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## *Journal of Issues in* **Intercollegiate Athletics**

### **Gender Representation in 2010 NCAA Division I Media Guides: The Battle for Equity was only Temporarily Won**

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*The purpose of this study was to examine cultural narratives of intercollegiate media guide covers and to compare present findings with previous research by Kane and Buyse (2005) which revealed that there had been a shift from non-action images of female athletes toward images of athletic competence and a decline in gender differences between female athletes and male athletes. Content analyses of 476 guides from the 2009-2010 season reveal a return to gender differences, as female athletes were less likely than male athletes to be portrayed on court and in action. Images were also mediated by the type of sport and the location of specific conferences aligned with geographical locations. Results represent a shift backward and suggest that the battle for accurate, responsible media portrayals of female athletes as competent sportswomen was only temporarily won.*

### **Introduction**

Media outlets are one way many cultural ideals about sports are propagated. Media organizations provide content that serves as entertainment, inspiration, and cultural capital for viewers (Coakley, 2004). Interpretations of media texts/images come from production aspects of the texts/images, the texts/images themselves, and the context in which the texts/images are produced (Davis, 1997). Print publications are one source from which individuals obtain information about sports and are distinctive as a medium because they link individual, social, cultural, and economic aspects of our lives (Currie, 1999). The images and text produced by sport media are powerful, as they send messages to the consumers about who and what is valued in sport. The predominant message across a variety of media privileges men's sport and male athletes over women's sports and female athletes (Duncan, 2006; Hardin & Whiteside, 2010; Messner & Cooky, 2010; Webster, 2009).

## Literature Review

### *Media Coverage of Female Athletes in Mainstream Media Outlets*

Two major themes emerge from myriad studies of media coverage of female athletes at all levels across all media over the past thirty-five years of sport research: 1) female athletes are underrepresented in terms of amount of coverage compared to male athletes (Media Education Foundation, 2005; Women's Sports Foundation, 2009), and 2) female athletes are most often portrayed in ways that emphasize femininity and sexuality before athletic competence (Jhally & Alper, 2002; Knight and Giuliano, 2001; Women's Sports Foundation, 2009). In addition, female athletes are most often portrayed as participants in individual sports rather than team sports and are presented in passive roles rather than active roles (Duncan, 2006). When female athletes are presented in non-individual sports, they almost always exhibit mainstream media sex appeal, like Natalie Gulbis or Jennie Finch (Duncan, 2006). Kane (2009) groups media depictions of female athletes into three camps: ambivalent images, where the athlete is presented in a feminine/sexualized way but the depiction contains some clue that she is an athlete (e.g., Michelle Wie in a wedding dress holding a golf club); sexualized images (e.g., Brandi Chastain nude bending over holding two strategically-placed soccer balls); and athletically competent images (e.g., Candace Parker charging down the basketball floor). The athletically competent image is the most realistic construction of what it means to be a female athlete.

Sport is a socially constructed institution that changes according to cultural context; affects other realms of our culture like family, religion, and politics; and represents larger historical issues like women's fight for equality (Coakley, 2009). Sport has historically been considered a masculine institution where characteristics such as aggression, tenacity, and physicality reign supreme (Jhally & Alper, 2002; Women's Sports Foundation, 2009); therefore, those athletes who enact these characteristics (historically men) are most revered for athletic competence. When women "cross the gender line" to participate in sports, powerful institutions like media can mitigate success by sexualizing, and therefore trivializing, female athletes (Jhally & Alper, 2002; Huang, 2004). Sexualized media representations ensure that the focus is on female athletes' sex appeal rather than on their athleticism (Meân & Kassing, 2008). Although male athletes are also presented in sexualized ways, the sheer magnitude of men's sports coverage dictates an alternate reality: there are thousands of pictures of male athletes as competent athletes to offset every image that sexualizes that athlete (Huang, 2004). The strong and capable female athlete (counterhegemonic image) poses a threat to masculine hegemony in sport.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity is defined as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 2005, p. 77). As such, Messner (2007) argues that the female athlete and her body becomes contested ideological terrain. In reflection on the "contested terrain" of gender meanings, Messner (2007) asserts that "the containment and marginalization of the female athlete by the media reinforces the historical notion of the 'natural superiority' of men's bodies" (p. 31).

The master narrative of media organizations is that "sex sells" female athletes, though there is no empirical data to prove this is true (Kane, 2009). Sex sells sex, not athletics, as evidenced by a study published by Kane and Maxwell (2011) that reveals ambivalent images of

athletes offended all groups of consumers (men and women, all ages, all sports backgrounds) and sexualized images did not increase interest in watching games on television, going to games, or buying season tickets. As women's sport becomes more commercialized and more money is to be made, it is clear from this research that images of competent athletic females will sell women's sport, not sexualized images.

### *Sport Media Research on Intercollegiate Athletes*

Recent scholarship on mainstream media coverage of college athletes is varied. In an analysis of two newspapers and two online sport publications' coverage of March Madness, Kian, Vincent, and Mondello (2008) found female collegiate basketball players are still constantly compared to male collegiate basketball players instead of receiving coverage related to the caliber of their play. Amongst other themes, a specific reference to male teams in articles about female teams and attributing athletic success to playing with men, position female athletes as "other" (Kian, Vincent, & Mondello, 2008). In a feminist cultural and social psychological analysis of how female athletes prefer to be represented photographically, Krane, Ross, Miller, Rowse, Ganoë, Andrzejczyk, and Lucas (2010) found discord between how the athletes in their study chose to be portrayed versus how mainstream media portrays female athletes. The athletes in their study wanted to emphasize their power and strength rather than traditional femininity, exhibiting pride in athleticism and muscles (Krane, et al., 2010).

Recent scholarship on print and television coverage on college campuses suggests that, though not equal, there has been some improvement on the coverage of female athletes. For example, in an analysis of 442 print/broadcast stories from campus newspapers and television stations at 39 schools representing a range of colleges and universities (in size, geographic location, accreditation status, and public-private distinction), Huffman, Tuggle, and Rosengard (2004) found 72.7 percent of print sports stories and 81.5 percent of broadcast stories were devoted to male athletes. However, when these outlets did cover female athletes, the quality of stories was equivalent to the stories showcasing male athletes (Huffman, et al., 2004). In an analysis of 20 campus athletic department websites, article, advertisement, multimedia, and photograph coverage of male and female athletes in baseball/softball, cross country, golf, soccer, swimming, and tennis (non-revenue sports) was comparable, with the exception of baseball/softball, where baseball received more coverage (Cooper, 2008). In a more recent analysis, however, only schools in Division III provided equitable coverage to male and female athletes on athletic department webpages (Cooper & Pierce, 2011). Division I schools cover revenue sports like men's baseball, men's basketball, and men's football significantly more than non-revenue<sup>1</sup> sports teams at these institutions (Cooper & Pierce, 2011).

### *Non-profit Sport Media Outlets*

There is evidence that non-profit media may present more equal media representations of female and male athletes than for-profit media. Cooper and Cooper (2009) examined images of female and male athletes in the *NCAA News* and found women were still underrepresented in all aspects (multimedia, articles, covers) of coverage, averaging about 32%, but that this statistic was significantly higher than most mainstream coverage. Intercollegiate media guides also offer a different perspective on media coverage of male and female athletes because they are produced by the institutions that distribute them, not by media organizations seeking profits. Buysse and

Embser-Herbert (2004) examined intercollegiate media guides from the 1989-1990 and 1997-1998 seasons from all six Bowl Championship Series (BCS) conferences in a variety of sports (basketball, baseball/softball, gymnastics, ice hockey, and tennis). Analysis of 1990 and 1997 media guides reveal gender differentiation in how male and female athletes are depicted, with female athletes less likely to be portrayed in uniform, on the court, or in action than male athletes in 1990 guides. In 1997 guides, female athletes were still underrepresented as athletes on the court and in action, but gender differences in terms of uniform presence disappeared (Buysse & Embser-Herbert, 2004).

To further investigate change in intercollegiate media guides over time, Kane and Buysse (2005) conducted a longitudinal analysis of depictions of athletes on covers of guides from the 1989-1990, 1996-1997, and 2003-2004 athletic seasons. The most recent covers revealed equitable coverage in representations of uniform presence, court presence, and action versus passive poses (Kane & Buysse, 2005). Female athletes were presented in uniform 97 percent of the time and male athletes in uniform 98 percent of the time (Kane & Buysse, 2005). On-court presentation in 2004 was 80 percent for female athletes and 86 percent for male athletes, and pose presentation was 72 percent active poses for female athletes and 79 percent active poses for male athletes (Kane & Buysse, 2005). Three findings emerged from the 2003-2004 data: 1) women were presented as competent athletes, with no statistically significant differences from how male athletes were presented, 2) the time period from 1990 to 2004 represented a significant shift in how female athletes were portrayed, with a positive trend toward showing female athletes as competent sportswomen, and 3) media guides illustrated trends different from traditional media, trending more favorably toward showing female athletes as competent rather than passive or sexualized (Kane & Buysse, 2005). The authors concluded that they are “not so naïve as to suggest that the broader contest Messner refers to is close to being resolved. But, during the 2003-2004 season, with 98% of the population (i.e., six major sport conferences) present and accounted for, it appears that one important battle, if only temporarily, has been won” (p. 118).

Since the research by Kane and Buysse (2005), intercollegiate media guides are at a crossroads. Guidelines established by the NCAA in 2010 and adaptations to trends in digital convergence have altered the presentation of athletes highlighted on covers of the publications. The state of media guides for intercollegiate athletics has recently changed again, prompted by NCAA Division I Proposal No. 2009-42, amendment to Bylaw 13.4.1.1, which went into effect August 1, 2010. The amendment states that institutions may produce either a recruiting brochure or a media guide (but not both) for prospective student athletes, their parents/legal guardians, their educational institutions, or any coaches who work with the student-athletes (NCAA, 2010a). If they choose the recruiting brochure, institutions can, however, provide the above-mentioned parties with a media guide via a digital media storage device (e.g., compact disc, flash drive) and post the information on their websites (NCAA, July 6, 2010). Storage devices used for this purpose cannot exceed the minimum standard capacity necessary to store the media guide (e.g., a media guide of 110 megabytes should be stored on a standard 128 megabyte flash drive) and additional printed recruiting materials like camp brochures or computer-generated recruiting presentations can only take up as much space as is left on the device (so, based on the previous example, 18 megabytes) (NCAA, July 6, 2010). Media guide publications are relegated to one color printing inside the cover, dimensions of 8 ½ x 11 inches, and 208 pages in length (NCAA, 2010a). These restrictions do not apply to media guides only posted electronically (NCAA, July 6, 2010). Any supplemental information (e.g., historical information or records) is relegated to the institutions' websites and must be printed in black and white (NCAA, 2010a).

The purpose of the amendment was cost-savings and to stave off a mini arms race among sports information departments (Cherner, Kushlis, Rupp, O'Toole & Bennett, July 26, 2005). Since then, NCAA governing bodies have discussed the possibility of no-print restrictions based on the changing nature of communications in intercollegiate athletics (Doherty, November 3, 2009).

In this study, we analyzed media guides from the 2009-2010 athletic seasons, a time in which institutions in the six major BCS athletic conferences continued to publish guides in predominately print form and posted portable document formats (pdfs) of these print guides on school websites. The purpose of the present study is to build upon previous research on depictions of male and female athletes on intercollegiate media guide covers, specifically to discover if there has been any shift in the patterns of representations from 2004 to 2010.

### *Importance of Media Guides*

In intercollegiate athletics, media guides are publications that provide historical, statistical and biographical information on particular college sports teams. They have been critical to marketing university athletic teams. The publications were initially created to provide key information to media personnel to prepare stories and broadcasts about the athletic teams. In the past 15-20 years, however, the audience for media guides has expanded to include entities like donors, prospective donors, corporations, or community leaders; and the purpose of the publication is primarily for public relations and recruiting, which has spurred an arms race of publishing in-depth, hard cover versions (especially for men's basketball) (Cherner, et al., July 26, 2005). The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) tried to curb this trend in 2005 by requiring schools to limit media guide page counts to 208, a number agreed upon based on input from sports information directors and printing production experts (Cherner, et al., July 26, 2005).

As identified in the previous published media guide studies, the most significant characteristic of intercollegiate media guides is that the guides are produced by the institutions themselves. In mainstream media, conscious choices of how to present information about athletes and coaches are made in the context of a sport media system often governed by corporations seeking profit from marketing collegiate athletes. In contrast, intercollegiate media guides are unique because they are not produced to garner profit and thus offer a chance to examine ways intercollegiate athletic departments, sport, and media work together to advance significant messages about gender, power, and sport. We confined our analysis to the cover photograph of media guides because these photographs embody, "significant social meanings that reflect values and goals of the producer and thus offer insight into the construction of ideological narratives" (p. 219). Covers of media guides offer a unique perspective into what the media guide purports to offer readers and sets the tone for how designers and decision makers wish readers to consume the guide.

Research questions for this study center on whether or not differences exist in depictions of both female and male athletes at the same institution, in the same year, and in the same sport on intercollegiate media guide covers. Primarily, we wanted to know if athletes presented a) in or out of uniform, b) on or off the court, and c) in active or passive poses in media guides published during 2009-2010 athletic seasons. Second, we wanted to know if, within same sport, if men's and womens' teams are depicted differently (in or out of uniform, on or off the court, active or passive poses) on media guide covers published during 2009-2010 athletic seasons. Third, we wanted to know, if differences in athleticism and gender-linked indicators are found in

depictions of athletes in guides published during 2009-2010 athletic seasons, whether those differences are differences correlated with particular areas of the country or particular conferences. Kane and Buysse (2005) analyzed longitudinal data on depictions of athletes in media guides from the early 1990s through 2003–04 athletic seasons and found an unmistakable shift toward representations of women as competent athletes and a sharp decline in gender differences between female and male athletes. The purpose of our study is to update previous research by examining contemporary media guide covers.

## Method

### *Sample and Analytic Techniques*

As in previous studies analyzing intercollegiate media guide covers, we examined media guides from colleges and universities representing the six most prestigious conferences across all NCAA institutions: the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), the Big East, the Big 10, the Big 12, the Pacific Athletic Conference (PAC-10), and the Southeastern Conference (SEC). In total, 73 universities were included and data was gathered for 12 sports (baseball, softball, women's and men's basketball, women's and men's golf, women's and men's gymnastics, women's and men's ice hockey, and women's and men's tennis) as in previous studies, allowing for accurate comparison. Of a potential 876 guides for all schools fielding teams for all sports, 590 teams produced media guides for the sports they offer. A research assistant gathered covers for 476 of those guides that included a cover (the other 114 were online pdfs or interactive guides that did not include a cover).

We employed content analysis of intercollegiate media guide cover photographs to characterize athletes' images and compared findings with the 2005 media guide study that found female athletes portrayed as competent athletes. Content analysis is used to describe media messages, to draw inferences about meaning, and to infer context from standpoints of both production and consumption (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005). Textual meanings are prompted by particular contexts, discourses, and purposes (Krippendorff, 2004), so we remained cognizant of issues surrounding intercollegiate media guides throughout our analysis.

Our analysis is informed by a feminist critique of sport and gender. Feminist critics analyze the construction of gender in a particular artifact and then explain how those gender constructions maintain a system of domination (Dow, 2006; Foss, 2004) or foster female empowerment, sometimes by overthrowing the unequal gender constructions identified (Brummett, 2006). Feminist criticism of popular culture is especially important because mediated communication is presentation of real-life situations that individuals internalize as reality (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 2002). However, most mediated texts are one-way interactions, so the opportunity for feedback from an audience is nonexistent (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 2002). As a result, mediated texts presented as reality and reality itself are conflated. Popular culture often teaches boys/men to be subjects and girls/women to be objects, and feminist critics break down these distinctions to illuminate how gender perpetuates ideologies that favor men and inhibit women (Brummett, 2006).

### *Criteria for Measurement and Coding Process*

To measure change over time, we adhered to data collection guidelines established by previous studies of intercollegiate media guide cover photographs (Buyse, 1992; Buyse & Embser-Herbert, 2004; Kane & Buyse, 2005). Using the previously established coding matrix, one female graduate student and one female undergraduate student were trained by the principal researcher in two training sessions to ensure consistency of coding for the 2009-2010 guides. The two co-researchers then coded guides from two of the six athletic conferences and reconvened with the principal researcher to check for reliability and to break down questions the co-researchers had about the coding schema by going through each difference the co-researchers identified. Intercooder reliability for this portion of the study was 72%. After discussing each of the differences and coming to a consensus on how to code the images, co-researchers finished coding the remaining four athletic conferences. Intercooder reliability for the second portion of the study was 97%. After the second round of coding, when differences in coding came up, the co-researchers discussed reasons for coding until consensus was reached. In most cases, discrepancies between the co-researchers simply had to do with whether or not contextual cues affected the images [e.g., whether or not the photo of Texas A&M women's basketball players in skimpy attire posed around a coach tugging on his shirt cuff (Appendix A) exhibits femininity or sexualization or both].

### *Statistical Analysis*

We first analyzed the 2009-2010 data we gathered on intercollegiate media guide covers and then compared it to the previous study results from 2003-2004 media guides. The first issue under consideration was the current data set (2009-10). We wanted to determine the prevalence of media guide covers that portrayed female and male athletes in and out of uniform, on and off the court, and in active and passive poses collapsed across all six conferences and twelve sports. Such an assessment required chi-square analysis, which was used for most remaining analyses because it is the most commonly used statistical technique when examining textual (e.g., visual) images (Pedersen, 2002), and because all variables had at least two levels of measurement.

Chi-square analyses were also used to determine whether gender patterns were mediated by conference affiliation and the specific sports in which the athletes participated. As in the previous study on media guide covers (Kane & Buyse, 2005), when overall analyses resulted in significant differences, a visual inspection of the data was conducted to determine where major differences occurred. A visual inspection technique is appropriate when there are more than two levels of a particular variable (Thomas & Nelson, 2001), as was the case for conference affiliation and specific sport.

## **Results**

The primary purpose of this study was to examine cultural narratives (images/cover photographs) of NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletes to determine how seriously they are presented as defined by being in uniform, on the court and in action in media guide cover photographs. A second purpose was to examine whether there has been a shift in the representations from the 2004 intercollegiate media guide investigation to the present one. We first present results on whether athletes are presented a) in or out of uniform, b) on or off the

court, and c) in active or passive poses in media guides published during 2009-2010 athletic seasons. Within these results, we document to what degree men's and women's teams are depicted differently (in or out of uniform, on or off the court, active or passive poses) on media guide covers published during 2009-2010 athletic seasons. We then correlate gender differences to particular areas of the country and particular conferences and sports. Results from the current study are presented first, followed by comparative results.

### *Current Results*

As mentioned previously, we solicited media guide cover photographs for 12 sports for each of the 73 universities in the sample for a total possibility of 876 guides. However, as in previous studies, not all institutions offered all 12 sports, some did not produce a media guide, and some of the online intercollegiate media guides did not include a cover. Our findings indicate that there were a total 286 sports that were not offered and there were 62 universities that did not produce a guide. Results for this study are based on the instances where a sport was offered and a guide was published that included a cover photograph; a total of 476 sports (236 for women, 240 for men). This finding is delineated in Table 1.

Table 1 - *Number of Sports in Intercollegiate Media Guides Examined for the 2009-2010 Season*

Sport	Women (N=236)	Men (N=240)
Softball/baseball	45	59
Basketball	63	69
Golf	42	46
Gymnastics	26	10
Hockey	6	9
Tennis	54	47

### *Uniform Presence*

To determine how athletes were presented on intercollegiate media guide covers, the first variable under investigation was whether athletes were presented in or out of uniform. Uniform presence was operationally defined as an actual university uniform or warm-up attire worn by athletes for participation in specific sports (e.g., a jersey and athletic shorts for basketball). In the current (2009-2010) study, overall, athletes were overwhelmingly represented on media guide covers in their uniforms at 98.2% (N=430/438) of the time. Female athletes are portrayed in uniform 98.6% of the time (N=217/220), and male athletes appear in uniform 97.7% (N=213/218) of the time. Based on a chi-square analysis of uniform presence and gender of athlete, there were no statistically significant differences between female and male athletes. There are 10 cases (5 women, 5 men) in which the covers portray multiple photographs of athletes both in and out of uniform. As in previous studies, covers with athletes both in uniform and out of uniform were excluded from any statistical analysis.

### *Court Location*

The second way we assessed how athletes are portrayed on intercollegiate media guide covers is whether they were presented on or off the court. Court location was operationally defined as the actual playing area of the sport (e.g., basketball court, golf course). Results indicate that overall, 60.3% (N=241/401) of the athletes were portrayed on the playing surface or court. Female athletes were portrayed on the court 56.3% (N=112/199) of the time, and male athletes appeared on the court 64.2% (N=129/201) of the time. Based on a chi-square analysis of court location and gender of athlete, there were no statistically significant differences between female and male athletes. There were 49 cases (27 women, 22 men) where athletes were portrayed in multiple photographs both on and off the court. Covers depicting athletes in multiple photographs both on the court and off the court were excluded from any statistical analysis.

### *Pose Presentation*

The third issue under investigation was whether athletes were featured in action portrayals versus posed or passive portrayals on intercollegiate media guide covers. Pose presentation was operationally defined as active if an actual simulation of the sport was performed (e.g., an athlete shooting a jump shot) and passive if the athlete(s) was not performing an actual skill associated with his/her sport (e.g., posing for a team photograph). Results indicate that overall athletes were portrayed in action 66.0% (N=217/329) of the time. Female athletes were portrayed in action poses 60.1% (N=98/163) of the time, while male athletes were featured in action 71.7% (N=119/166) of the time. Though excluded from statistical analyses, it is important to note that athletes were presented in multiple photographs depicting a combination of two or more of the above “in action” and “not in action” (at least one “in action” and at least one “not in action”) categories 106 times (58 female athletes/teams, 48 male athletes/teams). Chi-square analysis of pose presentation as a function of gender of athlete was statistically significant ( $p \leq .022$ ). These results indicate that men are significantly more likely to be portrayed as competent athletes than women.

### *The Effect of Conference Affiliation and Sport Type*

Another way we assessed cultural narratives (images/cover photographs) of NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletes to determine type of presentation was by identifying whether the 2009-2010 media representations would be mediated by conference affiliation or sport type. The following results provide information on the effect of conference and sport on uniform, court and pose. Due to several low cell counts, these data are presented descriptively and were not treated to Chi-square analyses. Note that some cells have counts of five or less, so these results should be interpreted with caution.

### *Conference Affiliation*

As previously noted, with respect to uniform, all athletes were overwhelmingly portrayed in their uniforms on the media guide covers for the 2009-2010 seasons. All conferences featured female athletes in uniform 100% of the time except in the case of the Big 12 (92%). For male

athletes, the ACC, Big Ten and Pac-10 featured athletes in uniform 100% of the time followed by the SEC (98%), Big East (95%) and Big 12 (92%). As in 2003-2004, uniform presence was once again evenly distributed throughout the conferences.

There was more variation in conference affiliation when looking at court location of athletes on intercollegiate media guides. Within-gender differences appeared for both men and women in different conferences for this variable. On-court presence for women was highest in the Big East (71%), Big 10 (62%), and Big 12 (60%); and on-court presence for men was highest in the Big East (81%), Pac-10 (73%) and Big 10 (68%). The conference least likely to portray female athletes on the court was the ACC (42%) and the conference least likely to portray male athletes on the court was the Big 12 (38%, the lowest for all athletes). Between-gender differences were noted in five of six conferences, with female on court appearance lower than male on-court appearance by six percent or greater. The most notable differences were in the Pac 10 (50%/73%) and in the ACC (42%/64%).

Finally, with respect to conference affiliation and pose presentation analyses of athletes on intercollegiate media guide covers, we found that the Big East and Big 10 presented female athletes in action most often (76% and 77%, respectively) and, for males, the Big East, ACC, SEC, Big 10 and Pac 10 had the highest frequencies (74-81%). Between-gender differences were highest in the Pac 10, a 25-point difference (50% for women, 75% for men). Interestingly, the lowest percentages for active pose presentations were in the Big 12 for both men and women (50% and 52%, respectively).

## *Sport*

A second consideration of this study was whether the specific sport type would affect the overall patterns for uniform, court, and pose on intercollegiate media guide covers. With regard to uniform, a visual inspection of the data revealed that uniform presence was evenly distributed throughout each sport for all athletes. There were only three instances (two in basketball, one in golf) when women were not in uniform and five instances (four in basketball, one in golf) when men were not in uniform.

The pattern of even distribution of female and male athletes was not evident when looking at on- versus off-court portrayals. Women were most likely to appear on the court or playing surface in hockey (80%), golf (69%), tennis (68%) and softball (66%) and least likely in basketball (47%) and gymnastics (18%). The on-court differences for men's sports were more evenly distributed. Male athletes were featured on the court most often in hockey (86%), tennis (73%), golf (73%), gymnastics (71%), and baseball (68%) and least likely to appear on the court in basketball (52%). When looking at between-gender differences, the widest range is in gymnastics, with a 53-percentage point gap.

Finally, when looking at pose presentation across all twelve sports on intercollegiate media guides, the most variation occurred in women's sports. Active athletic portrayals of women occurred most often in the sports of hockey (100%), golf (75%) and tennis (74%) and least often in softball (63%), basketball (43%), and gymnastics (33%). Men were presented in action most often in hockey (100%), gymnastics (100%), tennis (79%), baseball (78%), and golf (73%) and least likely in basketball (55%). Note that the men's percentages are all still above 50%. The greatest gender difference was in gymnastics, where male gymnasts were in action 100% of the time and females were in action only 33% of the time.

### *Comparison of 2004/2010 Data*

The second purpose of this study on intercollegiate media guides was to compare the results from 2010 to results of the 2004 study. For the first variable of uniform presence, there was little change. However, for the remaining measures of court, pose, and themes of true athleticism and femininity/masculinity, we found some marked differences.

#### *Uniform, Court, and Pose*

Both female and male athletes were overwhelmingly represented in their uniforms in both 2010 (98.2%; N=431/439) and 2004 (97.2%; N=487/501) (see Table 2). Female athletes appeared in uniform 96.6% (N=253/262) of the time in 2004 and 98.6% (N=218/221) of the time in 2010. Male athletes appeared in uniform 97.9% (N=234/239) of the time in 2004 and 97.7% (N=213/218) of the time in 2010. This finding is not surprising, as both high and relatively equal percentages of athletes in uniform between men and women have been consistent since the first media guide study of the 1989-1990 athletic seasons (Buysse, 1992).

The second comparison of intercollegiate media guide covers between 2004 and 2010 athletic seasons is the degree to which female and male athletes are presented on versus off the court. In 2004, overall, athletes were featured on the playing surface or court 83.2% (N=397/477) of the time (see Table 2). Six years later, this category of analysis dropped to 60.3% (N=241/400) for all athletes (see Table 2). Female court presence dropped from 80.4% (N=201/250) in 2004 to 55.8% (N=111/199) in 2010, while male court presence declined from 86.3% (N=196/227) to 64.1% (N=129/201), respectively. There were also 49 cases, an 11-point increase (4 for men and 7 for women), where there were multiple photos on a cover with both on- and off-court photographs. The 2010 data were close to being significantly significant ( $p \leq .069$ ) for between-gender comparisons.

The third comparison of intercollegiate media guide covers between the 2004 and 2010 athletic seasons involves action versus non-action poses of athletes. In 2004, 75.0% (N=340/453) of the cover photographs featured athletes in action compared to 65.9% (N=217/329) in 2010, a nine-point difference (see Table 2). Action photographs for both women and men decreased. For female athletes, there was a notable decrease of 11.7% [2004 – 71.8% (N=171/238); 2010 – 60.1% (N=98/163); see Appendix B for photo examples] and for males a slightly less decrease of almost 7% [2004 – 78.6% (N=169/215); 2010 – 71.7% (N=119/166)] in this category.

**Table 2 - Comparison of 2004 and 2010 Data for Uniform Presence, Court Location, and Pose**

Year	(In) Uniform	(On) the Court	(In) Action Pose
2004	97.2% (N=487/501)	83.2% on court (N=397/477)	75.0% (N=340/453)
2010	98.2% (N=431/439)	60.3% on court (N=241/400)	65.9% (N=217/329)

## Discussion

Our findings point to two important issues regarding the presentation of athletes on media guide covers of NCAA Division I institutions. The first indicates that the most prestigious and influential sport conferences were less likely to portray athletes on the court and in action in 2010 than six years earlier. As previously mentioned, in the 2004 cover photographs, males and females were overwhelmingly portrayed as competent athletes (in uniform, on the court, and in action). While uniform presence remained high with little change in 2010, court presence and action presentations deteriorated. For example, for on-court presence, there was close to a 25% decrease for all athletes in 2010, a 24.1% decline for women and a 22.1% decline for men. Equally troubling is that in 2010, overall, all athletes were less likely to be portrayed in action (see Appendix B for an example). A 9.0% decrease was noted for all athletes, with an 11.7% decline for women compared to a 6.9% decline for men. Though higher than two of the previous studies in 1990 and 1997, these data represent a backward shift from 2004.

Although the reasons for such a significant decrease in on-court and in-action appearances are difficult to speculate, they may be related to the NCAA Division I Proposal No. 2009-42 which was meant to change the practice of using the media guide as a primary recruiting tool to using the guide to provide history and statistical information for media personnel. Media representatives tend to be interested in the content of guides, not the cover photographs on guides (M. Slieter, Personal Communication, October 18, 2012), so when a cover photograph was used, it may have served a more general function of showing several aspects of the athletic program and the university. This could explain the numerous covers with multiple photos that were not included in statistical analyses. Additionally, this may have affected the number of guides available for statistical analyses. In 2004, 477 photographs were analyzed for court presentation and 453 photographs were analyzed for pose presentation. In 2010, 400 photographs were analyzed for court presentation and 329 photographs were analyzed for pose presentation. This is a 124-photograph difference for pose and a 77-photograph difference for court, which may have had some bearing on the analysis.

We also surmise trends in digital convergence may explain part of the decrease in number of guides available, as we noticed many schools moving to online pdf guides without covers or interactive guides without covers. A pdf file with a cover photograph tends to be very large, so universities may eliminate the cover to decrease the size of the pdf file (M. Slieter, Personal Communication, October 19, 2012). In this study, we found that 17% of the guides that were published did not include a cover photograph (N=99/575).

The second important issue relates to between gender differences. When analyzing the three basic variables of uniform presence, pose presentation, and court presence. While uniform presence reveals relatively equal percentages between female athletes and male athletes (98.6% versus 97.7%, respectively), pose presentation and court presence reveal male athletes are presented in action 11.6% more of the time and are featured on the court 7.9% more of the time compared to female athletes (see Appendix C for photo examples). This means that male athletes are consistently presented as more competent athletes. Between-gender differences favoring male athletes for uniform presence, pose presentation, and court presentation were 1.4%, 6.8%, and 5.9% in 2004, so 2010 results indicate a downturn in portraying female athletes as competent sportswomen.

Contextualizing between-gender differences in conference affiliation and sport reveals even more nuanced differences. Uniform presence by gender and conference revealed no

differences between presentations of male and female athletes. Analysis of pose presentation revealed the Big 12 and Big 10 as the only conferences where female athletes were presented more in action than male athletes, albeit the differences are two percent and five percent, respectively. The Big 12 is the only conference that presents more female athletes on court than male athletes with a difference of 22%. Gender difference percentages within the Pac 10 and ACC are the highest for pose presentation, with male athletes presented in action 25% more of the time in the Pac 10 and 12% more of the time in the ACC than female athletes. Similarly, differences in court presence between male athletes and female athletes were 23% in the Pac 10 and 22% in the ACC. Again, reasons for gender differences are difficult to speculate without talking to the individuals who design intercollegiate media guides, but areas of the country where schools are located seem to make a difference in how male athletes and female athletes are presented, with areas of the southeast and west more favorable to male athletes and areas of the Midwest more favorable to female athletes.

Between-gender differences by sport also reveal differences between presentation of female and male athletes on intercollegiate media guides in the 2009-2010 seasons, though not to the extent that conference affiliation does. Again, uniform presence did not reveal differences between male and female athletes of more than two percent. Analysis of pose presentation, however, reveals that male gymnasts were presented in action 67% more of the time than female gymnasts. Additionally, male gymnasts were 53% more likely to appear on the court than female gymnasts. We suspect this difference may be to preserve the femininity of female athletes and to highlight male physicality and muscularity in what has historically been designated a feminine-appropriate sport.

The implications of portraying male and female athletes differently on intercollegiate media guide covers are significant. Disparities in media coverage between male and female athletes have been linked to female athletes threatening gender roles aligning traditional masculinity with characteristics such as power, aggression, and competitiveness and femininity with characteristics such as timidity, docility, and complacency; and hegemonic masculinity associated with the institution of sport (Jhally & Alper, 2002; Women's Sports Foundation, 2009). Although 40 years have elapsed since the passage of Title IX, female participation in sport is still a threat to what has historically been a male institution (Media Education Foundation, 2005). Sport operates at the most fundamental levels of our culture as a political, economic, and social institution (Coakley, 2009), so female athletes deserve the same type of coverage that male athletes receive on media guide covers.

Coakley (2009) writes extensively about the institution of sport as it privileges masculinity and therefore maintains hegemonic masculinity. Sport operates as a masculine institution because the characteristics considered valuable for success in sports like aggressiveness and competitiveness are considered masculine attributes (Duncan, 2006). It is no mistake that the most revered sports in our culture – football, baseball, basketball, and car racing (Sports Fan Market, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d) - are highly masculinized. Positioning masculine attributes as essential for success in sports positions males as naturally suited to play/enjoy sports and females as not naturally suited to play/enjoy sports (Duncan, 2006; Jhally & Alper, 2002). Portrayals of female and male athletes on intercollegiate media guides for the 2009-2010 seasons reinforce the institution of sport as masculine.

## Conclusion

In Division I championship sports, female athletes accounted for 3,411 intercollegiate teams and 76,252 athletes and male athletes accounted for 2,890 teams and 90,837 athletes during the 2009-2010 athletic seasons (NCAA, 2010b). Division I institutions fielded an average of 10.3 women's athletic teams and 8.8 men's athletic teams for a total average of 19.0 athletic teams per institution (NCAA, 2010b). Based on our results, female athletes are not presented as competent athletes equal to the teams they field.

Portrayals of athletes on intercollegiate media guide covers from the 2009-2010 athletic seasons represent a shift backward and suggest that the battle for accurate, responsible media portrayals of female athletes as competent sportswomen was only temporarily won. Messner's (2007) argument that female athletes and their bodies will become contested ideological terrain has re-surfaced in university-controlled media narratives. Validating female athleticism presents a challenge to dominant hegemonic sport ideology and the prevailing gender order. Resistance by university athletic teams and university-controlled media, though prevalent in 2004 media guide cover photographs, has waned, perhaps due to new NCAA regulations on media guides or trends in digital convergence. Whatever the reason, female athletes were consistently presented less seriously than male athletes in 2009-2010.

Limitations of this study center on availability of guides. Most guides we examined came from online sources because most institutions are placing pdfs of the documents on their athletic department websites. The research assistant who gathered guides queried athletic departments where guides were not available, but inevitably some guides that were published were not included in the study. Second, the total population of 2009-2010 guides was less than past studies, so results could have been tempered by trends in digital convergence or early adopters of online guides to comply with new NCAA rules on media guides.

Mass media shape discourse surrounding female athletes' participation in athletics. Discourse influences how viewers perceive culture (Women's Sports Foundation, 2009) and is a socializing agent that positively influences girls' and women's involvement in sport (Daniels, 2009; Schell, n.d.). In an ideal media climate, female athletes are portrayed as competent athletes in the same way male athletes are presented. In our analysis of 2009-2010 intercollegiate media guides, however, it seems the battle for equality forged in 2004 guides was only temporarily won.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Cooper & Pierce (2011) present findings of their study in terms of revenue versus non-revenue sports. In reality, according to the Office of Postsecondary Education Equity in Athletics reporting data for 2010 and 2011, most sports in the Division I-A conferences we examined for this study are revenue-producing, though not necessarily profit-generating. Additionally, women's basketball is number three in revenue generation and men's baseball is fourth (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2010, 2011). We report results of this study according to the authors' terms but acknowledge they should not have used the term non-revenue.

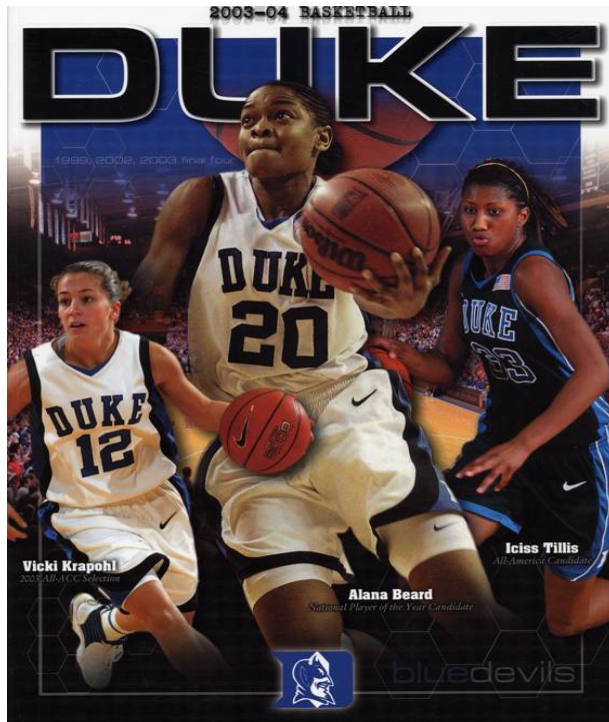
## Appendix A

Example of contextual cues (Texas A&M women's basketball)



## Appendix B

Comparison of Duke women's basketball media guide photos from 2004 and 2010



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## Appendix C

Example of between-gender same sport comparison: University of North Carolina softball and baseball

