manner. Dove’s “Campaign for Real Beauty” sought to quell the common female ideal of “thin is beautiful.” But just as these popular
Advertisements were taking steps away from the traditional thin-ideal, most entertainment media, which some research suggests may include sports, continues to portray messages that focus on thin physiques (Bissell, 2004a; Bissell, 2004b; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003). Thus, the window into further investigation was open.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to use a mixed method design to examine the impact that sports magazines and thin-ideal images had on the body image, as identified by appearance, weight, and attribution, of female collegiate athletes. The secondary purpose of this study was to determine what role race played in the development of body image dissatisfaction as a result of viewing sports magazines and thin-ideal images. It was intended for the results of this study to contribute to the body of knowledge pertaining to the behaviors that influence the body image of collegiate female athletes.

Research Hypotheses

This study was guided by the following research hypotheses:

H₁: Exposure to thin-ideal and sports magazine content is negatively associated with scores on three body-esteem subscales, defined by weight, appearance, and attribution.

H₂: Exposure to thin-ideal and sports magazine content is more negatively associated with scores on three body-esteem subscales, defined by weight, appearance, and attribution in White female athletes than it will for non-White female athletes.

H₃: White female athletes have higher exposure to thin-ideal magazine content than non-White female athletes.
Research Questions

Research Question: To what extent are perceptions in body image influenced by viewing sports media in selected current Division I female athletes attending a major university in the southeastern United States?

Sub-Questions:

1. To what extent do female athletes feel comfortable with their own body image?
2. How do female athletes feel about the way athletes are portrayed in the media?
3. To what extent do females link body image with athletic performance?

Definition of Terms

1. Body-Esteem (BE): specifically defines body image; self-evaluations of one’s body or appearance; can be measured by self-report questionnaires, open-ended interviews, or reactions to body-related words; consists of three factors: BE-appearance (a person’s general feelings about appearance), BE-weight (weight satisfaction), and BE-attribution (a person’s evaluation about body and appearance as attributed by others). (Gray 1997; Harter, 1985; Mendelson, Mendelson & White, 2001).
2. Body-Esteem Scale for Adolescents and Adults (Mendelson, B., Mendelson, M., & White, D. (2001): Instrument developed to assess body-esteem defined by appearance, weight, and attribution. The instrument is a 23-item Likert scaled survey.
3. Body Image: a global construct; a latent trait; indicated by perceived cognitive appraisals of the physical self (Bornholt, 1999).
4. Body Image Dissatisfaction: subjective feelings a person displays of dissatisfaction often characterized by negative thoughts and feelings with physical appearance (Littelton & Ollendick, 2003; Skemp-Arlt, 2006).

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5. **Body Image Distortion:** peaks during adolescence; often occurs when a person perceives personal body shape inaccurately (Skemp-Arlt, 2006).

6. **Eating Disturbances:** clinical aberrations in eating behaviors; characterized by unhealthy eating behaviors, unhealthy dieting, engagement in anorexic and/or bulimic behaviors, clinical eating disorders, and obesity (Skemp-Arlt, 2006).

7. **Lean sports:** sports in which weight and appearance are central to success; sports that emphasize leanness (gymnastics, ice skating, dancing, cheerleading, diving, swimming, & cross-country) (Borgen & Corbin, 1987; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003; Robinson & Ferraro, 2004).

8. **Nonlean sports:** sports in which weight and appearance are noncentral to success (soccer, softball, basketball, tennis, volleyball, fencing, golf, rifle/pistol, track & field, and field hockey) (Borgen & Corbin, 1987; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003; Robinson & Ferraro, 2004).

9. **Non-White:** racial groups exclusive of white/Euro-Americans.

10. **Sport media:** print (newspapers and magazines) and the electronic (radio and television) where sport and/or athletes are the main focus (Nichols, Moynahan, Hall, & Taylor, 2001).

11. **Thin-ideal media:** “thinness-depicting and thinness-promoting”; where the thin body shape and size is emphasized to the exclusion of other parts of human character like personality and agency; applied to those media where thinness is depicted as the norm to the point where thinness is seen as enviable and attractive (Harrison and Fredrickson, 2003; Harrison and Cantor, 1997; Bissella, 2004).
Assumptions

The assumptions of this study were as follows:

1. All subjects completed the survey questionnaires honestly and accurately.
2. Subjects selected for semi-structured interviews gave accurate and honest responses.

Delimitations

The Study will be delimited to:

1. Female Division I athletes in a single university in the southeastern United States.
2. Body image was assessed using the Body-Esteem Scale for Adolescents and Adults.
3. Body image was evaluated on (3) variables: BE-appearance (general feelings about appearance), BE-weight (weight satisfaction), and BE-attribution (evaluations attributed to others about one’s body and appearance).
4. Semi-structured interviews followed the questions set forth by the researcher.

Justification of the Study

Athletes are especially vulnerable to body image dissatisfaction (Skemp-Arlt, 2006). Furthermore, the juxtaposition of the influx in collegiate female athletes and frequent exposure to thin-ideal and sport media messages may add fuel to the existing epidemic of body image problems in young women today (Bissell, 2004a). Sport messages in the media continue to be an integral facet in the mass media (Nichols, Moynahan, Hall, & Taylor, 2001).

To coincide with statistics regarding a large number of viewers of sports publications, there was a general consensus in the literature that identified females with a
substantial propensity to develop disordered eating based on body image dissatisfaction (e.g., Bissell, 2004a; Bissell, 2004b; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003). Specifically, collegiate females are considered to be a vulnerable population in the risk of developing eating disorders as a result of body image dissatisfaction, considering the competitive nature of sport (Bissell, 2004b). “Body image dissatisfaction can lead to unhealthy eating patterns, extreme dieting behaviors, and the development of more serious eating disorders, which can have dire health consequences and long-term ramifications” (Skemp-Arlt, 2006, p. 45). Thus, it would be advantageous for coaches, parents, and administrators, to be mindful of the factors that contribute to body image problems in female athletes. Additionally, the media has an ethical responsibility to its public; and part of this responsibility includes having an awareness of the impact on consumers of media outlets. As identified research has indicated that thin-ideal messages as well as sport media messages beget body image dissatisfaction in female athletes, there was a solid foundation in which to continue a further investigation into the impact that sport media had on the body image of female athletes.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact that sports media exposure has on the body image of female collegiate athletes as identified by appearance, weight, and attribution. The secondary purpose of this study was to determine what role race plays in the development of body image dissatisfaction as a result of viewing thin-ideal and sports media. The following is a presentation of relevant literature pertaining to this study and is divided into five categories: (1) Theoretical Foundation, (2) Thin-Ideal Media and Body Image, (3) Athletic Participation and Body Image, (4) Women Athletes in the Media and Body Image, and (5) Sport Media Viewing Behaviors.

Theoretical Foundation

The marriage between the media and its public is studied through the filters of theories that have been widely used in mass communication research. Many studies that have explored the juxtaposition of media viewing and body image have focused on two theories in particular: (1) self-objectification and (2) social comparison theory.

The premise behind the female body in Western culture being seen as an object in society and perpetually being evaluated by others is based on the self-objectification theory (Muehlenkamp & Saris-Baglama, 2002). To add fuel to the premise, young females habitually engage in viewing media images that depict thin women as “powerful, successful, and attractive” (Bissell, 2004a, p. 458). Thus, females internalize this ubiquitous view seen in the media as thin being synonymous with success (p. 458).
American society has the definite propensity to value women based on physical appearance (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The result can produce negative psychological consequences, which include the tendency to self-objectify, which is the crux of the self-objectification theory. Simply put, “the self-objectification theory posits that girls and women are typically acculturated to internalize what they perceive as a primary view of their physical selves” (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 173). For example, people self-objectify when the perceived consideration of the outsider is internalized. The problem with this mentally is that, “self-objectification is hypothesized to produce body shame” (p. 173). Along with body shame, women’s constant self-evaluation hinders performance in other areas, including activities where appearance is not central. Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, and Twenge (1998) tested the application of the self-objectification theory. In this study, men and women were divided into four groups; groups one and two had men and women wear bathing suits, while groups three and four had men and women wear baggy sweaters. All groups were given a math performance test. It was found that women in the bathing suit group reported lower self-esteem, higher body dissatisfaction along with feelings of shame, and performed worse on the math performance test, as opposed to the baggy sweater group. Men, on the other hand, did not exhibit negative consequences from wearing bathing suits or baggy sweaters.

The application of the self-objectification theory is useful in gaining a better understanding of body image issues as related to external factors, such as the media (Bissell, 2004a). Noll and Fredrickson (1998) defined self-objectification as developing a hypothetical observer’s view of the self. In other words, observable features define the
physical self (1998). Harrison and Fredrickson (2003) view self-objectification in terms of “the tendency to perceive and describe one’s body according to externally perceivable traits (how it appears) instead of internal traits (what can it do)” (p. 217). An important element of the self-objectification theory lies in the notion that “certain situations or stimuli can temporarily intensify self-objectification by making personal appearance particularly salient” (Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003, p. 218).

Another way of viewing self-objectification is to see it in terms of its “state-like” construct (Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003, p. 218). This construct leads into the idea that viewing sport media that depicts thin-ideal messages can have an immediate effect on a person’s tendency to self-objectify. Even if trait or chronic self-objectification is relatively low, state self-objectification may be heightened by external circumstances that emphasize appearance which may lead the individual to define herself, at least temporarily, by her external appearance (Fredrickson, et al., 1998).

From the perspective of the self-objectification theory, Harrison and Fredrickson (2003) conducted a study to assess the link between media exposure and body image perceptions in female adolescents as well as assessing the immediate effects of female adolescents’ exposure to women’s lean, women’s nonlean, and men’s sports videos on state-self objectification. The study was two-fold, using both survey and experimentation. In sum, adolescent females (N=426) aged 10-19 were tested. Part one of the study tested females (n=374) in grades sixth through twelve. The measures tested were trait self-objectification, mental health risks, sport magazine exposure, and participation in sports. Questionnaires developed by Noll and Fredrickson (1998) were used in combination with the Children’s Eating Attitudes Test (ChEAT) to measure trait
self-objectification and mental health risks. Sports magazine exposure was measured with self-reports developed by Harrison and Cantor (1997) and Harrison (2000). Participation in sport was measured by having participants indicate via a Likert-type scale the frequency they engage in team and individual sports. Participants also indicated their height and weight which was used to calculate BMI by the researchers. The study found that trait self-objectification increased with age. Also, when observing the relationship between self-objectification and mental health risks, it was found that trait self-objectification was positively correlated with depression, body shame, and disordered eating. In determining if sports participation was correlated with body shame as well as mental health risks, it was found that lean sports participation was positively correlated with trait self-objectification as well as eating disorder symptomatology, while participation in nonlean sports was negatively correlated with trait self-objectification and eating disorder symptomatology. A correlation between participation in nonlean sports and sports magazine reading was found, and for the older group (10th - 12th graders), a negative correlation was found between sports magazine reading and body shame and eating disorder symptomatology, suggesting that “for older females, reading sports magazines is linked to greater satisfaction with the body and less disturbed eating” (Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003, p. 223). However, it should be noted that exposure to sports magazines in this study was measured as a genre, and excluded exposure to sport-specific magazines.

The second part of the study, which observed the immediate effects of sports media exposure via videos of women’s lean, women’s nonlean, and men’s sports, tested participants (N=153), ranging in age from 10 to 17. Two racial groups (White and
African-American) were tested against three video conditions (women's lean and nonlean and men's sports). Participants (groups of 6-10) were seated in separate corners of a room while they viewed eight 1-minute video clips of an actual televised athletic competition that highlighted a specific athlete (Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003).

Immediately following the procedure, the participants completed a 20-item questionnaire to measure state self-objectification. The questionnaire tested “transient self-perceptions conceptually relevant to state self-objectification” (p. 224). It was found that the state self-objectification of the White participants was increased as a result of exposure to lean female athletes. The converse was found with the African-Americans in that state self-objectification was increased from viewing nonlean female athletes. Neither racial group exhibited an increase in self-objectification based on exposure to men's sports.

While the catalyst for internalizing in the self-objectification theory is based on the perceived evaluations of others, the social comparison theory suggests that people internalize based on personal comparisons of others. Hogg (2000) defined social comparison as “a pervasive and fundamental feature of group life” (p. 401). Others have described social comparison as an “almost inevitable element of social interaction” (Brickman & Bulman, 1977, p. 150).

Social comparison is an important aspect to consider when exploring the relationship between the media and body image, and has often been described as “a core aspect of human experience” (Suls & Wheeler, 2000, p. 15). To put into context, when a person views media images, an internalization is made via a comparison between the image and themselves (Botta, 2000; Goethals, 1986; Kruglanski & Mayseless, 1990; Wood, 1989; Wood & Taylor, 1991). Women are especially prone to make social
comparisons. For example, women often make comparisons between themselves and external images, and they often become motivated to emulate the images they see most regularly (Bissell, 2004a).

Thinness portrayed as beautiful and successful in Western culture is commonplace. Research indicates that the ubiquitous image of thin and beautiful is seen in early childhood via books, television shows, and movies. For example, Herbozo, Gokee-Larose, and Thompson (2004) studied popular children’s entertainment. It was found that “the primary determinant of female beauty is physical attractiveness, specifically thinness” (p. 30). Content analyses revealed that thin and attractive characters were generally portrayed as nice, successful, and happy while overweight or obese characters were generally seen as mean, unhappy, and disliked by others. Moreover, this study suggested that children’s repetitive viewing of media that depicts unrealistic body shapes has the potential to influence the internalization of these images while encouraging the emulation of the media’s standard of the ideal body shape. Indeed, this “thinness as attractive” message begins in childhood and precipitates the tendency to make social comparisons. The problem remains, however, that most often women see a significant gap in themselves and what society portrays, thus significant body image problems ensue (Bissell, 2004a).

Frith, Ping, and Cheng (2005) conducted a study that analyzed women’s magazine advertising from a cross-cultural standpoint. The premise behind the study is that certain themes are often found in the literature suggesting: (1) the stereotyping of women as passive and less powerful players in society, (2) the portrayal of women as
sexual objects in advertisements, and (3) the cumulative effect of magazine advertising on women's self-esteem” (p. 57). The study conducted content analyses of advertisements of the most popular fashion and beauty women's magazines in United States, Singapore, and Taiwan. Three of the most popular and influential magazines from different genres (lifestyle, general interest, and beauty) were selected within a 14-month period. Analyses were limited to full pages that contained at least one woman with both the face and body visible. A total of 1,236 advertisements were content analyzed. The study found that there is a significant difference in the way women are portrayed in the United States; the woman's “body” was seen as a dominant theme in United States advertisements while the woman's “face” was seen as a dominant theme in the advertisements seen in both Singapore and Taiwan.

Social comparison theory has also been used in several studies regarding race in relation to body image and media exposure. Botta (2000) tested the relationship between African-Americans' body image and the media through the framework of the social comparison theory and found that there is a difference in the way African-American and White females internalize thin body shapes. In the study, high-school African-American and White females were surveyed (N=214). Ethnicity, BMI, and socioeconomic status were used as control variables while exposure to television viewing, idealized television images, and comparisons with television images were used as predictor variables. Exposure was measured among two areas: total television viewing (which was measured by the participants reporting the hours and minutes spent, on average, engaging in the medium) and exposure to thin television dramas. Thin television dramas were defined as those that portrayed the main character(s) as being thin. This, too, was measured by the
participants reporting the hours and minutes spent viewing. Idealized television images were measured using a Likert-type scale where participants were asked to indicate a "realistic ideal media image" by viewing a set of items. Comparisons with television images were measured by asking participants, using a Likert-type scale, how often they engaged in making comparisons to media images while watching television. Body image disturbance was the dependent variable and was measured using the Eating Disorder Inventory, developed by Garner and Olmsted (1984). The study found that African-American females were, in fact, affected by images in the media in a different manner than White females. Specifically, this study found that African-American adolescent girls as a whole were more satisfied with their bodies while having a "larger personal ideal size" (p.154) than their White counterparts. Also, it was found that African-American adolescent girls engaged in viewing television longer, on average, than White adolescent girls. Of the White adolescent girls that reported frequently engaging in television, an increase in eating-disordered behavior was found. Finally, the study found that White adolescent girls, when making comparisons of figures in the media to themselves, tend to choose thinner figure sizes than African-American adolescent girls.

African-American women tend to exhibit higher body image satisfaction opposed to White women. This can be attributed to the fact that most mainstream media messages are robust with photographs and advertisements of White women. "Television stars and magazine cover girls set the standard, and these typically have not included African-American women" (Schooler, Ward, Merriwether, & Caruthers, 2004, p. 39). The statistics regarding African-Americans and media exposure reveal that they only make up 5.6% of primetime television characters (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000) and only appear in
2-3% of magazine advertisements. According to the social comparison theory, people
tend to make comparisons to others that are most like themselves. This might help
explain why media typically have a benign effect on African Americans: they do not see
themselves as comparable to the White, thin deal that is so pervasive in mainstream
media.

Thin-Ideal Media and Body Image

Considered an “umbrella label” (Thompson, Penner, and Altabe, 1990) for its
broad construct, “body image refers to the images and feelings an individual holds about
his or her body” (Davies & Furnham, 1986, p. 279). Cash (1990) defines body image in
terms of internal (how a person perceives their physical self) and external (how a person
perceives others’ opinions of their physical self) properties. Whatever the variation in
definition, body image is indeed a major part of the engine that fuels a person’s self
worth in American society. Research shows that people, when aware of the somatic-self,
become uncomfortable (Fisher, 1990). Some thirty-five years ago, body image was
explored in terms of self-awareness. Duval and Wicklund (1972) became interested in the
effects of self-awareness on behavior and were the pioneers of the theory of objective
self-awareness (OSA). The essence of this theory is that when people have attention
focused on themselves, they often become self-critical. This was revealed in the study as
subjects performed tasks in front of a mirror. A subsequent study (Wicklund, 1975) found
that when people feel they are the subject of disapproval, they often avoid looking in the
mirror if one is present. Problems with body image have been found to be a derivative of
multiple sources, and have been identified by Thompson and Smolak (2001, p. 4) as: (1)
comparing one’s self to media ideals or peers, (2) internalizing unrealistic media images
of attractiveness, (3) being teased about one's appearance, (4) modeling peers' or parents' weight practices or attitudes, (5) sexual abuse or harassment, and (6) early pubertal maturation.

While there are many facets that determine the composition of body image, the media are considered to be in the mix of important elements responsible for the perpetual desire for females to be extraordinarily thin (Bissell, 2004b). For example, Bissell (2004b) studied the impact that sports media, during the 2000 Olympic Games, had on the body image of women between the ages of 18 and 75. A quota sample (N=324) was used in the Northeast, the South, and the Southwest regions of the United States. The independent variables in the study were sports media exposure and sports participation. Of the fourteen days the 2000 Olympic Games aired on television, the respondents were asked to estimate the total number of days, hours, and minutes they spent watching the event as well as specific sports. Respondents were also asked to indicate the amount of time in days, hours, and minutes (estimated) that was spent on viewing televised sports not related to the Olympic Games. Also, respondents were asked, using a Likert-type scale (5=highly interested; 1=highly uninterested), to indicate their interest in watching specific women's sports on television. Current and past participation in sport was documented. Women's attitudes about their body image was assessed using a chart of nine different body shapes, where they were instructed to circle the shape they felt most closely resembled themselves. The same chart was used to ask the respondents to circle the body shape they felt came closest to matching their perception of ideal body shape (for themselves). Body dissatisfaction was measured using a 6-item, Likert-type scale (6=always; 1=never) with statements such as "I am satisfied with the way my body
looks” (p. 113). Results found no significant relationship to body dissatisfaction and exposure to general sports media; yet when the independent variable, exposure to sports, was dichotomized into lean verses nonlean sports, there was a significant relationship found between lean sports media exposure and body dissatisfaction. Furthermore, women who were reported as having a general dissatisfaction with their body shape indicated more interest in viewing lean sports, such as gymnastics and ice skating.

Messages portrayed in the media that continually promote the thin physique to the extent to where they are seen as enviable and desirable are considered to be “thin-ideal” (Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003). Moreover, thin-ideal media portrays thinness to the exclusion of other dimensions of human character (such as personality) to where the audience absorbs the message that thinness is the norm and should be emulated. This could attribute to the notion that women viewing lean sports tend to report a higher degree of body dissatisfaction.

Research indicates that exposure to thin-ideal messages in both television and print are linked to body image problems in adolescent and adult females, which include body dissatisfaction, distortions in body image, as well as drive for thinness (Levine & Smolak, 1998; Thompson & Heinberg, 1999). Tiggemann (2005) concluded that frequent exposure to thinness depicting and promoting media is conducive to greater body dissatisfaction, lower body self-esteem, and self-objectification in adolescent females. Nonetheless, the media plays a cogent role in the development of body image disturbances, particularly with the female college population (Bissell, 2004b). Moreover, numerous studies have shown that in addition to viewing entertainment television, body image distortion in females is the result of regular viewing of fashion magazines (Bissell
& Zhou, 2004; Harrison, 2000; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003; Thompson & Heinberg, 1999). While recent content analyses revealed that entertainment television and fashion magazines are beginning to see more of a diversity in body image, the primary messages are that of the thin-ideal (Bissell, 2004a).

Research studies that have found exposure to thin-ideal media to be conducive to body dissatisfaction have been inconsistent. With respect to causal inferences, many studies have weaknesses regarding, “does thin-ideal exposure cause body-dissatisfaction or are women with high body-dissatisfaction seeking ultra-thin images” (Brown & Dittmar, 2005, p. 1090). To address the inconsistencies in the literature, Brown and Dittmar (2005) took a different angle for investigation. They decided to explore the relationship in terms of how the effect occurs. Specifically, the study explored the level of attention placed when women process thin images, as well as the role of appearance schema activation, which refers to a “cognitive structure that organizes and determines the processing of appearance-related information that is relevant to the self” (p. 1092), as an underlying catalyst for the “[media] exposure-anxiety link” (p. 1088). The study consisted of three exposure conditions: ultra-thin models processed at high attention, ultra-thin models processed at low attention, and neutral control images. Participants in the study were college females (N=75). Images for the experiment were selected from leading fashion magazines via a pilot study of ten college women that ranked images using a 10-point Likert-type scale, where 1=very unattractive and 10=very attractive. After the 75 participants were exposed to media images selected from the pilot study, three measures were tested: appearance-schema activation, weight-related anxiety, and thin-ideal internalization. In sum, there were three main findings. First, an increase in
body-focused anxiety was found for women with a high propensity to make internalizations via observing thin-ideal media as well as exposure to thin models. This finding was not contingent upon whether or not they participated in a low or high attention testing group. Second, there was significance with regard to level of attention in the testing groups (independent of thin-ideal internalization): an increase in body-focused anxiety was found in women exposed to the high attention testing group opposed to those under low conditions. Third, exposure to thin models served as a catalyst for activating women's appearance schemata, thus increasing weight-related anxiety; however, this finding was more robust for women with a greater tendency to internalize the thin-ideal as a personal standard.

Athletic Participation and Body Image

The 2004 National Sporting Goods Association figures reflect the following in regard to female athletic participation: Swimming (30 million); Running/Jogging (12 million); Basketball (9 million); Softball (7 million); Volleyball (6 million); Golf (6 million); Soccer (6 million); Tennis (5 million); and Cheerleading (4 million). As female athletes become more prevalent at all levels in sport, “the athletic body type has become the latest standard for female beauty” (George, 2005, p. 317). Some have even labeled female athletes as cultural icons (Heywood & Dworking, 2003). Furthermore, female participation at the NCAA level has seen a dramatic increase (Wolverton, 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Overall Participants</th>
<th>Participants per School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981-1982</td>
<td>64,390</td>
<td>98.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>160,997</td>
<td>156.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| % Change | +150.0% | +58.7% |

Figure 1. NCAA Female Participation

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People who participate in sports generally exhibit greater body satisfaction than nonathletes (Wilkins, 1991). However, it is seen that when athletes participate in sport at a competitive level, the percentage of athletes exhibiting body dissatisfaction increases (Bissell, 2004a). To support this, two studies have found high levels of body dissatisfaction in elite female runners and college athletes (Hully & Hill, 1999; Johnson, Powers & Dick, 1999). Competitive women athletes are especially prone to body image dissatisfaction, especially those that participate in lean sports (Beals & Manore, 2002). Taub and Blinde (1992) found a large number of lean female athletes who admitted to fasting on a regular basis.

Lean sports are defined as those in which weight and appearance are central to success, emphasize leanness, and include dancing, gymnastics, cheerleading, ice skating, swimming, and diving (Borgen & Corbin, 1987; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003; Robinson & Ferraro, 2004). Lean sports are more likely to have athletes that display problems with body dissatisfaction than those who participate in nonlean sports (Smolak, 2004). Participants in nonlean sports, which are defined as those in which weight and appearance are noncentral to success, include soccer, softball, basketball, tennis, volleyball, fencing, golf, rifle/pistol, track & field, and field hockey (Borgen & Corbin, 1987; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003; Robinson & Ferraro, 2004).

Robinson and Ferraro (2004), contradicted former studies, and found that women who participate in athletics have a more positive overall body image. College women (N=108) were examined to assess the differences in body image among athletes verses non-athletes. The study drew female athletes (N=53) from four different sports: golf (n=6); swimming (n=15); track (n=22); volleyball (n=10). Fifty-five non-athletes were
studied. The athletes were separated among speed sports (sports where time is central focus) and technique sports (sports where skill, not time, is central focus). The researchers measured depression, which was assessed using the Beck Depression Inventory II, eating disorders (which has body dissatisfaction as a subscale) using the Eating Disorder Inventory (EDI), and verbal intelligence, using the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Test Scale-Revised. It was found that among the non-athletes, body dissatisfaction was higher. Also, non-athletes scored higher on drive for thinness as well as perceived a deviation between their current body type (which they viewed as larger than non-athletes) and ideal body type.

While it has been suggested that some athletes (such as runners) have high levels of body dissatisfaction, Smolak, Murnen, and Ruble (2000) conducted a meta-analysis that examined female athletes and eating disorders and found that running may be conducive to a positive psychological profile. Furthermore, Hausenblas and Symons Downs (2001) examined body image in athletes versus non-athletes. The findings suggested that athletes displayed a more positive body image than the non-athletes. Other studies that have focused on endurance sports, such as running, have found that this participation tends to yield athletes with healthier psychological profiles (Klock & DeSouza, 1995; Ryujiu, Breauz & Marks, 1999). In examining males, Huddy and Cash (1997) looked at marathon runners. Participants (n=639) were tested on physical appearance, fitness, and health using the Multidimensional Body Image Inventory. The study found that overall, male runners have a more positive attitude toward fitness and health than their non-athletic counterparts.
At the core of sport lies physical movement of some form. Both aerobic and anaerobic exercise has shown to "improve body image, self-concept, and self-esteem" (Merckx, 2003, p.21). Studies that have explored the younger generation of women, including college-aged women, have found that regular participation in aerobic and anaerobic exercise have a significant and positive effect on body image (Trujillo, 1983; Brown & Harrison, 1986). However, the converse has been found in older women.

Merckx (2003) tested the effects of exercise on the body image of female baby boomers. The researcher used an experimental pre/post test, control group design. At the outset of the study, participants completed the Multidimensional Body Self Relations Questionnaire to assess body image perceptions, defined by appearance evaluation, appearance orientation, fitness orientation, and health evaluation. It was found that a large percentage of the participants scored reasonably low, and some "even fell below the normative data proposed by Cash (the creator of the instrument)" (p. 60). In fact, the scores on all four measures were significantly low, signifying a "normative discontent" among the participants (p. 60). Based on these scores, participants were assigned to one of the following groups: walking-aerobic group, resistance training group, and the non-exercise control group. The population consisted of females from 38 to 56 years old (n=35), in "reasonable good health" (p. 36). A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) for repeated measures was used to measure body image, defined by four variables (appearance evaluation, appearance orientation, fitness orientation, and health evaluation) against the 12-week resistance-training and walking-aerobic exercise groups. The researcher found that while there were psychological and physiological benefits from
engaging in exercise, no improvement in body image occurred over the 12-week time period.

Women Athletes in the Media and Body Image

"The celebration of the sporty physique in the media is promising, but should not go unquestioned" (George, 2005, p. 318). The past 25 years have seen significant improvements for women in sports regarding gender stereotyping, yet advertising companies tend not to run in tandem with those who view women as serious athletes. The Women’s Sports Foundation (2005) looked at trends of women athletes in the media, and found that: (1) women athletes have a greater propensity than men to be pictured failing at their sport (i.e. dropping the ball), (2) women athletes often appear without heads in advertisements, suggesting that only their bodies or parts of their bodies (such as breasts or buttocks) matter, (3) women athletes often appear as dainty, submissive, or shy, (4) women athletes often appear as pouting seductively, (5) words in advertisements often undermine the athletic image of women athletes (i.e. “strong is sexy” or “the beauty of power”), (6) often, younger girls (teens) are portrayed as women athletes, and (7) white female athletes are more pervasive in the media.

As seen in publications such as Sports Illustrated, athletes displaying prowess and a lean physique are often glorified. The leanest and most physically attractive athletes are more frequently seen in the media, and are more glorified for their achievements than their nonlean counterparts. (Bissell, 2004a). For example, swimmer Dara Torres-Gowen and volleyball player Gabrielle Reese are viewed in society as more than just athletes; they are stars in the sense that they are rewarded for more than just athletic ability, but physical attractiveness, which includes having a lean physique (2004a).
In an attempt to tackle the pervasiveness of gender stereotyping in the media, companies are following a set of guidelines when reviewing images of active women in electronic and print advertising. Examples of this include the 2005 launch of two advertising campaigns that celebrate larger women: Nike’s “Big Butts and Thunder Thighs” and Dove’s “Campaign for Real Beauty.” Also, producers of media are mindful of the potential for public relations as well as economic liabilities with female consumers (Women’s Sports Foundation, 2005). The general guidelines are as follows:

1. Does the woman look like an athlete?
2. Is she dressed like an athlete?
3. Does she have all of her appropriate clothes on?
4. Are any significant body parts missing?
5. Is her pose or are her movements realistic?
6. Do the words and pictures go together?
7. Does the athlete look her age?
8. Is the image something any girl could look at and feel proud of as a current or future athlete?
9. Would you be comfortable if the girl or woman in the advertisement was your daughter, mom or a female friend?
10. Is there diversity with regard to race/ethnicity?
11. Does the depiction of the sportswoman participating or the theme of the advertisement imply an encouragement or acceptance of unsportsmanlike conduct, lack of respect for opponents or violence towards other players?
Earlier content analyses that explored sports photographs found that female bodies are typically objectified (Duncan & Sayaovong, 1990). As lean figures in sport media are consistently portrayed, researchers have considered sports media to fall under the umbrella of thin-ideal media (Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003). Hence, like typical thin-ideal media, there is an empirical link with sports media exposure and viewers’ body perceptions.

Sport Media Viewing Behaviors

Due to changes in education as well as the ever-changing ethnic demographic of America, entertainment interests have changed, particularly with sport programming (Paul, 2003). Studies have been conducted to address the parallel between demographics and media viewing behaviors; however research results are still inconclusive (eg. Li, 1999).

Li (1999) tested demographics and media viewing behaviors through the framework of two broad theoretical perspectives. The first theory placed emphasis on the relationship between innate individual traits as predictors for media selection. The second theory focused on the idea that consumers of media are influenced by strategic manipulations such as convenience, availability, and with television, scheduling characteristics. In the study, a survey was administered to undergraduate students (n=187; female=116/male=71) at a large university in the southeastern region of the United States. The survey consisted of eight orientation statements regarding the motivations for viewing media. The statements included: (a) to pass time, (b) to relax, (c) to forget about problems, (d) education purposes, (e) current events, (f) to learn about self, (g) to be entertained, and (h) to have something exciting. Sixteen genres were
selected to measure media viewing preferences: comedy, drama, action-adventure, non-news magazine, news/magazine, sports, soap opera, comedy-variety, game show, talk show, documentary, children/youth, mystery, movie, music, and science fiction. Examples of each type of program were provided. Self-reports were used to measure the probability of viewing each program type. Pearson’s correlations were used to test the relationship between viewing motives and the probability of selecting a certain program type. For all program types (with the exception of film) significant correlations were found and ranged from r=.249 to r=.559. The program types that revealed high correlations were science fiction (r=.518), sports (r=.555), and soap opera (r=.559). T-tests were conducted to determine if males and females obtained different degrees of gratification from viewing certain program types. Results found that males were more apt to obtain gratification from viewing sports (t=6.126), whereas females were more apt to obtain gratification from viewing soap operas (t=-5.376). It should be noted that sports in this study was tested as a genre, and did not examine specific sports.

Where much of the sports media in the past was consumed by males, the trend is changing. For example, Bissell (2004a) tested college females (n=78). Descriptive statistics revealed that the participants reported reading sports magazines before engaging in other publications, such as fashion and entertainment. The same study found that the participants reported watching 1.5 hours of televised sports per day. Of the time spent watching televised sports, more time was spent watching men’s sports over women’s sports. This can be attributed to the fact that men’s sports are more prevalently shown on television than female sports.
Martin, Gibson, Duplantis, and Drane (2005) conducted a study that examined the differences in sport media viewing behaviors of male and females. Fifty-five students in the undergraduate sport administration program at a major southeastern university participated in the study. The sample was made up of 15 females, representing 27.3%, and 37 males, representing 67.3%; 83.6% were between the ages of 21-25; 30.9% were black, 65.5% were white, and 3.6% were classified as other. The instrument, constructed by the researchers, was a sixteen question survey. The survey was divided into two categories: (a) reading behaviors of sport media, which addressed the amount of time spent on, Internet resources, journal articles, magazine articles, newspaper articles, and books, and (b) viewing behaviors of sport media, which addressed the amount of time spent on: sport movies, sport networks, local sport coverage, and national sport coverage. The answers to these content questions were based on a five-point Likert type scale (1=strongly agree) and a (5=strongly disagree). The frequency of viewing and reading behaviors were based on a five-point Likert type scale, where 1=never and 5=always. Results under reading behaviors revealed that the majority of the sample uses Internet resources for sports information (3 to 7 times per week); 40% indicated rarely using sports journal articles (1 to 2 times per week); 84% reported reading sports magazine articles often (3 to 7 times per week); 40% reported reading sports newspaper articles often (5 to 6 times per week); and 62% reported rarely using books related to sports (less than 2 times per week). Results under viewing behaviors revealed that 61% of the sample reported watching sports movies sometimes and often (3 to 6 times per week); 82% reported watching sports networks often and always (5 to 7 times per week); 64% reported watching sports networks often and always (5 to 7 times per week); and
85% reported watching national sports coverage often and always (5 to 7 times per week).

In regard to gender and media, females tend to favor sports in which other females participate (American Demographics, 2004). It has been found that females are twice as likely as boys to watch women's basketball. Statistics regarding females and sports viewing revealed that 88% of girls like watching the Olympics. Gymnastics and ice skating comprise of 78% of girls' interest. Interestingly, football and basketball made the list of interest among girls with 68% and 67% respectively. Soccer is the one sport that appeared to be relatively equal among boys and girls with regard to viewing behaviors.

In regard to race and media, the different television habits among African-Americans and Whites continue to be vastly different (Weissman, 1999). However, although differences in viewing patterns continue among African-Americans and Whites, the gap is closing. Sports viewing appears to be a vehicle for closing this gap. Programs such as Monday Night Football are shown to have similarities in viewing patterns among racial groups. In regard to television, African-Americans watch 40% more than Whites, although this gap too is narrowing.

Summary

The college population is replete with body image problems. Furthermore, literature indicates that female athletes have a substantial propensity to develop body image dissatisfaction. Thus, collegiate female athletes are considered to be an especially vulnerable population in the development of body image disorders.
While there are many factors that contribute to the influx of body image disturbances in collegiate female athletes, the media could be considered to be among the most influential. Most young people look to the media as the paradigm of what is ideal. Media messages are ingrained into every aspect of society, influencing the way young people, particularly females, live their lives.

Several studies have explored the relationship between coaches, peers and parents in the development of body image disturbances in collegiate female athletes. Fewer studies have examined the relationship between media, particularly sports media, and body image problems in collegiate female athletes. Thus, conducting an investigation to add to the pool of factors that contribute to body image problems in a vulnerable population is essential. As body image dissatisfaction has proven to be a cogent factor in the development of eating disturbances, which in turn, directly affects health and performance, it is of importance for athletes, coaches, physical educators, and parents to have a thorough understanding of the factors that contribute to this phenomenon.

Throughout the review of current literature, weaknesses exist with regard to specifically looking at the effect of sports media on the body image of females:

*Flaws with instrumentation.* Many studies that have explored the effect of media on body image have used the Eating Disorder Symtomatology scale. While body dissatisfaction is a subscale in this instrument, other subscales include, for example, anorexia and bulimia, which are not necessarily related to body image. There are studies that have found correlations between eating disorders and body image dissatisfaction, but body image is its own entity, per se – and not necessarily related to eating disorders. Thus, using an instrument that examines body image *exclusively* is important. For
example, the Body-Esteem Scale which examines body image in terms of weight, attribution, and appearance is a more accurate measure for determining body esteem than the use of eating disorder scales.

*Examining sports exclusively as a genre.* Studies that have made correlations to specific media (news, entertainment, for example) have viewed “sports” as its own genre. Sports, as indicated in the literature, is divided into lean and nonlean sports. Thus, it is imperative when examining “sports” to make the differentiation between the two (lean/nonlean). Bissell’s (2004b) study was the first to examine this when the independent variable of the study was dichotomized into lean versus nonlean sports – in which a significant relationship was found between lean sports media exposure and body dissatisfaction.

*The high prevalence of quantitative methodologies.* Typical studies looking at the relationship between body image and media exposure have used quantitative methodologies via surveys where correlations were examined. Harrison and Fredrickson’s (2003) study was one of the few to examine this phenomenon quantitatively via an experimental design (when looking at the immediate effects of television exposure). However, there is a gap in the literature with qualitative studies. Body image, although it can be measured with instruments such as the Body-Esteem Scale, is largely subjective in nature. Thus, looking at body image from a qualitative approach will provide much insight into this topic. Merging qualitative data with quantitative data (as with this study) will paint a new picture of this phenomenon – and has the potential to be a useful addition to the existing pool of literature.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

The following study used a mixed methods research design for collecting data. Both quantitative and qualitative components used in this study were given the same priority and weight in both the data collection phase as well as the analysis phase. The following chapter is presented and organized into the following sections: (a) site selection, (b) participants, (c) quantitative component of study, and (d) qualitative component of study.

Site Selection

For the purpose of this study, it was imperative that the chosen site be replete with a diverse group of female athletes. Thus, it seemed natural to look to area universities as potential sites as they provide opportunities for female sport participation. It was also important that permission be granted from gatekeepers at the chosen site; in this case gatekeepers represented athletic administrators and coaches. Gaining access to participants when a sensitive topic, such as body image, is being researched can be challenging. Thus, it was advantageous to select a site where the gatekeepers have an understanding of the importance and process of research, which in turn, allowed for access to the athletes. Providing the athletic administrators and coaches a rationale of the study as well as copies of all instruments and procedures involved was imperative.

The chosen site was a comprehensive research extensive institution of higher learning in the southeastern region of the United States. After considering several universities, the primary rationale for selecting the university was the fact that numerous
experiences were gained through serving as a graduate assistant, which led to the opportunity to teach courses with a high number of female athletes. Teaching provided the opportunity to know and respect the diverse perspectives of the female athletes at the university. Working with this specific population led to the determination that they were well-suited for this study. A secondary reason for choosing this university was the fact that it houses Division I female athletes, which is an important consideration, as athletes in this division often face pressures and media coverage, which is not commonplace in smaller institutions.

For data control purposes, only current female athletes who participate in nonlean sports were chosen. Nonlean sports are those in which weight and appearance are noncentral to success, and include soccer, softball, basketball, tennis, volleyball, fencing, golf, rifle/pistol, track & field, and field hockey (Borgen & Corbin, 1987; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003; Robinson & Ferraro, 2004). The selected university provides an abundance of nonlean sports for females: soccer, softball, basketball, tennis, volleyball, golf, and track & field. Finally, a tertiary reason for choosing this university was the fact that experience was gained through working in the media relations division of the athletic department (at the chosen university) in a practicum capacity.

According to Institutional Research, the university consists primarily of Caucasian and African-American undergraduate students, 7,428 and 3,305 respectively. 80.6% of the undergraduate students are between the ages of 18-25, and of the 11,247 undergraduate students, 6,758 are female.
Regarding female athletes, the following chart (Figure 2) depicts the current demographics at The University of Southern Mississippi.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Number of Athletes</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Softball</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track &amp; Field</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>114</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2 - Demographic Information/Female Athletes/Southern Miss*

Participants

According to Bissell (2004), collegiate females are considered to be a vulnerable population in the risk of developing eating disorders, and college athletes may be at an even greater risk, considering the competitive nature of sport. In order to address the hypotheses and research questions of this study, participants were included in the study if they were: (a) female, (b) aged 18-25 years, (c) a current athlete at the location of study, and (d) agree to participate in the study by signing an informed consent. The age range of the participants in this study was selected on the rationale that the survey instrument used (see Appendix A) was validated for participants aged 12 to 25; minor participants

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were not included in this study. Finally, it was important, for data control purposes, that only current female athletes were selected. Former athletes were excluded from the study based on the rationale that they do not facing current pressures produced by the media as well as the fact that they have been exposed to life experiences beyond being a collegiate athlete and thus, do not share the same general perspective.

The specific sampling strategy used in this study was considered homogeneous sampling. "In homogeneous sampling the researcher purposefully samples individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics" (Creswell, 2005, p. 206). Although it was important to be mindful about selecting a racially diverse group of athletes (Caucasian and African-American), the participants were still a part of a specific group (current female Division I athlete), thus are homogeneous in nature.

Permission to interview participants was solicited via a written letter (see Appendix B Letter to Coaches). Furthermore, it was necessary to convey to the participants that participation in this study was voluntary as well as confidential. Thus at the outset of administering surveys as well as conducting the individual interviews, participants were verbally told of the voluntary and anonymous nature of the study (see Appendices C & D for Informed Consent and Oral Statement).
QUANTITATIVE COMPONENT OF STUDY

Research Design

The overall design of this aspect of the study was adopted from two former studies that observed the media in relation to body image (Bissell, 2004; Harrison & Cantor, 1997). A non-experimental survey design was used. The independent variables included the participants’ ethnicity, interest in women’s sports magazine content, interest in men’s sports magazine content, exposure to thin-ideal magazines, exposure to sports magazines, and sports participation. The dependent variable for this study was the Body-Esteem Scale for Adolescents and Adults. The instrument included twenty-three statements representative of one of three subscales: (1) appearance, (2) weight, and (3) attribution.

Instrumentation

Prior to testing, approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (see Appendix E). Participants were recruited via contact with the university athletic department and coaches. It was determined by the researcher that seventy-five athletes were required to obtain a 75% power to detect a moderate to large effect size.

Independent Variables

The survey instrument utilized in this study was adopted from a former study that observed the relationship between the media and body image (Bissell, 2004). Participants were asked to report the current sport they were involved with at the university (volleyball = 1, etc.) Self-reports measured time spent competing and/or practicing in sports in days and hours, estimated. Participants indicated their interest in reading women’s and men’s sports magazines using a Likert-type scale, where 1 = not
interested at all, 2 = somewhat interested, 3 = neutral, 4 = interested, and 5 = very interested. Exposure to specific genres of magazines (general sport, sport-specific, entertainment, fashion, fitness-health, and news) were assessed by indicating the amount of reading time spent with each; this was measured using a Likert-type scale, where 1 = never, 2 = seldom, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, and 5 = always.

Dependent Variable

The *Body-Esteem Scale for Adolescents and Adults* developed by Mendelson, et al. (2001) was used to measure body-esteem. Permission was granted by the principle investigator (see Appendix F) to the researcher for use in this study. The instrument chosen was “psychometrically sound and taps three aspects of body esteem in adolescents and adults: general feelings about appearance, weight satisfaction, and others’ evaluations about one’s body and appearance” (Mendelson, et al., 2001, p. 5). The instrument was a 23-item questionnaire with ratings for three subscales. A Likert-type scale (0-4) ranks items based on responses ranging from “never” to “always.” Higher values indicated a more favorable account of a person’s body esteem. According to Mendelson, et al., (2001) body esteem (BE) is representative of a person’s self-evaluation of one’s body or appearance. Under the umbrella of body-esteem were three subscales:

- **BE-Appearance**—measures general feelings about appearance (questions 11, 7, 9, 13, 17, 21, 6, 23, 15, & 1).
- **BE-Weight**—measures weight satisfaction (questions 8, 10, 16, 19, 4, 18, 22, & 3).
• BE-Attribution—measures evaluations attributed to others about one’s body and appearance (questions 2, 20, 12, 5, & 14).

(Mendelson, et. al., 2001).

Medleson, et. al. (2001) reported a high internal consistency, and a 3-month test-retest reliability. The reported Cronbach’s alpha ratings for the subscales are; BE-Appearance = .92, with a 3-month test-retest of .89, BE-Weight = .94, with a 3-month test-retest of .92, and BE-Attribution = .81, with a 3-month test-retest of .83 (BESAA Users’ Manual, 2001). The instrument was validated for males and females between the ages of 12 and 25 years of age.

After the administration of the survey instrument in the current study, the reported Cronbach’s alpha ratings for the subscales were; BE-Appearance = .88, BE-Weight = .91, and BE-Attribution = .80.

Survey Procedures

As aforementioned, participants were recruited via the University athletic department and coaches from the following sports: volleyball, golf, track & field, tennis, softball, basketball, and soccer. The researcher recorded a specific time and location for each sport team to complete the survey. Survey packets included the informed consents, which explained the purpose and anonymity of the study, as well as the survey instrument.

Data Analysis

Participants’ demographics (ethnicity, age, and sport) were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Pearson’s correlation was used to analyze Hypothesis 1 (Exposure to thin-ideal and sports magazine content will be positively associated with lower scores
on three body-esteem subscales, defined by weight, appearance, and attribution). Fisher's transformation of Pearson's correlation was used to analyze Hypothesis 2 (Exposure to thin-ideal and sports magazine content will be more positively associated with lower scores on three body-esteem subscales, defined by weight, appearance, and attribution in White female athletes than it will for non-White female athletes). T-tests were used to analyze Hypothesis 3 (White female athletes will have higher exposure to thin-ideal magazine content than non-White female athletes). For all hypotheses, a significance level of .05 was implemented.
QUALITATIVE ASPECT OF STUDY

Purpose of Research

The research purpose of the qualitative aspect of the study was to gain insight into the extent that female athletes' perceptions in body image are influenced by viewing sports media. This central purpose was guided by the following research questions:

Research Question #1: To what extent do female athletes feel comfortable with their own body image?

Research Question #2: How do female athletes feel about the way athletes are portrayed in the media?

Research Question #3: To what extent do females link body image with athletic performance?

Subjectivities Statement

We all view the world through our own filter of experience (McGraw, 2001). As the researcher is the principle instrument in qualitative research, it is essential to identify any potential biases that could ensue based upon personal experiences. “Particularly with qualitative research the role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates identification of personal values, assumptions, and biases at the outset of the study” (Creswell, 1994, p.163). As a former athlete, I am aware of the spectrum of variables that contribute to athletic performance. Based on my personal experiences, I believe that body image impacts self-esteem and could potentially impact athletic performance. I believe that when there is a gap between body image and body images viewed, body image is negatively affected. Finally, I believe that thin athletes are perceived in general as being more athletically dexterous.
I played varsity softball during my freshman and sophomore years in high school. Even today as I sit and recall the experiences of pitching and hitting, I am overwhelmed with anxiety and embarrassment. Slightly taller and more muscular than most girls my age, there wasn’t a single moment when I didn’t think about some aspect of my size. It didn’t matter that I had just hit the ball so far out in left field that the three girls on the bases in front of me made it to home plate. All I could think as I rounded third was “my legs must look like two giant marshmallows rubbing together.” As I made it past the high-fives in the dugout, all I wanted to do was melt into a corner and become invisible.

I made danceline the summer after I starved away forty pounds. No longer interested in being an overweight softball player, I opted for a new image. But the new image didn’t come without problems. Being thin made me even more critical of my body; there was always a gap in what I saw in the mirror and what I saw in magazines and television. I can recall being so disenchanted with my thighs in the sequined bathing suit we wore during football season that I didn’t allow myself to eat for two days before performing; water only. I wanted to look like all of those beautiful dancers I saw in competition magazines with long, slender thighs; but I never could. No matter how many days I went without eating or how many laps I ran around the track, the result was always the same: I felt fat and faint from low blood sugar.

Moreover, I think it is important for me to discuss my experiences with teaching sport information management. In this particular course, we delved into media relations in sport in great detail. Most of the students were athletes; and from their stories and comments during lectures, I gathered that they spent a great deal of time engaging in sport media. I can recall one student, a female soccer player, sharing with the class that
she knew she would never look like the girls in sports advertisements and, for this, she felt like "less of an athlete."

While the aforementioned anecdotes are brief and filled with very personal experiences, they are accurate in their description of my experiences as an athlete with body image problems. Because my experiences with body image problems while being an athlete, as well as my experiences with teaching collegiate female athletes have deeply influenced me, it took a concerted effort to use an objective lens to filter out any personal biases that could potentially compromise the integrity of the data. This was accomplished by constantly critiquing the process in which data was analyzed. But while it was important to present, as much as possible, unadulterated data, "the qualitative researcher singles out some things as worthy of note and relegates others to the background" (Wolcott, 1994, p.13). Thus, an individual’s repertoire of experiences with a particular phenomenon was conducive to a better understanding of the population being studied (Schram, 2003). Personal experiences only served to enhance my ability to properly analyze data. For example, the jargon or even mores of my selected population could have been misunderstood by someone with no personal experiences with body image problems or being an athlete. As a result, the process in which themes were ultimately developed was only bolstered as a result of my experiences.

Data Collection

As qualitative research is often speculated as being anecdotal in nature, it is essential to correctly "identify the types of data that will address your research questions" (Creswell, 2005, p. 209). General data collection approaches in qualitative research include (a) observations, (b) interviews, (c) documents, and (d) audiovisual materials.
For the purposes of this study, interviewing, defined as “the process in which researchers ask one or more participants in a study general open-ended questions and record their answers” (p. 593) was used to capture participants’ perspectives in order to address the study’s research questions: (a) To what extent do female athletes feel comfortable with their own body image? (b) How do female athletes feel about the way athletes are portrayed in the media? (c) To what extent do females link body image with athletic performance?

As the goal was to solicit as much information as possible, it was important that the interview questions be open-ended. “Open-ended questions are asked so that participants can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings” (Creswell, 2005, p. 210). Another important consideration of interviews is that the researcher has control over the questions being asked. Thus it can be argued that the data has the potential to be deceptive in nature as the line of questioning can be orchestrated to give what the researcher wants to hear (2005). Hence, in developing the research questions for this study, measures were taken to avoid tailoring the questions to run in tandem with personal assumptions and beliefs of what could potentially be found in this study. When developing the line of questioning, constant referral was made back to the research purpose of the study of gaining insight into the extent that female athletes’ perceptions in body image are influenced by viewing sports media. From there, consideration was made to all research questions by folding them into the line of questioning. Interview questions (see Appendix G) addressed the following: (a) body image; (b) the importance of having a healthy body image; (c) body image with athletic performance; and (d) athletes portrayed in the media.
As previously mentioned, it was determined that in order to best capture the perspectives of the participants, individual interviews would be conducted. Interviews were conducted in a quiet and suitable place, away from as many environmental distractions as possible. In order to efficiently conduct the interviews, preparation was made by bringing essential supplies and equipment for accurate recording. A standard notepad along with pens for note taking during interviews as well as a digital recorder were used.

The interviews were divided into two phases: (1) questions with images and (2) questions without images. At the outset of both phases of interviews, the interviewee signed an informed consent. The recorder was then turned on and permission to record the interview was obtained from the interviewee.

In phase one of the interview, two 8x10” computer generated images of female athletes were presented simultaneously. Questions pertaining to these images were asked in order to garner information in an attempt to gain insight into how female athletes respond to images portrayed in the media. The images were depictions of females in athletic-type clothing assuming an active pose. The only difference in the images was the fact that one was an illustration of a female with a healthy body mass index (see Appendix H), while the other was an illustration of a female with an unhealthy body mass index (Appendix I). The researcher, with the help of a graphics designer, constructed the images to depict a female with a normal body mass index of 18.5-24.9 and a female with a class I obesity body mass index of 30-34.9.

Immediately following phase one of the interviews, the images were put away and phase two of the interviews began. While a fixed set of interview questions for each
interview were provided, it was important to be “flexible enough to follow the conversation of the interviewee” (Creswell, 2005, p. 218). In addition, probes, which are defined as “subquestions under each question that the researcher asks to elicit more information” (p. 218) were necessary in order to have the interviewee expand upon a topic or to clarify certain points. Finally, upon completion of the interview, the interviewees were thanked for their participation, and give assurance of the confidentiality of their responses.

To ensure that accurate steps were taken in conducting interviews, the following checklist (Creswell, 2005) was considered:

- Established a comfortable and quiet location for the interview.
- Checked tape recorder at the outset of each interview.
- Obtained consent from the participant to participate in the interview.
- Conducted the interview effectively:
  - listened more and talk less
  - probed during the interview
  - avoided leading questions and ask open-ended questions
  - kept participants focused and ask for concrete details
  - withheld judgments and refrained from debating with participants about their views
  - thanked the participants at the conclusion of the interview.
Data Transformation

Following data collection one must “make sense” of what was there – that is, prudent measures must be followed in order to transform raw data into something meaningful to the researcher. “Everything has the potential to become data, but nothing becomes data without the intervention of a researcher who takes note-and often makes note-of some things to the exclusion of others” (Wolcott, 1994, p. 3). In an attempt to transform the data that were collected via interviews, there are three major modes to consider in which qualitative data is transformed: (a) description, (b) analysis, (c) interpretation. For the purposes of this study, analysis and interpretation were the chosen methods for data transformation.

“Analysis addresses the identification of essential features and the systematic description of interrelationships among them-in short, how things work” (Wolcott, 1994, p. 12). In sum, analysis is synonymous with facts; and in an attempt to bring forth facts from the interviews that ensued, a strategic process of analysis was essential. The following strategies were useful to the researcher in analysis (Wolcott, 1994): (a) display findings, (b) identify patterned regularities in the data, (c) compare with another case, and (d) critique the research process. Employing these strategies allowed for a systematic approach to analyzing data.

In displaying findings, Wolcott (1994) suggests that “tables, charts, diagrams, and figures are one way to do it” (p. 31). The use of graphics enabled the researcher to conceptualize what was found, thus for the purposes of this study, a graphic organizer (diagram) was used when displaying themes. In identifying themes in this study, transcripts of the interviews were read, followed by the process of coding. Prior to the
coding process, it was necessary for the interviews to be transcribed. Transcription is "the process of converting audiotape recordings or fieldnotes into text data" (Creswell, 2005, p. 233). In this study, fieldnotes were not used, thus only digital recordings were transcribed. Transcription, in this study, was accomplished via a transcriptionist.

After the interviews were transcribed, coding took place. Coding is where the researcher "makes sense out of text data, divides it into text or image segments, labels the segments, examines codes for overlap and redundancy, and collapses these codes into themes" (Creswell, 2005, p. 589). In this study, the interviews were read with the initial purpose of identifying text segments, which are "sentences or paragraphs that all relate to a single code" (p. 238). A code is a label given to describe a text segment. Coding (see Appendix J for Example Coding Scheme), in turn, was used to collapse the interview transcripts into several themes. Themes are similar codes that have been consolidated to form a major idea or topic and usually consist of a simple label of no more than two to four words (2005). Once the themes were identified, they were displayed via graphic organizers (diagrams). This process of identifying text segments, assigning codes, and developing themes was accomplished using the following steps suggested by Creswell (2005, p.238): (a) initially read through text data, (b) divided the text into segments of information, (c) labeled the segments of information with codes, (d) reduced overlap and redundancy of codes, and (e) collapsed codes into themes.

In searching for text segments, assigning codes, and developing themes, it was necessary to identify regularities in the data. Identifying regularities in the data is "where we look for and discuss the relationships, the what-goes-with-what that realizes in the study of a single case the potential for understanding something beyond it" (Wolcott,
In identifying regularities, the researcher attempts to avoid making stereotypes or overgeneralizations (Wolcott). This was done through observing the “whole picture” per se. For instance, in addition to considering individual word choices and thoughts, consideration to the collective thoughts were made. This process allowed for a more accurate and complete picture of the data. Thus, the researcher was consistently engaged with comparing cases to one another in an attempt to capture similarities.

A final important step in analysis was to continuously critique the research process. As suggested by Wolcott (1994) it is important to “focus your analytical attention on the research process itself, becoming your own critic but drawing attention to your methods rather than to your results” (p. 35). In this study, the research process was evaluated via a panel of experts, which included the dissertation committee, professors, and graduate assistants.

The natural progression from analysis is to interpretation. Interpretation means “making sense of the data” (Creswell, 2005, p. 251). As suggested by Creswell (2005), four important points to consider for interpretation include: (a) summarizing findings, (b) conveying personal reflection, (c) making comparisons to the literature, and (d) offering limitations.

According to Creswell (2005) summarizing findings consists of displaying an overall recap of what was found (major findings). Moreover, it is a suggested strategy to rewrite the individual research questions and post findings under each question. Having a summary of findings provides the readers with an overall picture of the findings to enhance and help make sense of the detailed results in the theme passages (2005).
Once a general summary of major findings was established, personal reflections of the researcher were woven into the meaning of the data. "...qualitative researchers believe that your personal views can never be kept separate from interpretations" (Creswell, 2005, p. 251). As previously mentioned, the qualitative researcher was the primary instrument through which the data was collected, analyzed, and interpreted. Thus, identifying the filters through which data flows was essential for the purpose of bolstering the integrity of the meaning of data. Personal reflections were based upon "hunches, insights, and intuition" (p. 251). Wolcott (1994) suggests that the first step in connecting personal experience with data is to "personalize the interpretation" (p. 44) -- in other words, how the researcher interprets the data, and second, to "make the interpretation personal" (p. 44) -- in turn, how the researcher was affected by the research experience. As it is important to bridge personal experiences with the data, it was equally important to make comparisons (of the data) to the literature. Simply put, "the qualitative inquirer interprets the data in view of past research, showing how the findings may support and/or contradict prior studies" (Creswell, 2005, p. 251). Finally, once comparisons were made to the literature, the researcher was in a good position to offer limitations related to the study as well as provide suggestions for future research. For example, in offering limitations and providing suggestions, it is important to address issues with data collection methods as well as the chosen participants and sites of the study.

In sum, the sequential steps in data analysis and interpretation that ensued in this study were as follows (adapted from Creswell, 2005):
Analysis:

1. Transcribed the semi-structured interviews via a transcriptionist.
2. Read through the transcripts to obtain a general feel for the material.
3. Identified regularities within the material.
4. Located text segments within the transcripts.
5. Assigned codes to text segments.
6. Collapsed codes into themes.
7. Displayed themes via figures and diagrams.

Interpretation:

1. Summarized findings
2. Wove personal reflections into findings
3. Made comparisons to the literature
4. Offered limitations while providing suggestions for future research.

Trustworthiness of Study

In an attempt to ensure that the findings and interpretations were accurate throughout the data collection and data transformation process, it was important to validate findings. According to Creswell (2005) the process of validating findings involves the researcher as he/she “determines the accuracy or credibility of the findings” through specific strategies, which, for the purposes of this study, involved (a) triangulation, (b) member checking, and (c) external audit (p. 252).

In an attempt to increase the accuracy of the study, triangulation was essential. “Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research.”
In this study, triangulation of data sources occurred through the following: (1) researcher notes taken during semi-structured interviews, (2) the semi-structured interviews themselves, and (3) member checking. Member checking was involved as it is “the process in which the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account” (Creswell, 2005, p. 252). For the purposes of this study, member checking involved sending the participants a written account of the findings and asking them to verify the accuracy. Regarding member checking, the following was asked of the participants: (a) whether the description provided by the researcher was complete and realistic, (b) the accuracy of themes, and (c) if the interpretations was fair and representative. The coalescence of researcher notes, interviews, and member checking provided the researcher with multiple sources by which to determine the accuracy of themes.

Finally, consulting an outside source is powerful in ensuring the accuracy of findings. An outside person (“external audit”), must “project to conduct a thorough review of the study and report back, in writing, the strengths and weaknesses of the project” (Creswell, 2005, p. 253). For the purposes of this study, the external audit occurred via a panel of experts that consisted of the dissertation committee, professors, and graduate students. The panel of experts assisted in determining the accuracy of the research process.
CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA

The following chapter is a description of the data analysis regarding the survey instrument, hypotheses, and qualitative research questions. The findings are presented and organized in the following sections: (a) description of the sample, (b) descriptive statistics for body esteem, and (c) tests of hypotheses.

Description of the Sample

A total of 87 participants were surveyed, which comprised 76% of the current female athletes at the chosen site of the study. Descriptive statistics were performed regarding race, age, current sport, and the frequency of exposure to different genres of magazines.

Regarding race, the predominant ethnicity was White/Euro-American (69%) followed by African-Americans (25.6%). A smaller percentage of the athletes were classified as other (5.8%). One athlete did not answer this question. Frequencies and percentages for race are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female Athletes: Race (N=86)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Euro-American</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>67.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of the female athletes were between 18 and 20 years of age. The highest percentage of the athletes were 18 years of age (36.8%) followed by 19-20 years. Frequencies and percentages for age are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Female Athletes: Age (N=87)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding sport, the largest percentage of the athletes participated in track and field (27.6%), followed by softball (17.2%). The smallest percentage of the sample indicated participation in golf (5.7%). Frequencies and percentages for sport are presented in Table 3.
Table 3

**Female Athletes: Sport (N=87)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Softball</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track &amp; Field</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>87</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The genre that received the highest percentage for all racial groups of always engaging in reading was fashion magazines (20.7%). For all racial groups the genre that received the highest percentage (59.8%) of never engaging in reading was sport-specific magazines. For African-Americans, the largest percentage of always engaging in reading was entertainment magazines (9.1%) while the largest percentage of never engaging in reading was sport-specific magazines (63.6%). For White/Euro-Americans, the largest percentage of always engaging in reading was fashion magazines (25.4%) while the largest percent of never engaging in reading was sport-specific magazines (57.6%). Frequencies and percentages for exposure to different genres of magazines are presented in Tables 4-8.
Table 4

**General Sports Magazines**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African-Americans</th>
<th></th>
<th>White/Euro Americans</th>
<th></th>
<th>Other</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5

**Sport-Specific Magazines**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African-Americans</th>
<th></th>
<th>White/Euro Americans</th>
<th></th>
<th>Other</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
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<td>18.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>
Table 6  
*Entertainment Magazines*  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African-Americans</th>
<th>White/Euro Americans</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>59</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 7  
*Fashion Magazines*  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African-Americans</th>
<th>White/Euro Americans</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8

Fitness-Health Magazines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African-Americans</th>
<th>White/Euro Americans</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency %</td>
<td>Frequency %</td>
<td>Frequency %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>11 50.0</td>
<td>20 33.9</td>
<td>2 40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>6 27.3</td>
<td>23 39.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>4 18.2</td>
<td>9 15.3</td>
<td>3 60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>1 4.5</td>
<td>4 6.8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>3 5.1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22 100</td>
<td>59 100</td>
<td>5 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Descriptive Statistics for Body Esteem

Regarding scores on the Body Esteem Scale, for the entire sample, the mean score on the Appearance sub-scale was 2.67 with a standard deviation of 0.683; the mean score on the Weight sub-scale was 2.42 with a standard deviation of 0.953; and the mean score on the Attribution sub-scale was 2.55 with a standard deviation of 0.726. The possible range on all scales was 0-4. African-Americans scored higher on all 3 sub-scales, which is indicative of an overall more favorable account of body-esteem than other racial groups. Of the three racial groups, the White/Euro-American athletes scored the lowest on all 3 sub-scales, indicating an overall lower account of body-esteem than other racial groups. Regarding African-Americans, mean scores for this group were lowest on the Attribution sub-scale (M = 2.7, SD = .883); for the White/Euro-Americans group, scores were lowest on the Weight sub-scale (M = 2.2, SD = .851). The descriptive statistics for the three sub-scales are presented in Table 9.
Table 9

Body-Esteem Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African-Americans</th>
<th>White/Euro Americans</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>2.49</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Scale: 0=never, 1=seldom, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=always.

Tests of Hypotheses

Three hypotheses were tested in this study. Pearson’s correlation was used to test

Hypothesis 1. Fisher’s transformation of Pearson’s correlation was used to test

Hypothesis 2. An independent-samples t test was used to test Hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 1

H$_1$: Exposure to thin-ideal and sports magazine content were negatively associated with scores on three body-esteem subscales, defined by weight, appearance, and attribution.

Pearson product moment coefficient of correlation ($r$) was calculated at a .05 level of significance to determine the relationship between selected genres of magazine reading and body-esteem. Hypothesis 1 was not accepted. The results of the correlational analyses presented in Table 10 show that there were no statistically significant correlations. The strongest correlations found among the study variables were between general magazine reading and appearance, $r(85) = -.192, p = .076$, and fashion/entertainment magazine reading and appearance, $r(85) = -.189, p = .082$.

This suggests that exposure to general and fashion/entertainment magazines was not significantly related to decreased feelings about appearance, weight, and attribution.
Hypothesis 2

H2: Exposure to thin-ideal and sports magazine content was more negatively associated with scores on three body-esteem subscales, defined by weight, appearance, and attribution in White female athletes than it will for non-White female athletes.

Fisher’s z-transformation of Pearson’s $r$ was used to determine if the differences in correlations within White female athletes and non-White female athletes were significant. Significance was computed at the .05 level. Hypothesis 2 was not accepted. No significant correlation differences were found for appearance [(z = .436, $p = .33$ (one-tailed)], weight [(z = .428, $p = .33$ (one-tailed)], or attribution [(z = .783, $p = .217$ (one-tailed)]. Statistical data for this test is found in Table 11.
Table 11

*Fisher’s z-transformation of Pearson’s r*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-scale</th>
<th>African-American</th>
<th>White/E-A</th>
<th>z</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>-.032</td>
<td>-.147</td>
<td>.436</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>-.203</td>
<td>-.092</td>
<td>.428</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.244</td>
<td>.783</td>
<td>.217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 3

H₃: White female athletes had higher exposure to thin-ideal magazine content than non-White female athletes.

An independent-samples *t* test was conducted to assess the differences between the means of racial groups with regard to thin-ideal magazine exposure. With regard to general magazine reading, the test was significant, *t*(79) = -2.441, *p* = .017. White female athletes (M = 13.71, SD = 3.61) have higher exposure to magazines than non-White female athletes (M = 11.59, SD = 3.08). With regard to sports magazine reading, there was no statistical significance, *t*(79) = -.916, *p* = .363. Essentially, white female athletes (M = 6.52, SD = 2.18) have relatively the same exposure to sports magazines as non-White female athletes (M = 6.04, SD = 1.83). And finally, with regard to fashion and entertainment magazine reading, there was a significant difference, *t*(79) = -3.222, *p* = .002. White female athletes have higher exposure to fashion and entertainment magazines (M= 7.19, SD = 2.07) than non-White female athletes (M = 5.54, SD = 1.94). Statistical data for this test is presented in Table 12.
Table 12

Magazine Exposure: Means and Standard Deviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>African-Americans</th>
<th>White/Euro-Americans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Magazines (0-25)</td>
<td>11.59</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports Magazines (0-15)</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion/Entertainment Magazines (0-10)</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of Quantitative Analysis

In sum, the quantitative data analysis via descriptive statistics and tests of hypotheses revealed that overall, African-American female athletes have a more favorable account of body-esteem, as identified by weight, appearance, and attribution than other racial groups. African-Americans had the overall highest score on the Body-Esteem Scale and the appearance sub-scale; while White/Euro-Americans had the overall lowest score on the Body-Esteem Scale and the weight sub-scale. Nonetheless, it was disclosed that the race of female athletes was not a harbinger for decreased feelings in body-esteem as identified by appearance, weight, and attribution as a result of exposure to general, sport, and fashion/entertainment magazines. Moreover, the White/Euro-American female athletes have higher exposure to magazines than non-White female athletes; specifically, White/Euro-American female athletes have higher exposure to fashion and entertainment magazines than non-White female athletes. However, regarding sports magazines, White/Euro-American and non-White female athletes shared
relatively the same exposure. Regarding sport-specific magazines, the female athletes in this study, regardless of race, do not engage in regular reading of this genre.
CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

Introduction

The purpose of the qualitative aspect of the study was to gain insight into the extent that female athletes’ perceptions in body image are influenced by viewing sports media. This central purpose was guided by the following research questions:

Research Question #1: To what extent do female athletes feel comfortable with their own body image?

Research Question #2: How do female athletes feel about the way athletes are portrayed in the media?

Research Question #3: To what extent do females link body image with athletic performance?

Twenty female athletes active in Division I sports participated in individual interviews pertaining to (a) body image, (b) the importance of having a healthy body image, (c) body image and athletic performance, and (d) athletes portrayal in the media. The interviews were divided into two phases, (1) questions specific to two computer generated graphical images (2) questions regarding sports media and body image (for a complete discussion of phases one and two of the interviews, see chapter three).

The interviewees were selected from seven sports (track, tennis, basketball, softball, soccer, golf, and volleyball) at a medium sized university in the southern region of the United States. The interviewees were selected via recruitment forms that were administered during the survey. In order to capture diverse perspectives, at least two
athletes from each of the seven sports were chosen. And efforts were made to interview athletes from diverse (Caucasian, African-American) racial backgrounds (see Table 1).

Based on the demographic results of the surveys administered in the quantitative component of this study, 69% of the female athletic population completing the Body-Esteem Scale were White/Euro-American, followed by 25.6% African-Americans. Only 5.8% represented the racial group of Other. Given the high percentage of White/Euro-American female athletes at the chosen university for this study, coupled with the fact that three out of the seven sports at the university selected for the study were comprised solely of White/Euro-Americans, this racial group represented the predominate ethnicity of the interviewees. The following table (Table 13) presents the athletes who participated in the qualitative component of the study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>Track</td>
<td>African-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet</td>
<td>Track</td>
<td>African-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>Track</td>
<td>African-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>African-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivian</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Francine</td>
<td>Softball</td>
<td>White</td>
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<td>Marcy</td>
<td>Softball</td>
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<td>Linda</td>
<td>Softball</td>
<td>White</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
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<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patty</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna</td>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhonda</td>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gina</td>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwen</td>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annie</td>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Explanation of Data

The primary data source for analysis in the qualitative component of the study was individual interviews. Each interview was digitally recorded and professionally transcribed. Over twelve hours of digital recordings were generated during data collection. The individual interviews ranged from 27:45 minutes in length to 56:47 minutes in length; the average interview was 36:79 minutes in length. The interview transcripts ranged from 18 -32 pages; the average transcript was 22 pages. Furthermore, the researcher’s notes taken during each interview served as a secondary source of information; the researcher notes yielded roughly five handwritten pages for each interview. The handwritten notes were useful to the researcher as they were read numerous times after each interview to provide a clear picture of the important details; the researcher also used the handwritten notes in the interim period between the conduction of interviews and the completion of the transcript. Moreover, the recordings of the interviews proved to be useful during data analysis as they provided the researcher with the level of emotion of the interviewees; they were also useful when conducting “accuracy checks” of the transcripts.

Data Transformation

Following Wolcott’s (1994) suggestions for data transformation, data in this study were transformed by (a) displaying findings, (b) identifying patterned regularities in the data, (c) comparing cases with one another, and (d) critiquing the research process. Employing these strategies allowed for a systematic approach to analyzing data. Graphics were used to display themes. In identifying themes in this study, interview transcripts were read and coded. Coding, in turn, was used to collapse the interview
transcripts into five major themes (a) Feel Pressure, (b) Still Fighting for Respect, (c) Portrayed as Gods, (d) Must Have Healthy Body, and (e) It’s All We See. The major themes were generated in an attempt to present a picture of the participants’ words in this study and will be discussed in detail in the following pages (for a complete discussion of data transformation, see chapter three and Appendix K).

Presentation of Themes

Feel Pressure

The athletes conveyed a variety of elements that served as catalysts in the formation of their views on body image. However, the central element that was revealed throughout the interviews was the notion of “Feeling Pressure.” Under the umbrella of feeling pressure, six sub-themes emerged, including: (a) pressure from the media, (b) pressure from cultural norms and expectations, (c) pressure from others, (d) pressure from professional athletes (e) pressure from coaches, and (f) pressure from teammates (see Figure 3).
Figure 3. Theme of “Feel Pressure”
Of all of these areas, the recurring theme from the interviewees was “feeling pressure”—pressure to be thin, pressure to be lean, pressure to emulate the image that is commonly portrayed in the media, pressure to please coaches’ ideas of an ideal weight range, pressure to be the strongest on the team, and pressure to conform to cultural norms and expectations regarding the ideal physique of the female athlete. All of these pressures combined, factor in to the equation that determined the overall body image for the female athletes in this study.

*Pressure from the Media.* The sub-theme of “feeling pressure from the media” was quite powerful. Most of the 20 athletes were passionate when discussing the way in which the media portrays athletes and females. Interestingly, the branch of “feel pressure from the media” was directly related to three other sub-themes including: (a) “cultural norms and expectations,” (b) “other people,” and (c) “professional athletes.” “Feel Pressure” was also indirectly related to the other themes of: “Still Fighting for Respect,” “It’s All We See,” “Portrayed as Gods,” and “Must Have Healthy Body.” However, there were several elements under the “pressure from the media” sub-theme that surfaced repeatedly. One of the central elements that surfaced was the expectation that females, which includes athletes, are expected to be aesthetically pleasing in the eyes of the media. For example, the media has the propensity to only select thin and attractive females, which in turn, is a catalyst for females striving to emulate the common depiction seen in the media. In essence, the media’s criteria for selection offers the capacity to affect the way females feel about themselves in that they are constantly making comparisons between themselves and what they see in the media.
Another interesting element under this sub-theme came into play during phase one of the interviews, and hinted to the notion that what is seen in the media has an impact on the interviewees' perceptions of people based on their physique. Specifically, Gloria, a tennis player, when asked to name suitable occupations for the graphically depicted nonlean athlete, was quick to name "school bus driver [or] lunch lady." She went on to say that she thought this because "the movies stereotype [these types of characters]... they're bigger and older." In her explanation, Gloria drew the parallel between the nonlean image and what she has typically seen in the media. Another example was seen with Gina, a volleyball player. When she was asked to name a suitable occupation of the lean athlete, she immediately thought "lawyer." She went on to say that she thought this because "Law and Order has that lawyer who's ... pretty and... strong too." While these cases do not deal with female athletes directly, they do, offer insight into the power that the media has on people's perceptions of others, and in turn, themselves.

To illustrate the sub-theme of feeling pressure from the media further, phase two of the interviews generated a host of responses from the interviewees. For example, when asked about body image, Patty indicated that the media is a powerful influence in the way in which women in society feel about themselves in terms of their body. When she was asked what came to mind when she thought of body image, she was very thorough in her response.

I don't think that girls in the world have a good sense of their own body image. Like so many girls have eating disorders and insecurities, and there are very few girls that can say that there's not a least one thing
they don’t like about themselves. Like I’ve never met anybody, I mean I have a 13 year old sister and she shouldn’t even be thinking about that kind of thing, she’s the skinniest thing in the world, and she thinks that she is fat because of, you know, T.V. and magazines. And I think that every single girl can’t honestly say that there’s not one thing they don’t like about themselves.

When asked to elaborate upon this thought she stated,

I think a lot of it has to do with our media. Like magazines and fashion, they tend to say that, you know, that you have to be this tall and this thin or you can’t wear their clothes. Like all the models are stick-thin. And like look at things like Victoria’s Secret, all those girls are so skinny with big boobs. Like that’s what they portray as being the only thing that looks good. And so, if you are not perfect like that, if you don’t have that body, then people are going to think, it like poisons you to think that there’s something wrong with you. So it gives you a bad sense of your body.

Along the same lines, Gina indicated that she has seen first-hand, the effects of the media on body image, when she made the following statement related to body image.

...I think a lot of it, with the media and magazines, have a lot to do with people’s self-esteem and what they think of themselves. So, that’s what I think...because I’ve been influenced on that, and I know that some of my friends have and my little sister has, and she’s had problems with weight forever. So, I think that it’s [media and magazines] a huge contributor to most women's ideas of their body.
Moreover, Annie, when discussing how the media influences women’s body image, indicated that size, particularly thinness, is a dominant theme in mainstream media.

Most of the magazines – if you buy a magazine... *Star* or *People*, the girls in there are famous and live in Hollywood or whatever and most of them are really skinny because, I don’t know why, they’re very skinny, they’re very in shape and the cover girls on magazines are usually very skinny, little clothes on, a lot of skin. Yeah. And that influences, I guess, younger girls who, not even younger girls, girls my age, who will see that and think, because that’s the only thing that we see and, yet, you know, show that that is the perfect ideal of a body.

Another element the athletes discussed with the media and body image was the idea that advertisements tend to only portray athletes with an aesthetically pleasing body type. As Janet stated, “they’re always advertising the sports and having the little magazines that talk about health and fitness; and they always have a skinny person on the front.” Another athlete, Patty, emphasized, “one thing that I don’t like about Nike models is that they only put women in there who tend to have like, you know, tanned skin and ...have really defined muscles.” Carol indicated that commercials which depict female athletes only portray a fit and slender image.

Well, I think in some of those commercials, like those, what commercials are those, the commercials for water, for Propel water, they show all the same kind of girls, like they show the slender and fit girl playing tennis and all that. I don’t think they really show the other side. Like, even if you are a little bit heavier than other girls or you’re a little bit shorter, you
can still play the same sports. So, I think they show pretty much the same kind of, like, those commercials, I think they’re models.

Francine, emphasized that for a female athlete, having a pleasing body type allows for greater exposure in the media.

Body type, image, if they look good they’re going to be in the media more. It’s kind of like Jenny Finch as a pitcher. She is more known for her advertisement and her face and her body more than her athletic ability, kind of like Anna Kournikova. She is more known for her athletic appearance, like her body and her face than she is her talent. I don’t think she ever won a match.

In sum, most participants indicated that the media does perpetually depict a common image of women, which tends to be slender and pretty. As Susan stated, “because that’s just the way it’s portrayed mostly, especially on TV and magazines,” and Kate, too, indicated that the “hourglass body” is “all we see... in the magazines... on the MTV shows, you never see big girls...” There was, indeed, a general consensus among the athletes that the media does in fact have the power to make the athletes feel pressure by portraying and even demanding an ideal body shape.

*Pressure from Cultural Norms and Expectations.* Societal expectations regarding the physique of female athletes are powerful in their capacity to influence body esteem, and the interviewees overwhelmingly emphasized the power that these expectations have on their views of body image. However, the media is the conduit through which these expectations flow; thus the sub-theme of cultural norms and
expectations is a direct branch from the sub-theme of “Feel Pressure” from the media. The notion of pressure from cultural norms and expectations revealed that the female athletes felt pressure to run in tandem with the view that society places upon women through the media in terms of appearance.

To illustrate the notion of pressure from cultural norms and expectations, Nancy, a volleyball player, when asked what first came to her mind when she thought of body image, offered, “I picture someone really fit and small...like the ideal, like what I would want to look like.” Patty, a soccer player, when asked the same question, offered, “we are expected to have picture-perfect bodies...been brainwashed [by society] into thinking the only way to be an awesome athlete is to have a picture-perfect body.” These comments, which transcended sport, were commonplace among the interviewees. This too reveals that the expectations that society places on athletes via stereotypes in particular, tend to apply pressure to athletes.

Gwen, a golf player, when asked about some of her experiences with body image and her athletic performance indicated that she has seen girls “starve themselves even for days trying to get their body where they think it should be or where society tells them it should be.” I asked her why she thought this and she said:

Because I think society has a warped image on what a women’s body should be. I mean, they show, you know, models on T.V. and actors and actresses and professional athletes and they overplay how nice their bodies are and stuff like that, so I think, you know, being a normal person, we see it and we want the same thing. We think that is the norm when really it’s not.
Francine, a softball player, discussed how she felt in terms of society’s views on women; she emphasized that this societal view on women impacts how people view female athletes, particularly with their exposure in the media.

And I do think with female athletes body image is a huge part of the overall society view on how people look at female athletes and success. If you’re...you don’t even as a female athlete really have to be successful; but if you look good in a bathing suit...you’ll be put on the front of some cover...but, I think that women are portrayed more negatively in that you have to look good in order to be something in society if you’re an athlete.

Linda, a softball player, indicated that she felt frustrated with how society views her sport. In fact, she offered an example of this when one of her professors made a reference to her that she did not look like a typical softball player. She actually took this as a compliment. When I asked her why, she said, “because like cheerleaders are seen as skinny, in shape, pretty...but like society sees softball players as a certain type, you know.” She went on to offer that society’s view of softball players tends to be “you know, big, dikey.” She even went on to say that because of this, “it’s easier to be a guy and an athlete.”

Indeed, society as a whole has an expectation regarding female athletes and females in general---and as previously mentioned, this expectation places a considerable amount of pressure on female athletes to emulate what is seen through the eyes of society based on depictions set forth in the media. In essence, the media is an establisher of the cultural norms and expectations of society; and as the
interviewees revealed that they are consumers of media, what is portrayed is a powerful source in how they view themselves and others in terms of body image.

*Pressure from Other People.* The sub-theme of “other people” was another area under the “Feel Pressure” umbrella that applied pressure on the athletes. One recurring aspects was the notion that athletes feel they have a certain standard to live up to in the eyes of others. In this study, “other people” referred to the interviewees’ non-athletic peers, spectators at their events, and even their teachers. With this standard that “other people” exude, comes the notion that having a “fat day” is taboo. For example, Patty, when asked about some of her experiences with body image and her athletic performance, indicated that she was often influenced by the perceptions of others regarding her physique.

I’ve played soccer forever, I feel like I always have this standard to live up to. That I have to have this, that I have to be muscular, I have to tone, I can never be, I can never have like a fat day, you know. Like I have to be this size and wear these kind of clothes and look this way and I feel like if I don’t, then I’m letting everybody else down.

Patty was then asked what she meant by “letting everybody else down.” She went on to say that, “I care about what other people think about me a lot.” Betty, a track athlete, also indicated that she cares what she looks like in the eyes of other people, especially regarding spectators at her games and practices. For example, when she was asked if she thought it was important as an athlete to have a healthy body image, she stated that, “you’re going to be out in front of a lot of people, and you’re going to have to do a lot of things…you just need to look like you can do what you are going
to do...what you have to do.” Another track athlete, Janet, expressed rather emotionally how heavily she was influenced by spectators of her sport by saying, “it’s like constantly in your head you’ll probably be, ‘I don’t like the way I look. I might look funny when I run. Oh my goodness, I can’t run my race right because I look funny!’” When asked how athletes are influenced by body image, Marcy, a softball player, indicated that “[athletes] care about what they look like in the eyes of other people or what they probably would think...if you were a certain size playing a sport, and then gain so much weight, it’s going to be noticed by your fans as an athlete.”

Kate also made a reference to feeling pressure to maintain a certain weight in the eyes of others. Specifically, she felt that people can make perceptions about other people solely based on weight, and this puts pressure on her to maintain a specific weight. She stated that, “for myself, if I don’t maintain a certain weight, I feel like I need to lose weight to stay in the range of what I am, and if not, I’m afraid people would look at me different or not think I’m capable of doing something.”

Some of the athletes also made references to their non-athletic peers. For example, when asked about her experiences with body image and her athletic performance, Rose indicated that she has a tendency to get self-conscious in front of others. She was referring to the notion that as an athlete, she is expected to be more muscular than the average girl.

When you are in front of other people, sometimes you kind of get a little self-conscious. You just compare yourself to what other people look like. And sometimes you wish oh, if I didn’t play sports, I wouldn’t be like that; I wouldn’t be so muscular or whatever.
Along the same lines, when referring to the fact that female athletes are expected to be muscular, Carol offered, that she has seen one of her teammates feel self-conscious about having to gain muscle weight and how this looks to other people.

Well, I know one girl on my team, when she first came, she was, like, she didn’t weight as much, she was real slender, but then she started gaining muscle weight and she was real sensitive about, you know, people making comments, she’d pay more attention to it. Like, it kind of hurt her feelings a little bit.

In this case, Carol made note of the fact that she observed her teammate build muscle to become a better athlete; while this weight gain was healthy, Carol’s teammate was very self-conscious of the change in her body. It was Carol’s perception that other people viewed her teammate’s weight gain as negative, which in turn made her teammate uncomfortable.

In sum, most of the athletes indicated feeling pressure in some capacity from “other people.” This area of feeling pressure from other people was interesting because most of the athletes exuded conflicted feelings because they are expected to be feminine and lean in the eyes of others; yet as an athlete, they are expected to also be muscular. This idea was seen with the previous case where Carol’s teammate gained muscle weight for her athletic performance, yet it was not well-received in the eyes of other people. This contradiction of expectations is often a culprit in the development of body image problems.

*Pressure from Professional Athletes.* The sub-theme of “pressure from professional athletes” stemmed from the pervasive view of the professional athlete as
possessing the perfect body type, which is typically promoted in the media. This section discusses the notion that professional athletes are deemed perfect from the physical standpoint; subsequent sections offer the notion that professional athletes can also be deemed morally perfect as they are often portrayed as role models. This concept will be investigated further through the sub-theme of “athletes as role models.” In the case of this sub-theme of “pressure from professional athletes,” it is revealed as a direct branch from the sub-theme of “pressure from the media;” with this, the media is responsible for the depiction of professional athletes, who felt pressure from athletes in this study. While there is a direct connection between pressure from professional athletes and pressure from the media, references to pressure from professional athletes was such a recurring aspect that it became its own identity. Under this sub-theme, the athletes conveyed that all they see is perfectionism regarding the body types of the professional athletes.

An interesting element under this umbrella came into play during phase one of the interviews. The majority of athletes in this study (17 out of 20) were able to quickly name a professional athlete that came to mind when observing the photograph of the lean athlete; however, study participants were only able to offer references to positions when referring to the nonlean athlete, such as “USM goalie” or “shot put thrower.” Popular professional athletes’ names given by the interviewees regarding the lean image included Brandi Chastain, Mia Hamm, Marion Jones, Anna Kournikova, Keri Walsh, and Misty May. Interestingly, when the interviewees gave these names, they were quick to mention that these are the athletes most often seen in the media. As these popular athletes were regarded by the interviewees as very lean,
thin, fit, and athletic, this hinted to the notion that this represents the ideal athlete, as
this is the image that is commonly seen. It was also implied through the interviews
that this common image of professional athletes is the image that the interviewees
strive to attain. Hence, the element of “pressure from professional athletes” appeared
to be a powerful aspect in the body esteem of study participants.

To illustrate this further, Gwen, when asked, during the second phase of the
interviews, how she felt athletes are influenced by body image, said “I think athletes
put a lot of pressure on themselves to have the perfect body image.” When asked
why she thought that, she went on to say, “because a lot of the professional
athletes...usually have a really nice body and you kind of feel like, for you to be
successful in whatever sport it is you’re doing, you should probably strive to look the
same.”

In particular, the athletes stated repeatedly, that especially if the professional
athlete plays the same sport or position (as the interviewee) there is an influence that
drives the athlete to emulate the body type of the professional athletes. Rose, when
asked how athletes are influenced by body image, offered, “you kind of have to, like
you see the professional athletes and you’re like, oh I need to look like that. Or I
should look like that. She plays the same position as me and she’s bigger or smaller.”

Donna, a volleyball player, made the comment that she saw professional athletes
as “real toned and muscular and skinny.” I asked her how she felt about that
perception and she offered:

…it makes younger people who watch all that think that if they’re
maybe a little heavier that they can’t do a sport, maybe. Or that it
discourages them from wanting to play, because they think you have
to look perfect to play.

In sum, the interviewees indicated feeling pressure because of regular
comparisons to professional athletes. Most of the athletes resonated the tone of the
sentiments from Annie, who stated, “we know we have to stay in shape—when we
see professional and competitive athletes that are in real good shape we feel we
should try to reach the same body figure.” These sentiments suggested the notion that
when athletes see a gap between themselves and the image of professional athletes,
body image problems could have the potential to develop. And problems with body
image, (discussed in a subsequent section of this study through the sub-theme of
“psychological impact on performance”) have the capacity to directly affect athletic
performance.

Pressure from Coaches. The theme of “Feel Pressure” was supported by another
sub-theme that emerged, and pertained to the relationship between coaches and
athletes. Kate stated that “some coaches put strict diets for their athletes, you know,
that they can only eat a certain amount of things before games and after games and
stuff like that. So I think the coaches...are definitely an influence.” As statements
such as these were seen in numerous cases, this section thoroughly builds the case
that coaches are indeed a powerful influence in the interviewees’ ideas of themselves
from the physical standpoint.

One of the aspects regarding coaches that emerged was the idea of first
impressions, especially during recruitment. Throughout the interviews, the athletes
would repeatedly discuss the issue of being fit and lean in the eyes of coaches. For
example, Rose indicated that “if coaches don’t think that you’re fit, by just like looking at you, they might not ask you to come play for their school...” To Rose, as well as some of the other athletes, being fit and lean was synonymous with being a good athlete, and this was most often seen in the recruitment process. Rhonda also felt this way as indicated by her statement, “sometimes before you even get recruited by a coach or something they’ll tell you that you need to put on weight or you need to lose weight or things like that.” Another athlete, Donna, indicated that “even coaches recruiting, if they’re recruiting someone and they...if you appear to not be in shape or not healthy then they’re not going to look at you.”

Regarding fitness and weight, the majority of the athletes felt that coaches apply pressure on them to comply with certain standards. Nancy offered that she has felt this as she stated, “I was told that I needed to, that if I lost 10 pounds, that it would help me and it would look better on my stat sheet.” Gloria indicated that coaches’ expectations regarding weight have the potential to influence the development of problems in the athletes.

You know when your coach is on your back about it [weight] they feel like they need to have a team that’s perceived as fit and athletic, you know, it makes it harder I guess and ends up resulting in a lot of problems...anywhere from any kind of eating disorder to, you know, depression, stressing you out a lot like that.

Rhonda also illustrated that she feels pressure from her coach regarding weight. In fact, at times, she indicated receiving mixed messages.

I was told I was too skinny and that I had to put on muscle...and then,
well, it's kind of a contradiction. The same coach who told me
that I had to put on weight at the end of the semester...told our whole
team that we had to lose five pounds...I mean, I didn't think that I needed
to lose five pounds because I had put some on which was what I was
supposed to do.

Another athlete, when asked to discuss some of her experiences with body image and
her athletic performance, spoke rather passionately about how her coaches influence
the way she feels about her body.

...my coaches told me before I went home for the summer that I needed
to stop lifting because I was getting too big. And I've never had anybody
tell me that I weighed too much. Like I've always been told I was normal
and that I was fine, even that I was like thin enough. And when a [my
sport] coach tells me that I'm too big, it really like, I don't think she
realized what she was doing. It really hurt me a lot.

I then asked her to tell me a little bit more about how it hurt her, and she stated,

I just feel like our coach has this image in her head that only skinny girls
can play soccer because they're fast, which is not true...I just don't think
she knows a lot about it, and I would think that ...like whenever we go,
like if we go out to eat and stuff with our team, she'll be like, 'oh do you
guys really need to eat that?' Like if we ordered dessert or if we get an
appetizer, 'do you guys really need that?' And she's just kidding around,
but sometimes she doesn't understand that like some of us really are
struggling with that kind of thing. And when she says stuff like, it makes it so much harder to cope with it.

In sum, most of the athletes indicated that coaches do in fact apply pressure to maintain a certain physique or body weight to be an overall better player. However, many of the athletes offered that at times, coaches’ pressures can be a catalyst for the development of unhealthy practices. Therefore, the athletes in this study feel a sense of urgency to be regarded as fit and lean in the eyes of their coaches.

Pressure from Teammates. The last area under the “feel pressure” umbrella is pressure from teammates. The athletes conveyed that the appearance of their teammates also served as a catalyst for making comparisons. And in turn, these comparisons led to both healthy and unhealthy competition. For example, Gina, when asked if she felt it was important for athletes to have a healthy body image, offered that she felt influenced by her teammates, and often times it made her feel self-conscious. And for this reason she feels it is important for athletes to have a healthy body image.

Personally I am a little bit self-conscious and, not so much as I was earlier this season, but like when you’re an athlete, your always around the other girls and you always have to be like, your undressing in front of each other, taking showers with each other and all that kind of stuff, and if you’re uncomfortable being with yourself, you don’t want to be showing people your body and that kind of stuff…”

From Gina’s statements it can be implied that the athletes are indeed affected by the presence of their teammates in that they are always around one another. As
interactions with teammates are unavoidable, the athletes feel the impact of the importance of maintaining a level playing field with regard to having and maintaining a healthy body image.

Rhonda offered that she feels pressure from her teammates as well. When asked how she felt athletes are influenced by body image, her initial response was, "they're influenced a lot... by your teammates, strength and conditioning coaches." When encouraged to share more about her teammates, she offered:

I think that you compare yourself to your teammates. Your teammates are always around you. So they're there to push you. Sometimes they push you in a good direction, sometimes they don't. Kind of obviously depends on the—but, I mean, you're with them all the time and you're always working out with them, so, they really influence you.

Rhonda discussed that teammate competition can be deemed positive, in that it can be a force to encourage athletes to work harder to be a better athlete or to have a healthy body. However, teammate competition can also be a negative force if it leads to making unhealthy comparisons.

Betty, a track athlete, when asked to discuss some of her experiences with body image and her athletic performance, offered that at times she wished she were more "attractive" compared with her teammates.

I don't know. I guess girls just have the tendency to want to look the prettiest. Girls all want to be the prettiest because they want all the attention; and so, when you see someone else getting all the attention that you could have, if you were prettier, then you just at that moment
say well, I wish I was prettier, 'cause then maybe they’ll be looking at me and maybe I’d be feeling good.

Going with the notion of Rhonda’s statement of how teammate competition can push athletes in a negative direction, Betty’s case puts this into context. She explains how females want to be pretty because this begets positive attention, yet it can cause teammates to compete with one another in an unhealthy manner; and as the subsequent sub-theme of “psychological impact on performance” will reveal, making unhealthy comparisons with other people can adversely affect performance.

Volleyball player, Gina, felt strongly about pressure from teammates. When asked how she felt athletes are influenced by body image, she did not hesitate with her response.

Athletes are influenced by body image by, well they look at other teammates who have great bodies and they’re great athletes and they want to be like them. That’s one way they can be influenced. I’m influenced by my friend, and she is an amazing volleyball player with an amazing body and she’s benching like 150 in high school. So I’m like, wow, I want to be like her.

Janet, a track athlete, indicated that she felt pressure from “competition…” She went on to elaborate that, “if they [teammates] think that your weight is too high, then they’ll be like you need to lose weight or we can’t help you out and stuff. Then you’ll try to lose the weight.”

One final note under this sub-theme suggests that the interviewees themselves give preference to lean athletes over nonlean athletes regarding teammates. This was
seen during phase one of the interviews, in which the interviewees were asked to indicate who they would rather have as a teammate, the graphically depicted lean or nonlean athlete. Over half of the responses (11 out of 20) indicated that the lean athlete would be a more desirable teammate. Typical responses supporting this notion included, “more versatile,” “able to perform more tasks,” “more endurance,” “seems quicker...stronger,” “better physically...shows endurance.” Responses such as these indicate that not only do these athletes feel they are held to a high standard from the standpoint of their teammates, they too, exude an equal standard for their teammates regarding the importance of having a desirable physique.

In sum, teammate competition proved to be a force in the way in which these female athletes view themselves as well as their teammates. Interestingly, while the interviewees represented a melting pot of sports and races, they indicated that they see themselves on the same playing field regarding the notion of having a healthy physique; they are held to a different standard, thus are constantly making comparisons with one another. However, these comparisons offer the capacity to push the athletes in a positive direction if they are working towards a healthy body. Yet they can also be pushed in a negative direction in that the comparisons would be a source for unhealthy behaviors that could lead to the development of body image problems.

**Deviant Cases of Feel Pressure.** All interviewees suggested feeling pressure in some form, yet there were some that discussed situations in which they did not feel pressure. To illustrate the deviant case of feeling pressure from the media in terms of body image, Vivian, a basketball player, emphasized, that as an athlete, she did not...
allow the universal image of women in the media to influence her one way or the other as she stated, “I really could care less what the people look like on TV... and I really don’t think athletes care about it.” In her statement, she indicated that she did not allow the media to influence her; it was also her perception that other athletes were not influenced either way by the media. However, this was one of the few participants who exhibited this viewpoint. Pressure from multiple sources (media, cultural norms and expectation, others, professional athletes, coaches, and teammates) was clearly identified by many of the other participants.

While most of the girls indicated that their coach applies pressure on them in some capacity, Annie, a golf player, contradicted the general consensus of the athletes by indicating that she did not feel pressure from her coach to gain or lose weight. However, in one of her statements, she indicated that she observed friends in other sports being influenced by coaches regarding their weight as she stated, “in golf it’s not so much about body image...I’ve never been pushed in either direction.” Because the majority of the athletes interviewed experienced pressure from their coaches in some capacity, Annie’s statement represented the minority.

Regarding norms and expectations from society, Gwen, a golf player, agreed that society does in fact place pressure on females, including athletes, to have a certain body type. However, she indicated that while she is aware of this societal expectation, she does not allow it to affect her and the way she feels about her body. Under this notion, she stated, “I think the norm is whatever is healthy for each individual person.” While Gwen had a healthy outlook, many of the other participants did not. Because the overall consensus was that pressure from society
and norms affect the way most of the athletes feel about themselves, Gwen’s statement represented the minority.

Regarding pressure from others, Carol, a track athlete indicated that she does not allow what others think of her to influence her and the way she feels about her body. In discussing some of her experiences with body image and her athletic performance, she indicated that she has seen her teammates become sensitive regarding their weight. However, regarding herself, she had a different sentiment of, “it doesn’t really bother me… I don’t really care.” While Carol was not influenced by the comments or suggestions of others, she in fact, represented the minority in that most of the athletes indicated that they did perceive other people to influence their self-image.

In sum, the theme of “Feel Pressure” was fundamental to the overall picture of the factors that influence the body image of the female athletes in this study. As clearly indicated by the interviewees, the notion of feeling pressure is indeed the crux of their sentiments. They feel pressure from the media in that it is the conduit through which societal expectations flow, and in turn, influences the way in which others (non-athletic peers, spectators at events, and teachers) view them as athletes. Moreover, the media is also the outlet through which the perfect physique of the professional athlete is portrayed, which impacts the physical expectation these athletes place on themselves. Pressure from coaches was revealed as a powerful influence on the way these athletes feel about themselves from the physical standpoint as well; as clearly indicated by the interviewees, coaches will often make assumptions regarding athletic potential based solely on physique – as seen with recruitment. Teammate
competition was also revealed as a source of pressure, both positively and negatively; positive with respect to the notion that it can propel these athletes to work harder to enhance athletic performance, yet negative in that it offers the capacity to make unhealthy comparisons.

Subsequent themes revealed additional factors that tap into the mix of elements that impact the body image of female athletes. Factors such as the pervasive stereotypes set forth by the media regarding the depiction of female athletes as well as the lack of coverage that the female athletes receive from the media as opposed to male athletes. Hence, the following theme, “Still Fighting for Respect” revealed that the athletes, despite tremendous progress, are still fighting for respect in the eyes of the media.

Still Fighting for Respect

Still Fighting for Respect is a theme that surfaced during analysis and appeared to evolve from feeling pressure from the media. The athletes indicated that one source of their pressure was a derivative of the media’s depiction of them. From this depiction they are consistently striving to be regarded as serious athletes, yet the sexual images of the female athletes portrayed in the media posits an uphill battle for them to fight. Furthermore, as opposed to their male counterparts, they are overwhelmingly underrepresented in the media as opposed to their male counterparts. Hence, there were two sub-themes that emerged under the umbrella of Still Fighting for Respect: (a) women athletes as sexual objects, and (b) women athletes underrepresented in the media (see Figure 4).
Still Fighting for Respect

Figure 4. Theme of "Still Fighting for Respect"
Women Athletes as Sexual Objects. To illustrate the notion that female athletes are consistently portrayed as sexual objects in the media, most of the athletes, when discussing how they saw female athletes in the media, used the following descriptions: “Sexy.” “Sexy, social, pretty.” “A bit nude.” “Sex symbols.” “Models in workout clothes.” “Small and thin.” “Sex icons.” “Amazing bodies.” “Attractive and cute.” “Popular ones are the prettiest.” To put some of these descriptions into context, Gina, was very passionate as she expressed her frustrations with fighting for respect. She is a volleyball player and feels frustrated that at many of their games, there are few spectators. However, she is aware of the “sexy” image that has manifested itself with volleyball players and realizes that this sexy image in the media is often used to gain spectators.

The college newspaper here printed an article about how the volleyball team was worth watching and it was...it was really funny because it was a really long article about how, why people should come watch us and stuff like that. And they’re like, ‘six foot blondes, skinny blondes with long hair.’ And I’m like, okay well first of all, there’s no one on our team like that, except for maybe like two or three girls. And they’re talking about spandex and stuff like that. It was a very sexual thing. Talking about how hot we are, rather than how good we are, or who are the good athletes. It said nothing about an individual athlete really. It just talked about who was on the team, and it talked about how sexy we are. How sexy our shorts are and stuff like that. And I thought that was very funny. But, I don’t know, I think it’s pretty, it’s kind of like a good thing, but in a way it
is a really bad thing, you know, because we want to be recognized more for our talents than our bodies, but in order to get a huge portion of the population into our sport, or to getting into women athletes, is through their bodies first. Which is how it’s going to have to be, I think.

While Gina does not necessarily agree with using the sexual image of volleyball players as a method of soliciting spectators, she understands that it is a powerful tool. She would rather be more recognized for her talent than a sexy image, yet she understands the power of the sexy image in gaining an audience for her sport. Gina’s statement represents the very essence of how female athletes are still fighting for respect and the contradictions they must embrace to promote their sport in our culture.

Rose, when asked to describe the way women athletes are portrayed in the media, stated, “[they are] sex symbols...sometimes inadequate.” I asked her why she mentioned “sex symbols” and she stated, “just like a lot of female athletes, after like the Olympics and stuff, will be asked to like pose in Playboy.” When I asked her why she thought this was, she stated, “...they do that kind of for promotion of the athlete.” Rose was suggesting that the sexual image of female athletes is often used as a marketing tool; and this taps heavily into the notion that female athletes are seen more as sexual objects than serious athletes.

Other athletes in this study discussed how advertisers will use the sexy image of female athletes to enhance sales. As Janet stated, “when they [the media] think of sales, they think slim, beautiful, gorgeous.” Francine observed that, “if [a female] athlete looks good in a bathing suit [they] will be on the front cover of Sports Illustrated.” And Marcy made the statement that when she sees a female athlete in a
sports magazine they usually are “in a little bikini top sitting on the car, posing in the *ESPN* magazine.” These statements represent the tone of the athletes’ views in this study on the way the media depicts female athletes in the media. Moreover, they revealed that they deem this depiction as unfair.

Nancy, a volleyball player, observed that with female athletes in the media, “most of the popular ones are the prettiest.” And being regarded as pretty is often a harbinger for being used as a sexual object in the media. Patty offered her thoughts on this issue when asked how she felt about the way athletes are portrayed in the media. She expressed that she does not think that there is a level playing field with attractive vs. unattractive athletes; that advertisers tend to pick only the attractive athletes for their products, while overlooking seemingly good athletes who do not fit into a certain mold, per se.

I think the media only focuses on the picture-perfect athletes...the tennis player with the blonde hair. She does the ads for the cameras. Like they only pick girls like that, who look super skinny, she’s tanned, she’s tall, she’s blonde. I mean she’s like every other model out there... Gee I wonder why?

Patty’s question could be answered based on the notion that more attractive athletes tend to be seen as more lucrative endorsements in the eyes of the media.

The issue of the way in which men view women and athletes continuously surfaced during the interviews. To illustrate this, Vivian, when asked how she viewed female athletes in the media stated, “they are...like sex symbols, sex icons.” When asked why she thought this, she stated, “I just think that men are attracted to
athletic women with good bodies.” Gwen offered that in golf, the camera tends to continuously focus on “only the attractive ones with beautiful blue eyes.” When I asked her why she thought this, she stated, “that’s what they want to see – men especially—don’t want to see big, overweight women.” Marcy, a softball player, offered a different spin on this issue. She feels that men have a tendency to view women as sexy because of their involvement in sports. I asked her how she felt about this, and she stated, “all these men... need to stop relating women with sex just because they’re in sports.” This statement revealed a level of frustration and that she is not comfortable with the idea of women athletes being regarded as sexual objects in the eyes of men.

Another issue that surfaced was the notion that the media is more forgiving of “imperfect” physiques with male athletes than it is for female athletes. For example, Patty, when she discussed how male athletes were portrayed in the media, offered that the playing field is not balanced with regard to weight issues.

I just think that it sucks that guys can, like guys can, you know, look however they want and [the media is] okay with that. But if girls get fat [they are regarded as]... ‘ooh, she’s so nasty’—like, you know what I mean? It’s okay for guys to be imperfect, but it’s not okay for girls to be imperfect.

Patty’s statement represents the fact that male athletes are not expected to maintain a certain physique in order for the media to regard them as worthy of coverage. It also enhances the notion that women are held to a different standard.
Along these same lines, Gloria, a tennis player, when asked to describe how she felt female athletes were portrayed in the media, discussed the aspect that the media has a tendency to dwell on the physique of female athletes more prevalently than with male athletes. She stated that “...it’s not always fair I think to any woman in the media to be judged more harshly [than males] sometimes.” Gloria’s feelings on this issue run in tandem with the statement of Patty, and suggests there is a level of unfairness with regard to how the media judges male vs. female athletes in terms of physique. And this reiterates the aforementioned notion that being aesthetically pleasing in the eyes of the media, which includes being thin and pretty, is often a precursor for being regarded as a sexual object.

In sum, the depth and breadth of the responses regarding women depicted as sexual objects were quite powerful. The athletes in this study indicated that they feel somewhat frustrated with the media’s consistent depiction of female athletes as sexual objects. And this depiction set forth by the media is a major hurdle in female athletes’ fight to be respected.

Female Athletes Underrepresented in the Media. “They could give us more media coverage so we can spread our wings.” These were the words of Marcy, a softball player, and her sentiment represents the majority of the athletes regarding how they felt about being underrepresented in the media. Thus, the sub-theme of female athletes underrepresented in the media surfaced as the result of the high number of responses indicating that female athletes are seen as minorities in the eyes of sport media. Because of this, many of the females feel like they are fighting for respect and that they deserve to be seen as equivalent to male athletes.
Marcy, when asked to describe the way she saw female athletes portrayed in the media, discussed a class project from one of her courses when she was required to find articles in sports magazines that pertained to female athletes. She stated that, “I went through two months of magazines, ESPN magazines, and I think there were two articles about females in the whole two months.” She also stated that the “media really don’t portray that much about female athletes because they don’t see it as being important, important to talk about.” Statements such as these, are powerful indicators that female athletes indeed feel underrepresented in the media.

Along the same lines, Gwen, indicated feelings of frustration regarding the under-representation of female athletes in the media. When she was asked what sports she most often sees in magazines, she stated, “football, baseball, basketball, and probably golf.” She was then asked what she thought about that, and she stated, “I think they’re male dominated…it makes me angry.” She also went on to say that, “I don’t think it’s fair. I think women are just as good at what they do as the men are and they should get just as much air time on TV and space in a magazine as the men do.” From this statement, Gwen revealed her frustrations of the unequal coverage of males vs. females in the media; her frustrations only enhance the notion that female athletes feel underrepresented in the media.

Carol also expressed her frustration with the underrepresentation of female athletes in the media. When asked to describe the way male athletes are portrayed in the media, she said, “they have a lot of shows about them…they have a lot more commercials than females do, than female athletes…they don’t really advertise too
many WNBA basketball games...they don’t have too many female athletes.” When asked how she felt about that she stated,

I think they should have more female commercials, more women sports, like softball, stuff like that. Softball and soccer. Like, even when we play--- but most of the soccer commercials now are more of male teams and the only time they really advertise females in commercials are when the World Cup is going on, or like when it’s time for the Olympics…

When asked why she felt it was important to have more commercials for female athletes, she stated,

So, girls can see more of what they’re able to do, like so younger girls can see more of different kinds of sports and that they’re able to play and that they can be just as successful as guys.

Carol’s statement represents the important role of the media to provide adequate exposure of female athletics. It is important in that the media is in a powerful position to impact the opportunities for females in sport by providing adequate exposure; this exposure has the capacity to influence younger generations of females to become interested in participating in sport.

Janet reflected the sentiments of Carol when discussing the issue of male athletes in the media. “They [the media] give them more publicity…it’s not really fair because girls do the exact same thing, so it should be equal.” Donna also expressed her feelings about the way male and female athletes are portrayed in the media.

Well, I think women athletes are portrayed as like maybe not as strong as men. They can’t perform as good as men. But I think they can, like I
think they can, like I think women work just as hard as men do and they
work out just as much and it’s just body types are different, and I think
that maybe they portray women as lesser, like not as equal as men...

Through this statement Donna indicated that when she has seen female athletes in
the media, the manner in which they are portrayed is not consistent with that of male
athletes.

Along these same lines, Rose suggested that the under-representation of female
athletes makes it seem more difficult to be a female athlete. She feels that the lack of
respect from the media regarding female athletes affects other areas as well.

...like a lot of times they [female athletes] don’t get the respect that they
should from people like, and like through, like I don’t know, people just
don’t understand sometimes that it’s hard to be a woman athlete...like
we’ve had to overcome so much just to be accepted, like a lot of times,
you know, schools won’t give the female sports as much money, newer
equipment, you know. And then you look at football teams and baseball
teams that always have state-of-the-art facilities. And, you know, we’re
still fighting to win championships for our schools too.

When asked to elaborate further, she stated,

It’s frustrating, you know, because, I mean, if you look at the women’s
soccer here in the United States, like our national team has won numerous
world cups and they don’t even have their own league anymore. It got
cancelled. So, it’s kind of frustrating to think after college, this is going to
be it for me. I don’t even have anything else. You know, men they can go
to the next level. But we’re done after this.

Along the same lines, Nancy, when discussing the way female athletes are portrayed in the media emphasized that sports media is overwhelmingly male-dominated.

...all that you mostly see is football – football or men’s, men’s, men’s.

So, women’s obviously wouldn’t be popular if the whole time it’s men’s on everything. You know, people are not going to want a big change like that. I don’t think that people realize that there are different sports [for women], whether it be volleyball or softball...I think it definitely stinks in a way. But I don’t know, like how it would be changed or you know, but I think it would be changed if there was more women’s sports on, such as even team sports, you know, not solo.

From this, Nancy feels that highlighting team sports would contribute to the enhancement of respect for their sport in the eyes of the public by taking away the emphasis on individual athletes. By highlighting individual athletes, often times this is where the media chooses to highlight qualities not related to athletic performance, such as sexual appeal.

And finally, Susan, a basketball player, regarded female athletes in the media as, “of course, minority.” In sum, most of the athletes indicated that they feel frustrated on some level as the result of being underrepresented in the media. They feel, as indicated by their statements, that being underrepresented in the media prevents future opportunities for them to play their sport. Rose’s statement of “this is going to be it for me,” represents the crux of this sub-theme. Indeed, the female athletes in this study are
still fighting for a level of respect, which perhaps, would enable them to continue to play their sport.

*Deviant Cases of Still Fighting for Respect.* There was almost a consensus with the interviews that female athletes in the media are seen as feminine with sex appeal. However, there were a few athletes who made note of the fact that some sports have an image that does not run in tandem with the image seen in mainstream media regarding female athletes. For example, when asked to describe the way women athletes were portrayed in the media, Janet immediately thought of basketball player Sheryl Swoopes. She went on to say, “they portray them athletic in women’s basketball…sometimes they kind of try to make them be gay.” Along these lines, Francine, when asked how she saw women athletes in the media, stated that softball players have a certain stereotype, which is “a more gay, lesbian community…pretty much girls in athletics are probably more the manly, gay, lesbian type, that’s what I think, unless you’re one of the oddballs who has a pretty face and a nice body; and I think that’s how softball is portrayed.” Linda also noted that she sees female tennis players as “real burley.”

A deviant case that went against the notion that female athletes are underrepresented in the media was given by Kate. When she was asked to describe the way female athletes are portrayed in the media, she immediately offered, “strong-minded.” She even went on to say, “…not being overcome by men…but thinking you’re equal with the men.” This statement, albeit powerful, did not run in tandem with the majority of the athletes’ views regarding female athletes’ depiction in the media.

In sum, the theme of Still Fighting for Respect directly relates to the way in which the media portrays female athletes. Specifically, the sub-themes that comprised this
theme revealed that the female athletes in this study see a distinct difference between male and female athletes’ portrayal in the media. In essence they feel that attractive female athletes receive more exposure, regardless of their athletic ability; because of this, they are fighting for respect to be taken more seriously as athletes. Moreover, subsequent themes revealed during analysis reflect the notion that professional athletes in the media are seen as perfect, or in essence, portrayed as gods. And this portrayal of perfectionism in the media only enhances the myriad of pressures the athletes in this study felt.

Portrayed as Gods

The theme “portrayed as gods” represents the pressure athletes felt vicariously through the media’s consistent depiction of professional athletes as “gods on earth.” This depiction is responsible for the perpetual pressure placed upon the athletes from the way in which the media portrays athletes as proverbial celebrities as well as role models. This ubiquitous view of perfectionism places pressure on the athletes in that the room for error, either in appearance or performance, is nonexistent. Therefore, when the athletes inevitably make a mistake, the media is quick to sensationalize. And for this, the athletes feel a sense of pressure to remain on the transient pedestal set forth by the media. There were two sub-themes that emerged under this umbrella: (a) athletes as celebrities, and (b) athletes as role models (see Figure 5).
Athletes as Celebrities. "Portrayed like gods" is a phrase that was used in various forms by many of the athletes when describing the way athletes, namely professionals, are depicted in the media. For example, Nancy, when asked to discuss her feelings about the way athletes are portrayed in the media, noted that she felt they were depicted "more as celebrities than as athletes."

When I asked her why she thought this, she stated,

Just like the attention that they [receive]...I think people forget that they're athletes and they're just like celebrities. Like that is their job and
...I think people forget how hard they work for what they do, and they're just like celebrities, you know, portrayed like that.

Gwen, when asked her feelings about the way athletes are portrayed in the media, instantly stated, “I think they’re portrayed as God on Earth.” However, while she acknowledged the pervasive celebrity-like stereotype set forth by the media, she also indicated that she disagreed with it, and even felt it was unfair.

They’re made out to seem like they’re not a normal person. They’re made out to seem like they’re untouchable and their status is unattainable… I think it is completely opposite. I think they’re normal people with some athletic ability who have worked really hard at whatever sport they’re passionate about and I think everybody, you know, given a natural ability, can reach that point if they work as hard as them. So I don’t think it’s fair for them to be put up on such a high pedestal.

Linda indicated that she too felt that athletes in the media were, “held to higher standards.” Marcy stated that athletes in the media were “portrayed as Goddesses.”

Regarding appearance, Francine felt that athletes were held to the same standards as celebrities in the media, especially in the respect that “[they] are held high on a pedestal and that’s how people should look, and that’s how they [the media] want athletes to look.” And along the same lines, Patty felt that “the media only focuses on picture-perfect athletes…they’re all celebrity-like.”

Male athletes in particular were seen as “God on Earth” by many of the study participants. For example, Kate described male athletes in the media as “portrayed like gods….the male of all males.” Regarding male athletes, Susan indicated that
“they think the world revolves around them.” Janet stated that male athletes in the media were portrayed “as gods...there’s the religious one and then there’s the, oh, he’s so awesome because he is a male athlete...let’s be groupies.” Gina, when referring to male athletes in the media, stated, “…what they want to do is, as an athlete, is to make that money so they can get the girls and, you know, get the diamonds, and get all that rich stuff that’s in the media, the media portrays.” Nancy referred to male athletes as “popular and overexposed.” Finally, Marcy noted that the media sees male athletes as a “hot ticket” and even made a reference to basketball legend Pistol Pete’ portrayal in the media “as a god.”

Regarding race, an observation made by Francine, was that white female athletes are seen more as celebrities than African-American female athletes.

I don’t really know any other African-American female athletes [except basketball or track stars]...but I mean, I’ve seen them put a good bit of white female athletes in the media, maybe because of their face...more of a celebrity-type. When I’m seeing them in the media, I don’t think of them as an athlete in general...I think of somebody like Jennie Fench who marries a baseball player who’s worth several millions of dollars.

Her statement indicates that the she sees the media as quick to enhance the celebrity-like qualities of professional athletes. As celebrities in society are usually presented as physically perfect by the media, this suggests that the female athletes in this study see professional athletes as being synonymous with the typical perfect-looking celebrity. For this reason, feelings about their body image can be affected.
Another element that surfaced throughout the interviews was the notion of money in relation to the professional athlete. References to this were made many times in discussing the celebrity-like depiction of athletes set forth by the media. For example, Francine stated that athletes were "paid like celebrities;" Nancy stated that "professional [athletes] get paid so much for what they do;" and when referring to professional athletes, Marcy stated that "it all boils down to money."

Indeed the general tone of the athletes in this study was that they view athletes in the media as celebrity-like figures, which in turn lead to the notion that they are portrayed as gods. They indicated that they observe the media as a filter through which many superficial elements of professional athletes flow, such as pleasing appearances and big salaries. The problem with this in relation to body image is that the superficial image the media portrays is often unattainable to the average athlete. "Held to a standard" was a phrase used in various forms by the participants to represent the notion that athletes are expected to possess qualities outside the realm of normalcy. And as most of the athletes in this study viewed themselves, as Gwen quoted, "just normal people," there exists a gap between the celebrity-like image of athletes in the media and the everyday image of the typical athlete. However, while the media is quick to portray athletes in a celebrity-like manner, there is also the notion that the media is apt to highlight athletes who serve as role models in the community.

*Athletes as Role Models.* Just as athletes are portrayed as celebrities, they are also seen as role models. Thus, the sub-theme of "athletes as role models" surfaced. This theme emerged as participants indicated that there is a positive side to the popularity
of athletes in that they are seen as role models. The opportunity for athletes to serve in this capacity was deemed admirable in the eyes of the participants. For example, Donna stated that she sees athletes “shown positively...especially Misty May and Kerri Walsh...people like them because they do give back to the community and they’re good leaders...” Sandra even stated that the positive image set forth by the media served as an inspiration to her.

I think athletes are portrayed very highly. A lot of people – I know growing up, I would say I looked up to a lot of athletes even in the beginning when I wasn’t very serious about softball, they always were treated as very high quality people. You know, they work hard and they were part of a team and they’re very motivated...I saw them on T.V, like I’d watch softball growing up a lot and every time they’re on T.V., it was just very positive for me and pushed me to want to be a part of that and to want to become like a higher athlete or play in college. I think it drove me because I always thought of them highly.

Susan, when discussing the way in which female athletes are portrayed in the media, reiterated the sub-theme that female athletes are underrepresented in the media, yet regarded their portrayal, albeit a small window of exposure, as positive. She stated that while she does not see female athletes in the media very often, when she does see them, they are usually portrayed in a positive manner. She said, “I think they [female athletes] are portrayed very well ...most of the media time is in... doing good deeds like community service or such.” Along these same lines, Rhonda stated that athletes are “idols for lots of people, kids growing up.” And she went on to say that “I think that’s a
good thing if your kids want to get out there and play basketball or something.” And Rose, when asked how she felt about the way athletes in general were portrayed in the media, indicated that is was positive.

[Athletes are] similar to role models...they try to have like, like there’s certain rules you have to follow and they like make the athletes follow them so that, you know, whenever kids see them on T.V., or in public, that, you know, they’re making sure that they’re doing the right thing.

Betty, when asked about women athletes in the media, offered that she felt female athletes are seen as more respectable than typical models and actresses in the media. She stated, “I think they [female athletes] are respected...more than like actresses, just because of the type of work they do.”

In sum, the overall consensus among the athletes was that there is value in being a popular athlete in that there is the opportunity to inspire others through being a role model. This positive depiction of female athletes in the media offers an ostensible sense of hope to the athletes in this study; while they are still fighting for respect regarding the notion of being portrayed as sexual objects in the media, tremendous gains have been made via the positive impact that athletes, which include females, have on society by being a positive role model.

Deviant Cases of Portrayed as Gods. For the theme of Portrayed as Gods, there were cases that did not run in tandem with the general consensus. Most of the examples included the depictions of male athletes in the media. For example, Susan, when referring to male athletes indicated that they have “no character, they do just what they want to do...they know they are talented...they think the world revolves
around them.” However, while she felt male athletes were depicted in a negative manner, she indicated that she sees female athletes portrayed “positively.” Moreover, she acknowledged that “you always have those…the good athletes which have character and integrity, and then you have the other athletes who always cause problems.” While Susan did acknowledge the fact that at times, the media has a tendency to portray male athletes negatively, she also noted that there is a positive side to the way in which the media portrays athletes.

In sum, the theme of Portrayed as Gods revealed the notion that athletes in general are held to a higher standard in society. The athletes in this study deemed being held to a higher standard in the eyes of the media from the standpoint of a role model, as positive. Yet the media also offers the tendency to create an often unattainable standard via the high prevalence coverage of attractive athletes, attention to high salaries, and, as Nancy stated when referring to the portrayal of athletes, as “…like celebrities…” While the role model and the celebrity aspect of athletes result from media influences, subsequent themes that offered the capacity to influence the way in which the athletes in this study felt about their body image, included factors not enforced by the media. The athletes discussed in great detail the elements that factor in to their athletic performance and revealed that in order to perform well, it is imperative to be both physically and psychologically “fit.” Thus the notion that as athletes, they feel pressure to have a healthy body, was another major theme that surfaced during analysis.

**Must Have Healthy Body**

“Must have healthy body” is a theme that emerged during analysis, and taps into both the physical as well as psychological impact on performance. This theme revealed
that athletes in this study feel tremendous pressure, for example, from coaches to fall within healthy weight ranges; pressure from teammates to strive to be the strongest, the leanest and the best performer; and pressure from the athletes themselves to be as healthy as possible to prevent injuries. All of these elements combined factor into the equation that athletes feel pressure to have a healthy body to not only perform well, but to have a healthy view of themselves. Under the umbrella of “Must Have Healthy Body” are two sub-themes: (a) physical impact on athletic performance, and (b) psychological impact on athletic performance (See Figure 6).

Figure 6. “Must Have Healthy Body”
Physical Impact on Athletic Performance. “It’s important to be healthy all-around as an athlete.” These are the words of Carol, and they represent the tone of many of the athletes, which is, as an athlete, it is important to have a healthy body from the physical standpoint to enhance athletic performance. To illustrate some examples of other athletes who agree with being healthy for athletic performance, Gloria, a tennis player, discussed some of her issues with weight and her performance on the court.

[I’m] definitely slower on the court. I mean considering I’ve put on a lot of weight over the last three years, I’m quick but I’m not fast if that makes any sense. I read the ball on the court very well and I can make a drop shot from the baseline but sprinting wise I’m not fast so it definitely affects me in that sense...and for my size I am overweight and I think that puts some pressure on my joints. I’m injured a lot that might have something to do with it.

As a tennis player, Gloria recognizes the importance of being physically fit in the face of her athletic performance. Also, she is aware of her weight issue and its adverse ramifications to her health.

Gina, when discussing the physical demands of volleyball, emphasized the importance of having a healthy physique to perform well.

...in volleyball you have to have a lot of quick movements and you have to be, you have to have lean muscle mass to move quick, I guess, or that’s your goal, to be lean as possible because you need to jump high. You need to be explosive and you can’t have extra weight because it’s going to hurt your knees, you know, because all your joints need to be...I don’t
know, in good shape, I guess.

Gina reiterates Gloria’s observation that being overweight can be especially hard on an athlete’s body; and especially in a sport such as Gina’s, being physically unfit will undoubtedly thwart athletic performance.

Rhonda, who also plays volleyball, made the statement that, “if you’re going to be fast, it helps to be thinner over bigger.” Softball player Marcy stated that, “you have to be certain weight for positions...in tennis you can’t be big and play...smaller people have more effect at sport.” Marcy also went on to say that “weight issues impact [athletic performance].” Soccer player, Rose, noted that for an athlete in any sport, “it’s good to be in shape because you can get hurt [if not].” And Kate, who also plays soccer mentioned that the athletes who are “healthier, stronger, more fit [are] better apt to do better in sport.”

Vivian, who plays basketball, alluded to the fact that playing a sport at the collegiate level brings with it certain physical demands that were not present at other levels of play, such as high school. And because of this, collegiate athletes have no alternative but to be healthy if they want to succeed in their sport.

And in college, it’s a completely different level. Your day revolves practice and weights and eating right and, you know, lifting weights and like all that stuff. So that’s why I think that in college you are almost forced to have the healthiest body that you can because you don’t really have a choice. Like either you have a healthy body and you succeed at your sport, or you decided to just, you know, eat unhealthy and kind of just forget about succeeding. Hold on, that came out wrong. Either you
can have a healthy body and succeed at your sport, or you can go the other way and just fail and since college like of an athletes...the life of a college athlete revolves around the sport, you’re kind of forced to go down the path of the right.

And the “path of right” to Vivian is to engage in the necessary behaviors to have a healthy body; because it is essential to optimal athletic performance at the collegiate level.

Along these same lines, softball player, Sandra, who is a pitcher, discusses the importance of having a healthy physique to perform well in her position.

...especially since I’m a pitcher, our coach has us doing other things than some of the other players, like we have to run a lot more for endurance and stuff, so I think that helps me through the game with endurance and lasting longer.

In sum, there was almost a consensus among the athletes that having a healthy physique lends an advantage in the competitive playing field of their sport. Moreover, during phase one of the interviews, Betty, a track player, when observing the photograph of the nonlean athlete, stated that she “looks tired...doesn’t look healthy...not energetic.” She went on to say that she thought this “because prior knowledge that most heavier people aren’t as healthy.” Her statement represented the majority of the statements made regarding the photograph of the nonlean image, which only enhanced the notion that having a fit physique lends credibility in the face of athletic performance. And in a nutshell, Annie summed up the essence of this sub-theme of “physical impact on performance,” by stating, “when in shape, [athletes]
perform better.” But just as it is imperative to be healthy from the physical standpoint, athletes must also be healthy from the psychological standpoint.

*Psychological Impact on Performance.* This sub-theme surfaced from the result of statements, such as “if you’re not happy with yourself, it’s hard to perform to the best of your ability.” These were the words of Rhonda, and represent the essence of this sub-theme. Many of the athletes, when discussing their performance, made references to the importance of feeling good about themselves in the face of their athletic performance. Patty stated, when discussing the importance of having a healthy body image as an athlete, that “part of it is mentally liking yourself.” She went on to say that some of her athletic peers, at times, think that “mentally they don’t see the same picture that everybody else does because it’s almost like they’ve been poisoned, like they’re blind.” This statement indicates that athletes often have misconceptions of themselves in terms of body image; and she feels that this compromised mindset has the capacity to adversely affect athletic performance.

There were other cases that strongly supported this sub-theme. For example, Rhonda, when she was asked if she felt it was important as an athlete to have a healthy body image, referred to the notion that if an athlete does not feel good about themselves, this could offer the potential for unhealthy practices, such as not eating enough, which in turn can affect performance.

...if you’re not happy with yourself, it’s really hard to perform to your best ability. I mean...some people are really kind of obsessive over their body weight and things like that. They think they need to lose weight, or things like that, I mean – and then some people go to extremes and don’t
eat and things like that. I mean, if you don’t eat then you don’t have energy and become sick.

Rhonda’s statement discusses the adverse impact of having an unhealthy psychological mindset in terms of athletic performance; in a nutshell, if an athlete is apt to engage in unhealthy behaviors, or have a negative psychological outlook, she will not perform well as an athlete.

Along these same lines, Vivian, a basketball player, when discussing the importance of having a healthy psychological mindset as an athlete, talked about how some of her struggles with an eating disorder affected her level of play, and how coming to terms with it really helped her become a stronger athlete.

Can I just be really honest? Like I was fighting bulimia in high school because I was too worried about by body image. I was bulimic my junior year and I actually got down to 130 pounds and I’m 6’2”. And I was playing summer basketball… and I would find myself being really tired after practice… and it seemed like it was really hard. So I pretty much had to start eating right because I was running out of energy. Like it was impossible to go to practice without eating. And, once again, the reason that I didn’t was because I thought I was overweight…

Other examples of athletes noting the importance of having a healthy psychological mindset were made by Susan, when she stated, “take volleyball---they might be influenced by body image because of their uniforms they have to wear…[this could make them] self-conscious.” Janet noted that “nothing but negative thoughts about yourself can affect performance.” Annie mentioned that
being an effective athlete “has to be about being healthy and feeling good and being in a good place.” And Patty sums up the notion of having a healthy psychological mindset as an athlete by stating, “you have to learn to block it out, if you don’t it’s just going to mentally take over you.”

Indeed, the depth of the responses of the interviewees validates the sub-theme of “psychological impact on performance.” As indicated by the athletes, having a healthy psychological mindset directly impacts athletic performance. As revealed by the interviewees, having skewed perceptions in body image can lead to the development of unhealthy physical behaviors, which can make the challenging task of being a collegiate athlete that much harder.

**Deviant Cases of Must Have Healthy Body.** There were very few deviant cases for the theme of “Must Have Healthy Body.” However, there were a few cases that presented a different spin on the issue. One such case was Patty. She was discussing the notion that the media has a tendency to only portray athletes as physically fit and toned. While she did agree with the importance of having a healthy body as an athlete, she did note, however, that “there are plenty of girls who are athletic and who are good at their sport that don’t have bodies [physically fit, toned] like that.” Softball players were used as an example of this. For example, Marcy, a softball player noted, in Phase I of the interviews that “[the nonlean athlete] doesn’t look that much in shape – but still could be fit.” And Vivian, who undoubtedly agreed with the notion of having a healthy psychological mindset as indicated by her experiences with an eating disorder, did however mention that the physical aspect of being an athlete is not as important as the psychological aspect of being an athlete. She stated, “and for
an athlete...I think you need to change your, the mental part of it and just focus on what’s the best thing for you.”

In sum, the theme of “Must Have Healthy Body” represents the importance that the athletes in this study placed upon their physiques and their minds. Having a healthy body is important to them, because being physically and psychologically healthy directly impacts their athletic performance. However, it was also indicated in the interviews through this theme, that the athletes are very aware of the elements that contribute to having an unhealthy body, which was a positive element conveyed by the participants in this study.

It’s All We See

The theme of “It’s All We See” emerged from the result of the athletes indicating that they see differences in the pervasive stereotypes in the media among white vs. African-American female athletes. These stereotypes, as noted by the interviewees, tend to portray white female athletes as thin and attractive while portraying African-American athletes as athletic and strong. Hence, two sub-themes surfaced under the umbrella of It’s All We See, and included (a) white female athletes portrayed as thin and beautiful, and (b) African-American athletes portrayed as athletic and strong (See Figure 7).
Figure 7. Theme of "It's All We See"

White Female Athletes Portrayed as Thin and Attractive. "...in the media, they're portrayed the same...small and thin." "Blonde hair, blue eyes, good-looking." These are example statements from the interviewees as they described the way in which female athletes are portrayed in the media. The sub-theme of "white female athletes portrayed as thin and attractive" emerged from the number of responses that indicated this. To illustrate this further, Carol, when asked to describe the way she sees white women athletes portrayed in the media, stated that many of the commercials she sees for sport products, tend to use white, "model-looking" athletes.

To me, they look like models. They don't really look like athletes. They look like they all just got their hair done and they're all tanned. I mean,
they kind of look like athletes because they’re in shape, but they all kind of look the same.

Gwen also noted that she sees the media consistently portray white female athletes as attractive, more so than African-American athletes. When she was discussing the way in which white female athletes are portrayed in the media, she stated that “when I think of a white female athlete, I think of blonde hair, blue eyes, tall, thin, usually pretty good-looking.” Along these same lines, Gloria even stated that white female athletes in the media are “more feminine…as opposed to black female athletes.” When referring to the notion that the media tends to depict female athletes as attractive, Francine made the comment that “[the media is] quick to put a white female athlete with a nice face and body over an African-American [athlete].” Vivian’s first response to the way in which white female athletes were depicted in the media was, “they’re pretty.” Gina stated that white female athletes in the media are portrayed “like a sex symbol.” And Carol elaborated a bit more about how general sports magazines tend to favor attractive white female athletes by stating that “if you read a runner’s magazine then you see a diverse race – but Sports Illustrated, ESPN uses white models as athletes.”

With regard to the depiction of size, Patty indicated that she sees white female athletes as being portrayed as thinner in the media than African-American female athletes.

I think that they’re portrayed as, most of them tend to be, like a lot of white girls, like when I think about a white girl being advertised in the media, I think of like a tennis player or a dancer or a swimmer. Or even like a soccer player, like Mia Hamm or Brandi Chastain, all of them. Like
they’re advertised a lot in magazines and on T.V. for all kinds of stuff.

And usually white girls, with the exception of soccer and maybe the basketball kind of players, it seems like they’re all really little, like dancer-type bodies. Small, thin, and lean.

Patty even went on to say that the media “makes it seem like it’s okay [for African-Americans] to be curvier, bigger butts, wider hips – but it’s not okay for white girls to look like that.”

The aforementioned cases demonstrate examples of they way the interviewees viewed white female athletes in the media. As many of the girls, when asked about the portrayal of white female athletes, immediately either said “thin” or “attractive” – the validity of this sub-theme of “white female athletes portrayed as thin and attractive” is only enhanced. Interestingly, however, the interviewees’ view of white female athletes in the media is different from their view of African-American athletes in the media, which tends to be athletic and strong.

African-American Athletes Portrayed as Athletic and Strong. The majority of the interviewees regarded the images of African-American female athletes in the media as “more muscular and toned” or “very strong.” To illustrate this further, Sandra as she discussed this issue, stated:

When I think of non-white female athletes, I probably would think of, like, just off the top of my head, like Serena and Venus Williams, and they’re very strong athletes…

Linda indicated that she sees African-American female athletes as more athletic in the media, as she stated,
I would say they’re portrayed as maybe more athletic, maybe because of their build or just because of, you know, their accomplishments and things like that.

She also went on to say that “all the runners who are black they’re usually the best runners.” When asked why she thought this, she stated, “they’re usually the most accomplished as far as like running and things like that...they are [seen as] more dominant.”

Kate’s immediate response when she referred to African-American female athletes was, “stronger.” She went on to say, when compared to white female athletes that African-American female athletes are seen as,

A lot stronger. A lot fitter. They’re body image is more cut, like their bodies are more cut. It seems like they don’t have to work as hard to achieve that body.

When I asked her why she thought this, she stated, “...that’s all we see, that’s all we’re told [in the media].” This statement reiterates the notion of the power that the media exudes on the thoughts and perceptions of the athletes in this study.

Gwen, too, when asked to describe non-white female athletes in the media stated that “...I think that black women usually are more muscular and toned than even, you know, white athletes.” And Gloria, when she was asked to describe non-white athletes in the media immediately said, “stronger, in better shape, faster.” Elaborating on this she stated

The black female athlete. I mean even if the white female athlete beats the black female athlete it doesn’t matter. The media still perceives her as
yeah, she’s a great athlete she beat her but the black female athlete is
stronger and more fit.

This statement reveals that Gloria has been influenced by the notion that African-
American athletes are stronger and more fit than white athletes. Paula, who plays
tennis, gave the example of Venus Williams as she described the way in which she
sees non-white female athletes in the media.

She looks stronger [than the white female athlete]. So much stronger...
she has...they [nonwhite female athletes] have like a better body... a
healthy body.

Other examples of this include Betty, who stated that she sees female African-
American athletes as “just strong and serious.” Gina’s first response to female
African-American athletes was “sprinter.” Vivian indicated that female African-
American athletes were “very focused...hard-working.” Annie offered that female
African-American athletes in the media have “a lot of power.” On an interesting note,
Patty felt that the athletic image of the female African-American athlete stems from
them “naturally having bigger butts and wider hips.”

In sum, the overall tone of the interviewees was that they in fact see female
African-American athletes as athletic and strong. This observation is in direct
contrast to the way in which they view white female athletes. It is interesting to note
that this perception transcended the race of the participants as it was the common
view of the majority of the participants. While they did not always agree with this
depiction, they did note that this portrayal in sports media was indeed pervasive.
Deviant Cases for It’s All We See. The deviant cases for the theme of “It’s All We See” reflect the notion that white vs. nonwhite athletes are portrayed equally in the media. For example, Donna stated that, “well, to me, I think that maybe both like any race for women, even males, are portrayed the same...I think they’re portrayed equal in that aspect to me...I feel like they’re equally portrayed in the media.” And Sandra, when she discussed how she viewed white vs. nonwhite athletes in the media, offered, “I think they’re portrayed the same.”

In sum, the theme of “It’s All We See” represents the way in which the interviewees perceive images of white and African-American female athletes. The general observation among the participants was that the media commonly depicts white female athletes as thin and attractive while depicting African-Americans as athletic and strong. This goes back to the notion of cultural norms and expectations in that it is more socially acceptable for African-Americans to be deemed as bigger and stronger. This sentiment was revealed through Patty’s statement of “[the media] makes it seem like it’s okay [for female African-Americans] to be curvier, bigger butts, wider hips—not okay for white girls to look like that.” This hints to the notion that the media may find it more appropriate to select larger African-Americans female athletes than white female athletes. And often times larger people tend to be more muscular. Hence, it is more common in the media to see African-American female athletes as strong. Furthermore, this theme is important in that it further illustrates, the power that the media has on the perceptions of the female athletes in this study.

In sum, it was seen how the sub-themes of “pressure from the media” and “pressure from cultural norms and expectations” were related to the theme of “It’s All
We See.” The following section delves deeper into the interrelationship among all of the five major themes and fourteen sub-themes.

Summary

In sum, the coalescence of the major themes and sub-themes paint an overall picture that provides insight into the way the female athletes in this study feel about themselves in terms of body image (For a graphic depiction of the interaction of themes, see Figure 8). As the interviewees indicated, there are a myriad of pressures, as seen with the major theme of Feel Pressure, that influence their body image. The theme of Feel Pressure was the central theme that emerged as it is directly linked to all four other major themes of Still Fighting for Respect, Portrayed as Gods, It’s All We See, and Must Have Healthy Body. In turn, the major sub-theme that emerged was “pressure from the media.” “Pressure from the media,” which fell under the umbrella of Feel Pressure, was the major sub-theme in that it was directly linked to four of the five major themes of Still Fighting for Respect, Portrayed as Gods, and It’s All We See.
Figure 8. Interaction of Themes
Member Checks

Member checking was involved as it is "the process in which the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account" (Creswell, 2005, p. 252). For the purposes of this study, member checking involved one-on-one meetings in which the participants were provided a graphic depiction of the interaction of themes (see Figure 6), along with a written account of the highlights under each theme. In member checking, it was the intention of the researcher to obtain a general sense of how the athletes felt about the accuracy of themes. In sum, 17 member checks were conducted, with all of them agreeing that the themes were, in fact, a very accurate portrayal.

The following statements were offered by the interviewees during member checking: "I'm shocked -- it's so good!" "You did a really good job." "So accurate." "Thank you." "It's what everyone thinks." "Right on point." "Shocked to see that everyone else saw the same as me." "It's there!" "Very detailed." "It's true." "I agree with it." "It's exactly what I think." "The theme about It's All We See -- gosh, so true!" "Correct about the media—it really does affect us!" "Accurate depiction overall." "Yes!" "Absolutely agree." "Very thorough." "I see it just like that." "It's definitely what you see." "Agree with everything." "It's just how I feel." "That's some good research!" "Agree with all the pressure." "You did a great job!" "This is so good." "I like it!" "Definitely hits the spot." "Very specific." "Very true." "Definitely feel the pressure—2 girls this past year had eating disorders!" "Captures what I feel." "Interesting to see that all of the other sports felt the same as me." "Everything you said is dead-on!" "We all feel the same!"
In sum, the words of the athletes regarding the themes indicate that they do, in fact, agree with the overall findings/themes of this study. This consensus lends a sense of validation to this study, which can lead to the notion that their "voices" were accurately raised by the researcher.
CHAPTER VI
SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following chapter is organized and presented into the following sections: (a) summary of study, (b) findings and conclusions, (c) discussion, and (d) implications and future recommendations.

Summary of Study

The purpose of this study was to use a mixed method design to examine the impact that sports magazines and thin-ideal images had on the body image, as identified by appearance, weight, and attribution, of female collegiate athletes. The secondary purpose of this study was to determine what role race played in the development of body image dissatisfaction as a result of viewing sports magazines and thin-ideal images. It was intended for the results of this study to contribute to the body of knowledge pertaining to the behaviors that influence the body image of collegiate female athletes.

The quantitative aspect of the study was guided by the following research hypotheses:

H₁: Exposure to thin-ideal and sports magazine content is negatively associated with scores on three body-esteem subscales, defined by weight, appearance, and attribution.

H₂: Exposure to thin-ideal and sports magazine content is more negatively associated with scores on three body-esteem subscales, defined by weight, appearance, and attribution in White female athletes than it will for non-White female athletes.
H₃: White female athletes have higher exposure to thin-ideal magazine content than non-White female athletes.

The research purpose of the qualitative aspect of the study was to gain insight into the extent that female athletes' perceptions in body image are influenced by viewing sports media. This central purpose was guided by the following research questions:

Research Question #1: To what extent do female athletes feel comfortable with their own body image?

Research Question #2: How do female athletes feel about the way athletes are portrayed in the media?

Research Question #3: To what extent do females link body image with athletic performance?

A mixed-methods research design was used for this study. In the quantitative aspect of the study, participants (N=87) were surveyed which comprised 76% of the current female athletes at the chosen site of the study. Participants indicated their interest in reading women's and men's sports magazines while also indicating their exposure, via a Likert-type scale, to specific genres of magazines (general sport, sport-specific, entertainment, fashion, fitness & health, and news). The Body-Esteem Scale for Adolescents and Adults, developed by Mendleson, et al. (2001), was used to measure participants' self-evaluation of their body or appearance via three subscales of BE-Appearance, BE-Weight, and BE-Attribution. Descriptive statistics were performed regarding race, age, current sport, and the frequency of exposure to different genres of magazines. Pearson's correlation was used to test Hypothesis 1, while Fisher's
transformation of Pearson’s correlation was used to test Hypothesis 2. An independent-samples $t$ test was used to test Hypothesis 3.

In the qualitative aspect of the study, twenty current female athletes from seven sports (track, tennis, basketball, softball, soccer, golf, and volleyball) self-selected to participate in individual interviews pertaining to (a) general feelings of body image, (b) the importance of having a healthy body image, (c) body image with athletic performance, and (d) athletes portrayed in the media. The interviews were divided into two phases: (1) questions with images and (2) questions without images. Over twelve hours of digital recordings were generated during data collection. In turn, the recordings were professionally transcribed and transformed following Wolcott’s (1994) suggestions for data transformation of: (a) displaying findings, (b) identifying patterned regularities in the data, (c) comparing cases with one another, and (d) critiquing the research process. Employing these strategies allowed for a systematic approach to analyzing data. In addition, graphics were used to display themes. In identifying themes in this study, interview transcripts were read, followed by the process of coding. Coding in this study was aided through the use of standards set forth by Creswell (2005).

Findings and Conclusions

The quantitative data analysis regarding descriptive statistics for body-esteem and tests of hypotheses presented in Chapter IV disclosed the following:

1. Overall, African-American female athletes have a more favorable account of body-esteem, as identified by weight, appearance, and attribution than other racial groups.
2. As a whole, the weakest area of the body-esteem of African-American female athletes was that of attribution; whereas the weakest area of the body-esteem of white female athletes was that of weight.

3. Female athletes in this study, regardless of race, do not engage in regular reading of sport-specific magazines.

4. African-American female athletes in this study more regularly engage in reading entertainment magazines; while white female athletes more regularly engage in reading fashion magazines.

5. Decreased feelings in the body-esteem of female athletes as identified by appearance, weight, and attribution, was not related to exposure to general, sport, or fashion/entertainment magazines.

6. The race of female athletes was not a harbinger for decreased feelings in body-esteem as identified by appearance, weight, and attribution as a result of exposure to general, sport, and fashion/entertainment magazines.

7. White female athletes have higher exposure to magazines than non-White female athletes; specifically, white female athletes have higher exposure to fashion and entertainment magazines than non-White female athletes.

8. As a whole, white female athletes and non-White female athletes shared relatively the same exposure to sports magazines.

The following presents a brief review of the findings found in Chapter V while providing answers to each of the research questions:

To what extent do female athletes feel comfortable with their own body image?
Both phases of the interviews provided insight into this question. During phase one, the interviewees were asked if they saw themselves in either image of the lean athlete or the nonlean athlete. From this, there were three areas of answers that emerged: 1) those that saw themselves more like the lean athlete, 2) those that saw themselves more like the nonlean athlete, and 3) those that saw themselves in both images. Of these sections, most of the athletes’ responses fell under being more like the lean athlete. However, while this provided evidence that the athletes in this study saw themselves as being more like the lean athlete, this did not indicate that they necessarily felt comfortable with their image, albeit lean. Insight into this notion was revealed through several themes that emerged during the second phase of the interviews.

The theme of “Feel Pressure” revealed many elements that suggested the athletes in this study were not always comfortable with their body image. The sub-theme of “pressure from others” provided very poignant illustrations that the athletes in this study feel pressure to maintain a certain physique. Examples of this were seen when participants discussed their experiences with feeling self-conscious in the eyes of others (non-athletic peers, spectators at events, and teachers); some of the interviewees were very specific with regard to their experiences as they revealed that gaining muscle weight is often times perceived negatively. This notion was also revealed through the sub-theme of “pressure from the media.” For example, in “pressure from the media” it was seen that the athletes are very aware of the lean and feminine physique of females, including athletes, in the media. And this physique is especially commonplace with white female athletes, as seen through the sub-theme of “white female athletes as thin and beautiful.” Hence, to some of the white athletes, gaining muscle weight did not run in tandem with
the way white female athletes were typically portrayed in the media. Along the same lines, many of the African-American athletes also revealed that they feel pressure to be perceived well in the eyes of others, particularly at their events. For example, many of the athletes indicated that they felt pressure to “look good” in their uniforms at their events as they felt spectators would make judgments on their ability based on their physique. Moreover, many of the athletes experienced, vicariously through their teammates, the ramifications of not having a healthy body image. This was revealed through observing their teammates engage in unhealthy eating or exercise behaviors as a result of feeling self-conscious about having to gain muscle weight or even having to lose weight to meet coaches’ expectations; this was mostly seen through the sub-theme of “pressure from coaches.” Moreover, many of the athletes shared their personal experiences with weight issues as a result of coaches’ pressures. The sub-theme of “pressure from coaches” also revealed that the athletes felt pressure to maintain a fit and lean physique through the eyes of their coaches in the recruitment process as many observed that coaches will often make assessments on performance based on solely on physique.

The aforementioned examples reveal an overall tone that suggests the female athletes in this study were not completely comfortable with their own body image. Subsequent questions examine how female athletes feel about the way athletes are portrayed in the media and to what extent female athletes link body image with athletic performance.
How do female athletes feel about the way athletes are portrayed in the media?

Illustrations regarding how female athletes view the portrayal of athletes in the media was specifically seen through three major themes that emerged in analysis: (a) “Still Fighting for Respect,” (b) “Portrayed as Gods,” and (c) “It’s All We See.” All of these major themes revealed the way in which the athletes in this study observed the way athletes are portrayed in the media.

Under the umbrella of “Still Fighting for Respect,” common phrases used by the interviewees were “sexy,” “a bit nude,” “sex symbols,” and “sex icons,” which were factored into the emergence of the sub-theme of “women athletes as sexual objects.” Other examples of this notion were given by the participants as they discussed how frequently the media will choose an aesthetically pleasing athlete over a talented one; some even made specific references to their experiences with viewing magazines and newspapers. Through the depiction of female athletes as sexual objects, the participants indicated an ostensible feeling of frustration in that female athletes are regarded in the media more for sexual appeal than athletic ability; and this, as indicated by the participants, goes against the very essence of being an athlete. Moreover, the participants observed that female athletes were also underrepresented in the media as compared to male athletes. From this, the participants felt that the lack of media coverage for female athletes prevents opportunities for them to engage in sport beyond the college years.

It was also indicated by the participants that professional athletes in the media are seen as physically perfect; this was revealed through the sub-theme of “pressure from professional athletes.” From this, the participants suggested that the high standard the media sets regarding the physique of professional athletes exudes pressure on them in
that in order to be accepted and revered as a professional, having a fit and lean physique is a necessity. Other references to this notion were made through the theme of "Portrayed as Gods" in which the participants observed that the media consistently depicts athletes as perfect, both morally and physically. From this, the participants indicated a level of pressure in that the room for error in the eyes of the media in nonexistent.

Finally, the theme of "It's All We See" revealed that the participants observed a distinct difference in the way in which the media depicts white female athletes versus African-American female athletes. From this, the participants indicated that white female athletes in the media are consistently depicted as thin and beautiful; while African-American female athletes are depicted as athletic and strong. The participants regarded this depiction as not only unrealistic, but also unfair. In sum, the coalescence of these elements represented how the participants in this study felt about the way athletes were portrayed in the media.

*To what extent do female athletes link body image with athletic performance?*

This was illustrated very specifically through the theme of "Must Have Healthy Body," and taps into both the physical as well as psychological impact on performance. This theme revealed that athletes in this study feel tremendous pressure, for example, from coaches to fall within healthy weight ranges; pressure from teammates to strive to be the strongest, the leanest and the best performer; and pressure from the athletes themselves to be as healthy as possible to prevent injuries. All of these elements combined factor into the equation that athletes feel pressure to have a healthy body not only to perform well, but to have a healthy view of themselves; because having a healthy mindset from the body image perspective directly impacts physical performance. Under
the umbrella of “Must Have Healthy Body” were two sub-themes: (a) physical impact on athletic performance, and (b) psychological impact on athletic performance; both of these sub-themes provided powerful illustrations.

In sum, the athletes in this study felt that having a healthy physique lends an advantage in the competitive playing field of their sport. Examples of this were seen as the participants gave instances where not being in good shape adversely affected their athletic performance; many of the athletes discussed the notion of extra weight and the impact this can have on their joints. They also made references to being in shape for the sake of cardiorespiratory endurance. But just as it is imperative to be healthy from the physical standpoint, the athletes in this study conveyed the importance of being healthy from the psychological standpoint. The sub-theme of “psychological impact on performance” surfaced from the result of statements, such as “if you’re not happy with yourself, it’s hard to perform to the best of your ability.” As revealed by the interviewees, having skewed perceptions in body image can lead to the development of unhealthy physical behaviors, which can make the challenging task of being a collegiate athlete that much harder.

As a whole, the interviewees indicated very poignantly, the direct link between body image and athletic performance. As illustrated through both the physical as well as psychological aspects, there is in fact, a relationship between body image and athletic performance.

Discussion

The findings in this study supported several phenomena found throughout the literature. With regard to the overall scores (weight, appearance, and attribution) on the
Body-Esteem Scale, this study found that African-American female athletes have a more favorable account of body-esteem than other racial groups. While this study specifically examined athletes between the ages of 18-25, Botta (2000) reported similar results with female adolescent African-Americans, who were found to be more satisfied with their bodies than white female adolescents. Moreover, the African-Americans in this study reported an overall lower exposure to magazines than other racial groups. Through the framework of the social comparison theory, an interesting parallel can be drawn in that, as seen throughout the literature, people tend to gravitate towards and make comparisons of others that are most like themselves (Hogg, 2000). As it was reported that African-Americans are not as prevalently seen in magazines (Schooler, et al., 2004), this may help to explain the rationale of the African-Americans in this study engaging in less magazine reading than their white counterparts.

Furthermore, Botta's (2000) study also found that in addition to the higher level of body satisfaction in African-American adolescents, they also reported having a “larger personal ideal size” (p. 154) than white females. This coincides with the finding in this study where the white athletes scored lowest on the weight sub-scale. In addition, the white females in this study reported the highest exposure with fashion magazines. The relationship between these findings supports the notion of the self-objectification theory, where Noll and Fredrickson (1998) defined as the essence of allowing observable features, such as the media, to define the physical self. The relationship of the findings also hints to other studies that suggest that body image distortion in females is the result of regular viewing of fashion magazines (Bissell & Zhou, 2004; Harrison, 2000; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003; Thompson & Heinberg, 1999). However, the fact that the white
females in this study scored lowest on the weight sub-scale specifically relates to Botta’s (2000) study where the white female adolescents reported an overall lower satisfaction with their bodies.

Regarding media exposure, the findings in this study found that female athletes, regardless of race, do not engage in regular reading of sport-specific magazines. It also found that African-American female athletes in this study more regularly engage in reading entertainment magazines, while white female athletes, as aforementioned, regularly engage in reading fashion magazines. This contradicts the findings found in Bissell’s (2004a) study, where college females reported reading sports magazines before engaging in other publications, such as fashion or entertainment. This contradiction could be due to the fact that in Bissell’s (2004a) study, there was not a distinction made between sports magazines and sport-specific magazines. Sports, as indicated in the literature, is divided into lean and nonlean sports. Thus, it is important when examining “sports” to make the differentiation between the two (lean/nonlean); a subsequent study conducted by Bissell (2004b) examined this and found a link between body dissatisfaction and viewing lean sports.

With regard to body-esteem and magazine exposure, this study did not find a significant relationship. Specifically, decreased feelings in the body-esteem of female athletes as identified by appearance, weight, and attribution was not related to exposure to general, sport, or fashion/entertainment magazines. While the descriptive statistics of the Body-Esteem Scale provided valuable information that could be linked to different elements found in the literature, there was not significance found with regard to magazine exposure and any of the body-esteem sub-scales. However, the themes that emerged in
the qualitative aspect of this study, provided powerful insight that suggested that the body-esteem of the female athletes in this study is indeed impacted by the media. The themes also revealed other elements that contribute to their overall feelings of their body image.

The central theme that emerged in this study, “Feel Pressure,” produced sub-themes that provided insight into factors that contribute to body-esteem in female athletes. One very poignant sub-theme was that of “pressure from the media.” The essence of this sub-theme supported the study conducted by Thompson and Smolak (2001) in which they identified sources that contribute to body image problems, such as (a) comparing one’s self to media ideals or peers, and (b) internalizing unrealistic media images of attractiveness. Another interesting element that emerged under this sub-theme hinted to the notion that what is seen in the media has an impact on the interviewees’ perceptions of people based on their physique. This was seen when the interviewees were asked to name suitable occupations of the graphically depicted lean and nonlean athletes, and were quick to name the lean athlete as a “lawyer” because of what was portrayed on television. This hints to the study conducted by Herbozo, Gokee-Larose, and Thompson (2004) where content analyses were conducted on popular children’s entertainment and found that thin characters were seen as successful.

There were other elements that surfaced under the “pressure from the media” umbrella that fit into the related literature. One of the major elements that surfaced from “pressure from the media” was the effect of media on body image. Specifically, interviewees made references to what they saw in the media and how this made them feel about themselves in terms of body image. This supports other studies that reveal when a
person views media images, internalizations are made via a comparison between the image and themselves (Goethals, 1986; Wood, 1989; Kruglanski & Mayseless, 1990; Wood & Taylor, 1991; Botta, 2000). “Pressure from the media” in this study also ties into the theoretical framework of the social comparison theory while supporting Bissell’s (2004a) assumption that women often make comparisons between themselves and external images, and often they become motivated to emulate the images they most often see. The very essence of the social comparison theory is the notion that people internalize based on comparisons of others (Brickman & Bulman, 1977; Hogg, 2000).

Social comparison theory in this study was also revealed through the sub-theme of “pressure from others.” This was seen through statements made by the interviewees in this study where spectators at events can often make them feel self-conscious. Specifically, this was seen when the athletes in this study discussed the notion of spectators at events and their perceptions of them in their uniforms; this ties into the theoretical framework of the self-objectification theory. It supports the research conducted by Fisher (1985) in that when aware of the somatic-self, people become uncomfortable, as well as the research of Duval and Wicklund (1972) in that when people have attention focused on themselves, they often become self-critical. It also fits into the study conducted by Harrison and Fredrickson (2003) who tested self-objectification in terms of its state-like construct and found that state self-objectification may be heightened by external circumstances, such as being evaluated by others. Interestingly, it also hints to the study conducted by Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, and Twenge (1998) who tested the application of the self-objectification theory and found that women who wore bathing suits scored worse on a math performance test. The parallel from the
athletes in this study feeling self-conscious about their spectators at events judging them in their uniforms and the women in the aforementioned study who scored low on a math performance test while wearing a bathing suit can be drawn.

The sub-theme of “pressure from coaches” also revealed the notion of the self-objectification theory in that, as found in the study conducted by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997), people self-objectify when the perceived consideration of the outsider is internalized. As with the case of “pressure from coaches,” one of the fundamental elements was the notion that the athletes felt coaches judged them based on their physique. This was pervasively seen, as indicated by the interviewees, in the recruitment process, where coaches will make assumptions on the athletic ability of the athletes solely based on their appearance. Hence, from the perspective of the self-objectification theory, it can be seen how the athletes in this study felt pressure from their coaches to obtain a particular physique in order to please them.

The fundamentals revealed through the theme of “Still Fighting for Respect” were found to be connected with studies throughout the literature. The sub-themes that emerged of “women as sexual objects” and “women athletes underrepresented in the media,” support the trends found by The Women’s Sports Foundation (2005) in that: (a) women athletes have a greater propensity than men to be pictured failing at their sport (i.e. dropping the ball), (b) women athletes often appear without heads in advertisements, suggesting that only their bodies or parts of their bodies matter, (c) women athletes often appear as pouting seductively, and (d) words in advertisements often undermine the athletic image of women athletes. Moreover, the athletes in this study often discussed the notion that the media glorifies more attractive athletes over talented athletes, which
supports the assumption set forth by Bissell (2004a) where the leanest and most physically attractive athletes are more frequently seen in the media as opposed to their nonlean counterparts. Also, the notion of the sub-theme of “women athletes as sexual objects” supports the earlier content analyses of Duncan (1990) that explored sports photographs and found that female bodies are typically objectified.

With regard to the themes of “It’s All We See” and “Must Have Healthy Body,” and “Portrayed as Gods” there is a lack of literature regarding the fundamentals of the sub-themes that emerged. However, under the umbrella of “It’s All We See,” inferences can be made regarding the sub-themes of “white female athletes as thin and beautiful” and “African-American female athletes as strong and athletic” to related literature. Botta’s (2000) study found that White adolescent girls, when making comparisons of figures in the media to themselves, tend to choose thinner figure sizes than African-American adolescent girls. As the athletes in this study tend to see white female athletes as ubiquitously thin in the media, an inference can be made in that White female athletes tend to internalize the thin image and are motivated to emulate it; this also ties into the framework of both the social comparison theory as well as the self-objectification theory. The lack of literature regarding the themes of “It’s All We See,” “Must Have Healthy Body,” and “Portrayed as Gods” offers the notion that these are areas that are worth investigating for future studies.
Recommendations for Future Studies

In order to expand and address the gaps in the existing literature base, the following recommendations are suggested for further study:

1. Currently, there is a lack of literature regarding body image and male athletes; therefore, it would be beneficial to replicate this study using male athletes.

2. Currently, there is a lack of qualitative methodologies regarding body image and athletes; therefore it would be beneficial to expand the qualitative portion of this study using focus groups. Specifically, focus groups could be used to garner information into the body image of female and male athletes with regard to gender. The qualitative portion of this study could be replicated using three focus groups: males, females, and a mixed-gendered group.

3. The qualitative portion of this study could be replicated with specific attention focused on the racial aspect of body image. Specifically, three focus groups could be conducted: African-Americans, White/Euro-American, and a racially mixed group.

4. The qualitative portion of this study could be replicated with specific attention focused on specific sports. Focus groups and individual interviews could be conducted in an attempt to garner information pertaining to specific sports.

5. This study could be replicated using lean sports, such as cheerleading and dance; currently there is a lack of literature supporting these sports.

6. This study could be replicated using adolescent female athletes; currently there is a lack of literature regarding body image and adolescents.

7. This study could be replicated using an experimental design to measure exposure to specific genres of magazines; this could build upon the study conducted by
Harrison and Fredrickson (2003) in which an experimental approach was used to measure exposure to media.

8. The qualitative themes that emerged from this study could be used to construct an instrument for use in a quantitative study.

9. This study could be replicated using a general female population of college students; currently there is a lack of research that qualitatively examines body image with regard to female college students.

10. This study could be expanded and replicated using other conferences and universities.

11. Future studies could focus on the content analyses of sports advertisements to explore the themes that emerged in this study of “white female athletes as thin and beautiful” and “African-American athletes as strong and athletic.”

12. Based on the themes that emerged in this study regarding “athletes as celebrities” and “athletes as role models” and the fact that there is a lack of literature to support these, future studies could focus the media’s depiction of athletes.

13. Based on the themes that emerged in this study regarding “physical impact on performance” and “psychological impact on performance” and the lack of literature that supports these, future studies could explore these further with specific attention placed on examining the impact of body image on athletic performance.

14. This study could be used in conjunction with exploring the phenomenon of the female athlete triad.
Limitations of Study

*Media Sources.* This study attempted to explore the relationship between sports magazine exposure and body image. While the quantitative component of this study specifically measured exposure to this media outlet, many of the interviewees, when discussing their experiences with the media, would often use different media outlets interchangeably. For example, many of the athletes in this study would discuss the way they felt when reading magazines, yet would simultaneously give references to television. This leads to the notion that perhaps it is not possible to dissect the media umbrella, as all media outlets are pervasive as well as interrelated in society.

*Location of Study.* This study only involved current female athletes attending a single university in the southeastern region of the United States. Hence, the perspectives from both the quantitative and qualitative components were limited to the athletes at this institution. Expanding to other conferences and regions would perhaps extend as well as present new perspectives on the phenomenon of the relationship between the media and body image in female athletes.

*Participants.* The opportunity to participate in individual interviews was extended to all 87 female athletes that completed a survey. It was the ultimate goal of the researcher to capture diverse perspectives throughout the interviews. Thus, it was necessary to recruit athletes from each sport, while selecting a racially diverse pool of participants. All participants that completed a survey were asked to indicate their interest for participation by completing an interview recruitment form. At the outset of the study, it was established by the researcher to select at least two athletes from each sport, and ideally, select at least one white athlete and one African-American athlete. However, the
logistics of both soliciting and scheduling the interviews was particularly challenging. Furthermore, it was also established at the outset of the study that neither former nor current students taught by the researcher would be used. This slightly limited the pool of participants. Furthermore, there were no African-American athletes in three of the seven sports. Also, there were athletes that did not complete a recruitment form, did not respond to a phone call nor email, or did not show up for a scheduled interview. Nonetheless, the researcher was able to interview at least two athletes from each sport while soliciting seven African-Americans. However, while most of the digital recordings used in the interviews were complete, there were two of them that were incomplete in that they were cut off inadvertently during interviews. Unfortunately, the two incomplete interviews were African-Americans, therefore only five usable interviews from African-Americans were used for analysis. While there was a healthy number of participants as well as a healthy representation of each sport, most of the interviews were conducted with white athletes. Therefore, this study was limited in that having a more racially diverse pool of participants could have presented different perspectives throughout the interviews.

Moreover, all of the athletes in this study were active in nonlean sports. While including athletes from lean sports would have the potential to provide different perspectives, the selected university only offered two lean sports. Therefore, the ratio of nonlean and lean sports was not balanced, hence it was the decision of the researcher to include only athletes in nonlean sports. Recommendations for future study include the addition of lean sports to add to the existing pool of perspectives on this phenomenon.
Interviews. Interviews ran very smoothly with little interruption. Some of the interviews were conducted in the library at the university in a private study room. However, the study room had a large window which provided a slight distraction to some of the participants. For example, there were times when people would walk by. Because of this, some of the participants had a tendency to get distracted or stop what they were saying in midstream. However, this did not appear to compromise the integrity of the interviews in that all of the participants were eventually able to express their thoughts; this was clearly seen during analysis in which the quality of all of the interviews appeared to be the same throughout.

Triangulation of Data Sources. Through the process of triangulation, data were collected from three different sources including (a) individual interviews, (b) researcher notes, and (c) member checks. The individual interviews proved to be the most cogent form of data collection in this study. However, while the researcher took notes during the interviews, it would have been beneficial to have a note-taker in the room to focus solely on capturing the essence of the interviews. In this study, the researcher conducted the interviews while simultaneously taking notes. This often times prohibited the researcher from making eye contact and perhaps not being as engaging as possible at all times. Furthermore, the integrity of the researcher notes would have been enhanced by a note-taker, in that they could have been compared and merged to form a more comprehensive account of the interviews. Nonetheless, the digital recordings of the interviews proved to be very efficient in data collection in that the recordings were very clear and did not appear to pick up any outside distractions. This was seen through the "accuracy checks"
of the transcripts in that there were very little discrepancies in the recordings and the transcripts.

Finally, the process of member checking provided a powerful tool of credibility to this study. The researcher was able to conduct member checks with seventeen of the twenty participants. During member checks, the participants were given the graphic depiction which illustrated the interaction of themes. They were asked to be honest in their opinions of the themes that emerged, and all seventeen of the participants very strongly agreed. However, it was a concern of the researcher to ensure that the participants were in fact being honest and not just agreeable. Thus, the researcher was mindful to not goad the participants in any way, but rather just let them express their thoughts. As a group, participants were very passionate in their opinions that the themes were, in fact, representative of their thoughts and feelings. This leads to the assumption that their voices were accurately raised throughout the analysis process.

Implications for Practice

As stated in recommendations for future study, this study could be used in conjunction with exploring the phenomenon of the female athlete triad. As seen with this study, many of the unhealthy eating and exercise practices that occurred among the female athletes in this study were the result of problems with body image, as seen through the major theme of Must Have Healthy Body. As current research indicates that the female athlete triad is commonplace among collegiate female athletes (Hostetter, 2007) and this often occurs as the result of body image problems. An implication for practice would be the inclusion of educational programs to educate the coaches and athletes on the ramifications of not engaging in healthy eating and exercising habits.
Another beneficial implication for practice from this study would be the inclusion of team sports psychologists to help the athletes and coaches deal with real issues, which run the gamut from team building to body image issues. The team building aspect could help to alleviate many of the elements that emerged from the sub-theme of “pressure from teammates.”

Moreover, aspects of the self-objectification theory were revealed through the sub-theme that emerged in this study of “pressure from others.” Specifically, the athletes gave references to the way they felt in their uniforms through the eyes of their spectators at events. As aforementioned, this sub-theme hinted to the study conducted by Fredrickson, Noll, Quinn, and Twenge (1998) who tested the application of the self-objectification theory and found that women who wore bathing suits scored worse on a math performance test. From this, the question becomes, could athletic performance be hindered in the same way academic performance is? Nonetheless, an implication for practice would be the notion of having athletes wear more forgiving uniforms at their events.

And finally, the media itself, which is the major conduit through which thin-ideal images flow, has a responsibility to its public. As this study revealed in the qualitative component, female collegiate athletes are regular consumers of media outlets, such as magazines, and are indeed affected by the ubiquitous images and messages that are portrayed. Thus a final implication of this study is for producers of media to quell the current thin-ideal by perhaps, portraying messages that run more towards the middle of a continuum to run in tandem with the mainstream public.
APPENDIX A

Survey Instrument

PART ONE: Please respond to the following questions.

1. Race (please circle): African-American Asian Native-American Hispanic
   White/Euro-American Other

2. Age: _____

3. What sport do you primarily participate in for the university? (please circle):
   Basketball Golf Soccer Softball Tennis Track&Field Volleyball

4. How many days per week do you spend practicing and/or competing in your sport: _____

5. How many hours per day, estimated, do you spend practicing and/or competing in your sport: _____

6. Please indicate your interest in reading women’s sports magazines:
   1 = not interested at all  2 = somewhat interested  3 = neutral  4 = interested  5 = very interested

7. Please indicate your interest in reading men’s sports magazines:
   1 = not interested at all  2 = somewhat interested  3 = neutral  4 = interested  5 = very interested

8. Please indicate how frequently you read general sports magazines, such as Sports Illustrated or ESPN Magazine.
   1 = never  2 = seldom  3 = sometimes  4 = often  5 = always

*If you do read general sports magazines, please list the ones you read here:
9. Please indicate how frequently you read sport-specific magazines, such as *Runner's World or Golf.*
   1 = never  2 = seldom  3 = sometimes  4 = often  5 = always

*If you do read sport-specific magazines, please list the ones you read here:

10. Please indicate how frequently you read entertainment magazines, such as *People or US:*
    1 = never  2 = seldom  3 = sometimes  4 = often  5 = always

*If you do read entertainment magazines, please list the ones you read here:

11. Please indicate how frequently you read fashion magazines, such as *Vogue or Cosmopolitan:*
    1 = never  2 = seldom  3 = sometimes  4 = often  5 = always

*If you do read fashion magazines, please list the ones you read here:

12. Please indicate how frequently you read fitness-health magazines, such as *Self or Fitness:*
    1 = never  2 = seldom  3 = sometimes  4 = often  5 = always

*If you do read fitness-health magazines, please list the ones you read here:

13. Please indicate how frequently you read news magazines, such as *Times or Newsweek:*
    1 = never  2 = seldom  3 = sometimes  4 = often  5 = always

*If you do read news magazines, please list the ones you read here:
**PART TWO:** Indicate how often you agree with the following statements ranging from "never" (0) to "always" (4).
Circle the appropriate number beside each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Times</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I like what I look like in pictures.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Other people consider me good looking.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I'm proud of my body.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I am preoccupied with trying to change my body weight.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I think my appearance would help me get a job.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I like what I see when I look in the mirror.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. There are lots of things I'd change about my looks if I could.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I am satisfied with my weight.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I wish I looked better.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I really like what I weigh.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I wish I looked like someone else.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. People my own age like my looks.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. My looks upset me.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I'm as nice looking as most people.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I'm pretty happy about the way I look.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I feel I weigh the right amount for my height.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I feel ashamed of how I look.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Weighing myself depresses me.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. My weight makes me unhappy.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. My looks help me to get dates.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I worry about the way I look.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I think I have a good body.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I'm looking as nice as I'd like to.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

Letter to Coaches

Date

Respondent’s Name
Address

Dear Respondent:

I am a graduate student currently completing the requirements for my doctoral degree in Human Performance at The University of Southern Mississippi. Part of the requirement for degree completion includes a dissertation. The purpose of my study is to study the effects of sport media on the body image of female athletes. The results of this study may provide insight into the factors that contribute to body image dissatisfaction among collegiate female athletes. By contributing your time to this research, you will provide valuable insight into this subject area.

I am requesting the participation of your female athletes in this study. The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. The information is confidential and participant information will remain anonymous. If desired, a written report of the results will be provided to you upon completion of the study.

Your support and cooperation in this study is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Ashley K. Gibson
Graduate Assistant
School of Human Performance and Recreation
APPENDIX C

Informed Consent

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
AUTHORIZATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT

Subject’s Name __________________________________________________________

Consent is hereby given to participate in the research project entitled “The Effects of Sport Media on the Body Image of Division I Female Athletes”. All procedures and/or investigations to be followed and their purpose were explained by the researcher. Information was given about all benefits, risks, inconveniences, or discomforts that might be expected.

The opportunity to ask questions regarding the research and procedures was given. Participation in the project is completely voluntary, and subjects may withdraw at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. All personal information is strictly confidential, and no names will be disclosed. Any new information that develops during the project will be provided if that information may affect the willingness to continue participation in the project.

Questions concerning the research, at any time during or after the project, should be directed to Ashley Gibson at 601-466-9446. This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concern about rights as a research subject should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820.

A copy of this form will be given to the participant.

__________________________________________  _____________
Signature of participant                     Date

__________________________________________  _____________
Signature of researcher                      Date
APPENDIX D

Oral Statements

Survey Oral Statement

Research is being conducted to study of the effects that media exposure, specifically sports media, has on the body image of collegiate female athletes. Its purpose is to examine factors that contribute to body image dissatisfaction in female athletes.

The study will involve the participation of approximately 75 female athletes. Participation requires the completion of a brief survey, which will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Individual interviews will be conducted at a later time. If anyone wishes to participate in an interview, a brief informational sheet is attached to each survey. When handing in the surveys, you are asked to detach the informational sheet and give it to the researcher.

By contributing your time to this study, you will be adding to the pool of existing studies pertaining to body image issues in female athletes. If you are selected for an interview, you will receive a $25 gift card to Target.

There are no known risks or discomforts for participating in this study. However, the topic of this study [body image] is sensitive in nature. If you feel the need for psychological assistance as a result of participating in this study, please see the researcher for a list of resources for help.

All surveys are anonymous, meaning that your name will not be associated with the information in any way. Also, if you decide to later participate in an interview, your name will not be associated with the information in any way. All information will be locked in the researcher’s office and only the researcher and the researcher’s dissertation committee will have access to it.

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board at 601-266-6820. Participation in this project is completely voluntary, and subjects may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. Any questions about the research should be directed to Ashley Gibson at 601-466-9446.

Signature of Person Giving Oral Presentation

Date
Individual Interview Oral Statement

Research is being conducted to study of the effects that media exposure, specifically sports media, has on the body image of collegiate female athletes. Its purpose is to examine factors that contribute to body image dissatisfaction in female athletes.

This portion of the study requires participation of approximately 14 female athletes. Participation involves an individual interview with the researcher and will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. By participating in this interview, you will receive a $25 gift card from Target.

Your name will not be associated with any information. If a name is mentioned in the research report, it will be in the form of a pseudonym, meaning that your actual name will not be used. Furthermore, if a pseudonym is used, it will not be associated with your particular sport or race. Also, tape recordings and notes taken during interviews will be locked in the researcher's office. Only the researcher and the researcher's dissertation committee will have access to the information. Furthermore, one year after data analysis, the tape recordings will be destroyed.

During this interview, you will be asked to answer a series of questions which will be recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Also, the researcher will contact you upon completion of analysis to ensure that you agree with the findings of the interviews; this is a process called "member checks". During analysis, the researcher will develop themes from the interviews. You will be asked to read over the themes, and indicate if you feel they are accurate, fair, and representative. This will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes of your time.

There are no known risks or discomforts for participating in this study. However, the topic of this study [body image] is sensitive in nature. If you feel the need for psychological assistance as a result of participating in this study, please see the researcher for a list of resources for help.

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board at 601-266-6820. Participation in this project is completely voluntary, and subjects may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. Any questions about the research should be directed to Ashley Gibson at 601-466-9446.

Signature of Person Giving Oral Presentation

Date
APPENDIX E

Institutional Review Board Approval Form

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE
NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.

Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 26101606
PROJECT TITLE: The Effects of Sport Media on the Body Image of Division I Female Athletes
PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: 01/01/06 to 06/15/07
PROJECT TYPE: Dissertation or Thesis
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: Ashley Kristin Gibson
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Health
DEPARTMENT: Human Performance & Recreation
FUNDING AGENCY: N/A
HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 10/16/06 to 10/15/07

[Signature]
Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
HSPRC Chair

[Signature]
[Date]
Hello,

Here are copies of the following:

- a paper on the latest version of the Body Esteem Scale for Adolescents and Adults (bescale);
- the manual for the measure (bemanual), which has a copy of the scale in Appendix 1;
- a paper that used an earlier version of the scale, but which may interest you nonetheless (beseimp).

If you have difficulty reading the files, please let me know what word processor (and version) you use.

If you end up using the measure, I would appreciate receiving a report of any research you conduct with it.

Thanks for your interest in our work.

BKM

P.S. Please address future e-mail to <bev@ego.psych.mcgill.ca>.
APPENDIX G

Interview Questions

PART ONE: At the beginning of the interview, the participants will be shown two photographs of women. The following questions will be asked regarding the photographs.

1. What do you see when you look at these pictures?
   -Give as many adjectives as you can think of to describe each picture.

2. What is the person in each picture doing?
   -Describe where you think each person has been.
   -Describe where you think each person is going.

3. If I told you this person (thin model) was an athlete, what sport(s) would you say she played? Describe why you think this.

4. If I told you this person (obese model) was an athlete, what sport(s) would you say she played? Describe why you think this.

5. If you had to choose, which person would you rather have as a teammate? Why.

6. How old do you think each person is?
   -If you see that they differ in age, why?

7. Do you see yourself in either image? Why.
   -Do you have any personal connection to this image? Why.

8. Name an athlete that comes to mind when you see each person. Describe why you think this.

9. Looking at these people, if they were not athletes, what occupation(s) do you think they would have? Why.

PART TWO: Pictures are not present during these questions.

1. What comes to mind when you think of body image?

2. As an athlete, do you think it is important to have a healthy body image? Why.

3. Tell me some of your experiences with body image and your athletic performance?

4. Overall, what are your feelings about the way athletes are portrayed in the media?
5. Give as many adjectives as you can think of to describe the way women are portrayed in the media?

6. Give as many adjectives as you can think of to describe the way men are portrayed in the media?

7. Describe the way you see White women athletes portrayed in the media.

8. Describe the way you see non-White women athletes portrayed in the media.

9. What sports do you most often see in magazines?
APPENDIX H

Illustration of Athletes

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APPENDIX I

Example Coding Scheme

1. “Feel Pressure”

Feel Pressure from Media

#3 The way it is portrayed on T.V. and magazines---when you see an ad you see a small, real slim person---on T.V. most females are slim (1).
#19 It’s all we see. Magazines. MTV---never see big girls (1).
#8 The media---always advertising sports-talk about health & fitness, always a skinny person on front (1).
#15 Magazines, media have a lot to do with people’s self-esteem and how they think of themselves (1).
#18 T.V., magazines, media---have to be tall and thin to wear clothes-models are stick thin; T.V. & magazines are like poisons (1).
#20 Magazines built around body image. How you look (1).
#23 Magazines-- most are skinny. Little clothes on--a lot of skin (1).
#8 [Body image influenced by] media (1).
#13 Commercials --- always a skinny girl (2).
#17 [Body image influenced by] media (2).
#18 Nike models only put tanned skin, defined muscles; younger girls are poisoned b/c of magazines, movies, T.V. (2)
#19 Media, magazines definitely influence [athletic performance] (3)
#22 Models on T.V., actors, actresses, professional athletes---the media overplay how nice their bodies are---we think it’s the norm (3)
#17 [Body image influenced by] media (3)
#11 Professional athletes [in the media] look real toned and skinny---makes younger people who watch think—if they may be heavier---may discourage them to play (4).
#18 [The media] only focuses on picture-perfect athletes—only pick girls that are super skinny, tanned, tall and blonde—Anna Kournikova—only pick the ones that look good regardless of how they are at sport (3)
#21 In commercials, such as Propel, show slender and fit girls—don’t really show the other side (4)
#19 Think a lot of stress on female athletes to keep up body image—to keep it thin—think media has a lot to do with it—magazines, T.V. shows, Bowflex commercials (9)
#20 Right now it’s gotten a little out of control—see a lot of extremely skinny super models—not good images to portray. Read where anorexia and bulimia have risen (9)
#21 All look the same [in the media]---strong, tall, thin, slender, in shape (5)
#11 Think media doesn’t always need to portray athletes as having a perfect body image---as long as you are good at sport—that should matter (9)
#21 Not necessarily about the best athlete [in the media]---all about looks and personality (6)
#16 Media focuses on negative parts---injuries, gambling—media thrives off of this (4)
#8 If they do something bad the media will blow it all up—they will never let them live it down (4)
#7 [Portrayed] pretty well until they screw up and then it’s a big deal (4).
Pressure from Coaches
#7 Coaches make it harder, ends up resulting in a lot of problems—eating disorders, depression, stress
#17 Coaches don’t think you’re fit by looking at you—might not play for their school
#12 [Influenced by] conditioning coaches, strength coach—before recruited by coach—will tell you about weight (2)
#3 Our coaches tell us all the time when you’re in shape—will perform better than the ones who are not (3)
#7 Coach thinks I need to lose weight—put me on a diet—other girls may not take this so well—-quit eating, become bulimic, anorexic, or gain more weight (3).
#9 Coach makes comments (3).
#12 Told by coach that I was too skinny—had to put on muscle; the same coach who told me to put on weight told our whole team that we had to lose 5 pounds—I didn’t think I needed to lose 5 pounds (3)
#14 Coach told me to lose 10 pounds—would look better on my stat sheet.
#18 My coaches told me before I went home for summer—was getting too big—I was upset—I’d never been told I weighed too much (3)
#19 Coaches put us on strict diets for athletes (3)
#21 My coach is little—so he’s sensitive about how much girls weigh (3)
#22 Have friends in swimming and ballet—their coaches have been pushing them to lose weight to make it easier to perform (3)
#11 People constantly looking at you—rerecruiting coaches, people’s opinions of our body image—coaches, teammates (2)
#5 We have to weigh in every week—girls say they want to lose weight (2).
#21 [Influenced by] coaches—some athletes more sensitive about the way they look—someone makes comment about weight—take it harshly (2)
#15 Some coaches make you wear 2” spandex over 4” spandex to get the audience (5)

Pressure from Others (Attribution)
#16 Feel pressure to be skinny—surrounded by thinner girls (1).
#14 People will pick on you if you don’t [have a healthy body image]—will put it to you harder (2)
#6 Some care what they look like in the eyes of people or what they probably would think (2)
#14 Does affect when people see me—whatever my weight and height is—they might think you are out of shape (3)
#17 People would always tell me I was too small to play (3)
#4 In front of people—need to look like you can do what you have to do (2)
#8 Constantly in your head you might look funny when you run (2)
#17 Compare myself to other people—sometimes I wish if I didn’t play sports I wouldn’t be so muscular (3)
#19 If I don’t maintain a certain weight, I’m afraid people would look at me different or not capable of doing something (3)
#18 I always have a standard to live up to—I can never have a fat day; I have to be this size, look this way—if I don’t I let everyone down. I care about what other people think about me—a lot (3)
#21 Some girls [track] have problem with body—they won’t eat, develop eating disorders—can see how this happens being looked at all the time (9)

Pressure from Cultural Norms and Expectations
#18 We are expected to have picture-perfect bodies---been brainwashed [by society] into thinking only way to be an awesome athlete is to have picture perfect body (2).
#14 Picture someone really fit and small—it’s the ideal of what I want to look like (1)
#18 If you’re not perfect like that there’s something wrong with you (1).
#22 Society has a warped image on what a woman’s body should be
#15 Had teacher who said come watch “tall blondes” [play volleyball] (5)
#9 It’s easier to be a guy and an athlete (6)
#5 Do think with female athletes, body image is huge part of overall society view of how people look at athletes (9)

Pressure from Professional Athletes
#23 We know we have to stay in shape- when we see professional and competitive athletes that are in real good shape we feel we should try to reach same body figure (2).
#22 Pressure to have healthy body image---professional athletes have really nice body - you feel to be successful in sport, should strive to look the same (2).
#17 See professional athletes ---“need to look like that” if they play the same position [as you]
#11 [Professional athletes] look real toned and skinny---this makes younger people who watch think, if they may be heavier, discourages them to play (4)

Pressure from Teammates
#12 [Influenced by] teammates (2)
#15 [Influenced by] look of other athletes —want to be like them (2)
#12 Compare self to teammates (2)
#15 Undressing, taking showers in front of each other ---if your uncomfortable with yourself don’t want to show body (2)
#15 Always want to be the strongest on the team---teammate competition (3)

• Deviant Cases
#16 Don’t care what’s on T.V. and magazines---everyday people aren’t like that (2).
#21 Don’t think you have to be certain size to be healthy (2).
#23 Balance in what you do---eat right, exercise, not because you want to lose weight and look like a super model (2).
#16 Really don’t think athletes care about it [body appearance] at collegiate level (2)
#22 Norm is whatever is healthy for each individual person—as long as healthy and feel okay about self—that’s how it should be (3)
#23 I’ve never been pushed in either direction-coaches in golf say to stay healthy, not gain or lose weight (3)
#18 Can't let media portray what you think about yourself because that's what they think—you need to have your own opinions (9)
#21 Since they're athletes, magazines and T.V. try to make them look healthy—muscles (4)
#23 Models are getting so skinny, no one can relate to that—but athletes, people can Relate (4)
#14 Nothing different than any other woman [in the media] (7)
Subsequently following the completion of interviews, each digital recording was electronically submitted to a professional transcriptionist. During the interim period of the submission of recordings and completion of the transcripts, I read through the pages of handwritten notes taken during the individual interviews while listening to each recording. Doing this allowed me to remain close to the data; this proved to be very helpful in that by the time each transcript was received, I was already very familiar with the material.

Upon receiving the transcripts, I immediately formatted each one by double-spacing the text while placing the participants' words in bold. Subsequently following, I read through each one while listening to the audio recordings. This allowed me to clarify any discrepancies between the transcripts and the recordings. After this was done, I continuously listened to the recordings while reading the transcripts; this helped me to identify regularities within the transcripts. Throughout the entire process of analysis, I continuously listened to the audio recordings to remain close to the data.

The next step began the process of line-by-line coding. I began this process by going through each line and capturing the pertinent details of each statement and handwriting it out on the transcript; I was very careful during this process to always use the participants' words and not paraphrase using my own. The process of reducing the data set allowed for better data management. As a result of this process, I had an abridged copy of each transcript. Each abridged transcript was used to create a master document. The master document was created using large rolls of butcher paper. The
process of this began by writing each interview question on a separate roll of paper. The first step was to simply take each abridged transcript and write the responses under each question. For example, I wrote out the question “Give me as many words as you can think of to describe the way women athletes are portrayed in the media” on a single roll of paper; in turn, I went through the stack of abridged transcripts and looked only at that specific question – then put the number of the transcript on the paper roll and wrote the response. Once all of the abridged responses were handwritten under each question, I pinned up each roll on a wall and placed large sheets of blank paper underneath. Having all of the responses for each question on a single roll of paper was very useful in that I was able to visually see all of the responses at the same time under each question. I then used colored highlighters to color-code words and phrases that all fell within a common idea or concept. For example, anything that pertained to women being depicted as sexual objects was highlighted pink; anything that pertained to women being depicted as strong and athletic was blue. From this, I wrote out in pink, “women as sexual objects” on the blank sheet of paper underneath the large roll. Anytime throughout the interviews either in this question or in following questions that pertained to women as sexual objects was highlighted pink and handwritten on that sheet. Each time a new concept was mentioned, it would be given a specific color and then handwritten out in that color on a blank sheet of paper. This allowed me to grasp and organize all of the concepts and ideas that emerged from the interviews. For example, some of the interviewees had the tendency to stray away from the topic; when they were asked about women athletes in the media, they may have gone on a tangent about their coaches or teammates. In turn, each of these concepts would be highlighted and color-coded (for example anything having to do with
coaches was colored-coded green) and given its own sheet. I went through each
interview question using this process.

The result of the process of handwriting the abridged transcripts under each
question and highlighting common concepts and ideas generated many sheets of paper.
In turn, I pinned all of the sheets of paper containing ideas and concepts on several walls.
From this, I was visually able to absorb all of the major ideas/concepts simultaneously so
I could begin the process of collapsing the data to generate sub-themes. Also, anytime I
came across an idea or concept that contradicted a sub-theme, I would circle it in black
and create a new sheet of paper labeled “deviant cases.” During the process of collapsing
the data, I wrote out the major research questions on large poster boards so I could
constantly see them while I was absorbing all of the ideas and concepts that generated.
So in essence, while I began the process of collapsing the data to form crystallized
concepts, I was able to filter all of the generated information through the major research
questions. Anything that did not pertain to the research questions would be eliminated by
not exploring them further – for example, many of the ideas and concepts pertained to
many elements dealing with male athletes; as this was not the focus of my study, they
were not used in the process of generating themes. I did, however, use the information
generated pertaining to male athletes in the theme of “Portrayed as Gods.”

Each time an idea or concept would collapse into a sub-theme, I created a new
sheet of chart paper and wrote out the name; for example, “pressure from the media.”
The result of this was the generation of fourteen sub-themes. I then placed the charts of
all fourteen sub-themes side by side on a wall. From this, I was able to grasp how the
sub-themes related to one another so I could place and organize them under a major
theme. Major themes were labeled using participants’ words that captured its essence. In sum, five major themes were generated.

The last phase of transforming data consisted of diagramming the relationships among themes and sub-themes. This proved to be useful in grasping how the themes and sub-themes interrelated with one another in an attempt to grasp the “big picture.” In sum, five figures were generated to reflect the elements of the major themes; a sixth figure was created to depict the interrelationship of the themes (for a visual model of the figures, see chapter five).
REFERENCES

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