

How the Media Frames Pregnant Female Athletes

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Introduction

The purpose of this research is to examine how female athletes are framed in the media regarding both pregnancy and motherhood.

Methodology-

- Limited case study approach, analyzing a purposive sample of four female athletes through close readings of news stories and by examining feature articles online from a three-year time span
- Analyzed each article to look for the overall frame of the print piece, how the athlete was mentioned in the text and the types of frames
- Athletes: Serena Williams, Candace Parker, Joy Fawcett, and Alysia Montaño
- Outlets: The New York Times, Associated Press, Sports Illustrated, ESPN, ESPNW & Specialty sports outlets

Research Questions

- 1. What are the common themes/frames in the media when referring to pregnant female athletes?
- 2. Are there differences in the framing of these athletes based on the type of publication?
- 3. Regarding race, how are pregnant black female athletes framed?

Results

The Common Frames included:

- Trailblazer
 - Feminist, woman as the leader
- Competitive athlete frame
- Reality frame
- Superwoman who can do anything

Race:

- Articles used a reality frame of the pregnancy/post pregnancy experience including complications and injuries post pregnancy when referring to the coverage of the black athletes I analyzed
 - Black women are more likely to have pregnancy related complications

Team vs. Individual:

- Team athletes are depended on more
- Letting the team down type of frame

- Future Directions -

- There is still a fight for sex equality in sports and the media should continue to fight for pregnant female athletes and their representation
- Possibility to look at a larger span of time.
 - Including more than a three-year time frame would provide of broader perspective and possibly more frames
- Include female athletes who have female partners to see what frames arise

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