

# Public Perceptions of Credibility of Male and Female Sportscasters

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## Abstract

While there has been considerable growth in the success and involvement of women athletes in all levels of sport, the opportunity to participate is not enough to guarantee equality in the field of athletics. In society, one must have a voice that is not only heard but is considered credible. This voice is considered sport media, and the right of women to own a place in the field of sport media is as important as their right to participate in professional sport (Staurowsky & DiManno, 2002). While the appearance of women behind the sportscasters desk has grown in both local and network markets, are they deemed less credible than their male counterparts?

Cast within impression formation theory, this study was designed to explore the impact of attractiveness and knowledge in the formation of impressions of credibility of male and female sportscasters. Using a repeated measures analysis of variance, the findings illustrated that a sex stereotype does indeed exist concerning the perceptions of credibility regarding male and female sportscasters. Even the most attractive and most knowledgeable female sportscaster can't overcome the stereotype of another pretty face who cannot talk sports. Her sex prevents her from being judged as credible as the least attractive and least knowledgeable male sportscaster. Implications of these findings and suggestions for future research are discussed.

## Dedication

For my family, old and new.  
You can pick your friends, but you can't pick your family.  
Thankfully, I would have picked mine anyway.

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## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the evolution of sport, the involvement or lack thereof of women has served as an international symbol of the social and political status of women. Until about 150 years ago, women were prohibited from participating in sport, much like their prohibition from participating in society, the workplace, and politics (Navarro, 2001). In the 1996 Olympics, the success of the United States' female athletes signaled the growth of media exposure and public support for women's athletics. Sport media declared 1996 the "Year of the Woman," as female athletes began appearing on the covers of Sports Illustrated, Time Magazine, and Newsweek (Gremillion, 1996).

The opportunity to participate is not enough to guarantee equality. In society, one must have a voice that is not only heard but is considered credible. This voice is sport media, and the right of women to own a place in the field of sport media is as important as their right to participate in professional sports (Staurowsky & DiManno, 2002).

It is evident that the emergence of women in sport media has increased dramatically, thus indicating a fundamental social change and social acceptance of sportswomen (Creedon, 1994a). Despite the increase, the institutions of media and sport both construct and represent a patriarchal system of gender roles and values that is indicative of American culture (Kane & Greendorfer, 1994). The intersection of these two patriarchal institutions creates a unique setting that only further highlights our socially constructed gender values. Media has been viewed as a masculine discourse when the content focuses primarily on male interests and concerns. Research shows that the domain of sport programming has largely been preserved *for* men, *about* men and *by* men. It "celebrates the male values of competition, toughness, endurance and physical prowess and, above all, the male body, *but* for the appreciation of the male viewer" (Dyer, 1987, italics added, p. 8).

This study was designed to add to the growing research of those who actually conduct this talk. Within the framework of impression formation theory, this study examined the differences in audience perceptions of male and female sportscasters. Specifically, respondents were presented with images of both male and female sportscasters to determine if a sex stereotype exists in audience perceptions. Respondents

were asked to judge each target sportscaster on their credibility. The findings illustrate the differential influences of sex on credibility of male and female sportscasters.



## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, the role of sex and gender, mass media, and sport will be briefly discussed to provide the background for this paper. Then, contemporary theories of impression formation and person perception will be summarized. Next, the theories involving source attractiveness and credibility will be examined. Finally, the theories of gender perception are discussed.

### Sport and Media as Metaphors for Gender Values

In defining terms, there is a clear difference in the term *sport*, meaning a cultural institution, and the term *sports*, meaning activities or games that are only a part of the institution of sport (Creedon, 1994a).

Many researchers have argued that as a perpetuator of male superiority and female inferiority, sport may do so more than any other social institution (Birrell & Cole, 1990; Duncan, 1990; Duncan & Hasbrook, 1988; Kane, 1995; Kane & Snyder, 1989). This is based on the premise that sport is one of the few institutions where biological or physical differences interact with social and cultural interpretations of gender role expectations (Kane & Greendorfer, 1994). For example, Hargreaves (1986) contends that Western culture assigns physical size and strength as symbols of male power. Sport emphasizes these symbols of male muscularity and superiority because it essentially is about physical activity. Because men run faster, jump higher and throw farther than females, the male body represents power and dominance, while the female body represents subservience, frailty and weaknesses (Kane & Disch, 1993; Messner, 1988).

About 65 years ago, the first televised sporting event in the United States was captured by a single camera for an experimental NBC station on May 17, 1939, at Columbia University's baseball diamond. Three months later, Red Barber announced the first NBC "network" play-by-play for a major league baseball telecast that was picked up by a few dozen receivers across New York (Rader, 1983). These early beginnings signaled a revolution in the relationship of the institutions of media and sport that would have a profound impact on American culture. Today this social phenomenon is so

pervasive that “televised sports permeate modern life from the family room to the newsroom and boardroom” (Bryant & Raney, 2000, p.153).

The first network program featuring female athletes and a female sportscaster debuted in 1948. NBC’s *Sportswoman of the Week* was a 15-minutes sportscast, featuring Sarah Palfrey Cooke, 13-time national women’s and mixed doubles tennis champion, who interviewed outstanding female athletes. Despite her athletic achievements, Cooke was often regarded as merely a “beautiful” Boston socialite, and the show was not picked up as a part of the NBC program listings in 1949 (Neal-Lunsford, 1992).

However, it wasn’t until January 21, 1975, over 35 years after the baseball game at Columbia University, that the first women’s sporting event was televised nationally by ABC affiliates. Prior to the 1970s, women athletes were virtually nonexistent on television screens (Creedon, 1994b). The occasional glimpse of the female athlete appeared on ABC’s *Roller Derby*; brief, occasional features on ABC’s *Wide World of Sports*; and CBS’s coverage of the first televised Olympic Games in 1960 from Rome and Squaw Valley (Neal-Lunsford, 1992).

As far as seeing women behind the sport anchor desk, it wasn’t until the 1970s when stations began hiring women and minorities to fill the sportscaster role due to pressure to keep their licenses. To address the void of female sportscasters, networks often created “hostess” roles by hiring former beauty queens, cover girls or former female athletes (Creedon, 1994b). Rarely were women with actual knowledge of different sports *and* broadcast experience hired to fill network positions. Those women who were hired based on those merits, were either greeted with remarks concerning their appearance, not their credibility, or were so disenchanted with the field of sport media they left for positions in broadcast news or other venues (Creedon, 1994b). It is possible that these are experiences that would not occur for male sportscasters, due to contemporary stereotypes.

According to Sports Diversity Recruiting (2005), an online sports diversity career center, fewer than 50 women were working as sportscasters out of 630 affiliate stations in 1991. Today, 127 female sportscasters are currently employed at all three major networks and nine cable networks. While in the past decade more women are talking

sports talk, female sportscasters only report 29% of all stories in sport media. Not only are there limited numbers in actual sportscasting roles, but the numbers are even lower for women who are actually covering men's sports. For example, CBS refuses to allow women to broadcast Professional Golf Association Events since the sport is limited to male players (Creedon, 1994b).

Through research of sport history and sociology, Creedon (1994a) found that sport is both "an expression of the socio-cultural system in which it occurs" and a "mirror [of] the rituals and values of the society in which they are developed" (3-4). As metaphors for gender values, both sport and media work to describe what is considered to be male and female in our culture (Creedon, 1994a).

Summarizing Clarke and Clarke (1982), Theberge (1985) and Willis (1982), Kane and Snyder (1989) argue that sport not only represents biological male superiority, but also equates physicality to social superiority:

Sport reproduces the ideology of male supremacy because it acts as a constant and glorified reminder that males are biologically, and thus inherently superior to females. Ultimately, this physical, biological, 'natural' supremacy of males in sport becomes translated into the 'natural' supremacy of males in the larger social order" (p. 77).

According to feminist television critic Gillian Dyer (1987), the media, and particularly television, are just as capable of signifying cultural gender values of what is considered male and female. "Television provides entertainment and information, and as a discursive practice and producer of cultural meanings, it is a major force in the production of dominant images of women" (p. 6). Media frames socially construct a reality that is not a true portrayal, but one that will purport a dominant schema or "status quo" (Fink & Kensicki, 2002; Tuchman, 1978). Some research has shown that news media discourse is a masculine discourse that purports the political and economic interests of men a patriarchal worldview and value system (Strutt & Hissey, 1992; Theberge & Cronk, 1986; Tuchman, 1978). The distinction between hard and soft news is an example of the gendered difference between "serious, important" masculine stories and "human interest, lifestyle" feminine stories (Tuchman, Daniels & Benet, 1978). In

this view, “news is not only about and by men, it is overwhelmingly seen through men” (Hartley, 1982, p. 146).

Other feminist theorists such as Mulvey (1975) have further argued that the difference between men and women operates on a semiotic level. Mulvey (1975) argued (w)oman then stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning (p. 7).

The implication of this argument is that women operate as a sign, or an object of male attention, in men’s discourse or narratives.

Although women do have roles as newscasters, they appear as representations of, rather than, real women. Research on the double standard of appearance for women newscasters signifies the understanding that women are “bearers of meaning, the objects of male fantasy, than other representations of women” (Rakow & Kranich, 1991, p. 12). Holland (1987) furthers this idea that women newscasters face a standard of appearance not faced by men by speaking to women’s images as speaking subjects. The head-to-shoulder image of a male newscaster is completed by his speech, while a woman’s image is completed by her body. Holland (1987) argues women newscasters “cannot escape their femininity, yet the possibility of making a contribution that is specifically on behalf of women is ruled out” (p. 148). According to this idea, women do not operate as women speaking for women.

The female subject then is not only framed in news stories, but in representations of women as newscasters as well. Coverage of women newscasters can point to how in a masculine narrative, women are described according to a patriarchal worldview. In his study of the framing of female subjects, Alexander (1999) employs Foucault’s (1971) conception of language as an exertion power to describe how news discourse frames the female subject. News is not an objective lens to the real world, but rather constitutes the meaning, subjectivity and sexuality of the audience. Alexander (1999) argues,

if, as Foucault (1971) says, discourse is ‘a violence that we do to things,’ then the relationship between news discourse and women may be described as one of a violence which disguises itself as benign objectivity (p. 229).

It is this idea of news media discourse being incapable of objectivity that informs this research. If the media are viewed as a masculine narrative despite the involvement of women as speaking subjects, frames about women newscasters must therefore reflect a patriarchal worldview. This can be seen particularly in sport media, which have generally been a discourse space saved for males as subject matter and speaking agents.

The Super Bowl, the essence of sport media spectacles, is an example of these gender differences in both sport and media. Communication scholar Michael Real (1975) describes it as, “a collective reenactment of symbolic archetypes that express the shared emotions and ideas” (p. 96) of our culture. Novelist Tom Robbins (1990) concurs, saying, it is “the pure spirit of America. It sums up this country, it’s what we’re all about” (p. 381).

What this says about gender differences is that because professional football personifies men only, men are considered to possess a degree of privilege. Women are denied participation as players, thus they are considered less “qualified, powerful or physical than men” (Creedon, 1994, p. 5). Women’s participation in professional football is limited to “largely stereotypical support roles, such as cheerleader, spectator, hostess for a Super Bowl party” (p. 5), which suggests that women should assume subservient roles.

It is apparent that the institutions of sport and media can be seen as metaphors for gender values. Sport media produce and represent what is considered male and female in our culture. It seems likely that research on the differences between impressions of male and female sportscasters will also reflect cultural gender values.

### Impression Formation and Person Perception

Broadly speaking, social cognition addresses the complex processes of interaction between individual structures of knowledge and new information regarding specific objects, persons or occasions (Brewer, 1988). Howard and Renfrow (2003) emphasize the social nature of cognition, citing Howard and Hollander’s (1997) explanation that social cognition “goes beyond intra-individual information processing” to include structures of knowledge that are “socially structured and transmitted, mirroring the values and norms of the relevant society and social groups” (p. 260).

One vein of research regarding these structures of knowledge in social cognition is the process of person perception or impression formation. The study of person perception involves the classic impression formation theory of Asch (1946), who conceived this ability to form impressions of others as a skill vital to human beings alone. During the course of everyday life, human beings are constantly bombarded with enormous amounts of information about countless individuals through direct interaction or indirect observation (i.e., mass media). Because human beings are cognitive misers, meaning they cannot carefully attend to every piece of information perceived through these channels, human beings must “classify and organize social information as it is received” (Shah, 1987). Therefore, people integrate this diverse information into a consistent and unified impression of the person (Asch, 1946).

Asch’s (1946) “trait adjective” method provided a framework for current experimental design techniques today (Krauss, 1981). The technique requires that a subject be presented with a list of trait adjectives that represent a hypothetical person. Asch (1946) contended that these traits are organized to form a *Gestalt*, a whole impression of the person rather than the sum or average of individual traits. Each trait affects the meaning of the others, so that the social perceiver creates a holistic perception of the target person. For example, a person is characterized as being “intelligent,” “industrious,” “skillfull,” “determined,” “practical,” “cautious,” and “warm.” The subject is then asked to describe the person and evaluate him or her on a number of additional bipolar trait dimensions. Asch (1946) concluded that by varying the trait characteristics and the relationships among them, one could determine the differences in the overall impressions formed by individuals.

A second period of early impression formation and person perception work grew out of Anderson’s (1965) mathematical models of information integration. Though this model differs in conceptualization from Asch’s (1946) theory, it still is based on the premise that impressions are integrated from the stimulus information provided. Anderson (1974a; 1974b) formulated his algebraic model called information integration theory, which he applied to other areas of social psychology. Information integration theory assumes that individuals develop impressions through combining the information by either adding or averaging the value of each trait. The research generated from this

theory focused on how individuals integrate several pieces of stimulus information in forming judgments about others.

These early impression formation theories conceptualized person perception as a cognitive process that creates a “mental slot” when encountering new stimulus objects. For example, when meeting a previously unfamiliar person, a perceiver creates a new space to receive and process information about that person. As additional information is gathered, they are integrated with previous information to create “a unified impression of the person as a single unit” (Brewer, 1988, p. 2). The inherent problem that these early theories do not address is that perceivers possess limited cognitive capacities, which does not allow for information overload to occur.

More recent models of impression formation returned to investigating the cognitive processes that coalesce “incoming stimulus information and prior knowledge (schemas), but still postulate a single process of selection, abstraction, interpretation, and integration” (Brewer, 1988, p. 2; Alba & Hasher, 1983). For example, perceivers develop integrated impressions and yet continue to receive and evaluate new stimulus information. Rather than defaulting to the original trait or behavior information to form these new judgments, perceivers may rely on the integrated impression to guide judgments (Carlston, 1983; Lingle, 1983; Brewer, 1988).

Recent research also questions the assumption that individual persons are automatically the basis for organizing stimulus information (Pryor & Ostrom, 1981). Rather, more recent research suggests that social information is also organized according to social categories, “which include mental representations of social attributes and classes of social events, social roles, and social groups (Brewer, 1988, p. 3). Previous research failed to address category-based impressions because the dominant research paradigm consisted of presenting information of a single stimulus person all at once, and one person at a time. Researchers could not distinguish person-based impressions from category-based impressions of the same information (Brewer, 1988). In other words, recent research more effectively addresses the premise that perceivers may form impressions of a target person based not just on their individual characteristics, but their social group or role characteristics as well.

Brewer's (1988) dual processing model of person cognition incorporates both the constructivist "theory-driven" approach of Asch (1946) and the structuralist "data-driven" approach of Anderson (1965). The model allows for the same information to be processed either way, depending on the decisions of the perceiver (Zebrowitz, 1990). The dual processing model "begins with the recognition that a stimulus environment contains a person or group of persons" (p. 5). While information about a stimulus person may be gathered either directly or indirectly through verbal description, the mere appearance of the stimulus person activates certain classification processes automatically without the perceiver's knowing.

This identification stage occurs in all person perception. It is only later stages – typing, individuation, personalization - that modes other than automatic processing may take place (Brewer, 1988). Bruner (1957) referred to the initial identification stage as "primitive categorization" because impressions formed here are based on information that is frequently and consistently accessed. Perceivers automatically and unconsciously categorize an individual based on demographic characteristics or "established stimulus dimensions such as gender, age, and skin color" (Bruner, 1988, p. 6).

The purpose of the initial classification stage is to determine whether or not further information processing is needed. If the target person is incompatible or irrelevant to the perceiver, then no additional processing is necessary. Impressions are ascertained by stereotypes of the category in which the person is placed, representing theory-driven processing. However, if the stimulus person engages self-involvement, meaning the perceiver feels compatible or related to the person or judgment task, then more person-based and data-driven processing will take place (Brewer, 1988). Brewer's (1988) model differentiates between category-based perceptions and person-based perceptions according to their organizational structure and format. Specifically, category-based impressions are less complex and are represented in a visual rather than a verbal format (Zebrowitz, 1990).

While Brewer (1988) identifies that either category-based *or* person-based impressions may occur, according to Fiske and Neuberg (1990), "impression formation involves a continuum from category-based to attribute-based processing" (p. 2). Social perceivers form impressions from pre-existing concepts and theories about a particular



category of people during constructivist processing. Subsequently, perceivers engage in structuralist processing by forming impressions based on a linear combination of the target person's characteristics. However, constructivist category-based processing appears to dominate because perceivers first attempt to fit targets into pre-established cognitive categories. Structuralist person-based processing occurs only when the perceiver is personally involved with the target person or cannot categorize the person into a demographic category (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990).

Recent research has also focused on various perceiver characteristics that affect impressions of a target person, such as cognitive factors. Relevant, but not limited to this study, are theories which discuss cognitive factors such as stable mental structures like group stereotypes, and various information processing strategies such as cognitive heuristics (Zebrowitz, 1990).

The cognitive processes of impression formation suggest that typically, once perceivers are given some trait information about a target person, they generally make subsequent inferences about other characteristics or traits that person may possess (Bruner, Shapiro & Tagiuri, 1958; Taylor & Crocker, 1981; Wishner, 1960). In fact, Gage (1952) found that most social perceivers portray a "general inclination to place a person in categories according to some easily and quickly identifiable characteristic such as age, sex, ethnic membership, nationality, or occupation, and then to attribute to him qualities believed to be typical of members of that category" (p. 422). Likewise, Ashmore (1981) argues that upon interaction, social perceivers initially classify target persons as either male or female, and then attribute them to a specific subcategory such as "a hardworking guy" or "a thoughtful, quiet woman." The perceiver then assumes that the target person possesses personality attributes associated with that sub-category. Thus, a variety of traits may be attributed to a target person that may not reflect the individual's actual personality.

Gender stereotypes may be one such category that influences impressions, particularly the stereotype that males are more competent than females (Zebrowitz, 1990). In Robinson and McArthur's (1982) study, perceivers observed tape-recorded targets as less nervous, less emotional, and more logical when the voice belonged to a male, than when it was manipulated to represent a female voice using the same intonation

and intensity. The same gender stereotypes influenced impressions of the works of males and females as in Goldberg's (1968) classic study. Female college students perceived the author of a journal article in a traditionally male field as more competent when the author was a male, rather than a female. Although successive research has found that Goldberg's (1968) results are subtle and minute, biased evaluations that do occur generally favor males (Swim, 1989).

The accessibility of gender stereotypes during impression formation may be a product of information processing strategies such as cognitive heuristics. Because social perceivers cannot process every single complex piece of information they encounter, it is necessary to rely on shortcuts to condense the information into simpler processes (Kahneman and Tversky, 1973; Tversky and Kahneman, 1974).

While there is no comprehensive theory of impression formation, there are several models that explain social person perception within a small framework. Early impression formation theories focused on either a constructivist or "theory-driven" approach representative of Asch's (1946) Gestalt model, or a structuralist or "data-driven" approach through Anderson's (1965) linear combination model. More recent theories incorporate both these approaches as apparent in Brewer's (1988) dual-process model and Fiske and Neuberg's (1990) continuum model. Contemporary impression formation theory suggests that, for most individuals, perceptions of others are frequently formed through automatic, cognitive processes that rely on classification of targets into well-established categories. Furthermore, most social perceivers may be given only limited information regarding another person, yet they generally form numerous other inferences about other characteristics and traits that may or may not be accurate.

### Source Attractiveness and Credibility

Because social perceivers are most likely to attribute other characteristics based on a limited amount of information regarding a target person, it is apparent that one's appearance could engage cognitive processes of impression formation. Research regarding physical attractiveness and person perception demonstrates this phenomenon.

According to Eagly and associates (1991), culturally bound messages of physical appearance in American society associate beauty with "goodness" and ugliness with

“badness.” Social perceivers generally find attractive persons more intelligent, sociable, and more interesting than less attractive persons (Dion, Berscheid & Walster, 1972). Consequently, Eagly et al.’s (1991) meta-analysis determined that social perceivers frequently use physical appearance to infer “social competence because of (a) the perception that attractive individuals elicit positive reactions from others, (b) the perception of true covariation between attractiveness and social competence, and (c) the media portrayal of attractiveness as critical to heterosexual popularity and social attention” (p. 112).

One such consequence of employing physical appearance to infer other characteristics and traits is the research concerning attractiveness and source credibility, which is relevant to this study. First of all, the distinction between source expertise and source trustworthiness as constructs of overall credibility clarify operational definitions in the methodology of this study. According to McCroskey’s (1966) Authoritativeness Scale, which corresponds to Hovland and colleagues’ (1953) expertise dimension, source expertise can be measured by statements that evaluate a speaker’s opinion on a topic, reliability as a source of information on a topic, and experience and qualifications related to a topic. In other words, expertise refers to how well informed the source is on the topic that is being communicated. In this case, the question is whether or not the sportscaster possesses adequate knowledge about different sports.

Likewise, McCroskey’s (1966) Character Scale, measures Hovland and colleagues’ (1953) source trustworthiness by evaluating statements of the speaker’s background, honesty, and reputation. This is the audience member’s “degree of confidence in the communicator’s intent to communicate the assertions that he considers most valid” (Hovland et al., 1953, p.21). For purposes of this study, this is the degree to which the sportscaster accurately communicates sport news to the audience.

The literature on source attractiveness indicates that looks have a powerful influence on credibility perceptions. Of particular interest is Chaiken’s (1986) conclusion that source attractiveness garners more persuasive effects in situations that seem to be relatively unimportant. Likewise, the activity of viewing television sportscasting has been considered by many researchers to be a leisure or social occasion, which does not

require receivers to attend closely to the message content (Creedon, 1994a). It seems likely that attractiveness will play a role in receiver impressions.

Specifically, Chaiken's (1980, 1987) cognitive-processing explanation of heuristics would explain why receivers would rely on cognitive shortcuts to evaluate the sources of this information. The likeability-agreement heuristic suggests that receivers tend to agree with people who are considered likeable. Physical attractiveness has been associated with likeability, which forms the basis for agreement with attractive sources (Chaiken, 1986).

Another cognitive explanation is the halo effect, which suggests that physically attractive individuals generally possess a number of other, positively evaluated characteristics. Attractive individuals, then, are considered to be more popular, more successful, and more competent (Dion et al., 1972). Receivers employ this stereotype as a heuristic, which results in higher perceptions in expertise and trustworthiness for attractive individuals than their less attractive counterparts (Chaiken, 1980, 1987).

### Gender Perceptions

Research differentiates between *sex*, which refers to biological characteristics of what is a man and a woman, and *gender*, which is the ongoing social construction of these two opposing forces operating in a binary system. In terms of research variables, sex is a demographic characteristic, while gender is a psychographic characteristic. The terms *male* and *female* refer to biological or physical differences, such as size, structure, or reproductive capacity. However, *masculine* and *feminine* refer to the social, historical and culture meanings associated with these biological differences (Kessler & McKenna, 1978; Rubin, 1975; Rakow, 1992).

For example, culturally bound North American definitions of what is considered masculine behavior use terms such as, "strong, ambitious, successful, rational, and emotionally controlled." Feminine behavior is described as "attractive, deferential, unaggressive, emotional, nurturing, and concerned with people and relationships" (Wood, 2001, p. 22). However, to assume all members of each sex conform to these social stereotypes is presumptuous, and thus considerable variation must exist within each sex.

Bem and associates developed a model of gender role schematicity, which argues that variance exists regarding the use of gender role conceptions to guide social perceptions (Bem, 1976; Frable & Bem, 1985). Gender-schematic processing sorts “persons, attributes, and behaviors into masculine and feminine categories or ‘equivalence classes’ regardless of their differences on a variety of dimensions unrelated to gender,” (Frable & Bem, 1985, p. 187). Individuals can be categorized as either “sex typed” or “cross-sex typed.” Sex-typed persons organize their self and social perceptions using gender-congruent associations, while cross-sex typed persons use gender-incongruent categories. For example, sex-typed persons would judge others based on whether or not they behave according to what is considered typical feminine behavior or masculine behavior. An athletic female who dresses in her favorite team’s jersey and wears her hair back could be categorized by sex-typed persons as either a “tomboy” or as “butch.” Cross-sex typed persons would not consider a female who is athletic as a “tomboy,” but rather as a female athlete.

Researchers have employed this gender role schematicity model to examine the mass media uses and effects (Mundorf, Weaver & Zillmann, 1989; Toney & Weaver, 1994). These studies suggested that gender may not be as pervasive a component for estimation of media use and effects. For example, the findings revealed misestimates of other-gender reactions to different types of media. Sex-typed females underestimated actual male responses, while cross-sex typed females overestimated actual male responses. Undifferentiated females provided more accurate estimates.

### Research Expectations

In this study, a strong sex main effect is anticipated. Sex, rather than gender, is emphasized because this study is measuring biological sex, not social meanings of gender. More specifically, it is expected that male sportscasters will be viewed as more credible than their female counterparts. It is predicted that respondents will utilize a sex stereotype when inferring judgments of credibility. Respondents are expected to use the stereotype that women do not know as much about sports as men in their judgments, which is a same-sex typed perception. This effect is expected to occur for both male and female respondents, however, it is predicted that male respondents will judge female

sportscasters more harshly than female respondents would. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Male sportscasters will be judged as more credible than female sportscasters.

H2: Male respondents will judge female sportscasters more harshly than female respondents.

Based on the research, it is also expected that the most attractive sportscasters will be rated more credible than their least attractive counterparts. Chaiken's (1986) likeability-agreement heuristic may be able to describe why more attractive sportscasters are evaluated more favorably than unattractive sportscasters. Likewise, it may account for higher evaluations for attractive females, which could explain CBS and other networks' rationale behind the historical practice of hiring former beauty queens and cover girls for female sportscasting roles rather than those with broadcast and sport experience.

It is also expected that those sportscasters that are rated as most knowledgeable will receive higher credibility ratings than their less knowledgeable counterparts. This follows from the literature that argues that individuals that have higher source expertise will be rated as more credible.

Consistent with current research, the following hypotheses are also proposed:

H3: The most attractive sportscasters will be judged as more credible than the least attractive sportscasters.

H4: The most knowledgeable sportscasters will be judged as more credible than the least knowledgeable sportscasters.

## METHOD

### Respondents

Respondents were 85 male and 107 female undergraduates recruited from communication courses at a large southeastern university during the spring of 2005. They received course credit for their participation. Of the 192 respondents, 85.94% reported their race as Caucasian, 6.25% reported Asian, 3.65% reported African-American, 3.65% reported other, and 0.51% reported Hispanic.

### Procedure

A female experimenter conducted 16 sessions. Respondents were tested in same-sex sessions of 20 individuals or less. The sessions involved same-sex groups in order to avoid an intra-audience effect that could occur from mixed sex groups. These respondents participated in one session, lasting an hour or less.

After greeting the respondents, the experimenter told them that they were participating in a project that focused on how people form impressions on others based on a limited amount of information. The experimenter then directed the respondents' attention to a statement of informed consent that was passed out to them. The experimenter asked the participants to read and sign the informed consent which detailed the procedure of the investigation and stated their right to withdraw, without justification or penalty, immediately or at any time during the study. None of the respondents elected to withdraw at this or any later time.

Each session involved a Power Point presentation and a paper-and-pencil questionnaire. The cover sheet of the questionnaire packet included an introductory commentary that asked the respondents, "How skilled are you in forming quick but correct impressions?" The respondents then answered a brief demographic questionnaire. These questions asked the respondents to indicate their gender (male or female) and their race (African-American, Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic, or other). The respondents also were asked to indicate the last four digits of their student identification number for coding purposes.

Next, it was explained that the study was designed to examine "how well people can judge persons' credibility in their career based on a limited amount of information,

such as their face.” The respondents were instructed to “inspect the photograph of each person in the following presentation.” The respondents were presented with 32 head-to-shoulder images of male and female sportscasters and were asked to report their perceptions of each person by answering the following question: “How credible is this person as a sportscaster?” Respondents recorded this perception by rating each person on a 0 to 100 scale, with 0 being “not very credible at all” and 100 being “extremely credible.”

### Selection of Images

Each of the 32 sportscasters’ photographs was selected by conducting a pre-test to ensure the validity in the selection of images. Approximately 50 respondents were recruited from an introductory level communication course and were presented with a paper-and-pencil questionnaire and 104 images of both male and female sportscasters. These images were selected from local broadcast television stations from across the country. Stations from eastern and southeastern states were avoided so as to prevent respondents from having prior knowledge of the sportscasters.

The respondents were asked to view each head-to-shoulder image and judge each sportscaster using a person perception inventory that asked respondents to judge each person’s attractiveness and knowledge as an individual, not specifically as a sportscaster. To determine attractiveness and knowledge, two adjective pairs were included for each category. To ascertain attractiveness, respondents judged each target on a 9-point scale for the following adjective pairs: plain and charismatic, and striking and ugly. To ascertain knowledge, respondents judged each target on the same scale for the following adjective pairs: competent and inept, and dim-witted and knowledgeable. These adjective pairs were selected because they reflected the definitions of both attractiveness and knowledge.

The responses for each of the 104 images were analyzed based on the factor scores (knowledge and attractiveness) to create the following four categories: most attractive and most knowledgeable, most attractive and least knowledgeable, least attractive and most knowledgeable, and least attractive and least knowledgeable. The clusters that developed were then isolated for further inspection. The expert judges



examined the images in each category for both males and females, in order to choose the three most valid images in each category.

From the pre-test, 24 images were selected, representing one of four categories for each sex. The images excluded both race and age, in order to focus on the sex differences, as these do not seem to be culturally bound. Therefore, the images represented young to middle-aged Caucasian sportscasters. Several images of sportscasters from other ethnicities were included as fillers to make the design more transparent; the results for these sportscasters will not be included in the analysis.

For male sportscasters the results of the pre-test were: least knowledgeable/most attractive (knowledge,  $\underline{M} = -0.11$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 0.34$ ; attractiveness,  $\underline{M} = 0.84$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 0.12$ ); least knowledgeable/least attractive (knowledge,  $\underline{M} = -0.84$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 0.22$ ; attractiveness,  $\underline{M} = -1.63$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 0.48$ ); most knowledgeable/most attractive (knowledge,  $\underline{M} = 0.79$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 0.17$ ; attractiveness,  $\underline{M} = 0.55$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.27$ ); and most knowledgeable/least attractive (knowledge,  $\underline{M} = 1.27$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 0.60$ ; attractiveness,  $\underline{M} = -1.89$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 0.29$ ).

For female sportscasters the results of the pre-test were: least knowledgeable/most attractive (knowledge,  $\underline{M} = -0.90$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 0.30$ ; attractiveness,  $\underline{M} = 1.08$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 0.51$ ); least knowledgeable/least attractive (knowledge,  $\underline{M} = -1.39$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 0.54$ ; attractiveness,  $\underline{M} = -0.23$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 0.77$ ); most knowledgeable/most attractive (knowledge,  $\underline{M} = 0.25$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 0.21$ ; attractiveness,  $\underline{M} = 1.61$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 0.59$ ); and most knowledgeable/least attractive (knowledge,  $\underline{M} = 0.08$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 0.14$ ; attractiveness,  $\underline{M} = -0.29$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 0.30$ ).

### Presentation Order of Images

After the images were selected, the presentation order for the final experimental design was randomly determined. Each image was assigned a number from 1 to 32, and then each number was randomly selected to determine the presentation order. After this process, the presentation order was determined and can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1

*Presentation Order of Sportscaster Images*

Slide	Race and Sex	Attractiveness	Knowledge
1	Caucasian Male	Most	Most
2	Caucasian Female	Most	Least
3	Caucasian Male	Least	Least
4	Caucasian Male	Least	Most
5	Caucasian Male	Least	Most
6	Caucasian Female	Least	Most
7	Caucasian Female	Most	Least
8	African-American Male	-	-
9	Caucasian Male	Most	Least
10	African-American Male	-	-
11	Caucasian Female	Most	Most
12	African-American Female	-	-
13	African-American Male	-	-
14	Caucasian Male	Least	Most
15	Caucasian Female	Least	Least
16	Caucasian Female	Least	Most
17	African-American Female	-	-
18	Caucasian Female	Most	Least
19	Caucasian Male	Least	Least
20	Caucasian Female	Most	Most
21	Caucasian Female	Least	Least
22	Caucasian Male	Least	Least
23	African-American Male	-	-
24	Caucasian Female	Least	Most
25	Caucasian Female	Most	Least
26	African-American Female	-	-
27	Caucasian Male	Most	Least
28	Caucasian Female	Least	Least
29	African-American Female	-	-
30	Caucasian Male	Most	Least
31	Caucasian Male	Most	Most
32	Caucasian Male	Most	Most

NOTE: African-Americans do not have any attractiveness or knowledge levels as they were used as fillers.

## RESULTS

### Overview

The dependent measure of credibility was subjected to a 2 X 2 X 2 X 2 mixed measures model with respondent sex (female, male) as an independent measure factor and sportscaster sex (female, male), attractiveness (most attractive, least attractive), and knowledge (most knowledgeable, least knowledgeable) as repeated measures.

Because this study used a repeated measures analysis of variance, it important to note that repeated observations are almost never independent of each other (Vasey & Thayer, 1987; Maxwell & Delaney, 1990). O'Brien and Kaiser (1985) regrettably observed the "sphericity" assumption is "unnatural for most repeated measures data" (p. 317). Yet, those scholars also found that using a multivariate analysis of variance would eliminate the sphericity problem. In this study, the results were analyzed using ANOVA and post hoc tests were then computed using the Student-Newman-Keuls  $t$  test.

### Dependent Measure

Credibility. Examination of the results from the univariate tests revealed significant main effects for sportscaster sex [ $F(1, 190) = 289.49, p < 0.0001, \eta^2 = 0.60$ ], attractiveness [ $F(1, 190) = 282.47, p < 0.0001, \eta^2 = 0.60$ ], and knowledge [ $F(1, 190) = 6.55, p < 0.0113, \eta^2 = 0.03$ ]. Additionally, the analysis yielded significant respondent sex X attractiveness [ $F(1, 190) = 4.43, p < 0.0366, \eta^2 = 0.02$ ], sportscaster sex X attractiveness [ $F(1, 190) = 65.48, p < 0.0001, \eta^2 = 0.26$ ], and attractiveness X knowledge [ $F(1, 190) = 42.33, p < 0.0001, \eta^2 = 0.18$ ] interactions. Further, the analysis also revealed significant respondent sex X sportscaster sex X knowledge [ $F(1, 190) = 11.63, p < 0.0008, \eta^2 = 0.06$ ] and respondent sex X sportscaster sex X attractiveness X knowledge [ $F(1, 190) = 7.92, p < 0.0054, \eta^2 = 0.04$ ] interactions. No other effects emerged as significant. Overall, there was not a significant difference between respondent sex, therefore, no between subject effects exist.

Inspection of the means associated with the sportscaster sex main effect revealed that male sportscasters ( $M = 61.86$ ) were judged as more credible than female sportscasters ( $M = 45.41$ ).

The means for the attractiveness main effect showed that independent of sex, the most attractive sportscasters ( $\underline{M} = 59.51$ ) were rated as the most credible overall as compared to their least attractive counterparts ( $\underline{M} = 47.76$ ).

Likewise, the means for the knowledge main effect revealed that the most knowledgeable targets ( $\underline{M} = 54.22$ ) were viewed as more credible than their least knowledgeable counterparts ( $\underline{M} = 53.05$ ).

The respondent sex X attractiveness interaction means demonstrated that female respondents judged the least attractive sportscasters ( $\underline{M} = 45.82$ ), regardless of sex, as significantly less credible, when compared to the judgments of male respondents ( $\underline{M} = 49.71$ ). Both male ( $\underline{M} = 59.98$ ) and female respondents ( $\underline{M} = 59.03$ ) judged the most attractive sportscasters, regardless of sex, as the most credible.

The sportscaster sex X attractiveness means are displayed in Table 2. As can be seen, the least attractive females ( $\underline{M} = 41.98$ ) were judged as significantly less credible as compared to their most attractive counterparts ( $\underline{M} = 48.83$ ). However, the least attractive males ( $\underline{M} = 53.54$ ) produced credibility ratings significantly higher than the most attractive females. The most attractive males ( $\underline{M} = 70.18$ ) were judged as significantly more credible when compared to any other group.

Table 2

*Credibility Ratings as a Function of Sportscaster Sex and Attractiveness*

Attractiveness	Sportscaster Sex	
	Male	Female
Most	70.18 <sub>d</sub>	48.83 <sub>b</sub>
Least	53.54 <sub>c</sub>	41.98 <sub>a</sub>

NOTE: Means having different subscripts differ at  $p < .05$  by the Student Newman-Keuls t-test.

Examination of the means for the attractiveness X knowledge interaction can be seen on Table 3. Sportscasters, regardless of sex, who were judged as the most credible were also rated the most attractive and the most knowledgeable ( $\underline{M} = 61.58$ ), when compared to their most attractive and least knowledgeable counterparts ( $\underline{M} = 57.44$ ). Further, sportscasters were judged as the least credible when they were least attractive, but also most knowledgeable ( $\underline{M} = 46.85$ ). Credibility ratings of the least attractive and least knowledgeable sportscasters ( $\underline{M} = 48.67$ ) were intermediate to these extremes.

The respondent sex X sportscaster sex X knowledge means are displayed in Table 4. Male respondents judged the most knowledgeable female sportscasters ( $\underline{M} = 48.04$ ) as significantly more credible as compared to their least knowledgeable counterparts ( $\underline{M} = 45.71$ ). Female respondents judgments of either the most ( $\underline{M} = 44.25$ ) or least knowledgeable female sportscasters ( $\underline{M} = 43.65$ ) were not significantly different from each other. Further, female respondents judged the least knowledgeable male sportscasters ( $\underline{M} = 59.51$ ) as significantly less credible when compared to their most knowledgeable counterparts ( $\underline{M} = 62.31$ ). And finally, male respondents judgments of male sportscasters either the most ( $\underline{M} = 62.28$ ) or least knowledgeable ( $M = 63.35$ ) did not differ.

Table 3

*Credibility Ratings of All Sportscasters as a Function of Attractiveness and Knowledge*

Attractiveness	Knowledge	
	Most	Least
Most	61.58 <sub>d</sub>	57.44 <sub>c</sub>
Least	46.85 <sub>a</sub>	48.67 <sub>b</sub>

NOTE: Means having different subscripts differ at  $p < .05$  by the Student Newman-Keuls t-test.

Table 4

*Credibility Ratings as a Function of Respondent Sex, Sportscaster Sex, and Knowledge*

Knowledge	Respondent Sex	Target Sex	
		Male	Female
Most	Male	62.28 <sub>e</sub>	48.04 <sub>c</sub>
	Female	62.31 <sub>e</sub>	44.25 <sub>ab</sub>
Least	Male	63.35 <sub>e</sub>	45.71 <sub>b</sub>
	Female	59.51 <sub>d</sub>	43.65 <sub>a</sub>

NOTE: Means having different subscripts differ at  $p < .05$  by the Student Newman-Keuls t-test.

Lastly, the respondent sex X sportscaster sex X attractiveness X knowledge means are shown in Table 4. Overall, male sportscasters were judged as more credible, with the most attractive and most knowledgeable male sportscasters as the most credible ( $\bar{M} = 70.28$ ). Female sportscasters were perceived as less credible overall, independent of attractiveness and knowledge. More specifically, least attractive and least knowledgeable males ( $\bar{M} = 56.78$ ;  $\bar{M} = 52.79$ ) received higher credibility ratings than the most attractive and most knowledgeable females ( $\bar{M} = 52.55$ ;  $\bar{M} = 49.20$ ). Female respondents also reported lower ratings of least attractive male and female sportscasters overall.

Table 5

*Credibility Ratings as a Function of Sportscaster Sex, Attractiveness, Knowledge  
and Respondent Sex*

Respondent Sex	Sportscaster Sex	Attractiveness	Knowledge	
			Most	Least
Male	Male	Most	70.28 <sub>j</sub>	69.92 <sub>j</sub>
		Least	54.28 <sub>g</sub>	56.78 <sub>h</sub>
	Female	Most	52.55 <sub>fg</sub>	47.18 <sub>d</sub>
		Least	43.53 <sub>b</sub>	44.24 <sub>bc</sub>
Female	Male	Most	74.30 <sub>k</sub>	66.23 <sub>i</sub>
		Least	50.31 <sub>f</sub>	52.79 <sub>g</sub>
	Female	Most	49.20 <sub>de</sub>	46.42 <sub>cd</sub>
		Least	39.30 <sub>a</sub>	40.87 <sub>a</sub>

*Note:* Means having different lowercase subscripts differ at  $p < .05$  by the Student-Newman-Keuls  $t$ -test.

## DISCUSSION

Consistent with expectations, the findings of this study illustrate that a sex stereotype does exist in public perceptions of male and female sportscasters. The fact that even the most attractive and most knowledgeable female sportscasters could not receive a higher credibility rating than the least attractive and least knowledgeable male sportscasters from either male or female respondents indicates that women face a considerable obstacle in their profession. It is not surprising that male targets were judged as most credible overall because their career is one that is not only dominated by men, but it is also directed toward male viewers and focuses on male athletes.

Furthermore, perceptions of the opposite sex produced unexpected results. Initially, the expectation was that male respondents would judge female sportscasters more harshly than female respondents. However, not only were female respondents harsher critics overall, but they were significantly more critical of female sportscasters than male respondents. Also, in judging the opposite sex, male respondents used more discretion in judging female sportscasters. Likewise, female respondents were more discreet when judging male sportscasters. The explanation behind this result could be that both males and females are more likely to be critical of their own sex, while attempting to be more politically correct when judging the opposite sex.

Upon further inspection of the credibility ratings, the impact of attractiveness on credibility is clear. Consistent with previous research, the most attractive sportscasters received higher ratings of desired traits, such as credibility. In this case, more attractive sportscasters were deemed more credible. Overall, both male and female sportscasters were judged as more credible when they were most attractive, despite their level of knowledge.

Because the effects of source attractiveness are not mutually exclusive, attractive sportscasters received higher evaluations for source expertise and source trustworthiness. Respondents clearly attached favorable evaluations of honesty, sport and broadcast knowledge, and experience to these individuals. Another possible explanation may be that these sportscasters received higher evaluations based on the social skills explanation. Physically attractive people are considered to have better social skills than less attractive



people (Chaiken 1980, 1987). Respondents may believe these sportscasters are more credible because they possess speaker confidence and communication skills, which are both necessary for on-air personalities.

What is interesting is that the results demonstrate that male and female respondents form impressions from attractiveness differently. While all respondents judged the most attractive sportscasters as more credible, males and females judged the least attractive sportscasters differently. Female respondents were considerably more ruthless in their opinions of the least attractive sportscasters. Perhaps attractiveness drives females' opinions of credibility more so than males because women are more likely to infer judgments based on appearance.

Another interesting point regarding the main effect of attractiveness on perceived credibility is that male and female sportscasters differed on how their looks impacted their authority. Attractiveness had a significant influence on increasing the perceived credibility of male sportscasters. The most attractive male sportscasters received overwhelmingly higher ratings than all others, but the same does not hold true for their female counterparts. Perhaps in the context of sport media, a pretty female face does not necessarily mean that the audience will believe she is a trustworthy source of sport news. In fact, her attractiveness could actually lead audience members to believe she is less of an expert because she was only hired for her looks. The findings reinforce the stereotype that female sportscasters are hired more for their appearance than their broadcast and sport knowledge. This finding is also consistent with the historical hiring practices in sport media.

The main effect of knowledge on credibility was also consistent with expectations that those who were seen as most knowledgeable would be considered a more reliable source of sport news. One of the main research questions asked whether receivers evaluate female sportscasters according to their level of expertise or knowledge. After first consideration, it seemed likely that female sportscasters would receive lower source expertise evaluations than male sportscasters. However, both females and males may receive similar evaluations for source trustworthiness.

The results indicated that both male and female respondents use knowledge to guide their judgments in the same manner. Likewise, there was little difference in how

knowledge impacted perceptions of male and female sportscasters; both yielded similar credibility ratings. What is worth noting is that even though knowledge can positively influence credibility ratings, it does not have as powerful an effect as does attractiveness. Perhaps this is due to the assumption that one possesses a certain level of competence because they must have some level of knowledge in order to be on television. Viewers may tend to believe that simply being a television reporter or newscaster is a symbol of knowledge. They may tend to trust broadcast journalists simply because they are “the man or woman on TV.”

However, the most powerful indicator of credibility was the sportscaster’s sex. The results indicated a very small difference between male and female respondents’ judgments. This shows that both males and females employ a sex stereotype when forming impressions of sportscasters. This is most evident when comparing the most attractive and knowledgeable female sportscasters to their least attractive and knowledgeable male counterparts. No matter what a woman does, she is simply not viewed as an equal to her male peers. This is interesting because there were no real sex differences concerning the main effect of knowledge on credibility ratings. So even though male and female sportscasters were seen as possessing similar levels of sport knowledge, they were not seen as equally credible.

In this case, it seems possible that respondents may possess other heuristics that may supersede the likeability-agreement heuristic. For example, receivers may rely on their attitudes regarding sex stereotypes rather than attractiveness. In this case, attitude-accessibility would explain which cognitive shortcut prevails in the impression formation of male and female sportscasters. Sex-based heuristics rather than attractiveness would be accessed first during evaluations of these men and women.

While the findings of this investigation are informative, some caveats must be acknowledged. The cultural diversity of the sample was limited. Eighty-six percent of the respondents were Caucasian and diverse ethnic groups were underrepresented. The university student-sampling frame could also be a weakness, in that it does not accurately represent the entire population of male and female respondents. In this case, it is assumed that perceptions of male and female sportscasters are not culturally bound by the age or race of the respondents.

Like all research concerning sex differences in social contexts, this study is concerned with “gender differences, or the socialization and cultural differences between individuals,” rather than biological sex differences (Stiff & Mongeau, 2003, p. 167). These culturally bound gender differences are employed to explain differences between men and women, yet they are rarely used to actually measure these differences. Instead, sex is used as the independent variable, which is an imprecise means of measuring social and cultural differences. Just as the biological definition of sex is an improper mode of categorizing individuals who do not identify with traditional sex roles, so is the variable of biological sex improper to measure message receiver differences (Stiff & Mongeau, 2003).

The work of Eagly (1978) and Eagly & Carli (1981) demonstrated the ineffectiveness of the biological definition of sex to measure gender differences in social influence. By employing both a narrative and meta-analytic analysis of prior research, they found there was little evidence to suggest that the sex of persuasive targets is a significant variable in message influence. In the earlier narrative review, Eagly (1978) found that of the 62 persuasive studies examined, 82% revealed no gender difference in persuasibility. Of those studies that found significant gender differences, Eagly (1978) determined that cultural and experimental factors were serious intervening variables. The majority of the studies were conducted prior to the beginning of the women’s movement in 1970, and thus sex-biased topics before this period may have made women more receptive to persuasibility. In fact, prior research indicates that both men and women are more susceptible to influence regarding topics they are unfamiliar with or find uninteresting (McGuire & Papageorgis, 1961).

Likewise, Eagly and Carli’s (1981) meta-analytic review confirmed these conclusions, by providing a more precise indication that subject gender variance occurred in only 1% of the studies. Eagly and Carli (1981) determined that “a sex difference as small as this may have few implications for social influence” (p.11).

Relying on biological definitions of sex to explain socially constructed gender differences is no longer acceptable in contemporary life or across cultures. Gender role self-perception is one possible variable that may be used to explain gender differences. Social expectations of appropriate male and female behavior may be able to more clearly

define variation within and between both sexes than the sex of the respondent (Eagly, 1987; Bem, 1993). Eagly (1987) conceptualized these social expectations as two types of self-perception: communal and agentic. The communal dimension involves qualities of communicating to connect with others and emotion, which is typically associated with females. The agentic dimension involves qualities of self-assertion, independence, and goal-orientated purpose, which is typically associated with males. While these self-perceptions are situational and individuals may possess both communal and agentic qualities, individuals have a clear natural preference for one or the other.

Some researchers have already applied Eagly's (1987) gender role self-perception variable to explain various social phenomenon. For example, Oliver, Sargent, and Weaver (1998) employed the communal and agentic dimensions to study the influence of biological sex and gender role differences on affective reactions to different genres of film. Specifically, the study found that "viewer's experience of media entertainment likely reflects a combination of the viewer's sex, gender role self-perception, and the type of entertainment in question" (p. 58). The study also suggested that further research examining gender role self-perception and media portrayals would more accurately explain why men and women different in their preferences and enjoyment of media entertainment, which is relevant to this study.

Future research could also focus on perceptions of female sportscasters reporting on specific sports, particularly male dominated sports such as football or professional golf. This study simply considered perceptions of sportscasters in general; by targeting specific sports, research could provide better information of sex differences in perceptions of male and female sportscasters. Also, this current study and future research could provide major networks and cable affiliates with evidence that attractiveness does not necessarily suggest that viewers will respond favorably to female sportscasters. Networks can concentrate on hiring knowledgeable and competent women, rather than former athletes or cover girls. Likewise, women who have been "let go" from their positions because their maturity is outmatched by youthful beauty may have a stronger case against their employers. Finally, ESPN conducts focus groups to test the likeability of their sportscasters. Such research would provide richer questions for these focus groups, in order for women to be given more opportunities in sport media.

The implications of this current study on society go beyond the institutions of sport and media. This study addresses the issue of how sex stereotypes are used to form impressions about persons in their career. Historically, the field of sport media was dominated by men, and those women who did break through sex boundaries were faced with considerable obstacles. Today, more women are being accepted into the field of sport media, yet sex stereotypes still exist. This indicates that with time, perceptions of what a male or female is able to do has become more elastic. Just as more women are seen behind the sportscaster desk, more men are seen as stay-at-home parents. Sex stereotypes do exist today, yet education and time has allowed both men and women to take on roles that were traditionally reserved for the opposite sex. By continuing to educate the population, sex stereotypes will become less powerful over time. In particular, programs to encourage today's youth to open their minds and pursue a variety of careers that may not be sex specific will push the envelope in diminishing sex stereotypes.

Another area of research that should be addressed concerns behavioral uses of media. An examination of the current media contexts and viewer behaviors would determine what causes viewers to stop and pay attention to specific media. For example, perhaps the reason why networks and cable affiliates hire attractive men and women is that the attractive sportscaster prototype catches the eye of the viewer and causes them to stop and watch the program. However, if society determines that stereotypes of attractiveness and sex are not acceptable in determining a person's worth in their career, perhaps the use of such industry prototypes will diminish.

In conclusion, the results indicate that a sex stereotype does exist concerning male and female sportscasters. While women have made considerable strides in breaking into sport media broadcasting, they still are not seen as entirely competent to fill the job. Prior to this study, little research has been done on how viewers perceive the sportscasters themselves. One of the main goals of this project was to create a new area of study to further explore how people use sex to form impressions, and to see if there are any sex differences regarding the performance of females in a predominantly male context.

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## VITAE

Heather Michelle Toro was born on April 19, 1980 to William and Nancy Toro in Norfolk, Virginia, where she grew up with her two younger sisters Stephanie and Jessica. She received her bachelor's degree in mass communication from Winthrop University in Rock Hill, SC, where she concentrated in broadcast journalism. After working for several newspaper, radio and television stations, she worked as a production coordinator for an audio and visual production company. She returned to school to receive her master's degree in communication at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, where she worked as a graduate teaching assistant in public speaking. Heather now resides in Christiansburg, VA with her fiancé and puppy.