

The future of women in sports journalism and broadcasting

Ella Morrissey
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Prof. Jack Lule
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INTRODUCTION

It is the year 2040, and there have been gender breakthroughs in the field of sports. People turn on the television and see a female duo calling the Monday Night Football game. In every major sports magazine, digital platform, and the monthly featured technology, the major breaking cover story features a byline with a woman's name on it. When someone gets into a hovercar and turns on the radio or hooks up their phone to listen to a podcast, a woman is doing the analysis of the latest NBA blockbuster trade deal or delivering the podcast. There will be more women on the business side of sports, conducting and negotiating sponsorship deals with teams and athletes.

That is the future. But, in 2022, that future seems far off.

In the last few decades, there have been award-winning and respected females breaking into sports media, but there is still a reckoning needed to understand how they have been treated and how they have worked to get to that position. Perhaps the next generation will consistently see a woman in print and on screen and perhaps they won't even recognize what used to be.

Since the beginning of sports journalism in the 1800s through the advent of sports broadcasting in the 1900s, sports writers, columnists, analysts, color commentators and those with on the field access have disproportionately been white men. It was an incredibly rare sight to see women working in the field of sports reporting. Not only are there disparities of women in sports journalism in general, but there are even greater disparities of women of color and women in the LGBTQ+ community. Today, more women are finding roles in the booth, behind the screen, on the field, in the writing room and in leadership positions. Yet much more work needs to be done.

Women have been battling for over a century to cement their place as respected and listened to members of the industry. Even after various court cases and laws have given women more access into the sports industry, this doesn't necessarily equate with equal treatment. In 2021, the Women's Media Center's Status of Women in Media report found that of the top 100 sports talk show personalities, zero were women (Anna Katherine Clemmons, 2021). Also, in its 2021 Sports Media Racial and Gender Report Card, the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports, gave the Associated Press Sports Editors a racial grade of B-plus but their sixth consecutive "F" for gender hiring practices. In 2021, the Women's Media Center also reported that although more women graduate from undergraduate and graduate journalism programs, the attrition rate of women is higher after four years in the industry. According to the Associated Press Sports Editors, women account for less than one in five among APSE newsroom members (Associated Press, 2021). Although that number has doubled since the first published report in 2006, progress is still slow. Even though it seems like great strides have been made, what has really changed in the last few decades? How much farther can we push? Title IX definitely provided a turning point but what more can we dream to do?

The passage of Title IX as part of the Education Amendments in 1972 paved the way for the beginning of more representation in previously male-dominated fields. The amendment, which grew out of the Civil Rights era, states that "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation, or be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." In athletics, women journalists began to have equal opportunity to coaches, equipment, facilities, locker rooms and interviews in the same capacity that their male counterparts do.

Yet even if a law is passed, mindsets and unwritten rules don't have to change. A widely recognized case in point is the 1977 *Ludtke v. Kuhn*. Melissa Ludtke was a female sports reporter for *Sports Illustrated* magazine. She filed a civil rights lawsuit against Bowie Kuhn, the fifth Commissioner of Major League Baseball, who had instituted a rule that barred female sports reporters from entering the team's clubhouse for interviews. Ludtke, who was denied access to the locker room after a World Series game, sued, arguing that her 14th Amendment right to equal protection had been violated. The US District Court for the Southern District of New York ruled in favor of Ludtke, ruling that it was Ludtke's fundamental right "to pursue a career under the equal protection and due process clauses guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment" (S.D.N.Y, 1978). This case opened the floodgates for other professional sports to change their stance on women in locker rooms and the way in which professional athletes were interviewed. Yet this case also had its negative effects. As more women began to enter the locker rooms, this led to more harassment and abuse.

Women have also failed to gain recognition for their work in sports. Take Mrs. Harry Johnson, for example. She is thought to be one of the first woman sportscasters, having worked for Central States Broadcasting in Omaha, Nebraska, in the 1940s. I scoured the internet and could find no evidence of her real first name, only the name of her husband. Mrs. Johnson's name is lost in history along with many other female broadcasters who never got the acknowledgement or the chance to give themselves a name in the industry.

Along with those who have been forgotten, it is also important to acknowledge some of the named pioneers in the industry, such as Jane Chastain. Chastain was the first woman sportscaster on the local and national level in the United States. She began her career in 1963, working for WAGA-TV in Atlanta. She was also the first female NFL announcer after being

brought in for commentary in 1974. Chastain was able to gain respect from coaches including Miami Dolphins coach Don Schula, who said he was skeptical of her abilities at first but later realized how good she was at her job. Yet she was met with her fair share of criticism. The network was berated with phone calls around the country for putting her on air. According to Bernie Rosen, a long-time sports director for WTVJ, "She had everything going for her, but the timing (at the network) was all wrong. Nowadays, she'd be a superstar." Although Chastain was one of the first, there have been many who have followed in her footsteps including Phyllis George, another woman to have a prominent role in television sports coverages in the 1970s; Jayne Kennedy, the first African-American female to host a network sports television broadcast; Hannah Storm, the first woman in American television history to solo host pre-game coverage of Major League Baseball games, and Doris Burke, one of the first women to be an analyst for NBA games and college basketball. These women have paved the way for current female sportscasters to break into the industry.

Despite these breakthroughs, there are still impediments to entry due to the male-centric industry of sports. While some male broadcasters have been ex-athletes, most of them are not and are simply just sports enthusiasts. The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports conducted a study in 2021 detailing race and gender in sports media. More than 100 newspapers and websites were evaluated and results indicated that 79.2% of sports editors were white and 83.3% were men (TIDES, 2021). Also, 25% of women who are sports editors worked for ESPN, revealing that without including ESPN staffing in the study, almost all the racial and gender categories would suffer tremendously. Overall, men make up 90% of sports editors, 70% of assistant sports editors, more than 80% of sports columnists and 90% of sports reporters (Richard Lapchick, University of Central Florida, 2018).

Women in sports media and women in sports generally go hand in hand, as an increase in women in sports media has led to greater coverage of women in sports. According to ESPN in 2021, there were five total full-time women NBA referees, an all-time league high. Fifteen of the WNBA's 33 referees are also women. There are more women referees in World Cup soccer matches and there are three female officials in the NFL for the 2022-2023 season. While still small numbers, this compares to no female referees just a few years ago. There are also more female coaches, including 12 in the NFL in 2021 and 23 in Major League Baseball in 2021. The percentage of women sports editors in general increased significantly from 10% in 2018 to 16.7% in 2021 (Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports, 2021). The pay gap between male and female sportscasters is still highly evident, yet it has been acknowledged. Much less research has been done on the disparity specifically in sports broadcasting but in researching the highest paid sportscaster lists of the past few years, the majority on that list are men. More recently, female ESPN employees have begun sharing their salaries with each other in an attempt to understand the company's structure and gain more leverage in future contract negotiations (GoodSport, 2020).

Many different organizations have been created, striving to examine the future of women in sports media and broadcasting and lessen the barrier of entry. One of them is the Association of Women in Sports Media, which was founded in 1987 by Nancy Cooney, Susan Fornoff, Michele Himmelberg and Kristin Huckshorn. Membership now includes over 1,000 men and women dedicated to advocating for women working in the sports media industry and promoting diversity through career-enhancing networking opportunities and mentorship initiatives.

The purpose of this thesis is to anticipate the future of women in sports media. I grew up in a household where a sport was always on the television or on the radio in the car. I would

spend nights watching some of the most historic and incredible performances by athletes. Yet I noticed the lack of a female voice in the broadcasting booth, on the floor talking to athletes or among the articles written the next morning online or in print. As a journalism major and a current editor of the sports section for the Lehigh University Brown and White newspaper, I am hoping to gain an understanding of the field and its future before I venture into it. This thesis will build upon work already done by experts in the field, including the Association of Women in Sports Media, and those currently working in the industry who can draw on their experiences. The thesis will review literature of those who have written about the past, present and future of women in sports media. It will then include findings through interviews from professionals who are making strides in the field.

Why does representation in sports journalism matter? Every part of society should be striving for greater equality and representation and sports broadcasting is just one example of the strides we should be making for women and minorities. If women gain more representation in sports journalism and broadcasting, that may aid in other disparate issues such as equal pay and equal opportunity. Once women are seen as more represented in sports, this mindset may flow into other aspects of society, including politics, entertainment and business. The future of women in sports media can help with the future of the world.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Women in sports media have weathered difficult years and moments to arrive at where they currently stand among their male counterparts in terms of equal on-air time, equal hiring practices and equal pay. Various scholars and authors have studied this history of women in sports journalism and broadcasting, including their challenges, their successes and hopes for their roles in the future.

BEYOND THE LOCKER ROOM

Written in 1987, “Beyond the Locker Room: Women In Sports On Major Daily Newspapers,” by Wallace B. Eberhard and Margaret Lee Myers, examined the difficulties women have faced in breaking the locker room and newspaper barrier as previous studies have tended to focus on women in broadcast sports journalism. The authors conducted a study, concentrated on women in sports departments of the nation’s largest newspapers. Calls were made to the sports editors of 109 newspapers, with all those editors being male. The calls revealed that “the final list showed 96 female sportswriters working at 69 newspapers with circulations of 100,000 or more. Forty newspapers in the list had no women in the sports department” (Eberhard & Lee, 1987, 595). Ninety of those females took part in a survey where questions on demographics, journalism experience and attitudes related to their work were asked. The oldest respondent was 53 and the youngest was 18. Only 20% of the respondents were married, and 10% had children. The authors revealed the influence of family background on these women pursuing sports careers was very low (Eberhard & Lee, 1987, 596). Of the respondents, 9.7% had a college degree and nine of the 15 who had masters were in journalism. Income for more than half of the respondents in 1987 was in the \$22,000-plus salary category.

The authors also asked the respondents to guess the number of male and female personnel in the sports department they worked for and “the total estimate of sports department employees was 1,061. Only 9 percent of that total was female, by our data” (Eberhard & Lee, 1987, 597). Also, over half of the respondents said they would stay in sports reporting for another five years or more. Although there was a consensus of job satisfaction and youth among the respondents, a third of the respondents said they thought they were employed originally as “token” or “quota” employees. When asked about their overall level of content as a sports reporter, 83% said they were satisfied with the assignments they were given. Yet, almost 60% said they had faced discrimination from their male peers in the sports department at least once and “the discrimination described by respondents was chiefly attitudinal: condescension, assumption of incompetence, resentment of female presence, and a general lack of acceptance” (Eberhard & Lee, 1987, 597). Fifty eight percent of the respondents said they had also received discrimination from athletes, coaches, managers and sports personnel and this discrimination fell into denial of access to locker rooms, sexual harassment, condescension and being threatened physically. There was also a divide between the respondents on the nature of writing as nearly half of them thought there is no difference between how women write sports compared to men while 41% said there was (Eberhard & Lee, 1987, 598). Eighty percent of respondents said there were not enough women in newspaper writing because “some employers are hiring one token or quota woman for their staffs, and then put on a hiring freeze” (Eberhard & Lee, 1987, 599). Another reason was that there is a belief that women don’t have enough of a background in sports to give them the exposure and interest needed for the profession. A final reason is that there are simply not enough women with an interest and background in all types of sports. Overall, the authors argue that women have recognized progress made but they are still aware of the barriers in choosing

that specific career field. “Although women have made a place for themselves in the press box and the sports department, they do not quite fit the familiar cigarette advertisement that allowed how women have “come a long way” in American life. It would be safer to say they have come quite a way, but there is a long way to go before women are fully accepted as sports journalists (Eberhard & Lee, 1987, 599).

TRAINING WOMEN AS SPORTSWRITERS

“Training Women as Sportswriters: Coverage of Women in Athletics,” by Pamela J. Creedon, attempted to understand why so few women venture into the sports reporting and sports writing industry. Creedon stated that nearly 80% of female sportswriters – in a study conducted in 1988 – said there were not enough women in newspaper sports writing. Creedon noted that very little information is recorded pertaining to female sports writers during the early 1930s to the 1950s, except for Mary Garber, who was a sports editor during World War II at the *Winston-Salem Journal-Sentinel*. While Title IX increased women’s participation in high school sports by over 700% and by 400% in intercollegiate athletics, the women entering the sports journalism field was nowhere in comparison. Because of these disparate statistics, Creedon did a study of those who are training students to become sports journalists in American journalism and mass communication programs at colleges and universities to understand if any attention is being given to women journalists and women’s sports in these classes.

To conduct the study, a phone survey was sent out to all schools in the 1991 *Journalism and Mass Communication Directory*, with a total of 387 U.S. colleges and universities with courses in journalism and mass communication identified, with 55 of these schools offering a sports journalism course. Out of these 55 schools, the survey revealed that male professors taught

98% of all sports journalism courses, and only one female was employed to teach a sports reporting course. Fifty of the professors said they had a background in reporting for newspapers, magazines, radio or television or have worked in collegiate sport information offices. In terms of covering women's sports in the class, 20 of the respondents said they teach their students that sports reporting is "gender-neutral." For the others, there was mention of class discussions that focused on female reporters, barriers to entry for females in the industry and the importance of women in sport, with a few respondents saying they had invited female sports reporters to come to the class to talk about their career and experiences.

Creedon argued that "although the number of women in sports reporting classes is proportionately larger than the number of women in the sports reporting profession, the percentages of women in these classes are extremely low compared with overall journalism and mass communication enrollment patterns" (Creedon, 1993, 49). In closing her article, Creedon pointed out further studies needed to be done on which textbooks are used in these sports journalism classes, the curriculum of these classes, and if a particular approach to teaching these classes is what keeps women out of them. Yet there has consistently been an overall lack in female professors teaching sports journalism, which has led to fewer women taking these classes.

THE CURRENT STATE OF WOMEN PRINT JOURNALISTS

Written in 2005, "The Current State of Women Print Journalists: An Analysis of the Status and Careers of Females in Newspapers Sports Departments," by Kimberly S. Miloch, Paul M. Pedersen, Michael K. Smucker and Warren A. Whisenant, argued that even though women in sports have increased over the last 30 years, they are still underrepresented in administrative roles within athletic departments and recreational organizations. Sports journalism as a whole

had long been considered a “toy department,” forcing all sports journalists to have to prove themselves and legitimize their role in the journalism and newspaper industry as a whole.

“Originating as a means of distraction from the hard or serious news, sports journalism has evolved from box scores and highlights to in depth features and editorials focusing on a myriad of issues including the business aspects of player salaries, economic impact, and revenue sharing” (K.S. Miloch et al. 2005, 220). Miloch gave a brief history of women in sports, arguing that women actually began working in the sports field in the 1920s. The numbers of female reporters declined in the 1950s and 1960s but the passage of Title IX in 1972 paved the way for more to enter (K.S. Miloch et al. 2005, 220).

Yet, the authors note, Title IX didn’t necessarily change the mindset of the industry, only the law. In the 1970s, women faced even more discrimination, especially in the locker room, though they then began gaining more access to locker rooms in the 1980s and 1990s. In 2002, one anonymous female journalist commented, “the state of women in journalism today is one of those half-full, half-empty things. We no longer sit in the balcony, but neither do we have the best seats in the house” (K.S. Miloch et al. 2005, 220).

The authors argued that many of these struggles to gain acceptance resulted in the founding of the Association for Women in Sports Media in 2008. The association has sought to provide support for female professional members of the media and young women with the hopes of entering the industry. The authors conducted a study with all 306 members of the Association for Women in Sports Media in 2005 to understand their personal perspectives and experiences of working in the industry. A survey was conducted with a 5-point scale with response selections ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The overall results of the study indicated that, as a whole, female sports journalists were neutral when asked if their job expectations had been

met. They strongly disagreed that there “was a long way to go” before achieving equity in sports media, providing a glimmer of hope among the respondents. In terms of demographics, only 9% of the respondents were non-Caucasian, 57% received a salary of more than \$45,000 and 49% had been in the print media industry for more than 10 years at the time the survey was conducted (K.S. Miloch et al. 2005, 223). The authors pointed out some interesting points, including that minority female sports journalists felt more capable writing about women’s sports than their male counterparts, whereas white female journalists did not share this same perception. Also, when female sports journalists were asked whether they were happy with the assignments they’ve been given in the past, current editors said they were not pleased as writers or columnists.

Overall, the study concluded that although many women have faced discrimination in sports media, most of them do believe that improvements have been made. This was very age dependent as “younger female sports journalists and those relatively new to the field were more positive in their responses to statements regarding career expectations and opportunities for entry and for advancement in the field” (K.S. Miloch et al. 2005, 228). Overall, the authors concluded that “hegemonic masculinity will not be reversed until there is an ideological shift in the thinking relating to sport and the mass media” (K.S. Miloch et al. 2005, 231).

THE FRAGMENTED PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF FEMALE SPORTS JOURNALISTS

“Feeling Much Smaller than You Know You Are: The Fragmented Professional Identity of Female Sports Journalists” was written in 2007 by Marie Hardin and Stacie Shain. The article examined the conflicting identities that women in the industry face as both a woman and professional journalist. The authors argue that there is an incorrect assumption that women who

are promoted in media organizations will incorporate a feminist agenda into part of their professional goals. Instead, “women must negotiate identity contradiction to succeed in male-dominated workplaces” (Hardin & Shain, 2007, 323). The authors then define cultural hegemony and how it has permeated institutions, arguing “hegemony, a form of control based on persuasion, not coercion, is the result of the responses of people to values that support social relationships and power structures” (Hardin & Shain, 2007, 323). Hostility for women in sports has been a long lasting problem, with the authors giving an example of a 2002 site for sports journalists that featured a message board called “Sports Babes,” which led male sports journalists to comment about their female counterparts (Hardin & Shain, 2007, 324). Females are held to a certain standard in the newsroom and are expected to meet the definition of femininity as well as the criteria for professionalism (Hardin & Shain, 2007, 324). Because of these high expectations, women often have to adopt a thick-skinned approach to get higher positions in the newsroom. Yet the authors also noticed an emerging trend and change in the newsroom as “more women will not change news, but changed news (with an emphasis on “human interest” stories) could welcome more women” (Hardin & Shain, 2007, 325). There is also an expectation that females in the sports industry, whether or not they are on air, should look a certain way. They are criticized for being too “mannish” or overly sexual to gain an advantage over their male colleagues with male sources. To gain more stories and personal experiences from women in the industry, the authors conducted focus groups of 20 women who attended the 2004 annual convention of the Association for Women in Sports Media. Each woman in a focus group was a print sports journalist. The sessions revealed that most of the participants said their status in the industry had improved over the past decade as newsrooms had begun to diversify their staffs. Yet unanimously, all of the participants said they were frustrated with their “second-class” status in

the newsroom (Hardin & Shain, 2007, 329). The participants on the younger side who had not been in the industry as long also were inclined to resent women who they thought played up their sexuality too much and were just a pretty face. There was an overall level of blame on other women for low levels of self-esteem in the profession rather than on male colleagues. There was also worry and “several talked about the danger of being ‘pigeonholed’ into covering women’s sports” (Hardin & Shain, 2007, 333). There was a difference in mindset based on age and overall experience in the industry as the women who were younger saw being labeled a “feminist” as negative and sometimes saw covering only women’s sports as being held back in their career. Yet older, more experienced female journalists said they felt passionate about advocating for women’s sports, most likely because they were the ones who fought for equal footing and had to endure more difficulties earlier on in their career. Overall, “getting in the door, perhaps as a token hire, is easier than it has ever been. Once hired, women are socialized into a newsroom that emphasizes their inferiority in relation to journalism, and into a department that emphasizes their inferiority in relation to sports” (Hardin & Shain, 2007, 335). There is a difficult balancing act for women to act too much like men or too much like a woman in terms of being overly sexual and not taken as a serious journalist, the focus groups indicated to the authors. Until the mindset that men “own sports” changes, women won’t be fully accepted and seen as equals. Therefore, the authors conclude that “advocacy for women’s sports coverage is also advocacy for women in sports journalism; the fates of each group are intertwined” (Hardin & Shain, 2007, 336). Until more female journalists advocate for women in sports, hegemonic ideologies may not change.

THE REVOLVING DOOR FOR YOUNG WOMEN IN SPORTS JOURNALISM

In "'There's no sex attached to your occupation': the revolving door for young women in sports journalism," Marie Hardin, Stacie Shain and Kelly Schultz-Poniatowski argue that the entry in sports journalism for women is like a "revolving door", meaning that they outnumber men in overall journalism programs in college, and Title IX has increased their interests in sports, yet the retention rate for women staying in the industry is very low. In the past, the authors note, "feminine values are at odds with qualities expected of journalists such as a certain amount of directness, distrust and toughness" (Hardin, 2008, 69). The authors referenced a study conducted by Cramer in 1994, in which 19 female sports journalists were interviewed and found that many planned to change their careers because of the discouragement over lack of progress for women in the industry. Based on a study conducted in 2005, 72% of respondents had considered leaving their careers over long hours, lack of advancement or family obligations. Therefore, the authors conducted a study to examine and interrogate the views and experiences of women new to their careers in sports journalism to better understand why many leave their profession. Participants for the study were recruited through the Association for Women in Sports Media and interviewed about how they first took an interest in sports journalism and their current experience in the field.

The results of the study indicated that the women interviewed expressed a sense of pride in their careers and recognized their roles in a minority status in the sports departments. Yet, all the participants "believed that being a woman is not a career hurdle but is instead an enhancement to their career potential, giving them an edge with colleagues, supervisors and sources" (Hardin, 2008, 72). Many of the participants also mentioned age as a potential barrier to entry, citing that "the 'first wave' of women had already paved her path; the challenges often came with her lack of experience" (Hardin, 2008, 73). The authors also took note that the

participants said they thought it was easier to interview male sources because they opened up more during interviews, and that many of the sources acted in a more paternal way towards female reporters.

Something the authors found surprising was that all but one of the interviewees said they felt guilty about the hiring advantage they had over men in getting their job. One respondent said “I hate the fact that I am a woman sports writer and that could get me a job. It’s an advantage, but I feel bad about it” (Hardin, 2008, 73). Overall, knowledge of sports trivia and passion for sports and statistics was what many women felt set them apart from men and they felt pressure to “become one of the guys” to fit in the newsroom. Another overall theme reached in the study was that the women worried more about their career in relation to having a family and children in the future and the effect their career might have on balancing working and raising a family.

The authors conclude by understanding that the participants in the study have both positive and negative views on their careers. On one hand, they said they have an easier time getting more information from male sources, but they also believe they were unfairly hired solely on the basis of their gender. In terms of raising a family, some women have suggested initiatives such as flex-time and on-site childcare but the authors argue that these initiatives will contribute to women feeling like outsiders in the industry. The authors conclude by looking towards the future where “before the sports media workplace can be transformed, our ideas about sports must be transformed” (Hardin, 2008, 77) and that this transformation needs to happen not only in the sports industry but in all social institutions.

WOMEN’S OPINIONS IN THE SPORTS NEWS INDUSTRY

“Pundits drive the sports news industry, but women’s opinions are almost totally absent,” examines why women aren’t often seen as panelists on sports-talk shows. Written in 2014, author Paul Farhi from the Washington Post recognized that women have made strides in every area of sports journalism but there is still a lack when it comes to women being able to share their opinions on the air. When it comes to talking about coaching decisions, draft projections and various controversies, “Sports talk usually doesn't get that sexist, but it also doesn't regularly offer many opinions from the other sex, either” (Farhi, 2014, 2). In 2014, ESPN only had two female panelists among the 33 regular and guest panelists for the long-running “Around the Horn” debate show. Also, among the top 100 sports-radio programs which contains 183 hosts and co-hosts, only two women made an appearance on the list. Farhi questions whether these trends mean that there is a lack of women who want to debate with men on the air, or whether there is a lack of interest in hearing what women have to say about sports. Past studies have found that sports viewers, which in the past has typically also been male-dominated, prefer to hear male voices when they watch male sports and that women who comment on these sports have been seen as less credible and taken less seriously. Farhi also mentioned how the most dominated job by women in sports broadcasting is the role of the sideline reporter, yet “it's mostly younger women who fulfill these roles, reinforcing the perception that the job is primarily window dressing” (Farhi, 2014, 3). These findings, Farhi argues, might be because women have had very few role models on sports radio to emulate or look up to. Yet women are now beginning to appear as expert commentators in recent years. For example, WNBA star Kara Lawson has weighed in on NBA news on ESPN. Christine Brennan, a USA Today sports columnist, said having more women on television is a smart business move because “maybe there's a 12-year-old

girl somewhere who hears a woman's voice and says, 'Let's watch.' And the sport and the network have just created a new fan."

CAUGHT UP IN THE TIMES

Many women have shared their stories on their careers in early sports newsrooms and broadcasting booths and have given voice to the difficulties they have faced. “‘Caught up in the times’: Women remember their careers in sports newsrooms, 1975-1990”, by Dunja Antunovic, an assistant professor of communication at the Charley Steiner School of Sports Communication and a member of the Women’s and Gender Studies Committee at Bradley University, spoke to women about their experiences. Antunovic wrote that the 1970s presented a huge opening for women in sports reporting and that Title IX and workplace discrimination lawsuits helped to prevent sex based discrimination in the workplace. Yet even with these strides, there was still a lack of women in these spaces. Antunovic referenced a study conducted by Eberhard and Myers (1988) that revealed that there were only 96 women out of the estimated total of 1,061 employees in sports at newspapers with a circulation over 100,000 printed copies. The study also found that 40 out of the 106 newspapers did not even have one woman on the sports staff. Despite some change that occurred in the 1970s and 80s, Antunovic argued that “sports newsrooms became a site of power struggle that simultaneously exposed contemporary forms of misogyny and mobilized change” (Antunovic, 2017, 12).

Antunovic examined several assumptions that women and feminist scholars have identified which have contributed to the barrier of entry women face in going into sports journalism. For one, women have been asked to cover women’s sports solely on the assumption that they would be more comfortable with those assignments compared to covering a male sport.

Some women also strayed away from advocating for women's sports in general because they wanted to escape a "feminist" label associated with it (Hardin & Shain, 2006). It was also assumed that women brought a different style of writing to the sports section; during the 1980s, men took a more "statistical, jargonistic, analytical approach to their stories," whereas women wrote more emotionally, choosing to focus on the stories of the players and human-interests rather than just statistics and facts (Antunovic, 2017, 13). Overall, "while some try to minimize their gender identity and assimilate, others believe that being a woman gives them strategic advantage in getting hired" (Antunovic, 2017, 13). Yet this led to the same pressure that all women felt to prove themselves in such a male-dominated industry.

To get some personal perspectives on the topic, Antunovic did an extensive review of overall themes by interviewing five women who all worked for the Tribune Company in Chicago, as the city remains one of the central locations in U.S. sport. All five of the journalists had begun their careers in the 1970s and all had left the sports department of the Tribune by 1991. It was interesting to see that not all five of these women originally had a goal of becoming a sports journalist, and instead because of their writing, sports journalism found them instead. For example, Jody Homer, originally said she wanted to be a school teacher but was given qualifications to move into the journalism industry by writing a short piece on an intramural softball team. Others, like Marla Krause, had a passion for sports in part due to their father's influence. Each of the five women said they were driven in bringing visibility to girls' and women's sports in particular. Linda Kay, who was the first woman hired as a true sports reporter, said she worked to grasp the human angle of pieces and "was trying to simplify the world of sports in a sense" to cater to both men and women readers (Kay, 17). Overall, Antunovic's study revealed that these women were able to break through into the sports industry but the success

didn't come without challenges. They constantly had to prove themselves and even though they all worked during the same time period in slightly different roles, they rarely interacted with one another, meaning "they engaged in individual, rather than collective barrier-breaking" (Antunovic, 2017, 18).

A SURVEY OF SPORTS EDITORS

"Diversifying the Sports Department and Covering Women's Sports: A Survey of Sports Editors," by Pamela C. Laucella, Marie Hardin, Steve Bien-Aime and Dunja Antunovic, surveyed sports editors about hiring and coverage issues. Since the enactment of Title IX in 1972, the Women's Sports Foundation in 2012 found that women's participation in sport has grown by more than 900% yet patriarchal ideologies and perceptions of gender and identity have reinforced the status quo that the sports industry is hegemonically male dominated. The authors also argued that even with increased inclusion of women in sports, the perception of sports editors has not progressed nearly fast enough. Increasing the number of female staffers in sports may not result in seeing them more on screen and in the broadcast booth but this could open doors for less stereotypical ideas of the industry.

The authors argue that the passage of Title IX has created infinitely more opportunities for women. Previous studies have found that male journalists have seen Title IX as a detriment to men's sports. According to the 2014 APSE Racial and Gender Report Card, including information from 100 websites and newspapers, the percentage of female sports editors rose from 9.6% in 2012 to 9.9% in 2014 (Laucella et al. 2017, 777). Still, there was a large decrease in the percentage of assistant sports editors from 17.2% to 9.8% in the 2012 and 2014 reports. Especially without the representation for ESPN, the percentage of women in sports editor

positions would plummet. Women in the industry have faced unique challenges which has created a higher turnover rate in them leaving the industry. “Women feel isolated and frustrated by sports journalism’s ‘glass ceiling’ and the family and relationship sacrifices they make with little incentive and” “payoff” in advancement opportunities” (Laucella et al. 2017, 778).

The authors conducted a study, surveying 200 U.S. daily mainstream newspapers. One hundred twenty eight sports editors agreed to take the survey which included questions on whether editors believe they have an obligation to cover women’s sports or hire female sports staffers and editors. Of the respondents, only six were women. Results found that about three quarters of editors agreed with the idea that they were ethically obligated to cover women’s sports and hire women to their staffs. Also, about 66% of respondents reported that at least one woman worked in their sports department, leaving a third without any women.

Overall the findings indicated that values and attitudes toward female sports editors have shifted in the last few decades and when sports sections of various newspapers commit to hiring more women, they find those who can move up and become leaders. Yet, there are a number of sports departments that still don’t have any women on staff and men still dominate supervisory positions. “The finding that the presence of women in sports departments is linked with an ethical obligation by sports editors to diversity and to the advancement of women to supervisory roles. This underscores the fact that when editors make an ethical commitment to hire women, they can and do. It also underscores the fact that when women are given the chance, they can, indeed, succeed and lead in the sports department. They need the chance” (Laucella et al. 2017, 786). The article concludes with the authors suggesting future research needs to be done on women as sports editors and comparing sports media organizations. Colleges and universities also deserve further scrutiny. In the 2012-2013 academic year, women earned 65.3% of

bachelor's degrees in journalism and mass communication but the professional news media industry is almost two-thirds male. Also, in a 2013 study on college newspapers, women comprised 41.5% of authors but wrote only 21.7% of articles in the sports section (Laucella et al. 2017, 786). Therefore, educators can play a role in encouraging and advocating for students to pursue a career in sports journalism and teaching them about how to fight through the barriers to entry.

ONLINE HARASSMENT, WOMEN SPORTS JOURNALISM, AND FEMINISM

In “‘We wouldn’t say it to their faces’: online harassment, women sports journalism, and feminism,” by Dunja Antunovic examines the #MorethanMean campaign in 2019, that highlighted online harassment and the vulgar and violent threats against female sports journalists. The video of women sport journalists reading these tweets reached three million views in under a week and was shared on ESPN. The #MorethanMean campaign was meant to bring attention to sexism and violence against women and theorize about the post-feminist world. The author notes that after the Melissa Ludtke case in 1978, which secured equal access for women sports reporters in locker rooms and a 1990s case in which New England Patriot football players sexually harassed sports reporter Lisa Olson in their locker room, the Association of Women in Sports Media was founded. To battle against this harassment, women have joined organizations or online communities of women sports journalists to share their stories.

Antunovic argued that the rise of different social media platforms has the potential to strengthen women’s and girls’ concerns and their activist movements. Yet on the other hand, these platforms are also spaces for online harassment and abuse. “Harassment directed at women

usually leverages historic discrimination, safety gaps and double standards to amplify disparate impact on women” (Antunovic, 2019, 431).

The #MoreThanMean campaign was created by Just Not Sports, a small independent media organization that focuses on athletes’ passions outside of sports and was created by three men. The men decided to take action after noticing the abundant amount of online harassment directed towards women on social media platforms, most notably Twitter. The three founders of Not Just Sports mentioned in the article that the purpose of the campaign was to make men confront their beliefs and statements and to raise awareness of the issue. Antunovic argued that “the campaign’s widespread popularity and recognition confirms that production by men that centralizes men remains the most efficient strategy to succeed in sports media” (Antunovic, 2019, 435).

The campaign, although only featuring men, gave a way for other female sports journalists to come out and share their stories about online harassment, showing how digital spaces offer people ways to connect over similar experiences. Antunovic recognized though that through all the publicity the campaign received, it still “omitted discussions of collective change or initiatives to empower women. This journalistic strategy is disappointing, especially considering that networks of women sports journalists—both digital and offline—do exist” (Antunovic, 2019, 439). The article ends with the argument that campaigns like #MoreThanMean publicize issues and bring them to mainstream media, but it is still the people affected, in this case the women sports journalists, who have to advance the cause and put in the work.

DEALING WITH TOXIC MASCULINITY

In 2020, “For women in sports media, dealing with toxic masculinity is far from new,” by Ben Strauss and Kim Bellware of the Washington Post, looked at the investigation into detailed allegations of sexual and verbal harassment made by 15 women against former employees of the Washington Commanders football team. Sports reporters Rhiannon Walker and Nora Princiotti shared their story and Lindsay Jones, an NFL reporter for the Athletic, said she was hit incredibly hard by these allegations, in addition to the other stories over the years of similar harassment claims. Jones said, “It was remarkable that 15 women went on the record. At the same time, I feel like it could have been 50, just given what it’s like working in and around sports.” After these claims were made, many female sports reporters took to Twitter to share their own personal experiences. These reporters included Jane McManus, a long time writer for ESPN, who said she would often let new and up and coming female reporters know about various agents and employees who have had a history of being inappropriate towards women. Joan Niesen, a former Sports Illustrated writer, said that during NFL combine weeks, female reporters “were checking up on one another and detailing the many uncomfortable situations they found themselves in.” The women on Twitter explained that not only were the unwanted advances difficult, but it also affected their ability to do their jobs and stay in the profession.

Walker published an essay after the allegations, and shared her pain and effects of the harassment, much of which came from Alex Santos, who was Washington’s pro personnel director at the time. In her essay, Walker wrote “[In] one 25-minute interaction, I was petrified that the work I’d done that season and those two months was in jeopardy.” After Walker published her story, several professional sportswriting groups came out in support of Walker and Princiotti and the other women who shared their stories. It read in part: “Women reporters are

repeatedly subjected to demeaning behavior on the job and in the workplace and misogynistic attacks on the internet. This needs to stop.” Women who had been in the industry for a number of years recognized that there have been improvements in the wider sports culture, and female reporters in locker rooms and on the field have become more commonplace. Yet, male colleagues also play a role in improving this culture. The article concludes with Nancy Armour, a longtime columnist and sports reporter, saying “If a male colleague steps in and has your back, that means something. If you’re a man and are horrified at what went on, step in.”

My study of women in sports reporting and broadcasting will closely fit into the previous research done on the difficulties and challenges women have faced in the industry. As the research shows, in most of the late twentieth century, women faced difficulties entering the industry because of male hegemony and stereotypes over their ability to write and cover sports stories in the “correct” way. Even today, after various prior laws and cases and new organizations supporting women have come to fruition, women still face challenges related to previous gender norm mindsets about their ability to work in a male-dominated industry.

METHOD

For my study, I will interview women in various positions in sports media to get their insights on the current state of the field and their thoughts on the future. To reach and interview the greatest number of women in the sports industry, I will broaden my search to women in both the sports journalism and sports broadcasting field. I will interview a range of those who have worked in the field for a number of years and those who have just entered.

My interviews with these women will help me to answer questions such as: Were you always interested in covering sports as a journalist? What drew you to reporting or writing about sports? Did you feel supported in your career choices while you were studying in school? How did you first get your start in the sports industry? In your current role, are you surrounded by many other women doing similar work? What are the main challenges you face as a female sports journalist or sports reporter? Where do you envision the future of women in sports journalism and broadcasting to go?

These interviews will help me to see if there is a correlation between the experiences of these women and the various studies and research that has been done on their roles. Through these interviews, I would also like to analyze the similarities and differences between these women's experiences based on their age, the number of years they have worked in the industry, the addition or lack of surrounding female coworkers and whether they work in a larger or smaller sports section. I also hope to gain a better understanding of where these women see the future of sports journalism and sports broadcasting going forward, regardless of gender.

Ultimately, this research will give me a greater understanding of the challenges and triumphs these women have faced in their career to get to where they currently stand. My hope is

that these women, regardless of where they work, recognize the difficulties faced by those who have come before them. I hope they are now in a better position and feel equal to their male colleagues and envision the future as a time where any of the challenges they currently face will become part of the past.

RESULTS

To learn more about the personal experiences of those in the industry, I interviewed six women. I reached out to Lehigh University alumni who are now in the industry as well as various female sports writers at papers including the Philadelphia Inquirer and the Atlantic. I also reached out to a few female newsroom staffers and reporters at ESPN. Through these initial connections, I was able to get names of other women to interview. Each woman I interviewed is a different age and at a different stage of their career and work in many different facets of the sports industry including as a staff writer, a sideline reporter, a communications assistant, an analyst, and on the business side.

Katie McNulty graduated from Lehigh University in 2022. Right after graduating, she took a job as an athletics communications assistant at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, PA. After six months in this position, McNulty went back to her alma mater to serve as an assistant director of sports communications in the Lehigh Athletics Department.

Renee Washington is a graduate of LaSalle University, where she played on the women's soccer team and was a member of the track and field team. Washington then went on to Lehigh University where she pursued a masters degree in educational leadership and was also an assistant coach for the women's soccer team and worked for the Lehigh Athletics Department. She currently works as a sideline reporter for ESPN, covering college athletics for basketball, football, soccer, and other sports across The Ivy League, The American Athletic Conference, The Atlantic 10, and more.

Giana Han currently works at the Philadelphia Inquirer as a reporter for the Philadelphia Flyers hockey team. Han previously worked as a sports reporting intern for the Baltimore Sun, was a Penn State football intern, and most recently worked as a beat reporter for the Auburn football team at AL.com. Han and her fellow female beat reporter, Olivia Reiner, are one of the first all female beat reporter duos of any sport or publication.

Allison Gallagher is a 2011 graduate of Lehigh University where she majored in finance and marketing. She currently works at the Creative Artists Agency in their office in New York City. Gallagher managed Bose's sponsorships for all 32 NFL teams as well as oversaw strategies for Bose's Global Formula 1 and U.S. Ski & Snowboard Association sponsorships. Gallagher was named to the 30 under 30 list for sports for Forbes in 2018.

Debbie Antonelli is a national basketball analyst and has worked for ESPN, Big Ten Network, CBS, Fox and Westwood One. She is currently in her 35th broadcast season. Antonelli played college basketball at NC State where the team made the NCAA Tournament four times and appeared in the Sweet Sixteen twice. After graduating, Antonelli attended Ohio University and got her masters in sports administration. After this, she spent four years as the director of marketing at the University of Kentucky before moving on to a similar role at Ohio State University. In 2007, Antonelli won the Women's Basketball Coaches Association Mel Greenberg Award, which recognizes a member of the media who displayed commitment to women's basketball and to advancing the role of the media in promoting the women's game. In 2011, Antonelli was inducted into the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame.

Carol Stiff was the vice president of programming and acquisitions at ESPN, before retiring in 2021. She also serves as the president of the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame's board of directors. Stiff played two years of basketball at Southern Connecticut State University before switching to field hockey. After graduating, she took on coaching positions at Western Connecticut State University, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and Brown University. In 1990, she began an entry-level position at ESPN, and is credited with starting the Tennessee-Uconn women's basketball rivalry and programming eight United States women's national basketball games during the Summer Olympics of 1996. She now serves as an advisor to the Women's Sports Network.

How did each of these women get into the sports industry?

Based on research done in my literature review, there is a mix of women who have always shown interest in the sports world and grew up wanting to break into the industry. On the other hand, there are women who say the sports industry found them instead, so I was interested in learning more about what influenced these women to find a career in sports.

Gallagher said she is from Boston and has always had a love for sports, especially Boston sports teams. Gallagher said she doesn't think being a huge fan of sports is absolutely necessary to succeed in the sports industry, but it makes her job more enjoyable. While at Lehigh, Gallagher said she wasn't exactly sure what she wanted to do but decided that finance and marketing were two majors she couldn't go wrong with. She said "it was really just looking for internships and

what was available and what sounded interesting. I for the most part fell into the sports marketing world.”

McNulty said she had always been interested in sports from a young age. She said she originally wanted to be a broadcaster growing up, but later realized her strengths weren’t necessarily talking in front of large audiences. It wasn’t until she got to Lehigh that she realized that a sports information job exists and it was something she could see herself in. During her senior year at Lehigh, McNulty worked with the sports multimedia department at Lehigh and said she was able to learn a lot of new skills with videography and editing and this expanded her resume. McNulty said her favorite part of a sports career is the storytelling aspect and also learned that you don’t necessarily have to work at ESPN to be successful in the industry. She said “I’m huge in the storytelling aspect and these student athletes deserve to get their stories told in the right way and so I try to make a difference in that way.”

Han said she had played sports growing up but it wasn’t until she started working for the student newspaper in high school that she realized she could see herself working in the industry. Han attended Penn State University where she double majored in print/broadcast journalism with a certificate in sports journalism and integrative arts. Han said, “for me, journalism is about sharing people’s stories and getting important information to people, and sports is a way to talk about it in a way that people will care.” She said sports figures also serve as ways to get people to listen to other major topics, including politics and racial issues. Covering hockey wasn’t something Han said she always had her sights set on, but realized she could learn the game with experience.

Washington said after graduating from La Salle, she got an opportunity to come to Lehigh to pursue her graduate degree and become a member of the women's soccer coaching staff.

Washington said, "I had already decided prior to my time at Lehigh that I was interested in making that transition into sports reporting. That was also something I knew going into it was that I was looking for a grad program that aligned with that." Through her time getting her masters in educational leadership, Washington said she learned a lot about how to apply those leadership qualities with her other aspirations in broadcasting and entrepreneurship. While at Lehigh, Washington also had a job in the Lehigh Athletics Department, where she clipped highlights together, shot film and worked on content for the website and also did some freelance writing on the side to build up her brand. She said, "I credit Lehigh for giving me the confidence and helping me to take those first steps of what that looked like in a career." Washington said she had always envisioned a career in sports but didn't know how many opportunities were available. "Growing up, to be honest, I didn't know that there were so many opportunities to work in sports. I always just thought it was either being a player or coach and I didn't know about the reporting thing. I saw reporters on TV, especially since I watched so many sports growing up, but it never dawned on me that it was possible for me."

Antonelli said after graduating from NC State, there were not any opportunities to play at the professional level in the United States, considering the WNBA hadn't been invented yet.

Antonelli said she originally wanted to be an athletic director. She was the first director of marketing in the athletic department at the University of Kentucky. While at Kentucky and Ohio State, Antonelli said she worked with corporate signage, licensing, selling inventory and working

to get radio and television stations to pick up the games. It was at Kentucky where Antonelli called her first game in November 1988. Eight years later, she decided to pursue a career in full-time television and radio.

Antonelli said while she was at Ohio State, she was tasked with marketing and promoting its 31 sports with a budget of \$33 million, which was the largest out of all universities. Antonelli also organized a television package for Ohio State, as at the time there weren't any women's college basketball games televised. She said "I sold it, I marketed it, I distributed it, I created it and then I called the games, which kept that passion alive for me." Antonelli spearheaded getting 55 radio affiliates in Ohio to carry Ohio State women's basketball games. She said, "this was a really important piece for helping launch women's sports on the radio and across the state. It's good for recruiting and this is good for so many different things, not only for recruiting but for awareness and visibility and to tell recruits that we have a statewide syndicated radio network. No one has that."

Stiff said while she was in college studying physical education, she had always dreamed of becoming a physical education teacher. She said she loved being on a team and while coaching for five years, she studied Tennessee women's basketball coach Pat Summit and took those lessons into coaching and the rest of her career. She said "what that taught me was you have to surround yourself with a team in life. So what helped me at ESPN was my network and building relationships which were imperative for getting anything done in the sports media industry. So I learned that early on which helped me profusely at ESPN."

What did the job search process look like for the sports industry?

Knowing that these women graduated with various degrees and various levels of schooling, I was interested to see how the job search process went and looked for these women. Were they specifically looking for jobs in the sports industry or were they led there through different avenues?

In 2011, **Gallagher** said LinkedIn was not as big as it is today so she relied on sites like Monster.com and even Craigslist to search for any and all jobs since she wasn't exactly sure what she wanted to go into. Gallagher started with an internship at an events marketing company right out of school where she was working on a Nike account and also got to live in New York City during the time.

Gallagher recently just celebrated her 10 year anniversary at Creative Artists Agency, which represents clients from all over the world across film, television, music, sports, digital media marketing and represents thousands of the world's leading actors, directors, writers, teams, athletes, coaches, etc. Her team worked with Bose to create headsets for NFL coaches and managed talent deals with top NFL athletes. She also had a four year deal with the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association and managed the Mercedes Formula 1 team. She said she recently moved off the Bose account, which is what she worked on for eight years. With this, Gallagher said it was mainly about managing their sponsorship portfolio and telling them where they should be spending their money. To get her foot in the door at CAA, Gallagher said she spent three months working in the CAA mailroom with extra long hours but said "it's the best way to learn the business and now I have connections inside and outside of sports that I wouldn't have had previously."

McNulty said she started applying to jobs in the sports industry during the first semester of her senior year at Lehigh. She said she applied to over 60 jobs through TeamWork Online, a platform specifically dedicated to enabling connections between people looking to get into the sports industry and sports organizations. From there, she was able to find her first position at Muhlenberg University as an athletic communications assistant. She also had an offer from MLB Network and St. Bonaventure but chose Muhlenberg for its proximity to her home. Six months later, she got a call from Lehigh about a position in the sports department which she said she couldn't turn down.

At Lehigh, McNulty is one of six in the sports communication department. Here she is able to focus on women's basketball, men's soccer, men's and women's swimming and diving and men's lacrosse. McNulty said, "you get to focus on more and work more closely with the student athletes and coaches." McNulty said she is one of a few young females in the department. They all collaborate and McNulty said "we all love sports and we all love communicating and social media and we all have different strengths which is good because we just bounce off of each other."

Han said she looked for post grad internships, many of which were all over the country in places like Montana or Idaho. She landed her job at Auburn University in Alabama. Han said "it gets a lot easier after you got your first job and so you have your name out there."

Washington said she had been applying to jobs nearing the end of her two year program at Lehigh. She was also working heavily on her social media and branding to carve out her role as a sports reporter. She said she first got her start as a multimedia journalist working with news and

sports. “That internship became my first full-time job in the industry. My first role just came through me trying and me putting my name out there and also being comfortable speaking up on what I wanted to do.” Washington said she was initially offered a job as a copy editor but realized that it was important to speak up and express her ambition, which opened up new opportunities and positions. She said, “let people know what your goals are, let people know what your interests are because you never know which opportunities they may know of or how they can help if they're aware of what your long term goal is.”

Stiff said she entered her entry level position at ESPN through a temp agency. She was offered a job as a temp in the communications department and her first real job was working the 10th anniversary party at ESPN. Stiff said, “I did everything they asked me to do, plus I showed up early for work. I stayed late. No job was below me. If it was above me, I asked a lot of questions and just hustled and made a really strong impression among the people that were full-time at ESPN.” Stiff said she was then offered a job in the programming department and was taught a lot about programming and data entry, and this is where she got her start programming for women’s college basketball.

What has been your relationship with male colleagues and coworkers? How has the work dynamic been? Do you collaborate with other women in your department?

I was interested in learning from each of these women how the work dynamic with their male colleagues has been in the past. Has it improved with higher up positions? Does it depend on the size of the staff or part of the country you are in?

With the Bose sponsorship, **Gallagher** said she was one of five members of that specific team, with three of the five being women. Gallagher said she has always felt supported by her male colleagues and credits this to the culture of Creative Artists Agency. She said “the thing with CAA is they kind of preach it and you don't really believe it at the beginning, but having been here for 10 years, you kind of see that they breed a culture of collaboration. I think in doing so, my department and the company as a whole have really built people up so that I don't think gender is really a hindrance.”

Han said while she was a staff writer in Alabama, she was the only female on the sports writing staff. She said she later found out she was one of two women in the SEC with that position. When asked about her relationship with her male colleagues, Han said, “it wasn't that they didn't support me, it's like they don't understand. It's a different power dynamic. I got really cyber bullied in Auburn. And I've had people say, ‘why don't you just get off Twitter?’ You can't, it's part of the job.” Han said she thinks working in the South as a female sports reporter or writer is more difficult than in the North. While at Auburn, Han remembers how she was covering a game at Louisiana State University and was wearing a dress when she got her period. “I didn't have a single person to bring me a tampon. That's such a little thing that every girl can relate to, like any girl in the press, if you were in the press with me, I could be like, ‘hey can you bring me this?’”

Now at the Philadelphia Inquirer, Han said even though she is covering hockey, she does see and gets together with the other women in the sports department covering other sports. She said she takes the new female intern to get lunch sometimes and solicits advice from the older women in the department.

Washington said there typically has not been a ton of women in producer roles or on air. She said “there's a lot of times, especially when I am going into a locker room or a press conference, whatever it may be, where you will have women there, but a lot of those women might be from smaller publications and outlets versus the men being from the more prominent outlets.” Therefore, Washington said she would like to see more diversity, not just in the room, but among the different companies and publications.

Like other women, Washington said she has had her fair share of negative experiences working in the industry. Therefore, she has relied on her friends and allies in the industry. She said “definitely being able to have people that you can talk to about this and about things and different issues that come up within the company, I always strive to have people that I trust that I can turn to for questions.” Washington said there are differences in the questions you ask to different colleagues, for example, she said she doesn't ask men what they are wearing to an event or press conference and this is something women have to be more meticulous and aware of. “Like a lot of people like to go out for drinks with their colleagues. But now as the only woman in the office, I can't just go out for drinks every Thursday and Friday with my colleagues, like my male counterparts might be able to do.”

Antonelli said she feels on equal footing with all her male colleagues today. “I think our bosses consider me to be one of the top 10 analysts in college basketball.” She said she has many colleagues who she shares a lot in common with including that they enjoy watching and breaking down film together. She said, “I feel like I'm a part of the fraternity. I totally feel that way in the college basketball landscape on the men's side and I've never felt any different.” When first

starting out in her career, Antonelli used the advice that she always tells young people in that she is not here to prove she belongs, but she is here to improve.

Stiff said she hadn't really ever thought about her relationship with her male colleagues, but she did rely on her male colleagues at the time because they were the majority surrounding her. She said "there's a lot of good men that helped me get ahead in life at ESPN and I owe them a ton of gratitude, especially Tom Jackson. If it weren't for him, I don't know where I would be." Stiff said her mentor at ESPN was a woman named Rosa Gatti and she looked up to her in many ways as one of the few females in leadership positions.

What are some of the biggest lessons you have learned in the industry?

In reflecting on her career up to this point, **Gallagher** said she's realized that "the sports industry feels big, but it's not and everyone talks." Because of this, Gallagher has learned to handle all relationships and interactions with grace and humility. For women looking to enter the industry, Gallagher said it is important to say yes to everything. She said, "you never know who is going to end up being the president of ESPN or whomever and it is great to try to make connections as deep and wide as you can within the industry. It is fairly small and you run across the same group of people, so it is good to just be a good person."

Washington used to host a show titled "Redefining Us," which looked at how to break stereotypes around gender and race in the industry. The show was a part of a summer series with

Growing Black Wealth to discuss ways to make changes in the world, specifically for more marginalized groups. Washington started this podcast during the pandemic and said she learned a lot from her guests and realized that there is a need for more conversations like these. She said “I think for me it's just knowing that if you are able to articulately express issues and concerns and bring conversations to the forefront, you know, there is a way to make an impact, even if it's just a couple of people that are listening.” Washington said she also learned that in expressing your opinion and speaking on different topics, there is always going to be someone who will listen and appreciate it.

What have been the main changes you’ve seen throughout your career?

Many of the women who I’ve talked to are on the younger side and have only been in the industry for a number of years. Therefore I only asked this question to **Debbie Antonelli and Carol Stiff, who have both been in the industry for over 30 years.**

Antonelli said in her 35 year career, access for women in the industry has changed and evolved. Antonelli has been able to build up a level of rapport and trust with the teams she covers. She said, “I'm somewhat harmless because I'm only here to promote and market and passionately educate about the game. I'm not an investigative journalist and I'm not digging up crap on anybody. I just want to know who's playing, how they can help, what they've done to get better and how and why things happen on the floor.”

Stiff said the opportunities for women have grown since she first started out at ESPN in 1990.

Stiff also said the advancement of technology has helped in giving an outlet for female athletes and commentators to tell their stories and get their voices heard.

In the article, “‘There’s no sex attached to your occupation’: the revolving door for young women in sports journalism,” authors Marie Hardin, Stacie Shain and Kelly Schultz-Poniatowski found that the women in their study “believed that being a woman is not a career hurdle but is instead an enhancement to their career potential, giving them an edge with colleagues, supervisors and sources” (Hardin, 2008, 72). I asked the women I interviewed whether this was something they believed to be true.

McNulty said she believes that sentiment differs based on where someone works. She said although the industry is still a male-dominated field, women are taking more leadership roles, which in turn gives them an edge. McNulty said, “some people are still sexist unfortunately and that can hurt if you are trying to apply to specific jobs. But I’ve been very fortunate where no one I’ve worked with has been.”

Washington said she sees this sentiment as “a double edged sword,” citing both advantages and disadvantages to being a woman in the industry. She said, “being a woman, especially in a time now where more and more people are looking to hire diversity, it is great but you don’t want to just be hired because you check a box. You want to be hired because you belong.” Washington said she recognizes that it is great for those trailblazers who have started these movements and pulled other women alongside with them but “you don’t want to be the token. You don’t want to

be hired just to meet a quota and you definitely don't want to be in a situation where you're there and they don't truly value you because hiring you doesn't mean that a company values you."

Washington said she likes to use her current platform to encourage more women to join the industry but recognizes the hurdles and challenges they face when they do. She cited an example where a female reporter was struggling to pronounce Giannis Antetokounmpo's name on air, an NBA player for the Milwaukee Bucks. Washington said this is a perfect example of the double edge sword where a woman who mispronounces names will get a lot more flak than if a man were to. She said "there still are double standards and your credibility and your reputation is always unfortunately up to question. So you have to carry yourself differently in terms of how you dress, how you act and how you carry yourself all around. So there's an upside, but there's also a lot of challenges and hurdles and I would never try to downplay those because they still exist for sure."

Han said she sees both sides of the argument, saying she does think that women are given an edge at some points, but there can also be lots of hurdles because of one's gender that women need to overcome. Han said, "there are women who believe you can't look at your career through the lens of being a woman. The problem with that is that other people are going to."

Han believes that as a woman in the industry, she has to be more careful and think more about her actions, whether it be the texts she sends to sources in fear of being misinterpreted or misunderstood. Yet she also said she believes she sometimes has an edge, saying, "I definitely do think about the edge that I have in a room full of old white men because the player will remember me every time. Most of the players I've covered would pick me out over my colleagues. In general it has been shown that players answer questions better when a woman asks

them.” Han revealed that she has gotten better quotes and story angles than her male colleagues. Yet Han said she always realizes the career hurdles and is still shocked that she and Olivia Reiner are the first two female beat reporters for any sport. She said this is still crazy for her but appreciates that she has someone to relate to. Overall Han thinks there are both disadvantages and advantages to being a woman in the industry.

Antonelli said being a woman “gives you a chance to maybe get your foot in the door, but being a woman in sports is not going to be the reason you stay. You better be good and you better work hard and you better go above and beyond because doing a moderate or average job is not going to be good enough.” When Antonelli covers men’s basketball games, she said she feels like she is being evaluated at a higher level. She said when she was hired by CBS as an analyst to cover the first and second round of the NCAA men’s basketball tournament, she felt scrutinized and there was a lot of attention on her during this time as a female analyst. Antonelli said she hasn’t changed the way she reports, regardless of the national attention she gets, because she knows she is good at her job and she knows what she is talking about.

Stiff said she believes being a woman in the industry is both a career hurdle and an edge. She agreed that being a woman helps get your foot in the door and the edge is overpreparing to do and be good at your job.

In my interviews, I also referenced Paul Farhi’s article from 2014 titled “Pundits drive the sports news industry, but women’s opinions are almost totally absent.” Farhi said women have made strides in every area of sports journalism but there is still a lack when it comes

to women being able to share their opinions on the air. I asked some of my interviewees what they thought about this and whether they have always felt comfortable sharing their perspective or if it is something that has come with experience and practice.

Han said she typically does not share her opinion on the Flyers in general. If she has to write a column, she typically tries to make her opinion a generally accepted opinion. Han said her Twitter slogan is “personality and not personal” because Han abides by unbiased standards of journalism and tries to be as objective as possible in all her writing and reporting. Han said she also doesn’t feel comfortable giving her personal opinion and take because she is still learning all the ins and outs of hockey. Han said, “off the record with the other journalists, I’m very not shy about sharing my opinion. But I’ll say that it really frustrates me that there are people where they just assume I don’t know something and they’ll like correct me and either I was joking or I was talking in a different context and you just didn’t know.” Han said she is still learning the balance of sharing her opinion in sports but believes it is more of a journalistic thing that prevents her from doing so.

Washington said being comfortable sharing your opinion online or on air to male audiences is something that comes with time. She has gained more confidence through her colleagues and her mentors and allies. Yet at the beginning, Washington said, “when I first started, I remember having people that would say to me like, “what do you know about sports?” And I’m like I actually played professional soccer and was a three time All-American. It’s only then they said ‘wow you do know sports.’” Washington recognizes that there is still an assumption that female sports reporters are just there to be the pretty face. She said, “there is still a stigma around how

women are portrayed in sports and I still deal with it and I'm one that actively will speak up and share. I don't want to be there just because I'm pretty and somebody finds me attractive. I want to be there because I know what I'm talking about.” Washington said she thinks this stigma has prevented a lot of women from advancing and sticking with staying in the industry. Washington herself said she has had days where she has questioned herself and her ability but has grown with time and experience.

Gallagher said she has been lucky to have bosses and colleagues who have valued her opinion and given her the opportunity to speak up at the table. She said, “I think it came with time and experience but from a fairly young age in my career, I was able to kind of find that confidence and groove.” Gallagher said one of the things she has learned is that if you are ever cc'd on an email, try and add value in a response because that will improve confidence and coworkers' confidence in you.

After 35 years of being on the air, **Antonelli** said she has developed a certain rhythm and cadence to how she delivers and analyzes. She said, “when I first started, and I still am a little bit nervous today because I want to do a good job. The pressure doesn't come from any other source except for an internal source to do the very best job I can do. And I hold myself to a very high standard.” Antonelli said her style of broadcasting comes from her passion for the game. “I've been so fortunate to be around some of the best teachers and leaders and communicators that happen to be coaches. When you get to call Mike Krzyzewski's last three games in Cameron Indoor Stadium including the Duke versus North Carolina game, for a kid like me that grew up on Tobacco Road, it doesn't get much better than that.”

Stiff said being comfortable giving her opinion has come with time and experience. She said, “early on I asked if I could just be a fly on the wall during the negotiation just so I could learn, and 99% of the time they would let you be that person in the room and you just take those opportunities and bank them.” But as she has gotten older, Stiff said she has become more confident and become a big voice in the world of women’s sports, speaking her mind and giving her opinion with research to back it up.

Why is representation in the industry so important?

McNulty said she grew up a huge fan of women’s sports but rarely was able to see it on television growing up. “I can now go on ABC and turn on a UConn women’s basketball game or turn on a WNBA game and I couldn’t do that 10 years ago. I think that’s really cool because things are clearly changing.”

Han said she thinks it is important to have representation in the industry so women don’t feel alone and it will help the younger generation to see themselves represented in this type of media. Han said hockey as a whole lacks diversity and having more representation will show that “people like me do like this sport and they can like this sport and they can be good at it.” Han also said she thinks “that glass ceiling had already been shattered, as women have been in sports long before me, but now it’s more for me just about comfort and knowing what steps to take.” Han remembers interviewing 10-year-old girl hockey players and their dads and said she learned how important representation is for those young girls to see a woman working in a

male-dominated field and sport. Han said “I'm the young one in the field right now. How I can still make a difference to people who are even younger, that was like really powerful.”

Washington said representation is important because it gives people a chance to feel inspired. She said, “I remember having a conversation with my nephew when he was three. I was explaining what I do to him and I was saying how I'm on TV and I explained like, you also can be on TV one day. I said I interview people and he said ‘oh that’s so cool’ and now he wants to do it himself.” Washington said it's important to have role models and people to look up to to know that accomplishing your own dreams is possible. “It's very discouraging if you are pursuing a goal or a dream and there's nobody there that looks like you. I always try to be a positive influence in that way and I'm hoping that many others can do the same of having that representation for the next generation.”

Stiff said the whole discussion of representation and equality in the industry goes back to Title IX, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. She said, “if and when you have children, if your son is getting A plus treatment and then you have a daughter, don't you want your daughter to have the same A plus treatment?” Stiff said she wants to continue seeing those opportunities for women, and cited current sports announcer Doris Burke as someone who has had to jump through hurdles to get where she is now, announcing NBA and college basketball games on ESPN.

What is your ideal future for women in the sports industry in the next 20-30 years?

McNulty said she simply thinks the industry needs more women. She said, “I think we just need to give people a chance and realize that it's a hard industry in general and women are there for a reason. Sports isn't something you just get to work in just because of who you are, like you have to earn it.”

Han said she thinks not even solely from the journalism perspective that she simply wants to see women in sports in general be treated equally. “It doesn't matter if you're a male covering female sports or a female covering male sports or if you're a male athlete or a female athlete. It is all similarly important.” Han said she wants more people to recognize that there is a cultural problem in sports and the problems aren't solely societal. Han said she also hopes women won't be judged for how they look and how they came into their position. She said, “it would be nice to be on an even level and the other thing is for women to be able to be in these positions, like the higher positions, without having played that sport.”

Gallagher said she thinks the media should be held more accountable for giving a platform to women's sports, which will also contribute to giving a platform to women journalists and reporters. She said, “it has started to happen and that's why we've been able to see the uptick in coverage. But I think that will be a major turning point for things because you can see things like the National Women's Soccer League now, which has gained a ton of traction and there are fans. I think increased media coverage will only help to skyrocket women in sports and women's stories.” Something Gallagher said she has also learned is just because there are female athletes, that doesn't also mean only female fans will resonate with them. There is a stigma that you need to reach women through women's sports. “We have an NFL sponsorship and a lot of women are

fans of the NFL. How can we tailor a strategy to reach them through the NFL rather than just reverting to only women resonate with women.”

Washington said she hopes the industry will “be a space where women in sports, and it's not just for reporters and journalists, it's for athletes or coaches or front office, where we can look across the board and see true diversity.” It is not enough just to hire women to these positions, but Washington said it is also up to these companies and the industry as a whole to make everyone feel included. She said, “I feel like they have a voice to feel empowered and to feel like they can just do their jobs without having to work through favoritism, toxicity, politics and jumping through a million hoops just to do their job. So I think it would be creating that space that gives everybody an opportunity to do what they love doing unapologetically.” Washington recognizes that the culture is improving but there are decades of undoing the gaps created in society.

Antonelli said social media has played a big role in pushing certain issues and platforms. She also recognized that more young women are playing sports now than ever before which gives them more opportunities in the future. “For somebody like me for 30 plus years who has been pushing the same narrative and the same agenda, it’s just giving women a chance.” As the percentage of women’s sports covered by the national media continues to grow, Antonelli said this will also lead to more women in broadcasting and journalism. Also, as a mom of three boys, Antonelli said women are able to find a career and family balance.

Stiff said she would like to see more women in CEO and CFO positions, making decisions about buying and sales. To do this, Stiff says it will take time but also recognizes the importance of

having male allies believing in their female counterparts and letting them take on big roles. “This is going to be imperative for the growth of women in leadership positions, and will also be the same for corporate America.”

Other Insights: Advice

Antonelli said she has two pieces of advice for women interested in and looking to break into the sports industry. Her first is “you have to be willing to make decisions early on in your career that do not involve money.” Her second is “We have so much social media access at our fingertips, and you can create your own niche, what is it exactly that you want to do and who do you want to be.”

Antonelli gave an example of how she has analyzed a player on the Iowa women’s basketball team named Monika Czinano and found she made 82 field goals last season, dribbling only 16 times. “Now the only way you can get that number is if you physically watch every single basket she scored. I’m willing to do that. If you’re not willing to do that, then that’s fine, but don’t criticize or bring me down because you’re not willing to bring the same level of effort.”

Stiff said, “do exactly what I did. Hustle and volunteer.” She said whenever you are at a sporting event, ask if there is anything you can do, whether it be calling the game, conducting interviews on the sideline, or just showing your face to make a name for yourself.

The Women's Sports Network

Stiff is included on the network advisory board of the Women's Sports Network, which will debut on free, ad-supported streaming platforms in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of Title IX: "If you build it, they will come." The network will include a studio show called Game On, highlighting and analyzing women's sports and will include female commentators. Stiff said she met with tennis legend Billie Jean King and told her about this show and this network, and King's response was "she threw her head back and double pumped both her fists, as if she just beat Bobby Riggs. She said, Amen. Hallelujah. About time."

DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

Each woman I interviewed is in a different role and in a different stage of her career in the sports industry. They expressed both similar and different sentiments on their experiences and opinions of the past, present and future of women in sports journalism and broadcasting. Many of those experiences were also connected in some ways to the readings and studies analyzed and summarized in the literature review.

Many of the research articles I read were written at a time where there were very few female writers at major daily newspapers. The women I interviewed, who are currently sports writers, joined the industry at a time when the numbers of women in the industry were finally beginning to change. For example, Gianna Han, a Philadelphia Flyers reporter and writer for the Philadelphia Inquirer, said there are a number of females on sports writing staff covering other teams including the Philadelphia 76ers, the Philadelphia Phillies and the Philadelphia Eagles. To most fruitfully analyze the results and their alignment to the research in my literature review, I have identified five main issues, ideas and arguments found in my literature review and will explore how the women I interviewed feel about these issues.

- 1. The influence of the education system and others (family, educators, friends, communities, etc) on women pursuing careers in the sports industry**
- 2. The differences in age of women in the sports industry and the relationship among them all**

3. **Women covering women's sports versus covering male sports and the relationships with male colleagues**
4. **The differences and myths in the way women write and report compared to men and the differences between covering male and female sports**
5. **The role that social media plays in benefiting or hurting women in the sports industry**

The education system and influence of others in pursuing a career in the sports industry:

In the article, "Beyond the Locker Room: Women In Sports On Major Daily Newspapers," authors Wallace B. Eberhard and Margaret Lee Myers found the influence of family background on women pursuing sports careers was very low. I would say this was fairly in line and was similar to the results I found through the interviews I conducted. Of those who I interviewed, it seemed like most of them in the industry found sports through playing them growing up or collegiately or from the area they grew up in. For example, Washington, Antonelli and Stiff all played sports in college. Also, Gallagher said she was originally from the Boston area and so grew up during a time where Boston teams were successful. McNulty also said she had always been interested in sports at a young age, growing up so close to Lehigh and being able to regularly attend games at the university.

From the article, "Training Women as Sportswriters: Coverage of Women in Athletics," the authors conducted a study and identified a total of 387 U.S. colleges and universities with courses in journalism and mass communication, with 55 of these schools offering a sports journalism course, which may have been an impediment to women breaking into the sports industry. From my results, all of the women I interviewed had college degrees and majored in

different things. Washington majored in public relations during her undergrad at La Salle and then went on to get her masters in educational leadership. Through outside internships and volunteer and freelance work covering sports, she realized she could use her public relations degree to go into the sports industry. Gallagher majored in finance and marketing at Lehigh University but used her business skills and love of sports to go into sports marketing. Han double majored in print broadcast journalism with a certificate in sports journalism and integrative arts, but said each of these fields provided her with options of what to do after graduating. I believe that my results signaled that women don't have to major specifically in something related to sports to have an interest in going into that industry.

The differences in age of women in the sports industry and the relationship among them all:

The article, "The Current State of Women Print Journalists: An Analysis of the Status and Careers of Females in Newspapers Sports Departments," argued that "younger female sports journalists and those relatively new to the field were more positive in their responses to statements regarding career expectations and opportunities for entry and for advancement in the field" (K.S. Miloch et al. 2005, 228). Considering I talked to three respondents who have been in the field for less than 10 years, one who has been in the field for a little over 10 years, and two women who have been in the field for over 30 years, I found that all didn't necessarily have negative attitudes towards career expectations and opportunities for advancement into the field. Both Antonelli and Stiff believed that there are so many more opportunities for women today in the industry compared to when they first started out but they weren't negative in their expectations in the field starting out considering they both found positions in the sports industry

early on in their careers and advanced through the ranks. There was also an argument in the article, “Feeling Much Smaller than You Know You Are: The Fragmented Professional Identity of Female Sports Journalists,” that older and more experienced female journalists said they felt like they were more passionate about advocating for women’s sports, primarily because they were the ones who fought for equal footing and had to endure more difficulties earlier on in their careers. I don’t think any of the women that I interviewed would fight against one another about the level of passion they have for their jobs and the sports they cover. Even though Antonelli and Stiff have been in the industry much longer than the rest of the women I interviewed, I don’t think they would agree with this as passion is equated with work ethic and how hard you are going to work to make a name for yourself, and this looks different for everyone in the industry. Each of the women I interviewed expressed and confided in difficulties they have faced, and their passion for their careers each look different. For example, Antonelli said her love of the game is shown through the amount of hours she puts in watching film and analyzing plays to better call games. This looks different from someone like Han, who is newer to the sport of hockey but is always traveling and finding her passion through her love of writing and being a role model to the younger generation.

The article, “Feeling Much Smaller than You Know You Are: The Fragmented Professional Identity of Female Sports Journalists,” argued that there is also an expectation that women in the sports industry, whether or not they are on air, should look a certain way. Women are criticized for being too “mannish” or overly sexual to gain an advantage over their male colleagues with male sources. I think that most if not all of the women I interviewed would argue that their male colleagues don’t have to worry about the clothes they wear to interview athletes and coaches or as a sideline reporter. For example, Washington said she has never asked men

what they are wearing to an event or press conference, so their looks are something women have to be more meticulous and aware about. The study, which interviewed women who attended the 2004 Association for Women in Sports Media Convention, revealed that there was an overall level of blame on other women for low levels of self-esteem in the profession rather than on male colleagues. The women that I interviewed would not agree with this, as most notably Washington said she has learned one of the most important things in the industry is to rely on your allies, and often those allies are female counterparts. I don't believe that there is any competition today between women that results in low levels of self-esteem and resentment. I did not see a lack of advocating for women in sports from any of the women I personally interviewed. In fact, I think they would all agree that women need to work together in the industry to create change, and it cannot be done alone and without male counterparts and male allies. Stiff said over the years she has learned that to achieve the goal of having more women in executive positions and top leadership roles, there is a need for more male allies to advocate for those women.

The expectations of women covering women's sports versus covering male sports:

In the article, "'Caught up in the times': Women remember their careers in sports newsrooms, 1975-1990," author Dunja Antunovic found an assumption that women are often asked to cover women's sports solely because they would be more comfortable with those assignments compared to covering male sports. For many of the women that I interviewed, some of them started out covering female sports but have had to work hard to cover male sports. For example, Debbie Antonelli started out by calling only women's college basketball games and she had to make a name for herself before getting the opportunity to call men's games. But other

women, including Washington and Han, started out covering male sports like baseball and football respectively. There was also an argument that “some women also strayed away from advocating for women’s sports in general because they wanted to escape a ‘feminist’ label associated with it” (Hardin & Shain, 2006). I don’t think any of the women that I interviewed shied away from covering women’s sports because of any label or assumption.

In the article, “‘There's no sex attached to your occupation’: the revolving door for young women in sports journalism,” authors Marie Hardin, Stacie Shain and Kelly Schultz-Poniatowski argue their study found that female reporters found it easier to interview male sources because they open up more during interviews and are more willing to talk to a female reporter than a male reporter. Han would agree with this but also said she has to be more careful in what she says and how she acts toward male sources. Especially when sending a text, she is sometimes afraid of being misinterpreted or misunderstood.

Difference in how women write and report compared to men:

Antunovic also mentioned the assumption that women brought a different style of writing and reporting to the sports section, as during the 1980s, men took a more “statistical, jargonistic, analytical approach to their stories,” whereas women wrote more emotionally, choosing to focus on the stories of the players and human-interests rather than just statistics and facts (Antunovic, 2017, 13). Of all the women I talked to, most of them said their favorite aspect of sports reporting and writing was the storytelling aspect. McNulty said she enjoys talking to student athletes in her role at Lehigh to make sure their voices are heard and to tell their stories in the right way. Han echoed a similar sentiment, saying her favorite part of journalism is getting people’s stories out there in a way that will make people care about other issues including

politics and racial inequalities, referencing NBA player LeBron James as someone who does this well. But I believe that the women I interviewed would disagree that there isn't a space for them to also pursue and have an interest in statistics and analytics and that the two aspects of writing cannot go hand in hand. Antonelli serves as a great example of this as a college basketball analyst.

The role that social media plays in benefiting or hurting women in the sports industry:

In the article, “‘We wouldn’t say it to their faces’: online harassment, women sports journalism, and feminism,” author Dunja Antunovic argued that the rise of various social media platforms has had the potential to strengthen women’s and girls’ concerns about their activist movements, yet these places also serve as spaces for online harassment and abuse. Antonelli, who started her career at a time when there really wasn’t any social media platforms to promote women in sports and women in the sports industry, would agree that social media plays a role in pushing certain issues. Social media also allows those looking to get into the industry to promote themselves better and create their own niche, showing exactly who they are and what they want to be.

Washington was someone who worked extensively on her social media and branding to get her name out there as a sports reporter, which landed her an initial role as a multimedia journalist.

Han said while working at Alabama, as the only female on the sports writing staff and one of very few women covering the SEC conference in general, she said she experienced online harassment through cyberbullying on Twitter. She said many people often asked her why she stayed on Twitter, and she had to respond saying being on social media and engaging was part of

her job, and it's not something you can give up as a young reporter looking to gain notoriety and a following. She also responded saying that older men in the industry who already have a following may not need to use social media as much, due to the respect they already have.

The article, “For women in sports media, dealing with toxic masculinity is far from new,” by Ben Strauss and Kim Bellware of the Washington Post, also argues that male colleagues are important in improving the culture for women in the workplace. All of the women I interviewed would agree with this, and most of them would say they have been around some great male colleagues who have supported them, which has contributed to greater confidence and assurance in themselves.

Gallagher, Antonelli, and Stiff all said they have felt supported and relied upon by their male colleagues, and their male colleagues have helped them get to the position they are in today. Han said she did feel supported by her male colleagues but didn't always feel understood, and said there was a noticeable power dynamic where they were allowed some affordances that she had to constantly worry about including being cyberbullied online as well as not having anyone to talk to about certain simple things, such as needing a tampon. Washington said she has felt supported by her male colleagues but also agreed with Han that there is a difference in working with them compared to other female colleagues. For example, Washington said she can't ask a man what they are wearing to an event or can't always ask them out for drinks in fear of being misinterpreted.

The article also mentioned how social media has been used for women in the same position to share their stories with one another in the hopes of finding comfort and common ground over shared negative experiences, which all the women I interviewed would cite as a possible aspect of social media growing the acceptance of women in the industry.

CONCLUSION

Women have had to fight for decades to be accepted in the sports industry, including on the field, in the broadcast booth, on the business side of things, and as writers. The passage of Title IX in 1972 inevitably served as a turning point but didn't completely change the nature and attitude of the industry, and women had to continue to fight themselves to become accepted and welcomed by male colleagues, in both small and large publications, and with sources, fans and the sports community in general. Looking back upon the literature review, from the first analyzed article written in 1987 to the final analyzed article written in 2019, it is evident that there has been a transformation in the attitudes and struggles that female broadcasters, reporters and journalists have faced. With that has come the advancement of technology and social media platforms which have also compounded problems and changed the way we view and think about women in the sports industry. Instead of facing harassment and abuse in person, it has now translated to similar sentiments online, as people are able to hide behind a screen to call out women in the industry. Even when doing a quick Google search on current women in the sports industry, many of the top results focus on "The Hottest Female Sports Reporters and Presenters" and "The Most Popular Female Sports Reporters," whereas looking up men in the industry doesn't yield the same results. Yet on top of this, there are also magnitudes of support for women that has allowed people from the industry in all different parts of the country to communicate and share experiences with each other.

Based on the women I interviewed and the discussion section in which I compared the literature to first hand experiences, it is evident that women have much more optimism on the future of journalism and equality than they once did. Because of their work ethic, and their

opinions on their role in the industry, the sentiment and idea that they are token employees and were solely hired because of their gender isn't as commonplace. Women now feel like they belong and the rest of the sports community has followed along with that, and accepted that women are now a part and will continue to play a major role on the screen, in bylines and behind the scenes. What once was an industry solely dominated by men has since changed. Although it is still predominantly men, the number of women continues to increase, which has also gone hand in hand with the number of women playing sports and the coverage they have received. Yet it is ignorant to think that just because the numbers are increasing, all problems for women in the sports industry have been solved. According to a 2021 Global Sport Matters study, author Paola Boivin found that only 10% of sports editors and 11.5% of sports reporters are women, and are disproportionately represented in power positions in the industry (Boivin, 2021). Even as more women are continuing to pursue sports journalism majors and enrollments in journalism programs at colleges and universities, why are these numbers not translating to professional careers?

Yet based on my interviews, it is hopeful that the women who are currently in the sports industry are ones who are intent on creating change. They are the ones who are looking to pave the way for the younger generation to see people who look like them on screen and in writing and want to emulate what they do. The current issues that plague the sports industry for women aren't for a lack of trying, as changing cultures within industry simply takes time, and it is evident that the women who are currently working towards these goals are content with continuing to fight.

Even through researching different studies and aspects of difficulties and successes women have had in the sports industry, there are still aspects that I was unable to research in

depth or even find enough research on. Some of these issues include women in sports leadership roles and how that translates into change, and more research needs to be done about the disparities for women of color in sports journalism and what can be done about this. There also was not much research on the wage gap between male and female sports journalists and broadcasters today, which would have also been interesting to look at in analyzing how things have changed in the last few decades and to what extent that gap has closed. And while much of my research early on mentioned the differences between small publications and large sports networking sites including ESPN and the Athletic, it would be interesting to conduct more research about the current differences in attitude at these different sized sports hubs.

One of the most common questions women sports journalists and reporters get asked is “what is it like to be a woman in sports?” In reflecting on my thesis, my hope for the future is that women won’t have to get this question asked of them anymore. Women are breaking the glass ceiling, and the creation of the Association for Women in Sports Media and the Women's Sports Network are providing more advocacy and support for women and more entrances for male colleagues and fans to become allies. I believe there is much more glass ceiling to break but remain optimistic about everything that can be accomplished in just the next 20 to 30 years. Melissa Ludtke, the pioneer behind the historic 1977 Ludtke v. Kuhn case, which still serves as one of the most pivotal and impactful moments for women working in sports media, said “because men dominated the media in the 1970s, they hijacked the telling of our stories about our push for equal access and fair treatment.” Yet reflecting on today, Ludtke said that we now have women sitting in broadcast booths as analysts and color commentators in sports, which she couldn’t have imagined as a young reporter in the 1970s. Yet Ludtke also realizes that “only social movements will change cultural norms on the necessary fronts – sharing of family

responsibilities, tamping down of misogynistic impulses and lifting of women's sports. From the activism I see in the millennial generation, I expect to celebrate progress in the years ahead."

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