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Media Perceptions of Male Homosexual Athletes

Abstract

The world is forever changing and as time has gone on homosexuals coming out have become more and more commonplace, however professional male sport is having trouble accepting societies trends. The purpose of this study is to look into the initial media response to male homosexual athletes coming out. This research will be beneficial to the academic community because it researches the relationship between sport, the media, and homosexuals. This study was conducted using secondary data from four media outlets, Sports Illustrated, ESPN the Magazine, The USA Today, and the LA Times. The data collected showed that there is limited statistical significance between the athletes and what the media is presenting.

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Media Perceptions of Male Homosexual Athletes

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Abstract

The world is forever changing and as time has gone on homosexuals coming out have become more and more commonplace, however professional male sport is having trouble accepting societies trends. The purpose of this study is to look into the initial media response to male homosexual athletes coming out. This research will be beneficial to the academic community because it researches the relationship between sport, the media, and homosexuals. This study was conducted using secondary data from four media outlets, Sports Illustrated, ESPN the Magazine, The USA Today, and the LA Times. The data collected showed that there is limited statistical significance between the athletes and what the media is presenting.

Media Perceptions of Male Homosexual Athletes

The sport industry is one of the most unique industries in the world; from the players to the executives it is clear that there is one aspect of sport that makes it very different from all other industries. Athletics is the last industry where homophobia is commonplace (Roper & Halloran, 2007). From youth leagues all the way up to professional leagues such as the NFL, MLB, NBA, and NHL it is clear that equality for homosexual athletes is a topic that no one wants to talk about and therefore no one is. Homophobic oppression is a topic that has taken the forefront of the United States government, with the US Supreme Court recently ruling that the US Constitution guarantees homosexual individuals the right to get married in all fifty states. However with all of this progress being made, the sports industry has failed to address the issue of equality regardless of sexual orientation.

It is unclear why sport is so reluctant to address the issue of homosexuality when other hyper masculinized industries have done so. Why is it that now even the military is allowing its members to be open about their sexuality but when it comes to sports it is still an unopened closet? Some people attribute it to the athletes not welcoming openly gay athletes to their respective locker rooms. Former San Francisco 49ers and now Washington Redskin cornerback Chris Culliver, when asked if an individual would be better off staying in the closet for the betterment of their respective career he was quoted saying “yeah, come out 10 years later after that” (Rodgers, 2013, p.1). Although Mr. Culliver would later apologize for his comments it’s clear that some locker rooms would not welcome an openly gay athlete. Some also suggest that the root of the problem is that high-level executives

are not in favor of the publicity that is associated with having one of the first openly gay athletes on their respective teams (Roper & Holloran, 2007). Although many owners and high-level executives have been open about their positive opinions in regards to having a homosexual player on their team it is clear that the comments may just be a way for them to shrug off the critics (Roper & Holloran, 2007). For example Buffalo Bills head coach Rex Ryan commented on the topic in the wake of the Michael Sam announcement, he said, “as far as I’m concerned, if a guy’s a good teammate and can help you win, I’d be open to anybody” (Waldron & Leichenger, 2014, p. 2). Although Ryan seemed to be very supportive of an openly gay male athlete joining his team, he did not comment on the NFL as a whole. Ultimately many attribute the problem to the media and the way they portray openly gay athletes. As many executives have said before, it is not about if he or she is gay or not it’s about if they help the team, however they do not support the media attention whether negative or positive that comes with having an openly gay athlete on their franchise (Waldron & Leichenger, 2014).

This research has looked at how the media’s perception of gay male athletes are presented and draw conclusions through content analysis of media articles. The media’s perceptions, although not always correct, can give a good perception of how the sport industry and the world views homosexuals in sport. In the wake of the Michael Sam, Jason Collins, and Robbie Rogers announcements, the issue of accepting male homosexual athletes into professional sport is at the forefront of the United States media. The amount of media coverage of sport as whole is endless which in the end has an affect on the larger cause of homosexual male athletes, if

equity will ever be reached for male homosexuals in the sport industry. The importance of this study is to see how the media presents homosexual male athletes after they have openly come out to the public about their sexual orientation.

Literature Review

Media Framework

What is Media

As the world has grown so has media, from the early stages of the printing press and radio all the way to the age of new media. Like sport, media has grown at an exponential rate. However do we really understand what media is or how important it really is in shaping our opinions and the opinions of others? Stead says that media is vital to framing, determining and influencing our picture of reality (2002). In other words media is helping to frame our opinions of everything. Now with the growth of media outlets such as Twitter, the use of media is becoming part of everyday life for Americans.

Media Evolution

Media has been changed substantially over time, with the early forms becoming available in the form of magazines, newspapers, and books. Following World War II television sets starting popping up in household's left and right, by 1974, 97% of American households had a TV set in their homes (Roberts & Foehr, 2008). With this growth came more exposure to people of all ages, however young adult's ages 11-18 were affected the most, due to the increase in the availability. Now with those generations growing older the early exposure is making watching a newscast or viewing Twitter part of an individual's daily routine. Now these

generations are also passing down their individual love for all things media to their children and with the addition of new technology such as personal computers and cell phones the access to media outlets for people of all ages is endless (Roberts & Foehr, 2008).

Media and Sport

Sport and the media have enjoyed a very long relationship because they feed of each other. Media causes sport popularity, the enormous amount of attention provided by the large number of outlets such as television, newspapers, and the internet help supplement any sport information that needs to be seen by the public (McChesney, 1989). Almost every increase in sport popularity has been accompanied by an increase in media coverage (McChesney, 1989). Also ultimately media has covered more and more sport, from the creation of sporting television like ESPN to the sport section in your local newspaper, media has been crucial to the growth of sport on a global stage. Furthermore the media help put together story lines that help build up the excitement that surrounds sporting events such as the Super Bowl and World Series (Stead, 2002). Additionally sports media generally promote and reinforce a unique set of values related to capitalism, nationalism, patriarchy, and racism/sexism (Stead, 2002). I would relate this back to your specific topic as a transition before moving on to your next section.

Homosexuals in Sport Framework

It's not taboo!

A key concept to understand when discussing media and homosexuals is what exactly makes you a homosexual. Unfortunately many use those words so

freely because they are of the mindset that gay is taboo or “not normal” (Shackelford & Besser, 2007). However gay is not different, as Roper and Halloran stated gay is another way to be happy (2007). A more scientific definition would refer to sexual orientation, as the “enduring pattern of emotional, romantic and/or sexual attractions to men, women or both sexes” (American Psychology Association, 2015, para. 1). These attractions can occur anytime in life, however scientists believe it is most apt to show up in your “middle childhood or early adolescent years” (American Psychology Association, 2015, p.1). In simple form Gay or Homosexual is the term used when referring to someone who has a sexual attraction the same sex.

Masculinity Theory

When discussing homosexuals in sport it is important to understand the Masculinity Theory and how the theory affects the issue of male homosexuals in sport. Masculinity is a very complex concept in part because there is no perfect definition (Mazzie, 2014). It is important to understand the difference between gender and sex; sex is your biological make up, in other words male (XY) or female (XX). Gender is socially constructed and although your biological makeup may be female you personally may feel you are a male or vice versa. This feeling is called your gender identity; your gender identity is formed through your life experiences and your communications with others (Mazzie, 2014). The Masculinity Theory is the idea that a man is masculine and his actions reflect all things masculine. In other words men will do things that are masculine to show they are a man, for example men feel like they need to dominate women in order to display their masculinity to the world. Furthermore masculine men believe they are supposed to compete with

other men and dominate the other sex by being sexually experienced, physically imposing, ambitious, and demanding (Planned Parenthood, 2015).

Masculinity Theory also conveys the idea that if you are not masculine then you are feminine and that no man can be feminine and if he is then his sexuality will be questioned (Mazzie, 2014). Furthermore the Masculinity Theory refers to the power associated socially with being a man. Not only is it important for a man to feel superior to women it is important for men to feel superior to other men. Men are in a constant battle with themselves and with others for power, this power then gives them the masculinity that they need to feel that they are “man enough” (Kimmel, 1997). When we refer to masculinity in sport we think of the big time leagues like the NFL, NBA, NHL, and MLB and the amazing athletes that participate in them. These leagues are not the only professional leagues however they are the most masculine, for example the National Football League (NFL) is full of physical specimens that have worked their whole entire lives to get where they are. These athletes are a prime example of masculinity because they are constantly striving to be better than their opponent or in other words have more power over them.

Masculinity Theory reinforces the stereotype that a gay man is feminine and therefore cannot be masculine (Kimmel, 1997). These perceptions help form the contradiction at hand, that a man cannot be gay and play a masculine sport such as football or hockey. In other words since the masculinity theory is stating that in order to be masculine you can't be feminine, while you also can not be feminine and play a popular male sport in the United States. Ultimately it comes down the fact that a homosexual in sport is required to stay closeted because of the fear that if

they show even a small amount of feminism then their gender and their masculinity will be put into question by their teammates (Dusenbery, 2013). With their masculinity in question they will be subject to homophobic slurs and degrading remarks that even a straight man would feel uncomfortable receiving. Masculinity culture or the idea that locker rooms and sport in general are the home of stereotypical male gender roles help give reason to why it is hard for an individual athlete to justify his career for the sake of challenging gender/masculinity norms. In the end until an athlete can be gay and have a successful career while open about his sexuality, Masculinity Theory will continue to overpower locker rooms around the country. Homosexual successful athletes will continue to stay closeted in fear that no matter how much time and effort they put into their craft, being gay will put them in a category alone where they will be categorized as weak and not “man enough” (Kimmel, 1997).

Male Homosexual Stereotypes

When you open up about being a homosexual you subject yourself to an array of stereotypes that surround the homosexual community. There are the general stereotypes such as all gay men are feminine, all gay men are attracted to all men and cannot control their desires, or even two gay men cannot raise a healthy and happy child (Lipp, 2013). Then there are the more serious or degrading stereotypes such as that male homosexuality is caused from childhood issues, or that gay men cannot be trusted around children, and that HIV/AIDS is primarily a gay disease (Lipp, 2013). These stereotypes are just a few of the many degrading concepts that people associate with gay men. In terms of sport, there are two sides

of the debate, if you are a successful women athlete you must be a lesbian and if you are a successful male athlete you cannot be gay (Loewentheil, 2013). This is the basic sport stereotype that all athletes have to deal with. However with the Jason Collins announcement male athletes have been exposed to the possibility of one of their masculine teammates being gay.

Even with the Collins and Sam announcements it is clear that the sport industry as a whole has a long way to go towards equality. This is clear simply due to the fact that Sam and Collins are not even on a roster anymore. Even worse both are seen more as gay rights activists, because of the courage they show when coming out as a homosexual, than they are viewed as athletes. Now both will be remembered more so as the first athletes to come out while still active in their respective sports, than professional athletes who had solid careers in their respective sport. Neither will go on to make the hall of fame or the case of Sam maybe even play a down of regular season football. Could the media's attention to athletes such as Sam and Collins drive executives away or does the lack of openly gay male athletes have to do with how the media portrays them once they come out about their sexuality? Furthermore, studies by Eric Anderson have shown that just because they are gay does not affect their potential to be a professional athlete. Is the media attention really becoming the main problem associated with male homosexuals and sport?

Sport Influence

Sport is a billion dollar industry and along with that money comes a lot of media attention. As media has grown so has sport, now both are well established

global industries (Stead, 2002). From the NFL to the MLS it is safe to say that homosexual male athletes are not as prominent as they should be. Part of this is due to the factor of masculinity. With the military now allowing for openly homosexual members, sport is now the isolated glorification of masculinity. And so long as American culture does not associate masculinity with male homosexuals, the coming out of a male athlete in any sport is challenging everyone's views (Pederson, 2002). However unlike politics, the military, and the medical field, who have all made strides in equity for homosexuals, sport is the last field where there is no equality for homosexuals. However, there are now two exceptions, Robbie Rogers of the Los Angeles Galaxy (MLS) and Jason Collins formally of the Brooklyn Nets (NBA). It is clear that being gay is still a cause for concern in sport, because to date there has not been one male athlete that has been openly gay and had a career in a big time professional sport. Michael Sam who was the first active professional football player to come out was very close to finding a home in the NFL, however after being drafted by the St. Louis Rams, Sam did not make it past the final cuts of training camp.

Due to the rarity, topics like the Collins announcement have become front-page news and have drawn media attention from all over the country. Furthermore sport has the power to change lives, and motivate others to make a difference. Although it seems that athletes such as Sam and Collins have had little success breaking the barrier, Kian & Anderson (2009) stated that with homosexuality becoming more commonplace in society, heterosexual male athletes are gradually distancing themselves from homophobia and starting to become more welcoming of

openly gay male athletes in all sports. Furthermore even though many believe that the masculine sports such hockey and basketball are not welcoming, a 2006 poll done by *Sports Illustrated*, showed that 60% of NBA players would be comfortable with an openly gay man on their team, 80% of NHL players said that they would also be okay with an openly gay male athlete on their team (Kian & Anderson, 2009).

The Homosexual Sport Movement

“One by one, baby” were the wise words spoken from tennis great Billie Jean King (Price, 2013, para. 2) in regards to how long it will take for the homosexual sport barrier to be broken down. It was King that grew up in age where even lesbians were not welcome in sport, after losing her former partner and 2 million dollars in endorsements, King says it is “one of my prayers” when referring to the equality of homosexuals in sport (Price, 2013, p. 2). Now as the years pass, it is evident that there has been some progress in terms of homosexual women and their fight for equality in sport. Homosexual women are not facing the same trouble that homosexual men are facing when trying to compete at a professional level because of the idea of masculinity. Masculine women are actually sought after in women’s professional sport because of the idea that masculine means strong/powerful and with that comes better athletic ability (Kian & Anderson, 2009).

However men face a different challenge, to stay closeted and play the sport they love or have their career put and in jeopardy and their masculinity questioned. For many years’ male homosexuals in sport were an after-thought, no one believed that a gay man could be masculine enough to play a high level sport and be gay. It wasn’t until players such as Billy Bean (MLB), David Kopay (NFL), and John Amaechi

(NBA) came out after their retirements from their respective sports that people even began to think about gay males and professional sports (Rozenberg, 2012). These individuals were the pioneers for the gay sport movement, however along with their bravery came an obvious question, why wait? The answer at that time and now, in most cases, is fear (Shackelford & Besser, 2007). Most athletes fear that they will not be accepted by their teammates and statements of discrimination like “I hate gay people” from Tim Hardaway did nothing but reinforce the idea that an openly gay male athlete would be looked down upon in a professional sports locker room (Price, 2013, p. 2).

For many years the world contemplated how fans, the media, and the respective leagues would react when an active professional male athlete came out as openly gay. First, Robbie Rogers an American soccer player who announced simultaneously that he was retiring from soccer and that he was gay (McRae, 2013). He would later come out of retirement after much support from his hometown club the Los Angeles Galaxy, who would make him the first active gay male athlete in American sports history. However many still waited to see when a man from one of the four major American sports, NFL (American Football), NBA, NHL, and MLB, would be brave enough to challenge stereotypes and become “Athlete One” (Price, 2013). Then on May 6th 2013, “Athlete One” arrived, Jason Collins. At the time Collins was an active free agent in the NBA. He would soon sign a 10-day contract with one of his former teams the Brooklyn Nets. Days later he became the first openly gay male athlete to play in a game in one of the top four sport leagues in the United States (Spears, 2014). The courage that Collins showed sent a message to not

just the sport industry but to all the world that it is possible for a 7 foot, 225 pound, black man to be a professional athlete and be gay. Although this was a huge step for the sport industry, the success only lasted for a month as Collins was not signed for the rest of the season and only appeared in 22 games for the Nets (Jason Collins NBA Stats | Basketball-Reference.com, 2015). Nevertheless, the gay sport movement is not in the same place it was ten, five, or even two years ago (Price, 2013).

However, even with the brave actions of Collins, equality is a long ways away. Athletes such as Michael Sam and Derrick Gordon who came out as a homosexual while they were still enrolled in college have experienced issues when trying to turn professional. Sam, who was the Southeastern Conference's co-defensive player of the year in 2013 failed to make an NFL roster in 2014, while his counterpart C.J. Mosley was selected with the 17th pick in the first round. Derrick Gordon's fate as a professional basketball player still awaits him as he has another year of eligibility in college. Ultimately progress is being made, Collin's announcement has sparked a lot of debate and has given individuals like Michael Sam and Derrick Gordon the guidance that people need when making a life changing decision to come out as an openly gay male athlete. The ultimate goal is for individuals like Jason Collins and Michael Sam to show their courage to the world and show not only closeted homosexuals athletes but also the closeted homosexual community as a whole that you can come out and still live a normal and productive life, you do not need to stay closeted to live a productive and meaningful life.

This study will take an in-depth look of the words used by the media to describe homosexual athletes and look into the trends being found in the media

when discussing homosexual athletes when they first come out. It is clear media affects the opinions of those that consume it. Furthermore the increasing amount of media outlets gives people of all ages the opportunity to not only form but also voice their opinions on important topics such as male homosexuals in sport. Media brings the attention and is a critical part of sport, however does the media bring the right attention to male homosexuals in sport? What do we tend to see more positive or negative articles? What kind of media attention is being published following the individual announcements? Does the media still frame their messages in homophobic language? These could all be answers to why the United States is yet to have an openly gay male athlete secure himself on a professional roster in one of the four power sports in America. This study is designed to look into the positivity and/or negativity of articles written by the media about openly homosexual male professional athletes.

Method

To date there has been some similar research comparing sport and media however since a male homosexual coming out while they are an active player is still a new concept there is not an array of articles discussing the topic. The idea behind this research is to find trends and key words that media outlets associate with the individual athletes. This research will be a content analysis of the articles selected. A content analysis fit this research process because it is the most common technique used when examining media articles like ESPN the Magazine (source).

Sample Selection Athletes

As discussed earlier there are not many examples of male homosexuals in sport so this research explored three different subjects: Michael Sam (NFL), Jason Collins (NBA), and Robbie Rogers (MLS). Researching these three subjects will give the best synopsis of how the media reacts across all sports in the United States. I have selected these subjects because they are three of the most well known openly gay male athletes and, because their sports are unique because each sport has different masculinity perceptions for example, soccer is perceived to be less masculine than football, therefore the media may post information about Robbie Rogers compared to Michael Sam. The NFL and the NBA are two of the four major leagues in America and the perceptions surrounding masculinity are much different than the perceptions of masculinity associated with the MLS (Loewentheil, 2013). So including Robbie Rogers who participates in a sport that is perceived to be less masculine than his counterparts Sam and Collins will give more credibility to the research.

Sample Selection Articles

The research information was gathered from four different media outlets. First, ESPN the Magazine, whose mission is “to serve sports fans wherever sports are watched, listened to, discussed, debated, read about or played” (Entertainment and Sport Programming Network, 2015, para. 1). Including ESPN the Magazine in this research is essential because they are one of the industry leaders in sport media and research. Second, Sports Illustrated, one of the most well-known sport magazines will serve as a counterpart to ESPN the Magazine.

Sports Illustrated is an extension of Time Magazine, with that comes credibility but also the duty to follow their mission which is “to adapt to the needs of the ever-busier reader who wishes to stay informed in all facets of media (Time, 2015, para. 1). Sports Illustrated will bring another sport point of view to the table when discussing media and their perceptions of homosexual male athletes. Using two media outlets that focus on sports will help when finding concluding commonalities and differences in sport-focused publications.

Finally the research will include two non-sport media outlets, The USA Today, and the LA Times. The USA Today’s objective is “to serve as a forum for better understanding and unity to help make the USA truly one nation” (USA Today, 2015, para. 3). With this mission in mind The USA Today will bring a different perspective on the topic. The LA times objective is to “to join its readers in a dialogue about important issues of the day -- to exhort, explain, deplore, mourn, applaud or champion, as the case may be” (LA Times, 2015, para 1) It is important to use a non-sport media perspective because they will bring many different aspects to the table in terms of their language and how they discuss the athletes. Comparable research done by Eric Anderson has used this same technique because it allows for the most diverse and useful information (2010-2014). Most importantly all four have credibility in the media field and will give a distinct perspective on how homosexual males are perceived in the media.

My selection parameters went as follows, first I would search for each individual athlete, once presented that data I narrowed down the available articles to the articles published within three months of the coming out date. From here I

looked at the five most relevant articles following the coming out date of each athlete.

Research Design

Using www.thesaurus.com, a list of synonymous with “masculine” was created (see Appendix A). Furthermore the appendix includes the first seven words that are considered the opposite (antonym) of “masculine”. Some examples of the synonyms are words such as “bold” and “brave” while the antonyms are words such as “weak” and “afraid”. Using only seven words allowed for the data collected to be concise but still informative. Creating a content analysis using the first seven synonyms and antonyms of masculine gave me a nice sized slice of data to make inferences about.

Data Collection Process

The process went as follows, using two appendices the researcher investigated the language written in the articles about the test subjects. The process starts with the first appendix, which will use the first seven synonyms and first seven antonyms associated with the word masculine. Using only seven words gave me a small but informative cross-section of the words used in the articles, furthermore instead of checking when those words are used. Once each article is analyzed and coded using the first appendix, they were ran through a second appendix, the second appendix was made to account for the quantifiable data such as the focus of the article, the tone of the article, if there were pictures in the article, and how many page breaks/paragraphs were in the article. The second appendix

was put into place to further check for any differences between the media outlets and the athletes.

Data Analysis Plan

To analyze the data collected in appendix A I put together my own inferences from what I had read in the articles, so for example I had found that most of the articles written are written in a positive manor. The first part of the analysis explored the frequency and type of synonyms and antonyms found in the articles. The second part of the analysis used SPSS statistical analysis of the quantitative data collected. The reasoning behind doing a two-part test is previous research done on related topics used a two-part test and in some cases like Roper and Halloran in 2007, a three-part test. Due to time constraints and the parameters of this research, a two-part test was done. Using Appendix B gave the researcher a way to quantify the data and account for any additional significance that would not have been accounted for if we were just looking at the words used in the articles. The addition of the data collected in appendix B gave the study additional credibility. The research uses a specific data collection sheet to collect data when reading the articles. A data collection sheet fits in this case because this will allow for the most clear and useful information to be collected. Furthermore if the research did not use a definitive data collection sheet, the final conclusions would have been scattered and would not have any academic merit. Using the data collection sheet allows the data collected to have common ground, instead of just taking notes on the different articles the research focused on looking for the same key words in each articles and from that data I drew conclusions about the differences and similarities.

Results

Part one of the analysis explored the qualitative data collected and uncovered three distinct themes when exploring the coming out of Michael Sam, Jason Collins, and Robbie Rogers. The first theme uncovered was that overwhelmingly, the tone of the articles was positive. Only 3 out of the 38 or 8% of the articles that were collected and analyzed had an article tone that I concluded was negative. The few examples that I deemed to be negative came also with criticism, for example an article posted in Sports Illustrated included a few quotes from NBA owner Mark Cuban, although Cuban went on to say that Collins wasn't the right fit for the Mavericks, he would have been honored to have the first openly gay player on his team.

Second, in terms of the content of the article and the words used looking at Appendix C you can see that the top three masculine synonyms used for one athlete is in line with the top three of another athlete. For example looking at Michael Sam's top three compared to Robbie Rogers, they both have the same top three words, which are "courage, strong, and powerful". Furthermore the top synonym for each athlete was "courage", this word represents the medias recognition of the bravery each individual athlete has for coming out as an openly homosexual male athlete.

Lastly it is clear that there were more masculine synonyms than masculine antonyms used when discussing these athletes, with a total of 71 synonyms and only 20 antonyms. This is great news considering the fact that all three athletes announcements were met with backlash from the public and media, however in the

end when you get down to the content of what the media was putting out it was for them most part conveying the athletes as courageous individuals. Furthermore I found that some of the antonyms that were used to discuss the athletes were used in a positive manor. Even though they show up as a negative check mark, they are read by the reader of the article in a positive way. For example in one of the articles posted in sports illustrated they quoted Jason Collins saying, " I'm not afraid". Since afraid was used to detect a antonym of masculine this would be perceived in the initial data however it is really used to show Collins strength and further reinforce the fact that the media is talking about openly gay athletes in a positive way. Ultimately my own inferences have found that the media is reporting in a positive way about the test subjects, Sam, Collins, and Rogers.

Other then the main trends discussed above I did find some general findings such as 17 of the articles were articles that told a story about the individual athlete, 7 of the articles were opinion pieces, and 14 articles that were news related. Of the each individual media outlets ESPN put out "News" the most frequently (6/11), LA Times put out "News" articles the most (3/5), Sports Illustrated also put out "News" the most (5/10), and finally the USA Today was the only unique outlet with the leading article type being a "Story" (8/10). This data shows that other then USA Today, 22 of the 38 articles the media is putting out is primarily focused on bringing the reader some sort of new information. In terms of articles talking about the athletes in a positive manor, it is worth noting that ESPN and LA Times, all of the articles collected used words that were positive and therefore was deemed to be "Pro" articles. Furthermore in terms of individual publications and words used,

ESPN used 26 masculine synonyms compared to just 7 antonyms of masculine. The LA Times used 12 synonyms compared to 6 antonyms, Sports Illustrated used 14 synonyms while only writing 6 antonyms in all, and finally USA Today was the biggest difference in words used with a high of 19 masculine synonyms and a low of 1 antonym used.

On top of the results found from my own inferences and research, appendix B allowed for me to do a statistical analysis of three important aspects of my research. If you take a look at Appendix D you will find the data that first looked into if there was any significance between the individual athlete and the tone of the articles, if there was a picture in the article, the amount of page breaks in the articles, the amount of synonyms used, and the amount of antonyms used. The second statistically analysis looked into the correlation between the individual media outlets and the tone of the articles, if there was a picture in the article, the amount of page breaks in the articles, the amount of synonyms used, and the amount of antonyms used. Lastly, the combination of both the individual athlete and the individual media outlets and the possible correlation between the tones of the articles, if there was a picture in the article, the amount of page breaks in the articles, the amount of synonyms used, and the amount of antonyms used. I chose these three statistically approaches because I felt it gave the best snap shot of the possible correlation between the articles, athletes, and the aspects recorded.

Breaking down the results in Appendix D it is clear that there is minimal significance between any of the aspects discussed above. The only strong correlation shown is that the individual media outlets have a distinct difference in

pictures used. If you look back at the data this could be contributed the fact that USA Today did not display any pictures at all when discussing the individual athletes, furthermore the LA Times displayed a picture in every article that was looked at. Other than the correlation between the pictures and the individual media outlets, the statistical analysis shows that there is no correlation between what the media is writing about and the individual athletes.

Discussion

It is no secret that there is a lack of open homosexual representation in male professional sports, however my research has found that there is no statistical significance between the athletes, the media outlets, and the individual aspects discussed in the results section. With this being said I believe there is no connection between what the media is displaying and the individual athletes.

One aspect I found to be very interesting is that it has been said that male homosexual athletes are subject to negative stereotypes and are seen as weak and afraid individuals. However the data I collected that the media did not, for the most part, display any of these stereotypes. This shows that although the sport industry as a whole has a long way to go until there is equality for homosexual athletes, the lack of stereotypical words used to describe homosexual athletes in the media is a step in the right direction. Furthermore if the media can continue to display these athletes as courageous individuals who are meant to be part of their respective leagues, there will be a better chance of those individuals securing a spot on a roster.

Another aspect I found to reinforce previous literature was the idea that soccer is perceived as a less masculine sport and furthermore a less relevant sport than the other four American power sports. Not only was it harder to find articles on Robbie Rogers the articles I did find on Rogers were all written in a pro tone when discussing him as an openly gay male athlete. I believe this can be directly connected to the sport he plays, furthermore we can see soccer as the first sport in America to really allow a openly gay male athlete to succeed.

Overall my data could be subject to bias in the form of researcher bias, due to the simple fact that half of my research was based of my own inferences drawn from the research. However I did my best to keep an open mind when reading all articles and did the best I could to not take in consideration previous articles results when researching new articles. However I would be wrong to say there was no researcher bias in my inferences.

I believe there were three key limitations with my research first and foremost as discussed in the literature review when an athlete comes out as openly gay it is going to bring a lot of national media attention, however what I found in my research was that it wasn't that easy. When researching Sam and Collins I found it to be difficult to find relevant articles that would be useful when collecting the data for my appendices. I also found it even more difficult to find articles about Robbie Rogers, now I believe some of this can be contributed to the sport that Robbie plays and the fact that MLS soccer is a lot smaller compared to the NBA and NFL, the leagues Sam and Collins were a part of. In the end I found it to be very interesting and contradictory that it was difficult to find articles that were relevant for all

athletes included in the study. To take this a step further due to time constraints I had to only select four media outlets, in the future researchers could take this research one step further by looking into many more media outlets. Even taking a look at more specific media outlets within the individual athletes teams city. Another aspect was the limited words I looked for, due to time constraints it wasn't feasible to look into all possible synonyms and antonyms of masculine, so I selected the ones I felt would show up the most. With this being said in the future, this research could really be expanded in this aspect of the design, maybe looking more into the meaning of the articles as a whole or looking at the synonyms of synonyms. Finally was the lack of athletes to look, in the future there will hopefully more athletes from each individual league for researchers to look at, however for this particular case I was limited to just three athletes simply because those were the only three active athletes that have come out in recent time.

Overall however I believe my research found that the media is putting out positive articles about the athletes and that their influence although large has been positive and not negative. Although my statistical analysis did not find much correlation at all, my own research has shown that the articles and specifically the words used do not reinforce the stereotypes that are associated with the male homosexual community. The importance of these findings is simple, what the media is writing and putting out for the public to read is not negative and therefore has not correlation with the fact that other then Robbie Rogers, no male athlete has had a successful career as an openly male gay athlete.

Conclusion

When looking at the overall words written about the athletes, the media outlets, and the different aspects researched you can see that the media is putting out primarily positive articles about the openly homosexual male athletes. So although the media does have the power to change the world, its positive influence on the openly homosexual male athlete has not cemented its place just yet. Hopefully as more athletes follow the courageous acts of Michael Sam, Jason Collins, and Robbie Rogers, the media will continue to write about them in a positive light and put pressure on the individual leagues and teams to break the equality wall.

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Appendix A
Synonyms of Masculine

Brave	Jock	Powerful
Strong	Courageous/Courage	Bold

Antonyms of Masculine

Weak	Afraid	Cowardly
Fearful	Shy	Feminine

Actual results of this? Summaries for each athlete? Each athlete per publication?

Appendix B

Athlete Name	Michael Sam	Robbie Rogers	Jason Collins
Publication	The USA Today	Sports Illustrated	ESPN the Magazine
Focus of Article	Opinion	Story	News
Tone of Article	Pro Gay	Anti Gay	
Pictures Used	Yes	No	
Length (# of Paragraphs)			
Number of Masculine Synonyms			
Number of Masculine Antonyms			

Appendix C

	Synonyms					
	Powerful	Jock	Brave	Strong	Courage	Bold
Michael Sam	2			5	18	2
Robbie Rogers	3		1	3	7	
Jason Collins	3		5	3	17	2
	Antonyms					
	Weak	Afraid	Fearful	Shy	Cowardly	Feminine
Michael Sam	1	3	2			
Robbie Rogers		4	4			

Appendix D

Athlete Comparison

Focus	Tone	Picture	Page Breaks	Synonyms	Antonyms
0.152	0.515	0.245	0.39	0.412	0.457

Media Outlet Comparison

Focus	Tone	Picture	Page Breaks	Synonyms	Antonyms
0.27	0.393	0	0.399	0.184	0.429

Athlete & Article Type Comparison

Focus	Tone	Picture	Page Breaks	Synonyms	Antonyms
0.151	0.814	0.002	0.524	0.395	0.685

Note: Numbers in the table indicate a Pearson Correlation. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

(2-tailed). *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.