

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to examine how women are depicted in sports media. Previous researchers have consistently found over time that women athletes and sports are under-represented compared to the coverage of men's sports. Research on this subject has grown over the past 25 years. It has entered the phase where studies need to be replicated to determine if progress has been made and to further examine the effect this inequality is having on society and implications for public relations practitioners in the development of strategic plans and tactical media relations activities.

The research showed that more men than women are being depicted on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*. The content analysis showed that men were 14 times more likely to be on the cover than women. It also showed that women were also twice as likely to be shown in posed positions than in active, athletic action. It did not prove that women more likely to be shown in gender appropriate sports. The results were equal.

This study specifically tested progress in the past decade. It built on a previous study by Salwen and Wood (1994), which examined *Sports Illustrated* covers from three decades (1950's - 1980's). It showed progress was made from the 1960's - 1980's but not face-paced progress. Also the results were a decline compared to the 1950's.

Overall the research concluded women are underrepresented in the sports area especially with the increased opportunities of today. The evidence continued to show that women's sports are inferior to men's sports by not being pictured as often and in athletic action, this has impacted their potential. In addition, it also impacts the number of female

communication professionals in the world of sports. Future research needs to be conducted to delve into the impact this is having on public relations activities and practitioners in this field.