

# Attitudes about women's sport in mainstream media

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Cheryl Cooky, a Purdue University associate professor of women's, gender and sexuality studies, can talk about girls' and women's participation in sports; gender images in media; and the connection between feminism and sports. She is part of a team based at the University of Southern California that analyzes the amount and quality of media coverage for men's and women's sports. Credit: Purdue University photo/Charles Jischke

As the women's World Cup soccer tournament begins, a Purdue University sports sociologist is looking to see how mainstream media captures action on the field and enthusiasm in the stands and social media.

"There are spaces within [sports](#), participation for example, where girls and women have made tremendous strides in terms of [social change](#), however, we see a disconnect between what is happening in our culture and what is reflected in mainstream news [media](#)," says Cheryl Cooky, an associate professor of women's, gender and sexuality studies.

Cooky is co-author of "It's Dude Time!": A Quarter Century of Excluding Women's Sports in Televised News and Highlight Shows, a report published online in Communication & Sport. The 25-year study, in partnership with the University of Southern California, found that women's sports has declined over this period of time and now constitutes 2 percent to 3 percent of TV sports broadcast news coverage. This is in contrast to the positive trend of more women's live sports events airing on TV. Mainstream sports news shows still lag behind in coverage, Cooky says. And, when female athletes are reported on, it is often in the context of being mothers, wives and girlfriends. The report does show a positive trend in the decline of sexualized humor toward women.

"There is a need for positive women's sport coverage," says Cooky, who studies girls' participation in sports and gender images in media. "Last year's #LikeAGirl [social media](#) campaign was huge, and it was featured during a Super Bowl spot. It was a glass of water in a desert, and people are thirsting for positive messages around girls in sports.

"In the past couple of years, there has been a lot of championing of feminism in popular culture: Feminism is no longer the 'F' word. Beyoncé, Taylor Swift and Emma Watson are just a few of the entertainment celebrities who are visible in the spotlight and are

advocating for feminism. They are claiming the identity in ways that are unapologetic, and we have not seen that in the sports world. There are moments in sports, but it is happening in small scales and doesn't have as much visibility and outreach."

**More information:** "'It's Dude Time!': A Quarter Century of Excluding Women's Sports in Televised News and Highlight Shows." *Communication & Sport*. 2167479515588761, June 5, 2015. [DOI: 10.1177/2167479515588761](https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479515588761)

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