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**COMPARING FEMALE ATHLETES AND MODELS IN *SPORTS ILLUSTRATED*
SWIMSUIT ISSUES FROM 1997-2013**

A Thesis in

Media Studies

by

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ABSTRACT

Research has examined the portrayal of female athletes in *Sports Illustrated* (SI) magazine. Much of this research has focused on the sexual objectification of these women. The coverage draws focus away from their athletic abilities and onto their feminine attributes. The present project conducts a content analysis of the photographs in *SI* swimsuit issues from 1997-2013. Photographs were coded for: sport, pose, overall appearance, and setting. Results indicate the depiction of models and athletes used in the *SI* swimsuit issue has changed over time. The portrayal of models and athletes differ very little in the amount of passive and sexual poses. There is concern for the continued ambivalence created by the media, which constructs the idea female athletes must rely on their sexuality and feminine features rather than their athletic ability to gain visibility.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Hands shoot into the air in an undergraduate class in response to the question, “Does anyone know the name of a model in this year’s *Sports Illustrated* (*SI*) swimsuit issue?” A few shout out the names of Kate Upton and Hannah Davis; however, the next question leaves the room silent. Not a single student in the junior and senior level Sports, Media, and Society class could name one of the four female athletes appearing in the 2013 *SI* swimsuit issue. When asking about the women in the *SI* swimsuit issues in other years, it is clear the students know more models in the magazine than athletes. This came as no surprise, since the *SI* swimsuit issue tends to reinforce gender stereotyping by stressing femininity rather than athleticism (Davis, 1997).

Although there has been an increase in females participating in sports over the last 40 years, the media coverage continues to display gender asymmetries (Cooky & Lavoie, 2012; Messner, Duncan, & Cooky, 2003). Gender asymmetries occur when there appears to be a lack of equality in society between men and women. A majority of research examining female athletes in the media focuses on the sexual objectification and stereotyping of female athletes by the media (Fink, 1998; Kane, 2011; King, 2007). Sports media professionals and marketers have used the “sex sells” strategy frequently. This strategy creates a stigma around the appearance of female athletes by making it seem as though their sex appeal is what makes them successful rather than their athletic ability (Kane, 2011).

The quality of media coverage of female athletes has been the focus of research over the past few decades. King (2007) examined *The Times* and the *Daily Mail*’s Olympic coverage from 1948 to 2004 and found female athletes were severely underrepresented. Male

athletes dominated Olympic newspaper coverage. Other studies of television, newspapers, and magazines also acknowledge the underrepresentation of female athletes in the media (Fink, 1998; Hardin, Lynn, & Whiteside, 2005). Over the years, women's sports have tried to build their own media outlets (e.g., *Women's Sport and Fitness*, or *Sports Illustrated for Women*). However, female athletes continue to share media coverage with men in mainstream sports publications. *SI* is at the center of gender and sport research because it covers professional and collegiate sports, as well as features articles on numerous male and female professional athletes (Kite, 2010).

Female athletes and their sports are underrepresented in the media (Fink, 1998). When female athletes do appear in the media, it is in an objectified light (e.g., using the "sex sells" strategy) that plays on aesthetic rather than athletic ability (Cahn, 1993; Duncan, 1990; Trujillo, 1991). Gill (2009) argues sexual objectification has been commodified because the sexuality of an individual can be sold. Popular culture messages can have a variety of meanings and lead viewers to embrace hegemonic ideals through eroticized objectification (Caputi, 1999). Caputi's (1999) research surrounding advertising imagery suggests objectification is a "process whereby a sentient being is dehumanized, reduced to a thing" and someone turned into something shown off (p. 67). Companies like Time Inc., who produce the *SI* swimsuit issue, profit by promoting a specific kind of female sexuality desired by the male population.

Although the athletes occasionally appear in the advertisements, the *SI* swimsuit issue displays them as feature models. The sexuality of the athletes and the models is a multibillion-dollar business for *SI*, but the models do not see any of the profits since they all pose for free (Madden, 2013). Mayer's (2005) research on *Girls Gone Wild* discusses sexual

objectification of women posing for free and explains how visual images can negatively reinforce gender differences.

The *SI* swimsuit issue has created a following through the years by using famous models and athletes. Serena Williams, Lindsey Vonn, Maria Sharapova, and Danica Patrick are not only known for being professional athletes. They share a commonality with the likes of Heidi Klum, Tyra Banks, Cindy Crawford, Elle Macpherson, Brooklyn Decker, and Kate Upton, super models. All of these well-known women have modeled in the *SI* swimsuit issue.

Since its first publication, the *SI* swimsuit issue has evolved. The *SI* swimsuit issue was first released in 1964 as a way to boost readership during the winter months when there were fewer sports to cover (Curtis, 2005). *SI* began using female athletes as models in 1997 (Curtis, 2005). Tennis player Steffi Graf was the first female athlete featured in the *SI* swimsuit issue. U.S. Olympic beach volleyball players Gabrielle Reece and Karri Poppinga were also featured in the 1997 issue. Graf was pictured wearing bikinis in pictures scattered throughout an article. The shots show her posed or in action, with her hair down or up. The U.S. Olympic beach volleyball players appeared in four pictures, but only two photos showed them playing volleyball. The text surrounding these photographs discussed the sex appeal of beach volleyball (Silver, 1997).

The 2013 *SI* swimsuit issue features American surfer Alana Blanchard, Australian hurdler Michelle Jenneke, and Dutch field hockey players Ellen Hoog and Eva de Goede. Each athlete appears wearing a bikini with her hair down and smiling. There is minimal text, and without the field hockey sticks, there is no visual evidence to indicate the sports these athletes play. None of the 2013 athletes are easily recognizable for their athletic

achievements because they have not won Olympic medals, and their sports are rarely televised.

When comparing the athletes shown in the 1997 *SI* swimsuit issue with the 2013 issue, one observes *SI* uses less text, employs more foreign and less successful athletes, and there are fewer action shots/photos. Past research surrounding *SI*'s swimsuit issue has involved textual analysis as well as interviews of consumers and producers of the magazine (Davis, 1997). Davis's (1997) book *The Swimsuit Issue and Sport*, discusses how *SI* supports institutional and individual practices that create and maintain inequality. Davis (1997) employed hegemonic masculinity to argue the dominant masculinity climate *SI* has created negatively impacts women, gays, lesbians, and people of color (Davis, 1997).

Davis (1997) did not examine the differences between the professional models and athletes depicted in the *SI* swimsuit issue. Also, 1997 was the first year *SI* included female athletes in the *SI* swimsuit edition. The depiction of female athletes may have changed since the 1997 study. The present study conducts a content analysis of *SI*'s swimsuit issues from 1997 to 2013. The study analyzes photographs and text to determine whether there are differences in how models and athletes are depicted over time.

By comparing the representation of female athletes and models in the *SI* swimsuit issue, this study analyzes differences of women versus women unlike past research that examines women versus men in the media.

More specifically, this thesis examines the trends and changes in the coverage of the female athletes depicted in the *SI* swimsuit issue to examine the extent to which female athletes are sexually objectified alongside the models. Hargreaves (1990) argues the goal of liberal feminist analysis is to eliminate social impediments keeping women from competing

on the same level as men. Hardin (2012) states, “liberal feminists take the value systems of sports as a given and advocate for women's inclusion within them” (p. 2).

Along with the inclusion of women in sport, women’s sports advocates call for fairness in sports representations (Messner et al., 2003). The media shaped not only views of sport and ideal beauty, but also female athletes’ place in society in regards to their male counterpart (Hundley & Billings, 2010). By internalizing gender identity, female athletes become subject to media influence (Barker, Rutchi & Tinning, 2010). The result of an emerging sexually objectified economy presents itself in the fact most accepted female athletes have beauty and sex appeal, which in the eyes of many compensates for their athletic ability and supports hegemonic masculinity (Cahn, 1994).

The feminist movement informed American women of the role sexism, sexual exploitation, and oppression have on society (Hooks, 1995). While sexism refers to differing treatment of men and women, sexist exploitation and oppression presumes male domination over women (Hooks, 1995). This domination can be achieved from a place of power created by media’s placement of women as a commodity and spectacle (Caputi, 1999). Popular culture has been known to classify objectification as a necessary component of sexual agency (Caputi, 1999). The media has the ability to sexually objectify women by allowing for them to be viewed as subordinate by a dominate male and constructs feminine and masculine subjectivities grounded in gender inequality (Caputi, 1999). There is concern regarding the negative effects of sexism, yet many are not willing to take action in order to change substantive habits and society (Hooks, 1995).

The media provides mixed messages for women, which hinders their ability to break through the “glass screen” (Carilli & Campbell, 2012). Feminist communication theory is

focused on the representation of women in the media and how the media communicates ideologies encompassing women, gender, and feminism (Dow, 2009; Griffin, 2009). The media presents the female audience with powerful women like Oprah, while also popularizing Snooki from *Jersey Shore*, which leaves women constantly questioning their role in society (Carilli & Campbell, 2012). The *SI* swimsuit issue features female athletes as models and takes them from an empowering position as a professional female athlete and places them in a subordinate position for consumption.

A woman's ability to create a social identity can be difficult and complex. Women do not benefit from the deeply patriarchal gender experience the media provides (French, 2012). The media deploys sets of ideals and tactics to skew representations of women avoiding the constraints of patriarchy, which post-feminist scholars argue lead to generalizations about women aiming to appear like other women (Luo, 2012). This is to say women in the media are presented avoiding societal pressures; however, the way they are depicted leaves women aspiring to be viewed as something different.

The current study employs a feminist lens to analyze the ambivalence created when featuring female athletes in the *SI* swimsuit issue. By analyzing the *SI* swimsuit issue through the feminist lens, the study draws on gender and subjectivity to make conclusions surrounding sexism in the magazine.

Chapter 2

Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue

Female athletes' have been displayed in mediums such as television, newspapers, magazines, and advertisements (McDonald, 2005). In magazines, female athletes are discussed in feature stories and posed pictures are more commonly used than the action shots captured for newspapers and seen on television (McDonald, 2005). *Shape*, *Self*, and *Women's Health* are popular magazines for active women that commonly feature female athletes (Capon & Helstein, 2011). In order to gain readership and draw attention, these magazines are filled with athletes that have an ideal female body: young, fit, and toned (McDonald, 2011). One publication not marketed directly at a female audience that includes female athletes is the *SI* swimsuit edition. In the *SI* swimsuit issue, the sexual objectification of female athletes is obvious. Female athletes pose for free and are marketed as feature models. Feminists argue the swimsuit issue dehumanizes women by showing them as a product for male consumption (Bennet, 2002).

The *SI* swimsuit issue did not start by featuring female athletes. In the early years, *SI* included stories pertaining to sportswear, travel, and food along with their well-known sports reporting (Davis, 1997). In 1963, *SI* attempted to expand coverage past sport by featuring a story on the tropics. The story featured a woman swimming in the water in Mexico (Curtis, 2005). The following year, the original swimsuit issue was published, to boost magazine readership and fill the lack of content during the slow transition from football to basketball season (Curtis, 2005). The 1964 issue was considered the true beginning featuring Babette March on the cover, five pages of swimsuit pictures, and an eight-page story on snorkeling (Cohen, 2014).

SI editors knew in order to become profitable and established as a media source for sports news, they needed to make a statement in sports journalism that set them apart from other sports media outlets (MacCambridge, 1997). The magazine was often “irreverent, and unapologetic about the central role of sports in modern society” that allowed it to become a “blueprint for modern American sports journalism, and the quintessential American middle-class magazine of the postwar era” (MacCambridge, 1997, p. 4). Writer Dan Jenkins stated, “The magazine was edited in those days from the standpoint of ‘What we think is important, is what you should think is important, and if you don’t agree with it, that’s your problem”” (as cited in MacCambridge’s, 1997, p. 4).

Earlier *SI* swimsuit issues focused on travel and tourism rather than the exploitation of the women (Davis, 1997). Content and readership changed over the years (Davis, 1997). The criticism from the first *SI* swimsuit issue did not stop the editors from publishing future issues, and *SI* adopted the “sex sells” approach to attract more men with the appearance of the women featured (Kane, 2011). Executive producer of *Project Runway* and former *SI* swimsuit issue cover model, Heidi Klum stated, “You sell the suit, but it’s more about creating a fantasy” (Cohen, 2014, p. 132).

The swimsuit issue is now *SI*’s most profitable issue. According to *Forbes*, the *SI* swimsuit issue brings in more than \$1 billion each year for Time, Inc., while generating seven percent of *SI*’s total revenue (Madden, 2013). The swimsuit issue attracts around 70 million readers or “viewers” each year (Odell, 2012). This readership is made up of white middle class males, but the swimsuit issue has more than 18 million female readers making up almost one third of the total readership (Davis, 1997; Madden, 2013).

The *SI* swimsuit issue had gained continued readership and popularity (Davis, 1997). With its additional marketing strategies and featured content (e.g. body paint, feature models, and athletes), the readership continued to grow and allowed for *SI* to publish the swimsuit issue as a standalone edition in 1997. Everyone can view the “girl next door” swimsuit model long-time editor, Jule Campbell created (Cohen, 2014). Although it is a yearly production, *SI* has created ways to promote the issue year round with the help of modern technology. *SI* now has a smartphone application, where users can view the most recent issues, models, videos, and locations. The application also features a “360 degrees” viewing option that allows the audience to view the models from a variety of angles, which is not possible with the print magazine.

In addition to the mobile application, *SI*'s webpage now features a “Swim Daily” section. By simply clicking on this section, the viewer is presented with photos, videos, style, news, health, and alumni from the swimsuit issue. The page is updated daily with an article featuring a woman from the most recent issue or former models. Readers can follow the messages on Twitter at @SI_Swimsuit. The official account describes the handle “Beauties, Beaches & Bikinis” and has more than 140,000 followers.

The issue comes out once a year; however, *SI* has capitalized on the success of the issue's popularity year round. The models, despite posing for close to free, use their appearance as a resume booster for endorsement deals (Madden, 2013). NBC recently aired the “*Sports Illustrated* Swimsuit 50 Years of Beautiful” two hour special, which was used as a celebratory show for the anniversary of the issue. The special featured numerous models who have appeared in the issue, interviews with photographers, editors, and models, performing artists, and a “best cover” award.

By constructing women as passive, men as active, women as objects, men as subjects, men as lookers, women as the looked-at, men as viewers, and women as receivers; the *SI* swimsuit issue profits from situating men as the consumer and the women as the “to be consumed” (Betterton, 1987; Kite, 2010). Duncan (1993) attributed the issue with offering sexual fantasies and blatant voyeurism in a sports magazine. The *SI* swimsuit issue and a narrow definition of sport allow *SI*'s producers to increase profit by creating a magazine about hegemonic masculinity rather than sports (Davis, 1997). In American society, hegemonic masculinity and sports are so tightly intertwined they have become symbiotic. Since the *SI* swimsuit issue acknowledges it sexualizes women and female athletes for profit, the issue is a proper medium for analysis of the ambivalence surrounding the representation and sexual objectification of female athletes in the media.

Chapter 3

Women in Sport

In order to understand female athletes and why they would agree to pose in the *SI* swimsuit edition, it is important to understand the role of females in sport. Female athletes have been challenging the limits placed on women pertaining to participation in physical activity and female fragility for some time (Messner, 2002). Notions of female fragility date back to the Victorian era. Between 1876 and 1919, the ideal image of womanhood included portrayals of domestic obligations and was used to reinforce American concerns about race, sexuality, and consumerism (Banta, 1987). In the early 1900s, women's athleticism began to attract negative attention and feelings from educators, doctors, and religious leaders. These groups "expressed a fear of a growing 'mannishness' among physically active women" (Messner, 2002, p. 138). As a result, the growth of female athleticism was confined and frowned upon, and men's sports continued to grow. Women with the desire to play sports were subjected to athletic gatherings or playdays that stressed socialization over competition and consisted of friendly games of hockey and netball (Festle, 1996; O'Reilly & Cahn, 2007).

Following the 1920 Olympics, there was a battle between the Amateur Athletic Association (AAU), National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), and the American Olympic Committee about who was responsible for choosing athletes for the future Olympic teams. More importantly, these organizations were fighting over the selection of female athletes. In 1923, the War Department organized the National Amateur Athletic Federation (NAAF) to provide broad-based opportunities for children and young adults that promoted physical fitness for American soldiers and society (Suggs, 2005). With the backing of Mrs.

Lou Henry Hoover, president Hoover's wife, a women's division of the NAAF was created to promote a recreational approach to women's sports. In April 1923, Hoover called upon more than 200 men and women leaders in education, physical education, health education and girls' activities fields in order to form an organization to promote an interest in the appropriate kind of sports and activities for girls and women (Wayman, 2013).

Title IX

Title IX played a crucial role in women gaining equal opportunities in sport. Brake (2010) describes Title IX as a law that means many things to many people; however, it is rarely understood and appreciated. Title IX was developed after the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed to prevent discrimination of religion, race, color, and national origin. This gave renewed energy to the women's movement that had slowed since the 1920s (Brake, 2010). As the movement regained momentum, women began to break free of traditional gender roles and restrictions. At that time, women typically went to school, found a husband, married, and had children. The women's movement opened new doors and created new opportunities for women to deviate from traditional gender roles (Blumenthal, 2005).

The push for gender equality aided in the passing of Title IX in 1972. The law prohibited sex discrimination in educational programs or activities at federally funded institutions (Brake, 2010). In 1975, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) published final regulations, which presented schools with a 1978 compliance (Suggs, 2005). Title IX mandates equal opportunity and funding for women in all federally funded institutions leading to equality and social justice in the U.S. (Hardin, 2012). Nearly all of the federally funded institutions due to lack of effort and initiative were non-compliant in 1978

(Messner, 2002). As a result, the HEW issued a final policy interpretation in 1979 explaining each institution's obligation to provide equal opportunities. It was known as the "3-Prong-Test" (Suggs, 2005). The "3-Prongs" include providing athletic opportunities proportionate to the student enrollment, expanding athletic opportunities for the underrepresented sex, and accommodating interests and abilities of the underrepresented sex (Suggs, 2005). Although the "3-Prongs" were put in place in 1979, there have been multiple court cases through the 1990s to 2000s claiming noncompliance (Suggs, 2005). The "3-Prongs" led to the cutting of certain men's collegiate athletic programs and resulted in mixed views and controversy surrounding the impact of Title IX (Gavora, 2002).

The 1970s and 1980s brought exceptional growth of women's sports. "Much has changed American culture as it affects girls' and women's sports experiences in the more than three and a half decades since Title IX was enacted" (Brake, 2010, p. 62). The Reagan administration slowed equity during the 1980s due to HEW dragging its feet (Messner, 2002). The 1988 Civil Rights Restoration Act extended Title IX coverage to all programs of any educational institution receiving federal assistance (Messner, 2002). The programs were monitored for roster sizes, recruiting budgets, scholarships, and coaches salaries through the 1990s (Suggs, 2005). The push for gender equality in educational programs and athletics led to opportunities for female athletes outside of federally funded institutions as well.

As Title IX aided in increased opportunities for women, a gender division in sports participation began to develop. With teams divided by gender, male and female athletes were channeled into 'gender-appropriate' sports. "Athletes who conform to the gender continuum receive the most positive cultural attention" (Brake, 2010, p. 29).

Masculine sports involved contact and aggression found in basketball and football (Hardin & Greer, 2009; Koivula, 2001). Female athletes were encouraged to participate in noncontact and individual sports like tennis and figure skating (Hardin, Lynn, & Walsdorf, 2005). The “feminine sports” like tennis allowed women to showcase beauty with little or no gender conflict (Koivula, 2001). The gender division of sports thus “works to suppress evidence of a [gender] continuum,” that makes the difference between men and women seem more natural and obvious than it is (Brake, 2010, p. 29). The gender continuum supports sports with no gender binaries restricting participation based on being a man or a woman, based on traditional gender roles (e.g, men wear pants, women wear dresses) (Brake, 2010).

Female Athletes in the Media

Research focuses on the stereotypical image surrounding female athletes and their bodies in sports media. Brake (2010) examined women’s sports coverage for 15 years. She states the media changed how it portrays female athletes, with “the general tenor of reporting from portraying women in demeaning or trivializing ways to respectfully covering them as serious athletes” (Brake, 2010, p. 223). Instead of focusing on their feminine features, coverage has begun acknowledging strengths and accomplishments. However, Brake (2010) acknowledges women’s sports still receive less media coverage. For example, the Women’s National Basketball Games (WNBA) average 413,000 viewers as compared to the 1.46 million viewers of the National Basketball Association (NBA) (Zeigler, 2008). Female athletes may have gained more media exposure, but the quantity and quality has not improved (Kane, 2011).

The Olympic Games are a focus in gendered sports coverage. A 2003 study analyzing 52 hours of NBC’s coverage of the 2002 Winter Olympics concluded men received nearly

twice the amount of coverage as women (Feeney, 2014). Although the amount of female athletes and their medals grew at the 2008 Olympics, male athletes dominated screen time (Feeney, 2014). The women's sports covered during the Beijing Olympics were those closely aligned with "feminine" or "socially acceptable" sports such as tennis or gymnastics (Feeney, 2014).

Research examining the coverage of women's sports finds media symbolically annihilate female athletes (Whiteside & Hardin, 2011). Symbolic annihilation refers to the media's omission of a woman's athletic ability in stories and images. Female athletes are depicted as trivial or inferior to male athletes in sports coverage (Kearney, 2011). Female athletes tend to be sexualized and objectified, unlike their male counterparts (Duncan, 1990; Hilliard, 1984; Kane, 1988). The media also skews the portrayal of female athletes and trivializes their achievements and abilities with stereotypical representations (Lumpkin & Williams, 1991; Messner et al., 2003).

Fink (1998) argues, "the visibility of women is 'all in the hands of the media,'" which leads to the symbolic annihilation of female athletes without recognition from society (p. 37). A certain representation of athletes has become normal to viewers, and although there is increased coverage celebrating athleticism, female athletes' accomplishments are simultaneously undermined (Antunovic & Hardin, 2013). Their athletic accomplishments should be the focus of coverage, but their appearance, sexuality, and feminine attributes usually dominate. According to Hebert and Brooks (2006), the media play a central role in the construction and broadcasting of gender ideologies and socialization. This leads to the misrepresentation of women in the mass media that hinder their ability to view themselves and others without distorted stereotypes and trivialized portrayals (Kilbourne, 1999).

The problematic depiction of female athletes could influence younger generations' perceptions toward women, sport, and gender inequality (Oglesby, 2007). Female athletes are more prevalent in the media when they are fulfilling traditional stereotypical roles and exploiting their feminine features (Greendorfer, 1990). Examples include: playing in skirts and styling their hair. Krane (2001) suggests female athletes need to conform to traditional feminist norms to gain media coverage. Norms include: smiling, inactive posing, wearing their hair down, and donning feminine clothing (Young, 1997).

Sport requires certain physical strength, body mass, and muscularity. These traits are constructed for male athletes and not commonly accepted traits for female athletes (Young, 1997). Maintaining physical fitness is necessary for optimal performance in sport. Female athletes need to keep a toned body for sport but also adhere to the "ideal female body" to obtain media exposure (Krane, 2001). Kolnes (1995) argues maintaining a heterosexual, feminine appearance is a survival strategy for female athletes. Representations of male athletes serve as a basis for conventional perceptions of what is deemed masculine and feminine (Hilliard, 1984). Male athletes play off their strength and masculine qualities. However, female athletes instead play on their sexuality to gain media exposure (Krane, 2001). Female athletes are typically photographed in poses similar to soft-core pornography in the attempt to arouse heterosexual males (Duncan & Sayaovong, 1990; Duncan, 1990).

Coverage of female athletes in the media has changed drastically throughout the past century. As visibility has increased, representation has not. The media reflects ideal femininity, which leads to symbolic annihilation and ambivalence.

Chapter 4

Literature Review

The current study examines the trends and changes in the coverage of the female athletes and models depicted in the *SI* swimsuit issue. It employs a feminist lens, ambivalence, and visual framing.

Framing an Identity Crisis

Over the years, a recurring issue with the rise of women in the media is that the female audience needs to look like and emulate the women featured in the media. Female athletes were portrayed as beauty queens to popularize and commercialize sport in the mid-1900s (Cahn, 1993). To combat the “mannishness” stereotypes, female athletes had to be portrayed as “beauty queens” in order to continue to popularize their sports (Cahn, 1993).

Duncan (1990) examined how photographs have the ability to construct differences between females and males, as well as females and other females, and how these images can leave the viewers believing these differences. Images are typically edited to present a subjective message with a facade of objectivity to create a vivid, real, and memorable depiction of the photographed individual (Duncan, 1990). While male athletes display their muscles, strength, and manliness, a slim figure is stressed for females, and the media emphasizes sex appeal (Harrison & Cantor, 1997).

Female athletes who consume media aspire to be like the women photographed; however, many times it is unrealistic for their athletic performance, body type, and genetic makeup to look like the models. Duncan and Hasbrook (2002) describe these unrealistic depictions of female athletes in the media as ambivalence. Bissell and Duke (2008) observed a link between media exposure promoting a standard of attractiveness and dissatisfaction of

young girls with their bodies. In their analysis of fashion magazines such as *Glamour*, *Vogue*, and *Cosmopolitan*, Sypeck, Gray, and Ahrens (2004) acknowledge the increased value American society has placed on the ideal woman's figure.

Media coverage of female athletes portrayed as the feminine athletic ideal can consist of attractive appearances, thin bodies, and sexual appeal. These depictions are proof of media's attempt at leading focus away from strong, athletic talent to sexual appearances (Billings, Angelini, & Duke, 2010). Serena Williams is a dominant professional tennis player; however, her appearance during competition distracts from her athletic traits. During tennis tournaments, she usually wears flashy jewelry, tight fitting and unique dresses, and has her hair done differently for each match.

Jean Kilbourne is known for researching the media's representation of women and how this influences women's perceptions of themselves as a part of society. Through her documentaries *Deadly Persuasion* and *Killing Us Softly*, Kilbourne (1999) argued mass media's representation of women impact women's relationships, roles, and insecurities, as well as peer pressure that impacts views of masculinity and femininity. Kilbourne says the media negatively influence a woman's perception of herself and society. Her original documentary *Killing Us Softly* (1979) has been adapted four times since it was originally filmed. Each edition focuses on the negative portrayal of women in the advertising industry and the impact it has on all women.

Kilbourne also produced the popular documentary *Miss Representation* (2011) that investigates mainstream media's contribution to the underrepresentation of women in dominant positions. The film features interviews with numerous influential women such as Katie Couric, Gloria Steinem, Condoleezza Rice, as well as teenage girls, who are willing to

share some of their eye-opening experiences relating to the issue at hand. Like much of Kilbourne's work, *Miss Representation* concludes the media is a culprit in society's identity crisis.

The media places women in subordinate positions. Caputi (1999) argues media sexually objectify women by confirming their status as a spectacle and object of possession, whether it is in advertising, fashion, pornography, etc. Women are displayed as objects and not as human beings, which allows for the audience to view them as anything other than a woman. Those who gaze at the sexually objectified women are placed in a power position (Caputi, 1999). This type of media representation is almost uniquely done to women and by normalizing the subjection of women to men, sexual differences are created (MacKinnon, 1989).

Lynn, Hardin, and Walsdorf (2004) focus on sexual differences and visual representations in advertisements in sports and fitness magazines. Lynn et al. (2004) observed the manipulation of photographs for sexual difference. They analyzed the depictions of women as passive in relation to the sport being played, the camera angles, and leadership positions (Lynn et al., 2004). Lynn et al. (2004) stress the need for visual representations that move away from commodity feminism. Such a representation would empower women by acknowledging their athleticism, strength, and accomplishments.

Research has focused on the overall representation in photographs, as well as specific poses. Duncan (1990) employed a typology to examine model poses in advertising. Body stance can be either *passive*: sitting, reclining, or tilting one's body; or *active*: the model is in action or has erect posture (Duncan, 1990). When applied to sport, Duncan (1990) found female athletes and female fashion models were depicted similarly in photographs by

focusing on the body areas accentuating sexuality, such as the chest, butt, and hairstyle, over athleticism through poses.

The current study examines if female athletes will be posed in more nonsexual, active poses when compared to models due to *SI*'s acknowledgement of female athletes being special guest “models” (Kim, Sagas, & Walker, 2011). *SI* swimsuit issue started employing athletes as models in 1997. Kilbourne’s documentary came out in 1999, and Davis’s research has not been extended to determine how or if the *SI* swimsuit issue has altered the depiction of models since 1997. This study questions if *SI* altered its depiction of female athletes over the past 16 years. Female athletes may feel more pressure to exploit their sexuality if *SI* continued to use athletes as models. This study examines if the athletes are portrayed differently than the models as well as examines if *SI* has changed how it depicts athletes and models over the past 16 years. The following is asked:

RQ1: Will the *SI* swimsuit issue photographs depict models differently over time?

Ambivalence

Tuchman focused a significant amount of her research on the representation of women in the media. Tuchman (1978) defines symbolic annihilation as a term used to refer to the exclusion and stereotyping of a social group that results in the “trivialization” and “condemnation” of the group in the media. The treatment of female athletes is very similar. Female athletes are symbolically annihilated by the media through underrepresentation and over emphasis on traditionally feminine characteristics such as beauty and emotion (Rintala & Birrell, 1984). Female athletes play on their feminine features (Greendorfer, 1990). Examples include playing in skirts, styling their hair, or wearing jewelry. Female athletes need to present a body and physical beauty that conforms to traditional feminist norms to

obtain media attention (Krane, 2001). Female athletes play on sexuality to gain media exposure (Krane, 2001). They are typically photographed in poses similar to soft-core pornography in the attempt to arouse heterosexual males (Duncan & Sayaovong, 1990; Duncan, 1990).

Female athletes have fought for their place in athletics and society; however, sports media has not followed suit. It has been suggested media coverage of female athletes has transitioned from symbolic annihilation to ambivalence (Duncan & Hasbrook, 1988; Duncan, 2006). Representations of female athletes continue to emphasize the hierarchy of gender by highlighting athleticism and trivializing accomplishments with negative portrayals (Antunovic & Hardin, 2013). Since Tuchman theorized symbolic annihilation, female athletes have gained coverage and visibility. Antunovic and Hardin (2013) claim ambivalence has allowed for a greater acknowledgement of athleticism while undermining female athletes' accomplishments, which weakens women's empowerment through sport.

Messner, Duncan, and Jensen (1993) referred to this as asymmetrical gender marking, where media refers to women's sporting events as "women's basketball" and "women's championship game," while men's sports are simply "basketball." Studies focusing on intercollegiate athletics revealed women's sports being underrepresented and occupying less prominent placement on the pages of *NCAA News*, as well as female athletes being positioned as active in less than half of cover photos on media guides (Buisse & Embser-Herbert, 2004; Shifflett & Revelle, 1994;). Antunovic and Hardin (2013) state the treatment of male and female athletes is based upon the idea male athletes are the norm and female athletes are less-than. Media representations play upon and construct these differences and make them appear natural (Antunovic & Hardin, 2013). In *SI*, women are commonly shown

in supporting roles for male athletes. Photos of female athletes are limited; especially those in “male” sports (e.g., basketball and soccer), and women are falsely portrayed as sex symbols rather than talented athletes (Bishop, 2003; Fink & Kensicki, 2002).

Another way media stress the femininity of female athletes is through the types of sports gatekeepers decide to cover. For example, media coverage usually focuses on individual sports such as gymnastics, swimming, and golf, which have long been considered “feminine” or “socially acceptable” sports (Feeney, 2014). It is argued mass media discourage women in team sports by labeling them “unfeminine.” By ignoring female athletes taking part in team sports, the media create a model of power in society that favors men (Duncan & Hasbrook, 2002). Individual sports, considered more appropriate for men than women due to demands of strength and endurance (e.g. weight lifting and marathon running), have also been deemed unfeminine (Duncan & Hasbrook, 2002). Masculine, contact sports are sports that require more physical contact, aggression, and are typically played by men (Brake, 2010). Some sports in this category may include soccer and basketball. Feminine, non-contact sports are typically individual, showcase beauty, and require a less muscular appearance to be successful (Brake, 2010). Some sports that fall into this category are golf, tennis, and swimming (Kane, 1988).

This study borrowed from the Hardin et al.’s coding scheme (2005) that coded sport-type as either individual or team activities (such as volleyball or soccer). Sport category can include aesthetic, strength, high-risk, or neutral. Neutral sports can include, but are not limited to golf, soccer, tennis, swimming, and basketball. Aesthetic sports include those such as gymnastics, figure skating, and diving due to their outcomes depending upon judges’

scores. High-risk sports include surfing and rock climbing because of their dangerous nature. Strength sports can include weightlifting and boxing.

Hardin et al. (2002), Bishop (2003), and Fink and Kensicki's (2002) studies of *SI* included *SI for Women* and *SI for Kids*, but did not include the *SI* swimsuit issue. This study examines if the *SI* swimsuit issue varies in its depiction of the type of female athlete used as a model (team or individual) to perpetuate mainstream coverage of female athletes taking part in "gender" appropriate sports. The photos were also analyzed for the presence of sporting equipment to determine if *SI* would pose female athletes with sporting equipment in order to differentiate them from female models. The following questions were asked:

RQ2: a) Does the *SI* swimsuit issue feature more individual or team athletes? b) Are female athletes shown with sporting equipment more often than models?

There has been an expectation female athletes' progress in sport would also be reflected in their representation in mediated sport, however, their athletic ability rarely takes focus over aesthetic appeal (Antunovic & Hardin, 2013). The message seems to be women can play sports but must maintain a certain degree of femininity and abide by societal standards. Antunovic and Hardin (2013) conclude ambivalent representations deliver a look of progress but leave messages of dominance intact due to the unavoidable tensions between normative values and normalized discourses around heterosexual femininity and sport. This is to say female athletes' presence may make it seem like their being treated correctly by the media, however, when examined more closely, female athletes are still placed in a feminine, male dominant portrayal.

Krane (2001) argues athleticism and femininity have become contradictory because females must go out of their way to be athletic and socially accepted. Sports media is a

masculine domain producing coverage by, for, and about men (Bruce, 2013). Women who ignore the cultural hegemony breach cultural norms and are viewed as deviant (Antunovic & Hardin, 2013; Server, 2005). Therefore, in order for female athletes to gain exposure and attention, representations in the media must reinforce cultural norms (Antunovic & Hardin, 2013). A perfect example of this type of media exposure is the use of female athletes posing voluntarily in *SI*'s swimsuit issue as feature models. This research will compare the athletes featured as models in the issue against the models.

Visual Framing

A component in the development of the identity crisis among female athletes is the issue of framing in the media. Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley (1997) define framing as the way a media outlet presents an issue or event. Although some argue media framing is unintentional, Geer and Gray (2004) maintain media frames provide the audience with a specific way to interpret a matter.

Media and outside sources help shape the world in which girls and women feel they have to be attractive in order to be successful (Bissell & Duke, 2007). It has been argued the female appearance has been normalized through repetitive portrayals and images of overemphasized femininity so these depictions are no longer questioned in mainstream society (Kite, 2010). Women see other women in media and unconsciously assume it is what they are supposed to look and act like (Kilbourne, 1999). Media create a disparate body image portraying thin, youthful people as ideal in sexist, demeaning, and harmful ways (Wolf, 2002). Women in sport are 'softened' by de-emphasizing athleticism (Whiteside & Hardin, 2011). The current study examines this by comparing how female athletes are depicted compared to professional models. Past research has examined models in *Glamour*,

Cosmopolitan, and *Vogue*, but this study extends what is known about the *SI* swimsuit issues by comparing females with different occupations.

Consistent with gender inequality, *SI*'s swimsuit issue presents text and images of women and female athletes emphasizing the masculine ideal (Davis, 1997). The *SI* swimsuit issue uses images of hegemonic femininity that promote hegemonic masculinity in society by producing a magazine marketed to a primarily male demographic (Davis, 1997). When women are placed in powerless and non-threatening positions it is a form of hegemonic masculinity (Kuhn, 1985). It can be said the pictures of the female athletes in the *SI* swimsuit issue detracts from their athletic abilities by emphasizing their feminine characteristics as they appear in bathing suits or body paint. In the *SI* swimsuit edition, the models often appear in minimal clothing, lying down, or smiling, which abides by the hegemonic masculine ideal of the powerless woman (Kuhn, 1985).

Because the athletes in the *SI* swimsuit issue possess athletic characteristics, it is necessary to observe how they are posed when compared to the professional models. Duncan's (1990) framework categorizes body stance as being passive (tilting body, sitting, and reclining) or active (erect and action) in photographs. This is similar to Hardin et al.'s (2005) coding of motion in images as passive if clearly posed and appearing motionless or active if the model is clearly in action. From passive and active poses, models can also be depicted sexually or non-sexually. Sexual poses relate to those of soft-core pornography and display models lying down, with no eye contact, tilting their heads, and arching their backs (Duncan & Sayaovong, 1990). Female athletes may adapt more passive, sexual poses in order to fit the feminine ideal. If female athletes are not shown in action or non-sexual poses common to their sport, it indicates they may want to conform.

The annual swimsuit issue promotes the sexual objectification of females and female athletes by displaying models in a sexual light (Daddario, 1992). Kim et al. (2011) argue the *SI* swimsuit issues reveal uneven treatment of female athletes, as well as display stereotypes by employing the sex appeal strategy. *SI* repeatedly places athletes in positions unrelated to sport and overly sexualizes their appearance (Kim et al., 2011). An overlap of female athletes' images with professional models can occur by emphasizing the female athletes' body and trivializing their athletic performances (Kim et al., 2011).

Gender marking, compulsory heterosexuality, and appropriate femininity are a few media effects research identifies through the discourse of sport and masculinity (Wensing & Bruce, 2003). The feminine ideal involves tanned, healthy slenderness, no bulges, and face and body perfection (Kuhn, 1985). This femininity examined in the *SI* swimsuit issue focuses on the emphasis of feminine characteristics such as hair placement, toned bodies, and no flexing of muscles, which has allowed female athletes to avoid assumptions of masculinity (Bordo, 1993; Krane, 2001). Because feminine sexual attractiveness is ideal in female sports coverage, the female athletes in *SI*'s swimsuit issue must display the same amount of femininity as the models. Additionally, if a woman chooses to engage with competitive sport, she runs the risk of being viewed masculine or being deemed less physically capable compared to a man based on her gender (Oglesby, 2007; Server, 2005). This study examines how the *SI* swimsuit issue portrays femininity and asks:

RQ3: Is there a difference between female athletes and models shown in the passive pose?

RQ4: Do female athletes and models differ in the use of sexual poses?

Research has revealed the percentage of media coverage of Olympic sports skyrockets when the sport requires the female athlete to wear a bathing suit (e.g. beach volleyball) (Feeney, 2014). Krane (2001) suggests female athletes need to conform to traditional feminist norms in order to obtain media attention. Young (1997) argues female athletes are portrayed as smiling, in inactive poses, wearing their hair down, and donning feminine clothing. Sport requires certain physical strength, body mass, and muscularity that are socially constructed for male athletes and not commonly accepted traits for female athletes (Young, 1997). Maintaining a heterosexual, feminine appearance has developed into a survival strategy for female athletes (Kolnes, 1995). Female athletes exploit sexuality to gain media exposure (Krane, 2001). It seems the female athletes emphasize their feminine characteristics rather than strength in order to gain media attention. Duncan (1990) found female athletes and female fashion models were depicted similarly in photographs by focusing on the body areas accentuating sexuality, such as the chest, butt, and hairstyle, over athleticism through poses. In order to evaluate the manipulation of models' femininity, the following research question is asked:

RQ5: Do female athletes and models differ in their attire or hair placement?

In the *SI* swimsuit issue, women are photographed in exotic places, beaches, and pools. However, the current study examines the *SI* swimsuit issue for trends of female athletes photographed in studio shots or sporting arenas, as compared to the exotic settings of the professional models. The athletes will be posed in these locations because it will be easier to manipulate and emphasize their femininity. In order to evaluate the manipulation of models' femininity, the following research question is asked:

RQ6: Are there differences in shot location when comparing female athletes and models?

Duncan and Hasbrook (1988) found television coverage emphasized female athletes' personal backgrounds, aesthetic, and sexual appeal rather than their skill and sporting performance. While a female athlete's performance and skill may be referenced, information beyond the competition is emphasized and the focus of most of the coverage. The examination of televised broadcast coverage of men's and women's basketball in the 1992 Olympic Games reinforced the differential treatment through language used while discussing male athletes (Blinde, Sankner, Han, & Greendorfer, 1991; Higgs & Weiller, 1994). Halbert and Latimer (1994) observed the use of first names and "girl" or "lady" when referring to female athletes as compared to the use of full or last names for male athletes. This differential treatment in commentary reinforces a standard of reporting when referencing men and women's sports.

Parks and Robertson (1998) summarized males and females as having different treatment in U.S. culture due to the use of 'sexist language' in the English language. There are three types of sexist language: language that ignores women, language that defines women narrowly, and language that deprecates women (Henley, 1987). According to Bissell and Duke (2007) this type of language can advance stereotypes and gender expectations and inequalities in sports media.

The current study examines the text employed in the *SI* swimsuit issue to determine if sexist language is active when referring to the female athletes depicted. According to Hebert and Brooks (2006), the media play a central role in the construction and broadcasting of gender ideologies and socialization. A study analyzing broadcast coverage of the 2000

Summer Olympics characterized a majority of comments about female athletes as stereotypical (Feeney, 2014). The commentary alluded to female athletes having less skill and commitment to their male counterparts (Feeney, 2014). A female athlete's accomplishments should be the main focus of coverage, but their appearance, sexuality, feminine attributes, family, and hobbies have been known to dominate coverage. Does *SI* discuss the success of the athlete, the athlete's history and accomplishment in the sport, or does the text focus more on the physical characteristics of the athlete by discussing her appearance? The following research question is asked:

RQ7: Does the *SI* text reinforce the use of gender inequality and sexual objectification by referring to female athletes by: a) their first name, b) athletic abilities, and c) sexual connotations?

Chapter 5

Method

This study employed a content analysis to examine the trends in employing female athletes in the *SI* swimsuit issue. *SI* was examined because the magazine has the largest circulation of any sports magazine in North America (Lumpkin & Williams, 1991; Messner & Montez de Oca, 2005). It also provided one of the only magazines to compare female athletes with female models.

Female athletes have been featured in the *SI* swimsuit issue since 1997 as special guest models (Kim et al., 2011). The annual *SI* swimsuit issue features full-page spreads of models and athletes. Although the athletes do not appear as frequently as the models, they receive a special section in the issue. The women are featured in an advertisement-style display that has changed very little through the years (Kim et al., 2011).

The sample for this study uses the *SI* swimsuit issues from 1997 to 2013. Seventeen *SI* swimsuit issues (1997 to 2013) were selected. For convenience purposes, the 1997, 1998, and 1999 issues were accessed online.

The unit of analysis was each photo ($N = 2,080$) presented in the *SI* swimsuit issue that was not included as an advertisement. A written coding instrument was developed. Two coders coded two issues in their entirety to determine intercoder reliability. Coding norms were established during training session. Then, 8.5% percent of the sample ($n = 177$) was randomly selected and coded independently for training. After intercoder reliability was calculated, one coder coded the rest of the sample independently. Scott's Pi was used to assess inter-coder reliability for nominal level data. Intercoder agreement ranged from .87 – 1.0. See Table 1.

Table 1. Intercoder Reliability Results for the Nominal Level Categories Coded

Variable Coded	Percentage Agreement	Scott's Pi
Photo Angle	96.6	.87
Pose	96.0	.82
Head Tilt	98.3	.92
Arched Back	97.7	.87
Touching	100	1.0
Laying Down	100	1.0
No Eye Contact	100	1.0
Smiling	100	1.0
Standing	100	1.0
Mid Action	99.4	.97
Hair Placement	96.0	.87
Fully Covered	99.4	.98
Partially Covered	100	1.0
Body Paint	100	1.0
Flexing Muscles	100	1.0
Sporting Equipment	97.2	.91
Setting	99.4	.99

Variables Coded

Nominal level categories were employed. Each photo was coded for the demographics: sport, pose, overall appearance, shot location, and reference within text.

Demographics

Sport. This study borrowed from the Hardin et al.'s coding scheme (2005) that coded sport-type as either individual (74.7%; such as golf or skiing) or team activities (25.3%; such as volleyball or soccer). Sport category was also coded as aesthetic, strength, high-risk, or neutral. Neutral sports (67.8%) can include, but are not limited to, golf, soccer, tennis, swimming, and basketball. Aesthetic sports (6.2%) include those such as gymnastics, figure skating, and diving due to their outcomes depending upon judges' scores. High-risk (26%) sports include surfing and rock climbing because of their dangerous nature. Strength sports (0%) can include weightlifting and boxing.

Photo and Text Analysis

Pose. Duncan's (1990) framework categorizes body stance as being passive or active in photographs. This is similar to Hardin et al.'s (2005) coding of motion in images as passive or active. A model was coded as *passive* (93.3%; tilting body, sitting, and reclining) if she was clearly posed, appeared motionless, or if the photograph only showed the waist, mid-section, or chest. A model was coded as *active* (6.7%; erect and action) if she was clearly in action.

Pictures falling into the category of *sexual* featured the models: with arched backs (21.7%), looking over their shoulders (24.1%), touching (46.2%), laying down (19.3%), and tilting their heads (36.6%). *Non-sexual* poses featured the models: smiling (38.7%), looking directly at the camera (75.9%), standing (47%), mid action (6.5%), or other (36%) (Duncan, 1990).

This study duplicated Hardin et al.'s (2005) approach to coding photo angle according to the camera's gaze upon the participant. Photo angle was coded as direct (84.4%), looking up (4.2%), or looking down (11%).

Overall appearance. Overall appearance was examined for model's attire [fully covered body parts (82%), partially covered (12.7%), use of body paint (4.2%)], hair placement [up (8.5%), down (71.9%), or other (19.6%)], flexing of muscles (.6%), and presence of sporting equipment (8%).

Setting. The setting of the photograph was also coded. Categories included: a studio (19.2%), beach or pool (48.3%), sport arena (2.4%), travel destination (26.7%), or other (3.4%).

Textual Analysis. In media coverage of sport, gender differences between male and female athletes are typically stressed (Bissell & Duke, 2007). For example, text may refer to female athletes by their first name and male counterparts by their last name.

In this study, the text surrounding the coverage of the female *athletes* was examined for: reference to the athlete by her first name ($M = .37$, $SD = .87$), last name ($M = .61$, $SD = 1.89$), or full name ($M = 1.08$, $SD = .67$); feminine connotations ($n = 25$), and whether the text in *SI* alludes to the female athletes' athletic careers or abilities (51.1%); and whether the female athletes are sexualized through the text (28.3%). This category included text discussing the athlete's beauty, appearance, and sexual appeal. Captions were examined for this coding category. Please see Table 2 for a list of variables coded.

Table 2. Percents for Variables Coded

Variable		Frequency	Valid Percent
Type of Sport			
	Individual	109	74.7
	Team	37	25.3
Category of Sport			
	Neutral	99	67.8
	Aesthetic	9	6.2
	High Risk	38	26.0
Photo Angle			
	Straight	1764	84.8
	Up	87	4.2
	Down	11	11.0
Pose			
	Active	140	6.70
	Passive	1940	93.3
Head Tilt		1318	36.6
Arched Back		451	21.7
Touching		961	46.2
Laying Down		401	19.3
No Eye Contact		502	24.1
Smiling		805	38.7
Standing		977	47.0
Mid Action		136	6.5
Other		749	36.0
Hair Placement			
	Up	176	8.5
	Down	1496	71.9
	Other	408	19.6
Partially Covered		265	12.7
Fully Covered		1726	82.9
Body Paint		88	4.2
Flexing Muscles		13	.6
Sporting Equipment		166	8.0
Setting			
	Studio	399	19.2
	Beach/Pool	1005	48.3
	Sport Arena	50	2.4
	Destination	555	26.7
	Other	71	3.4
Reference Athletic Career		46	51.1
Sexual Reference		26	28.3

Chapter 6

Results

The following research examines the trends and changes in the coverage of the female athletes and models depicted in the *SI* swimsuit issue to see if the coverage sexually objectifies female athletes.

To analyze Research Question 1, Chi Square analyses were conducted; only significant results are reported. Research Question 1 asked if models in the *SI* swimsuit edition would be depicted differently over time. A Chi Square analysis was conducted for the year of publication as well as for pose and appearance. Significant differences were found for the years and **pose**, $\chi^2 (16, N = 1,990) = 109.03, p = .00$; *head tilt*, $\chi^2 (16, N = 1,990) = 145.4, p = .00$; *arched back*, $\chi^2 (16, N = 1,989) = 136.04, p = .00$; *touching*, $\chi^2 (16, N = 1,989) = 34.63, p = .00$; *laying down*, $\chi^2 (16, N = 1,989) = 31.60, p = .01$; *no eye contact*, $\chi^2 (16, N = 1,990) = 155.58, p = .00$; *smiling*, $\chi^2 (16, N = 1,990) = 139.45, p = .00$; *standing*, $\chi^2 (16, N = 1,990) = 37.74, p = .00$; and *mid-action*, $\chi^2 (16, N = 1,990) = 115.08, p = .00$.

In years 1998, 2000, 2001, and 2004 there were no athletes depicted, while some years featured athletes as often as 17 times. Active poses were most common in 1997 and 2006. Some years there were no active poses including 2004. In 2011 there was only one active pose in the entire issue. Please refer to Table 3.

There were also significant difference for **appearance** including: *fully covered*, $\chi^2 (32, N = 1,990) = 78.26, p = .00$; *partially covered*, $\chi^2 (16, N = 1,990) = 43.69, p = .00$; the use of *body paint*, $\chi^2 (16, N = 1,990) = 103.44, p = .00$; and *flexing of muscles*, $\chi^2 (16, N = 1,990) = 67.27, p = .00$. Yes, *SI* varied in the depiction of models from 1997 to 2013 (Table 3).

Models were depicted with their hair up as often as 20 times in the 2010 issue to as low as three times in the 2011 issue. Female athletes were depicted with their hair up a high of seven times in the 1997 issue. Aside from the four issues female athletes were not featured in, they were depicted with their hair up once in five issues.

Models were displayed partially covered 36 times in 2006 and 24 times in 2008. Female athletes were only featured partially covered in the 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011 issues. Female athletes were not featured wearing body paint until 2012 and appeared a total of 14 times in the issue. Although there were issues without body paint, models were featured high of 15 times in the 1999 issue and 17 times in the 2013 issue. No other issue featured models in body paint more than six times. Please see Table 4.

Research Question 2a asked if the *SI* swimsuit edition would show more individual or team athletes. Results show the *SI* swimsuit edition features individual athletes (74.7%) more frequently than team athletes (25.3%). Descriptive statistics indicate the *SI* swimsuit edition focuses more attention on neutral sports (67.8%), followed by high-risk sports (26%), then aesthetic sports (6.2%). There were no strength sports depicted. To answer Research Question 2b, female athletes are rarely depicted with sporting equipment. Only 7.8% of the photos coded showed athletes with their sporting equipment.

To answer Research Question 3, a Chi Square analysis was conducted for model (model or athlete) and pose used in the photo. Results indicate a statistically significant difference, $\chi^2(1, N = 1,990) = 34.09, p = .00$. Models were shown in passive poses more frequently than athletes ($n = 1,736_{\text{model}}$; $n = 117_{\text{athlete}}$).

Research Question 4 asked if there was a difference in the use of sexual poses for the models. There were no significant differences found for: *head tilt*, $\chi^2(1, N = 1,990) = 1.23, p$

= .27; *touching*, $\chi^2(1, N = 1,989) = 1.18, p = .28$; *arched back*, $\chi^2(1, N = 1,989) = .99, p = .32$; or *laying down*, $\chi^2(1, N = 1,989) = .00, p = .97$. The only **significant difference** between the type of model and the use of sexual poses was found for the amount of eye contact; *no eye contact*, $\chi^2(1, N = 482) = 7.02, p = .01$. Models were more likely to tilt their heads ($n = 671_{\text{model}}$; $n = 59_{\text{athlete}}$), they were also more likely to be touching ($n = 868_{\text{model}}$; $n = 61_{\text{athlete}}$), appear arching their back ($n = 412_{\text{model}}$; $n = 27_{\text{athlete}}$), and laying down ($n = 361_{\text{model}}$; $n = 28_{\text{athlete}}$), as well as having less eye contact with the camera ($n = 434_{\text{model}}$; $n = 48_{\text{athlete}}$). Models use more sexual poses than female athletes.

Research Question 5 examined the differences in attire and hair placement. There were significant differences found for hair placement, $\chi^2(2, N = 1,990) = 9.73, p = .01$. Both models and athletes were more likely to wear their hair down ($n = 1,320_{\text{model}}$; $n = 99_{\text{athlete}}$) than they were up ($n = 148_{\text{model}}$; $n = 22_{\text{athlete}}$) or in another hairstyle ($n = 378_{\text{model}}$; $n = 23_{\text{athlete}}$). How the model was shown (fully covered, partially covered, or painted) was also examined. Significant differences were found for the use of body paint, $\chi^2(1, N = 1,990) = 11.62, p = .00$, and depicting the model partially covered, $\chi^2(1, N = 1,990) = 4.34, p = .04$. Models were more likely to be depicted as partially covered and wearing body paint when compared to athletes.

Research Question 6 examined the differences in the setting where the models/athletes were shown. There were significant differences found, $\chi^2(4, N = 1,990) = 33.66, p = .00$. Models were more likely to be posed in a studio ($n = 301_{\text{model}}$; $n = 37_{\text{athlete}}$). They were also more likely to appear near or in a beach or pool ($n = 917_{\text{model}}$; $n = 67_{\text{athlete}}$), in a sporting arena ($n = 35_{\text{model}}$; $n = 11_{\text{athlete}}$), and in a vacation destination ($n = 523_{\text{model}}$; $n = 28_{\text{athlete}}$).

Research Question 7 asked if the *SI* text reinforced the use of gender inequality by referring to female athletes by: a) their first name, b) athletic abilities, and c) sexual connotations. Descriptive statistics show *SI* did not refer to the athletes by their names 74.4% of the time. The writers referred to the athletes' ability or career 51.1% of the time. *SI* used sexual connotations (e.g., beauties or girls) 28.3% of the time.

Table 3. Active and Passive Poses by Model Type and Year

<i>Year</i>	Active Pose	Passive Pose
1997 (<i>n</i> = 106) Model (<i>n</i> = 89) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 17)	19 5	70 12
1998 (<i>n</i> = 68) Model (<i>n</i> = 89) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)	4 --	64 --
1999 (<i>n</i> = 74) Model (<i>n</i> = 72) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 2)	3 1	69 1
2000 (<i>n</i> = 96) Model (<i>n</i> = 94) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 2)	17 0	77 2
2001 (<i>n</i> = 77) Model (<i>n</i> = 77) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)	2 --	75 --
2002 (<i>n</i> = 100) Model (<i>n</i> = 100) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)	11 --	89 --
2003 (<i>n</i> = 116) Model (<i>n</i> = 104) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 12)	5 7	99 5
2004 (<i>n</i> = 106) Model (<i>n</i> = 98) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 8)	0 0	98 8
2005 (<i>n</i> = 87) Model (<i>n</i> = 75) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 12)	2 4	73 8
2006 (<i>n</i> = 143) Model (<i>n</i> = 134) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 9)	19 1	115 8
2007 (<i>n</i> = 147) Model (<i>n</i> = 147) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)	4 --	143 --
2008 (<i>n</i> = 141) Model (<i>n</i> = 135) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 6)	2 0	133 6
2009 (<i>n</i> = 97) Model (<i>n</i> = 84) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 13)	2 4	82 9
2010 (<i>n</i> = 152) Model (<i>n</i> = 129) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 23)	3 2	126 21

<i>Table 3. Active and Passive Poses by Model Type and Year</i>		
2011 (<i>n</i> = 144)		
Model (<i>n</i> = 129)	1	128
Athlete (<i>n</i> = 15)	0	15
2012 (<i>n</i> = 180)		
Model (<i>n</i> = 163)	8	155
Athlete (<i>n</i> = 17)	0	17
2013 (<i>n</i> = 156)		
Model (<i>n</i> = 148)	8	140
Athlete (<i>n</i> = 8)	3	5

Table 4. Hair Placement and Attire

Year	Hair Up	Partially Covered	Fully Covered	Body Paint
1997	Model (<i>n</i> = 9) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)	Model (<i>n</i> = 9) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)	Model (<i>n</i> = 80) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 7)	Model (<i>n</i> = 0) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)
1998	Model (<i>n</i> = 6) Athlete (<i>n</i> = --)	Model (<i>n</i> = 5) Athlete (<i>n</i> = --)	Model (<i>n</i> = 63) Athlete (<i>n</i> = --)	Model (<i>n</i> = 0) Athlete (<i>n</i> = --)
1999	Model (<i>n</i> = 10) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 1)	Model (<i>n</i> = 9) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)	Model (<i>n</i> = 48) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 2)	Model (<i>n</i> = 15) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)
2000	Model (<i>n</i> = 7) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 1)	Model (<i>n</i> = 12) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)	Model (<i>n</i> = 82) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 2)	Model (<i>n</i> = 0) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)
2001	Model (<i>n</i> = 9) Athlete (<i>n</i> = --)	Model (<i>n</i> = 14) Athlete (<i>n</i> = --)	Model (<i>n</i> = 63) Athlete (<i>n</i> = --)	Model (<i>n</i> = 0) Athlete (<i>n</i> = --)
2002	Model (<i>n</i> = 14) Athlete (<i>n</i> = --)	Model (<i>n</i> = 4) Athlete (<i>n</i> = --)	Model (<i>n</i> = 96) Athlete (<i>n</i> = --)	Model (<i>n</i> = 0) Athlete (<i>n</i> = --)
2003	Model (<i>n</i> = 11) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 2)	Model (<i>n</i> = 10) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)	Model (<i>n</i> = 93) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 12)	Model (<i>n</i> = 1) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)
2004	Model (<i>n</i> = 2) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 2)	Model (<i>n</i> = 17) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)	Model (<i>n</i> = 75) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 8)	Model (<i>n</i> = 6) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)
2005	Model (<i>n</i> = 2) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 1)	Model (<i>n</i> = 15) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)	Model (<i>n</i> = 54) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 12)	Model (<i>n</i> = 6) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)
2006	Model (<i>n</i> = 16) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)	Model (<i>n</i> = 36) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)	Model (<i>n</i> = 94) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 9)	Model (<i>n</i> = 4) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)
2007	Model (<i>n</i> = 6) Athlete (<i>n</i> = --)	Model (<i>n</i> = 18) Athlete (<i>n</i> = --)	Model (<i>n</i> = 124) Athlete (<i>n</i> = --)	Model (<i>n</i> = 4) Athlete (<i>n</i> = --)
2008	Model (<i>n</i> = 5) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 1)	Model (<i>n</i> = 24) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 2)	Model (<i>n</i> = 105) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 4)	Model (<i>n</i> = 6) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)
2009	Model (<i>n</i> = 12) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 4)	Model (<i>n</i> = 13) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 1)	Model (<i>n</i> = 66) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 12)	Model (<i>n</i> = 5) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)
2010	Model (<i>n</i> = 20) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)	Model (<i>n</i> = 19) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 5)	Model (<i>n</i> = 109) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 18)	Model (<i>n</i> = 0) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)
2011	Model (<i>n</i> = 3) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 2)	Model (<i>n</i> = 13) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 3)	Model (<i>n</i> = 110) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 12)	Model (<i>n</i> = 6) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)
2012	Model (<i>n</i> = 5) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 1)	Model (<i>n</i> = 15) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)	Model (<i>n</i> = 148) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 3)	Model (<i>n</i> = 0) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 14)
2013	Model (<i>n</i> = 10) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)	Model (<i>n</i> = 21) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)	Model (<i>n</i> = 110) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 8)	Model (<i>n</i> = 17) Athlete (<i>n</i> = 0)

Chapter 7

Discussion

This study examined the trends in the coverage of female athletes and models depicted in the *SI* swimsuit issue. The study employed a feminist lens. The present study conducts a content analysis of *SI*'s swimsuit issues from 1997 to 2013. The study analyzes photographs and text to determine whether there are differences in how models and athletes are depicted over time.

Research Question 1 asked if the *SI* swimsuit issue photographs depict models differently over time. Results indicate the models' pose and overall appearance in the *SI* swimsuit issue did vary over the 16 years studied. The models varied in the pose portrayed including being depicted with arched backs, heads tilted, touching, laying down, having no eye contact with the camera, standing, smiling, and in mid action. Additionally, the models' overall appearance, which includes being pictured fully covered, partially covered, wearing body paint, and flexing muscles, also changed over time.

This presents a conflicting message, one in which Duncan and Hasbrook (1988) discussed as combining positive portrayals of sports women with subtly negative suggestions belittling their achievements. The *SI* swimsuit issue acknowledges their athletic abilities by photographing them as feature models in order to draw readership; however, results show the models/female athlete models' pose and overall appearance have changed through the years. At first glance this may not appear obvious over the span of 16 years, but like Antunovic and Hardin (2013) pointed out, the media is responsible for creating and normalizing these representations of female athletes. This coincides with the suggestion of moving from symbolic annihilation to ambivalence because, as results show, the athletes are present in the

media and acknowledged, while their abilities are trivialized by their portrayal (Antunovic & Hardin, 2013). Although female athletes were not featured in four of the issues, findings show the changes in depiction through the years. Once female athletes were acknowledged as feature models, their pose and appearance was manipulated to play on feminine features and not athletic features. As results show, female athletes were depicted in less active poses and appeared more often with their hair down in recent years than the first few issues they were featured. With the reoccurring feature of female athletes, *SI* has successfully utilized the sex sells strategy and free labor Mayer (2005) discussed in her sexual objectification media research.

Results for Research Question 2 indicate the *SI* swimsuit issue features an individual sport athlete more frequently than a team sport athlete. The findings align with research surrounding media coverage being focused on individual sports such as gymnastics, swimming, and golf over team sports such as basketball and soccer, due to individual sports being more “feminine” and “socially acceptable” (Feeney, 2014). Athletes who conform to the gender continuum receive more attention (Brake, 2010).

Hardin et al. (2005) argue female athletes were encouraged to participate in non-contact and individual sports. These sports can include figure skating and tennis and allow the female athletes to showcase beauty with little gender conflict (Koivula, 2001). Results for Research Question 2 show neutral sports (e.g. volleyball, soccer, and tennis) are depicted more frequently in the *SI* swimsuit issue. High-risk sports such as surfing and snowboarding were also common. Aesthetic sports like gymnastics and diving were rarely depicted and strength sports did not appear at all. This finding contradicts Koivula’s (2001) view that sports coverage focuses on sports that portray beauty.

Although the neutral sports were depicted more frequently, these athletes can still enhance their beauty through uniforms, make up, and hairstyle. Coverage attempts to lead the focus away from strong athletic talent, to sexual appearances (Billings et al., 2010). Tennis players Serena and Venus Williams are examples of individual, neutral sport athletes, who have appeared in the *SI* swimsuit issue and are known for their distracting attire during competition. Additionally, the depiction of high-risk sports may be due to special sections during the Olympics in which the *SI* swimsuit issue chose numerous Winter Olympians to appear in the issue. Surfing is another high-risk sport that depicted, while beach volleyball was also common. These athletes wear bathing suits for a living; so posing for the *SI* swimsuit issue would not portray them differently than watching them play their sport. Media coverage of sport increases when the sport requires an athlete to wear a bathing suit, so the results support Feeney's (2014).

Research Question 2, in addition to the type of sport the athlete plays, asked about the use of sporting equipment as props in photographs. A very small percentage of photographs displayed models with sporting equipment. At times, sporting equipment was present even though the model was not an athlete. It was not uncommon when a model posed with a professional male athlete for sporting equipment to be present. These photographs typically show the male athlete as strong and powerful with a gorgeous girl by his side. Granted, in the current study, this photo would not have coded the male athlete, only the female depicted. Although the woman was not an athlete, this finding supports Hilliard's (1984) argument of male athletes serving as the representation for conventional perceptions of what is deemed masculine and feminine. Male athletes play off their strength, while female athletes play up

sexuality to gain exposure (Krane, 2001). In the current study, female athletes exploited their sexuality to gain attention whereas the male athletes depicted played off their strength.

Results for Research Question 3 indicate models are more likely to be shown in passive poses more frequently than athletes. Overall, models in the issue are most likely to be posed passively, which coincides with Duncan's (1990) findings of female athletes and fashion models being depicted similarly in photographs by accentuating their feminine body parts. The female athletes are used and acknowledged as special guest "models," but results show the passivity and sexuality of their poses do not differ from the normal swimsuit models.

Caputi's (1999) research surrounding sexual objectification and the positioning of women in the media would support these findings. While the women are acknowledged as female athletes, their strength and ability is suppressed to support hegemonic ideals. *SI* features athletes, but at the end of the day the female athletes are sexually objectified by passive depictions. Thus, presenting the female athletes as an item for heterosexual male consumption.

Research Question 4 results indicate athletes only differ from models in sexual poses through eye contact. Aside from displaying more eye contact in photographs and being depicted more sexually in general (e.g. arched backs, tilted heads, touching, and laying down) there were no significant differences in the way sexuality was depicted in the photographs. Results indicate female athletes exploit their sexuality because it is necessary for a female athlete's success (Krane, 2001; Kolnes, 1995). Results support Duncan and Sayaovong's (1990) point regarding female athletes typically being photographed in poses similar to soft-core pornography to arouse heterosexual males. There is almost no difference

in the type of model (athlete or model) shown in passive (tilting body, sitting, and reclining) and sexual poses (tilting head, laying down, and arched back) in the *SI* swimsuit issue, which acknowledges heterosexual males as their target audience.

Although males are the primary target audience for the *SI* swimsuit issue, the number of female readers continues to increase. The more recent 2013 issue featured multiple Target bikini advertisements targeting the female demographic. Therefore, the minimal differences in sexual poses between female athletes and models in the issue is concerning. The *SI* swimsuit issue profits by promoting a specific kind of female sexuality desired by the male population. However, now with shifting in readership demographics, female readers are being subjected to the sexual objectification presented by *SI*. Caputi (1999) would argue the female readers are witnessing the dehumanization of the models as they are turned into a product for male consumption representing ideal femininity. In turn, there is a risk female readers will feel the pressure to conform to sexist appearance and exploitation supporting the male domination suggested by Hooks (1995).

Results for Research Question 5 surrounding hair placement and attire revealed both athletes and models were more likely to be photographed with their hair down more frequently than wearing their hair up. Both models and athletes were more likely to be fully covered in photographs than partially covered and sporting body paint. Models were more likely to be depicted partially covered and wearing body paint when compared to the athletes.

Past research has found female athletes attempting to avoid discrimination based on assumptions of masculinity by presenting a physical beauty that conforms to feminist norms (Krane, 2001). By donning the same attire and hairstyle as the models, the female athletes can blend in and reinforce their feminine traits. This allows for successful framing of the

female athlete (Whiteside & Hardin, 2011). The female athletes strongly resemble the models and are only set apart by the feature section in the magazine, which originated in 1997 (Curtis, 2005). Although the female athletes have been referred to as special guest “models,” results reveal they maintain similar appearances as the regular swimsuit models (Kim et al., 2011). There is also a special section in the magazine that focuses on models wearing body paint. When the *SI* swimsuit issue became a standalone issue in 1997, the increased space created a need for new content, which led to the posing of female athletes, male athletes and their wives, and body paint (Cohen, 2014). Thus, it would be rare for two feature sections (e.g., body paint and female athletes) to duplicate content.

Research Question 6 examined the differences in where the models/athletes were photographed. Models and athletes were most likely to be photographed by the beach or pool. Models were then more likely to be photographed in a vacation destination, in a studio, and a sporting arena. Aside from a beach or pool, female athletes were likely to be photographed in a studio, a vacation destination, or sporting arena. These findings support Kim et al.’s (2011) findings that *SI* places athletes in positions unrelated to sport and overly sexualizes their appearance. By photographing female athletes in passive, sexual poses by a beach or pool and in a studio, the *SI* swimsuit issue is better able to manipulate the athletes’ sexuality.

Finally, Research Question 7 was answered in three parts all focused around the *SI* swimsuit issue’s use of text to reinforce gender inequality. Descriptive statistics revealed a majority of the time female athletes appeared in the issue they were not referred to by their names. This indicates the female athlete was named once in the first picture she appeared and not named again, or the female athlete was mentioned in a brief write up and her name did

not appear with every picture of her. Lack of female athletes' names throughout the issue coincides with Higgs and Weiller's (1994) findings, which revealed language trends in coverage supporting differential treatment of gender. Reporting standards are reinforced when male athletes are referred to by their full or last names and female athletes are referred to by first name or not at all, which is what the results of this study suggest (Halbert & Latimer, 1994). On the other hand, if the female athletes names are not present, that can be communicate their unimportance and inferiority to men (Whiteside & Hardin, 2011).

As for the second and third parts of Research Question 7, the *SI* swimsuit issue referred to the athletes' athletic careers just over half of the time and used sexual connotations more than a quarter of the time. These two findings reinforce Antunovic and Hardin's (2013) statements regarding ambivalence. *SI* acknowledges sexualizing women for profit and targeting a certain demographic, so the fact female athletes appear as feature models with their athletic careers referenced over half the time they appear in photographs strengthens the argument of ambivalence in sports media. Bissell and Duke (2007) have long claimed sex to be a common tool for marketing and promoting female athletes. By referencing the athletes' careers just over half the time, creates an ambivalent representation that delivers a look of progress by acknowledging the athletic success, but leaves the audience focused on the athlete's overall appearance of femininity and sexuality (Antunovic & Hardin, 2013).

The message of ambivalence is also true when discussing the presence of sexual connotations. Although results were rather low at just of a quarter of the time, sexual connotations were still present in the text surrounding female athletes. "Goddess," "beach-babe," "muse," and "Wonder Woman" were just a few of the sexual references made when

describing certain female athletes in the issue. “Beauties,” “dolls,” and “girls” were also used, which are similar terms Duncan and Hasbrook (1988) found in their research on sports media coverage used to remind audiences of gender inequalities when covering female athletes.

Limitations

This study had limitations. The primary limitation for this sample is the lack of coders for the content analysis. Although intercoder reliability was high, this research would have ideally had multiple coders for all sixteen issues of the magazine. Multiple coders would have allowed for the researcher not to be involved with the coding. Usually individuals who know the research questions being asked are not involved in coding.

Another limitation of this study is that male athletes were not included in the coding of the *SI* swimsuit issue photographs. Comparing the depiction of male athletes with female athletes in the issue could have been beneficial in constructing gender differences in the sexualization of athletes. Analysis of the male athletes in the swimsuit issue would have truly allowed this research to make conclusions of women compared to women and to make conclusions of women compared to men. However, this study is only able to compare female athletes and models to make assertions to the differences of women and women in the media.

Advertisements were not coded. Female athletes were often used in advertisements, which could have related to the “sex sells” motto *SI* has developed. Advertising has also been a key area of sexual objectification research and is known for placing women in demeaning positions to sell a product. Therefore, the inclusion of advertisements in the swimsuit issue in this analysis would reinforce conclusions and increase the amount of photographs analyzed. Additionally, analyzing advertisements through the 16 issues would have been valuable to

notice trends as the target demographic has shifted from middle-class men to men and women.

Future Research

Future research can continue along the same path as the *SI* swimsuit issue continues to be published year after year. The 2014 issue celebrates 50 years of the *SI* swimsuit issue. There has been considerable hype around celebrating the 50 years with a two-hour special award show on NBC, television interviews, magazine articles, and a reunion feature within the issue. One of the most discussed topics in the *SI* swimsuit issue's success has been surrounding the contributions of long time editor, Jule Campbell and Cheryl Tiegs sporting a see-through bathing suit in the 1978 issue. Campbell and the Tiegs photograph have been credited with changing the issue forever (Cohen, 2014). The *SI* swimsuit issue received criticism and cancellations in its early years and after the 1978 issue; however, today it is one of the most discussed photographs in the 50-year history of the publication (Cohen, 2014). Discussing and comparing the scrutiny and criticism the *SI* swimsuit issue received in its early years with the publicity and recognition the media and magazine have created over the past few months could be interesting research.

Future research can also consider reaching out to female athletes through interviews to gather their views on the portrayal of female athletes in the issue. Questions could also investigate whether or not they would pose for the issue if they were given the opportunity and what they think that would say about them as a female athlete and woman. By conducting such interviews, researchers could gather a better sense of the ambivalence created surrounding female athletes in the media and the overall implications the *SI* swimsuit issue has on young women.

Further research could compare the ratio of sexual references used when covering the models with the references used when covering the female athletes in the issue. Additionally, the write-ups female athletes do receive in the issue could be analyzed for extra information that can be used to reinforce stereotypical roles that play on feminine features as discussed by Greendorfer (1990). These could include references to hobbies, husbands, family, and their feelings on posing for the issue.

Conclusion

Results show changes in sexual objectification over time, as well as similarities in the depiction of female athletes and models. Ambivalence in the media has facilitated the success of the *SI* swimsuit issue's use of female athletes as models. Due to lack of success and positive attention to female sports in the United States, female athletes have come to rely this type of media portrayal to gain attention. Though it may be a stretch to demand these female athletes cease to pose in such a light or for *SI* to stop featuring them, the way *SI* covers the models could be altered. At the end of the day *SI* is to blame for the sexual objectification of the female athletes, which Hooks (1995) would argue has continued due to the popularity and profitability of the issue.

The relationship created between the *SI* swimsuit issue and female athletes has developed into a "you help me, I'll help you" relationship. The female athletes pose for free and gain media exposure for themselves and their sports, while *SI* profits. If *SI* continues to feature female athletes, it would be ideal to adapt their depiction in order to minimize the amount of sexual objectification and avoid increased ambivalence. Female athletes can continue to pose similarly to the models in the issue, however their athletic accomplishments should be acknowledged more. If the "Rookies" of each issue are featured with a bio write-

up, female athletes should also receive a write-up that discusses their athletic abilities and other facts. It would also be ideal to feature an action photograph of each female athlete competing in her respective sport.

Although results reveal the depiction of the models in the *SI* swimsuit issue have changed since 1997, there continue to be strong similarities in the portrayal of the models and athletes within the issue. Time Inc. and *SI* continue to profit from a single issue that purposely sexually objectifies women for its readership. However, fingers may be pointed in the wrong direction. By comparing the sexual objectification of female athletes with models in the swimsuit issue, conclusions can be made surrounding the differences in depictions of women in the media. The media normalized the depiction of women, but if the women and female athletes deny the opportunity to exploit their femininity and beauty, progress could be made. The fact female athletes pose in such a misrepresented way to gain a majority of their media exposure is not right and can reinforce the media's ability to lead viewers to embrace hegemonic ideals through eroticized objectification (Caputi, 1999). Without challenging the long-standing gender norms, ambivalence will be the best option for female athletes' place in the media. Change cannot happen overnight, but as more people are made aware of the misrepresentation of female athletes in the media, shifts in gender expectations in sport can begin to appear.

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Appendix A

Code Sheet

Overall Appearance:
Hair Placement: 1 = Up 2 = Down 3 = Other
Fully Covered Body Parts: (1) No (2) Yes
Partially Covered Body Parts: (1) No (2) Yes
Body Paint: (1) No (2) Yes
Flexing of Muscles: (1) No (2) Yes
Sporting Equipment: (1) No (2) Yes
Setting: 1) Studio 2) Beach/Pool 3) Sport Arena
 4) Travel Destination 5) Other_____

Text:
Name and Number of Times:
 1) First _____
 2) Last _____
 3) Full Name _____

Feminine Connotations: _____

Reference to athletic career or ability: (1) No (2) Yes
Sexual References: (1) No (2) Yes

Year:
 1) 1997 2) 1998 3) 1999 4) 2000 5) 2001
 6) 2002 7) 2003 8) 2004 9) 2005 10) 2006
 11) 2007 12) 2008 13) 2009 14) 2010
 15) 2011 16) 2012 17) 2013
Model or Athlete: 1 = Model 2 = Athlete 3 = Feature
Number of Pictures on Page: _____
Number of This Picture: _____
Type of Sport: 1 = Individual 2 = Team

Category of Sport:
 1 = Neutral 2 = Aesthetic 3 = High Risk 4 = Strength
Specific Sport: _____
Photo Angle: 1 = Straight 2 = Up 3 = Down

Pose: 1 = Active 2 = Passive
 1) Head tilt (1) No (2) Yes
 2) Arched back (1) No (2) Yes
 3) Touching oneself (1) No (2) Yes
 4) Laying down (1) No (2) Yes
 5) No eye contact/looking down (1) No (2) Yes
 6) Smiling (1) No (2) Yes
 7) Standing (1) No (2) Yes
 8) Mid action (1) No (2) Yes
 9) Other _____ (1) No (2) Yes