

HOW FOUR METROPOLITAN NEWSPAPERS REACTED  
TO MICHAEL SAM'S ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT BEING GAY

William Erik Hall

Dr. Cynthia Frisby, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to learn how major newspapers write about a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender athlete and to determine how major newspapers use language to write specifically about an athlete who publicly announces that he is gay. A content analysis study was done of newspaper coverage about Michael Sam during the 15 days after he announced he is gay. Data was obtained from four major metropolitan newspapers — The Houston Chronicle, New York Times, Los Angeles Times and St. Louis Post-Dispatch — to identify trends after Sam's announcement. Results of the analysis show journalists made poor word choices and some dismissed him as an athlete, but the majority of the coverage praised Sam for deciding to announce his sexuality publicly. Data obtained in the study seem to imply that, although most instances showed writers using proper LGBT terminology, more work needs to be done. The findings have relevance for theory building and practical implications for sports reporters, journalists and other media.