

VISUAL FRAMING, RACIAL IDENTITY AND  
PERCEIVED FEMININITY IMPACTS ON PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS  
OF TRANSGRESSIVE FEMALE ATHLETES

by

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## ABSTRACT

While issues surrounding the race and sex of athletes, as well as the transgressive acts of athletes, are frequent mass media research topics and are fervently discussed in sports media, the recent intersection of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and subsequent high-profile protests by U.S. athletes has focused attention toward enduring issues of racial concern regarding athletes and sports fans. This research experimentally investigated issues surrounding American spectators' racial attitudes, the spectator's sex, an athlete's race and the athlete's sex to determine if race and the subject's perceived femininity impact perceptions of female athletes committing transgressive acts. Theory bases for this research include Visual Framing Theory, Social Identity Theory, Self-categorization Theory and mass media stereotyping of Blacks. This research reports the results of a 2 (race: White female athlete/Black female athlete) x 2 (visual frame: athlete with tattoos/athlete without tattoos) experiment to investigate public responses to a female athlete accused of using steroids. A total of 263 female participants read a simulated media report, then provided responses concerning an appropriate punishment for the athlete. Each participant also reported her personal strength of racial identity using the Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS) as well as her perceived level of femininity using the Femininity Ideology Scale (FIS). These results were used as control variables in subsequent statistical analyses. Results were inconclusive regarding strength of racial identity or perceived femininity as indicators of punishment length for the transgressive female athletes. Though results were not statistically significant, the data does trend in the hypothesized direction.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Dr. Kinney, Dr. Phelps, and Dr. Daniels for their long-term commitment to seeing this project through to completion. Special thanks goes out to Dr. Kinney for pushing me for the last six years to finally complete this project, even when we had to do a complete restart. I am very appreciative of his guidance and direction, and would not be where I am today without him.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

df	Degrees of freedom: number of values free to vary after certain restrictions have been placed on the data
f	A ratio of two variances
n	The number of valid (i.e., non-missing) observations used for calculating statistical tests
p	Significance level: the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis given that it is true
sd	Standard deviation: a measure that is used to quantify the amount of variation or dispersion of a set of data values
t	Computed value of t-test

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## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	5
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	21
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS.....	25
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION.....	31
REFERENCES.....	39
APPENDIX A: INDEPENDENT VARIABLE TREATMENTS..... RACE AND VISUAL FRAME	55
APPENDIX B: DEPENDENT VARIABLE OPERATIONALIZATIONS..... RACIAL IDENTIFICATION SCALE FEMININITY IDEOLOGY SCALE RECOMMENDED GAME SUSPENSION	58
APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL.....	64

LIST OF TABLES

1. SUBJECT RACE BY TREATMENT GROUP.....27

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

While issues surrounding the race and sex of athletes, as well as the transgressive acts of athletes, are frequent mass media research topics and are fervently discussed in sports media, the recent intersection of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and subsequent high-profile protests by U.S. athletes has focused attention toward enduring issues of racial concern regarding athletes and sports fans. This research experimentally investigated issues surrounding American spectators' racial attitudes, the spectator's sex, an athlete's race and the athlete's sex to determine if race and the subject's perceived femininity impact perceptions of female athletes committing transgressive acts. Theory bases for this research include Visual Framing Theory, Social Identity Theory, Self-categorization Theory and mass media stereotyping of Blacks.

Hartman (2000) called sports "contested racial terrain, a social site where racial images, ideologies and inequalities are constructed, transformed and constantly struggled over" (p 230). The state of American race relations is often reflected in the prism of sports (Dickhaus & Kinney, 2014). While separate but equal was still US law, heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis was the country's biggest celebrity. Before the US Supreme Court required public schools to integrate, Jackie Robinson broke Major League Baseball's color barrier. In 1970, Jim Plunkett became the first Mexican-American to win the Heisman Trophy recognizing America's best collegiate football player. Tom Flores became the National Football League's first Mexican-American head coach in 1979. Doug Williams became the first black quarterback to play in and win the Super Bowl in 1988. Art Shell became the first Black NFL modern-era head coach when the Oakland (now Los Angeles) Raiders promoted Shell to the position 14 years before the

NFL's Rooney Rule required teams to interview at least one Black head coach candidate for open positions.

Reports in contemporary sports media often resemble crime scene reports. Fans are daily besieged by reports of athletes committing improprieties, including assault and battery, domestic abuse, financial misdeeds, drug abuse, cheating scandals, sexual offenses, gun violence and even murder. Sports commentary broadcasts feature extensive discussion of these topics. *Bleacher Report* and *Deadspin*, websites specializing in sports coverage and commentary, document athletes' transgressions in minute detail while simultaneously offering fans opportunities to comment on the site's discussion board. Another sports-specific website, *TMZ Sports*, was launched with the objective of providing salacious coverage of athletes' crimes and other misdeeds.

While most media sports coverage focuses on male athletes, prominent female athletes have received negative media coverage for transgressions more often associated with male athletes. In 2014, US soccer star Hope Solo was arrested and charged with fourth-degree assault of her half-sister and nephew. Allegations included drinking and abusive language from Solo. After prolonged legal appeals, charges were dropped after Solo's half-sister and nephew withdrew the complaint. US Olympic track and field star Marion Jones was ensnared by a federal investigation of BALCO, a sports lab accused of supplying illegal steroids to athletes. Jones admitted to obtaining and using Erythropoietin (EPO) and Tetrahydrogestrinon ("The Clear") through the lab. Jones admitted to misleading investigators and being involved in financial fraud. Following her admissions, the US Olympic Committee and the International Olympic Committee demanded that Jones return all medals, money or other prizes won after 2000. Jones was sentenced and served six months of federal detention in Carswell Prison, Fort

Worth, TX. (Douglas, 2014; Kramer, 2013). In 2016 US soccer player Abby Wambach was arrested for driving under the influence of intoxicants soon after her Women's World Cup Championship with the US team. As a result, she lost her endorsement deal with automaker MINI. Wambach's subsequent (2017) detailed her years-long struggle with drug and alcohol addictions. Women's National Basketball Association players Britney Griner and Glory Johnson were both suspended from the WNBA following domestic violence arrests in 2014 at the couple's home. Griner was required to complete anger management classes and domestic violence counseling.

Academic research investigating sports media's coverage of athletes and crime usually focuses on high-profile male athletes, often from a public relations perspective. The major concern seems to be rebuilding the athlete's public reputation or protecting the team from further taint via continued association with the athlete. Under-researched areas relative to athletes and crime concern fans' pre-conceptions, visual imagery and transgressive female athletes. Numerous researchers have advocated addressing these gaps (Abraham & Appiah, 2006; Dixon, 2007; Duncan, 2006; Entman, 1994; Grainger, Newman & Andrews, 2006; Grano, 2010; Greer & Jewkes, 2005; Holt, 2013; Jones, Dickhaus & Davis, 2016; Leonard, 2014; 2006; 2004; Messaris & Abraham, 2001).

In the following chapters of this thesis, several theory areas are reviewed and integrated to produce hypotheses that were investigated with an experiment manipulating the athlete's race and appearance. In Chapter 2, Framing Theory is reviewed. The main tenet of Framing Theory is that how journalists present information, either textually, verbally or visually, activates schemata that influence subsequent processing and judgments. Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Self-categorization Theory (SCT) are used to illustrate how people develop and maintain positive

self-images. SIT describes how people select preferred self-images and bolster self-esteem. A person's group alliances produce preferred ingroups. Competitive identity groups are called outgroups. SCT describes the operation of extreme bias for ingroup members while simultaneously motivating extreme prejudice for outgroup members. Discussion then moves to mass media's ability to produce and strengthen group-related stereotypes. Often, powerful stereotypes are generated for Blacks via crime-related reporting. A frequently observed effect of this pairing is the tendency of White media consumers to associate criminal activity with Black perpetrators. Chapter 2's last section catalogs stereotypes associated with Black and White, male and female professional athletes presented in different visual frames. Chapter 2 concludes with hypotheses predicting how Black and White females will respond to media reports of Black and White female athletes accused of the same transgression while simultaneously controlling for the subject's pre-existing racial identity and perceived femininity.

Chapter 3 details the methods used to conduct this experiment, including independent variable manipulations and dependent variable assessments. In Chapter 4, statistical analysis is conducted to test the proposed hypotheses. A discussion of the research's findings, limitations and future research suggestions are presented in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Framing Theory hypothesizes that editorial decisions regarding how media content is organized and presented, verbally or visually, affect how content is perceived and comprehended (Ryan, 1991). In this section, Framing Theory is discussed, followed by research on verbal and visual framing effects.

Goffman is noted as the primary framing theorist (1993). Specifically, media frames have been defined as “organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world” (Reese, 2001, p.11). Media content frames develop longitudinally via frequent media exposure, peer interactions and personal experiences (Newman, Just & Crigler, 1992). Media content frames provide efficient patterns for information processing (Schuefle, 2004). All cultures contain a collection of widely understood, standard frames. According to Entman (1993), “... culture might be defined as the empirically demonstrable set of common frames exhibited in the discourse and thinking of most people in a social grouping” (p53). Media gatekeepers select frames based upon professional judgment, assumptions about the intended audience and the vehicle’s editorial policies (Brantner, Lobinger & Wetzstein, 2011; Ettema & Peer, 1996; Kim & Telleen, 2017), as well as perceived cultural norms, resources available to cover events and professional socialization (Edelman, 1993; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Scheufele, 1999; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). An important feature of media framing is its ability to go unnoticed despite its influence: “...the impact of framing is crucially dependent on its being taken for granted...” (Messaris &

Abraham, 2001, p215), while simultaneously activating existing schemata that influence how a recipient interprets content (Abraham and Appiah, 2006; Arpan, Baker, Lee, Lorusso & Smith, 2006; Grimes & Dreschel, 1996). Activated schemata can be reinforced or modified by the frame's contents (Brantner, Lobinger & Wetzstein, 2011; Price, Tewksbury & Powers, 1997).

Media framing effects research investigates how competing frames impact recipients. Media framing research is divided into different areas (Entman, 1993; Scheufele & Scheufele, 2010). Communicator perspective framing research examines choices made by originating journalists and other gatekeepers. Public discourse and social movement framing research investigates media texts framing important actors in the public sphere and how those frames influence political action. Media effects framing research examines how recipients process, perceive and comprehend content presented via differing frames. Consider media discussion regarding the American coal mining industry, for example. Several schemata may be activated, such as excessive environmental regulation versus free-market economy ideals (public discourse and social movement frames). Sierra Club publications are likely to include frames advocating environmental concerns, while coal industry publications advocate competitive mining industry frames (communicator perspective). The research reported here concerning transgressive female athletes is based upon the media framing effects research stream.

### **Visual Framing Effects**

The framing paradigm has expanded beyond textual content to include visual content and other symbols (Abraham & Appiah, 2006; Entman, 1993). Media gatekeepers pair visual and verbal content for several reasons (Garcia & Stark, 1991; Gibson, 1991). While visual content adds variety and interest, visual content serves as more than "mere décor" (Zillman, Gibson & Sargeant, 1999, p225). Visual content attracted readers to verbal content (Brantner, Lobinger &

Wetzstein, 2011; Bucher & Schumacher, 2006; Knobloch, Hastall, Zillman & Callison, 2003; Zillman, Knobloch & Yu, 2001; Gibson, 1991). Accompanying visual content increased information acquisition (Gibson & Zillman, 2000; Zillman, Knobloch & Yu, 2001), as well as recall of verbal content (Brosius, Donsbach & Birk, 1996; Brosius, 1993; Graber, 1990; Zillmann, Gibson & Sergeant, 1999).

If verbal framing's influence resides in its ability to subtly affect perceptions without raising the recipient's awareness, then accompanying photographs may frame content even more subtly than text (Abraham & Appiah, 2006; Fahmy & Kim, 2008; Messaris & Abraham, 2001) by activating non-logical, emotional responses (Barry, 1997; Pfau, Haigh, Fifrick, Holl, Tedesco, Cope, Nunnally, Schiess. Preston, Roszkowski & Martin, 2006;), especially empathy for people depicted in photographs (Wanta & Roark, 1993; Wolf & Grotta, 1985). Zillman, Knobloch & Yu (2001) asserted that photos "amount to additional storytelling that can greatly influence and predictably shift the interpretation of the news text proper" (p302). Messaris & Abraham (2001) used the term "indexicality" (p217) to describe a photograph's framing potential. Unlike illustrations or other visual elements (charts, graphs, etc.), photographs suggest credibility and realism unequalled by other visuals; "... photographs come with an implicit guarantee of being closer to the truth than other forms of communication... (and) diminish the likelihood that viewers would question what they see" (p217). The documentary nature of photos suggested a picture-superiority effect when compared to verbal presentation alone (Madigan, 1983; Paivio, Rogers & Smythe, 1968). Readers may be on guard for verbal frames, thereby processing verbal content more skeptically, but the inclusion of realistic, true-to-life photos circumvented these safeguards and reduced counter arguments about accompanying verbal content (Coleman, 2010; Estrada, 1997; Graber, 1990; Kepplinger, 1991).

Visual framing effects research indicated that visual frames function independently of verbal frames, and may exceed verbal content's impact (Brantner, Lobinger & Weitzstein 2011; Pfau et al. 2006). Visual frames can shape problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation (Entman, 1993). Emotional responses to photos may circumvent rational consideration of the text because the photo lured readers to the text's content (Mendelson & Thorson, 2004). Messaris & Abraham (2001) suggested "... visual propositions are more reliant on the viewer's ability to make intuitive sense of implicit meanings on the basis of contextual or other cues" (p219). Therefore, viewers individually interpret photos based upon individual experiences, including interpretations drawn from exposure to prior frames.

Zillman, Gibson & Sargeant (1999) demonstrated visual framing effects. Subjects read news reports regarding the safety of amusement park rides, along with a report about agricultural economics. Subjects were randomly assigned to various treatment conditions, including a control condition (no photos), photos representing one side of the report (threatening or non-threatening photo) or a balanced condition with photos representing both sides of the report. Results indicated that more threatening, one-sided photo presentations influenced immediate and delayed content assessments. Gibson & Zillman (2000) reported visual framing effects in a public health context. Subjects were presented with a fictitious media report concerning a tick-borne disease. Accompanying photos included images of ticks and photos of children of varying ethnicities (ethnically balanced/White and Black children, Black children only, White children only). Single-ethnicity photos resulted in higher estimates concerning the likelihood of that race of children contracting the disease, especially when photos of ticks were paired with the children's photos. Zillman, Knoblach & Yu (2001) reported significantly different results for

information acquisition and time spent reading print media reports containing photos of victims as compared to no-photo or non-victim photo conditions.

In an investigation of the impact of war casualty photos, Pfau et al. (2006) reported that photos with captions undermined war support by triggering strong emotions among readers. Brantner, Lobinger & Wetzstein (2011) held report copy constant while varying photos concerning the contested Gaza Strip. Human-interest photo frames elicited more emotional response and were also rated as more communicative. Yan & Liu (2016) conducted experimental, longitudinal research comparing visual treatments among Chinese media consumers while simultaneously controlling for prior beliefs regarding controversial relationships between Chinese vendors and regulatory officials. Yan & Liu demonstrated immediate and delayed consequences of visual frames, even when controlling for prior beliefs.

### **Social Identity Theory**

Tajfel (1974) and Tajfel & Turner's (1986; Dumont & Louw, 2009) Social Identity Theory (SIT) describes how individuals establish multiple social identities, as well as how individuals maintain and bolster social identities. Tajfel (1974) described social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept that is derived from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (p69). These identities and emotions coalesce to produce positive self-esteem. All social identities have both positive and negative characteristics. Individuals judge their social identities, as well as the social identities of others, in relation to these positive and negative characteristics (Korte, 2007; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Preferred social identity groups are called ingroups, while competing social identity groups are labelled outgroups. Sharing characteristics and identity with preferred ingroups

reduces feelings of alienation and social isolation. Individuals prefer ingroups that make them feel good about themselves, even at the expense of other groups (Brewer, 1979). Social identity is malleable and multiple, and an appropriate social identity can be triggered by social context cues as to which identity is most salient under differing contexts (Brewer, 1979; Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi & Ethier, 1995; Fink, Parker, Brett & Higgins, 2009; Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Shinnar, 2008). When a need to assert social identity is perceived, individuals will select the preferred identity providing the most positive self-concept in that context (Shinnar, 2008). Common social identities include a person's race, sex, occupation, familial relationships, hobbies or other interests (Dickhaus & Kinney, 2014; Turner, 1982).

Selecting and maintaining social identity is a multi-stage process (Dickhaus & Kinney, 2014; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Hornsey, 2008; Scott, 2007). In the categorization stage, individuals identify with preferred ingroups based upon observed similarities between themselves and the preferred ingroup, while simultaneously rejecting differences with competing outgroups (Tsui & Gutek, 1999). During the identification stage, the preferred ingroup identity is distinguished from outgroups, thereby solidifying self-esteem via ingroup membership. The comparison stage bolsters individual self-esteem by contrasting the preferred ingroup's perceived superior characteristics to those of competitive outgroups. Social identity and strong positive self-esteem are established by positive feelings for preferred ingroups along with negative, hostile feelings for maligned outgroups, a trait called ingroup bias effect (Brewer, 1979, Hogg & Abrams, 1999; Negy, Shreve, Jensen & Uddin, 2003; Piliavin, Dovidio, Gaertner & Clark, 1981). Ingroup bias is solidified in the distinctiveness stage. SIT provided the initial basis for investigating positive and negative intergroup relationships, as well as interactions between individual members of competing groups (Hornsey, 2008).

SIT was expanded to include a Self-categorization Theory (SCT) process (Hornsey, 2008; Mastro, 2003; Trepte, 2006; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987). While SIT most accurately describes how individuals establish social identities, SCT more effectively describes intergroup relationships based upon established social identities (Trepte, 2006). SCT hypothesizes that self-categorization occurs “through the accentuation of similarities within groups and differences between groups in comparisons with a prototype member” (Harwood & Roy, 2005, p191; Mastro, 2003; Ortiz & Harwood, 2007). Positive social identity is dependent upon favorable intergroup comparisons (Brown, 2000). The SCT prototype member construct has provided a research basis for stereotyping (Reid, 2012).

### **Race as Primary Social Identity**

Blacks are not a monolithic population; “There is a great deal of diversity and variety with respect to the meaning of being African American” (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton & Smith, 1997, p. 806). However, a person’s racial identity is often a central component of social identity, especially for minority-group members (Elias, Appiah & Gong, 2011; Jaret & Reitzes, 1999; May, 2009; Phinney & Onwughalu, 1996; Martin, 2014; Shinnar, 2008; Sellers et al, 1997). Stryker (1987) considered race-based identity the “master status” identity (Deaux et. al., 1995, p. 280) subordinating all other identities. Deaux et al. (1995) used the term “ascribed identity” to describe groups “you are born into” (p282). Phinney & Onwughalu (1996) suggested that ethnic social identity is composed of race and ethnicity components. The race component is denoted by observable genetic features such as skin tone. The ethnicity component is derived from perceived differences between cultural ingroups. Phinney (2005) later defined ethnic identity “as a self-constructed understanding of oneself in terms of one’s cultural and ethnic background and attitudes and feelings associated with that background” (p13). Increasingly high

levels of minority racial identity and ethnic background correlated with preferences for others within the same racial group (Brewer, 1979; Deaux et al., 1995; Jackson, Sullivan, Harnish & Hodge, 1996; Sellers et al, 1997; Tsui, 1992), enrollment at historically Black colleges and universities and willingness to enroll in Black studies courses (Sellers et al, 1997). Same-race minority group preference has been noted for media characters (Appiah 2001, 2004; Elias, Appiah & Gong, 2011), counseling preferences (Morten & Atkinson, 1983; Parham & Helms, 1981), interpersonal communication behaviors (Hecht, Larkey & Johnson, 1992), role model selection (Karunanayake & Nauta, 2004) and evaluations of celebrities and sports figures (Dietz-Uhler, End, Demakakos, Dickirson, & Grants, 2002; Jones, Dickhaus & Davis, 2017; Knight, Giuliano & Sanchez-Ross, 2001).

Brewer (1991) noted that minority membership results in lowered power and status relative to the racial majority. These conditions produce strong motivations to maintain high levels of racial identity and ethnic self-esteem. Elevated levels of esteem for one's preferred ingroups produced extreme bias for ingroup members. Extreme ingroup bias produced ethnocentric attitudes of strong hatred, resentment or disdain for outgroup members (Harrington, 2003; Verkuyten, 2002). Race-based ingroup preferences were reported for celebrities accused of violent crimes (Knight, Giuliano & Sanchez-Ross, 2001). Similarly, young Black athletes were more accepting of bad behavior from professional Black athletes (Jones, Dickhaus & Davis, 2017).

This research concerning SIT, SCT and the previously reviewed framing research suggests hypotheses regarding evaluations of same-race and different-race athletes.

H1: Subjects reporting high levels of racial identity will suggest a significantly more severe penalty for athletes of another race. White subjects will suggest a significantly more

severe penalty for Black athletes. Black subjects will suggest a significantly more severe penalty for White athletes.

### **Mass Media and Stereotype Development**

Stereotypes are cognitive structures or categories that affect the encoding of information (Dixon, 2007; Graber, 1987; Hamilton & Trolhier, 1986; von Hippel, Sekaquaptewa & Vargas, 1995). Stereotypes include negative behaviors and characteristics applied to all members of negatively perceived outgroups (Curseu, Stoop & Schalk, 2007; Fiske, 1998). Dixon (2007) suggested “cognitive misers” (p179) rely on stereotypes to avoid comparing specific instances of racial minorities (Macrae, Milne & Bodenhausen, 1994) and to reduce uncertainty about how to respond (Tajfel, 1981). Rather than comparing individuals, cognitive misers efficiently processed information by placing all members into a single, stereotyped group (Entman, 1994; Smith, 1998; Iyengar, 1987; Lasorsa & Dai, 2007; Wicks, 1992). Researchers identified stereotyped, race-based prejudices as schemata for interpreting information presented via mass media (Grimes & Dreschel, 1996; Hamilton & Trolhier, 1986). Stereotypes can be consciously or unconsciously activated (Bargh, 1994; Blair, 2001; Devine, 2001; Devine & Monteith, 1999). Once a stereotype is activated, subsequent content will be assessed in terms of the activated stereotype (Grimes & Dreschel, 1996). In the case of race-based stereotypes, all members of a negatively perceived minority outgroup are assumed to embody the stereotype, and even brief media exposures activated negative associations (Dixon, 2007; 2006; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000; Givens & Monahan, 2005; Mendelberg, 1997).

Media are frequently cited as sources of race-based stereotypes (Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Ford, 1997; Fujioka, 1999; Givens & Monahan, 2005; Mastro, 2009; Ramasubramanian, 2007; Tan, Fujioka & Tan, 2000). Browne, Firestone & Mickiewicz (1994) wrote that mass

media produce powerful, pervasive stereotypes “because they extend throughout society, and frequently serve as trend-setters, taste-makers, labelers, and the raw material for daily conversation” (p8). Despite journalists’ efforts to avoid deliberate stereotyping (Korzybski, 1958; Morgan, Pifer & Woods, 2006), frequent, consistent media portrayals link positive and negative behaviors to all members of the race. Frequent stereotype activation reinforces the stereotype, resulting in deeply ingrained associations that can be accessed consciously or unconsciously during subsequent media exposures (Entman, 1994; Banaji, Hardin & Rothman, 1993; Blair, 2001; Wittenbrink, Judd & Park, 2001). Even subjects reporting no racial prejudice responded to media content based on deeply ingrained stereotypes (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Bargh, 1984).

Most framing-based stereotypes research examined the impact of textual (print) or verbal (broadcast) content. However, additional research demonstrated that visual content also activated stereotypical frames (Campbell, 1995; Entman, 1994). These indirect racial cues activated “... symbolic racism (that) allows for subtlety, indirectness, and implication...” (Van Dijk, 1988, p18). These non-textual, nonverbal cues can include visuals depicting stereotypical physical and behavioral features. Research demonstrates that stereotyped responses were activated even in the absence of visual cues (Abraham & Appiah, 2006; Devine, 1989; Cowen, 1991; Dixon, 2007; Johnson, 1997).

News media are often investigated as the major source of negative Black stereotypes. Gilliam & Iyengar (2000) described mass media news content as a “principal window on the world,” that overwhelmingly shows a view “conflating Blackness with criminality, and present(s) the idea that crime is an inherent trait of Blacks” (p560). Other researchers documented stereotypical news media content linked to Blacks (Abraham, 2003; Devine, 1989;

Dixon, 2008; 2007; Dixon & Maddox, 2005; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Entman, 1994; Ford, 1997; Gibbons, Taylor & Phillips, 2005; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000; Gilliam et al, 1996; Gray, 1989; Martindale, 1996; Mastro, 2009; Oliver, 1999; Oliver et al., 2004; Oliver & Fonash, 2002; Ortiz & Harwood, 2013; Peffley, Hurwitz & Sniderman, 1997; Peffley, Shields & Williams, 1996). The presence of stereotypes influenced attitudes about suitable punishments for offenders of different races (Dixon & Linz, 2000; Peffley, Shields & Williams, 1996).

### **Stereotypes of Black Athletes**

Athletic success is often assumed to be race neutral. Merit, acclaim and financial success accrue through direct, skill-based competition with other athletes. Former National Basketball Association league commissioner David Stern said fans respond to superior performances, rather than racial biases (quoted in Wynter, 2002 in Leonard, 2004). Alternatively, Carrington (2001/2002) described the implications of sports events and associated media coverage as far more than frivolous entertainment. Carrington suggested ever-present racial undertones, describing mass media sports coverage as “signifier for wider questions about social identity within racially demarcated societies” (p94). Sports media often present subtle racial cues regarding athletes of different races, most notably “White brains/Black brawn narratives” (Grano, 2010, p256) stressing biological essentialism (Andrews, 1996; Bruce, 1994; Davis, 1990; Denham, Billings & Halone, 2002; Douglas, 2005; Entine, 2001; Long & Hylton, 2002; Sailes, 1993; Simons, 2003; Smith, 1990; Wonsek, 1992). This brains/brawn narrative supported stereotypes that White athletes triumph over Black athletes because hard work (Hoberman, 2000; Shropshire, 1996), intellect and character (Grano, 2010) trump the superior physical advantages of Black athletes. Since Black athletes lack the intellectual ability to defeat White athletes, a

Black athlete's success is ascribed to "natural and primitive physicality" (Grano, p271) harnessed and managed by White coaches.

For whites, character and the body are unified so that the white athletic body signifies proof of character (a triumph of inborn, interior will over bodily limits), while for African American athletes, a body wired with primal drives is essentially conditioned against characterological controls and becomes redeemed for civic life not by force of an independent will, but through a contingent relationship to external disciplinary structures (p256).

The athletic Black body becomes a "fetish object" (Banet-Weiser, 1999, p 403) and a site of difference signifying physical menace and threats to civil order and polite society (Andrews, 1996; Grano, 2010; Kawash, 1997; Leonard, 2006; 2004; Soar, 2001; Wenner, 1995). The Black male body becomes viewed as "... angry, violent... ultimately, as criminal" (Leonard, 2004, p300).

Numerous critics noted associations between the National Basketball Association, hip-hop culture and stereotyped 'Blackness' (Cunningham, 2009; Leonard, 2009). Andrews and Silk (2010) described professional basketball's "ghetto-centric logic" (p1626), that uses "stereotypical signifiers of the urban African American experience... attire, music, hair style... verbal and non-verbal communication" (p1627) as key promotion tactics to attract attendees, broadcast audiences and brand marketers. Grainger, Newman & Andrews (2006) called these efforts the "commodification of Blackness" (p459). Associating urban, criminal street culture with the NBA is assumed to provide White audiences with an impression of "authentic Blackness" (Grainger, Newman & Andrew, 2006, p459). Ultimately, these stereotypes are transferred to the general Black male population (Andrews & Silk, 2010). According to Hoberman (1997), media have

aggregated the “athlete, the gangster rapper, and the criminal into a single Black male persona that the sports industry... made into the predominant image of Black masculinity” (p. xvii).

While Black men generally occupy stereotypically criminal mass media frames, Black women are also stereotyped into narrow representations, such as the compassionate, nurturing mammy, the aggressive, sexually predatory jezebel and the independent, bossy sapphire (Givens & Monahan, 2005; Plous & Neptune, 1997). While female athletes of all races are often scrutinized for their appearance, the Black female athlete is judged against White heteronormative beauty standards stressing European physical features like long, straight hair, light complexion, thin nose and a traditionally feminine physique (Banet-Weiser, 1999; Plous & Neptune, 1997). Venus and Serena Williams were ridiculed for not meeting these appearance standards (Douglas, 2005; Leonard, 2014; Schultz, 2005). Consequently, Black female athletes occupy a status beyond acceptable social standards (McKay & Johnson, 2008). Black female athletes are often portrayed as simultaneously unattractive and hyper-masculine, and are thereby denied both femininity and womanhood (Leonard, 2014). One particularly memorable media example was the controversy surrounding radio personality Don Imus and his remarks concerning the Rutgers University women’s basketball team. Imus and his guests referred to the women’s tattoos while also calling them “rough girls,” “hard-core hos,” “nappy-headed hos,” and “jigaboos.” Imus and guests compared the women’s appearance to those of male basketball players competing for the Toronto Raptors and the Memphis Grizzlies (Leonard, 2014, p225).

The preceding review of framing research, SIT, mass media stereotypes generally and mass media athlete stereotypes specifically suggest the following hypotheses:

H2: Subjects reporting high levels of racial identity will suggest a significantly more severe penalty for athletes of another race when the athlete is presented in a threatening visual

frame. White subjects will suggest a significantly more severe penalty for Black athletes. Black subjects will suggest a significantly more severe penalty for White athletes.

H3: A significant interaction effect will be observed between self-reported racial identity and visual frame. Subjects reporting high levels of racial identity will suggest a significantly more severe penalty for athletes of another race when the athlete is presented in a threatening visual frame. White subjects will suggest a significantly more severe penalty for Black athletes. Black subjects will suggest a significantly more severe penalty for White athletes.

### **The Black Sheep Effect, Ingroup Norms and Depersonalization**

People self-select to identify with social groups because they expect an affirming, positive social identity, therefore the group must formally or informally monitor members to assure that members exhibit expected group norms. These norms are “propositions that prescribe beliefs, perceptions and behaviors of group members” (Marques, Abrams, Paez, & Hogg, 2001, p402). Members flouting ingroup norms are perceived as “negative deviants --- people whose behavior muddies intergroup boundaries because they diverge from the ingroup prototype toward the outgroup prototype” (Hogg, 2004, p67). Norms-transgressing ingroup members are likely to be judged more harshly than a similarly transgressive outgroup member. If positive social group identity is to be maintained and protected, deviant ingroup members must be devalued and discredited, a consequence termed the Black Sheep Effect (BSE), (Marques et al., 2001; Marques, 1990; Marques & Paez, 1994; Marques, Yzerbt, Yzerbt & Leyens, 1988) a form of ingroup favoritism for likable ingroup members while simultaneously derogating and distancing unlikable ingroup members. A personal relationship with the transgressing ingroup member is not required to trigger the BSE (Marques et al., 2001).

Marques et al. (2001) describe two types of norms relating to perceived ingroup membership. The first type, denotative norms, “define group prototypes... framed by criteria that apply to both ingroup and outgroup” (p410). Denotative norms are unlikely to be under individual control, such as race, skin tone, sex, height, etc. Alternatively, prescriptive norms “are mainly ingroup regulatory --- they apply in situations where group members behave in ways that conflict with ingroup expectations” (p411), but don’t impact denotative norms. Because of the fundamental, unchanging nature of denotative properties, social identity derived from them will be especially strong. Norms also offer proscriptive values (Forsyth 1990, Marques et al, 2001) by defining a range of acceptable behaviors for ingroup members. As an example, in the experiment reported by Kinney, Teal and Flamerich (2019) in which White and Black female athletes are arrested for illegal steroid abuse, the relevant denotative norms are race and sex, thereby placing the athletes in larger race-based and female ingroups. Steroid use likely flouts a prescriptive norm for athletes (athletes shouldn’t seek competitive advantage through drug use). Steroid use may also be considered a female-identity, prescriptive-norm violation (females should not use illegal drugs).

One consequence of a valued social identity is self-stereotyping which can be defined as strong allegiance to the group’s prototypical norms. When an ingroup member becomes aware of another ingroup member’s transgression, prescriptive norms defining a prototypical member’s behavior become salient (Miller & Prentice, 1996; Marques at al., 2001). In other words, an ingroup member that highly values the social identity provided by the group will internalize the group’s distinguishing stereotypes. The most highly self-stereotyped members will no longer consider themselves as distinct individuals. Instead, these ingroup members will subsume their individual identity to the group’s collective identity, a process known as depersonalization,

whereby the depersonalized, proscriptive norm's social identity supersedes the denotative norm's social identity (Marques et al., 2001).

The self-stereotyping and depersonalization processes can explain the results of the Kinney, Teal and Flamerich (2019) experiment. They hypothesized that a subject's race would be the dominant, salient identity when subjects were asked to evaluate transgressive female athletes of other races, especially if the athlete's image appeared aggressive and threatening. This hypothesis was supported for White and Black males, as well as Black females. However, White females were significantly more likely to derogate a White female when compared to a similarly transgressive Black female. The highest levels of derogation were reported for the White athlete presented in a non-threatening visual frame. Kinney, Teal and Flamerich suggested that BSE derogation was observed among White females. However, they offered no hypothesis to explain the BSE. They suggested that future research control for a female subject's perceived femininity level. The research proposed here offers an explanatory hypothesis based upon self-stereotyping, depersonalization and perceived femininity.

H4: White female subjects will suggest a significantly more severe penalty for a transgressive White female athlete when compared to a similarly transgressive Black female athlete.

H5: For White female subjects, a significant interaction effect will be observed between self-reported level of feminine identity and visual frame. White female subjects reporting high levels of feminine identity will suggest a significantly more severe penalty for the White female transgressive athlete presented in a non-threatening visual frame.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the details of the research method are described and operationalizations are reported. Subject sampling and group assignment are also described.

### **Research Design**

The research method is a 2 (race: White female athlete/Black female athlete) x 2 (visual frame: athlete with tattoos/athlete without tattoos) experiment. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of the following groups:

- a. White female athlete, no tattoos
- b. White female athlete, with tattoos
- c. Black female athlete, no tattoos
- d. Black female athlete, with tattoos.

The athletes with-tattoos conditions are assumed to be more threatening than the no-tattoos conditions. Previous research revealed that tattoos are perceived as threatening beginning in childhood (Durkin & Houghton, 2000). In the United States, it is estimated that 21 – 29% of the population has at least one tattoo, with 15 – 20% having two or more tattoos (Laumann & Derick, 2016). Women with tattoos are judged significantly more harshly than males. Resenhoef, Villa & Wiseman (2008) reported that subjects considered tattooed women to be less attractive and less intelligent. Tattooed women were also considered less professionally competent (Westerfield, Stafford, Speroni & Daniel, 2012). Discrimination has also been demonstrated against ethnic minorities with tattoos (Miller, McGlashan, Nichols & Eure, 2009). Negative associations for tattooed individuals have been observed even among people with

tattoos themselves (Shannon-Massal, 2016; Timming, 2015; Zestcott, Bean, & Stone, 2017a; Zestcott, Tompkins, Williams, Livesay, & Chan, 2017b). Tattoo stigma has been observed in both college-student samples and non-college student samples (Broussard & Harton, 2017). Sports observers reported that tattoos are often used by Black athletes, especially professional basketball players, as markers of street credibility and urban authenticity. White sports commentators assume the tattoos signify the athlete's rejection of conventional behavior and social norms (Andrews & Silk, 2010; Cunningham, 2009; Greer & Jewkes, 2005; Kornheiser, 2003; Leonard, 2014; 2006; 2004).

To assess the impact of the athlete's race and appearance, text was held constant among treatment conditions. No racial signifiers were included in the text. The simulated media report described the athlete's involvement in a performance-enhancing drug scandal and subsequent arrest. The report also included a mortification statement attributed to the athlete. Mortification involves accepting responsibility and apologizing for the offense, and is best used in a crisis situation when the transgression's circumstances were under the athlete's control (Benoit, 1995). The mock media report looked like a standard screen from *The Bleacher Report*, a leading sports news website. The treatment conditions can be reviewed in Appendix A.

### **Subject Sampling**

Black and White female subjects were nationally recruited via Qualtrics in order to ensure race balance among conditions. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of the four treatment conditions. Each condition contained nearly the same number of Black and White females. When a demographic group reached its quota for the condition, data collection ceased for that demographic. Data collection continued until race balance was achieved across all

conditions. Data were collected locally using the University of Alabama's Qualtrics survey software.

### **Dependent Variables Operationalizations**

The Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS) (Thomas & Speight, 1999) was used to assess all subjects for strength of racial identity following the subject's review of the media report. The scale consisted of eleven statements rated on a five-point scale anchored by strongly disagree/strongly agree. Higher scores indicated increasingly high levels of racial identity. Scholar.google.com indicates the scale has been cited by more than 200 researchers working on similar issues. The RIAS mean score was used as a control variable in subsequent hypothesis tests. The RIAS items can be reviewed in Appendix B.

The subject's perceived level of femininity was assessed with the Femininity Ideology Scale (FIS) (Levant, Richmond, Cook, House & Aupont, 2007). The 45-item scale is divided into five areas assessing perceptions of characteristics stereotypically ascribed to females (stereotypic images and activities, dependence/deference, purity, caretaking, emotionality). Each statement is rated on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The reported Cronbach alpha for the FIS is .93 (Levant et al., 2007). Scholar.google.com reports 100 uses of the FIS by researchers working in similar areas. The FIS items can be reviewed in Appendix B. The FIS mean score was used as a control variable in subsequent hypothesis tests. For the research reported here, the Cronbach alpha of .94 meets conventional research requirements and is consistent with Levant et al's (2007) reported alpha of .93. When the five subscales are considered, Cronbach alpha levels are consistent with previous research: stereotypic images and activities = .93; dependence/deference = .90; purity = .88; caretaking = .81; emotionality = .90).

Following exposure, subjects determined how severely the athlete should be punished. Subjects read statements informing them that WNBA policy requires arrested athletes to be suspended, however there are no details regarding the suspension length. Subjects were instructed to “Imagine that you are the WNBA league commissioner and must recommend a suspension for this athlete. If you were the commissioner, for how many games would you suspend this athlete?” The subject then entered a number from 0 - 34 (a full WNBA regular season is 34 games). The recommended suspension length was treated as a ratio-level variable in subsequent hypothesis tests. Subjects also provided an assessment of how severely they considered the steroid use transgression to be. Each subject completed the following item: “I think steroid use is a severe crime.” Agreement was assessed with a five-point, Likert-type scale (strongly disagree/disagree/neither agree nor disagree/agree/strongly agree). In addition to strength of racial identity, perceived femininity level, perceived severity and recommended suspension length, subjects also reported race (White or Black) and year of birth (used to calculate age in years).

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Via Qualtrics, a non-random sample of 2361 subjects were contacted and offered an opportunity to participate in this experiment. This resulted in 1741 subjects following the link to the experiment. A total of 36 respondents were eliminated at the informed consent stage and attention checks eliminated another 228 subjects. The experiment was completed by 263 subjects. These 263 subjects were randomly assigned to one of four treatment groups. No subjects refused to submit their data after viewing the debriefing screen. Efforts to ensure equal race dispersion among the groups, as well as group size, were successful. The numbers of women, both Black and White, were very closely matched among the four groups. A Pearson chi-square test did not indicate significant race differences between the treatment groups ( $\chi^2 = 1.25$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = .74$ ). Table 1 shows the frequencies for subjects' race among the four treatment groups.

TABLE 1  
Subject Race by Treatment Group

	Black	White	Treatment Total
Treatment Group			
Black no tattoos	32	36	68
Black with tattoos	30	24	54
White no tattoos	37	39	76
White with tattoos	30	35	65
Total	129	134	263

## Independent Variables Tests by Race

Key independent variables were examined by race prior to hypothesis testing to confirm equivalencies among conditions. A significant mean difference was observed for strength of racial identification between Black and White participants (mean White = 2.47 (sd = .57); mean Black = 2.74 (sd = .50);  $t = 4.09$ ,  $p = .000$ , two-tailed), however no significant racial identification differences were observed among treatment groups ( $F = .527$ ,  $p = .19$ ,  $df = 3, 255$ , two-tailed). Perceived steroid transgression severity was not significantly different between races (White mean = 3.86 (sd = .99), Black mean = 3.78 (sd = 1.11);  $t = -.64$ ,  $p = .52$ , two-tailed), nor were significant steroid severity effects observed among groups ( $F = .77$ ,  $p = .51$ ,  $df = 3, 259$ ). Overall, White subjects were significantly older than Black subjects (mean age White = 43.27 (sd = 14.0); mean age Black = 38.03 (sd = 13.53);  $t = -3.08$ ,  $p = .002$ , two-tailed). No significant age differences are noted among the four treatment groups ( $F = 1.28$ ,  $p = .28$ ,  $df = 3, 259$ ). Black subjects were significantly more likely to rate the athlete pictured in the treatments as appearing feminine (mean Black = 2.98 (sd = 1.16); mean White = 2.65 (sd = 1.13);  $t = 2.37$ ,  $p = .02$ , two-tailed). Significant appearance effects were also observed among the four treatment groups, with the Black athlete, with or without tattoos, rated as significantly less feminine than the White athlete in the with-tattoos or without-tattoos conditions ( $F = 11.49$ ;  $p = .000$ ,  $df = 3, 259$ ). All 45 items of the Femininity Ideology Scale (FIS) (Levant, Richmond, Cook, House & Aupont, 2007) were summed and means were compared for Black and White subjects. No significant mean FIS differences were observed between races (mean Black = 2.21 (sd = .61); mean White = 2.12 (sd = .54);  $t = 1.24$ ,  $p = .22$ ,  $df = 233$ , two-tailed) or among the four treatment conditions ( $F = .64$ ,  $p = .59$ ,  $df = 3, 231$ ). The five FIS subscales (emotion, caretaking, purity, dependence, stereotypes) were also checked between races and among treatments. No significant differences were

observed between the races or among the groups. In summary, when only the subject's race is considered, there were no significant differences for most independent variables. However, Black females were significantly more identified with their race than White females and the Black females were significantly younger than the White females.

### **Independent Variables Tests by Presence of Tattoos**

Prior to hypothesis testing, key independent variables were compared in terms of the presence of tattoos. Of the 263 females completing this research, 128 reported having at least one tattoo, while the remaining 132 subjects reported no tattoos. A Pearson chi-square test did not indicate significant differences among the treatment groups ( $\chi^2 = .52$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = .92$ ) regarding the presence of tattoos. An equal number of Black and White females, 66 ( $n = 112$ ), self-reported as having tattoos. No significant mean difference was observed for the number of tattoos between Black and White subjects (mean White = 4.17 ( $sd = 5.39$ ); mean Black = 4.86 ( $sd = 5.86$ );  $t = .71$ ,  $p = .48$ , two-tailed).

No significant mean difference was observed for strength of racial identification between Black and White participants based upon the subject's tattoo status (mean no tattoos = 2.59 ( $sd = .52$ ); mean with tattoos = 2.63 ( $sd = .57$ );  $t = -.49$ ,  $p = .62$ , two-tailed). A significant difference was observed for perceived steroid transgression severity (mean no tattoos = 3.98 ( $sd = 1.00$ ); mean with tattoos = 3.65 ( $sd = 1.08$ );  $t = 2.58$ ,  $p = .01$ , two-tailed). A significant age difference was observed for tattoos. Subjects without tattoos were significantly older than subjects with tattoos (mean no tattoos = 43.95,  $sd = 14.94$ ; mean age with tattoos = 37.84 ( $sd = 12.41$ );  $t = 3.58$ ,  $p = .000$ , two-tailed, equal variances not assumed). No significant difference was observed for the subject's rating of the athlete's feminine appearance (mean without tattoos = 2.84 ( $sd = 1.16$ ); mean with tattoos 2.77 ( $sd = 1.14$ );  $t = .55$ ,  $p = .58$ , two-tailed). All 45 items of the

Femininity Ideology Scale (FIS) (Levant, Richmond, Cook, House & Aupont, 2007) were summed and means were compared for no-tattoos and with-tattoos subjects. No significant mean difference was observed (mean no tattoos = 2.17 (sd = .57); mean with tattoos = 2.14 (sd = .58);  $t = .35$ ,  $p = .73$ ,  $df = 233$ , two-tailed). The five FIS subscales (emotion, caretaking, purity, dependence, stereotypes) were also tested. No significant differences based upon tattoo status were observed for the emotion, caretaking, dependence or stereotypes subscales. However, a significant difference was observed for the purity subscale (mean no tattoos = 2.50 (sd = .95); mean with tattoos = 2.20, (sd = .80);  $t = 2.81$ ,  $p = .005$ ,  $df = 253$ , two-tailed). In summary, when only the subject's tattoo status was considered, there were no significant differences for most independent variables. However, if the subject had tattoos, she was significantly more likely to perceive the steroid transgression as less serious, was significantly younger than the no-tattoos subjects and scored significantly lower on the FIS purity subscale.

### **Dependent Variables Hypothesis Tests**

H1 predicted a significant relationship between the participant's strength of racial identity and recommended punishment (suspension length). White participants in the Black athlete treatment conditions reported a racial identity mean of 2.50 (sd = .52) while suggesting a mean suspension of 16.42 games (sd = 11.54). An inverse, non-significant bivariate correlation was observed. As strength of racial identity increased, the recommended suspension length decreased at a non-significant rate ( $r_p = -.11$ ,  $p = .22$ , one-tailed). Black participants exposed to treatments featuring White athletes reported a racial identity mean of 2.74 (sd = .51) with a recommended suspension of 13.23 games (sd = 9.31). An inverse, non-significant bivariate correlation was observed ( $r_p = -.14$ ,  $p = .12$ , one-tailed). H1 is not supported: For these female, Black and White

participants, self-reported racial identity level exerted no significant influence on how long the cross-race athlete should be suspended.

H2 predicted a significant relationship between a subject's self-reported racial identity and recommended suspension length for a cross-race athlete when the athlete is presented in a threatening visual frame. Black subjects exposed to the white athlete without tattoos reported a mean raceid of 2.68 (sd = .51) while recommending a suspension of 12.10 games (sd = 10.16). There was no significant relationship between the subject's self-reported racial identity and recommended suspension length ( $r_p = -.24$ ,  $p = .08$ , one-tailed). Black subjects exposed to the white athlete with tattoos reported a mean raceid of 2.81 (sd = .50) and recommended a suspension of 14.72 games (sd = 11.64). There was no significant relationship between the subject's self-reported racial identity and recommended suspension length ( $r_p = -.07$ ,  $p = .35$ , one-tailed). White subjects exposed to the Black athlete without tattoos reported a mean raceid of 2.52 (sd = .52) and recommended a mean suspension of 16.94 games (sd = 11.29). There was no significant relationship between the subject's self-reported racial identity and recommended suspension length ( $r_p = -.04$ ,  $p = .41$ , one-tailed). White subjects exposed to the Black athlete with tattoos reported a mean raceid of 2.47 (sd = .52) and recommended a suspension of 15.71 games (sd = 12.10). There was no significant relationship between the subject's self-reported racial identity and recommended suspension length ( $r_p = -.19$ ,  $p = .18$ , one-tailed). H2 is not supported.

H3 predicted a significant interaction effect between the visual portion of the treatment and the participant's strength of racial identity as they relate to recommended suspension length. Results previously reported for H2 identified no significant correlations between raceid and

recommended suspension length based upon visual frames, therefore a test of H3 is unnecessary. Interaction effects cannot be observed in the absence of simple effects.

H4 predicted that White females would suggest a significantly longer mean suspension for the transgressive White athlete (with tattoos) as compared to the transgressive Black athlete (with tattoos). The White females tested here recommended a suspension of 17.10 games (sd = 11.83) for the White athlete with tattoos and a suspension of 15.71 games (sd = 12.10) for the Black athlete with tattoos ( $t = -.44$ ,  $p = .67$ ,  $df = 57$ , two-tailed). H4 was not supported. For these White females, there was no significant difference in recommended suspension between the tattooed athletes.

H5 predicted a significant interaction effect for White female subjects between self-reported level of femininity and visual frame. White females reporting higher levels of femininity were expected to recommend an increasingly longer suspension for the White athlete with tattoos. The White females in this research who viewed the White female with tattoos reported a mean FIS score of 2.21 (sd = .67) and recommended a mean suspension of 16.10 games (sd = 11.93). As a preliminary test of H5, a simple bivariate correlation was calculated between perceived femininity and recommended suspension. No significant bivariate relationship was observed ( $r_p = .04$ ,  $p = .40$ , one-tailed). No test for an interaction was calculated for H5. Absent simple effects, interaction effects are not expected.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

As Hartman (2002) noted, sports are indeed “contested terrain (p94)” fraught with implications for race relations. The research reported here investigated hypothesized racial differences between Black and White participants, while simultaneously investigating effects suggested by Visual Framing Theory, Social Identity Theory, Self-categorization Theory and mass media stereotyping. In this section, each hypothesis test is discussed for its implications. Research limitations are reviewed and future research areas are suggested.

H1 predicting significantly more severe punishments for athletes of the other race, not accounting for athlete appearance, was derived from Social Identity and Self-categorization Theories. The null hypothesis was not rejected: As strength of racial identity increased for Black and White participants, the length of the suggested punishment for athletes of the other race did not increase at a significant rate. The results reported for this research contradict the results reported by Kinney, Teal & Flamerich (2019). In their research, a significant relationship was noted between strength of racial identity and suggested suspension length for an athlete of another race. As reported in the previous chapter, the Black subjects of this research reported a significantly stronger racial identification than White subjects, but this effect was too weak to produce a significant effect upon the suspension variable.

Similarly, for H2, no significant visual framing effect was observed. However, as with the Kinney, Teal & Flamerich (2019) research, the observed results are in the hypothesized direction. White subjects suggested longer suspensions for the Black athlete with tattoos, while Black subjects suggested longer suspensions for the White athlete with tattoos. It is interesting to

note that while mean racial identity scores for Kinney, Teal & Flamerich's Black and White subjects were below the scale's midpoint of 3.0, the mean scores for the subjects of this research are lower than Kinney, Teal & Flamerich. The modest means suggest a weak ingroup bias effect is observed here. Black and White subjects reported low levels of racial identity, but when offered a chance to assess an athlete of another race, both Black and White participants suggested suspensions indicating some level of personal racial identity impacting ingroup bias and outgroup derogation. This result, while non-significant, can be explained by the difference between implicit racism and explicit racism. In this research, subjects read the media report, suggested a suspension length and viewed the athlete's image prior to completing the Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS). The RIAS required subjects to explicitly consider and reveal racial attitudes, including racial animosities. Low mean scores for the RIAS suggest low levels of explicit racism. The suspension length recommendation may be capturing the subject's implicit racism, described as "stereotypical thoughts about outgroups (that) are readily activated at the implicit level even though they are not applied consciously at the explicit level" (Ramasubramanian, 2007, p250). Activating implicit racism "can influence judgments in subtle, subconscious ways, even among persons who believe they are not overtly racist (Ramasubramanian, 2007, p258). When recommending a suspension, Black subjects may have considered another factor unlikely to be considered by White subjects. As minority group members, Black subjects may be more sensitive to judgments based solely on appearance. The Black research subjects may have been previously victimized by appearance-based judgments, or at least be sensitized to potential biases based upon appearance:

In addition to receiving unequal treatment and having distinguishing physical and cultural characteristics, racial minority groups in America also share a sense

of solidarity... The shared experience of oppression, direct or indirect, historical or contemporary, is the tie that binds (Martin, 2014, p4).

H3's interaction effects could not be tested due to a lack of simple effects between the racial identity and suspension length variables.

H4 regarding the subject's femininity attitudes was not investigated by Kinney, Teal & Flamerich (2019) and represents a new independent variable used in this research. As previously reported, no significant relationship was noted between femininity and suspension length for White women viewing the treatment featuring a tattooed White female. It was hypothesized that White females would protect a highly valued White feminine identity by derogating a highly transgressive White female. However, while non-significant, the results are in the hypothesized direction. Research has suggested that ingroup members may protect the value of the ingroup membership by distancing the group from a transgressive member. This distancing response is called the black sheep effect (Brown, Billings, Mastro & Brown-Devlin, 2015; Dietz-Uhler et al., 2002; Fink, Parker, Brett & Higgins, 2002; Greer & Jewkes, 2005; Ortiz & Harwood, 2013; Yzerbyt, Yzerbyt & Leyens, 1988). This effect occurs "when group members derogate the guilty ingroup member and label him/her as 'different' than the rest of the group... (and) no longer consider the black sheep as representative of the group" (Fink, Parker, Brett & Higgins, 2002, p145). As hypothesized, White females viewing the tattooed White female did suggest a longer suspension for the tattooed White athlete when compared to the tattooed Black athlete. It appears that the White athlete's appearance was influential for White participants. However, this effect did not reach a conventional statistically significant level. A lack of significant simple effects negated testing the interaction effects noted for H5.

## **Limitations and Future Research**

Efforts were made to assure gender and race balance among the treatment groups. Additionally, the research subjects were American adults, rather than more frequently examined college-student samples. The sample used in this research is more representative than what might be expected of a convenience sample comprised of only female college students in terms of life experience and exposure to different walks of life. In that regard, this sample can be considered as a typical, conventional cross section of the American public; however, the subjects participating in this experiment do not represent a genuinely random sample. A commercial research firm solicited participants from various databases. Potential participants contacted by the firm self-selected to participate. The research firm was compensated for recruitment efforts, and a portion of that compensation was provided to the subject. This non-random sample raises generalizability concerns. Different results might be observed for a nationally representative random sample. This sample focused solely on females, but it is worth noting that different types of samples could potentially produce different results. For example, an all-male sample might rate the athletes' feminine appearance differently; heavily-involved sports fans might not be put off by tattoos due to frequent exposure to them on high-profile athletes, but may be more offended by the steroid transgression for its impact on competition integrity; young female athletes may respond differently as a result of sports involvement. The sports interests of these participants were not accounted for. Interest in sports, generally, or basketball, specifically, may have influenced these results but are not investigated here.

Future research may dictate applying the same methods and treatments with more varied samples.

This research also involved deception. Participants were told that the research objective was to determine how people respond to media reports concerning athletes. Race was not mentioned as part of the informed consent process. Participants were debriefed as to the research's genuine objective just prior to data submission and offered the opportunity to withdraw from the research and delete their responses. However, no subjects withdrew their participation as a result of the debriefing.

The lack of effects based upon visual appearance (the Visual Framing Theory portion of this research) may be due in part to the visual used as an independent variable. The visual treatments used in this research were genuine photos taken from team rosters. The photos were then altered to add tattoos. These photos were deliberately selected to screen for several important influential variables and are well matched in important areas. The athletes were posed in the same position and wearing the same uniform. Each athlete's photo featured a nondescript facial expression (no smile, frown or other noticeable expression). These photos showed female athletes that appeared fit but not overly muscled. Hair was pulled back from the face and similarly styled in both photos. Textually, the same name, Hannah Moore, was used in each treatment in an effort to remove any prejudice that might be associated with names signaling racial difference. In external validity terms, the photos were selected because of their benign nature. These treatments were deliberately missing overwhelmingly negative visual information that might cue stronger racial biases (mugshots, handcuffed, courtroom images, hairstyles associated with particular races, etc.). Despite the conservative nature of the treatment and non-significant results, the data still trended in the direction hypothesized which suggests that more inflammatory photos could have produced more significant effects. Altering other physical features, such as hair style, musculature or facial expression may have produced different results.

Including the subject's self-reported feminine identity was the biggest innovation of this research (Kinney, Teal & Flamerich did not include the FIS). Their research suggested that the subject's perception of her own femininity may have influenced the results of their study, but its impact was not assessed. Femininity was suggested in that study as an area of future research, which influenced the addition of the FIS to the current study and investigating the FIS as the variable producing the "black sheep" effect. The FIS performance was consistent with previous research in terms of Cronbach alphas for both the full scale and the five subscales. The full FIS was published in 2007 (Levant et al.) with a full accounting for the scale's underlying factor structure and social context, as well as convergent and discriminant validities. A contemporary review of the scale's 45 items does suggest face validity problems that might be more noticeable in 2020. Some of the statements seem especially dated ("A girl should be taught how to catch a husband," "It is expected that a woman expressing irritation or anger must be going through P.M.S.," etc.). While the FIS may have been a valid, reliable scale at the time of its development, it may no longer reflect contemporary values and attitudes regarding feminine behavior. Despite inconclusive results, femininity may still be a viable explanation based upon the observed data trends. A sample of 263 females may not have been large enough to detect a significant femininity effect; however, there is always a possibility that another unobserved independent variable may be more influential than the subject's self-perceived femininity.

Statistical power may have played a role in the findings reported here. Kinney, Flamerich & Teal (2019) reported significant results with some of the same hypotheses investigated here. Their research included 382 subjects evenly distributed among Black and White males and females. Their findings suggested that female subjects be reviewed separately, so the research reported here focused on females. As reported earlier, data trended as hypothesized in terms of

recommended suspension. However, the data did not reach statistically significant levels. The effects hypothesized for this research may be present, but a sample of 263 subjects may not be large enough for the effects to reach statistically significant levels. The data trending as hypothesized supports this. Sample sizes too small to support hypothesized results increase the likelihood of a Type II error (failing to reject the null hypothesis when the null hypothesis is false). In all areas where comparisons are possible, this study's independent variables performed similarly to those of Kinney, Flamerich, & Teal. However, noticeable differences occurred in terms of suspension length between the two studies. Their female subjects suggested a longer suspension (19.6 games) than the female subjects in this study (15.3 games). This sample reported steroid use as more serious (3.81) than Kinney's (3.48), which would suggest a harsher suspension length. However, despite these differences, this sample's suggested mean suspensions were shorter than their suggested mean suspensions.

This research suggests several possibilities for additional research. In this research, a mortification statement (apology) is attributed to the athlete, but mortification is not the only possible strategy. Future research should investigate the impact of other response statements. Also, the transgression used in this research, a steroid drug arrest, could be changed. Other, more extreme interpersonal transgressions could be investigated, including domestic abuse, child abuse or infliction of life-threatening injury. Other sports-related transgressions, such as point shaving, could also be investigated. The athlete's visual image could be made more menacing by including additional cues that signal danger, such as mugshots, showing the athlete in police custody, showing the athlete in court, etc. Perhaps the most obvious future research area involves changing the athlete's sex from female to male. Media stereotypes research reviewed in Chapter 2 noted the prevalence of male images, especially for transgressive athletes. Future

research should compare the same transgressions for male athletes and female athletes to determine if the athlete's sex produces different responses.

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APPENDIX A

Independent Variable Treatments

Race and Visual Frame

## Black no tattoos

The screenshot shows a sports website with a navigation bar at the top containing links for NFL, NBA, World Football, CFB, MLB, MMA, WWE, Tennis, Boxing, More, Trending, Mag, Tickets, Get The App, a search icon, Sign Up, and Login. Below the navigation bar is a 'Home Archives' section with a grid of sports scores. The main content area features the WNBA logo and a photograph of Hannah Moore in a green Seattle Storm jersey with the number 24. To the right of the photo is the article title 'WNBA Star Arrested for Using Illegal Steroids.' and the following text: 'Seattle (AP) – Rising WNBA star Hannah Moore was arrested yesterday after testing positive for steroids, also known as performance enhancing drugs (PEDs). Athletes take PEDs to gain an illegal advantage over competitors. Moore admitted to taking a steroid called “the clear” for two years. The powerful steroid helps athletes recover from intensive workouts, increases muscle mass and allows muscles to regenerate faster. Side effects can include excessive facial hair, acne and high blood pressure. Moore was released on bail and issued a statement apologizing to her fans: “I am deeply sorry for my actions. I represented myself in a truly unacceptable manner and caused great harm to myself and others. I regret my actions and apologize for setting a horrible example.” Moore was ranked among last season’s top 20 WNBA scorers. Moore has won two league titles as a member of the Sonics.' Below the article are social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and a footer with links for About, Advertise, Blog, Contact Us, Careers, and Community Guidelines.

## Black with tattoos

This screenshot is identical to the one above, but the photograph of Hannah Moore in her Seattle Storm jersey (number 24) clearly shows her extensive tattoos on her arms and torso. The article title and text remain the same: 'WNBA Star Arrested for Using Illegal Steroids.' and the details of her arrest and admission to using 'the clear' steroid for two years. The rest of the page layout, including the navigation bar, scores, social media icons, and footer, is identical to the previous image.

## White no tattoos

The screenshot shows a sports website with a navigation bar at the top containing links for NFL, NBA, World Football, CFB, MLB, MMA, WWE, Tennis, Boxing, More, Trending, Mag, Tickets, and Get The App. Below the navigation bar is a 'Home' and 'Archives' section with a grid of sports scores. The main content area features a large image of WNBA star Hannah Moore in a green Seattle Storm jersey with the number 10, holding a basketball. To the right of the image is the article title 'WNBA Star Arrested for Using Illegal Steroids.' and the text: 'Seattle (AP) – Rising WNBA star Hannah Moore was arrested yesterday after testing positive for steroids, also known as performance enhancing drugs (PEDs). Athletes take PEDs to gain an illegal advantage over competitors. Moore admitted to taking a steroid called “the clear” for two years. The powerful steroid helps athletes recover from intensive workouts, increases muscle mass and allows muscles to regenerate faster. Side effects can include excessive facial hair, acne and high blood pressure. Moore was released on bail and issued a statement apologizing to her fans: “I am deeply sorry for my actions. I represented myself in a truly unacceptable manner and caused great harm to myself and others. I regret my actions and apologize for setting a horrible example.” Moore was ranked among last season’s top 20 WNBA scorers. Moore has won two league titles as a member of the Sonics.' Below the article is a social media sharing bar with icons for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and a footer with links for 'About', 'Advertise', 'Blog', 'Contact Us', 'Careers', and 'Community Guidelines'.

## White with tattoos

This screenshot is identical to the one above, but the image of Hannah Moore in her Seattle Storm jersey now shows her with extensive tattoos on her arms and neck. The article title and text remain the same: 'WNBA Star Arrested for Using Illegal Steroids.' and the text: 'Seattle (AP) – Rising WNBA star Hannah Moore was arrested yesterday after testing positive for steroids, also known as performance enhancing drugs (PEDs). Athletes take PEDs to gain an illegal advantage over competitors. Moore admitted to taking a steroid called “the clear” for two years. The powerful steroid helps athletes recover from intensive workouts, increases muscle mass and allows muscles to regenerate faster. Side effects can include excessive facial hair, acne and high blood pressure. Moore was released on bail and issued a statement apologizing to her fans: “I am deeply sorry for my actions. I represented myself in a truly unacceptable manner and caused great harm to myself and others. I regret my actions and apologize for setting a horrible example.” Moore was ranked among last season’s top 20 WNBA scorers. Moore has won two league titles as a member of the Sonics.' The social media sharing bar and footer are also present.

## APPENDIX B

### Dependent Variable Operationalizations

Racial Identification Scale, Femininity Ideology Scale,

Recommended Game Suspension

### Racial Identification Scale

1. A person's race influences how comfortable I feel around them.

Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4		5

2. I believe that Black people are more trustworthy than White people.

Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4		5

3. I believe that White people are more trustworthy than Black people.

Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4		5

4. I believe that people of my race are most trustworthy.

Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4		5

5. The people I respect the most are Black.

Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4		5

6. The people I respect the most are White.

Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4		5

7. I respect people of my own race the most.

Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4		5

8. The most important thing about me is my race.  
Strongly Disagree 1                      2                      3                      4                      Strongly Agree 5

9. A person's race influences how much I trust them.  
Strongly Disagree 1                      2                      3                      4                      Strongly Agree 5

10. A person's race has little to do with whether they are a good person.  
Strongly Disagree 1                      2                      3                      4                      Strongly Agree 5

11. I prefer to socialize with people of my own race.  
Strongly Disagree 1                      2                      3                      4                      Strongly Agree 5

My race is ---.

\_\_\_\_\_ Caucasian

\_\_\_\_\_ African-American/Black

### **Recommended Game Suspension**

You just read a press report about a Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) female athlete and her involvement in a drug scandal.

WNBA regulations require that all arrested athletes must be suspended. The WNBA league commissioner decides how many games the athlete will be suspended for.

Imagine that you are the WNBA league commissioner and must recommend a suspension for this athlete.

The WNBA regular season consists of 34 games.

If you were the commissioner, for how many games would you suspend this athlete? Select the number from the list below.

(drop-down menu)

\_\_\_\_\_ games

## Femininity Ideology Scale

Each item is assessed as follows:

Strongly  
Disagree

Strongly  
agree

\_\_\_1\_\_\_

\_\_\_2\_\_\_

\_\_\_3\_\_\_

\_\_\_4\_\_\_

\_\_\_5\_\_\_

1. It is more appropriate for a female to be a teacher than a principal.
2. When someone's feelings are hurt, a woman should try to make them feel better.
3. A woman should not marry a younger man.
4. A woman should not make more money than her partner.
5. If a woman chooses to have an abortion, she should not feel guilty.
6. Women should have men make decisions for them.
7. An appropriate female occupation is nursing.
8. A woman should not initiate sex.
9. A woman's worth should be measured by the success of her partner.
10. Women should not want to succeed in the business world because men will not want to marry them.
11. A woman should not expect to be sexually satisfied by her partner.
12. A woman should not swear.
13. A woman should not be competitive.
14. A woman should know how people are feeling.
15. A woman should remain a virgin until she is married.
16. A woman should not consider her career as important as a man's.
17. A woman's natural role should be as caregiver to the family.
18. Women should act helpless to attract a man.
19. A woman should wear attractive clothing, shoes, lingerie and bathing suits, even if not comfortable.
20. It is expected that woman who expresses irritation or anger must be going through P.M.S.
21. Women should be gentle.
22. A woman should be dependent on religion and spirituality for guidance.
23. A woman should have a petite body.
24. A woman should be responsible for making and organizing family plans.
25. Women should not read pornographic material.
26. It is not acceptable for a woman to masturbate.
27. A woman should not show anger.
28. Women should have soft voices.
29. Women should have large breasts.
30. A woman should not tell dirty jokes.
31. A girl should be taught how to catch a husband.
32. A woman should not have a baby until she is married.
33. It is expected that women will not think logically.
34. It is expected that women will discuss their feelings with one another.

35. Women should dress conservatively so they do not appear loose.
36. It is expected that women will have a hard time handling stress without getting emotional.
37. It is expected that women in leadership roles will not be taken seriously.
38. A woman should be responsible for teaching family values to her children.
39. It is expected that women will be viewed as overly emotional.
40. It is expected that a single woman is less fulfilled than a married woman.
41. A woman should not be expected to do mechanical things.
42. It is expected that a woman will engage in domestic hobbies such as sewing and decorating.
43. It is unlikely that a pregnant woman would be attractive.
44. It is likely that a woman who gives up custody of her children will not be respected.
45. Girls should not enjoy “tomboy” activities.

APPENDIX C

IRB Approval Documentation

Protocol ID: 19-07-2515  
Principal Investigator: Kinney, Terry  
Department: Advertising & Public Relations  
Protocol Title: Fem Thugs Fem Identity  
Review Type: FULLBOARD  
Approval Date: September 04, 2019

## COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)

### COMPLETION REPORT - PART 1 OF 2 COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS\*

\* NOTE: Scores on this [Requirements Report](#) reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details. See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

- **Name:** Justin Walters (ID: 5215537)
- **Institution Affiliation:** University of Alabama (ID: 1181)
- **Institution Email:** justin.walters@ua.edu;jcwalters@crimson.ua.edu
  
- **Curriculum Group:** Human Research
- **Course Learner Group:** Non-Medical Investigators
- **Stage:** Stage 2 - Refresher Course
- **Description:** Choose this group to satisfy CITI training requirements for Investigators and staff involved primarily in Social/Behavioral Research with human subjects.
  
- **Record ID:** 29576608
- **Completion Date:** 22-Aug-2019
- **Expiration Date:** 21-Aug-2022
- **Minimum Passing:** 70
- **Reported Score\*:** 86

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY	DATE COMPLETED	SCORE
University of Alabama (ID: 12200)	22-Aug-2019	No Quiz
Biomed Refresher 2 – History and Ethical Principles (ID: 511)	22-Aug-2019	2/3 (67%)
Biomed Refresher 2 – Regulations and Process (ID: 512)	22-Aug-2019	2/2 (100%)
Biomed Refresher 2 – Informed Consent (ID: 514)	22-Aug-2019	2/3 (67%)
Biomed Refresher 2 – SBR Methodologies in Biomedical Research (ID: 515)	22-Aug-2019	4/4 (100%)
Biomed Refresher 2 - Populations in Research Requiring Additional Considerations and/or Protections (ID: 519)	22-Aug-2019	1/1 (100%)
Biomed Refresher 2 – Research Involving Children (ID: 521)	22-Aug-2019	2/3 (67%)
Biomed Refresher 2 – Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects (ID: 17545)	22-Aug-2019	5/5 (100%)
Biomed Refresher 2 - Conclusion (ID: 922)	22-Aug-2019	No Quiz

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

Verify at: [www.citiprogram.org/verify/?k85fefb9c-e79f-4ba6-89c5-d12899673d05-29576608](http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?k85fefb9c-e79f-4ba6-89c5-d12899673d05-29576608)

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)

Email: [support@citiprogram.org](mailto:support@citiprogram.org)

Phone: 888-529-5929

Web: <https://www.citiprogram.org>

## COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)

### COMPLETION REPORT - PART 2 OF 2 COURSEWORK TRANSCRIPT\*\*

\*\* NOTE: Scores on this [Transcript Report](#) reflect the most current quiz completions, including quizzes on optional (supplemental) elements of the course. See list below for details. See separate Requirements Report for the reported scores at the time all requirements for the course were met.

- **Name:** Justin Walters (ID: 5215537)
- **Institution Affiliation:** University of Alabama (ID: 1181)
- **Institution Email:** justin.walters@ua.edu;jcwalters@crimson.ua.edu
  
- **Curriculum Group:** Human Research
- **Course Learner Group:** Non-Medical Investigators
- **Stage:** Stage 2 - Refresher Course
- **Description:** Choose this group to satisfy CITI training requirements for Investigators and staff involved primarily in Social/Behavioral Research with human subjects.
  
- **Record ID:** 29576608
- **Report Date:** 30-Apr-2020
- **Current Score\*\*:** 86

REQUIRED, ELECTIVE, AND SUPPLEMENTAL MODULES	MOST RECENT	SCORE
Biomed Refresher 2 – History and Ethical Principles (ID: 511)	22-Aug-2019	2/3 (67%)
Biomed Refresher 2 – Regulations and Process (ID: 512)	22-Aug-2019	2/2 (100%)
Biomed Refresher 2 – Informed Consent (ID: 514)	22-Aug-2019	2/3 (67%)
Biomed Refresher 2 – SBR Methodologies in Biomedical Research (ID: 515)	22-Aug-2019	4/4 (100%)
Biomed Refresher 2 - Populations in Research Requiring Additional Considerations and/or Protections (ID: 519)	22-Aug-2019	1/1 (100%)
Biomed Refresher 2 – Research Involving Children (ID: 521)	22-Aug-2019	2/3 (67%)
Biomed Refresher 2 – Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects (ID: 17545)	22-Aug-2019	5/5 (100%)
Biomed Refresher 2 - Conclusion (ID: 922)	22-Aug-2019	No Quiz
University of Alabama (ID: 12200)	22-Aug-2019	No Quiz

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