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Photographs

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CONSTRUCTIONS OF GENDER IN SPORT

An Analysis of Intercollegiate Media Guide Cover Photographs

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Within the arena of sport, as throughout society, traditional definitions of femininity and masculinity have established and maintained gender differentiation. The authors' research examines this pattern in intercollegiate athletics by analyzing National Collegiate Athletic Association media guide cover photographs. They find gender differentiation in the depiction of women and men athletes. For example, women athletes are less likely to be portrayed as active participants in sport and more likely to be portrayed in passive and traditionally feminine poses. These differences changed little between 1990 and 1997. The findings suggest that while one might expect less gender stereotyping from the teams themselves, the gendered images produced by intercollegiate athletic programs vary little from those produced by the popular press.

Keywords: *gender; sport; intercollegiate athletics; media; femininity*

There is little dispute about the assertion that the mass media play a significant role in the transmission of dominant cultural values, especially in the perpetuation of images of gender difference and gender inequality. Certainly, the media are key to the perpetuation of these values through the world of sport. Given that both the

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media and sport construct and utilize gender stereotypes to maintain gender inequality, it is important to examine the ways in which these two powerful institutions interact with one another.

While numerous studies have investigated the portrayal of female athletes in popular sports magazines, newspapers, or television (Bryant 1980; Duncan and Hasbrook 1988; Kane 1996; Salwen and Wood 1994), to our knowledge, none have examined the materials produced by the sport organizations themselves. Our research fills this gap by examining the constructions of gender difference and hierarchy as reflected in media guide cover photographs for intercollegiate sports. In addition, given the increasing participation of girls and women in sport, we test to see if images of women and men have become more balanced through the 1990s. Drawing on data from two different time periods has allowed us to conduct such a longitudinal analysis.

BACKGROUND

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I intercollegiate media guides are representative of a powerful, highly prestigious, and influential sector of organized sport participation. They are the primary means by which colleges and universities market their athletic teams to the press, advertisers, and corporate sponsors as well as alumni, donors, and other campus and community members who read them. Unlike many game programs, the media guides tend to be thicker, slicker portrayals of the images the institution wishes to present about itself and its athletes.

The photographs, particularly the cover photographs, carry meanings that are significant to the social construction of ideology and reflect the values and goals of the producer. Each media guide cover attempts to portray an image with which the reader can identify—often, an image consistent with traditional notions of femininity/masculinity. Thus, the specific messages in the photographs become significant in the analysis of the media presentation of women and men athletes (Duncan 1990). We analyze the cover photograph for each guide because of the prominent role that any cover art plays in conveying a carefully chosen message to the reader.

The way an institution chooses to present itself via the media guide communicates a wealth of information about attitudes of the institution toward women and men in sport and about contemporary attitudes toward gender and sport in general. Although some might question the impact of a publication that does not typically receive mass distribution to the public, we argue that the press and advertisers serve as highly critical conduits for these images and the messages that they convey. In addition, these attitudes are consumed not only by those who receive the guides directly and use the guides to cover the competition, design the advertising, and otherwise convey messages about the institution's athletic programs, but they are also used by the secondary consumer of the information that these people and organizations create.

For these reasons, we believe that intercollegiate media guides provide a window into the world of intercollegiate sport and reveal the way in which the media and sport collude, intentionally or not, to present messages about gender and sport. Through this research, we aim to determine the degree to which gender stereotyping exists in these publications. Does the gendered nature of the sport matter? Does the gender of the player(s) matter? And most important, to what degree might changes have occurred from 1990 to 1997, a period during which participation in women's intercollegiate sports continued to increase markedly? A number of significant changes also occurred outside of intercollegiate sport during this time, including an 11 percent increase in the number of women participating in the Summer Olympic games (from 23 percent in 1988 to 34 percent in 1996), the growth and development of two professional basketball leagues (the WNBA and the now-defunct ABL), and a continued increase in the number of women participating in high school and intercollegiate sport.

Research has documented the degree to which popular media coverage of sport contributes to and reinforces gender stereotypes that perpetuate male superiority and female inferiority in sport (Duncan 1990; Kane 1988, 1996; Kane and Parks 1992; Salwen and Wood 1994). This research has not, to our knowledge, addressed the media images created by the sport organizations themselves. Male athletes are portrayed by the popular media in terms of their physicality, muscularity, and superiority, while female athletes are feminized and their achievements as athletes are often trivialized. During the 1996 Olympics, where much attention was paid to women's participation, the emphasis was frequently on how well women could perform and still be feminine off the field. This remained true as recently as 1999 in the coverage of the U.S. Women's Soccer Team and their participation in the 1999 World Cup. The coverage was broad, but the focus was often on their appearance and families as much as it was on their performance. Despite dramatic gains in women's opportunities and participation since the passage of Title IX in 1972, women athletes continue to be underrepresented and trivialized by the popular media while men have been highly visible and glorified (Bryant 1980; Duncan and Hasbrook 1988; Duncan and Sayaovong 1990; Kane 1988, 1996; Messner, Duncan, and Wachs 1996; Nelson 1994; Shivlett and Revelle 1994; Tuggle 1997).

The issue of difference is highlighted by the fact that in media coverage, girls and women may be athletes, but they are female first. The physical attractiveness of these athletes is often emphasized over their athletic abilities. While the media have increased their coverage of women's sports events, the coverage continues to promote women athletes as different or other than men (e.g., "The Women's Final Four" vs. "The Final Four" and the "WNBA" vs. the "NBA"). The media also present the women athletes as less than the men athletes. Gender hierarchy is often expressed in the media by the fact that the best men athletes are rarely beaten by the best women athletes. The reality of women athletes as strong, skilled, competent competitors is masked by media representations that depict them as good enough to compete against other women but never as good as the top men in the same sport. As recently as 2002, John McEnroe raised a furor when he asserted that he, an aging

tennis star, could probably beat either of the Williams sisters, the current stars of women's professional tennis. This strategy, comparing women's athletic competence with men's athletic achievements, serves to maintain male superiority and control in sport (Kane 1996). Both gender difference and gender hierarchy are perpetuated in sport and are contributing elements to male hegemony in the larger social structure.

The importance of the mass media as a shaper and reflector of attitudes, values, and knowledge in modern society is well documented. As one of the most powerful institutional forces in modern society, radio, television, newspapers, books, movies, and magazines have become major vehicles for transmitting the social heritage of our society from generation to generation (Betterton 1987; Boutilier and SanGiovanni 1983; Lasswell 1948; Wenner 1989). Because of this influence, an examination of the media is important because, as Betterton (1987) argued, the media contribute to the ways in which we come to know and understand gender relations. At the same time, through its many forms, it also creates and emphasizes images of gender difference. In this study of media and sport, we did not utilize formal hypotheses. Rather, we took an exploratory approach in which we were interested in determining the content of current media portrayals of women and men in intercollegiate athletics.

DATA AND METHOD

The research presented here is drawn from two periods of time, the 1989-1990 (hereafter 1990) and 1996-1997 (hereafter 1997) academic years. In 1990, the data consisted of 307 NCAA Division I media guide cover photographs representing female and male sports teams in basketball, golf, gymnastics, tennis, and softball/baseball (Buyse 1992). The replication, in 1997, consisted of 314 media guide covers for the same sports. The difference in sample size is due to a slightly different response rate. It is also important to note that not all schools sponsored all of the sports under investigation (especially men's gymnastics).

The sports selected for this investigation were guided by previous research on the degree to which sports are viewed as appropriate for women, for men, or for both (Buyse 1992; Kane and Snyder 1989; Metheny 1965). For example, gymnastics, which requires movements that are aesthetically pleasing and fit within traditional notions of femininity, was considered to be appropriate for women, while basketball, which emphasizes strength and physicality, was considered to be appropriate for men. Notions of gender appropriateness in sport serve as the foundation for attitudes about how athletes should be portrayed in media. The sports included in our research were chosen to represent a range of typically male (basketball, baseball/softball), female (gymnastics), and gender-neutral (golf, tennis) sports.

We examined the cover photographs of the media guides with a focus on the following four general questions: (1) Are athletes portrayed on or off the court? (2) Are they pictured in or out of uniform? (3) Are they portrayed in active or passive

positions or poses? and (4) What is the theme of the cover photograph? We coded each cover for nine possible themes: (1) "True athleticism" was defined as being present when an athlete or athletes were on court, in uniform, and in action, while (2) "posed athleticism" was represented by athletes in uniform but in nonaction poses. (3) "Femininity" was identified by traditional feminine roles, appearances, and/or fashion, typically dresses, styled hair, and visible makeup, while (4) "masculinity" was identified by traditional masculine roles, appearances, and/or fashion. (5) "Sexual suggestiveness" included any sexually provocative pose, theme, and/or fashion (e.g., skimpy outfits, cheesecake poses, and "come-on" expressions). (6) "Student-athletes" are those who held textbooks, were in an academic setting, and/or were portrayed studying. (7) The inclusion of movies and/or songs from North American pop culture was coded as "pop culture." (8) We coded the use or presence of "sport equipment" and finally a residual (9) "other" category for themes not captured by the previous codings. These themes were developed by the first author during the initial phase of research and were based on existing scholarship as well as on her familiarity with intercollegiate athletics (Buysse 1992).

The media guides were solicited from six conferences within the NCAA based on their power and prestige and thus their influence in U.S. culture. The selected conferences are the Big Ten, Big Eight, Pacific Athletic Conference, Atlantic Coast Conference, Southwest Athletic Conference, and Southeast Athletic Conference. These conferences also represented the geographical regions of the Northern, Southern, Western, Eastern, and Central United States. These six conferences are composed of 54 NCAA Division I colleges and universities. A letter soliciting media guides was sent to every sports information director for each of these 54 universities. Follow-up letters and e-mails were sent and phone calls were made to achieve a higher response rate. In 1990, the response rate was 72 percent; in 1997, the response rate was 74 percent.

Each media guide cover photograph was coded for each measure by two independent raters. In 1990, interrater reliability was 98.8 percent, and in 1997, it was 98.0 percent. When disagreement existed (2 percent of the covers), coders discussed the area of concern until consensus was reached. Using SPSS/PC, data were analyzed with cross-tabulation/chi-square analyses.

In the following section, we provide the results of our analysis of research questions 1 through 3, beginning with the relationship between gender of the athlete pictured and whether they were on or off the court (i.e., playing area), in or out of uniform, and actively or passively posed. We then continue the analysis by examining the photograph themes (question 4) or the relationship between the gender of the athlete and whether the photograph displays true athleticism, stereotypical characterizations of femininity/masculinity, and sexual suggestiveness. Following these analyses, we disaggregate the results to look at the relationship between a specific sport and court location, uniform presence, active or passive pose, true and posed

athleticism, and each theme. In these analyses, we present findings only for those sports where a relationship was significant in 1990, 1997, or both years and only for themes in which there was a significant relationship in one year or the other.

RESULTS

For 1990, of the 307 covers analyzed, 47 percent (145) portrayed women's sports, while 53 percent (162) portrayed men's sports. Of the 314 covers analyzed in 1997, 51 percent (159) showed women's sports, and 49 percent (155) showed men's. While these percentages might suggest gender equity, our research questions probe beyond this superficial level.

Portrayals on Court

The first issue under consideration was whether there would be a significant difference between the portrayal of women and men athletes on or off the playing surface or court. In 1990, results indicated that there was a significant difference ($p \leq .002$) between gender of the athlete and court location. Men were portrayed on the court 68 percent of the time compared to 51 percent of the time for women athletes (see Table 1). Seven years later, the relationship remained significant. Men were portrayed on the court 57 percent of the time, while women athletes were on the court 41 percent of the time. Although this represents a decrease for both genders, men are still portrayed on the playing surface significantly more often ($p \leq .005$) than are women (see Table 1).

Portrayals in Uniform

With respect to uniform presence, initial findings revealed that more male athletes were featured in their uniforms (93 percent) than were female athletes (84 percent) (see Table 1). In 1997, the significance of this relationship disappeared when 92 percent of men and 91 percent of women were shown in uniform.

Pose

The next measure is the actual pose of the athletes: Were men and women featured differently? In 1990, results indicated a significant difference, as men were found to be in action 59 percent of the time compared to 43 percent for women (see Table 1). In the replication, this relationship remained significant, with 62 percent of men seen in action and 41 percent of women seen in action (see Table 1). The percentage of women portrayed in action decreased by 2 percent, while the number of men portrayed in action actually increased by 3 percent.

TABLE 1: Court Location, Uniform Presence, Pose, True Athleticism, Femininity/Masculinity, and Sexual Suggestiveness, by Gender of Athlete

	1990						1997					
	Men			Women			Total			Men		
	No. in Category/ No. of	Percentage	Covers	No. in Category/ No. of	Percentage	Covers	No. in Category/ No. of	Percentage	Covers	No. in Category/ No. of	Percentage	Covers
On court	68.3	110/161	51.4	74/144	60.3	184/305	88/155	56.8	65/159	40.9	48.7	153/314
In uniform	93.0	133/143	83.7	108/129	88.6	241/272		n.s.		n.s.	n.s.	
Active	59.3	83/140	43.3	55/127	51.7	138/267	81/130	62.3	53/130	40.8	51.5	134/260
True athleticism												
present	52.5	85/162	38.6	56/145	45.9	141/307	91/155	58.7	62/159	39.0	48.7	153/314
Femininity/ masculinity												
present	6.2	10/162	20.0	29/145	12.7	39/307	7/155	4.5	18/159	11.3	8.0	25/314
Sexual suggestiveness	n.s.		n.s.		n.s.			0.0	0/155	3.1	1.6	5/314
Total number of covers	162		145		307			155		159		314

NOTE: Not all themes were represented in all cover photographs. Therefore, the total number of covers for each category may be less than the total number of covers received. Court location, 1990: $\chi^2 = 9.10, p = .002$; court location, 1997: $\chi^2 = 7.94, p = .005$; uniform presence, 1990: $\chi^2 = 5.79, p = .016$; uniform presence, 1997: not significant; pose, 1990: $\chi^2 = 6.80, p = .009$; pose, 1997: $\chi^2 = 12.07, p = .000$; true athleticism, 1990: $\chi^2 = 5.90, p = .015$; true athleticism, 1997: $\chi^2 = 12.2, p = .000$; femininity/masculinity, 1990: $\chi^2 = 13.19, p = .000$; femininity/masculinity, 1997: $\chi^2 = 4.96, p = .026$; sexual suggestiveness, 1990: not significant; sexual suggestiveness, 1997: distribution too small for chi-square to be reliable, $\chi^2 = 4.95, p = .026$. n.s. = not significant.

Cover Themes

Turning to the cover themes, significant differences were found for true athleticism (i.e., on court, in uniform, in action) and the theme of femininity/masculinity in both years. In 1990, men were portrayed as true athletes 53 percent of the time compared to 39 percent for women athletes (see Table 1). In 1997, men were seen as true athletes 59 percent of the time compared to 39 percent for women (see Table 1). The actual number of people portrayed as true athletes increased for both men and women, but this resulted in a percentage increase only for men.

For the theme of femininity/masculinity, the 1990 data revealed that women were portrayed significantly more often under the theme of femininity (20 percent) than their male counterparts were portrayed under the theme of masculinity (6 percent) (see Table 1). In 1997, these percentages decreased for both women and men, although the relationship between the gender of the athlete and the likelihood that she or he would be portrayed as feminine/masculine remained significant (see Table 1). Women were more likely to be portrayed as feminine than men were to be portrayed as masculine. Eleven percent of the women's covers included portrayals of traditional femininity, while 5 percent of men's covers included nonsport portrayals of masculinity. Although sport has been viewed by many as masculine in its entirety, the distinction between portrayals of femininity and masculinity was made by comparing the number of times women were dressed in traditionally feminine clothing, wore make-up, and had a traditionally feminine hairstyle with the number of times men were portrayed wearing traditionally masculine clothing such as tuxedos and dress suits.

In 1990, the remaining thematic categories of sport equipment, sexual suggestiveness, pop culture, and student athlete revealed no significant differences between women and men as athletes. Yet in 1997, the category of sexual suggestiveness was significant, with women being more likely to be portrayed in a sexually suggestive manner. These findings, however, must be interpreted with caution as the limited sample size may bias the statistical results. Nonetheless, it remains true that five of these media guides for women's sports contained sexually suggestive poses, while none of the men's covers did so.

Differences by Sport Type

We also examined the relationship between sport type (gender appropriateness) and the variables already considered in the first four questions (court location, uniform presence, pose, and themes). For ease of comparison within sport, these results, though discussed thematically, are presented in tables by sport.

Sport type and court location or uniform usage. Table 2 focuses on the male-appropriate sport of basketball. In examining the relationship between court location and sport type, in 1990, a significant difference was found in the sport of

TABLE 2: Court Location, Pose, True Athleticism, Posed Athleticism, and Sport Equipment for Basketball, by Gender of Athlete

	1990						1997					
	Men			Women			Men			Women		
	No. in Category/ No. of	No. in Category/ No. of	Total	No. in Category/ No. of	No. in Category/ No. of	Total	No. in Category/ No. of	No. in Category/ No. of	Total	No. in Category/ No. of	No. in Category/ No. of	Total
	Percentage	Covers	Percentage	Percentage	Covers	Percentage	Percentage	Covers	Percentage	Percentage	Covers	Percentage
On court	70.7	29/41	41.5	17/41	46/82	56.1	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Active	72.2	26/36	33.3	12/36	38/72	52.8	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
True												
athleticism												
present	63.4	26/41	31.7	13/41	39/82	47.6	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Posed												
athleticism												
present	n.s.		n.s.			n.s.	15.6	7/45	41.9	18/43	28.4	25/88
Sport												
equipment												
present	95.1	39/41	65.9	27/41	66/82	80.5	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.

NOTE: Court location/basketball, 1990: $\chi^2 = 7.13$, $p = .007$; court location/basketball, 1997: not significant; pose/basketball, 1990: $\chi^2 = 10.92$, $p = .000$; pose/basketball, 1997: not significant; true athleticism/basketball, 1990: $\chi^2 = 8.26$, $p = .004$; true athleticism/basketball, 1997: not significant; posed athleticism/basketball, 1990: not significant; posed athleticism/basketball, 1997: $\chi^2 = 7.48$, $p = .006$; sport equipment/basketball, 1997: $\chi^2 = 11.18$, $p = .000$; sport equipment/basketball, 1997: not significant. n.s. = not significant.

basketball. Male basketball players were featured on the court 71 percent of the time, compared to only 42 percent for female basketball players (see Table 2). This relationship was not significant in the 1997 analysis.

A similar pattern emerged with respect to gymnastics, a sport that was considered to be gender appropriate for women and gender inappropriate for men. In 1990, results only approached significance (results not shown). Male gymnasts were photographed in the competition area 82 percent of the time compared to 48 percent for female gymnasts. In 1997, however, this relationship was significant. While men were portrayed in the competition area 50 percent of the time, only one women's team, of the 19 represented, was portrayed in the competition area (see Table 3).

In 1990, more men in the male-appropriate sport of baseball were featured on the field when compared to women in the comparable sport of softball (76 percent vs. 54 percent), although this was significant only at .09 (results not shown). This relationship was significant in the 1997 analysis, with 69 percent of male athletes portrayed on the field compared to 35 percent of women (see Table 4). In neither year were there significant differences in the gender-neutral sports of tennis and golf with regard to how often women or men were portrayed on the court or competition area. Sport type differences were also found for uniform presence, but only for baseball/softball. In 1990, men were shown in uniform more often than were women (see Table 4). This relationship was not significant in the 1997 analysis.

Sport type and pose. Sport comparisons for the measure of pose revealed a significant difference in the sport of basketball (see Table 2). Men were featured in action 72 percent of the time on the cover photograph, while women were portrayed in action only 33 percent of the time. This relationship was not significant in the 1997 analysis. For 1990, there were no significant differences found in gender appropriateness between the remaining sports by pose presentation. However, in 1997, men gymnasts were more likely to be portrayed in action than were women (see Table 3). Only 1 men's gymnastics team (16.7 percent) of 6 was not shown in action. On the other hand, of the 15 women's teams, 3 (20 percent) were seen in action, while 12 (80 percent) were not in action. It is interesting to note the low number of men's gymnastics teams. There are about 20 men's programs remaining in the NCAA. This may beg the question, given the gendered nature of sport, why the declining interest in men's gymnastics?

Sport type and cover themes. In 1990, there were significant differences by sport for two of the possible eight themes: True athleticism and sport equipment. In 1997, there were significant differences by sport for true athleticism and posed athleticism. In the areas of femininity/masculinity, student athlete, sexual suggestiveness, popular culture, and the category of other, findings for both years either were not significant or were only near significance at the .10 level.

In 1990, the relationship between sport type and true athleticism was significant in two sports, basketball and gymnastics. As previously stated, true athleticism was

TABLE 4: Court Location, Uniform Presence, and Sport Equipment for Baseball/Softball, by Gender of Athlete

	1990					1997				
	Men		Total			Men		Women		
	No. in Category/ No. of	No. in Category/ No. of	Percentage	Covers	No. in Category/ No. of	No. in Category/ No. of	Percentage	No. in Category/ No. of	No. in Category/ No. of	Percentage
On court	n.s.									
In uniform	91.0	30/33	68.8	11/16	83.7	41/49	69.4	25/36	34.5	10/29
Sport equipment present	84.6	33/39	55.6	10/18	75.4	43/57	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.

NOTE: Court location/baseball/softball: 1990, not significant; court location/baseball/softball, 1997: $\chi^2 = 7.9$, $p = .005$; uniform presence/baseball/softball, 1990: $\chi^2 = 3.87$, $p = .049$; uniform presence/baseball/softball, 1997: not significant; sport equipment/baseball/softball, 1990: $\chi^2 = 5.61$, $p = .017$; sport equipment/baseball/softball, 1997: not significant. n.s. = not significant.

defined as being on court, in uniform, and in action. In the sport of basketball, true athleticism was found in 63 percent of the 1990 media guides portraying men athletes compared to only 32 percent of the basketball media guides portraying women athletes (see Table 2). This relationship was not significant in 1997.

In both 1990 and 1997, a significant difference was found in the portrayal of true athleticism for the sport of gymnastics. Men gymnasts were depicted as true athletes 82 percent of the time compared to 46 percent for the women gymnasts (see Table 3). In 1997, men gymnasts remained more likely to be portrayed as true athletes. While the percentage of covers showing men gymnasts as true athletes dropped from 82 percent to 75 percent, the percentage of covers showing women gymnasts as true athletes dropped from 45 percent to 5 percent. There were no significant differences found in baseball/softball, tennis, and golf in either year.

While in 1990, there were no significant relationships involving posed athleticism, in 1997, the relationship between an athlete's gender and posed athleticism was significant for the sport of basketball (see Table 2). Women were much more likely (42 percent) to be seen as posed athletes than were men (16 percent). This was the only sport for which this relationship was observed.

The presence of sport equipment on the 1990 media guide covers also indicated significant differences with regard to the gender-appropriate and gender-inappropriate sports. In basketball, sport equipment was present for men 95 percent of the time compared to 66 percent for women (see Table 2). This relationship was also significant in gymnastics, where 82 percent of the men and 46 percent of the women were portrayed with sport equipment and in baseball/softball, where 85 percent of men and 56 percent of women were portrayed with equipment (see Tables 2 and 4).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Our examination of media guide cover photographs from six of the most prestigious athletic conferences in the United States reveals images in both 1990 and 1997 that are consistent with previous research on depictions of women athletes in the popular media. This research makes an important contribution to the literature by shifting the focus from popular media to university-created media. While one might not be surprised to see the popular press engage in the sexist treatment of women athletes, it is surprising that highly regarded educational institutions would continue such differential treatment, especially in light of the social changes during the past 25 years. In the 1990 media guides, when women athletes were represented, they were less likely than men to be portrayed in uniform, on the court, or in action. In 1997, women athletes continued to be underrepresented on the court and in action, but the gender difference in wearing uniforms had disappeared. Unfortunately, the degree to which women appeared on court actually decreased.

The above results suggest that if we want to predict how athleticism is portrayed in Division I intercollegiate sports, we need only know the gender of the athlete. It was surprising to find that there were few changes between 1990 and 1997. As

women's sports programs have achieved more equity in many other areas related to Title IX, one would expect to find greater similarities in the portrayals of women and men athletes on media guide covers. However, men were still more likely to be portrayed as true athletes, and markers of femininity had become common in the portrayals of women athletes.

Although we had hoped to see improvement over time, these data do not provide evidence for broad sweeping changes. Overall, there were some gains and some losses. It seems clear that the sport of basketball is one area in which greater strides for women can be noted. This is not surprising given the increased popularity of women's basketball nationwide. The other improvements, while worth noting, do not suggest widespread changes in the way women athletes are portrayed.

With women making their way into sports traditionally reserved for men (e.g., hockey), and the increased number of professional women's sports teams, the few positive results are surprising. This raises the question, why haven't the images of women as athletes changed to reflect this reality? Perhaps there was not enough time between the two investigations for such an effect to occur. Alternatively, the increased participation by women in sport may be a direct result of the feminine portrayals that make sport attractive to more women. That is, as long as they can be seen as "ladies" first, they will not be compromising their femininity, or their heterosexuality, by playing sports.

As sport becomes more commercialized, and more money is to be made from girls' and women's participation in sport, we think that those in control of media and advertising should have a vested interest in making sport more appealing to a greater number of girls and women. The message an institution sends about its teams may affect the way in which journalists present the team to the public. It could also be argued that the institution may be trying to sell the team as heterosexuality and feminine to improve the institution's coverage and support. Unfortunately, what this does is further distance the image of women athletes from athletic competence. An example of this is one media guide cover that portrayed the women's basketball team in formal gowns with heavily made up faces and styled hair. The message communicated is not about basketball. There is no evidence anywhere on the cover that suggests that this is a basketball team. Rather, it appears that they might be candidates for homecoming queen. Another example is from a gymnastics media guide on which gymnasts are in their competition leotards, in poses that draw attention to their upper thighs, buttocks, and chests. If "gymnastics" were not printed on the cover, it would be difficult to discern this from many soft pornography photographs. This type of representation does nothing to display these women as competent, elite athletes, which we believe should be the purpose of an athletic media guide cover photograph.

The marginalization of women's athleticism that results from these particular media presentations serves to reinforce male dominance and control of sport. Thus, the media create a fundamental barrier to any significant change with respect to conceptions of the female athlete and her body. For example, even though the numbers of women participating in intercollegiate sports have grown dramatically

during the past two decades, and the number of sports offered for women's participation at the college level has also increased, post-Title IX women athletes continue to be constructed differently by the media than are men. As others have argued (Duncan 1990; Duncan and Hasbrook 1988; Kane and Parks 1992; Kane and Snyder 1989), media portrayals of female athleticism contain and limit women in sport and subsequently deny them much of the status, power, and prestige that men experience in sport. By trivializing and marginalizing female athleticism, the media reinforce the notion that women's sport is a lesser version of the real (men's) sport (Kane and Snyder 1989).

Messner (1988) also pointed out that the images of women's athleticism constructed by the media represent major obstacles to any fundamental challenge to male dominance in organized sport. As the results of this research clearly show, the producers of women's athletic media guides seem more intent on projecting stereotypical images of traditional femininity than true athleticism. We conclude that sport as a primary area of ideological legitimation for male superiority is preserved through gender differentiation and gender hierarchy as represented in the cover photographs of these media guides. This systematic representation of differential treatment undermines the female athlete and limits her power and potential in sport.

The media have the power and, we would argue, the responsibility to act as social agents in the transformation of athletic images by reflecting the reality of the female athletic experience. That reality is best reflected by constructing images of female athletes that emphasize their athletic competence in sport. University athletic programs can and should provide leadership in media equity of female and male athletic teams.

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