Women in sports journalism: Breaking through the barriers established by male hegemony

A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Honors Degree with Distinction in Journalism
to Graduate in January, 2014

Submitted to the Honors Committee
by
Lauren Reiniger
November 25, 2013
Abstract

This project includes a literature review on the evolution of women in sports journalism and what roles they have played throughout history. Primary research explores public attitudes toward women in sports journalism, and potentially provides evidence suggesting that women pursuing careers in sports journalism are becoming more accepted in this male-dominated field. Based on results from a public questionnaire, the public attitude appears to be more welcoming of female sports journalists. A journalist questionnaire surveyed women currently working in sports journalism. These responses suggest that sexism still exists, but these women are generally content with their careers. Overall, there is an apparent trend that seems to show women can expect to eventually break through the barriers in sports journalism established by male hegemony. While this project explores trends, more research would need to be conducted and compared to previous research in order to produce a definite conclusion that women are progressing in this male-dominated field.
Acknowledgements

Dr. John Jenks, First Reader

Dr. Jennifer Dunn, Second Reader

Dr. CarrieLynn Reinhard, Research Mentor

Dr. Mickey Sweeney, Honors Advisor

Dr. Lisa Petrov, Honors Liaison

Dr. Ellen McManus, Advanced Academic Writing Professor

Dr. Tama Weismann, IRB Coordinator

Paul Simpson, Academic Enrichment Center Executive Director

Those who completed the public questionnaire and the female sports journalist questionnaire
# Table of Contents

List of Tables...........................................................................................................................................5

Introduction..................................................................................................................................................9

Literature Review.......................................................................................................................................10

  History Pre Title IX..................................................................................................................................13

  History Post Title IX (Feminist Era)........................................................................................................15

Research and Gaps......................................................................................................................................20

Methods....................................................................................................................................................22

  Sample..................................................................................................................................................23

  Materials..............................................................................................................................................24

  Procedure............................................................................................................................................26

Data Analysis...............................................................................................................................................27

  Descriptive Statistics............................................................................................................................27

  One-way ANOVAs..............................................................................................................................28

  Correlations.........................................................................................................................................30

  Thematic Analysis...............................................................................................................................33

Conclusions...............................................................................................................................................39

  Limitations..........................................................................................................................................43

References................................................................................................................................................45

Approval Forms........................................................................................................................................49
### List of Tables

**Table 1**  
ASNE 2012 Numbers and percentages of men and women by job category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Supervisors</th>
<th>Copy/Layout Editors</th>
<th>Reporters/Writers</th>
<th>Photographers/Artists/Videographers</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>6,619</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>3,447</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>5,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>11,210</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>6,881</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>11,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>11,210</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>6,881</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>11,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>11,210</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>6,881</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>11,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>11,210</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>6,881</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>11,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>11,210</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>6,881</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>11,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>11,210</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>6,881</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>11,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>11,210</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>6,881</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>11,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>11,210</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>6,881</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>11,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>11,210</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>6,881</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>11,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>11,210</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>6,881</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>11,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>11,210</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>6,881</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>11,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>11,210</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>6,881</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>11,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>11,210</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>6,881</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>11,348</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2
**General Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale: see note below</th>
<th>Mean (μ)</th>
<th>Std. Deviation (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>1.384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>0.480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Views</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch - ESPN</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>0.742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch - SportsCenter</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>0.760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch - Local Sports</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>0.701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read - Sports Illustrated</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>0.624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read - ESPN Magazine</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read - Newspaper</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>0.748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen - Radio</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>0.717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen - Podcast</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>0.602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCAA athlete</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>2.548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in sports</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>1.025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** n=283

Scale for Age 1=18-20 2=21-29 3=30-39 4=40-49 5=50+
Scale for Gender 1=female 2=male
Scale for Political Views 1=Conservative 2=Republican 3=Democrat 4=Liberal 5=Independent
Scale for Watch/Read/Listen 1=never 2=occasionally 3=often
Scale for Interest in sports 1=strongly agree 3=neutral 5=strongly disagree

### Table 3
**Sports Journalists' Attractiveness/Attire**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likert Scale: 1=strongly agree 3=neutral 5=strongly disagree</th>
<th>Mean (μ)</th>
<th>Std. Deviation (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notice male sports journalist's attractiveness</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>1.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notice female sports journalist's attractiveness</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>0.905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male's attire affects professionalism</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>1.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female's attire affects professionalism</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>0.983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women judged more than men on what they look like</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>0.720</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** n=283

### Table 4
**Male and Female Sports Reporting**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likert Scale: 1=strongly agree 3=neutral 5=strongly disagree</th>
<th>Mean (μ)</th>
<th>Std. Deviation (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on female sports journalist</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>0.742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tend to listen more to males reporting football</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females better at reporting women’s sports</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>0.989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females as capable as males on reporting masculine sports</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>0.897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men report male sports and women report female sports</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>0.820</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** n=283
Table 5

**Locker Room Access**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likert Scale:</th>
<th>Mean (μ)</th>
<th>Std. Deviation (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1=strongly agree 3=neutral 5=strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males can enter female locker rooms for interviews before a game</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>1.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males can enter female locker rooms for interviews after a game</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females can enter male locker rooms for interviews before a game</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>1.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females can enter male locker rooms for interviews after a game</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.063</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: n=283*

Table 6

**Sexism and Equal Rights**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likert Scale:</th>
<th>Mean (μ)</th>
<th>Std. Deviation (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1=strongly agree 3=neutral 5=strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No such thing as sexism in the sports journalism world</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>0.715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women given fewer opportunities than men in sports journalism</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>0.768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males more common due to higher interest in sports</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>1.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women still working to achieve equal rights</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>1.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women will never have equal rights and opportunities</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>1.048</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: n=283*

Table 7

**One-Way ANOVAs**

| Variable (d.f) | F    | Sig. | Political Allegiance | | | |
|----------------|------|------|----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
|                |      |      | Conservative (n=56)  | Republican (n=55) | Democrat (n=56) | Liberal (n=44) | Independent (n=72) |
|                | μ    | SD   | μ       | SD       | μ       | SD       | μ       | SD       | μ       | SD       | μ       | SD       |
| Women still working to achieve equal rights (4,278) | 4.057 | 0.003 | 2.73 | 1.053 | 2.53 | 1.016 | 2.18 | 1.193 | 1.98 | 0.821 | 2.40 | 1.044 |
| Tend to listen more to males reporting football (4,278) | 9.080 | 0.000 | 2.63 | 0.926 | 2.49 | 1.103 | 3.18 | 1.029 | 3.55 | 1.044 | 3.22 | 1.141 |
| Women given fewer opportunities than men in sports journalism (4,278) | 3.915 | 0.004 | 2.43 | 0.828 | 2.44 | 0.811 | 1.95 | 0.699 | 2.23 | 0.677 | 2.25 | 0.727 |

*Note: μ=Mean SD=Standard Deviation
* indicates sig. difference of at least p<.05 between Democrat/Conservative
+ indicates sig. difference of at least p<.05 between Democrat/Republican
# indicates sig. difference of at least p<.05 between Liberal/Republican
- indicates sig. difference of at least p<.05 between Liberal/Conservative
### Table 8
**Correlations Between Watching Sports Media and Noticing Male Sports Journalists’ Attractiveness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESPN and male attractiveness</td>
<td>0.154</td>
<td>0.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SportsCenter and male attractiveness</td>
<td>0.188</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local TV and male attractiveness</td>
<td>0.135</td>
<td>0.023</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 9
**Correlations Between Watching Sports Media and Noticing Female Sports Journalists’ Attractiveness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESPN and female attractiveness</td>
<td>-0.302</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SportsCenter and female attractiveness</td>
<td>-0.270</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local TV and female attractiveness</td>
<td>-0.048</td>
<td>0.422</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 10
**Correlations Involving Interest in Sports**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on female sports journalist</td>
<td>0.203</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tend to listen more to males reporting football</td>
<td>0.218</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females better at reporting women’s sports</td>
<td>0.176</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females as capable as males on reporting masculine sports</td>
<td>-0.212</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males more common due to higher interest in sports</td>
<td>0.205</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women still working to achieve equal rights</td>
<td>-0.170</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 11
**Correlations Involving Being a NCAA Athlete**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males more common due to higher interest in sports</td>
<td>-0.123</td>
<td>0.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women will never have equal rights and opportunities</td>
<td>-0.185</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Turn on the television to any given sports channel; turn up the radio to any sports broadcast; or go online to read articles about the game you missed. Do you notice anything about whom you see and hear? Unless you’re an observant feminist, you may not notice the lack of women in sports journalism. This paper studies the role of women in sports journalism; how this role has evolved throughout history; the obstacles these women have faced and still face today; and current attitudes regarding women in sports journalism. Data analysis of these attitudes suggests trends of women becoming more accepted in this male-dominated field. This information was gathered through secondary research and primary research. The primary research explores current attitudes on women in sports journalism from the public and from currently working in sports journalism. The secondary research constructs the literature review.

Literature shows a collective understanding of an established male hegemony in sports journalism. This hegemony is sociological and cultural, stemming from a historical male presence in sports in general. In this project, hegemony refers to the dominance of a male presence and influence in sports journalism. Because sports have always been more masculine and male-orientated, it is hard for the general public to accept female involvement in sports. While there is much literature on the women’s fight for equality during the 70s, 80s, 90s, and even early 2000s, there is a need for a higher quantity of up-to-date information in order to tell us if women will always fall behind men in sports journalism or if equality can ever be achieved. The amount of women who are pursuing sports journalism careers is increasing. More than one-third of students enrolled in U.S. sports journalism classes are women, indicating that significantly more women may be interested in careers in sports reporting than are currently
employed (Creedon, 1993, p. 49). It is important to conduct research to see if these women can expect fair treatment, acceptance, and success in this field.

To determine if this achievement can occur, there is a further need for research on the perspectives of the public, or the audience who tunes into sports journalism, and not just of those working in sports journalism. In a commercial-driven media where the audience can determine a network’s success or failure, audience acceptance of female sports journalists is crucial for their success in pursuing this career. “Journalists increasingly treat readers as consumers rather than citizens, an approach called high-market orientation…When reporters internalize [this], they cater to their beliefs about readers’ sense of immediate gratification” (Hardin & Whiteside, 2009, p. 60). The primary research of this project surveys the public, providing evidence for whether or not the sports audience is ready and willing to accept women in their sports entertainment. Furthermore, the primary research also surveys women currently working in sports journalism to get first-hand accounts on what they are personally experiencing as a woman in the male-dominated field of sports journalism.

**Literature Review**

In the field of sports journalism, women are not as common as men. This is due to a theme of male hegemony in sports. Marie Hardin wrote multiple articles and conducted research on this topic. Hardin is the associate dean and a journalism professor at Penn State University. She defines hegemony as “a form of control based on persuasion, not coercion, as the result of the responses of people to values that support social relationships and power structures” (Hardin & Shain, 2006, p. 323). Hardin continues to explain that individuals in social institutions thus participate in preserving the social norms (such as “masculinity” and “femininity”) that may ultimately oppress them (Hardin & Shain, 2006). In his research on the credibility and
authoritativeness of female sports reporters, Laurence Etling, a professor in mass media and communication at Valdosta State University, explains how gender role beliefs represent ideas of the proper roles for men and women in society, and sexist attitudes have been defined as those that place females in a position of relative inferiority to males. In Etling’s study, college students were questioned about sexism and the authoritativeness of sportscasters. 119 responders listened to a woman and 125 listened to a man. Etling’s research suggests there is an audience sex bias in evaluating sportscasters, with women perceived as being less authoritative than men.

Gender-role beliefs and sexist attitudes have also been associated with male hegemony; sport is embedded in masculine hegemony. Etling argued that men have been reluctant to accept the entry of women into the world of athletics because of a desire to retain a masculine model. Monica Gallegos, a graduate teaching associate in the department of communications at the University of Arizona, published an article in 2012 titled “The Wide World of Sports Reporting: The Influence of Gender- and Race-Based Expectations on Evaluations of Sports Reporters.” This article focuses on public perspectives; however, those perspectives are confined to just one university, and the article focuses on race in addition to gender. Gallegos concludes, “Female reporters may be viewed as more competent, reliable, valuable, and likeable when analyzing sporting contexts typically associated with women and femininity” (Gallegos, 2012, p. 461). This conclusion bridges the connection between the theme of male hegemony in present day and the specific examples of obstacles women in this field have faced in the past. When women invaded the men’s sports realm, it resulted in a denial of female-involvement. But, when female reporters were associated with “sporting contexts typically associated with women and femininity,” there was more of an acceptance.
Men dominate this field in both radio and television broadcasting as well as in print journalism. This is proven by reports on the number of women working in sports journalism, and journalism in general, over time. “Sports journalist jobs are overwhelmingly white and male. Women are just 6% of sports editors, 10% of assistant sports editors, 6% of columnists, 9% of reporters and 16% of copy editors/designers” (Gibbons, 2012). Although these percentages are low, they are slightly higher than they were six years before. Richard Lapchick, the Director of the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES) and the primary author of the TIDES 2012 report, said, “After six years from the 2006 report to the 2012 report, there was some change in the five key positions we examined… for gender” (Associated press sports editors racial and gender report card, 2013). From 2006 to 2012, there was an increase of women working as sports copy editors and designers by 6.6%, sports reporters by 1.7%, sports columnists by 2.8%, assistant sports editors by 4.2%, and sports editors by 4.6% (Associated press sports editors racial and gender report card, 2013). Despite these improvements seen in the specialized field of sports journalism, the ratio of men to women in the entire field of journalism in America decreased from 2006 to 2012 (see Table 1). In 2006, the ratio of men to women working in journalism was 33,345:20,217, or 37.7% female. In 2012, the ratio was 25,595:14,971, or 36.9% female. While this percent difference is extremely small, these statistics suggest a trend of female sports journalists becoming more common in sports journalism. As seen throughout more literature on this topic, it appears that women’s involvement in this field has increased and improved (in regard to working conditions).

Literature ranges from the 1890s to 2012, providing a wide range of history on the topic. The literature is evidence of the historical evolution of women’s roles in sports journalism. The beginning of this history discusses important female pioneers who have paved new roads for
future female sports journalists. Also within the history of this literature, there are many obstacles that women in sports journalism have faced. These include sexism and sexual harassment; rights to locker room entrance for pre- and post-game interviews; and lack of opportunities. The literature reflects on reasons why these obstacles exist, revolving around a basic male hegemony present in the world of sports. Finally, the literature suggests what needs to happen in order for women in sports journalism to achieve equality.

**History Pre Title IX**

Major female pioneers are recognized as the initial spark for women involvement in sports journalism. These important historical figures didn’t surface until about 1890. According to Oklahoma State University associate professor Mike Sowell, who worked more than 25 years in professional journalism and was a sportswriter and columnist for 20 years, the earliest legitimately documented famous female sports journalist could have been man writing under a female pseudonym:

In 1890, “Ella Black” appeared as a regular baseball writer, covering the Pittsburgh club in the Players’ League for the national sports publication Sporting Life… The authenticity of her identity became a source of debate by Sporting Life writers with some claiming her articles were penned by a man writing under a pseudonym. More than 120 years later, nothing more is known about Black than what appeared in Sporting Life that season… Like many of the women journalists of her generation, Black appears to have been lost to history. What no longer can be doubted, however, is that she was indeed a pioneering woman on the [sports] beat. (Sowell, 2012, p. 228)

Despite the questionable gender of the earliest documented pioneer, female sports journalists that followed were undoubtedly women, and each helped make progressions in different aspects in
women’s role in sports journalism. Most of the literature on sports journalism discusses these pioneers. On February 17, 1924, the New York Tribune (later known as the Herald Tribune) featured a two-column sports story by a new reporter named Margaret Goss. David Kaszuba is an assistant professor in the Department of Communications at Susquehanna University who wrote an article on Goss’s achievements in sports journalism. Kaszuba argues, “Goss established herself as the first American female journalist covering women’s sports for a daily newspaper” (Kaszuba, 2006, p. 14). Another woman, referred to as Mrs. Harry Johnson (her first name appears to be lost in history), is considered to be one of the earliest female sports journalists. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, she occasionally worked as a sports commentator alongside her husband during his broadcasts for Central States Broadcasting in Omaha, Nebraska (Grubb, 2010, p. 88). Many female sports journalists were essentially unheard of until the second half of the twentieth century. “Very little was recorded from the mid-1930s through the 1950s about women sportswriters, except for the career of Mary Garber, who was sports editor of an ‘all girls staff’ during World War II at the Winston-Salem Journal-Sentinel” (Creedon, 1993, p. 46). Even in Garber’s case, her work’s recognition is generally limited to this particular journal.

There is no doubt that women would continue to progress as professionals in sports journalism. However, those progressions did not come easily, as literature suggests. One example involves Margaret Josten, a reporter for the Cincinnati Enquirer from 1950 until 1993. “She once spent a day sitting on the Bearcats’ bench during a University of Cincinnati football game. One of the officials told her: ‘I don’t know if I can answer questions from a woman.’ Such was the life of a female reporter in 1957,” (Radel, 2013, p. 1). When Margaret Goss was faced with complaints and criticism, she said:

[The complaints] included the mere fact of my being a woman at all and being on the
sporting page—a spot, it would appear, sacred to masculine opinions alone whether the subject be feminine or otherwise… There is no come-back to this . . . rather medieval outlook. (Kaszuba, 2006, p. 24)

Goss’s quote exemplifies the main reason why women are not being fully accepted in sports journalism: because they are women. Circular reasoning aside, Goss’s point relates back to the central theme of male hegemony in this field. More female sports journalists didn’t surface until the feminist era began along with the passing of Title IX.

**History Post Title IX (Feminist Era)**

The feminist movement in the 1960s and the passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 changed a lot about sports. Title IX is a federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender in any federally funded education programs or activities. This applies to traditional educational institutions such as colleges, universities, and elementary and secondary schools, in addition to any education or training program operated by a recipient of federal financial assistance (United States Department of Justice). So, women interested in playing sports for their school were given the same opportunities and benefits as men. Also, women’s participation in sports increased. Fensch wrote a book titled *The sports writing handbook* (1988), in which he discusses how to properly report on women in sports. He says:

> Writers should not use prefixes indicating marital status… Females over the age of 18 should be referred to as “women.” They are not “girls,” “gals,” “ladies,” “chicks,” “broad,” “lovlies,” “honeys.” Words like “homemaker” and “housewife” are also not synonyms for women… When you have completed story about a woman, go through it and ask yourself whether you would have written about man in the same style” (p. 165-166).

Although this book was most likely targeted toward male sports journalists, Fensch shows
evidence of a positive change and a demand for respect toward women playing sports, which could further extend to women reporting sports.

Women were working hard to achieve equality, but some cases required the help of those already in power: men. Some literature, including Grubb’s, attributes women’s rise in sports journalism to the work of men in authority positions. Grubb (2010) says:

Bob Wussler, vice-president of CBS Sports in the 1970s, paved the way for women in sports media when he realized that women made up a sizable portion of the viewing audience. Wussler hired Gayle Gardner, who became the first female sports anchor to cover games on a weekly basis for CBS. (p. 88)

Here, it’s important to notice that audience is indicated as an important factor in including female sports journalists, as audience acceptance is a major focus of this project. Fensch and Wussler appear to have helped pave the way to success for women in sports journalism, but many females were pioneers as well.

One female pioneer of this time, Jane Chastain, started working in the mid-1960s for CBS and was the first woman to conduct a play-by-play of a live sporting event. Lesley Visser became the first female NFL beat writer in 1974, first female Superbowl sideline reporter, and first female NFL broadcast analyst. Suzyn Waldman was the first radio beat reporter to cover the New York Yankees baseball and the New York Knicks basketball teams (Grubb, 2010, p. 88).

Women were rapidly immersing themselves in sports around this time in history. In less than a decade after the passage of Title IX, women’s participation in high school sports increased 700% and 400% in intercollegiate athletics. However, the number of women entering sports journalism didn’t parallel the increase in women’s participation in sport (Creedon, 1993, p. 46). Despite the increase in women’s sports at the high school and college levels, it appears there was not a
similar increase in women’s participation in professional sports, resulting in fewer opportunities for female sports journalists to cover women’s sports. Fewer opportunities were just one of the obstacles women pursuing this field had to face.

Some literature suggests that the requirements for a woman to have a career in sports journalism had little to do with their knowledge of sports. Grubb (2010) quotes instances of this:

Women sportscasters… such as NBC’s Pauline Frederick and Nancy Dickerson, were hired for reasons other than their knowledge of sports (Allen 2003). Phyllis George, former Miss America, was hired as a sportscaster in the mid-1970s (Schwartz 1999). According to George, despite her hard work, viewers positioned her as a sex symbol (Martze 2000). Jayne Kennedy, who also had little professional background, replaced George as the new anchor for the NFL’s pre-game show. According to Schwartz (1999) neither was hired for her knowledge of football but to add a feminine touch to the male-dominated airwaves. (p. 88)

Although the feminist movement was in progress, it appears that some women were still not taken seriously as professionals in this career.

Another major obstacle stopping women from being able to perform their job as a professional sports journalist involved admittance to male locker rooms. Sherry Ricchiardi, Professor of Journalism at Indiana University, explains the movement for women’s rights in the locker room. She notes that the movement started in the mid-70s, and in 1978, a lawsuit was filed and resulted in the Melisa Ludtke Rule. Ludtke filed a suit because she was kept out of the locker room during the Major League Baseball World Series. The courts ruled in her favor because the incident violated the 14th Amendment Equal Protection Clause (Conan, 2010, p. 2).

Although Ludtke won her case in the 70s, the locker room issue was still a problem for
female sports journalists. One example took place in the next decade. In an interview with Neal Conan in 2010 on NPR, Paola Bovin, Sports Reporter and Columnist from the Arizona Republic, said:

When I first got out of college in the 80s, I went to cover a Dodger’s game… so I went to the visitors’ clubhouse… and felt [a player] smack me in the head. He was unhappy I was there and came up and asked if I was there to work or to look at something I won’t mention on this family program.

The very next decade, one of the most extreme incidents occurred. Boston Herald reporter Lisa Olson assigned to the New England Patriots on Sept. 17, 1990. She entered the team’s locker room and was met with an onslaught of verbal abuse. While the 26-year-old reporter was interviewing cornerback Maurice Hurst, she was approached by Zeke Mowatt who stood just inches away from her, naked, making lewd suggestions. Other players lined up behind him, also unclothed and making vulgar gestures. She described her reaction to the experience as feeling violated, a victim of “nothing less than mind rape” (Fuller, 1992, p. 41). Victor Kiam, owner of the Patriots, was overheard calling Olson “a classic bitch” (Fuller, 1992, p. 41). The NFL appointed a commission to study the incident. The commission’s finding, a 60-page indictment called the Heymann Report, was released Nov. 27, 1990. The three main offenders (Zeke Mowatt, Robert Perryman, and Michael Timpson) and the Patriots’ management were fined $47,000 in all. Apparently, this wasn’t enough to stop the sexism. On February 4, 1991, Victor Kiam joked at a sports dinner in Stamford, CT, “What do Lisa Olson and the Iraqi Army have in common? They both have seen Patriot missiles up close” (Fuller, 1992, p. 41). On April 25, Olson filed a four-count sexual harassment suit in Suffolk Superior Court charging civil rights violations, emotional distress and damage to her professional reputation. She could no longer
work in Boston, or in the United States for that matter, and took a job with media mogul Rupert Murdoch in Australia (Fuller, 1992, p. 41).

Female sports journalists being prohibited from locker rooms, and experiencing sexism while searching for interviews in locker rooms, were major obstacles for women in this field. Sexual harassment was, and somewhat continues to be, a common negative aspect of the job experience. In an example from a book quoting ESPN workers, Karie Ross, former ESPN anchor, says:

During my first week, I was writing at my desk… and I just felt this feeling that there was something going on, so I looked up, and the Playboy Channel was on… I looked behind me, and there were like twelve to fifteen guys standing there just to see what my reaction was. (Miller, 2011, p. 174-175)

Like most of the examples found in this literature, this took place in the 70s and 80s. Other examples of sexism are subtler, but insinuate facts about women in sports. For instance, Andrea Kremer, who started her career in 1989 at ESPN as their first female correspondent, said, “I hear this all the time: Oh, did you have brothers? Is that why you like sports? No, I like sports because I just have loved it my whole life. It’s not something that’s just endemic to men. Women can love it and be knowledgeable about it, just as men can” (Block, 2011). This quote is one that indicated the overall argument over whether or not women can be just as knowledgeable as men in sports, particularly male sports such as football and baseball. Sports editors and producers have claimed, “As long as the ‘Big Three’ (men’s baseball, basketball, and football) dominate, all other sports, including women’s events, will play second fiddle…The problem is that women are usually given the ‘soft’ sports (women’s sports) to cover” (Padgett, 1998, p. 6). Research attempts to settle this argument. Grubb (2010) explains why it is so hard for women to make
strides in the male-dominated field of sports:

Women sportscasters face considerable challenges when entering the male-dominated sports world. In the realm of sports culture, the ongoing competition among sports teams and athletes serves as a continual mechanism for constructing, validating and commemorating manliness. Sport is the nectar that nurtures the masculine self. It is a culture; the dominant culture in the United States where men rule and women are marginalized and objectified. (p. 87)

Research recognizes that sport is a male-dominated culture, and attempts to answer these questions: Are women making strides in sports journalism? Are women as capable as men in reporting sports? Are women in this field happy with their careers? While literature provides insight to these questions, there are gaps that need to be filled through further research.

**Research and Gaps**

As Hardin explains in her research from an article published in 2005, sports departments may have become more tolerant during the past decade. Also, there is evidence of hope for the future of women pursuing sports journalism. Creedon (1993) explains:

*We may be observing the beginning of a trend in sports reporting. Slightly more than one-third of those enrolled in U.S. sports journalism classes are women, which would indicate that significantly more women may be interested in careers in sports reporting than are currently employed in the field.* (p. 49)

However, women who enter sports media careers still face a male-dominated environment that discourages them from pursuing long-term tenure. “Many survey respondents seem to have adopted hegemonic values, making them more willing to accept their marginal status in the field and less likely to facilitate any change for the marginalized status of women's sports coverage”
(Hardin & Shain, 2005, p. 804). Most women have just accepted the fact that they have to play by the men’s rules in order to succeed in this career. This is supported by more of Hardin’s research. She conducted a survey in 2005 regarding female sports journalists’ satisfaction in the workplace. In a survey sent to 144 female sports journalists, most respondents (73%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I am satisfied with my current job.” 66% reported they were satisfied with the media organizations where they work, and 62% believed their employers to be “female friendly.” However, more than half of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, “I have never felt discrimination” in job duties or at the workplace. This research shows that, although most women have felt discriminated in the workplace, they are generally satisfied with their jobs. This suggests that sexism in the workplace is not a deterring factor for women pursuing this career, but is certainly aggravating.

In one survey conducted by Hernandez in 1996 on women working in sports journalism, 93% of female journalists surveyed claimed that the obstacles or frustrations they encounter are not the same obstacles or frustrations that their male counterparts experience. This study explores women’s experience of these obstacles. Female sportscasters said they felt pressure to maintain their appearance, constantly prove their credibility, confront inequitable treatment, work longer hours for promotions, and tolerate the network’s informal policy of hiring “beauty over intelligence” (Grubb, 2010, p. 89). This research, while somewhat outdated, shows the perspectives of women working in sports journalism and their experience in a male-dominated workplace. A gap in the literature shows itself here in regard to research on the perspective of women in sports journalism needing to be replicated in order to show current data.

Another gap presents itself because not much of the literature researches the public attitude on women in sports journalism. Grubb (2010) explains what has to happen in order for this
attitude to change:

For women to have equal opportunities as sportscasters, the sports culture needs to change. Boys and girls at a young age need to participate together in sports activities if we are to remove the traditional rituals for affirming masculinity. These changes to the sports culture rely on men seeking to define themselves not through their masculinity but as human beings which requires a wider cultural shift. (p. 92)

Grubb brings us back to the theme of male hegemony in sports journalism. The culture of sports has to become more accepting of women. As the literature reveals, sexist attitudes are still alive today, whether they are intentional or simply a part of our culture’s roots. This is seen through the sexist examples given by the literature. However, most of this literature is at least a few years out of date, and there’s not much literature from the past decade on this topic. Also, the literature focuses on the perspectives of women in sports journalism, men in sports journalism, or some public confined to a specific university—not the general public. Research admits there is a gap that needs to be filled. Etling (2007) says, “A better understanding could provide insights about the role of the audience in predicting success for women in sports broadcasting and the likelihood that women will continue to make career gains in the field” (p. 123). Through this project’s research, this gap is partially filled because it explores current perspectives of the public and of women currently working in sports journalism.

**Methods**

This project’s research question asks if women are becoming more accepted in today’s sports entertainment. It explores and compares attitudes of the public and of female professionals currently working in sports journalism. Data was analyzed through descriptive statistics, correlations, one-way ANOVAs, and thematic analysis. The responses collected through
questionnaires provide very current data, exploring public attitudes regarding male hegemony and if this idea is becoming less of a threat to women pursuing a career in sports journalism. The public responses are of those across the nation, and not just those confined to a certain area or organization. In addition to the perspective of the public, this research surveys women currently in sports journalism. This provides current literature on what experiences women have in regard to working in a male-dominated workplace. Results of the two data sets are compared to see how the public’s attitudes relate to the female journalists’ attitudes. The purpose of this comparison is to see if both groups show similar attitudes, therefore providing supportive evidence suggesting a higher acceptance of women in the field of sports journalism.

This research plan was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) on April 17, 2013. Both the public and journalist questionnaires were sent and collected from this date until the end of July. From the end of July through August, data was analyzed, and all of the traceable data from SurveyMonkey was deleted.

Sample

The questionnaires focused on two separate groups of people: the public and professional female sports journalists. The public questionnaire consists of 283 participants from ages 18 to 50 or older. The first section surveyed demographics of the participants. Of the 283 participants, 30.74% were ages 18-20; 40.99% were 21-29; 2.83% were 30-39; 11.66% were 40-49; and 13.78% were 50 or older. Most of the participants were born within the last three decades, which should be considered in data analysis. For example, those born before or during the feminist era may have different responses and attitudes than those born in a world where sexism is not as common. Females made up 64.31% of the participants and 35.69% of the participants were male, which should also be taken into account in data analysis. Since there were more females than
males who completed the questionnaire, there may be a gender bias in the responses. The political demographic was the most consistent: 56 respondents were Conservative; 55 were Republican; 56 were Democrat; 44 were Liberal; and 72 were Independent.

The journalist questionnaire consists of 10 participants and did not measure age. This part of the research consists of interviews completed women currently working in sports journalism through an open-ended questionnaire. These women described themselves with the titles of (a) senior editor of sports; (b) sports writers (two women described themselves as sports writers); (c) editor; (d) copy editor and designer; (e) sports columnist; (f) sports journalist (g) assistant sports editor; (h) beat reporter; and (i) sports reporter and weekend sports anchor. In the data analysis, each woman has a pseudonym for the purpose of distinguishing quotations.

The participants who completed the public questionnaire were reached through the snowball effect. This means that questionnaires were sent to immediate contacts, and those contacts were asked to forward the questionnaire to their contacts. The professional sports journalists were reached through email contact, if their contact information could be found on the Internet. These professionals did not indicate where they work or where they are from, but 20 women were contacted from various states and 10 women filled out questionnaires.

Materials

Both of the public and the journalist questionnaires were conducted using SurveyMonkey, a secure online survey database. A consent form explained how SurveyMonkey keeps each participant’s personal information private—a participant could not enter his or her name, and there were no survey questions that would reveal personal information. The only traceable aspect of the survey was the IP addresses, which were deleted after the data was collected and analyzed. The consent form also states that the participant, at any time for whatever reason, may decide to
opt out of the questionnaire and may do so without any penalty. The public questionnaire consisted of 31 questions attempting to measure the public’s attitude toward women in sports journalism. The journalist questionnaire consisted of 8 questions attempting to measure the attitudes of women currently working in sports journalism.

In the journalist questionnaire, each woman was asked the following:

• what her job title was;
• the ratio of men to women at her places of work;
• whether or not she had experienced sexism related to work;
• if she felt she is given as many opportunities as men at work;
• how much thought she puts into her work attire;
• if she had ever been judged based on her appearance; and
• if she felt respected as a sports journalist.

Also, at the end of the questionnaire, they could state anything they would change about working in sports journalism.

Each participant completed the public questionnaire regarding his or her personal views toward women in sports journalism. The purpose of this study is to see how participants view women sports journalists today, and if the future of sports journalism can expect to see more women involved. Things to consider in the analysis of data are age, gender, ethnicity, religion, political views, relationships with female athletes, and whether or not the participant is an athlete. The participant revealed this information in the first section of the survey. In the body of the questionnaire, the participant chose to strongly agree, agree, remain neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree with a list of statements. The body of the questionnaire is made up of a range of statements involving the following:
• participant’s involvement in and fondness for sports in general;
• views on female and male sports journalists’ appearances and attractiveness;
• whether females should report on male sports and vice versa;
• whether females should be allowed in male locker rooms and vice versa; and
• if the participant acknowledges the exigency of sexism in today’s society.

This answer key is a 5-point Likert scale. The five points are as follows:

• 1=strongly agree
• 2=agree
• 3=neutral
• 4= disagree
• 5=strongly disagree

This data reveals correlations between participants and their attitudes toward female sports journalists.

Procedure

Participants of the questionnaires were requested to fill out a survey to provide research for an honors project with distinction at Dominican University in River Forest, IL. If a participant chose to complete the survey, he or she opened the provided link to SurveyMonkey. At the beginning of both questionnaires, a consent form had to be agreed to in order for the participant to continue to the next set of questions on the questionnaire. Participants who did not give consent could not complete the survey. Following the consent form, participants completed the questionnaires. Once the questionnaire was complete, participants were no longer a part of the study. Many participants opted out of the questionnaire at various points, and those incomplete questionnaires were not included in data analysis.
Data Analysis

Data analysis used descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA tests, correlations, and thematic analysis. The public questionnaire was analyzed through descriptive statistics, ANOVAs and correlations; the journalist questionnaire was analyzed through thematic analysis. First, the public questionnaire is analyzed, followed by the thematic analysis of the journalist questionnaire.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics don’t draw any conclusions, but show average responses from the public. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics involving the public’s demographics and their interest in sports. For watching, reading, and listening to sports media, the public’s highest average of paying attention to sports media was seen in watching ESPN ($\mu=2.05$). For the statement “I have an interest in sports,” it appears that most of the participants who took this survey had an interest in sports ($\mu=1.78$, SD 1.025), and are more qualified to answer the questions than those who do not have any interest in sports. If a participant did not have an interest in sports, they wouldn’t be as qualified to be described as part of the sports media’s audience.

Data shows (see Table 3) respondents choosing to be more neutral in noticing a male’s attractiveness ($\mu=2.96$) than female’s attractiveness ($\mu=2.3$). Furthermore, most of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that women are judged more than men on what they look like ($\mu=1.63$).

Table 4 shows descriptive statistics for the public’s attitudes toward female sports journalists and reporting sports journalism. Data on the statement, “Females are just as capable as males on reporting more masculine sports,” ($\mu=1.98$) suggests that the public attitude
generally strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. Furthermore, it appears that most of the public disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, “Men should report on the sports only men play and women should report on the sports only women play” (μ=4.34). This table shows promising data for women in sports journalism, since there are no strong attitudes shown against women in this field.

Table 5 shows descriptive statistics for the public’s attitudes toward both male and female sports journalists entering male or female athletes’ locker rooms. For each statement, the average ranged from μ=3.21 to μ=3.36, suggesting that the public has generally neutral attitudes toward this subject.

Data from Table 6 suggests most of the participants disagreed or strongly disagreed (μ=4.2) with the statement, “There is no such thing as sexism in the sports journalism world.” These descriptive statistics show a brief description of some of the public’s attitudes toward women in sports journalism.

One-way ANOVAs

Another aspect of the data analysis involved one-way ANOVAs. The one-way ANOVA is an omnibus test statistic and can’t reveal which specific groups are significantly different from one another, but does reveal that at least two groups were different (“One-way ANOVA in SPSS”). LSD post-hoc tests were used to indicate where exactly the main differences were present. In this study, ANOVAs were used to measure if any particular demographic showed strong attitudes toward female sports journalists, and potentially what political groups are helping or hindering the success of women in sports journalism. When reporting an ANOVA, the F score is shown with the degrees of freedom (df), and the significance (sig. or p) shows the significance level. If the significance is less than .05, there is a statistical significance (“One-way
ANOVA in SPSS”). The original purpose of the demographics section was to measure any correlations between the public’s demographics and their attitudes toward women in sports. This would address the research by seeing if both men and women equally wanted more women in sports journalism, or if the public had similar attitudes regardless of ages, ethnicities, religious views, or political views. Only the political affiliation could be used since it had the most consistent response numbers. Data analysis tested this demographic to see if certain affiliations would have certain beliefs. Testing involved discovering if there would be difference between the stereotypical right-winged and left-winged political beliefs. Specifically, analysis attempted to find if left-winged (liberal and democrat) participants selected responses that would be more supportive of progressions for female sports journalists, and right-winged (conservative and republican) participants selected responses that were more content with the present dominance of males. Because these numbers (see Table 7) were close to equal, the political demographic could be used in data analysis.

Table 7 shows the data from one-way ANOVA tests. According to this table, when comparing the political demographic to the Likert scale statement, “Women still have a long way to go when it comes to achieving equal rights to men,” there is a significant difference between the public’s political affiliations and their belief that women are still fighting for equal rights. An LSD post-hoc test indicated the main differences were seen between Democrats and Liberals compared to Conservatives and Republicans. The post-hoc analysis on this statement suggested the following: Democrats tended to agree more than Conservatives; Liberals tended to agree more than Conservatives; and Liberals tended to agree more than Republicans.

The second part of this ANOVA test (see Table 7) compares the political demographic to the statement, “When a female sports journalist and a male sports journalist are talking about
football, I tend to listen more to the male, since football is a men’s sport.” A post-hoc test showed Liberals tended to disagree with this statement more than Conservatives and Republicans.

The third part of this ANOVA test (see Table 7) compares the political demographic to the statement, “Women are given fewer opportunities than men in sports journalism.” The statistical difference shown in the post-hoc test is found between Democrats and Conservatives and Republicans. Democrats tended to agree more than Conservatives and Republicans with this statement.

Correlations

Another aspect of the data analysis involved finding correlations between variables in the public questionnaire. Correlations were used to see if there were any relations between the public’s attitudes on various statements. The Pearson coefficient (r) indicates the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables (Stockburger, 1996). A positive relationship will indicate that as one variable increases, the other also increases. A negative relationship will indicate that as the first variable increases, the second decreases. In a negative slope relationship presented in this data, since both variables use the same Likert scale, when a person strongly disagrees on one variable, they most likely will strongly agree on the other variable. For a positive slope relationship, with the same Likert scale, when a person strongly agrees on one variable, they most likely will strongly agree on the other variable. The significance of a correlation shows the probability that the correlation is due to chance, where p=the significance level; when p<.05, there is a statistical significance between the two variables. The public questionnaire data showed various correlations.
One set of correlations involved the relationships between those who watch sports media and their responses regarding a journalist’s attractiveness. Table 8 focuses on a male sports journalist’s attractiveness and shows relationships that are positive and significant. So, it appears the more a respondent watched sports media, the less likely he or she was to notice a male sports journalist’s attractiveness. On the other hand, Table 9 shows correlations between those who watch sports media and if they notice a female sports journalist’s attractiveness. While all correlations are negative, the relationship between those who watch their local sports channel and noticing a female sports journalist’s attractiveness does not show a significant correlation. However, the responses involving ESPN and SportsCenter show very significant correlations. So, data suggests that the more a respondent watched sports media, the more likely he or she was to notice a female sports journalist’s attractiveness.

Another set of correlations involved the relationships between those who claimed to have an interest in sports and their responses. The reason for this pairing involves the assumption that those who claim to have an interest in sports are more tuned into sports media, therefore providing more reliable responses. Table 10 shows the correlation between those who have an interest in sports in relation to their responses to statements. The first variable in the table shows whether or not they agreed to focus on a female sports journalist when she is covering a sport (see Table 10). There is a significant and positive correlation, so it appears the higher the interest in sports, the more likely a respondent was to focus on female sports journalists. The following variable shows the correlation between those who have an interest in sports and whether or not they tend to listen more to the male sports journalist when it comes to covering football ($r=0.218$, $p=0.000$). There is a strong positive correlation, so data suggests the higher the interest in sports, the more likely a participant tended to listen more to the male covering football. The next
variable compares an interest in sports to whether or not a participant agrees that female sports journalists are better at reporting on sports more females are involved in \( (r=0.176, \ p=0.003) \). The higher the interest respondents had in sports, the more they seemed to disagree women are better at covering women’s sports. Furthermore, the following variable compares an interest in sports to whether or not a response agrees that female sports journalists are just as capable as male sports journalists on reporting more masculine sports \( (r=-0.212, \ p=0.000) \). This negative correlation shows the higher interest the respondents had in sports, the more they seemed to agree women can cover men’s sports.

Table 10 also shows the correlation between those who have an interest in sports and if respondents agree male sports journalists are more prevalent due to a higher male interest in sports. This data shows the higher interest in sports, the more likely the participants seemed to agree male sports journalists are more prevalent due to a higher interest in sports than females. The last variable in the table shows a negative correlation between those who have a high interest in sports and the belief that women have a long way to go when it comes to achieving equality; \( (r=-.170, \ p=.004) \). The higher the interest in sports, the more likely they were to disagree that women have a long way to go to achieve equality to men. These correlations provide a perspective of those who have an interest in sports and their current attitudes toward women in sports journalism.

Another set of correlations involved the relationships between previous and current NCAA athletes and their responses. Table 11 shows two variables. The first variable shows data on the correlation between being, or expecting to be, a NCAA athlete and the statement involving males being more common due to a higher interest in sports \( (r=-0.123, \ p=0.039) \). Because this correlation is negative, the data suggests the more recent an athlete has played in
the NCAA, the less likely he or she is to agree that males are more prevalent due to a higher interest in sports. The second variable shows the correlation between those who were or are NCAA athletes and whether or not they agree that women will never have equal rights and opportunities ($r=0.185$, $p=0.002$). Because this correlation is negative, it appears that the more recent an athlete has played in the NCAA, the less likely he or she is to agree that women will never have equal rights and opportunities.

**Thematic Analysis**

All of the women described a higher number of men than women at their workplaces; the highest male to female ratio was 50:2, and the lowest was 3:1. These results coincide with research discussed in the literature review that women are not as common as men in sports journalism (2012 Associated Press Sports Editors Racial and Gender Report Card). But, these women’s responses regarding their experiences in today’s workplace suggest a higher level of happiness with their job compared to those in previous research (Hardin & Shain, 2005, p. 809). In this analysis, the names given to those who participated in this questionnaire are pseudonyms, followed by that woman’s description of her job title. This is done for the purpose of differentiating quotations.

In regard to experiencing sexism in the workplace, the results were split; five indicated in their responses that they had experienced sexism, and five indicated they had not. On sexism in the workplace, Diane (copy editor/designer) said:

> At a previous job, my supervisor would send me messages when he liked what I was wearing (i.e. when I wore a skirt). Another co-worker occasionally made similar comments. These are very mild forms of sexual harassment, and I only mention these
because in my time working outside sports departments, male co-workers never treated me this way.

It’s important to notice that she has never experienced sexism in other forms of journalism, but did in sports journalism. Claire (editor) said she had not experienced sexism in the workplace, but did during two interviews for jobs she did not take. She said, “One manager told me not to worry; I’d never have to cover football since it wasn’t the place for a woman. Another manager showed up at my hotel room very late at night.” She added that, at work, she was not judged by gender, but by being from the south. Claire (editor) said, “I was repeatedly sent to cover events that were seen as ones a southerner would know about (hunting, auto racing, etc.)... that was far worse than any issues related to being a woman.” Gerry (sports journalist) also experienced sexism as a sports journalist. She said, “When I first started at my current place of employment, I had an editor who made me work the odd hours while everyone else got weekends and nights off. He also made sexual comments to other male co-workers to make me uncomfortable.”

Isabelle (beat reporter) described sexism at her workplace and in the field. She said:

I have been harassed repeatedly on Twitter by a variety of fans (many of whom made lewd, suggestive comments or commented on my appearance, which has nothing to do with my abilities as a writer) and in my job other journalists have occasionally made an inappropriate or suggestive comment. Unfortunately I think that, to a certain degree, this comes with the territory.

Isabelle refers to this “territory” that is also discussed in the literature review in relation to male hegemony in sports journalism. Jessica (sports reporter/weekend sports anchor) experienced a form of harassment that was more popular in the 70s and 80s; she was “denied access to locker
rooms for interviews.” The five women who indicated that they experienced sexism at work gave these examples of sexism in the workplace.

When asked questions about equal opportunities in the workplace, seven women said they were given as many opportunities as men and three said they were not given equal opportunities. Two of the three women elaborated on their answers. Diane (copy editor/designer) explained:

[It] has more to do with the organization of our newsroom. I’m technically a member of an editing/design department, not the sports department, even though I work in sports.

But I consistently receive excellent reviews and awards and haven’t been promoted in 10 years in my position.

Emma (sports writer) also felt she was not given as many opportunities as men. She said, “[I was] never given the chance to be a columnist at my present job after winning awards as a columnist at my previous job.” However, Isabelle (beat reporter) explained a positive experience, “Personally, I have never felt held back because I’m a woman. The bottom line is that my editors care about quality of work and work ethic, and I have high standards in both those areas.” Claire (editor) also explained a positive experience, “I have been fortunate to always work at places where there was equal treatment between men and women. If there was not, I would have likely left as soon as possible.” Gerry (sports journalist) said, “I’ve been at my current job for six years and I feel like I am considered one of the best in the section, and often get the more difficult or in-depth stories to write.” As seen through these responses, it seems that more women today are being more fairly treated and respected in regard to job opportunities.

Five women said they put thought into what they wear to work when it comes to being a woman. Diane (copy editor/designer) replied:
I basically try to dress like an old man. Nothing fitted, low cut, or remotely sexy. When I wear skirts, they hit below my knee. If I wear anything shorter than that, it's over opaque leggings. I don’t wear v-neck tops. Only sensible (2.5-inch wood-block) heels, but most days I wear jeans and a loose fitting top with flats or sneakers (my workplace is casual).

I’m kind of obsessed with being covered. Maybe that’s why I haven’t been promoted? ;)

Diane included a winking face after she suggested her conservative dress code was a reason she hasn’t been promoted. This remark could indicate that she is either somewhat serious about this question, or is simply playfully answering the question. She continued to explain, “When I used to dress like a (professional) female, a few Neanderthal sports co-workers noticed, so I decided I’d rather dress like a tomboy than dress the way I want to look and receive unwanted attention.”

Diane wasn’t the only respondent with a more conservative dress code. Gerry (sports journalist) explained:

A lot of thought goes into what I wear to work. I had a female co-worker for a few years who also worked in sports. She was very tall and skinny and was proud of her body, and rightfully so. But the things she wore to work were a little too revealing—short skirts, shirts that showed off her back tattoos—and coaches would comment to me about her. I was always aware of what I wore, but even more so after that. I always make sure my neckline and skirt line is respectful.

While some women prefer to dress more conservatively or cover more skin, others appear to recognize that a dressed-up woman is more likely to get more attention in a male-dominated room. Journalists need to get someone’s attention for an interview, and the tactic of appearance is useful for some of these women. Isabelle (beat reporter) said:
I’m very conscious of what I wear. I want to make sure I’m always appropriate, and that my outfits could never be interpreted as me trying to “get attention” or be used to flirt with athletes (and gain attention that is probably not helpful in my job). That being said, I’m also conscious of the fact that a well-dressed woman in a press conference room full of men is probably going to stand out and, theoretically, be called on more.

Jessica (sports reporter/weekend sports anchor) also prefers to avoid unwanted attention, but acknowledges the perks of being dressed up. She said:

If I’m anchoring I’ll wear a dress. If I am out in the field or going to a practice to interview coaches and players, I will lean towards loose fitting dress pants and a shirt that covers the bust. I switch clothing because I want to avoid an awkward experience, and get my job done without distraction. I’ve noticed when I look done up with makeup and hair it is easier to get an interview.

Of course, almost everyone puts some thought into what they wear to work, but some of these women are more conscious of the message they send out through their attire. It’s interesting to note that, while some of these women admitted that looking more feminine often made their job easier, they did not admit to utilizing this on a regular basis. Also, even though five women admitted to putting much thought into their work outfits, only two women said they had been judged based on their appearance. Also, Diane (copy editor/designer) said that she was judged when she first started working, but not in current times. Isabelle (beat reporter) said she has not been personally judged, but said, “Fans sure as hell like to take shots as women’s appearances, regardless of if they’re a size 2 or size 20.” These responses show either a trend of women becoming immune to these incidents or of fewer women experiencing these incidents.
Nine women said they felt respected as a sports journalist. Jessica (sports reporter/weekend sports anchor) said she feels respected in the field, but not at work. She explained, “I feel I am respected in the community and with coaches and players. My co-workers make it clear that they don’t like having a woman in ‘their sports world.’” Again, we see reference of a man’s sports realm. Gerry (sports journalist) said she currently feels respected as a sports journalist, but that it took a while to earn that respect. She said:

The first impression is you’re a female so you must be weak. Standing your ground and speaking your mind is effective, but I’ve found by just working hard and doing right by my sources have helped me earn the most respect. It’s not an overnight deal, but it is worth it.

When asked if she feels respected as a sports journalist, Abby (senior editor of sports) responded, “I do now. The lack of respect when I first took the job had more to do with the fact I work at a weekly; not my gender. I’m a hard worker and I get positive results, so the respect came afterward.” These responses indicate that, overall, these female sports journalists feel respected at their positions, which is a huge difference from the past.

When asked if she could change anything about working as a sports journalist, Jessica (sports reporter/weekend sports anchor) replied:

I would change the stereotype. People openly assume that I just want to be on television or have this job because I want to be with an athlete. In reality, I just love sports. My very first memories as a child involve being in a gym with a basketball, or playing baseball with my brothers. The game is my passion.

Jessica’s response alludes to the argument involving whether or not women can have the same interests as men in sports. Hannah (assistant sports editor) said, “I would love to see more
women involved. I have not experienced in overt sexism, but I would be nice to have a more balanced staff and to have women I can talk to who have shared experiences.” These responses show two women who still feel they are not completely equal to men in the sports journalism world.

All of these women’s responses have provided evidence on their own attitudes on working as a female in sports journalism, and some of these results can be compared to results from the public questionnaire.

**Conclusions**

The public questionnaire concludes that the surveyed public audience is willing to accept more women in sports journalism and sports entertainment. With that said, sexism still exists and women are still not equal to men in sports journalism, as shown by Gibbons’s statistic in the literature review along with results from both questionnaires. But, the results from this research show potential for future success of women in sports journalism.

According to Table 7, there were statistical differences between political demographics on the statement concerning paying more attention to a male sports journalist on football. However, no particular political view showed strong attitudes suggesting a strong preference to male sports journalists. Overall, the public’s responses did not show any strong attitudes against women in sports journalism, regardless of political views.

Table 5 shows descriptive statistics for the public’s attitudes toward both male and female sports journalists entering male or female athletes’ locker rooms. For each statement, the average ranged from $\mu=3.21$ to $\mu=3.36$, suggesting that, overall, the public has neutral attitudes toward this subject. Since the public attitudes did not show strong attitudes for either males or females entering locker rooms before or after games, it’s possible that the public no longer is
disapproving of females entering male locker rooms. Furthermore, only one woman in the journalist questionnaire said she was once denied access to a locker room. As discussed in the literature review, this used to be a widespread issue where many female sports journalists were being denied locker room access. This evidence suggests that attitudes are changing to be more accepting of female sports journalists in this profession.

In the literature review, Grubb (2010) said that in order for a change to happen that will accept women in sports, “boys and girls…need to participate together in sports activities if we are to remove the traditional rituals for affirming masculinity” (p. 92). The data gathered from the public questionnaire suggests the more recent an athlete has played in the NCAA, the less likely he or she is to agree that males are more prevalent due to a higher interest in sports. Data also suggests the more recent an athlete has played in the NCAA, the less likely he or she is to agree that women will never have equal rights and opportunities. Grubb’s proposition is supported by these data results. NCAA athletes see both men and women competing in athletics at their schools, so they recognize that both men and women are capable of being heavily involved in sports. This could also mean that NCAA athletes not only recognize that women can play sports, but also report sports. Furthermore, the correlations (see Table 11) could suggest that those who are not only involved in sports, but are also products of a newer generation, may be setting the trend of accepting more women in sports and sports journalism.

The data collected from both questionnaires suggests that women are still judged based on their appearances. Almost all the women said that, if they were judged based on their appearance, they were not aware of it. These results suggest that women today are either disrespected or given more attention based on what they wear and how they look like, but it appears to be to lesser extent compared to the past. Referring to the survey conducted by
Hernandez in 1996 on women working in sports journalism, women sportscasters stated that they felt pressure to maintain their appearance and tolerate the network’s informal policy of hiring “beauty over intelligence” (Grubb, 2010, p. 89). The responses from the women in this research could reveal that women are being more respected in regard to what they look like, as compared to when men used to more commonly outwardly comment on these women’s appearances. Furthermore, the results from this project’s journalist questionnaire can be compared to the results from the public questionnaire. In the public questionnaire, Table 8 shows relationships that are positive and significant. So, it appears that the more a respondent watched sports media, the less likely he or she was to notice a male sports journalist’s attractiveness. However, Table 9 shows negative correlations while the responses involving ESPN and SportsCenter show significant correlations. So, it appears that the more a respondent watched sports media, the more likely he or she was to notice a female’s attractiveness. In the journalist questionnaire, five women said they put thought into what they wear to work based on how they would be perceived, but only two women said they have knowingly been judged based on their appearances. This comparison suggests that, while most of the public notices a female sports journalist’s attractiveness more than a male’s, perhaps people are less likely to publically comment on women’s appearances.

In the public questionnaire, the average response for the statement, “There is no such thing as sexism in the sports journalism world” was μ=4.2. This shows that most of the participants either disagreed or strongly disagreed that sexism doesn’t exist in sports journalism. Sexism in sports journalism may continue to exist, but the responses to this questionnaire appear to be more accepting of women in this field, which is another step in the right direction for gender equality. The responses from the journalist questionnaire also show evidence that sexism
in this field still exists. Diane (copy editor/designer) said she has never experienced sexism as a journalist, but did as a sports journalist. Isabelle (beat reporter) mentioned a sense of “territory” still existing in sports journalism in which may never cease to exist. Jessica (sports reporter/weekend sports anchor) referred to this male-dominated field as “their sports world.” These references support the theme of male hegemony and a work environment dominated by men. The evidence from these women suggests an existing essence of sexism toward sports journalists, but the overall question asks whether or not there can be an expected improvement for women working in this field.

Based on the responses from the professional women and from the public responses, it appears that women are becoming more accepted in this field. Further research would have to compare the working conditions over time of female sports journalists in order to find if there really is an improvement, but these responses appear to portray a public attitude accepting women in sports entertainment. Half of the women surveyed for this project said they had experienced sexism in the workplace. This can be compared to Hardin’s study, where more than half of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, “I have never felt discrimination” in job duties or at the workplace (Hardin & Shain, 2005, p. 809). This comparison potentially reveals an improvement in treatment of women in sports journalism and less instances of sexism.

According to Table 10, the higher the interest respondents had in sports, the more they disagreed women are better at covering women’s sports. The negative correlation shows the higher interest the respondents had in sports, the more they agreed women can cover men’s sports. These two data results suggest that the public displayed attitudes that women can cover both male and female-based sports, and can do it just as well as male sports journalists. This
table also shows the higher the interest in sports, the more likely the public was to disagree that women have a long way to go to achieve equality to men. This shows that the participants who are more tuned in to sports journalism appear not believe women are still working toward equality. This could mean a number of things. It could be that those participants believed women are already equal to men. On the other hand, it could mean that those participants believed women still need to achieve equality to men, but do not have a “long way to go.” This data can be compared to the responses in the journalist questionnaire. The journalist questionnaire concludes that these women currently working in sports journalism generally feel respected as sports journalists.

While some have experienced sexism related to their work, the female journalists’ responses show an overall improvement in the treatment of women in sports journalism compared to previous claims and incidents. The public’s responses appear to be more accepting of women in sports journalism and suggest that women are just as capable as men, while women currently working in sports journalism feel respected as sports journalists. Overall, these women’s responses provide an idea of how women feel today about working as a sports journalist. Despite familiar obstacles female sports journalists have had to face ever since the first woman was seen on a sports story by-line, the fact that all of these women feel respected as sports journalists provides supportive evidence that women have come a long way in achieving equality in sports journalism.

Limitations

This project has limitations. The public questionnaire asked close-ended questions, which do not allow for individuals to elaborate on their answers. Also, there was not an even number of responses based on age, gender, race, and religion, making it impossible to draw any conclusions
based off demographic results. The journalist questionnaire asked open-ended questions, which vary in answers and cannot result in any statistical conclusions. In both questionnaires, social desirability could have affected participants’ responses. This means that participants may not have been honest in their responses, or may have responded based on how they thought they should respond to any particular question. Also, because respondents of the public questionnaire were selected through the snowball effect, there was not a complete randomness to participant selection. Presumably, participants chose their own contacts to forward the questionnaires to. Furthermore, only female sports journalists whose information was available online were contacted, also limiting randomness of participants. Also, in data collecting and analysis, 1 should have equaled “strongly disagree,” and 5 should have equaled “strongly agree.” This would have made many aspects of data analysis easier to understand since it would be more consistent with the accepted research style using Likert scales. If this research were to be re-conducted, there should be a higher number of responses for both the public and journalist questionnaires to ensure a more reliable sample. Future research should also compare to previous similar studies to draw conclusions on female sports journalists’ progressions in this career.
References


Applications. Retrieved from
http://www.psychstat.missouristate.edu/introbook/sbk17m.htm

http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=11&sid=80a14d0a-b55c-413e-9a33-928f6c0f25a4%40sessionmgr11&hid=26&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtGGl2ZSzY29wZT1zaXRl#db=ahl&AN=72396749

Table 1. Numbers and percentages of men and women by job category. (2012). *American Society of News Editors*. Retrieved from
http://asne.org/content.asp?pl=140&sl=144&contentid=144.

United States Department of Justice. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.
First Reader Approval Form
Second Reader Approval Form
IRB Approval Letter

To: Carrie Lynne Reinhard and Lauren Reiniger

Project: “Women in sports journalism: Breaking through the barriers”

IRB # 13-07

The IRB has received and reviewed the changes to protocol for the IRB application numbered above. Based on this review, your project is Approved.

You may begin the research as of the date of this letter and this approval is valid until April 17, 2014. If you need to renew this research project, please do so three months prior to 4-17-2014. For renewals, please refer to this study’s approval number to expedite renewals. Your renewal will keep the same IRB number.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at Dkirchen@dom.edu or Kathleen Mullaney (IRB Administrator) at IRBadministrator@dom.edu.

Sincerely,

Dennis Kirchen