Perpetuating Problems or Powerful Messaging?: A Content Analysis Media Coverage and Representation of Female Collegiate Athletes NIL Deals

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Abstract

Most recently the New York Times released an article about National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) gymnast Olivia Dunne from Louisiana State University where remarks were made about her aesthetic, appearance, and focus on oversexualization regarding her status as one of the highest earning athletes in the new era of Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL). The media has had a long-standing issue with providing minimal coverage and representation of women's athletics (Cooky et al., 2013) and many times when coverage is received it is through an oversexualized lens focused on Cisgender, White and feminine women (Cooky, 2022). However, in the era of NIL, women have become some of the highest paid and endorsed athletes due to their online presence and followings (Chen, 2021), lending some experts and scholars to believe this could be an area where women can combat long-standing equity issues. Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore the ways in which sport media and news outlets cover and represent collegiate female athletes who receive endorsement/NIL contracts since the passing of NCAA legislation in July 2021. A qualitative content analysis will be conducted harvesting sport media articles related to female collegiate athletes NIL deals using a critical feminist lens to understand the ways in which coverage either challenges or reinforces traditional feminist norms.