

AM I GRACEFUL? THE EFFECTS OF SUBTLE STEREOTYPE ON A PERFORMED SOCCER DRIBBLING TASK



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ABSTRACT

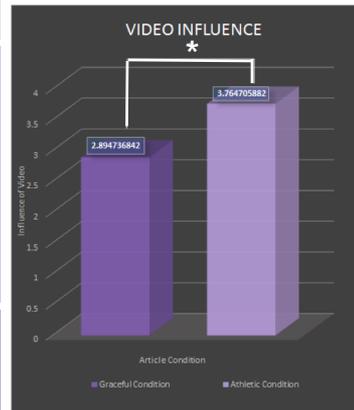
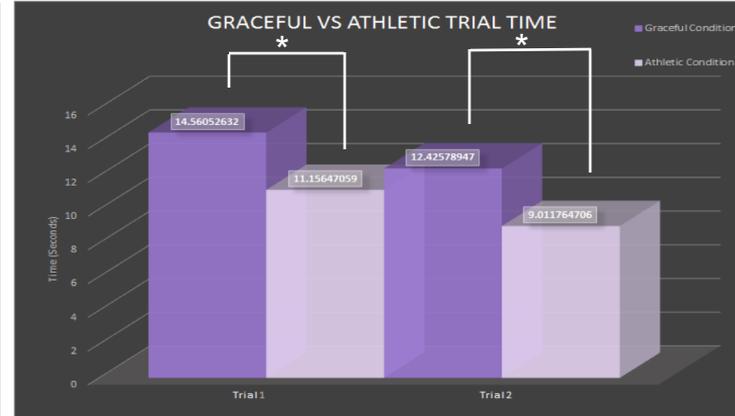
The purpose of our study was to research how various descriptions of a famous athlete could influence sports performance in undergraduates. Specifically, words such as “graceful” compared to “strong” were used to describe famous soccer player, Alex Morgan. The current research evaluated whether females would be more likely to complete a soccer dribbling task if they were given a subtle stereotype prior to the task. Participants were randomly selected to read a summary of famous female athlete, Alex Morgan that described her performance as “graceful” or “strong”. Our research expected to find that women performed with the least amount of time and highest level of efficiency on an athletic task where a female soccer player is described as “strong.” 36 female students from Carroll College were recruited to participate between the ages of 18 and 23 years of age. Participants were of varying socioeconomic backgrounds and ethnicities. Results showed that individuals in the “graceful” condition (N=18) described Alex Morgan using marginally more stereotypical female terms compared to the “strong” condition (N=18). The current results suggest that media terminology may impact our perception of female athletes. Females were significantly more likely to describe Alex Morgan with stereotypical feminine language (e.g. beautiful) after exposure to the “graceful” article. Alternatively, females were more likely to describe Alex Morgan as athletic when exposed to the “strong” condition. In summary, results suggest that the adjectives participants viewed influenced their perception of Alex Morgan, but not necessarily soccer performance.

BACKGROUND

- Subtly activating negative stereotypes impeded performance on both physical and quantitative tasks, while positive stereotypes facilitated performance (Ambady, Shih, Kim, & Pittinsky, 2001).
- Female participants who believed the stereotype “females are bad at math” performed worse on a math exam in comparison to females who did not believe the stereotype (Keller, 2007).
- Professional female athletes who read an article stating women are worse at soccer than men showed decreased performance on a soccer task. (Hermann & Vollmeyer, 2016).

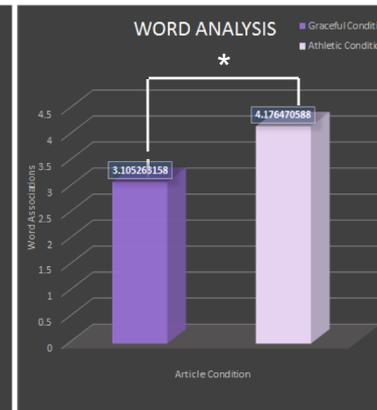
HYPOTHESES

- Participants will perform worse on a soccer dribbling task when prompted by the stereotypical female traits in an article than if they are prompted by non-stereotypical female traits in an article.
- Participants will be more likely to describe Alex Morgan with adjectives that are synonymous with the adjectives used in either the “graceful” or “strong” articles.



VIDEO INFLUENCE SCALE

No Influence	1
Medium Influence	3
High Influence	5



WORD ANALYSIS SCALE

Graceful or beautiful	1
Non- specified	3
Athletic or strong	5

METHODS

- Participants: 36 female students at Carroll College between the ages of 18 and 23
- “Graceful” Test Group (N= 18); “Strong” Test Group (N=18)
- Procedure:
- After doing a preliminary soccer dribbling task participants were given a pre-questionnaire, watched a video of professional soccer player Alex Morgan and given an article that described Alex Morgan as either “Graceful” or “Strong”
 - Participants were asked to complete the soccer task again
 - After, participants were given a final questionnaire, a stereotype susceptibility questionnaire and were debriefed.

RESULTS

- One way ANOVA was used to compare differences in soccer performance and on questionnaires.

Soccer Performance

- The “athletic” group was faster at completing the soccer task prior to reading the article ($p=0.024$) and after article manipulation ($p=0.001$).
- There was no significant difference between the “athletic” and “graceful” conditions in number of errors or whether a goal was complete before or after the article manipulation (all $p>0.05$).

Questionnaire

- There were no significant difference on the stereotype susceptibility questionnaire, familiarity with Alex Morgan, familiarity with the Women’s Soccer League and years of soccer experience between the two conditions.
- There was a marginally significant difference suggesting that individuals in the “athletic” condition felt more influenced by watching Alex Morgan play compared to those in the “graceful” condition ($p=0.08$).
- There was a significant difference in how individuals described Alex Morgan. Those in the “athletic” condition were significantly more likely to rate Alex Morgan as “athletic” ($p=0.001$).

CONCLUSIONS

- Our findings showed that the perception of female athletes can be influenced by media. Research suggests commercial clips and similar media can influence perceptions of people, particularly females (Hermann & Vollmeyer, 2016).
- Participants were more likely to describe Alex Morgan with adjectives synonymous to adjectives used in their article condition. Forbes & Schmader (2010) state that readings involving stereotypes are often remembered with greater accuracy.