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## Framing females in sport: The pictorial and written coverage of female athletes in Sports Illustrated from 1996-2005

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FRAMING FEMALES IN SPORT:  
THE PICTORIAL AND WRITTEN COVERAGE OF FEMALE  
ATHLETES IN *SPORTS ILLUSTRATED* FROM 1996 – 2005

A Thesis

Presented to the

School of Communication

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

By

Stephanie L. Hand

April 2007

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Date April 4, 2007

FRAMING THE LAST 10 YEARS OF SPORT:  
THE PICTORIAL AND WRITTEN COVERAGE OF FEMALE  
ATHLETES IN *SPORTS ILLUSTRATED* FROM 1996 – 2005

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University of Nebraska, 2007

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Abstract

Current research reveals that mass media framing techniques used in sports media result in a lack of coverage for female athletes, a perception of “socially acceptable” sports for women, and the feminization of sports. Due to the historical sports victories occurring after 1996, such as the 1996 Olympics, the formation of the WNBA, and the US World Cup victory, there is a perceived and actual change in the popularity and participation in female sports. This study sought to determine whether these sports victories for women have been reflected in volume and in quality on the cover photographs and cover articles of *Sports Illustrated* from 1996 – 2005. A content analysis of 641 depicted subjects revealed significant differences between the photographic coverage of male and female athletes and story content related to gender. Further, this study revealed that media framing is occurring through more subtleties and that it is often packaged under the label of female progress. These differences have implications in our understanding of female athletes, as well as in the future involvement of females in sports.

*Table of Contents*

Chapter 1	Introduction	1
	Media Framing Theory	3
	Framing Females in Sports	4
	Coverage of Male versus Female Athletes	5
	Coverage of “Socially Acceptable” Female Sports	12
	Feminization of Sports	14
	Increase in Female Participation	19
	Statement of Purpose	23
Chapter 2	Methodology	23
	Subjects	25
	Procedures	25
Chapter 3	Results	32
Chapter 4	Discussion	46
Chapter 5	Conclusion	52
	Limitations	53
	Recommendations for Future Research	55
	References	58
	Appendix A: Sports Illustrated Coding Instructions	61
	Appendix B: Explanation of Cover Photograph Coding Categories	63
	Appendix C: Explanation of Cover Article Coding Categories	64
	Appendix D: Strategies of Sexualization Handout Given to Coders	66
	Appendix E: Coding Sheet	67

## Chapter 1

### *Introduction*

Mass media are responsible for communicating messages about the role of female athletes to millions of people. While the number of women and girls participating in sports within the United States has risen at all competition levels since the adoption of Title IX in 1972, media coverage of female sporting events has not increased at the same rate (Tuggle, 1997). Research shows that media coverage of females in sports is not only lacking, but often perpetuates traditional notions of femininity, thus discounting the athletic nature and performances of female athletes (Fink & Kensicki, 2002).

In general, the U.S. places a high value on sports culture. Children participate in sports at an early age, entertainment often centers on amateur and professional sporting events, and some of the highest incomes belong to professional sports figures. In fact, in 2002, 54 percent of all American children aged six – 17 played on at least one organized sports team and girls comprised 44 percent of all organized sports teams (SGMA, Sports Participation in America, 2002, as cited on [www.womenssportsfoundation.org](http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org)). While the majority of sports figures and fans are males, females' involvement in the world of sports is growing. According to the Women's Sports Foundation, the number of females participating in sports at all levels (pre-adolescent to college) is steadily increasing. Female audience participation is also noteworthy as in 2001, women comprised approximately one-third (34 percent) of the adult audience for ESPN sporting event programs (ESPN, 2002, as cited at [www.womenssportsfoundation.org](http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org)).

Newspapers, television, radio, magazines, and Internet sites document the world of sports often by framing, or focusing one's attention to certain aspects or athletes. Sports magazines, such as *Sports Illustrated*, have framed U.S. sports culture since the early 1950s. The decision to put a particular athlete, gender, sport, pose, or angle on a story or photograph issue after issue and year after year, is critical to the public's comprehensive understanding of sport. In other words, mainstream sports sources provide society with ideas not only of *what*, but also of *whom*, to value in the world of sports.

Mass media images both reflect and also create the way that female athletes are viewed in this culture (Fink & Kensicki, 2002). According to research, events such as the 1996 Olympics (Fink & Kensicki, 2002), the establishment of the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) in 1997 (Tuggle et al., 2002), the U.S. Women's Hockey Olympic victory in 1998 (Shugart, 2003), and the U.S. Women's World Cup soccer victory in 1999 (Tuggle et al., 2002) have influenced females' participation in sports and have impacted the media coverage received by female athletes. As the number of women and girls participating in sports increases, it is important to determine whether the media is keeping up with the growing popularity and movement of females in sport. Furthermore, it is important that girls and women in sport are seeing themselves accurately represented in U.S. sports culture. This study uses framing theory to analyze whether popular sports media – specifically *Sports Illustrated* – has reflected the monumental progress of women's sports from 1996 - 2005 both in quantitative coverage and in the quality of representation.



## *Review of Literature*

### *Media Framing Theory*

The theory of “framing” encompasses the idea that mass media help mold society’s view of events through their coverage or lack of coverage of particular events (Tuggle, 1997). Framing can be accomplished not only through the amount of coverage given to particular groups or subjects, but to the type of coverage: “Through their gatekeeping function, [frames] provide what is seen, heard, and read, along with the type and amount of coverage given” (Pederson, 2002a, p. 421). In addition, framing calls attention to certain items and directs attention away from others in order to organize information and to facilitate understanding for audiences (Zoch & Turk, 1998). According to researchers, the power of framing goes beyond the organization of information. Many communication researchers study framing to look at how the media constructs society’s reality as frames are considered to “connect ideas within text, photos, or audiovisual presentation in a way that suggests particular interpretation” (Hardin et al., 2002b, p. 344). Consequently, media framing can heavily influence how the public perceives reality.

Many communication scholars argue that the presentation or framing of women in sports by mass media contributes to society’s reality about the significance and legitimacy of female athletes (Tuggle, 1997; Hardin et al., 2002; Tuggle, Huffman & Rosengard, 2002). Framing can be accomplished through the amount and type of coverage given to females in sport throughout various form of mass media. The research reviewed looks at the effects of media framing and how the framing of female athletes

“may have more subtle and powerful influences on audiences than bias” as it is more difficult to detect through framing that women are being “packaged” a certain way to media audiences (Severin & Tankard, 2001, p. 278).

### *Framing Females in Sports*

Researchers have often used the concept of media framing to explore mass media coverage of female participation in sports (Tuggle et al., 2002). Various types of media have been researched in this regard including primetime television, sports television, sports magazines, newspapers, and the Internet (Shugart, 2003). Specific media such as *CNN* and *ESPN SportsCenter* (Tuggle, 1997), *Sports Illustrated* and *Sports Illustrated for Women* (Fink & Kensicki, 2002), and *NBC's Primetime* television (Tuggle et al., 2002) have been the focus of research due to audience popularity. A variety of sports at various levels have been analyzed including coverage of the Olympics (Tuggle et al., 2002; Kinnick, 2002), NCAA Championship games (Billings, Halone, & Denham, 2002), the Women's World Cup Soccer Championship (Shugart, 2003), and high school athletics (Pedersen, 2002a, 2002b). Of the research reviewed, the majority of studies involved content analyses of articles, photos, and broadcast commentary.

While the studies have been wide and varied, the significant findings related to the framing of female athletes can be organized into three categories:

- 1) a higher coverage of male versus female athletes;
- 2) a higher coverage of “socially acceptable” sports for women; and
- 3) the feminization of women in sports (Shugart, 2003, p. 1).

These categories can be used to organize and make sense of the body of research in this area.

*Coverage of Male versus Female Athletes.* Many studies focus on the comparison between the amounts of media coverage male athletes receive versus the amount given to female athletes. Coverage can be evaluated through a quantitative analysis of photographs and article content of various forms of media. Three chosen studies examine mass media coverage in magazines – both sports-specific magazines as well as popular magazines (Salwen & Wood, 1994; Fink & Kinsicki, 2002; Curry, Arriagada & Cornwell, 2002).

Salwen and Wood (1994) studied the depictions of females on the covers of *Sports Illustrated* spanning over three decades from 1957 to 1989. *Sports Illustrated* was chosen for analysis by the authors as it was considered at the time of the study to be “America’s most prominent and largest circulation sports magazine published continually since 1954” (p. 101). The authors chose to analyze the magazine’s covers as they are the prominent feature of a magazine, differentiate the magazine from competitors, and represent the interests of the magazine’s audiences (Salwen & Wood, 1994, p. 100). Their analysis involved studying both the number of females on the covers and the type of poses (action versus non-action) of the athletes on 504 *Sports Illustrated* covers. Results indicated that there were far fewer females than males on the covers (55 females compared to 782 males) resulting in female athletes being shown on only 4.4 percent of the covers of *Sports Illustrated* during these decades (Salwen & Wood, 1994).

Fink and Kensicki's (2002) research on the construction of gender from both *Sports Illustrated* and *Sports Illustrated for Women* reveal similar findings. A content analysis was conducted on nine issues of each magazine in order to assess the content and coverage depicted in both articles and photographs. The study revealed that women were underrepresented in *Sports Illustrated* as only ten percent of articles and ten percent of photographs were female-specific. The authors argued that this under representation may result in the "symbolic annihilation" of the female athlete "because the media are relied upon to reflect the important events within our culture" (Fink & Kensicki, 2002, p. 330).

Curry, Arriagada and Cornwell's (2002) study of 46 popular non sport magazines analyzed the extent to which "sports images are presented in the general culture and whether sport participation is a value that is found in both men's and women's magazines" (p. 401). They found that magazines with a primarily male audience contain more images of competitive sport than do magazines aimed at women. However, they found that only 15 percent of people in sport-related images in men's magazines are women versus the 65 percent of sport-related images in women's magazines which are men. The authors found that "the overall pattern suggests that men's magazines fuse males with sport to a greater extent than women's magazines fuse females with sport" (Curry et al., 2002, p. 403).

Media coverage of females in sports can also be framed through the broadcast coverage of television programming (Tuggle, 1997; Tuggle et al., 2002; Billings & Eastman, 2002). Tuggle's (1997) study focused on the amount of airtime given to women's athletics by *ESPN SportsCenter* and *CNN Sports Tonight*. The purpose of this

research was to “assess how women’s sports are constructed as opposed to the way men’s sports are constructed by the two programs” (p. 2). A four-week sample of both sportscasts was collected and analyzed. In general, only five percent of airtime was dedicated to the coverage of female athletes (Tuggle, 1997). When women were covered, their stories were typically shorter than those involving males. The author argued that “the degree to which sportscasters cover female athletics helps mold society’s view of female athletes and its perceptions of women in general” (Tuggle, 1997, p. 2). The author states that this particular framing “reinforces the idea of male supremacy in sports and sends the message that female athletes are simply not as deserving of regular coverage” (Tuggle, 1997, p. 7).

Tuggle, Huffman, and Rosengard (2002) focused their research on examining NBC’s broadcast coverage of men and women in the 2000 Summer Olympics as compared to the 1996 Olympic coverage. This study used media framing to suggest that “gender stereotypes may persist in media coverage because strategies for representing gender have become standardized in news practice” (Tuggle et al., 2002, p. 362). Videotaped recordings of NBC’s primetime Olympic coverage were analyzed over 15 days of competition. The results of the study found that men received more overall coverage (55 percent involved men’s coverage versus 44.8 percent of women’s coverage) (Tuggle et al., 2002). The study found that in addition to men receiving more coverage, women were given fewer opportunities to speak about their accomplishments (Tuggle et al., 2002).

Billings & Eastman (2002) also studied the televised coverage of the 2000 Summer Olympics by analyzing a total of 54 hours of prime-time programming on NBC. The purpose of their research was to analyze gender, ethnicity, and nationality bias within commentary and clock time. Clock time analysis revealed a ratio of 53 percent for men's sports compared to 47 percent for women's sports, results similar to Tuggle et al. (2002) (Billings & Eastman, 2002). No bias was found in the top ten most-mentioned athletes within NBC's telecast, as one half or five of the ten most-mentioned athletes were women. Finally, male speakers were shown more frequently than women speakers (58 percent of visuals).

In general, the authors found that men were more likely than women to have their success attributed to athletic skill and commitment and to be perceived as failing because of a lack of concentration. Women, on the other hand, "were viewed as having less athletic skill and less commitment to their sports" (Billings & Eastman, 2002, p. 366). The authors point out that the significant overall coverage of men in the Olympic Games is consistent with the results of prior American Olympic analyses. The authors argue that when audiences lack "a larger frame of reference, the identity stereotypes embedded within the television coverage can readily become [the audience's] perception of reality, setting expectations about gender, ethnicity, and national similarities and differences" (Eastman & Billings, 2002, p. 368).

Hardin, Chance, Dodd, Hardin's (2002) content analysis of the photographs in four Florida dailies and one national newspaper during the 2000 Olympic games revealed a more optimistic view of mass media coverage of women in sports. The authors chose to

analyze photographs as they believe “photos are arguably more potent because of their readability and impact. The number of photos, camera angles, and activity of photo subjects are ways that photos can frame gender” (Hardin et al, 2002, p. 66). Their assessment revealed that of 1,425 images in the newspapers studied, 48 percent were of women – also comparable to the demographics of the U.S. Olympic teams. The authors attribute this to a high participation of female athletes being realistically reflected by the media, as well as a high female audience not unusual for Olympic coverage.

Kinnick’s (1998) study of five major dailies covering the 1996 Olympic athletes also found more favorable media coverage for women. This study examined five newspapers: *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Atlantic Constitution* to determine the extent to which the nation’s leading newspapers reflect gender bias in feature stories about Olympic athletes. Using the personality profile as their unit of analysis, the authors found that quantitatively speaking, female athletes compared favorably with male athletes as out of 170 profiles, 93 were male athletes and 77 were female athletes (Kinnick, 1998, p. 224). In fact, female athletes were better represented proportionately than males. The authors suggest the explanation for these findings to be that “journalistic practices have caught up with contemporary social attitudes reflecting greater acceptance of women and girls in sport” (Kinnick, 1998, p. 234).

While the number of articles was favorable, gender bias was evident in regard to “frequent mentions of female athlete’s marital status, dependency on other, emotionality, and general good looks (Kinnick, 2002, p. 233). The author does point out that the

favorable results should not be a reason for females to celebrate as it is pointed out that at no other time are female athletes as popular as during the Olympics, which occur for only two weeks, every four years.

The under representation of female athletes in the media can also be analyzed in newspaper and Internet coverage (Pedersen, 2002a and 2002b). Pedersen's (2002a) study of the newspaper coverage of high school athletics revealed that media framing also occurs at the interscholastic level of sport. A content analysis of sports page articles from 602 issues (1792 articles) of daily newspapers (43 total over a one-year period) was conducted. The results revealed that boys' athletics received more overall written coverage (58.3 percent) than girls' athletics (31.4 percent), as well as more column inches (60.6 percent for males compared to 28.8 percent for females). Moreover, articles covering male athletes were more likely to be better positioned and have photographic accompaniment than those covering female athletes. The author argued that through framing, the media "continued to perpetuate the glorification of male athletics and the trivialization of female athletics" thus promoting "male supremacy and female subordination by giving higher quality coverage to male athletics" (Pedersen, 2002a, p. 429). Pedersen (2002a) further states that "through the repetition of such coverage, it becomes a commonly accepted aspect of the sports pages that males will be featured more often and promoted with more vigor than their female counterparts" (p. 429).

Pedersen's (2002b) analysis of the newspaper photographic coverage provided to female and male high school athletes confirms his previous research. A content analysis was conducted on 43 daily circulation Florida newspapers' photographs covering high



school sports. In general, results of this study concluded that females were consistently given underrepresented and biased photographic coverage by the newspapers used in the study (Pedersen, 2002b). Out of 827 photographs pertaining to high school sports, 32.6 percent were devoted to female athletics, while 66.7 percent were devoted to male athletics (Pedersen, 2002b).

Not only did males receive more photographic coverage, they also received more photographic column inches, received better positioned photos, and more color photographs. Inconsistent with previous research is the fact that there was no association found between the type of photograph (action versus non-action) and gender. The author attributes this to the level of sport and the availability of action photos of female high school athletes. The author points out, however, that through less coverage, worse positioning, and less visibility for girls, “the newspapers indicated that they deemed female sports participation as less important and less newsworthy than male sports participation. Such actions reconfirm the hegemonic masculinity that is found in sport and the mass media” (Pedersen, 2002b, p. 314-315).

In nearly all studies, females at all levels in sports are being under represented with the articles, broadcasts, and photographs of newspapers, sports magazines, and television. Pedersen (2002a) argued, “... regardless of the focus – whether it is professional or recreational, intercollegiate or interscholastic – females who participate in sports and physical activity receive inequitable coverage by the mass media” (p. 430). The unfair coverage in the media “establishes barriers to participation by females, fails to provide role models, hinders the advancement of females in sports, influences the

recognition females receive for their participation, and impacts the level of fulfillment that females can obtain through their participation” (Pedersen, 2002a, p. 430).

*Coverage of “Socially Acceptable” Female Sports.* In addition to analyzing the amounts of coverage female athletes receive in the media, it is also important to look at how they are portrayed when represented. A number of studies have revealed that when women do receive media coverage, it is typically the individual sports that receive the most coverage. These sports include, but are not limited to women’s golf, tennis, gymnastics, swimming, and diving (Tuggle et al., 2002). Scholars discuss how these individual events are often deemed more “socially acceptable” (Tuggle, 1997, p. 7) as they require traditional female qualities such as balance and grace. In general, sports that require more stereotypical masculine qualities, such as basketball and softball, receive less overall media coverage. Communication researchers believe the framing of certain acceptable sports contributes to society’s understanding of the role of females in sports (Curry, Arriagada & Cornwell, 2002). The coverage of ‘socially acceptable’ sports can be illustrated in the following studies.

Salwen and Wood’s (1994) study of three decades of *Sports Illustrated* covers also revealed that female athletes were more likely to be shown in ‘non-contact’ sports including tennis, track and field, golf, snow skiing, and swimming. The most frequent sports for men on *Sports Illustrated* covers were football, baseball, basketball, golf, and boxing (Salwen & Wood, 1994, p. 4). Similarly, Tuggle’s (1997) study of *ESPN’s SportsCenter* and *CNN Sports Tonight* revealed that more airtime was given to females in individual versus team sports (three of the 65 stories about women’s sports were team

oriented) and the “socially acceptable” sports of tennis and golf were given 95.4 percent of the coverage of female sports (p. 5). Billings and Eastman’s (2002) study of the television coverage of the 2000 Olympics supported these findings. The majority of women’s sports coverage included the three sports of gymnastics, swimming, and track-and-field – all individual and “traditionally feminine” sports – accounting for 73 percent of all coverage of women’s sports (Billings & Eastman, 2002, p. 362).

Tuggle, Huffman and Rosengard’s (2002) study of NBC’s 2000 Olympics show that women’s individual sports received twice as much airtime as women’s team events (approximately 15 hours versus 7 hours). Approximately 80 percent of NBC’s coverage of women’s 2000 Olympic sports was gymnastics, track, swimming, and diving. The authors discuss how the media’s framing of certain sports creates the perception that the audience “is much more interested in sports that involve grace and fluid movement than sports in which athletes sweat, grunt, or try to exert physical mastery of an opponent or object” and that “women are accepted as athletes only if they continue to look and act as women are expected to look and act” (Tuggle et al., 2002, p. 373).

In Curry, Arriagada, and Cornwell (2002)’s study of non sport magazines, the sports-related images of women’s magazines stress “pleasure and participation” versus those that stress “power and performance” in men’s magazines (p. 409). In fact, their study found that only 16 percent of sports-related images in women’s magazines consisted of power-performance themes versus the 42 percent of sports-related images in men’s magazines reflecting power-performance themes (Curry et al., 2002). The authors

argue that “Over time, such differences probably reinforce different meanings of sport for the men and women who read these magazines” (Curry et al., 2002, p. 409).

Hardin, Chance, Dodd and Hardin’s (2002a) content analysis of photographs covering the 2000 Olympic Games as depicted in newspapers found opposing results. The study revealed that females received a fair percentage of dominant photos and that women were shown more often than men in team sports. However, women were again shown more often in aesthetic sports versus strength sports. The authors argue that these findings reflected the reality of the 2000 Olympic Games. In addition, they state that while the coverage of Olympic Games may be headed in a positive direction, it is “how the media frames female athletes on a week-by-week and month-by-month basis [that is] the true test” (Tuggle and Owen, 1999, p. 171; as cited by Hardin et al., 2002a, p. 76).

*Feminization of Sports.* Finally, many studies on media coverage suggest that mass media frame women in sports in a way that perpetuates traditional notions of femininity focusing on characteristics of heterosexuality, sexuality, and traditional female roles (Christopherson, Jannings, & McConnell, 2002). This can be evaluated through the content analyses of photographs, news content, and broadcasts as seen in the following studies.

Framing occurs through the use of photographs used to depict women in sports. In their analysis of three decades of *Sports Illustrated* covers, Salwen and Wood (1994) found that there were more males in active poses than females in active poses (97.8 percent to 2.2 percent). Further, there was no increase in active poses from 1957 to 1989 which they attribute partially to the female swimsuit phenomenon and the fact that

women were often seen as cheerleaders to men's sports during this period of time (Salwen & Wood, 1994).

Hardin, Lynn, Walsdorf and Hardin (2002b) analyzed "the framing used to create images of women and female athletes in *Sports Illustrated for Kids* to determine whether images of girls and women in the magazine have improved in percentage or quality since the 1996 Games...and whether the visual images emphasize sexual difference" (p. 343). The analysis of 36 issues revealed that men vastly outnumbered women in editorial photographs (62 percent to 28 percent). Further, 58 percent of the photos showed active men compared to the 15.1 percent of photos showing active women (Hardin et al., 2002b). Men were also depicted more frequently in leadership roles than women. The authors argue that women were framed more often than men in inferior ways as shown in their under representation in photographs and their overrepresentation in aesthetic sports (Hardin et al., 2002b, p. 355).

Hallmark and Armstrong (1999) studied camera shots and graphics in broadcasts of men's and women's NCAA Division I championship basketball games from 1991 to 1995. Their research revealed that men's NCAA Division I college basketball championships broadcasts contain significantly more camera shots and graphics than the women's broadcasts for the same tournament. The men's games had more court level camera shots, more full court camera shots, and more on-screen graphics, while the women's games contained significantly more full-screen graphics. The authors argue that more court level shots "convey a commitment to the action and the men involved in the action" while the graphics in the women's games takes the focus away from the action

and athletes (Hallmark & Armstrong, 1999, p. 229). Further, the full-screen graphics in the women's games "convey a lack of faith in the quality of the women's contests" which "reinforces the argument that producers do not wish to rely on the action to maintain audience interest" (Hallmark & Armstrong, 1999, p. 229).

Billings, Halone and Denham (2002) studied "the degree to which gender-based evaluations characterizes athletic performance by men and women" (p. 295). Their research focused on the content and language of sports commentary covering the 2000 Final Four basketball championships. The authors analyzed the broadcast commentary of the men's and women's championship games in April 2000 by looking at variables including the gender of the broadcaster, the type of commentary, and the amount of time dedicated to women's versus men's sports through content analysis methods. The study found that only 37.1 percent of broadcast commentary characterized women's sports (Billings et al., 2002).

In the aforementioned study, significant differences were found in the evaluation of male and female athlete performances. Male athletes were described by commentators as more physical and athletic, while female athletes were described more often in terms of positive consonance, personality, background, and looks and appearance – categories unrelated to their athletic performance. Interestingly, female broadcasters focused more often on gendered descriptors of personality and looks and appearances, while male commentators more often commented on task-related issues of performance including physicality and athleticism. The results of their study support previous research indicating that the "mediated nature of sports broadcast commentary is accompanied by gender bias,

a bias that appears to communicatively manifest itself in relatively dynamic fashion” (Billings et al., 2002, p. 299).

Christopherson, Janning and McConnell (2002) focused on the analysis of newspaper articles covering the 1999 Women’s World Cup Soccer Championship. Their research was based on basic contradictions of media representation of women in sport identified from previous research: conflicting images of female bodies, character stereotyping, and empowered versus oppressed status (Christopherson et al., 2002). These contradictions are used in evaluating “repeated and somewhat inaccurate framing of the games as a new era for women and women’s empowerment” (Christopherson et al., 2002, p. 171). A content analysis was conducted using newspaper articles containing reports on the 1999 Women’s World Cup soccer championship.

The authors found that the coverage of this event contained a high amount of gendered commentary, as half of the articles made reference to the status of women and nearly one-third of the articles discussed the appearance, body, or sexuality of the players and/or the audience (Christopherson et al., 2002, p. 177). Female soccer players promoted women’s empowerment because of their sex appeal, and also because of their more stereotypically masculine qualities such as grit and determination. The presence of female and masculine qualities was found to work, as long as the athletes had *both* of these sets of qualities. The authors concluded that, “reporters analyzed the games...through a gendered lens that highlighted and reinforced gender stereotypes about women” (Christopherson et al., 2002, p. 183). The attempt to appeal to both men and women audiences means that the athletes were represented by the media in a way that

praised their athletic performance within socially acceptable constructs such as behavior, sexual orientation, and class (Christopherson et al., 2002).

Shugart (2003) also examined the media coverage of the U.S. National Women's Soccer team in order to assess how gender is addressed in media coverage. The author analyzed an array of major print newspapers, news magazines, entertainment magazines, televised coverage of the 1999 Women's World Cup tournament on *ESPN*, *ESPN2* and *Sports Illustrated*. Shugart (2003) presents four 'strategies of sexualization,' which she argued contribute to the "construction of female sexuality in the mediated representation" of the team. The author states that this construction, or framing, "accommodates increased popular consciousness of overtly sexist media practices, overshadowing their athleticism and undermining their achievements" (Shugart, 2003, p. 7).

The strategies presented by Shugart include 1) passive objectification of women (as seen in women shown more often in non active poses); 2) athleticism as sexualized performance (as seen in the sexualization of certain female athletes particularly in "traditionally female" sports); 3) vigilant heterosexuality (as seen in the tendency of media to define female athletes in terms of their relationships); and 4) asexuality as a foil (for those not representing traditional "sexuality," sexuality was downplayed and/or dichotomous to traditional notions) (Shugart, 2003, p. 7-26). These strategies, according to Shugart (2003) contribute to the "ultimate consequences of that coverage: commoditization of the sexualized female athlete" (p. 28).

In summary, the reviewed literature reveals that media framing techniques result in a lack of coverage for female athletes, a perception of "socially acceptable" sports for



women, and the feminization of females in sports. Tuggle et al. (2002) sum up the implications of the under representation of females in the media:

The message is that female sport is of little interest and female athletes are second rate. This can affect women contemplating or actually participating in athletics and how they view themselves and sports. Few people will become involved in an activity that receives little if any social approval. Media, therefore, frame female sports as less deserving of coverage than men's competition (p. 364).

While some researchers argue that media coverage represents the reality of sports audiences and participants, Hallmark and Armstrong (2002) contend that "if the media portray women's broadcasts as inferior through language use, promotion, and inadequate technical support, then they do not provide viewers an adequate opportunity to develop interest in the sport" (p. 225). Clearly, the way mass media frames women in sports can have long-lasting implications for sports participation and the social construction of gender.

### ***Increase in Female Participation***

Despite the issues surrounding the coverage of female sports, the number of women across all levels of sport is increasing. In fact, "the number of women in intercollegiate sports has increased more than tenfold since the implementation of Title IX, and participation in girls' high school sports in the United States has reached record numbers in 2000" (Acosta & Carpenter, 1994; Gillis, 2001 as cited by Hardin et al., 2002, p. 343). The recent increase in participation can be attributed to events such as the 1996 Olympics along with other monumental events occurring in the recent history of women's sports. According to Shugart (2003), "nearly all of the changes in women's sports and their coverage by the media have occurred since the 1996 Olympics" (p. 3).

Society's enthusiasm and interest in women's sports was catapulted as a result of the success of the 1996 U.S. female athletes (Fink & Kensicki, 2002). "The 1996 Olympics were, with some reservation, a significant step toward breakthrough coverage of women's athletics. In 1996, the sports media took notice of women athletes and told their viewers, readers, and listeners about these talented competitors (Brown, 1996; as cited by Hardin et al., 2002b). Some reporters even referred to women as being the "legacy of the Olympic games" (Hardin et al., 2002b, p. 342). Popular sports magazines, as well as news journals gave females high coverage as *Sports Illustrated*, *TV Guide*, *New York Times Magazine*, and *Newsweek* all ran cover stories about Olympic female athletes (Gremillion, 1996 as cited by Fink & Kensicki, 2002).

Other monumental events in women's sports followed the Olympics including the establishment of the WNBA, the Women's World Cup Soccer victory, and the U.S. Women's Hockey team's Olympic victory. "One of the biggest changes in mediated sport for women in the United States in recent years is the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA). The WNBA began its first season in 1997 with more television coverage than ever before in the history of women's sports (Wearden & Creedon, 1999; as cited by Tuggle et al., 2002). A year later, an Olympic gold medal was won by the U.S. Women's Hockey team in the winter Olympics. According to Shugart (2003), this is significant because most often hockey is associated with men due to its violent and aggressive nature – opposite of what the media tends to cover in women's sports. In addition, the NCAA recognized the Women's Frozen Four in Minneapolis in 2001, the first time in history (Hapin, 2000; as cited by Spencer and McClung, 2001).

Following the Winter Olympics, the 1999 Women's World Cup soccer match between the United States and China set an attendance record for women's sports events as 90,000 fans attended the sold-out final game (Starry & Brant, 1999; as cited by Tuggle et al., 2002), the largest ever to see a women's sporting event. Shugart (2003) refers to the media attention that the U.S. Women's Soccer team received as "excessive, lavish by any standards, even as compared to coverage of men's sports" (p. 4). According to Spencer and McClung (2001), "soccer emerged from the 1990s as one of the most visible team sports for women in North America" (p. 329). She attributes this to the momentum and increasing interest in women's sports following the WNBA and hockey victory.

According to Shugart (2003), in addition to specific victories corporate investment in women's sports has increased:

The face of women's sports and more to the point, media coverage of women's sports has changed dramatically. This is due in part to the fact that the benefactors of Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972... are hitting their athletic stride, thus creating a pool of talented and trained athletes. The high promising market for women's sports has sparked the interest of the most critical factor in the success of sports today: corporate sponsorship. The highly promising market for women's sports has prompted mega corporations like Nike, Reebok, and Gatorade to invest substantially in the cultivation of women's sports, to capitalize on a large, as-yet-untapped consumer base (p. 3).

Spencer and McClung (2001) suggest that four factors have contributed to the growing popularity of women's sports: sponsorships, successful Olympic performance by women, the emergence of professional women's leagues, and the financial support of corporations (p. 340).

With participation at a high, corporate sponsorship investment, and a number of monumental events marking female athlete success, one might expect the media to follow

suit. According to the Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles, however, nationwide data from 1999 indicated that women made up 38-42 percent of all sport and physical activity participants. Yet, at that time, sportswomen received only 8.7 percent of the total sports coverage (Gender in Televised Sports: 1999). Hardin et al. (2002) also studied whether the success for women's sports translated into significant changes in sports media. Their results showed that the gap between men and women's coverage had widened instead of narrowed during this period. The majority of research conducted after 1996 indicates that despite the progress women have made, the media's coverage of women in sport is simply not reflective of the increasing number of female participants.

### *Statement of Purpose*

The reviewed literature reveals that mass media framing techniques used in sports media result in a lack of coverage for female athletes, a perception of “socially acceptable” sports for women, and the feminization of sports. Further, research on the topic indicates a perceived and actual change in the popularity and participation in women’s sports due to a number of historical sports victories and events occurring since 1996.

These events have placed women on the map of sports culture. But do the popular sports media images and content reflect this changing sports scene? Are women still underrepresented, shown in feminine sports, and stereotyped to fit into society’s traditional ideas of sport? The purpose of this study is to address these questions in order to determine whether this movement has been positively reflected in the coverage of women in popular sports media. In addition, this study will add to prior research in the area by focusing on a critical historical period in women’s sports.

This study is important because a magazine’s cover and cover story reflect and frame the world of sports for millions of readers. Thus, *Sports Illustrated* directly and indirectly contributes to society’s construction of gender – in this case, the role of females in athletics. The effect of framing can affect both males’ and females’ values and attitudes toward females in sports. Furthermore, framing techniques can indirectly influence people’s participation in and satisfaction from their athletic involvement (Pedersen, 2002a).

Based on the cited literature, females in sport are not only underrepresented, but often misrepresented. The fact that females in sport have made historical progress in participation since the 1996 Olympics, leads to the following questions:

RQ1: Is there a difference between the number of male and female athletes represented on the covers and in the cover articles of *Sports Illustrated* from 1996 – 2005?

RQ2: Is there an increase in the coverage of female athletes represented on *Sports Illustrated* magazine covers from 1996 to 2005?

RQ3: Is there a difference in active/non active photographic depictions of male and female athletes on *Sports Illustrated* covers from 1996 – 2005?

RQ4: Is there a difference between the way male and female athletes are portrayed in the cover articles of *Sports Illustrated* from 1996 to 2005?

RQ5: How does the representation of female athletes in *Sports Illustrated* from 1996 – 2005 compare to Shugart's (2003) four 'strategies of sexualization'?

## Chapter 2

### *Methodology*

#### *Subjects*

A content analysis of cover photographs and cover articles was conducted for ten years of *Sports Illustrated* magazine from 1996 - 2005. *Sports Illustrated* is issued weekly and in this sample, a total of 485 issues were coded (an average of 48.5 issues per year). The sample did not include special or bonus issues (such as the football preview).

The time period of 1996 – 2005 was chosen due to the increase in female participation in sports and the historical progress that women made during this time period. Coincidentally, it also captures the last ten years of *Sports Illustrated's* 50 year coverage as the magazine's first full 52 issues were published in 1955. *Sports Illustrated* magazine was chosen because of its longevity and consistently high circulation figures as over 18 million men and five million women currently read *Sports Illustrated* each week (*Sports Illustrated*, 2005, as cited at [www.si.com](http://www.si.com)). In addition, it was chosen because of the previous research focusing on this medium and the comparison possibilities (Salwen and Wood, 1994; Fink & Kensicki, 2002).

Magazine covers and headlines lure and attract viewers with framing techniques including the strategic use of photographs and headlines. Due to their “readability and impact” (Hardin et al., 2002a, p. 66), cover photograph subjects were the primary framing techniques and units of analyses used in the study.

Each person on the cover of the magazines was analyzed. Photographs were analyzed for up to four “identifiable people” (Salwen & Wood, 1994). Those photos with

more than four identifiable people were excluded as a high number of people on a magazine cover may detract from individual identities (Salwen & Wood, 1994). People appearing in backgrounds such as sports fans, were not coded. Issues with photographs of objects were excluded from the sample (such as a racing car or a helmet) if the individual was not identifiable. Photographs containing individuals other than athletes (i.e. models) were also analyzed allowing the researcher to look at gender portrayal as it relates not only to female athletes, but to the female population in general.

The other unit of analysis is the cover story as it provides additional in-depth coverage of what the media considers to be current, important, and interesting to the public. Articles were analyzed for up to four “identifiable people” (Salwen & Wood, 1994). Those articles covering four or more “identifiable people” were excluded. The analysis of the cover stories included text only; photographs within the cover stories were not included.

### ***Procedures***

*Sports Illustrated* cover photographs and articles from 1996 – 2005 were collected. To ensure greater objectivity, two assistants were trained individually on the coding procedure and were given written, detailed instructions and coding category details for reference (Appendices A – E). To practice the coding method, assistants and the author coded a small sample taken from an older issue of the magazine. Upon initial completion of the coding, an overall reliability of .90 was established using Holsti’s (1969) formula. Holsti’s formula is the number of agreements multiplied by three over the sum of individual coder decisions. Additional instruction was given and discrepancies



between coders were discussed. A re-code of the issues resulted in an increase in reliability to .98. This calculation does not include an analysis of the number of subjects coded per issue as this was not included in the recoding. The reliability calculation of the initial coding for number of subjects coded per issue was .33. Added to the calculation, this would bring the initial reliability of the sample to .80 and the recode to .87 (assuming there was no recode of the number of subjects).

Intercoder reliability was calculated using Holsti's formula. Table 1 lists the reliability calculations for each category. The coefficient of agreement (i.e., total number of agreements divided by the total number of coding decisions all had observed) for the three observers was .92 overall. Holsti's formula was calculated to be 1.0 for gender, .92 for athlete, .88 for photographic content, .91 for article content, and .89 for number of athletes coded per issue. All scores were above the .8 range, which denotes an acceptable level of reliability.

**Table 1: Holsti's Formula – Reliability Calculations**

	<b>Total # of decisions</b>	<b>Total number of agreements</b>	<b>Holsti's Formula</b> $3(N)/C[1] + C[2] + C[3]$
			<i>N=number of agreements</i> <i>C=number of decisions made</i>
<b>Gender</b>	641	641	$3(641) / 641 + 641 + 641 = 1.0$
<b>Athlete</b>	641	592	$3(592) / 641 + 641 + 641 = .92$
<b>Photo</b>	641	569	$3(569) / 641 + 641 + 641 = .88$
<b>Article</b>	641	582	$3(582) / 641 + 641 + 641 = .90$
<b># of subjects per issue</b>	485	433	$3(433) / 485 + 485 + 485 = .89$
<b>Total</b>	3049	2817	$3(2817) / 3049 + 3049 + 3049 =$ $= 8451 / 9147$ $= .92 \text{ overall reliability}$

It should be noted that one coder had a tendency to code more subjects per issue than the other two coders. Since the reliability was determined to be .89 for number of athletes coded, the majority number of subjects was used for the purpose of statistical analysis. Also for the purpose of analysis, any discrepancies in coding between the three coders were changed to reflect the majority coding. This was justified by the overall reliability of .92.

Each photograph and article was coded for gender and athlete/non-athlete. An athlete is considered to be any identifiable individual or sports figure belonging to or

participating in a team or individual sport at any level. All other subjects in photographs were coded as non-athletes including coaches, officials, models, family members of a sports figure, spouses, team owners, etc. (Salwen & Wood, 1994).

Those photographs and stories coded as athletes formed the sample for the study. Photographs were coded into the categories of athletic action, dressed but poised and pretty, non sport setting and pornographic/sexually suggestive (Fink & Kensicki, 2002). Originally developed by Kane (1998), the following operational definitions for these categories were borrowed from Fink and Kensicki's (2002) research analyzing visual and textual constructions in *Sports Illustrated* and *Sports Illustrated for Women*:

*Athletic Action* - Person(s) actively engaging in a sport and dressed in athletic apparel (e.g. photograph of athlete in game action)

*Dressed but poised and pretty* – Person(s) dressed in athletic apparel, but posed for the photograph. Person(s) is not engaged in athletic activity (e.g. group shot of team).

*Non sport setting* – Person(s) dressed in non athletic apparel and photographed in a non athletic setting (e.g. photograph of athlete at home with family).

*Pornographic/sexually suggestive* – Person(s) dressed provocatively or photographed in such a way as to focus solely on sexual attributes (e.g. photograph framed on an athlete's breasts) (Fink & Kensicki, 2002, p. 325).

To allow comparison between this research and past research, the category of athletic action was considered an "active" pose, while dressed but poised and pretty, non sport setting and pornographic/sexually suggestive was considered "inactive." This

information was used to look at how “showing women less in athletic action and more in posed photographs enables a media outlet to construct a reality that serves to maintain the status-quo ideology of women as different and inferior athletes in comparison to men” (Fink & Kensicki, 2002, p. 325).

Cover articles were coded into the categories of: personal, victim, sports-related, system critique, sport struggle, sport victories, health personal, health sport, fashion (Fink & Kensicki, 2002). While cover stories did not fall into all of these categories, this coding system is believed to be inclusive of all possible cover article themes. Written content was coded according to *one* overall narrative theme:

*Personal* – Content describing the non athletic portion of a person(s) life (e.g. story of athlete’s family).

*Victim* – Content describing a person(s) struggle against adversity (e.g. story of an athlete’s history with drug abuse).

*Sport related* – Content describing a person’s ability as an athlete (e.g. story of an athlete’s sporting accomplishments).

*Sport struggle* – Content describing difficulties of a sport achieving popularity or content describing continued mismanagement or poor behavior of athletes (e.g. story detailing continued low awareness of a sport).

*Sport victories* – Content describing triumphs of a sport achieving popularity or content describing continued management or good behavior of athletes (e.g. story detailing rise of sport popularity).

*Health-Personal* – Content describing activities or products that improve a person(s) non athletic health (e.g. story describing suntan lotions).

*Health – Sport* – Content describing activities or products that improve a person(s) athletic health (e.g. story describing workout routines for sport-specific improvement).

*Fashion* – Content detailing clothing or makeup (e.g. story describing a new line of jogging attire) (Fink & Kensicki, 2002, p. 326).

This category system allowed the author to objectively consider how differences between the coverage of men and women in cover stories serve to maintain dominant gender and sport ideologies (Fink & Kensicki, 2002). The study's validity was strengthened due to analyzing a magazine that has been studied by past researchers and by using coding instruments that have been studied by past researchers.

## Chapter 3

### *Results*

RQ1: Is there a difference between the number of male and female athletes represented on the covers and cover articles of *Sports Illustrated* from 1996 – 2005? A chi-square analysis of *Sports Illustrated* covers and cover articles found that women are still far underrepresented in both photographs and cover story articles ( $\chi^2 = 512.97$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .000$ ). Of the 641 subjects (604 males, 37 females) photographed on the covers of *Sports Illustrated* during this timeframe, 597 are athletes. Of the 597 athletes, 22 are female athletes making up 3.6 percent of all athletes covered and 3.4 percent of all subjects (including non-athletes).

RQ2: Is there an increase in the coverage of female athletes represented on *Sports Illustrated* magazine covers from 1996 - 2005? Table 2 lists the breakout of gender and athletic status over the given timeframe. Results indicate that the average number of female athletes represented in cover photographs per year is 2.2 as compared to 57.3 male athletes. It should be noted that if a team was pictured, it would count as one athlete provided the team photo included over four subjects. This occurred in two instances for women and six instances for men. The most coverage was given to female athletes in 1996 (4 athletes) and 2003 (4 athletes). The least amount was given in 2001 (0 athletes).

The representation of female athletes on the covers of *Sports Illustrated* during this timeframe was analyzed through chi-square analysis. An overall chi-square analysis found that there was not a significant increase in the number of female versus male athletes from 1996 – 2005 ( $\chi^2 = 6.729$ ,  $df = 9$ ,  $p < .665$ ). Additionally, a Chi-square analysis

revealed no significant differences between any two years in the 1996-2005 time periods ( $\chi^2 = .537$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .464$ ). For example, between the years of 1996 and 2005 there was no difference in the increase of coverage for female versus male athletes.

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**TABLE 2: Photograph Content of Sports Illustrated from 1996 - 2005**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Athletes</b>		<b>Non-athletes</b>		<b>Total</b>
	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	
<b>1996</b>	58	4	6	3	71
<b>1997</b>	62	2	3	1	68
<b>1998</b>	53	1	8	2	64
<b>1999</b>	58	3	3	1	65
<b>2000</b>	54	3	4	1	62
<b>2001</b>	64	0	1	2	67
<b>2002</b>	54	1	2	2	59
<b>2003</b>	60	4	2	1	67
<b>2004</b>	55	2	1	1	59
<b>2005</b>	55	2	1	1	59
	573	22	31	15	641

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Also noteworthy is the fact that there was no significant difference found between the number of men and the number of women coded as 'non-athletes' (31 males; 15 females) ( $\chi^2 = 3.983$ ,  $df = 9$ ,  $p < .913$ ). There were, however, 15 females considered non-athletes out of the 37 females on the covers (40.5 percent of females) versus 31 males considered non-athletes out of 604 males on the covers (5 percent of males). So while there was a similar amount of non-athlete males and females photographed on the covers, the number of non-athletic females made up a far greater percentage of the total number of females covered during this time frame.

RQ3: Is there a difference in active versus nonactive photographic depictions of male and female athletes on *Sports Illustrated* covers from 1996-2005? Table 3 illustrates the breakout of gender and photo content. When female athletes were shown in photographs, they were shown in active poses 50 percent of the time (11 out of 22 photos) as compared to men were shown in active poses 69 percent of the time (396 out of 573). Chi-square analysis ( $\chi^2=15.152$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p<.004$ ) indicated a significant difference in the photo content of male subjects coded as athletes versus female subjects coded as athletes. A significantly higher percentage of men were shown in poses categorized as “athletic action” as compared to women.

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**Table 3: Cover Photograph Content of *Sports Illustrated* from 1996 – 2005 (N=594)**

	AA	DPP	NS	P	C
Sports Illustrated (a)	407	144	35	2	6
Men (573)	396	137	33	1	6
Women (22)	11	8	2	1	0

Legend for Table:

AA – Photo Content Athletic Action  
DPP – Photo Content Dressed but Poised and Pretty  
NS – Photo Content Non-sport Setting  
P – Photo Content Pornographic  
C – Photo Content Caricature

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A chi-square analysis was conducted to determine whether there is a difference between the number of male and female athletes photographed in active versus non active poses. To test for this difference, those subjects coded as “athletic action” were considered to be in active poses and those photograph subjects grouped into the categories of “dressed, but poised and pretty,” “non-sport setting,” and “pornographic” were considered to be in inactive poses as defined by Fink and Kensicki (2002). A chi-square analysis revealed no difference ( $\chi^2=2.628$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<.105$ ) between how males and females were represented among these two groupings. For both men and women, the categories of “athletic action,” “dressed, but poised and pretty” and “non-sport setting” were the three most popular categories and in the same order. So, while significantly more men were categorized in the “athletic action” category, there was no difference as to the overall categorization between active and inactive poses for male and female athletes.

RQ4: Is there a difference between the way male and female athletes are portrayed in the cover articles of *Sports Illustrated* from 1996 – 2005? Table 4 shows the breakout of gender among story content. Chi-square analysis ( $\chi^2 = 12.215$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p < .032$ ) indicated a significant difference between how males and females were represented among story content categories. This can be seen in the fact that females were grouped into three of nine categories (“personal,” “sports related,” and “sports struggle”) versus men who were grouped into five categories (“personal,” “victim,” “sports related,” “sports struggle” and “sports victory”).

**Table 4: Article Content of *Sports Illustrated* from 1996 – 2005 (N=594)**

	P HP	V HS	SR F	SS MI	SV
Sports Illustrated (b)	38 0	3 0	533 0	9 8	3
Men (573)	33 0	3 0	518 0	8 0	3
Women (22)	5 0	0 0	16 0	1 0	0

P– Article Content Personal

V – Article Content Victim

SR – Article Content Sports Related

SS – Article Content Sports Struggle

SV – Article Content Sports Victory

HP – Article Content Health (Personal)

HS – Article Content Health (Sport)

F – Fashion

MI – Missing Information

A further analysis between each content area pairing revealed a statistical significance between the “personal” and “sports related” content areas ( $\chi^2 = 10.358$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ). More than 90 percent (518 out of 573) of the articles in *Sports Illustrated* covering male athletes were coded as “sports-related” as compared to 72.7 percent (16 out of 22) for females. Approximately 22.7 percent of the cover stories featuring females were coded as “personal” (5 out of 22) as compared to 5.8 percent (33 out of 573) for stories featuring males. Content covering female athletes was not portrayed under the categories of “victim,” “sports victory,” “health (personal),” “health (sport)” or “fashion.”

RQ5: How does the representation of female athletes in *Sports Illustrated* from 1996 – 2005 compare to Shugart's (2003) four "strategies of sexualization?" To answer this question, a content analysis of all cover photos and articles which included female athletes was conducted. List A contains the featured female athletes, years they appeared on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*, volume, issue and author of the corresponding cover article. A content analysis of the articles focusing on the 22 female athletes reveals that Shugart's (2003) strategies of sexualization are relevant and present in the coverage of female athletes in *Sports Illustrated* during this timeframe.

Shugart's (2003) four strategies of sexualization were chosen for comparison purposes. Shugart's (2003) strategy labeled *Passive Objectification of Women* refers to the presentation of a female as an object in position for the male gaze in a way that is absent from their athletic context (p. 7). The presentation of Anna Kournikova in *Sports Illustrated's* 2000 issue is an example of this strategy as it relates to both photograph and content coverage. The photograph is a close up of Kournikova in street clothes lying on a pillow. The photo frames her face so that her blond hair is flowing over the pillow, her shirt is set off the shoulder and she is staring at the camera.

In the cover article, Kournikova is photographed in a bathtub with the headline reading, "She won't win the French Open, but who cares? Anna Kournikova is living proof that even in this age of supposed enlightenment, a hot body can count as much as a good backhand" (p. 95). This tactic "decontextualizes" the fact that she is an athlete and overtly reduces her status to sexy female (Shugart, 2003).

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**List A: Female Athletes on Covers of *Sports Illustrated* from 1996 – 2005**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Athlete, Sport</b>	<b>Volume (Issue)</b>	<b>Author of article</b>
1996	Christy Martin, Boxing	84(15)	Richard Hoffer
	USA Basketball Players (3)	85(4)	Alexander Wolff
1997	Jamila Wideman, Basketball	86(11)	Gary Smith
	Venus Williams, Tennis	87(11)	S.L. Price
1998	Michelle Kwan, Figure Skating	88(5)	E.M. Swift
1999	Brandi Chastain, Soccer	91(3)	Grant Wahl
	Serena Williams, Tennis	91(11)	S.L. Price
	USA Soccer Team	91(24)	Michael Bamberger
2000	Anna Kournikova, Tennis	92(23)	Frank Deford
	Megan Quann, Swimming	93(12)	Leigh Montville
	Marion Jones, Track & Field	93(13)	Tim Layden
2001	No female athletes on cover		
2002	Sarah Hughes, Figure Skating	96(10)	E.M. Swift
2003	Serena Williams, Tennis	98(21)	L. Jon Wertheim
	Annika Sorenstam, Golf	98(21)	L. Jon Wertheim
	Mia Hamm, Soccer	99(12)	Gary Smith
	Diana Taurasi, Basketball	99(12)	Frank Deford
2004	Maria Sharapova, Tennis	101(2)	S.L. Price
	USA Softball Team	101(8)	Tim Layden
2005	Danica Patrick, NASCAR	102(23)	E.M. Swift
	Jennie Finch, Softball	103(2)	Richard Deitsch

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In addition to the photograph, author Frank Deford, contributes to this strategy through his discussion of her appeal:

“...she [Kournikova] has achieved this status at a time when we are all supposed to be so gender-enlightened, when pretty isn’t supposed to matter anymore in the workplace, especially in such a meritocratic domain

as sports. So here is what Kournikova proves about Homo sapiens, male division, circa 2000: Skin-deep still counts. That is, for example, why this magazine, which is not run by naives, has Ms. Kournikova on its cover this week..." (p. 97).

According to Shugart's strategy, by discussing gender-enlightenment and meritocracy, Deford leads the reader to believe that progress has been made for females in sports. By then following up with the excuse that males are only human and that skin-deep still counts, the author legitimizes the reason for including Kournikova on the cover.

According to this strategy, this contradiction further discounts Kournikova's athletic ability. As Shugart (2003) explains, "Even as women's athletic virtues are celebrated and, accordingly, significance of gender is rejected, it is summarily resurrected with the reference to other [sexual imagery]" (p. 14). It should be noted that this was also the longest article of all cover articles given to female athletes (9 pages). The length of articles and the number of pages afforded to females is yet another framing technique that gives readers clues on what they should consider important.

Shugart's *Athleticism as Sexualized Performance* strategy depicts athletes in athletic roles, but the depiction is read as sexual text. The most prevalent example of this strategy is in the media's coverage of Brandi Chastain's removal of her shirt after the US Soccer Team's win. Deford writes, "Team sports have never produced sex objects until the U.S. Women's soccer team took on its celebrated babe status last year" (p.101) and refers to Brandi Chastain's celebration as a "strip tease" (p. 101). In a 1999 article covering the US Women's soccer team, Chastain's actions were again presented in a sexual context by author Michael Bamberger, "The US scored on each of its five attempts, the last of which came off the golden left foot of defender Brandi Chastain,

who, in her shirtless post kick exuberance, revealed that the rest of her is golden too” (p. 18). As Shugart (2003) points out, the focus of this strategy is on the sexualization, not the athletic context of the event and the fact that [Chastain] scored the goal to win the world championship (p. 10). Taking off one’s shirt, Shugart (2003) goes on to explain, is an expected behavior in men’s sports and it is unlikely that it is seen as a sexual act.

Two of the female athletes on the covers of *Sports Illustrated* in 1998 and 2002 were shown in athletic poses, however they were both figure skaters shown in leotards and doing the splits. This is consistent with Shugart’s (2003) explanation that “another manifestation of the strategy is that ‘sex-appropriate’ sports for women such as ice skating are identified...because sexualized performance is an integral feature for which athletes are rewarded” (p. 11). Even Deford recognized that “it is the sequined figure skating princesses who have most often been permitted their sexuality” (p.101). Whether this was intended to be read in a sexual context or not, according to Shugart (2003) these subtleties contribute to our understanding of the role of females in sports.

*Vigilant Heterosexuality*, Shugart’s (2003) third strategy of sexualization refers to the framing technique of connecting females to males. This strategy was present in the articles covering women during this timeframe. This type of framing can be seen in the way the media define female athletes in terms of their relationships. Whether implicit or explicit, according to Shugart this tactic acts to “negate the implied threat that females pose to traditional, male-defined and -controlled female sexuality” (p. 15).

An example can be seen in Richard Hoffer’s article on Christy Salters Martin, boxer and wife of manager Jim Martin. Hoffer writes, “Today Christy Salters Martin, in

addition to being Jim Martin's wife (a somewhat better story), has become an icon of gender equality in a society that must now consider glass chins along with glass ceilings" (p. 58). He goes on to write:

It's one thing to encourage women to get out of the kitchen and become doctors, quite another to allow them to appropriate the testosterone-driven sports that men have traditionally enjoyed (and that well-meaning people would hope to wean men away from). And if it's not confusing enough to see her appear in a white leather miniskirt at a news conference and then a blood-stained jersey in the subsequent fight, what about this husband-wife thing, where the Mr. sends the Mrs. into the kind of combat that is traditionally reserved for the man, the breadwinner, the head of the household? (p. 58)

The author continually references Martin's connection to her husband. Hoffer's overt statement that her husband "sends her into the ring" and that men "allow" women to participate in sports implies that her husband has control over her athletic performance. His use of symbolism - a "white, leather mini skirt" and a "blood-stained jersey" - represents the question of whether women can simultaneously be feminine and sexual, as well as gritty and athletic.

The *Vigilant Heterosexuality* strategy can also be seen through the framing occurring in headlines. The photo of Marion Jones on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* in 2000 shows Marion in an athletic pose; however, the headline reads: "The amazing Marion Jones presses on in Sydney after her husband's drug bombshell." In another example, Jamila Wideman's profile is photographed on the cover with her father's profile behind hers. The title of the article reads, "Out of the Shadows: Like her father, the distinguished writer John Edgar Wideman, Stanford point guard Jamila Wideman has had to confront a dark family legacy while attracting the limelight with her surpassing gift"

(p. 79). Shugart's (2003) explains that the media's consistent reference to female athlete's relationships with men "function to assert male influence, if not control, over female performance" (p. 18). While this may seem like a subtle strategy, few articles contained the reverse – a male connected to a female figure.

Another example of *Vigilant Heterosexuality* is seen in Deford's coverage of Kournikova as he wrote: "Did she really announce that she is still a virgin?" (p. 98) and "Little boys chase her. Big boys leer after her. Special K. Baby Spice. Pornikova." (p. 98). These comments illustrate a number of strategies that "function not only to infantilize the women and trivialize their athletic accomplishments but to represent them as susceptible and submissive to the whims of a controlling male figure" (Shugart, 2003, p. 17).

Shugart's (2003) final strategy, *Asexuality as a Foil*, was also prevalent in *Sports Illustrated's* coverage of female athletes. This strategy encompasses the idea that media frame female athletes as asexual which functions as a "foil against which the sexualized characterizations of the other athletes are more clearly defined" (Shugart, 2003, p. 21). In his article covering Kournikova, Deford writes,

Their stylishness is more the marvel than the tennis is. Martina Hengis, in contrast, seems to have been born a genius on the court; she, too, was bred in a Communist country and is represented by Adidas, but she stumbles through style. Her hair is always wrong, her court clothes old-womanish. The Kournikova taste though is impeccable. Even when Anna showed up at the Women's Tennis Association Awards banquet on six-inch heels wearing a form-fitting see-through knit minidress that showed off a bare midriff and a leopard-skin bra – which sounds like a 3 a.m. street walker's getup – it worked. On her. As god given beautiful as Kournikova is, it is her style and presence that, in sports parlance, take her to a new level (p. 99).



According to Shugart (2003), this would be an example of using asexuality (Hengis as old-womanish) to serve as a “backdrop” against which the sexuality of another female (Kournikova) was played out. Further, by posing the questions of “Maybe it must always come down to the internal rivalry: the Beautiful Celebrity versus the Gritty Athlete. Is it possible to succeed at both, simultaneously?” (p. 108), Deford implies that it is impossible to be an aggressive athlete, while also being sexually appealing.

In many articles covering female athletes during this timeframe Shugart’s strategies are combined for an even more powerful message to readers. An example of *Vigilant Heterosexuality* in combination with *Passive Objectification* and *Asexuality as a Foil* can be seen in Deford’s article as he discusses males’ impact on female athlete popularity:

Women athletes have always had to deal with the negative image of being too mannish. This is how jealous men have put down athletic women; denying them their femininity, making them neuter.... There has always been a vein of accepted pulchritude that has cut through the mass of antagonism toward women in sports. It is almost as if, despite themselves, men deign to give special dispensation to a select few gorgeous athletes – admiring their women’s figures, not their athletes’ bodies (p. 101).

By stating that men deny athletic women their femininity and that they give special privilege to beautiful athletes again implies that they have control over female success. Discussion about being too ‘mannish,’ exaggerates the dichotomy of the gorgeous athlete and non feminine athlete. Finally, comments on admiring women’s figures versus their athletic bodies are used as a tactic that can be categorized under the *Passive Objectification* strategy.

Of the articles that include these strategies, many refer to the idea that beautiful female athletes are more successful than those who are average-looking. This can be seen in Deford's above comment on Kournikova, "it is her style and presence...that take her to a new level" (p. 99). According to Shugart (2003), this is strengthened by the messages sent through endorsements and marketing. In an article covering NASCAR driver, Danica Patrick, author E.M. Swift frames the story in a headline and subtitle that state: "Decent Exposure – Forget racing, Indy turned Danica into a one-name celebrity, a hot pinup and the object of marketers' affections" (p. 57). Women's sexuality is being used to gain media attention, but only for those with sex appeal. Deford quotes Billie Jean King who address the double standard: "It doesn't bother me at all if some of the guys come out to watch women's tennis because they want to see a beautiful woman. Who can hold that against Anna? Still, it is unfortunate when others with a high skill factor don't win the endorsements. Sure, the good looking guys get more endorsements, but the difference in men's sports is that the ugly ones get their share too" (p. 106).

In his coverage of Mia Hamm, author Gary Smith suggests that the movement of female sports needs a face such as Mia's: "The movement needs the face because the face, no longer a pixie tomboy's, offers the femininity, the beauty and the naked passion that the sports and the camera need" (p.68). This refers to what Christopherson et al. (2002) discuss in regard to contradictions that occur through framing. Female athletes must be represented in a way that praises their athletic performance within acceptable limits to readers and viewers. When this happens, athletes become accepted through media framing techniques such as labeling as pointed out in an article on Serena Williams

written by L. Jon Wertheim:

Somewhere along the way she has also won over the hearts and minds of the critics in the tennis salon. As their sentiments have shifted, so has their vocabulary. Serena's 'irreverence' has become her 'taking the path less traveled.' Her 'arrogance' has been recast as 'confidence.' Her 'brute force' has been upgraded to 'sleek power.' Outfits once described as 'lapses in taste' are now 'bold and provocative.' The consummate tennis outsider has become the sport's figurehead (p. 38).

Along these lines, through framing techniques such as hook lines, authors covering female athletes during this time period captured traditionally feminine concepts. For example, two of the articles covering female athletes referred to crying. Michael Farber's article covering the US Softball Team opened up with "Now we know: There is crying in softball" (p. 50) and Tim Layden's article on Marion Jones began, "She hates to cry. Tears are too close to the soul, they could rinse away her strength" (p. 42). References to crying portray the traditional side of these athletes and remind readers of their feminine nature.

As a follow up on past research relating to Olympic coverage, it is noteworthy to point out that seven of 22 female athletes on *Sports Illustrated* covers from 1996 - 2005 were photographed during the Olympics. This is consistent with the literature that indicates that women receive higher representation during the Olympics (Hardin et al, 2003a). In contrast to prior research, there was not a noticeable discrepancy between the number of females shown in individual sports (12 of 22) versus those shown in team sports (10 of 22).

## Chapter 4

### *Discussion*

While females of all ages are becoming increasingly more involved in sports, this study shows that they are still grossly underrepresented on the pages of popular media such as *Sports Illustrated*. An average of 2.1 female athletes were shown each year as compared to an average of 57.3 male athletes. This difference is representative of how popular sports media frame our understanding of the role of females in sports. The constant underrepresentation of female athletes has the potential to result in the “symbolic annihilation” of female athletes (Fink & Kensicki, 2002, p. 325). If society does not see female athletes represented by the media, the message becomes one that places little value on the role of females in sports. The extreme level of underrepresentation in such a popular and mainstream sports media source, clearly communicates to both males and females that the sports arena belongs to males.

Not only has the coverage of women remained low, the number of female athletes made up only 57 percent of the total number of females appearing on covers during this timeframe. In contrast, 95 percent of the males shown on covers were athletes. In the year 2001, *Sports Illustrated* issued 49 magazines without a single female athlete on the cover. That same year, however, there were two issues with female subjects – the annual swimsuit issue and a picture of the Dallas Cheerleaders. These numbers, or lack thereof, imply that there is a perceived value placed on female athletes and non-female athletes. In fact, this study revealed that non-athletic women may be more cover-worthy to the majority of *Sports Illustrated* readers than the successful female athlete.

The results also appear to indicate that the monumental events for female athletes such as the 1996 Olympics, the establishment of the WNBA, the Women's World Cup Soccer victory, and the US Women's Hockey team's Olympic victory had little impact on the amount of coverage given to female athletes in *Sports Illustrated* during these record-setting years. While the US soccer team, US softball team, and US Basketball team were all on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* during this time period, the percentage of female athletes represented on *Sports Illustrated* covers has actually decreased from 4.4 percent during the 1957 – 1989 time frame (Salwen and Wood, 1994) to 3.5 percent during the 1999 – 2005 timeframe. The fact that the overall representation of females on covers has decreased at a time when women have an increasing number of females in sports indicates a disconnect between the reality of female involvement in sport and the way females are framed among popular sports media.

A number of team sports were represented by female athletes on the covers, though not as many as those representing individual sports as supported by prior research. This study revealed that of the 22 female athletes shown, 10 athletes represented team sports (36.4 percent). The top three covered sports for female athletes were tennis (5 athletes), basketball (4 athletes) and soccer (3 athletes). While overall more female athletes represented individual sports, the basketball and soccer coverage challenges previous research that found that team sports receive less coverage due to their lack of social acceptance (Tuggle et al., 2002). As mentioned by Tuggle et al. (2002), presenting individual or socially accepted and traditionally female sports can create the illusion that the audience is more interested in aesthetically pleasing sports than those involving a

sweaty battle between opponents. According to Crosset (1995), as referenced by Spencer and McClung (2001) individual sports “have traditionally provided the greatest opportunity for females to convey conventional notions of femininity” (p. 322). This may explain the high number of tennis players shown (5 of 22), which is consistent with past research.

When female athletes were shown in photographs, the results showed that over 50 percent of the time they were shown in active poses. This is compared to Salwen and Wood’s (1994) study of *Sports Illustrated* magazine cover photographs from 1957 – 1989 where only 2.2 of women were shown in active poses. Past research has suggested that female athletes are typically shown in inactive poses. This study may indicate a small amount of progress as it relates to the quality of coverage for female athletes.

In regard to article content, results showed that there were significant differences between how males and females were covered in the context of the articles. This difference was found in the number of articles coded under the categories of “personal” and “sports related.” As mentioned, there was a higher percentage of content covering male athletes coded as “sports related” and female athletes had a larger percentage of “personal” stories than did male athletes. This difference can be attributed to the strategies that Shugart (2003) discusses including the tendency of the media to frame female athletes as heterosexuals or linked to male figures. This framing technique creates a reason for presenting female athletes on a personal basis instead of solely on their athletic ability.

Shugart's framing strategies, which were frequently used in the cover photographs and articles of *Sports Illustrated*, illustrate how today's "mediated representations of female athletes" function in both overt, as well as more sophisticated, subtle and powerful ways than in the past (Shugart, 2003, p. 7). The overt statements relating to the sexual aspects of female athletes such as the Kournakova article, remind us how society perceives women in today's sports and communicates the message that female beauty and sex appeal often trump physical ability and degree of athletic success. The constant reference to women as sex symbols frames women as worthy of attention not for their athleticism, but for their entertainment value.

Just as concerning as the overt remarks are the references to the "progress" of female athletes within the articles which actually illustrate many of the strategies as described by Shugart:

"...it [the strategy of framing] was often reflected in apparently innocuous, incidental descriptors or disguised as shrewd commentary. The fact that those strategies apparently have become more diffuse is not encouraging, however...that they are now less clearly identifiable affords them the untold hegemonic potential, for their repackaging increases the odds that they are 'bought' as something else, especially progress" (Shugart, 2003, p. 11).

The repackaging of female athletes under the headlines of so-called progress simply brings forth and reminds us of the fact that women are seen as inferior athletes. To a reader who is not aware of these framing techniques, the author's framing of the situation may appear to be seen as progress since he is addressing the contradictions between what was and what supposedly exists today. Christopher et al. (2002) discuss how the attempt to appeal to both male and female audiences through the framing of progress "praises the

players while still maintaining control of their behavior, and celebrates their individual achievements within a group-oriented, heterosexual, middle and upper-class white context” (p. 184).

While the research questions of this study took a critical look at gender, coders also noted media framing techniques related to race, age, class, and ability. While cover photographs of *Sports Illustrated* appear to be diverse in regard to the subjects included, issues pertaining to race are prevalent within the content of cover articles. For example, in an article on Tiger Woods, author Rick Reilly writes, “Almost 50 years to the day after Jackie Robinson broke major league baseball’s color barrier, at Augusta National, a club that no black man was allowed to join until six years ago, at the tournament whose founder, Cliff Roberts, once said, ‘As long as I’m alive, golfers will be white and caddies will be black,’ a 21-yr-old black man delivered the greatest performance ever seen in a golf major” (p. 35). The decision to frame the story from this angle makes a difference as to the meaning of this event to the reader. In addition, and similar to the above examples with gender, “progress” is mentioned by bringing up past struggles.

Another article written by Price focuses on historically white dominated sports being taken over by black athletes. The article discusses the dedication of “lost dominance” for whites and the struggle for black athletes to keep the new inroads of success in perspective for its younger generation. Dedicating an 11-page article to the subject of race affects readers and provides a lens through which to view and interpret other photographs and articles. In addition, the decision to frame the story with the



headline, “What Ever Happened to the White Athlete?” may also affect people’s perception of the topic.

Nothing was noted in regard to class or age, however, the tendency to show athletes who are good looking and fashionable, as well as the conversation surrounding endorsements and celebrity status for athletes brings up issues of class. In regard to disability, no athletes with disabilities were photographed on the covers of *Sports Illustrated* during the 1995-2006 timeframe. All of these areas deserve a closer look to see how framing theory affects the meaning we place on certain groups within the sports world.

## Chapter 5

### *Conclusion*

Four main conclusions can be drawn from this study. First, mainstream media coverage, as represented in *Sports Illustrated*, continues to be male dominated. Second, while the number of female athletes participating in sports is increasing, the amount of coverage is not. More specifically, the monumental progress made by women during and after the 1996 Olympics has not been reflected in an increase of coverage. Third, framing is occurring through more subtleties, which means that gender difference is being packaged by the media for easy consumption by the reader. As Shugart (2003) points out, “the strategies appear to be more sophisticated, less visible, camouflaged as earnest, legitimate coverage” (p. 27).

Finally, strategies are being used to create the illusion of progress. In other words, written coverage still refers to females as sex objects though these comments are often legitimized by discussions of social progress. For example, Shugart (2003) points out that there are many references to the new strong and sexy female athlete: “Strong, we are told, is sexy; this sounds like progress, but in fact, it is an appropriation in which female strength has been redefined as male pleasure” (Shugart, 2003, p. 27). According to Christopherson et al. (2002), this balance “appeals to the hopes of women while perhaps assuring the men that nothing has really changed” (p. 184). For a female athlete sexuality then becomes a double-edged sword. It is a tool to gain media attention and at the same time it is a framing strategy that often disguises a female’s athletic ability.

Due to the fact that the number of female athletes is increasing, the implications of media framing for female athletes are wide-spread. If the media are relied upon to report important news (Spencer & McClung, 2001) and females are left out of the sports mainstream, the message received is that females have a small role in the world of sports. The females that do get pictured represent those that have the marketable package – good looks and talent – or just plain good looks. Females hoping to find role models through mass media will in some way be affected by these strategies and this could ultimately lead females to feel pressure not only to be superior athletes, but also to gain the look that will get media attention. The constant input of these messages for men, reinforce the notion that female athletes are less valuable.

### *Limitations*

When interpreting the results of this study it is important to consider a few of the limitations. First, this study analyzes only one magazine as a representation of sports media. Further, the articles cited as contributing to Shugart's (2003) strategies are from a combined five authors. While these results contribute to our understanding of framing, they limit the ability to make general conclusions about framing strategies for all popular sports media. Future research involving other popular sports magazines such as *ESPN Magazine* may solidify these findings.

Furthermore, in today's technological world sports enthusiasts may prefer to use the Internet for their sports information. While previous research has focused primarily on the framing occurring in newspapers, sports broadcasts and television, future research should focus on Internet media sites such as SI.com and ESPN.com. These sports sites

directly and indirectly contribute to society's construction of gender and in this case, the role of females in athletics on a day-to-day basis.

The focus of this study is on the cover photographs and articles, but does not take into account the photographs and articles covering female athletes included within the magazine. Analysis of these articles would provide additional insight as to whether the events during this timeframe created an impact or increase in overall coverage for female athletes within the pages of the magazine.

On SI.com, the editorial mission of *Sports Illustrated* magazine is written as:

*"Sports Illustrated weaves words and images together to provide readers with the richest and deepest understanding of sport--what happened, why it happened and what will happen next. Sports Illustrated fuels the reader's passion by allowing him or her to experience the richness, complexity and emotion of sports on their own terms"* (www.si.com).

As mentioned by Fink and Kensicki (2002) in their study of *Sports Illustrated* and *Sports Illustrated for Women*, many of the conclusions reached in this study are based on the assumption that *Sports Illustrated* intends to represent males and females in sports on an equal playing ground. In fact, the above mission seems to imply that the "richest and deepest" understanding of sport – what, why, and what next – would include women. It does not, however, promise to represent the two genders equally. As Fink and Kinsicki (2002) point out, "What a magazine's masthead suggests as their driving force may not actually be their true mission in a landscape of constantly changing economics, political, and social market circumstances. With readership demands and financial advertising quotas, the veritable mission of a magazine may be unclear to the readers (and, at times,

to the publishers of the magazine)” (p. 336). Therefore, the expectation of equitable coverage may actually be a limitation of the study.

### *Recommendations for Future Research*

In addition to the above suggestions for future research, additional research should focus on the impact that framing has on the male and female audiences of sports media. *Sports Illustrated's* mission as mentioned above refers to the audience discovering sports on their “own terms.” While research has focused on how the media may be affecting audiences, it has not centered on actual feedback from the audience.

While researchers assume that athletes and readers are affected by framing, it would prove beneficial to study *how* they are affected and to what extent this is true. Are framing techniques recognized by readers? Does the effect of framing differ between males and females? How do female readers or female athletes respond to the coverage of female athletes in magazines? If the cover of a popular sports magazine is supposed to frame athletics in a way that lures readers and sells magazines, what matters to either gender? Entertainment and celebrity status are an important part of this conversation. Future research should look at what it takes for a female athlete to gain celebrity status in the eyes of both males and females – whether it is good looks, athleticism or a combination of the two.

The packaging of women under the notion of “progress” should be further explored. Future research should address how the perception of progress affects readers, how widespread this strategy has become and whether the constant mention of progress coupled with overtly sexist comments cause us to take a step back in actual progress.

Furthermore, it would be meaningful to explore whether this idea of “progress” is present in the discussion of athletes and race and whether this contradiction has an effect on readers. By attempting to understand the reader’s perspective we may gain insight into how framing techniques affect our understanding and opinions of female athletes, as well as other groups.

Finally, future research should look at how women are using these strategies to their advantage. For example, Danica Patrick, NASCAR, said, “I don’t feel insecure about being girlie,” says Patrick. “I do as much media as I can because I want this IRL series to be so kick-butt that NASCAR goes, ‘Huh?’”(p. 57). Christopherson et al. (2002) discuss the fact that the success of the soccer players in their study was due to the fact that they “maintained elements of femininity at the same time they prevailed in athleticism” (184). The question, they pose is “whether this is a positive or negative message for young girls and about women in society” (184). Future research that addresses how these strategies may actually be seen as advantageous, as well as how women strategically use or perpetuate these stereotypes to their advantage would provide a unique perspective to this discussion.

This study supports past research that recognizes the under representation of women in sports media, as well as the strategies used by the media to frame female athletes. Many of these patterns have remained consistent over time and have actually increased in complexity. It is time to transition the focus from what is occurring as it relates to the quantity and quality of coverage for female athletes to the implications and consequences of framing for both male and female audiences and athletes.

It is important to look at what these results mean to a society and in particular the implications for female athletes. In addition, we need to explore the assumptions in this body of research. If one compares the quantity and quality of coverage of male and female athletes in different countries would these framing strategies be different, for example, in the United States and European or other countries? Is the coverage of female athletes in popular sports media merely an extension of how a society, and its culture, views females? If this is so and if media is a reflection of the society in which people live, do means exist to constructively change the quantity and/or quality of coverage for females?

Further, if entertainment is the driving force behind this type of media, is change realistic? At the heart of this conversation is the difficult question of whether it is better for female athletes to receive stereotypical coverage or simply no coverage at all. These questions, among others, need to be explored to reach a deeper understanding of the impact of media framing. By shifting the focus from identifying framing theory within popular sports media to looking at the societal implications, we will increase our understanding of the role that the media plays in reflecting or in shaping a society.

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## APPENDIX A

### Sports Illustrated Coding Instructions

- 1) Each magazine year (1996 – 2005) is organized in a separate folder marked with the appropriate year.
- 2) Each issue (1 – 52) will be marked on the hard copies of cover photos and the cover articles. Cover photos are in the left pocket of the folder, cover articles are in the right pocket.
- 3) On the coding sheet, the year will be located on the top of the page. The issues will be labeled in the first column. Please use these numbers to record the appropriate data.
- 4) Read through the following documents carefully: *Explanation of Cover Photograph Coding Categories*, *Explanation of Cover Article Coding Categories*, and *Strategies of Sexualization*.
- 5) Complete steps #6 – #10 for each issue from 1996 – 2005.
- 6) Record the gender of the individual(s) on the cover up to four identifiable individuals. Use “M” for male and “F” for female. If there is more than one identifiable individual on the cover, record an M or F for each. For example, if there are two males, record M, M. If there are more than four individuals (and they do not make up an athletic team), do not code that particular issue. If there is an athletic team in the photograph with more than four individuals, code as if it is one individual.
- 7) Code each individual(s) into the categories of athlete or non-athlete. An athlete is considered to be any identifiable individual or sports figure belonging to or participating in a team or individual sport at any level. All other subjects including coaches, officials, models, family members, etc. should be considered non-athletes. In the event an athlete is now being shown as a coach, code him/her as a non-athlete (as that is his/her current status).
- 8) If the individual on the cover is coded as a non athlete, no further coding for either the photograph or article is required for that issue. If the individual is coded as an athlete, proceed to step 9.
- 9) Code each athlete(s) into one of the four cover photo categories of athletic action (A), dressed but poised and pretty (D), non sport setting (N), and pornographic/sexually suggestive (P). Refer to the Cover Photo Coding Categories Explanation sheet for a detailed explanation of these coding categories.
- 10) Code the overall theme of the cover story into one of the eight cover story coding categories (this includes Personal (P), Victim (V), etc). Refer to the Cover Article Coding Category Explanation sheet for a detailed explanation of these coding categories.

- 11) After coding each year, use Shugart's 'strategies of sexualization' (including passive objectification, athleticism as sexualized performance, vigilant heterosexuality, and asexuality as a foil), to record any observations that are either in support or contrast of these strategies. Use the Strategies of Sexualization sheet for detailed explanation of the strategies. Please note: you need not record notes in this regard for every issue, only those issues that warrant comment. If you have general thoughts on the matter, please record your comments on the third page of the coding sheet.
  
- 12) Finally, record any observations of how race, age, class and/or ability is (or is not) represented in the cover photographs and/or cover articles. Or, if you have general thoughts on the matter, please record your comments on the third page of the coding sheet. Again, you need not record notes for every issue, only those issues that warrant comment.

## APPENDIX B

### **Explanation of Cover Photograph Coding Categories**

*Cover photographs for those individuals coded as “athlete” should be coded according to one overall theme:*

***Athletic Action (A)*** - Person(s) actively engaging in a sport and dressed in athletic apparel (e.g. photograph of athlete in game action)

*Other examples:*

- *Photograph of a player resting during a game*
- *Photograph of an athlete waiving to the crowd before/after match*
- *Any photograph during an athletic event (as long as it is not posed for the magazine)*

***Dressed, but Poised and Pretty (D)*** – Person(s) dressed in athletic apparel, but posed for the photograph. Person(s) is not engaged in athletic activity (e.g. group shot of team).

*Other examples:*

- *Photograph of an athlete in uniform, but posing*
- *Athlete in photograph does not have to be in ‘pretty’ pose, as long as he/she is posed in athletic apparel*

***Non Sport Setting (N)*** – Person(s) dressed in non athletic apparel and photographed in a non athletic setting (e.g. photograph of athlete at home with family).

*Other examples:*

- *Close-up photograph of face (no athletic apparel is showing)*
- *Photograph shows athlete in clothes other than athletic apparel*

***Pornographic/Sexually Suggestive (P)*** - Person(s) dressed provocatively or photographed in such a way as to focus solely on sexual attributes (e.g. photograph framed on an athlete’s breasts).

*Other examples:*

- *Photograph of sexual nature that focuses on body part*
- *Non sport setting photograph with athlete in low cut shirt/mini skirt*

*\*Coding categories adopted from:*

Fink, J.S. & Kensicki, L.J. (2002). An Imperceptible Difference: Visual and Textual Constructions of Femininity in Sports Illustrated and Sports Illustrated for Women. *Mass Communication & Society* 5 (3), 317 – 340.

## APPENDIX C

### **Explanation of Cover Article Coding Categories**

*Written content should be coded according to one overall narrative theme:*

**Personal (P)** – Content describing the non athletic portion of a person(s) life (e.g. story of athlete's family).

- *Article is not focused on sports, but on other aspect of life; focus on the person, not the athlete*

**Victim (V)** – Content describing a person(s) struggle against adversity (e.g. story of an athlete's history with drug abuse).

- *Article is focused on a person's struggle with something other than their athletic inability*

**Sport Related (SR)** – Content describing a person's ability as an athlete (e.g. story of an athlete's sporting accomplishments).

- *Story may have a personal feel or spin, but still focuses on individual or team's athletic ability (or inability)*
- *Examples could be: Athlete's retirement; Summary of teams, predictions, recapping of teams/individuals; Entry into athletics; relationship with agent, etc.*

**Sport Struggle (SS)** – Content describing difficulties of a sport achieving popularity or content describing continued mismanagement or poor behavior of athletes (e.g. story detailing continued low awareness of a sport).

- *Story is focused on a particular sport's struggle (not a team or individual)*
- *Story is focused on a particular type of athlete, athletic behavior, or today's/yesterday's athlete*
- *General struggle (not a specific individual or team struggle)*
- *Examples could be: a particular type of athlete is on strike for more money; attendance/viewer decline for a particular sport, etc.*

**Sport Victories (SV)** – Content describing triumphs of a sport achieving popularity or content describing continued management or good behavior of athletes (e.g. story detailing rise of sport popularity).

- *Story is focused on a particular sport's victory (not a specific team or individual)*
- *Story is focused on a particular type of athlete or athletic behavior, today's/yesterday's athlete*
- *General triumph (not a specific individual or team victory)*
- *Examples could be: attendance is increasing for NCAA hockey games; athletes in a particular sport are contributing positively to society, etc.*

**Health - Personal (HP)** – Content describing activities or products that improve a person(s) non athletic health (e.g. story describing suntan lotions).

**Health - Sport (HS)** – Content describing activities or products that improve a person(s) athletic health (e.g. story describing workout routines for sport-specific improvement).

**Fashion (F)** – Content detailing clothing or makeup (e.g. story describing a new line of jogging attire)

*\*Coding categories adopted from:*

Fink, J.S. & Kensicki, L.J. (2002). An Imperceptible Difference: Visual and Textual Constructions of Femininity in Sports Illustrated and Sports Illustrated for Women. *Mass Communication & Society* 5 (3), 317 – 340.

## APPENDIX D

### **Strategies of Sexualization Handout Given to Coders**

*According to Shugart (2003), the strategies the media use to 'sexualize' female athletes include:*

#### **1) Passive objectification of women**

- Females are more often shown in non active poses
- Female athletes that fit the conventional feminine beauty ideals are more likely to be photographed
- Objectification of women's bodies

#### **2) Athleticism as sexualized performance**

- Females are positioned independent of their athleticism and absent of signifiers that functionally establish an individual as an athlete
- Females are position in photos for a male audience
- Focus on body parts versus overall athletic view

#### **3) Vigilant heterosexuality**

- Female athletes are defined in terms of their relationships
- The connection of female athletes to men

#### **4) Asexuality as a foil**

- For those not representing traditional 'sexuality,' sexuality is downplayed
- Those women that are different (age, race, sexuality, etc.) are defeminized or desexualized in a way that makes others that do fit traditional sexuality ideals to stand out

*Concepts adopted from:*

Shugart, H.A. (2003). She Shoots, She Scores: Mediated Construction of Contemporary Female Athletes in Coverage of the 1999 US Women's Soccer Team. *Western Journal of Communication* 67 (1), 1 – 34.



## APPENDIX E

ISSUE	PHOTO/ ARTICLE GENDER	COVER ATHLETE	COVER PHOTO	COVER STORY	NOTES
#	Male / Female  Please mark for each individual on cover photo	Yes / No  <i>(If no, you do not need to code any further)</i>	A - Athletic Action D - Dressed but Poised and Pretty N - Non Sport Setting P - Pornographic/ Sexually Suggestive C - Caricature	P - Personal V- Victim SR - Sports Related SS - Sports Struggle SV - Sports Victory HP - Health (Personal) HS - Health (Sport) F - Fashion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• Race</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Class</li> <li>• Ability</li> </ul>
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ISSUE	PHOTO/ ARTICLE GENDER	COVER ATHLETE	COVER PHOTO	COVER STORY	NOTES
#	Male / Female  Please mark for each individual on cover photo	Yes / No  <i>(If no, you do not need to code any further)</i>	A – Athletic Action D – Dressed but Poised and Pretty N – Non Sport Setting P – Pornographic/ Sexually Suggestive C – Caricature	P – Personal V- Victim SR – Sports Related SS – Sports Struggle SV – Sports Victory HP – Health (Personal) HS – Health (Sport) F – Fashion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• Race</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Class</li> <li>• Ability</li> </ul>
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Please use this page to record any general thoughts:

Shugart's (2003) Strategies of Sexualization:

- Passive Objectification
- Athleticism as Sexualized Performance
- Vigilant Heterosexuality
- Asexuality as a Foil

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Notes on gender, race, age, class, ability:

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Additional comments:

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