

“Sports do not build character. They reveal it.”:

The Influence of Athletes and Endorsements on Race and Gender

by

Erika Weiler

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

Approved April 2016 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Jennifer Sandlin, Chair
Gregg Rashad Shabazz Sanders
Deborah Henderson

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2016

ABSTRACT

Athletes and sports seem impervious to criticism. Sports is one of the most popular forms of entertainment within popular culture. Since popular culture is one of the dominant forms of education, it is important to analyze and recognize the ideologies present. How do the images and portrayals of professional athletes in still images and video endorsements reflect and perpetuate hegemonic ideologies of race and gender? How do these portrayals intersect with issues of justice and representation? By using a cultural studies framework with emphasis on representation of race and gender in popular culture, an analysis of the representation of seven athletes in advertising for endorsements was conducted. The seven athletes were chosen based on name-recognition, popularity, success in their sport, and a need for a diversity of races and gender. Using semiotics, the advertisements were coded and themes were presented. Several themes presented in the advertisements: Including (1) white female athletes are presented as sexualized objects, (2) black female athletes are represented using masculine traits, (3) white male athletes are normalized, and (4) black male athletes are presented as successful because of their bodies. These representations are harmful because they do little to nothing to change dominant ideologies. The representation of athletes in advertising reinforce hetero-patriarchal ideologies of race and gender.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS.....	iv
INTRODUCTION.....	1
FRAMEWORKS.....	4
Popular Culture.....	4
The power of athletes and their value.....	10
Race.....	18
Gender.....	20
METHODOLOGY.....	25
THE ATHLETES.....	28
Tiger Woods.....	29
Lebron James.....	30
Payton Manning.....	32
Serena Williams.....	33
Maria Sharapova.....	35
Danica Patrick.....	36

	Page
Ronda Rousey.....	38
THEMES/FINDINGS.....	40
Cover The Athlete.....	41
Athletes Become Sexualized Objects.....	42
Negotiating Race and Gender.....	46
Playing the Sport.....	51
All on His Own.....	55
DISCUSSION.....	59
CONCLUSION.....	62
REFERENCES.....	65

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs	Page
1. Tiger Woods in Nike Advertisement.....	29
2. Lebron James in Nike Advertisement.....	30
3. Payton Manning in Nike Advertisement.....	32
4. Serena Williams in Nike Advertisement.....	34
5. Maria Sharapova in Nike Advertisement.....	35
6. Danica Patrick in Edward-Elmhurst Advertisement.....	36
7. Ronda Rousey in Nike Advertisement.....	39
8. Danica Patrick in GoDaddy Advertisement.....	43
9. Maria Sharapova in Clear Advertisement.....	45
10. Serena Williams in Got Milk Advertisement.....	47
11. Ronda Rousey in Carl's Jr. Advertisement.....	49
12. Serena Williams in Berlei Advertisement.....	49
13. Payton Manning in Nationwide Insurance Advertisement.....	51
14. Lebron James in Nike Advertisement.....	52
15. Tiger Woods in Tag Heuer Advertisement	58

The idea that athletes are superior is an idea forged in American culture. Society places athletes on a pedestal and people individually spend hundreds and thousands of dollars a year on sporting events, apparel, televised games, or sports packages. The media assists in forwarding the “athlete as hero” image as “sport heroes are clearly promoted by the media as a source of national pride and function to represent national qualities, traditions, and distinctions” (Lines, 2003, p. 288). Athletes are given “hero” qualities and characteristics and as society begins to idolize them, their social lives are presented to the public. These sports stars function

to represent heroic images of men and masculinity... the ideal star is young, male, and successful. The maleness of the concept becomes clearer when the qualities evoked and offered for admiration are analyzed. There is a stress on a set of qualities traditionally associated with masculinity- toughness, aggression, commitment, power, competitiveness, and courage (Lines., 2003, pp. 289).

Thus the representation of athletes is tailored to traditional masculine qualities, targeting young males. The “athlete as hero” is presented to young children, and the “athlete as hero” is traditionally presented as males, not females. Athletes are role models children look up to on a regular basis, and adults allow children to idolize these athletes. These same athletes are arrested for domestic violence, rape, gun charges, drug charges, or other criminal offenses committed by athletes every day. However, since they are given god-like status by society, companies realize the potential to use athletes for their products. Athletes can potentially earn a higher wage endorsing products than playing their respective sport. Athletes are not the only celebrities seen endorsing products, however, companies are

representing them in different manners with respect to race and gender. With the ability to influence popular culture and the lives of consumers, representations of athletes currently reinforce the dominant ideologies within society, leaving little room for change.

Athletes are offered endorsement contracts by corporations because of the popularity sports have achieved. Sports have taken over individuals leisure time and, according to Carrington and McDonald (2009), watching sports is where “their entire leisure time, their individual powers, and their material means are devoted” (p. 21). As sport continue to consume leisure time it “can have no redeeming features other than being a conduit for dominant ideology, thereby weakening the revolutionary spirit” (Carrington & McDonald, 2009, p. 21). Sport has done little to nothing to advance non-dominant ideologies and “more often than not, serves to buttress, if not actively promote, rather than undermine dominant ideologies” (Carrington & McDonald, 2009, p. 43). These dominant ideologies are produced and supported by the companies endorsing athletes, companies that have an interest in preserving the current trends.

Sport is thus an important part of popular culture and its consumption by the population enables athletes to be transformed into commodities. Athletes are unique commodities not only because consumers are able to buy and wear athlete-endorsed clothing, but also because athletes are able to give consumers an experience. The experience is a part of the commodity, and one that individuals are willing to pay for. Researchers have asked “Who buys sports? People buy individual tickets, season tickets, executive boxes, and hospitality packages. They also purchase television sets, digital boxes, and satellite decoders... some purchase merchandise, most notably replica shirts”

(Carrington & McDonald, 2009, p. 81). The process of consuming sport is one of the main appeals for using athletes for endorsements.

Athletes and companies are only as successful as an athlete's performance. If an athlete has terrible consecutive seasons, products sales have the potential to drop because the athlete has lost the ability to connect with the audience. Those who enjoy sport and spend their time and money on them are aware of which athletes are successful and which are fizzling out. If an athlete cannot maintain high social status their product, their body, is no longer a wanted commodity.

The media has a particular role in creating the social standing an athlete possesses. For example, in the tennis world the Williams sisters are well known and respected. However "the differential media discourses on the 'super-feminine' Anna Kournikova and the 'trans masculine/she-male' Williams sisters presuppose a heterosexual White male gaze," thus placing the successful Serena Williams into a separate category because of physical characteristics (Carrington & McDonald, 2009, p. 134).

These representations can be harmful to an athletes standing because there are consumers who have little to no interest in watching sport but are aware of the athletes because of sports magazines, sports channels, or radio. If people solely listens to journalists, they would not hear about the mystifying domination the Williams sisters have in tennis, but rather about their inability to be "feminine" while doing so. The portrayal of athletes is from one perspective- white, heterosexual male- reinforces dominant ideologies of gender and race. How do the images and portrayals of professional athletes in still

images and video endorsements reflect and perpetuate hegemonic ideologies of race and gender? How do these portrayals intersect with issues of justice and representation?

I will begin by discussing popular culture and its impact within society, and move into an analysis of athletes and their social roles. Popular culture is important for my study because the athletes I analyze are presented through various popular culture outlets. From television to radio, magazines, and film, these athletes are presented to the public in particular ways by corporations. Athletes are necessary to analyze because of their ability to reach high levels of fame, and to influence individuals. Next, I will explain race and gender within culture because race and gender are socially constructed ideas produced through popular culture, and these images aid in perpetuating and forming ideologies. After I present the frameworks and methodology for my research, I will discuss the athletes and my findings, along with examples of the advertisements.

Frameworks

For my research I used a cultural studies framework with an emphasis on popular culture and the representations of race and gender. I begin with popular culture and the impact it carries within society and culture, I then introduce race and gender, and their role within culture.

Popular Culture

Popular Culture is everywhere. It consumes our lives. There are minimal spaces one can look without being exposed to it. It controls our lives, however, we are the ones

who take part in creating it. Corporations, the government, religion, the entertainment industry, families, and other social institutions play their parts, but in the end, we make it.

Popular culture is important to understand and study. Societies learn every day from the various outlets of popular culture. From television, magazines, newspapers, or Internet to name a few, individuals are constantly consuming culture. Culture is a complex idea but “to put it simply, culture is how we live nature (including our own biology); it is the shared meanings we as a culture have shaped and formed” (Storey, 2010, p. 2). Culture can change and vary between individuals, but culture is something we all have, and popular culture is something we all consume. The idea of popular culture was “referring to a ‘shift in perspective’... ‘popular’ meant ‘being seen from the point of view of the people rather than from those seeking favor or power over them’” (Strinati, 2004, p. 2). Researchers examined whether popular culture was an expression of the people, of their interests and experiences, or whether popular culture is used by higher powers to shape interests for their benefit. Some lean towards popular culture as a mask for corporations to sell and move commodities.

In order to understand the impact of popular culture on individuals I am using a concept developed by philosopher Antonio Gramsci, which he created to explain how social order was maintained. Gramsci called his idea hegemony. Gramsci wanted to know why the lower classes remained subordinate and how their subordination could be altered.

One explanation was

that ruling groups can maintain their power through force, consent, or a combination of the two... Gramsci noted, however, that power can be wielded at

the level of culture or ideology, not just through the use of force... power is wielded in a different arena – that of culture, in the realm of everyday life – where people essentially agree to current social arrangements (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003, pp. 165-66).

Hegemony is a powerful tool because it is through the use of language that culture and meaning are loaded into words and phrases individuals utilize to understand their society. Hegemony is important to understand for popular culture because hegemony helps form and create popular culture. Hegemony is powerful because it operates “at the level of common sense in assumptions we make about social life and on the terrain of things we accept as ““natural” or “the way things are”” (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003, p. 166). Common sense is utilized everyday by individuals and we use common sense to make sense of our surroundings and to discredit anything that goes against our understanding.

Hegemony influences popular culture through the mass media. Stuart Hall explains how the mass media help maintain hegemony as

mass media are one of the principal sites where the cultural leadership, the work of hegemony, is exercised... the media produce images of the world that give events particular meanings. Media images do not simply reflect the world, they re-present it; instead of reproducing the “reality” of the world “out there,” the media engage in practices that define reality (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003, pp. 168).

The mass media thus help to shape our understandings of events and tell us how to think and what to believe. The media help reinforce our understandings of words and concepts.

Hegemony is the process in which certain words in culture continue to carry meanings and universal understanding. Popular culture thus reinforces and perpetuates the process of hegemony. Social institutions that shape and form popular culture continuously mold and are molded by dominant ideologies. With this reinforcement of ideologies and “because we occupy the same society and belong to roughly the same ‘culture,’ it is assumed that there is, basically, only one perspective on events” (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 2013, p. 58). Dominant ideologies are formed in various ways and although they do not go undisputed, they continue to persist and consent is given by the acceptance of these ideas. Dominant ideologies are formed by the powerful within culture, and by social institutions.

The images and messages put forth by popular culture help to teach individuals from a young age what their values and opinions should be, thus engaging in socialization. Holtzman (2000) defined socialization as “the total set of experiences in which children become clear about norms and expectations and learn how to function as respected and accepted members of a culture.” Popular culture is one of the largest and most influential social institutions that participate in socialization. The media assists in teaching us what is “normal” and what is “deviant” and the media are successful in doing that as they tend to show “a remarkably narrow range of behaviors and lifestyles, marginalizing or neglecting people who are different from the mass mediated norm” (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003, p. 136). Popular culture is impactful because it not only explains how individuals should behave, dress, talk, or look, but it reinforces these ideas over and over again. Popular culture is a form of education that a limited amount of individuals or corporations control. These

individuals or corporations have agendas and goals when they formulate the images and messages given as popular culture, which create and shape our values and opinions. Society has accepted these images and messages as normal and “common sense,” and while there is a mixture of ideologies in popular culture, the dominant ones are also the most “normalized.”

One view of popular culture, and an explanation for the use of a dominant ideology, was created by Laura Mulvey. Mulvey coined the term “male gaze” in popular culture where the audience is put into the perspective of a heterosexual man. The term refers to the process through which women are viewed as objects for male characters, as audiences then view those characters as objects. Mulvey’s concept of the male gaze illustrates one example of the hegemonic ideologies put forth by popular culture. The male gaze by Mulvey is not the only gaze in popular culture, as it is predominantly white, but these also rely heavily on

woman can only mimic man’s relation to language, that is assume a position defined by the penis-phallus as the supreme arbiter of lack... critical black female spectators construct a theory of looking relations where cinematic visual delight is the pleasure of interrogation (Hooks, 1992, pp. 126).

Mulvey, along with other scholars, neglect to understand and analyze the lack of other gazes present in popular culture, and how these continue to stratify groups. However, Mulvey’s male gaze is important for my research, and for analyzing this particular popular culture, because sports is a male dominated field. One way I am utilizing gender studies is through the feminist perspective which analyzes “how the world has been shaped and

influenced by men, and in how this shaping has silenced women” (Borchers, 2010, p. 210). By taking up this lens I am able to view the advertisements as the target audience because most sports advertisements are generated for male audiences.

One facet of popular culture dominating consumers is advertising. Patricia Arend (2014) defines advertising as “the art of persuading people to buy a product. It includes any method used to this end, in any medium, such as film, television, radio, the Internet and print, from billboards to magazines and newspapers” (p. 54). Advertising is one of the main sources of revenue for media outlets, which is why we see more glossy ads in magazines than actual content. Since advertising is influential “advertisers are doing the most important buying, the principal products being sold are the audiences... media are in the business of delivering audiences to advertisers” (Croteau & Hoynes, 2011, p. 60). Advertising is everywhere and is polysemous, meaning it can have a variety of meanings and interpretations. Advertising is a powerful tool that can construct concepts of race, gender, and sexuality to name a few. Advertisements can construct concepts because “advertising presumes and promotes a culture of consumption, normalizing middle or even upper-middle class lifestyles and making buying power a measure of both virtue and freedom” (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003, p. 186). By buying the products being sold in advertisements, we reinforce our needs and wants created by popular culture. For example, popular culture teaches us what kind of clothing is popular, and advertisements tell us where we can purchase these items. Advertising is a money machine and popular culture are all the little parts that help create it.

Popular culture is important to analyze and critique. As an omnipotent force that encroaches on individuals lives from a young age, popular culture is considered an ultimate educator. With the ability to impact and influence an exponential amount of minds, and corporations along with other social institutions have the ability to create and shape popular culture, what exactly are we all consuming? Athletes are a part of that popular culture and because athletes are viewed in a different light, their power and the value of that power will be analyzed.

The Power of Athletes and their value

One of the main facets of popular culture is entertainment. Entertainment consists of a vast amount of aspects, but for the purposes of this paper, entertainment refers to television, movies, celebrities, and sports. Celebrities can range from actors, athletes, politicians, innovators, entrepreneurs, activists, or fashion icons. I specifically focus on athletes, and those athletes who have reached the celebrity status of being well known amongst the public. These athletes achieved a level of success by being a familiar face to individuals, specifically those who have little to no interest in sport and due to this success companies realized the potential reward of investment. A company invests in an athlete by creating a clothing line after them, giving them merchandise to wear, or having them appear in an advertisement for their product. A company that does any of these will officially be having an athlete endorse their product. In simple terms “athletes who appear in advertisements often have built-in celebrity status... those athletes endorsing a product or service in advertising generally enjoy public recognition and use their fame to help a company sell or enhance its image, products, or brands” (Kihan & Yunjae, 2011, p. 144).

Athletes can have a simple agreement with a company and wear their brand, or a long term relationship forms, either way the athlete is monetarily compensated.

Athletes are a category of celebrities companies were smart to tap in to because athletes are looked upon with a different lens. Athletes are heroes. With the ability to run at a superb speed, throw a football with lightning precision, hit a baseball out of the park, or shoot a block of rubber into a small goal, athletes are viewed as incredible people. Professional athletes, are able to do things that most of us could only dream of. Athletes are the example of excellence with the countless hours of hard work and sweat, athletes are the illustration of the American Dream, the belief that with hard work and dedication anyone can achieve anything. However according to the NCAA, the National Collegiate Athletic Association, less than ten percent in men's football, basketball, baseball, ice hockey, and soccer, along with women's basketball, make it to professional leagues. Perhaps the low percentage of people who are able to become a professional athlete aids in making them unique. Athletes who begin endorsing products have achieved a status amongst the public that companies recognize and exploit.

However, endorsement deals can be complicated, especially with the professional sports leagues athletes play in. Some endorsement deals have injury or trade clauses, where an athlete could potentially have to give a company the revenue they lost if injured and no longer able to play. Another complication is when athletes are unable to wear their endorsement brands because of their respective sports league. An example of this would be the National Football League, NFL, fining their athletes for wearing apparel made by companies whom they do not have an agreement with. Article 6 in the NFL rules state

“players are prohibited from wearing, displaying, or orally promoting equipment, apparel, or other items that carry commercial names or logos/identifications of companies, unless such commercial identification has been approved in advance by the office league” (Smith, Forbes, 2013). Players such as Cam Newton, who has an endorsement deal with Under Armour, or Colin Kaepernick, a deal with Beats by Dre, are fined \$10,000 for wearing their apparel. The players have to cover any identifying markers up to ninety minutes after a game, during a game, or during press conferences. The athletes have to battle with contracts from endorsements, and contracts with their sports league. These athletes are being fined when they are filling their role as a commodity to companies, some companies will pay these fines, and money appears to be the only factor everyone cares for. Although these players know the rules, each one chooses to defy them and maintain their endorsement contracts with other companies and wearing their apparel. Individuals see these athletes wearing various companies’ apparel, and companies see their sales increase. Not only do consumers wear the apparel and purchase the merchandise but athletes overall, and sports in general, have the ability to relieve people of their day to day lives. Sport has a magical spirit attached to it.

Not only do sports have a spirit attached to it, sports are a part of people’s identity. People possess an amount of pride in their sports teams and most people are fans of the teams from their hometown or state. An example would be people who do not watch sports but support the Arizona Cardinals solely because they are from Arizona. The same goes for nationality in events such as World Cups or the Olympics. When a nation is participating in the FIFA World Cup, populations stop to watch and display their national

pride. Strangers meet in a parking lot tailgate for a football team and it appears as if the individuals have been best friends their entire life. Sports is something that can bring a random set of people together, people who would never speak otherwise. There are the exceptions of rivals, but sports presents a sense of camaraderie for some. Sport is considered an industry but according to Horne (2006)

it is clearly a rather unorthodox one. Where else would consumers (football fans) maintain high levels of consumption even if quality (success) declines and prices rise...? Sport is clearly much more than simply another industry. Define sport as a ‘recreational and professional competitive, rule-governed physical activity (pp. 3).

Even when teams are in a winning drought, fans will continue to support them because we identify with the team and need to see them succeed, and need to be a part of it. The influence and impact of sport is important to recognize while the media and corporations take advantage. Corporations utilize the popularity of sports by having their products seen either in the area of play, the athletes, or commercials declaring their proud partnership with a league. Sports leagues have their own set of rules and governing body to oversee actions by the league or athletes. Whether or not an individual agrees with or enjoys sports it must be acknowledged that they

have assumed enormous importance in the modern world. The global attention paid to sport can be assessed not only in economic terms (total revenue generated from media, attendance, apparel, and equipment sales, etc.) and in time (total time spent watching, playing, reading about, etc.) but also in its impact on popular culture (advertising, journalism, movies) (Roper & Polasek, 2014, pp. 153).

Thus sports are consistently being consumed by people and in turn, so are the athletes. Since sports is a sacred idea for many, the athletes who play them begin to take on the same characteristics. A need arises to make athletes virtuous individuals for us to look up to. Many create these ideals and

the concept is based largely on ignorance: the less we know about an athlete, the easier it becomes to invest him with lofty ideals. The ideals have little to do with the athlete's character and everything to do with creating an artificial construct that serves a need (Rhoden, New York Times, 2012).

Regardless of the numerous falls athletes may take in their personal lives, falls that reveal their true character, we continue to grant them a hero status and those who wish to have their products endorsed look to athletes. Although some feel that endorsements are pointless because being a hero for an athlete is that "virtue is not a necessary qualification for hero status; a hero is not a role model. On the contrary, it is the essence of a hero to be unique and therefore inimitable" (Rhoden, New York Times, 2012). Companies choose athletes because of individuals need to be just like them, however, when athletes are given an untouchable hero status, it becomes impossible to ever be "just like them." The public has this need for athletes to be heroes because athletes are nationally recognized. There may be a need to have national icons with "hero" characteristics because they can cover and overshadow those icons we deem undeserving. Since sports allow fans to escape their regular day to day lives, athletes as heroes allow us to forget all the people who are unworthy of hero status. The coverage of sports displays

American values as well as the apparent tensions between them, including the juxtaposed values of work and play, tradition and change, teamwork and individualism, youth and experience, logic and luck, and the power of winning versus the character building lessons of losing (Vande Berg, 2003, pp. 138).

With the appearance sports puts on, it is no wonder we idolize athletes and believe them immune to values and characteristics we deem unworthy in heroes. Or perhaps, because of our need to see athletes as heroes, we continue to turn a blind eye to their true character. Athletes will continue to be viewed through a different lens and endorsements will continue rolling in. By contracting athletes as endorsers of a product, the companies and the public, in turn, make athletes a commodity.

Athletes are commodified during their process of endorsing a product. Although some might argue that a professional athlete became a commodity the minute they signed a contract or are being paid for their performance, endorsements are a different case. Most forms of endorsements have reassurance of mutual compensation for both parties, while a sports team cannot guarantee that an athlete can perform. Endorsements from companies can carry various clauses stating money will vary based on sales, or if performance is lacking or stops altogether, the athlete will give compensation. The form of commodification by endorsements can become problematic when the endorsements begin to perpetuate and enforce hegemonic ideologies of race and gender. An endorsement is giving public approval or support for someone or something, in this case, a product or a company. In the current political and economic state, consuming products is a need and a want for people. In this kind of society

consuming things, usually buying them, including leisure goods, services and experiences, has become a central life interest and shopping a major preoccupation. It also suggests that consumption has become a key source of personal identity—both material and symbolic, that it meets needs and it expresses a person’s place in the world (Horne, 2006, pp. 71).

In turn, consumption of sports is a way to display ones identity and sports is a facet of that identity. Society has a particular “fetish” with commodities. Karl Marx discussed the value and meaning of a commodity and defined a commodity as “an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another. The nature of such wants, whether, for instance, they spring from the stomach or from fancy, makes no difference.” (Capital, p. 303). These objects allow us to express who we are and our inner most wants and desires. Society values commodities. By an athlete becoming a commodity, they are no longer the talented athlete, they are now an object we consume through experiences, or purchase of their products.

As an athlete, you are selling your body. You sell your physical abilities to the public for a profit and those physical abilities only last for so long. For example “the average playing career for an NFL player is 3.5 years, the average MLB career is 5.6 years, the average NBA career is 4.8 years, and the average NHL career is 5.5 years” (Nelson, The Roosevelts, 2013). For some athletes turning professional happens right after high school and the sole focus is the sport. Five years is a short span of time and once you are no longer able to perform on the physical level expected of you, athletes are left to figure out their future and future earning abilities. Your physical being can only take so many

tackles, balls to the body, and impact on your joints. This is why athletes will continue to sell their labor where they will receive the most money. Athletes sign contracts for other teams or go overseas, but one of the largest ways athletes can earn a profit is endorsing products. By endorsing a product, an athlete can double their salary in an eighth of the amount of time. Companies use athletes to sell their products because by an athlete “selling their labor,” that athlete can then turn a profit for that company. It is public perception that if an athlete is wearing a particular brand, or eating specific foods, than the general public should as well.

Along with being consumed by the public, a value has been assigned to the athlete; the company assigns the value. The company assesses the athlete’s popularity in our culture and assigns a value to their work. Some athletes, such as Tiger Woods, make twice their salary in endorsements alone. These athletes as commodities are not given their value by the amount of time spent in their respective sport, but by their market value. Some athletes are less marketable due to their physical appearance, their athletic ability, or their overall qualities. Their labor value is socially assigned by culture and validated by companies. Some think of a commodity as a physical object that can be held and used by an individual. An athlete is not something we can have or hold, but they are someone we wish to emulate thus making them the commodity.

Their labor is socially affirmed. When sales for a company increase after signing on an athlete and releasing the advertisements, their value is confirmed. The companies can then agree to continue their contract, and potentially offer more money. Companies recognize the value of athletes in our culture and choose which ones to have presented

publicly or which ones will simply wear their product in public. The athletes not given much value are still paid significantly for their ability to wear sunglasses in the day, or a shirt with a small logo on the sleeve. Athletes should be recognized for their physical abilities in their respective field, however, some athletes are chosen to endorse products that perform poorly in their profession. Some receive endorsements based solely on their market value, and by doing so they educate the public on what it means to be an athlete, and how to be a successful one. Although I still believe athletes are viewed as heroes, they are now known for their looks rather than their actions and

today celebrities are a product of television and rely ‘less in doing, more on being noticed’ ... in consumer culture celebrities can be lived through- they assuage a sense of ontological insecurity of people’s lives. They offer another means of living with contemporary conditions... branding, marketing, and celebrity endorsement have become central to both professional sport and contemporary consumer culture (Horne, 2006, pp. 83).

Athletes are currently one of the leading categories of celebrities, which is not necessarily a negative feature. Athletes rely on endorsements for economic reasons and by analyzing the advertising athletes participate in, I will be able to discover what ideologies athletes are presenting, particularly in respect to race, the framework presented next, and gender.

Race

The system of race is a socially constructed concept. The idea of race was designed in order to classify and place individuals in set categories. These categories would allow

others to identify and determine what kind of person an individual was, based on their race. Omi and Winant (2015) identified the system of race as “the assignment of group identity on the basis of physical appearance- the corporeal- has served for half a millennium as a practical tool in the organization of human hierarchy and domination, and a tool of resistance as well” (p. 22). The human hierarchy Omi and Winant (2015) discuss in the quote is one where whites are seen as superior. White people are dominant and create the systems in society, thus creating hegemonic ideologies. Some have attempted to create and claim usage of a “colorblind” society, which is a society where we judge others based on their merits, not their skin color. Contrary to others belief, a colorblind society does not exist and race is an important aspect of social culture. Athletes are impacted by race and although we place athletes on pedestals because of their unique physical capabilities, athletes receive various forms of treatment based on their race. The science of race was created and is used to justify racism, to declare whites are biologically superior and people of color are inferior. Individuals have a need of

making up people. Making up people is both basic and ubiquitous. As social beings, we must categorize people so as to be able to “navigate” the world – to discern quickly who may be friend or foe, to position and situate ourselves within prevailing social hierarchies, and to provide clues that guide our social interactions with the individuals and groups we encounter (Omi & Winant, 2015, pp. 105).

Individuals want to believe that the system of race is no longer relevant, but we use race in politics, legal matters, economics, education, and numerous other aspects of society, cognitive dissonance is the reality. This basic need to quickly identify an individual is

relevant to the sports world as much as reality. Omi and Winant (2015) claim that people have a default to whiteness. When one needs to compare or use a scale of some sort in regards to race, white is the default setting. In sports, white continues to be the default setting, particularly in respect to aesthetics which I will explain in later sections. Race was a theory used to form nations and

gendered practices were central to nation-building as well. Just as there was a “racial frontier” in the settlement of the United States, so too was there a “gender frontier.” ... Intimate domains – sex, sentiment, domestic arrangement, and child rearing- figure in the making of racial categories and in the management of imperial rule (Omi & Winant, 2015, pp. 80).

Race is not the only socially constructed idea that continues to permeate and influence all aspects of society, gender is another. Race and gender were formed to serve a purpose to those with power in society and the ideologies created continue to persist.

Gender

Gender is a binary system and “the idea of the social construction of gender is that society defines what it means to be male and female. Society prescribes appropriate roles for males and females that have varying sanctions for those deviating from the norms” (Gardner, 2015, p. 33). From a young age, people are taught that if you have female reproductive parts, you are a girl and girls are feminine, and if you have male reproductive parts you are a boy and boys are masculine. Girls and boys are not supposed to behave in

the same manner when it comes to active play, or personality traits. It is dangerous how the

constraints of gender affect children. Society teaches us that girls play with baking toys, dress-ups, Barbie's, and dance, whereas boys play with tool-kits, balls, and play sports. Children who cross the boundaries of what is considered gender appropriate may be at heightened risk for rejection, harassment, discrimination, and abuse (Gardner, 2015, pp. 34).

Children are often retaught how to carry themselves in society if recognized and acknowledged their stray from their respective position within this binary. These binaries continue because some may fear the repercussions of behaving in ways not socially acceptable to their sex. A female should not have to be feminine, just as a male should not have to be masculine, but society uses social barriers to ensure upkeep in appropriate behavior. As Gardner (2015) explains, when an adult continues to present boundaries to children it leaves room for discrimination and little room for a child to discover their interests. The social construction of gender is prevalent in sports, a male dominated field. Men and women, who are athletes, are placed in particular categories based on their gender. Although two athletes, a man and a woman, play the same sport, such as basketball, their value is different. Since society has an oppositional view on gender

when a woman succeeds in sport, she can be seen as a challenge to the established gender order and an unwelcome intruder into the world of sports. The media, like sport and all our other social institutions, are bearers of masculine hegemony, an ideology or set of beliefs about the world that privileges men and disadvantages

women. For this reason, media accounts of women's sports are often ambivalent or derogatory (Duncan, 2006, pp. 231).

Gender alone may define what it means to be a respectable athlete. Serena Williams is a remarkable tennis player, and arguably one of the most impressive athletes currently playing. However, the coverage of her possibly winning the grand slam this past calendar year was bleak. Another example would be the United States Women's Soccer team, who won the World Cup in the summer of 2015, their recognition of proudly representing our country was remiss. However, when the men's world cup team was in the quarter finals last year, there were stadiums filled with thousands of people around the country. The lack of coverage for female specific sports is embarrassing. Kroh (2015), a writer for thinkprogress.org, a nonpartisan site for a variety of news, discussed the lack of coverage of women's sports. One excuse given by journalists is their belief "not to build audiences but to give current audience what it wants to see... there is a false logic because the interest is there" (Kroh, Think Progress, 2014). One excuse often given for the lack of coverage is the public's lack of interest in female sports, which has been proven wrong as the Women's World Cup match reported the highest ratings of viewership. This past year the United States Women's World cup set records of audiences watching the televised event, but those records were dismissed as "those moments are exceptions to the rule- a lot of activity in a short time span – and once those events are over, it's as if the news media has some sort of amnesia" (Kroh, Think Progress, 2014). The public expressed their interest in women's sports with record breaking numbers, and the media ignored it because it was a woman's sport.

The general public, as a whole, is not entirely responsible for the lack of recognition women receive. The media play a significant role in their ability to shape public perceptions of women. The masculine ideologies set forth in our culture tell us women should not be playing masculine sports, and that women are valued solely for their physical appearance and sexuality. Beginning at a young age, girls are told what socially acceptable behavior is, and this socially acceptable behavior includes what sports and activities girls should participate in. It is shameful that a girl can feel unaccepted and awkward socially if she chooses to participate in a sport, like hockey or basketball, because of what society tells them. The media help in creating images of women in sports and perpetuate stereotypes and

another common stereotypes in sport is that women are not credible as athletes. This is reinforced by the underrepresentation of female athletes in media coverage and by sports commentators' attention to women's femininity rather than their athletic ability. Mediated portrayals of female athletes focus on their personal lives, physical appearance, and other non-athletic themes, indicating that their athleticism is unimportant or unexciting (Gardner, 2015, pp. 362).

Thus gender is a controlling factor in the success of an athlete, a sport, or an event.

Women represent forty eight percent of athletes, college and professional, and yet they only receive four percent of all media coverage, according to the Tucker Center, research facility at the University of Minnesota. Sport is one location for affirmation of the gender binary. Roper and Polasek (2014) claim "sports are sites for reaffirming attitudes and beliefs about gender differences. The characteristics commonly associated with sport

– strength, power, dominance, competitiveness, aggression – are all socially defined as masculine traits/qualities. As a result, female participation in sport presents numerous challenges” (p. 159). Females who participate in sports and fail to embody the traits of being “feminine” are instantly scrutinized and their sexuality is commonly called into question. Their sexuality is questioned because some female athletes take on stereotypical masculine characteristics, muscular, strong, assertive, and dominant, in order to break into their respective sport. Females battle with having to display their abilities as athletes, being viewed as a respectable athlete, while remaining the ideal ideological forms of feminine. If a woman is not strong or assertive she is viewed as weak and incapable, but once a woman asserts her power and dominance, she is instantly viewed as unfeminine. Once she is seen as unfeminine a woman has her sexuality called into question. It is appalling that some women want to play a sport “but were aware that by doing so they would attract certain sexual associations” (Russell, 2007, p. 109). Since female athletes represent almost half of all athletes, college and professional, it is important to look at their representations in the mass media because

the mass media have become one of the most powerful institutional forces for shaping attitudes and values in American culture. Mass media portray the dominant images or symbolic representations of American society. These images in turn tell audiences who and what is valued and esteemed in our culture. How female athletes are viewed in this culture is both reflected in and created by mass media images. Thus, it becomes critical to examine both the extent and the nature of media coverage (Roper & Polasek, 2014, pp. 162).

The minimal coverage of females in sports expresses the little to no importance women in sports have. The mass media carries the ability to change these perceptions, but continue to participate in hegemonic ideologies. Popular culture is utilized to reinforce these ideologies, and athletes are one of actors in shaping them. In order to examine gender and race in sports, I have chosen to look at seven professional athletes and their representations in endorsements and in the next section I discuss how I went about that.

Methodology

For my research, I wanted to see whether and how the images of athletes in still and video endorsements perpetuated hegemonic ideologies. To conduct my research I used a cultural studies framework with an emphasis on popular culture, race, and gender studies.

To begin my research I needed to choose a sample of athletes. My sample came from a population of all professional athletes. Since there are multiple professional sports, for both men and women, there are a large amount of professional athletes in my population to choose from. In order to narrow down my sample, I began with the list of the Highest Paid Athletes in the World in 2015 on Forbes. Since my research is about professional athletes who are represented in advertisements and endorsements, I chose the Forbes lists in order to ensure that my athletes were amongst the top earning athletes. From the Forbes list I took the top fifty earning athletes, which is based on earnings from their profession and earnings from endorsements. For my analysis I wanted to ensure that I had multiple races and gender represented. Not only did I want several races, along with different gender represented, I created other criteria for my athletes. I wanted athletes who reached a certain amount of name recognition within the United States. The list Forbes has consists of

athletes throughout the world, and several of the top five athletes on the list play in other countries. Although these athletes are recognizable in the United States, I wanted athletes whose name recognition is significantly known. I wanted athletes who are continuously seen by the public, whether that be playing their respective sport, by the amount of endorsements and advertisements, or their involvement in scandals or stories in the media. I decided if the athlete had achieved the level of name recognition by comparing their earnings playing their sport to their endorsements, as companies are more likely to choose athletes with higher name recognition. I also searched the athletes in Google, Yahoo, and MSN and looked at how many stories presented themselves about that particular athlete, and how recent the stories were. The athletes for my study need to be well known in United States popular culture, and be successful in their respective field of sport.

Out of the top fifty athletes, only two females were listed, Maria Sharapova and Serena Williams. Since only two women were within the top fifty, I decided to consult another list on Forbes, the top earning female athletes in the world, to find other samples for women. From that list Sharapova was listed as first with Williams coming in at second, and by using the criteria I established for a well-known athlete in United States culture and successful in their sport, I chose Danica Patrick who is fourth on the list, and Ronda Rousey who came in at eighth. Each of these women have made significant advances in their sport and their name recognition is higher than others on the list. Also, since I wanted a variety of races, Sharapova, Patrick, and Rousey are all viewed as white women, each with their own distinct cultures, and with Williams as an African American woman. With the women selected I decided to begin selecting men.

The first five athletes on the list were men but several were athletes from other countries, and the top earning athlete, Floyd Mayweather, does not have constant time in the media. The sixth athlete on the list was Lebron James and because he is an African American, and is well known in the public, constantly in commercials, new movies, or playing basketball, I decided to make him one of my samples. A couple of athletes down the list was Tiger Woods coming in as ninth. Woods reached a level of infamy amongst the public regardless of his recent performances in golf and continues to be one of the top earning athletes in endorsements. Woods is also multiracial, fitting into the various race criteria. As I continued down the list on Forbes, numerous athletes were presented but many played in other countries or their name recognition was not as strong. A little ways down the list from Woods was Payton Manning at thirty two. Manning is a white male, and I had yet to selected one, and he had a lot of media attention with the play offs and potential to win another Super Bowl. Once I had my seven athletes for my sample, I was able to begin analyzing their endorsements in still and video advertisements.

To begin my analysis, I selected ten still or video endorsements for each athlete. I decided to use semiotics, the science of analyzing signs. Semiotics “attempts to answer the following question: what does X mean?” (Dansei, 2004, p. 3). Semiotics studies the meaning of signs in culture, those signs can be words, images, gestures, or body language to name a few. By studying the signs within society, semiotics hopes to explain the meanings we give to each of these and how they are interpreted and understood. For each advertisement I looked at factors that would help to explain the advertisement. Advertising is powerful within popular culture because of techniques called positioning and image-

creation. The first, positioning, “is placing or targeting of a product for the right people” and image-creation is “fashioning a personality” for it so that a particular type of product can be positioned for specific target populations" (Dansei, 2004, p. 259). All components of an advertisement are thought of in order to send the right message to a target audience.

These components include body language, lighting, use of colors, text, eye contact, the size of objects in the image, and if there were other people present. By looking at each of these factors in the advertisements, I was able to code each of them. After coding each advertisement, I went through my coding and began to establish themes that were repeated. After creating the themes I was able to establish what messages are in the advertisements, and establish if they were perpetuating hegemonic ideologies of race and gender since “the main intent of a large portion of contemporary advertising is to speak indirectly to the unconscious mind” (Dansei, 2004, p. 266). The athletes I have chosen for this research are utilized by corporations to sell products to the public, and each of these athletes present various forms of representation in advertisements. In the next section I discuss each of the seven athletes.

The Athletes

In this section I will give a brief background for each of the athletes and how they entered their sport. After the background, I will discuss an issue the athlete has had that was reported and analyzed in the media. These athletes have either had personal issues or issues with their sport brought to the public by the mass media. Some of these issues have called the athletes character into question, while others had personal issues that were created by the media. Each one has had to discuss their personal life with the media in

some way. After discussing their issues, I will present an advertisement featuring the athlete to give an example of their typical advertisement and endorsement.

Tiger Woods

Tiger Woods was born in Cypress, California in 1975. By 2009, Woods won thirteen majors and was named PGA Player of the Year ten times until Woods personal issues surfaced. Reports surfaced of a fight between Woods and club owner Rachel Uchitel and while Woods denied any involvement with

1. Tiger Woods Nike Advertisement

the club owner, photo evidence suggested otherwise. After Woods was in an accident outside of his home, where it appeared his wife had chased him out of the house with a



golf club, Woods apologized for unnamed transgressions. Once the toll of mistresses had climbed to over a dozen, with evidence to back up these claims, Woods could no longer remain silent about his infidelity. Woods has yet to retain his number one status in the golf world, but regardless of his inability to overpower the game of golf, Woods remains one of the highest paid athletes in the nation. In 2015 Woods made a mere \$600,000 from playing golf and raked in \$50 million in endorsements. Despite Woods infidelity issues, and his inability to bounce back to the powerful and electrifying golfer we once knew, Woods continues to receive endorsement deals. This image for Nike displays concentration, power, strength, and the assertive nature of Woods. The slogan "winning takes care of everything" was expressed by Woods himself and Nike had to put little to no

effort in making the consumer realize their company was involved with the infamous swoosh in the corner. The message sent by the advertisement is for consumers to understand that if one can wear Nike and be successful like Woods, there is nothing that one cannot handle. Although Woods is one of Nike's prominent endorsers, another athlete has recently taken the spotlight.

LeBron James

Basketball star LeBron James was born in Akron, Ohio on December 30, 1984. James was the number one draft pick in 2003 and drafted by the Cleveland Cavaliers, he became one of the most powerful forwards in the league. After winning rookie of the year

2. LeBron James in Nike Advertisement

at the age of twenty, the youngest player to win this award, James went on to play in Cleveland for seven years. After traveling



to China for the Olympics, James made the decision to uproot and leave Cleveland for Miami. James was in Miami for three seasons and in 2014, he decided to return to Cleveland. James does not have the same amount of negative publicity as Woods, however, his character has been called into question ever since his move to Miami. James was loved and adored by fans in Cleveland, they thought of James as their savior. When he left and moved to Miami, fans were less than pleased. Considered selfish and arrogant, James went

under the microscope, and was criticized for “thinking only of himself.” James reportedly moved to Miami for the purpose of capturing championship rings, something he felt unattainable in Cleveland. Yet again the criticism shot out when James made the “bold statement” that he would win seven championship rings, one more than all-time great Michael Jordan. The comparison of James to Jordan is scrutinized routinely by sports commentators and James statement did little to cease the fire.

Considered one of the most electrifying athletes of our time, James talent leaves little room to be challenged, his character is another story. However, James made \$20.8 million playing basketball and another \$44 million from endorsements in 2015. ESPN reported in December of 2015 that Nike has made their first lifetime deal with an athlete, LeBron James. Although the amount of revenue and salary for this deal has yet to be revealed, the agreement will help to boost and support James brand, and Nike has made more of James brand shoes than any other competitor. In this advertisement with Nike, the slogan “we are all witness” is a reference to the greatness of LeBron James. James has been regarded as the “next Michael Jordan” or one of the greatest athletes of our time. Nike uses that reputation to display the power of James. The image is not an action shot of him playing the game, but an action shot of his famous pregame ritual of throwing powder into the air. With muscles flexed and the color contrast, James stands out in a god like stance. He is all powerful, and he will show us something incredible. The Nike deal is significant in that Nike has made history for their company, and now other athletes will be looking for deals in the same area. Regardless of James’ back and knee pains, he continues to be an

exceptional athlete on the court, which is demonstrated in the booming sales of his merchandise.

Peyton Manning

Peyton Manning is an All American Athlete. Born on March 24, 1976 in New Orleans, Louisiana, destined to be a great football player, Manning achieved his goal. In 1998 Manning was the number one draft pick in the NFL, turning Indianapolis into his new home. In 2007, Manning finally won his first championship ring and silenced critics. After recovering from his injuries, Manning was traded and became the quarterback of the Denver Broncos. After a couple of struggles with the Broncos, Manning was able to surpass numerous season records and recently took his team to Super Bowl 50, where he defeated the Carolina Panthers and respectfully retired.

However, a recent story has the potential to change all of that. Late 2015 Manning was named, along with other professional athletes, in an Al Jazeera undercover probe, to have used performance enhancing drugs. Manning supposedly received a supply of human growth hormone (HGH) in 2011 while recovering from his

3. Payton Manning in Nike Advertisement



neck surgery. Manning denied the story and there is little to no real proof Manning had consumed the drug. The drugs were shipped to his home address, however, they were addressed to his wife instead of him. After the story was aired, the source of the story was discredited and the story vanished from all news outlets. Manning was not the only athlete accused of taking performance enhancing drugs, but his name is one of the most well-known, making for a good story. Being considered one of the greats in quarterback history, Manning has been successful off the field as well. Making \$15 million playing football, Manning was able to closely match that with \$12 million in endorsements. Manning's advertisement with Nike displays him about to throw a pass with "509 and counting" as the slogan. The number refers to the all-time pass record for touchdowns that Manning was able to surpass and set this year. Concentration, athleticism, and power dominate this picture through the poise and focus of Manning. The slogan exemplifies achievement as Manning is once again able to prove to everyone his dominance in football. Manning has a reputation of being a stand-up guy who is respected by numerous athletes.

Serena Williams

One of tennis' great athletes, Serena Williams started her career at the mere age of three. Born in Saginaw Michigan on September 26, 1981, Williams turned pro before graduating high school and became the first in her family to have a Grand Slam win, the U.S. Open title. Hitting a bump in the road, Williams had an altercation during a match that led to a two year suspension, one of the largest penalties given by the association. Not only was Williams dealing with medical issues, she was dealing with body issues as well. Williams reported she had been dealing with body issues due to the vast amount of

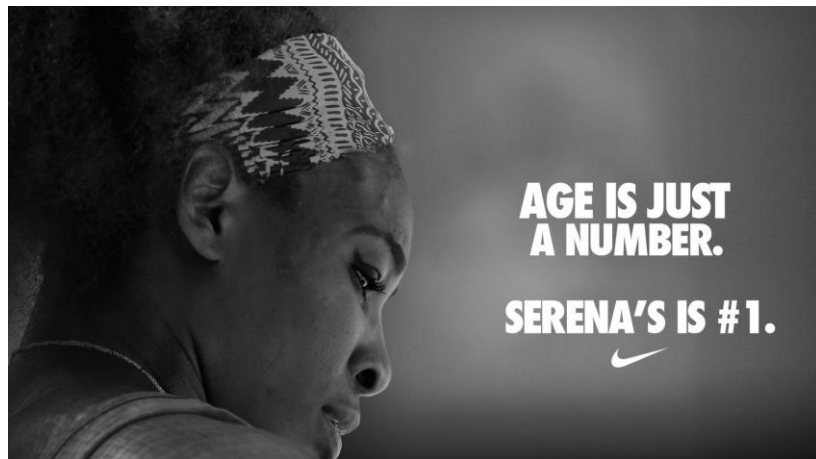
comments made in the mass media. The successful tennis player was dealing with how to love her body, especially with the amount of critique she receives. Williams has recently announced love for her curvy body, but it was a struggle. After other health issues, many were asking the athlete if she was going to retire on the spot. She did not.

By 2012 Williams had captured 15 Grand Slam singles titles and 13 Grand Slam doubles titles. In 2015, Williams was two wins shy of a calendar year Grand Slam, something only accomplished by three women in history. In the advertisement for Nike, Williams looks worn. The slogan “age is just a number. Serena’s is #1” does celebrate the accomplishments of the tennis player, but the image does not. Williams is looking down and off to the side, there is no direct eye contact. Her expression does not display excitement or happiness, but rather she looks worn out. The quote of “age is just a number”

is a message for the comments

4. Serena Williams in Nike Advertisement

made about her age and how she should be slowing down, but her performance shows otherwise. There is little dominance or assertiveness, with



Williams face looking soft. I say soft because there are no hard lines or assertive facial expressions, her eye contact is not direct conveying a passive rather than active tone.

Although Williams has been battling with critics for some time, she was able to make \$11.6

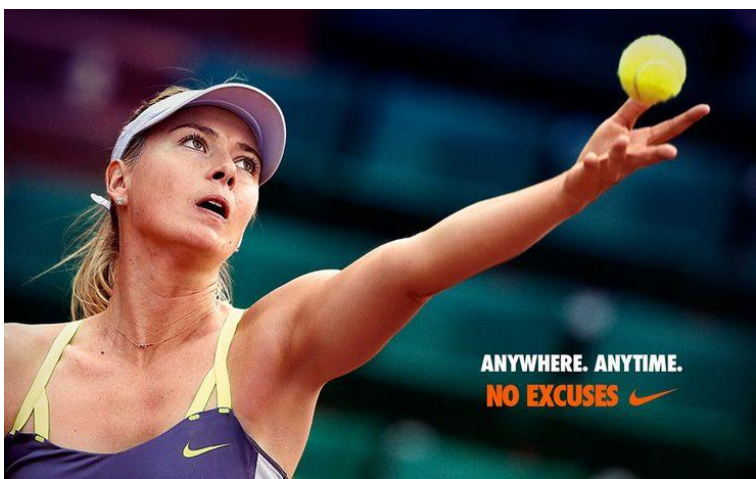
M playing tennis and \$13 M in endorsements. \$13 M is a relatively large amount to accrue in endorsements, but compared to tennis rival Maria Sharapova, the amount seems insignificant.

Maria Sharapova

Serena Williams’s rival, Maria Sharapova, was born in Nyagan, Siberia, Russia, on April 19, 1987. Sharapova turned pro at the age of fourteen and won her first Grand Slam championship in 2004 and began her track to championships. After experiencing a string of losses due to a shoulder injury, Sharapova made a comeback in 2011 finishing fourth in the rankings. Sharapova joined the club of athletes who won all four major Grand Slam tournament titles, just not in the same year. 2015 was not a championship year for the athlete as she left the French Open in the fourth round, the earliest she has left a tournament since 2010. Recently, Sharapova failed her drug test for the Australian Open. Sharapova tested positive for meldonium, a substance some athletes use because it helps with

endurance and ability to recover, according to BBC. Sharapova claims she has been taking the substance with the knowledge of it by a different name, and the substance was not banned until January of this year. She can attempt to get a

5. Maria Sharapova in Nike Advertisement



“retroactive therapeutic use exemption” for a medical condition, but as of now she is not

going to be playing. Sharapova is an athlete, however, her beauty and sexual appeal have led to her popularity.

The Nike advertisement featuring Sharapova is an action shot, but with little to no reference to Sharapova directly. “Anywhere, anytime” is said by numerous athletes and does not give any direct remark to Sharapova’s success or her athletic ability. However, “anywhere, anytime,” can be viewed as a sexual reference and Sharapova is known for her aesthetics more than her athleticism. Although it is an action shot, her face looks lost and full of wonder, no real determination or assertive eye contact. It is obvious she is about to do something with the ball, but what is unknown. Sharapova is traditionally not shown in action shots like the advertisement here, but rather in seductive poses. So while Nike attempts to turn Sharapova into an athlete, the use of the phrase “anywhere, anytime,” still allows Sharapova to be sexualized, making this advertisement similar to others. In 2015, Sharapova made \$6.7 M playing tennis and was able to rake in \$23 M in endorsements, ten million more than Williams who had an outstanding year in tennis, almost making history.

Danica Patrick

6. Danica Patrick in Edward-Elmhurst Advertisement

Danica Patrick is an athlete playing in a man’s sport. Patrick is a race car driver and participates in races that are co-ed. In sports, it is uncommon to see an event or game being played with both sexes



represented at the same time. Patrick was born on March 25, 1982 in Beloit, Wisconsin. In 2002 Patrick signed with Rahal-Letterman racing and had moderate success her first few years in the game. After coming in the top ten for numerous races during the 2006 race year, Patrick was named the Female Athlete of the Year by the United States Sports Academy.

There is no doubt Patrick has achieved success on the raceway, and her good looks have allowed for other opportunities to present themselves. Patrick became one of the lead endorsers for GoDaddy, was a host on Spike TV, featured on Sports Illustrated, and collected other endorsements. Where 2016 will lead Patrick is going to be watched as GoDaddy announced that they will not return to NASCAR racing for the 2016 year. GoDaddy has been Patrick's sponsor from the beginning, but the company announced a want to diversify and branch out, according to Fox Sports. Patrick has had to battle with critiques expressing that her success is solely due to her aesthetic appeal. Sports analysts have questioned her commitment to sports due to the constant use of her in advertisements that have sexual undertones. Patrick is "best known for her series of tongue-in-cheek and occasionally racy GoDaddy.com Super Bowl commercials," not her ability to drive race cars and be an athlete, which leads many to wonder what will be next for Patrick (Jensen, FoxSports, 2015).

Patrick does not have any known advertisements with Nike, but here is another one of her endorsements with Edward-Elmhurst healthcare. The sexual message of "who says being driven is a bad thing" is to tell people to possess drive to get healthy. Patrick is wearing a leather jacket and a stern look on her face, her hair is done and curled with her

arms in an off putting closed gesture. The advertisement is for healthcare, but the slogan with Patrick is odd and vaguely sexual. The advertisement could be confused for other companies or products because of the lack of direct appeal to health care. The use of Patrick and the slogan is an attempt to appeal to audiences with sexual innuendos. While earning \$7.8 M from racing, and another \$6 M in endorsements for 2015, Patrick had a successful year but 2016 could be different.

Ronda Rousey

Winner of Best Female Athlete in 2015 at ESPN's award night, Ronda Rousey continued her domination. Rousey is no stranger to fighting an uphill battle. Born on February 1, 1987 in Riverside, California, Rousey was born with her umbilical cord tied around her neck. At the age of eight, Rousey suffered the loss of her father to suicide and to help with the stress and anger, her mother took her to learn judo. Unsure of what to do after her judo career, Rousey decided to join a fighting club and after winning numerous matches, including becoming Bantamweight Champion in 2012, Rousey joined the Ultimate Fighting world. Rousey remained undefeated with her title until November 2015, with a loss to Holly Holm.

Although there was speculation that the fight against Holm was fixed and Rousey threw the fight, it was all quickly dismissed by numerous sports analysts and commentators. Commentators did address the attitude of Rousey before the fight, where many commented on her cocky stance and inability for sportsmanship. There was little to no reason for Rousey to throw that fight and her rematch being eight months later does not show that she needed to figure out and fix her issues, it displayed that she needed a break

as fighting is extremely violent, contrary to popular belief that it is fake. Rousey made a statement that after the fight with Holm she contemplated committing suicide. There was a lot of responses and black lash to Rousey making this statement, and she told the media

7. Ronda Rousey in Nike Advertisement



how she wants the issue of suicide to no longer be scandalous. Rousey has been dealing with

issues of suicide since her youth, and comments made by other fighters over social media, the issue continues for Rousey in her personal life. With “never give up” plastered across Rousey, perhaps a

message about her personal battles, and the fighter looking exhausted and defeated, Nike gave us another advertisement. Rousey is known as a dominating fighter, but Nike does not use her undefeated streak, until recently, as a slogan, or an action shot. Her face shows exhaustion with her eyes closed and using the ropes to stabilize her. Although the slogan is important to teach people to never give up, it does little to exemplify who Rousey is. 2015 was a good year for the ultimate fighter making \$3 M in fights and \$3.5 M in endorsements.*¹

All of the athletes for my study have been introduced and some of the complications each athlete’s face were presented. Although these seven athletes have been successful in

¹ *All biographical information for the athletes was retrieved from biography.com

their sport, and some less than desirable stories or characteristics have come forward, each athlete continues to be successful with endorsements, demonstrating patriarchy and the influence of athletes. After conducting an analysis of images, still and moving, of the athletes, several themes emerged relating to race and gender. After coding the advertisements and creating themes, I was able to see how the use of athletes in advertisements create and reinforce hegemonic ideologies of race and gender.

Themes/Findings

In this next section, I will discuss the findings from my analysis of the athletes. After analyzing the athletes still and video endorsements, I was able to discover themes in respect to race and gender. The themes I found were women as sexualized objects, negotiating race and gender, playing the sport, and all on his own. To begin, a recent social media movement began called Cover the Athlete. The movement was to display and promote the idea of female and male athletes receiving different treatment in interviews and comments made through social media. Female athletes are expected to discuss their personal lives, attire, or body image while male athletes are asked questions about their respective sport. Individuals decided to ask male athletes the same questions females are asked, and received confused stares, questions, laughter, or in some cases, annoyance or anger. I am discussing this social media movement to start off my findings to display the treatment female athletes receive in social media today and by analyzing the comments or questions about these female athletes, and using my findings through the advertisements, I can understand how females are being represented.

#Cover The Athlete

Women and sports, the idea seems normal and simple. However, women and sport have a complicated relationship. Women began to get involved in sports with the passage of Title IX. Title IX mandated public universities that received federal funding cannot discriminate on the basis of sex in any activity that utilized the funding. Women were playing college sports in increasing numbers, allowing the amount of professional female athletes to rise as well. As stated earlier women make up almost half of athletes, college and professional, but only receive four percent of total media coverage. However stark this contrast, it does not explain how that four percent of media coverage is utilized. A recent social media movement titled Cover the Athlete attempted to bring some of the issues professional female athletes face to light. The movement, which uses the hashtag *#covertheathlete*, describes the problem as “sexist commentary, inappropriate interview question, and articles focused on physical appearance not only trivializes a woman’s accomplishments, but also sends a message that her value is based on her looks, not her ability. And it’s much too commonplace.” Women are asked questions that no male athlete has to worry about answering, and the focus is on the athlete as a woman, not the athlete in of itself.

Comments such as “as your profile rises, people find out more about you, your breast reduction surgery, was three or four years ago. Does that play any part in your success? What about outside of tennis?” which was asked of Simona Halep. Or “generally I’m all for chunky sports stars... but tennis requires a mobility Serena cannot hope to achieve while lugging around breasts that are registered to vote in a different U.S. state

from the rest of her,” a telegraph columnist wrote of Serena Williams. Questions such as “tell us about your outfit” or “of anyone in the world of sport or movie who would you date?” are being presented to female athletes. The social media campaign decided to go around to professional male athletes with the same comments, or questions, and find out their response. Some athletes laughed, others walked away completely, and a few asked “why are you asking me that?” Female athletes are not given the respect they deserve as a woman, or as an athlete, their bodies are scrutinized, even their hair receives a comment or two. It is shameful that women undergo this type of scrutiny and commentary when they are on the field, court, or what their respective setting might be, working the same amount as men, if not more. A young girl who hears a commentator saying

I wonder if her dad did say to her when she was 12, 13, 14: ‘Listen, you’re never going to be a looker, you are never going to be somebody like a Sharapova, you’re never going to be 5ft 11, you’re never going to be somebody with long legs, so you have to compensate for that,

how is that girl going to respond? Women are being told to compensate for being a woman in a male dominated world, and unfortunately some women have by allowing their bodies to become sexual objects in endorsements.

Athletes become Sexualized Objects

The first theme I found while analyzing the endorsements was women being sexualized. Women are displayed in still images wearing either little to no clothing, or tight revealing wardrobes. Posed sexually, women are used to appeal to the target audience,

heterosexual men. Some advertisements have text displayed suggesting provocative undertones and sexual innuendos. One commercial for Super Bowl XLVII made the top five sexiest Super Bowl ads in 2013. The commercial starred Danica Patrick and

the scene opens with race car driver Danica Patrick in a tight, black leather outfit and heels standing next to two seated individuals. She states: “There are two sides to GoDaddy: the sexy side represented by Bar Rafaeli [a blonde, blue eyed, normatively beautiful Israeli model], and the smart side that creates a killer website for your small business, represented by Walter [a White, overweight, curly-haired male geek in glasses working on a laptop]. Together, they’re perfect.’ Patrick pauses and the camera zooms in to capture the model and the geek kiss for a full ten seconds, an eternity in Super Bowl commercial time. Across the screen we see the words, ‘When sexy meets smart, your small business scores’ (Arend, 2014, pp. 53).

8. Danica Patrick in GoDaddy Advertisement

Patrick is well known for her GoDaddy advertisements, the scantily black leather outfit that can unzip in the front with a giant unseen fan blowing her beautiful long curled dark hair from her perfect, blemish free, feminine face. Another one of Patrick’s commercials for GoDaddy was no different. Numerous attractive, small, white women were exiting sports cars with cameras flashing



asking them to show them their beaver. Each woman was holding an artificial beaver, and enter Patrick. When she exits the car, hair blowing, she begins to unzip her black leather outfit with everyone asking where her beaver is. She pauses the unzipping to explain that GoDaddy has allowed her to protect her beaver and zips her jacket back up. The phrase “beaver” is a sexual reference to a woman’s vagina and GoDaddy has made light of this reference and making Patrick a sexual object they have protected. Images of Patrick sponsoring GoDaddy look as if Patrick is wearing no clothing with only a GoDaddy sign covering the “important” parts. Patrick is in heels, hair and makeup professionally done, long legs being one of the focus points in the image. In all of these advertisements, not once is it mentioned, or visually revealed, that Patrick is a professional race car driver. If unknown to the audience Patrick’s occupation, it would appear that she is another attractive white woman being used in advertising. Patrick is not the only professional athlete whose sexuality is utilized to sell a product. The use of other athletes speaks to the cultural issues with women in sports. Women in sports want audiences to know their dedication and hard work got them to their level of success, not their body. However, when female athletes pose in advertisements, or appear in videos, with sexual messages and undertones, it completely undermines the athlete’s accomplishments. The use of female athletes as sexualized objects continues to remind women of their standing in society, being an object for the male gaze.

Patrick is not the only female athlete to subject herself as a sexualized object.

Sharapova is one the leading female athletes in endorsements. In her advertisements, the images all appear the same. Sharapova has her blonde hair done in a fashionable



statement, whether it is down or in

9. Maria Sharapova in Clear Advertisement

a ponytail. Skin is flawless, no blemishes, and some want her to appear natural, but make up was used to enhance her facial features bringing out her eyes and lips. An action shot is utilized less than a quarter of the time, having the athlete pose. Tan, blonde, and blue eyed Sharapova meets all the criteria set forth by the male gaze dominating sports. Her feminine body with long legs, soft facial features with full lips and bright eyes, small torso, and appropriate sized breasts make Sharapova a top choice for companies. In a still image ad for a camera company, the tennis star sits behind an enlarged camera, wearing a tennis outfit, with the slogan “make every shot a power shot” printed across. This ad does tell viewers that Sharapova is a tennis athlete with her signature at the bottom, but it fails to give Sharapova any real power or dominance. She is sitting with her legs to her chest, turning her head to smile at the camera. No evidence of sport or action is shown with the lack of sweat and passive gesture. Her legs are shown more than the rest of her body and

are positioned specifically for that reason. The positioning, along with all the other facets thought of and executed in the advertisement, go in to “commodify feminism.”

Selling feminism to women is popular among advertisements and the messages, although they may be different for some versus others, are being sold. Messages such as “men are active, and women are beautiful objects... they bathe; apply makeup; lotion and perfume; color and style hair; remove unwanted hair through plucking, waxing and applying depilatories such as Nair; and increasingly have cosmetic procedures” (Arden, 2014, p. 71). The use of athletes to continuously promote these beliefs in feminine beauty take away the importance of the female as an athlete. There are athletes, such as Sharapova, who have mentioned their need and want to continue to feel like a woman, to be considered feminine, beautiful, and poised. While other athletes like Serena Williams, who have battled with advertising and other media outlets over how she wants to be portrayed, is constantly battling with comments about her body, sexuality, and femininity. Williams is consistently being scrutinized and judged because of her strong, muscular body, which contrasts with other athletes. However, in Williams endorsements, being sexualized is not as common and her race plays a role.

Negotiating Race and Gender

In 2015 Serena Williams was at the peak of her career and after winning her 21st Grand Slam title, it was difficult to ignore the comments and critiques surrounding Williams. Her physique was once again under fire and has been since she and her sister, Venus, emerged onto the tennis court. Comments and questions over her non-white, non-feminine physic were the main focus of her tremendous win. The twitter world was buzzing

when comments such as “the main reason for her success is that she is built like a man” or “Williams has large biceps and a mold breaking muscular frame, which packs the power and athleticism that have dominated women’s tennis for years. Her rivals could try to emulate her physic, but most of them chose not to.” There were many who came to the defense of Williams and her athletic abilities. When New York Times published an article titled “Tennis’s Top Women Balance Body Image with Ambition,” Williams and other prominent tennis stars went front and center for criticism. Rothenberg (2015), the author of the NYT article, discussed how tennis stars battle with weight training and body image, and if they would rather be muscular and toned, like Williams, or protect their feminine physic. First, it is difficult to compare

athletes who are white with a black athlete such as Williams. Their physic is going to be different and when people are asking if Williams 125 mph serve is normal, the answer is yes because her serve is not the fastest recorded. Williams has not attempted to become thin or insist that she is, she has come to terms with her muscular frame and expressed her frame is genetic, as she barely lifts weights. Regardless, her body is constantly under fire and when Russian Tennis Federation President

10. Serena Williams in Got Milk Advertisement



Shamil Tarpishec “referred to Venus and Serena as “the Williams Brothers,”” he was fined 25,000 dollars. It is comforting that this behavior is not being tolerated by all, but it persists and is present in her endorsement images (Newman, Sports Illustrated, 2015).

The Williams sisters took to print in a “got milk” commercial in 1999. Venus and Serena have one arm around the other looking straight into the camera with the well-known milk mustache around their lips. Wearing all black tank tops to display their muscular arms and spandex to ensure there is nothing loose on the athlete’s bodies, the women appear strong and muscular. Their hair is in corn rows, black on the top, with white beginning shortly from the top and covering the rest of their hair. The phrase on the ad is “one cup, two straws, please,” and while this advertisement was made in 1999, the phrase “two girls, one cup” has come to be known as disgusting and sexualized after a video was released in 2007 of two women defecating and vomiting into the cup, then consuming them. The bottom talks about toasting to a sister’s victory with milk while one sister is holding a tennis racket indicating their status as athletes. However, the image was widely criticized. The creators of the advertisement posed the sisters in a masculine stance and dressed them in clothing to display their muscular arms. If the person in charge of creating the advertisement wanted the Williams sisters to have stereotypically masculine traits, they succeeded. The lack of long hair, shapely body, and makeup created an image of masculinity.

In another “got milk” advertisement, Danica Patrick is posed standing in a tight, black leather outfit holding a helmet, with her hair flowing behind her, makeup done in a smoky and erotic manner. The main phrase on Patrick’s advertisement is “refuel,” a direct

reflection on her sport/profession. Her stance has one hip cocked out revealing her shapely, ideological feminine physic. Other advertisements with Serena Williams lack the sexual appeal found in those with Patrick or Ronda Rousey.

Rousey recently became an endorser for Carl's Jr and in her advertisement for them, she is actively eating a breakfast sandwich in black tight

11. Ronda Rousey in Carl's Jr. Advertisement

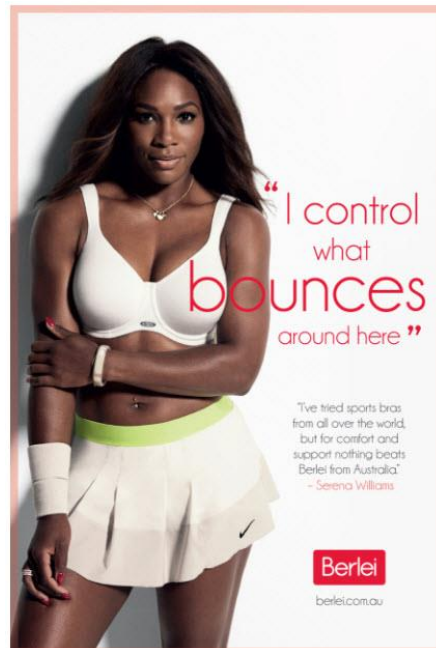
outfit revealing midriff and cleavage. Flowing blonde hair, light and natural makeup remind audiences that Rousey is a tough fighter, but overall a feminine



athlete. In a still advertisement for Berlei, an undergarment company, Williams is posed in a bra that

12. Serena Williams in Berlei Advertisement

reveals cleavage and midriff, the difference is that Williams has an arm across her stomach covering her body and the main phrase on the ad is "I control what bounces around here," indirectly talking about her breasts and tying in her respective field of sport. Her skirt is a typical tennis skirt worn on the court, with her body language revealing a covered and shy athlete. Rousey is completely open in her advertisement, actively showing off her midriff with a large smile on



her face. Rousey is also actively eating a sandwich and females placing food, or other items, into their mouth is sexual message created in popular culture. Williams has a shy smile on her face with little to no makeup on. Other still images of Williams are rarely sexualized. Williams is shown in her sports athletic gear either posing or in an action shot.

The lack of advertisements sexualizing Williams could be explained by the comments and questions over Williams's sexuality. In the sports world, muscles, lack of breasts, lack of flowing hair and make-up, equal lesbian. The labeling stems from "the acceptance or rejection of women's participation in traditionally-defined male activities... all of which contain large amounts of physical contact or the presentation of a strong muscular body" (Russell, 2007, p. 106). Williams has a strong, toned body which led to the assumption of her being a lesbian because "perceptions of muscular women are often fixed by the strong link between masculinity and 'butch' women" (Russell, 2007, p. 107). Any intrusion into the male dominated sports world by women will lead to a certain amount of criticism because sports is a male dominated field, and hegemonic ideologies tell women how to behave. Women are told to be nurturing, caring, passive, and supporting while maintaining an ideal body sold by social institutions. Should women have to accept and take in the criticism? Absolutely not, but they need to understand it. Should Williams be happy she is not shown in endorsements as a sexualized object to be leered at? Perhaps, but what does it say when male athletes are shown in the same manner, with her white, even tennis co players, are all shown as sexualized objects? Williams does not fit into the image of feminine beauty- white, petite, long hair, breasts, hourglass figure, to name a few characteristics- an image that other female athletes do possess but are consistently

sexualized in their media images. The hegemonic default idea of beauty in our society is white; white women are seen as beautiful and desirable. Williams does not fit into this portrait of beauty. However, there are other lens these representations can be viewed through. Williams is revered and loved in other popular culture outlets such as rap music. The lens used to create these advertisements are white male dominated, but there are multiple lens to view the athletes through. Williams is portrayed a particular way for the target audience in these endorsements. So in turn, Williams is shown similar to men in sports, active and dominant, and playing their sports.

Playing the Sport

Men in advertisements are wearing their respective sports attire, are playing their sport, or about to play. Peyton Manning is well known for his Papa Johns and Nationwide insurance commercials. In

13. Peyton Manning in Nationwide Insurance Advertisement



the Papa John commercials, Manning is either helping Papa make the pizzas, wearing his Denver Broncos Jersey, or throwing the football around with Papa, actively discussing the deals. In the Nationwide insurance commercials, there is a sequence of Manning in the locker room, in his hotel room/house, or his kitchen making a sandwich. The saying/singing of “chicken parm you taste so good” will be ingrained in the minds of television watchers. At some point throughout both companies’ commercials, Manning

either has his jersey, has a football present, or some reference to the game. Nowhere in his advertisements are sexual comments or suggestions presented, or is Manning wearing a black, leather outfit. The endorsements ensure Manning's position and profession are clearly stated for the audience, allowing no room for questions. The advertisements display Manning as a normal athlete who has a life outside of the job, and is a regular heterosexual male in real life. Manning is a well-known name in the sports world, and these advertisements made it so the non-sports world is familiar with him as well.

LeBron James is one of the most electrifying and talented athletes of our

14. LeBron James in Nike Advertisement

time. He has made history multiple times in regular and post season games. Along with Manning, James wears basketball attire and is either playing the game, has a basketball in his hands, or a



reference to "King James" is made. Something different between Manning and James is the lack of skin shown on Manning in his advertisements, and the abundant amount in James. James is either showing his arms or entire torso in still images for advertisements. The action shot images are of James looking intense, focused, strong, and dominate. In one Nike still image, James is holding two basketballs at arm's length, his back towards the camera, muscles flexed, and a larger image behind him holding the championship trophy.

The power of this image, James with arms extended in a God like position, with the prize in his grasp, demonstrates his talent and dominance in the sports world. Other advertisements have James without a shirt, holding a ball, looking directly at the camera stern and strong. His body is standing in an upright position, dominant and assertive, unlike in Patrick's standing advertisement with a hip cocked to one side, curves displayed.

Why is it that white male athletes wear full clothing and are displayed as normal guys in their advertisements, but black male athletes are shown playing their sport aggressively and dominantly? Erica Childs explains that images of the black male athlete dominate popular culture. She argues "that white America's fixation on the black male athlete is simply an extension of white America's history of obsession with the black body and black sexuality" (Childs, 1999, p. 19). Looking at the history of black men in America they have been portrayed as aggressive beasts with a desire and longing sexual appetite, especially towards white women. Marriott (2000) explains this relationship as

the problem is that white phobic anxiety about black men takes the form of a fetishistic investment in their sexuality... in other words, the violated body of the black man must be used as a defense against the anxiety, or hatred, that body appears to generate (pp. 12).

The images of the black body were used in response to fear, sexuality and violence were common uses. This image dominated history and impacted relationships between whites and blacks and although there appears to be an acceptance of black athletes, "rather the black male athlete is a modern-day embodiment of the stereotypes of the black man as physical and primitive, only now this image is repackaged as a money-making commodity"

(Childs, 1999, p. 20). The black male body is emphasized in the advertisements as all powerful and dominate, however, the lack of evidence that James does anything besides play a sport aides to the belief of blacks' physical superiority but intellectual inferiority (Childs, 1999, p. 28). Manning plays ping pong with family members, he sets up Christmas lights for his home, and he plays an important role in his sport. James just plays his sport, although dominate, there is little dimension to his life. Not only does James appear to have one purpose, his body is fetishized. His body is not fetishized in a sexual manner, but rather we use the black body to display power dominance. The image of James is a showing of the threatening dark, the other, the powerful, threatening black body. Corporations and advertising companies are careful to display the black body as dominant, but not sexual since culturally the black body has been viewed as threatening. Since sports are a male dominated field, and sports products and advertisements are targeted for male audiences, images of the body do not come off as sexual. Historically, the male black body has been viewed as a threat and culturally the black body has not been sexualized.

Black athletes are talked about in magazines or by recruiters in harsh, physical terms, while white male athletes, in the same sport and same position, are referred to in professional, sport defined phrases. Comments such as Jerome Bettis "has a big beefy butt" to aide in his position, but a white male athlete is "always looking for the proper angle" displays the contrast between the races (Sports Illustrated, 2003). The black male body is a spectacle controlled by money, and companies are aware of the fetish society has. The fetish is supported by the "popularity of black athletes: the large number of endorsements that black athletes receive; the way their styles are imitated by youths; their large fan

followings; their roles in movies” (Childs, 1999, p. 34). The black male body is fetishized and presented to the public, but the black female body is hidden. Williams is not fetishized in her endorsements, but James is. James represents a powerful and dominant being, while Williams does not fall into the heterosexual white male gaze dominating the sports world. Williams is viewed as a threat because of her muscular toned body, something set aside for men to have, not women. In order to ensure that others are aware women should not have muscular toned bodies is to make Williams into one of the men, so women would not follow in her place.

Making sure other athletes are not following Williams is already occurring with other tennis players making comments such as “it’s our decision to keep her as the smallest player in the top ten, because first of all she’s a woman, and she wants to be a woman” (Rothenberg, New York Times, 2015). Rothenberg claims other tennis players battle with becoming muscular and fit, and remaining feminine, an issue women would not have to contemplate if their bodies were scrutinized less or if being feminine was not a strict category that only so many women could possibly fit in to. White, male athletes and normalized in popular culture, while black, male bodies are continuously fetishized as the dark threatening other. However, there is one athlete represented in stereotypical manners on certain occasions, not all the time.

All on His Own

Tiger Woods. Some will know him as one of the greatest golfers to ever play the game, some will know him as a great golfer who fell from his high horse, or others will solely know him for the infidelity issues that plagued news outlets for weeks. Whichever

way people know Tiger Woods, the point is that they know Tiger Woods. Woods has yet to return to the high ranked positions he once knew and dominated in golf, and yet, made more in endorsements than any other athlete, besides Roger Federer, in 2015. How is an athlete who has yet to prove his athletic abilities since 2011 able to continue making fifty million in endorsements? Woods was once considered America's new son. America loved Woods, he was a multicultural, young athlete who entered and dominated what is arguably one of the whitest heterosexual sports around, golf. Woods was able to win numerous championship titles and be accepted as a multicultural athlete in today's society, helping to solidify the need for a color blind America. Woods became "renditions of the American super icon: a commercial emblem who makes visible and concrete late modern America's narrative of itself as a post historical nation of immigrants" (King & Leonard, 2011, p. 26). America valued Woods because he was proof of our color blind nation and because we showered him with love and acceptance, we were able show the world of society's advancement. Woods also challenged the racial system, particularly within golf. The Nike commercial titled "hello world" starring Tiger Woods was discussed amongst analysts because it challenged racial discrimination. The script for the advertisement is

Hello World. I shot in the 70's when I was 8. I shot in the 60's when I was 12. I won the US Junior Amateur when I was 15. Hello World. I played in the Nissan Open when I was 16. Hello World. I won the US Amateur when I was 18. I played in the Master's when I was 19. I am the only man to win three consecutive US Amateur titles. Hello World. There are still courses in the US I am not allowed to

play because of the color of my skin. I've heard I am not ready for you. Are you ready for me?

Some sports analysts hated the Tiger Woods commercial. For starters, it was one of his first and some were surprised at the content Woods would choose. One analyst wrote how he hated “the Tiger Woods thing because it was phony. It was phony because Tiger Woods was not a victim of racism. And they’re exploiting the race issue to sell golf shoes to black people and I think that is cynical” (Houck, 2006, p. 475). Others loved the Woods advertisement because here was an athlete ready to take on racial discrimination within sports, particularly golf which is dominated by white males, in a time when money was the decision maker. At this time the country had just experienced Michael Jordan who had little to no interest in politics, and a new athlete emerges for the nation to grasp on to in an attempt to display their advancement. The myth Tiger Woods brought forth, that we are a colorblind nation, was ingested and sold to millions of people. Tiger Woods does have talent and skill, that is indisputable, but Woods, along with corporations, used his race and rise to fame as a selling point. It would be different if we were a color blind nation, but the mass incarceration of minorities, the wealth inequality along racial lines, and police brutality to name a few, all demonstrate that Woods was a myth necessary to create to demonstrate the United States colorblindness. Another issue with Woods was what he identified himself as.

While on the golf course, commentators have made Woods a black athlete especially with comments of how Woods is the only black golfer on the course. A study was conducted by Billings (2003) who analyzed the comments made during golf tournaments about Woods. Billings (2003) was looking at whether the commentators gave Woods stereotypical black characteristics while playing. The study found that “when Woods is successful, the comments most frequently employed do not fit into traditional Black stereotypes. Yet, when Woods is struggling he is portrayed in similar ways to other Black athletes. In sum, he’s only black when he’s losing” (Billings, 2003, p. 35). During his career on the course,



15. Tiger Woods in Tag Heuer Advertisement

Woods has stressed his dream of being a great golfer, without racial categories. However “as a result of such declarations, many perceive that Tiger has “disidentified” himself as black and repudiated any obligations to the African American community” (Barbie, 2012, p. 7). Regardless of countless attempts by Woods to disengage from racial issues, he continues to get identified and caught up in them. Woods identifies as being multicultural, which is correct, but encroaching on a white dominated sport such as golf, Woods is mostly identified as Black. I placed Woods in his own theme from my research because his advertisements display contrasting images. Woods is typically shown playing golf or at least wearing golf attire, but since Woods is considered a black athlete by many, it was surprising to find that his body was not

fetishized. Woods does not have these dominant, powerful, dark, assertive images in his advertisements. Woods continues to carry this rhetoric of being colorblind by being identified as a minority, but being displayed similarly to white athletes. Woods has been able to carry the colorblind rhetoric, regardless of his personal issues, and continues to endorse multiple companies.

The themes I found present in the advertisements of the seven athletes reinforce hegemonic ideologies of race and gender. Women are sexualized, but only the dominant ideology of beautiful women are sexualized, white women. Women of color are displayed characteristically like men. White men are normalized while black men display their bodies in powerful, dominant, dark ways. Athletes that are multicultural are given black characteristics when deemed unsuccessful, but displayed similarly to white athletes in an attempt to make them “normal.” In the next section, I discuss how these representations are harmful to popular culture, and the injustice done to these athletes.

Discussion

How do the images and portrayals of professional athletes in still images and video endorsements reflect and perpetuate hegemonic ideologies of race and gender? How do these portrayals intersect with issues of justice and representation? These were the questions that I began with for this thesis. I wanted to understand how the images of athletes impact culture. The dominant ideologies being perpetuated in images of athletes in advertising do reinforce ideologies of race and gender. One of the main hegemonic ideologies in popular culture is a male dominated gaze. Men, predominantly white men, control a majority of popular culture. From television to movies, magazines and radio, men

are the dominating controlling factor for all of them. For my research, I specifically focused on the world of sports, which is easily one of the most male dominated fields in popular culture. Women began to get involved with sports in record numbers about forty years ago with the passage of Title IX, but before then, men were predominantly the only ones in collegiate and professional sports. White men were the only ones allowed to play in professional sports leagues, until men of color began to invade their world. Although men of color are seen throughout sports today, some more than others, the ideologies reinforced are still those of the white male gaze. Women continue to be viewed as objects. Not all women however, just mostly white, hegemonic ideological, women. The default for beauty is white, thin, curvy, long hair, hourglass figure, with long legs, a round bust, full lips, and wide eyes women. The representation of female athletes as sex symbols goes further to reinforce these “ideal” forms of beauty. Since these women have been able to succeed in the realm of sports, and demonstrate their ability to be strong, dominant, and powerful while maintaining their “femininity,” they have been turned into sexual objects. The athletes portrayed as sexualized objects in advertisements, however, choose to be portrayed as such. These athletes could change their representation and refuse to be seen as an object for the male gaze. By these athletes allowing themselves to be represented in these ways, it further reinforces that it is okay. That it is okay to make female athletes a sexualized object whose sole purpose is to be viewed and absorbed by men. These female athletes are giving their consent and further being detrimental to the cause. By making white female athletes sexual objects for the male gaze, their status as inferior is reinstated.

However, it could be argued that by having Serena Williams represented as a male athlete, she has reached a level of superiority. That argument cannot be stated after analyzing the advertisements. Although Williams is not turned into a sexual object, she is stripped of her identity as a woman. Williams is displayed as a dominant, powerful athlete in several of the advertisements, but that is just it, she is shown with masculine qualities. The display of masculine qualities is not a just representation because those advertisements display her as such because of her race. She does not fit the “feminine” ideals set forth in popular culture. Those advertisements are used to set her apart from other female athletes so individuals are taught that in order to remain a woman and an athlete, you cannot be muscular or strong. Her body is not sexualized because her body is not what culture deems “sexy” or “beautiful.” The other female athletes in my study are never represented in an aggressive, dominant, powerful manner in their still advertisements. There are advertisement with Rousey as a “body guard,” and while she is serious and dominant in these videos, men are shown to be turned on and aroused by her dominance. Even when Rousey is displayed as a fighter and strong, men continue to find it attractive. By men continuing to be attracted to her, again she is seen as inferior and her purpose is to entertain the men. We are shown that women continue to serve the male gaze in popular culture, and we are reminded of what is beautiful and feminine and how women should behave.

Is the representation of men better? Well if one is a white male then their representation is just. White men are normalized and given structure and substance to their lives as an athlete. White athletes are not sexualized, and they are standard men who have been able to become an athlete because of hard work and dedication. The representation of

white male athletes in culture show individuals what a normal athlete is. Black male athletes continue to be viewed through their bodies alone. The black male athlete is given their body as their source of power and success. The dominant, powerful, threatening, strong black male athlete are able to attribute their success to their body. Culturally, this is telling us that the black male athlete continues to be inferior. The view of black athletes as brutish, aggressive, and dominant places their performance as a representation of their body. Even Tiger Woods, who is multicultural, is represented characteristically white but is discussed in stereotypical black ways when he is losing. When he was regressing as a golfer, the comments were about how his body is giving up and his inability to mentally come back. When he was successful, the success was his mental game and he was portrayed using stereotypical white characteristics. Tiger Woods was going to be our symbol of a non-white athlete being successful and not because of his body.

We learned that white female athletes continue to be utilized for the male gaze as sexual objects. Black female athletes are stripped of their femininity in order to reinforce the ideology of what feminine should be. White male athletes are given substance, while black male athletes are superb athletes because of their body, and when given an athlete who could go against all odds and demonstrate a color blind world of sports, he is categorized based on his performance using stereotypical racial characterizations.

Conclusion

So what do we do from here? First, we recognize that there is no one ideal form of beauty. There is no one way to display femininity. Female athletes are athletes because they have dedicated the countless hours and sweat to become an athlete, just like men.

Women who are displayed as our “female athletes” in sexual terms reinforces their inability to be on the same level as males. Displaying our group of female athletes as objects undermines all the hard work and dedication these women have given. We also recognize that all male athletes are successful because of their physical and mental abilities. Mentally, being an athlete is difficult and it is not just physical. So we give black male athletes the same amount of success and substance as white male athletes. In order to do any of these things, culturally, individuals have to see athletes as normal people who have been able to make their dreams come true because of dedication, hard work, tenacity, and intelligence. None of these will happen if athletes continue to be represented in these hegemonic ideologies of race and gender. The white male gaze must begin to disappear from popular culture in order for new ideologies to present themselves equally and culturally ideologies can begin to shift.

Some of the most athletically talented individuals will continue to be represented in unjust manners because of the hegemonic ideologies set forth by popular culture. Popular culture will continue to be an ultimate educator and unless representations of race and gender change, there will be little to no shift in the dominant ideologies. Culturally we will continue to be shown women as sexual objects, women of color are not the ideal forms of femininity or beauty, and black male athletes are successful because of their bodies. For future research, athletes who are international should be analyzed. It should be analyzed whether these dominant ideologies have been engrained into other nation’s cultures, and how far these ideologies stretch. If these ideologies are being represented internationally, are they being represented in the same manner as here in the United States? Looking at

athletes with international recognition could potentially reveal what other ideologies are being reinforced if not these, and if those ideologies are ones our culture should begin to represent. Athletes are heroes because they followed their dreams and showed that with dedication and hard work, anyone can follow their dreams. However, the representation of athletes in advertisements tell us that not all athletes are heroes for the same reasons, and that hegemonic ideologies are present within the world of sports. The world of sports where individuals are able to escape their own reality, and fully engrain themselves into this one.

References

Arend, Patricia. "Gender and Advertising." *Gender & Pop Culture* (2014): 53-79. Web.

Barbie, D.J. (2012). *The Tiger Woods Phenomenon: Essays on the cultural impact of golf's fallible superman*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

"Maria Sharapova Failed Drugs Test at Australian Open." *BBC Sport*. 08 Mar. 2016. Web. <<http://www.bbc.com/sport/tennis/35750285>>.

Bell, Hooks. (1992). The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators. In *Race and Representation* (pp. 115-31). Boston: South End Press.

Billings, Andrew C. "Portraying Tiger Woods: Characterizations of a "Black" Athlete in a "White" Sport." *Howard Journal of Communications* 14.1 (2003): 29-37. Web.

Borchers, T. (2002). Persuasion and Language. In *Persuasion in the Media Age* (pp. 186-213). Boston: McGraw Hill Higher Education.

Carrington, B., & McDonald, I. (2009). *Marxism, cultural studies and sport*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Childs, Erica. "Images of the Black Athlete: Intersection of Race, Sexuality, and Sports." *Journal of African American Men* 4.2 (1999): 19-38. Web.

"Cover The Athlete." *Cover The Athlete*. 2015. Web. <<http://covertheathlete.com/>>.

Croteau, D., & Hoynes, W. (2003) Media and the Social World. In *Media/Society:*

Industries, Images, and Audiences, (pp. 3-16).

Dansei, M. (2004). Advertising. In *Messages, Signs, and Meanings: A Basic Textbook in Semiotics and Communication Theory* (pp. 255-273). Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.

Dansei, M. (2004). What is Semiotics? In *Messages, Signs, and Meanings: A Basic Textbook in Semiotics and Communication Theory* (3rd ed., pp. 3-22). Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.

Duncan, M. (2006). Gender Warriors in Sport: Women and the Media. In *Handbook of Sports and Media* (pp. 231-251). New York: Routledge.

Famous Biographies & TV Shows. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.biography.com>.

"The World's Highest-Paid Athletes." *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine, 2015. Web. <<http://www.forbes.com/athletes/list/>>.

"The World's Highest-Paid Females Athletes 2015." *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine, 2015. Web. <<http://www.forbes.com/pictures/mli45fdllh/the-worlds-highest-paid/>>.

Gardner, S. (2015). Choice Theory: Gender Roles and Identity. *International Journal of Choice Theory and Reality Therapy*, 31-36.

Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J., & Roberts, B. (2013). *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. London: Macmillan.

Holtzman, L. (2000). The Connections: Life, Knowledge, and Media. In *Media*

Messages: What Film, Television, and Popular Music Teach Us about Race, Class, Gender, and Sexual Orientation (pp 7-50). Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Horne, J. (2006). *Sport in consumer culture*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Houck, D. (2006). Crouching Tiger, Hidden Blackness: Tiger Woods and the Disappearance of Race. In *Handbook of Sports and Media* (pp. 469-484). New York: Routledge.

Jensen, T. (2015, April 29). GoDaddy won't return as Danica Patrick's primary sponsor. Retrieved from <http://www.foxsports.com/nascar/story/godaddy-leaving-danica-patrick-nascar-stewart-haas-racing-sprint-cup-series>.

Kihan, K., & Yunjae, C. "The Effects of Athlete-Endorsed Advertising: The Moderating Role of the Athlete-Audience Ethnicity Match." *Journal of Sport Management* 25.2 (2011). Web.

Kroh, K. (2015). SportsCenter's Shameful Coverage of Women's Sports. Retrieved from <http://thinkprogress.org/sports/2015/06/12/3668472/media-ignores-womens-sports/>.

Leonard, D., & King, R. *Commodified and Criminalized: New Racism and African Americans in Contemporary Sports*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011. Print.

Lines, Gill. "Villains, Fools or Heroes? Sports Stars as Role Models for Young People."

Leisure Studies 20.4 (2003): 285-303. Web.

Marx, Karl. *Capital; Critique of Political Economy*. Ed. Friedrich Engels. Chicago: C.H.

Kerr, 1907. Print.

Marriott, D.S. (2000). *On Black Men*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Mulvey, L. (1989). Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. *Visual and Other Pleasure*, 14-26.

"Estimated Probability of Competing in Professional Athletics." *NCAA.org*. 2015. Web.

<<http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/estimated-probability-competing-professional-athletics>>.

Nelson, Jeff. "The Longest Professional Sports Careers." *The Roosevelts*. 2013. Web.

<<http://www.rsvlts.com/2013/07/22/longest-sports-careers/>>.

Newman, E. (2015, July 14). No room for body image criticism in Serena Williams' Grand Slam chase. Retrieved from <http://www.si.com/tennis/2015/07/14/serena-williams-body-image-wta-tennis>.

Omi, M., & Winant, H. (2015). *Racial formation in the United States*. London:

Routledge.

Rhoden, W.C. (2012). Seeing Through the Illusions of the Sports Hero. Retrieved from

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/22/sports/seeing-through-the-illusions-of-the-sports-hero.html>.

Roper, Emily A., and Katherine M. Polasek. "Gender, Sport and Popular Culture."
Gender & Pop Culture (2014): 151-73. Web.

Rothenberg, B. (2015). Tennis's Top Women Balance Body Image with Ambition.
Retrieved from [http:// www.nytimes.com/2015/07/11/sports/tennis/tennis-top-women-balance-body-image-with-quest-for-success.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/11/sports/tennis/tennis-top-women-balance-body-image-with-quest-for-success.html).

Russell, K. (2007). 'Queers, even in netball?' Interpretations of the lesbian label among sportswomen. In *Sport and Gender Identities* (pp. 106-121). New York: Routledge.

Smith, C. (2013, September 24). Cam Newton has Committed NFL Uniform Violations for His Entire Career. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/chris-smith/2013/09/24/cam-newton-has-committed-nfl-uniform-violations-for-his-entire-career>.

Storey, John. *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture*. 2010. Print.

Strinati, Dominic. *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*. London: Routledge, 2004. Print.

"2015-16 Women Coaches Report Released!" *Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport*. Web. <<http://www.cehd.umn.edu/tuckercenter/>>.