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## Even playing field? Examining challenges female sportswriters face

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EVEN PLAYING FIELD?: EXAMINING CHALLENGES  
FEMALE SPORTSWRITERS FACE

A Thesis

by

DAVID HINOJOSA

Submitted to the Graduate School of  
The University of Texas-Pan American  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

August 2015

Major Subject: Communication



EVEN PLAYING FIELD?: EXAMINING CHALLENGES  
FEMALE SPORTSWRITERS FACE

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August 2015



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## ABSTRACT

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The purpose of the study was to examine what obstacles female sports writers face. Because sports writing has been and still remains a male-dominated field, there have been documented incidents in the past that have made the job more difficult for females than males. This study sought to see if there those obstacles remain.

With the rising popularity of sports and the increase of females entering the sports writing field, it is important to research, among other things, whether female sports journalists believe they are seen as equals by their male counterparts; whether they believe their sources take them seriously and what other difficulties they face when doing their job compared to male counterparts.





## DEDICATION

The completion of my Masters program would not have been possible without the support of my family and friends, especially the ones I made through the graduate program. I will cherish your friendships forever.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my father, Miguel, who has always inspired me although I lost him when I was young, and my mother, Aida, who did her best to help us carry on without him. I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my friend, Diana Ybanez, who talked me into enrolling in graduate school. I have never regretted that decision.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Sports journalism is an area of journalism that covers sporting events and the personalities who participate in them. In the 20th century, sports' popularity grew and it led to a proliferation of media coverage and outlets, which include sports sections in newspapers, radio, television, sports magazines and cable sports networks (on both the national and regional scales). Because of this rise in popularity, sports journalism has become a serious and worthy profession (Oates & Pauly, 2007).

But while there are more opportunities to cover sports, the sports journalism field has traditionally been male-dominated. The few women who took the challenge of covering sports faced enormous challenges.

Take Mary Garber, who began working as a sports journalist in the 1940s and was a pioneer for women who chose to enter the field. She was barred from the press box at Duke University in 1946 (Garber, 1994). Although she held a press-pass identifying her as a reporter for the *Journal-Sentinel* in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, she was barred from entering the press box to cover a college football game. Instead, she was placed in the wives' box where "coaches' wives gossiped and the kids beat on the table and the press box at Duke the following week, her badge still read, "Women and children not admitted to the press box" (Garber, 1994, p. 379).



Another example involved Lesley Visser, who is now an established television sports journalist. Before Visser became the first female to cover the National Football League (NFL) on television, she worked as a sports reporter for the Boston Globe in the early 1970s. For a game story on the Pittsburgh Steelers, she waited outside the team's locker room for then-Steelers quarterback Terry Bradshaw to emerge so she could interview him. When he finally did, Bradshaw took Visser's notepad and autographed it (Rapoport, 1994). It is important to note, however, that Visser was not the only woman in sports television who covered the NFL. A former Miss America, Phyllis George began serving as a co-host for the CBS pregame show, "NFL Today" with Brent Musburger, Irv Cross and Jimmy "The Greek" Snyder in 1974 (Perlmutter, 1975).

These are a few examples of the challenges female sports journalists have faced in covering sports for various media organizations over the years. Nevertheless, they have not deterred women from joining the profession. According to the Associated Press, about 25 women worked in newspaper sports departments and five in sports broadcasting in the early 1970s (Creedon, 1993). In 1991, fewer than 50 women covered sports in 638 network affiliates in the United States (Sports Illustrated, 1991). By 2001, that number grew by 50 percent. In 2005, roughly 500 women were sportswriters, according to the Association of Women in Sports Media (Ricchiardi, 2005).

One of the reasons for this growth is a quota system. The advent of Title IX, an amendment passed in 1972 as part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, caused awareness of discriminatory hiring practices involving gender. Title IX "ensures that girls and women receive opportunities equal to boys and men at any government-funded institution" (Hardin & Whiteside, 2009, p. 58). According to Jessica Quiroli (n.d.), while quotas have allowed more

women to come into sports journalism, “Female sports journalists remain on their own unique path and still face the question, ‘Why do you think you should be allowed in?’ and still face internal abuses that go unreported.”

In 2014, the Women’s Media Center (WMC) also released a study on the status of women in journalism. The study gathered data from 150 newspapers and websites and measured the number of women across different areas across media including online, radio and entertainment (television, movies, etc.). It also measured numbers in regard to women in sports journalism and issued grades in several categories such as race, gender, ethnicity and more. Sports newsrooms received an “F” in all five measures for gender: total staffs, sports editors, assistant sports editors, columnists and copy editors/designers (Women’s Media Center, 2014, p. 24). The study also determined that only 11.7 percent of sports reporters were women (Women’s Media Center, 2014). Given the difficulties women sports journalists face, why do they pursue this profession?

The purpose of this study was to find out what challenges females faced in covering sports and why they went into sports journalism. This study is important considering that while the number of women going into sports and sports journalism is increasing, their experiences are rarely studied in academia. In fact, research on the obstacles women face as sports journalists is scant.

According to Pamela Creedon (1994), sports journalism research is generally scanty as most studies are devoted to the coverage of politics and scandals in sports. Moreover, sports journalism itself is stigmatized as being inferior to other forms of journalism and therefore has no need to in-depth study (Creedon, 1994). Moreover, the sports department is often viewed as the “toy department” of the newsroom and is often viewed as “soft” news (Creedon, 1994, p. 68).

Therefore, conducting research on discrimination and other issues in sports is worth exploring as times have changed and sports journalism continues to grow and make money. Sporting events are among the highest-rated show in television history. The five most-watched television shows in U.S. history are Super Bowls, beating out popular shows like Breaking Bad (“Super Bowl”, 2014). In fact, in 2015, the most-watched show in U.S. television history was Super Bowl 49, the NFL championship in which Seattle beat Denver 28-24. (“Super Bowl”, 2015). Super Bowl 49 drew 112.5 million viewers (“Super Bowl”, 2015). Thirty-second commercial spots during the game even sold for \$4.5 million, up from \$3.8 million in 2013 (“Super Bowl”, 2015).

Also, it is important to research, among other things, whether female sports journalists believe they are seen as equals by their male counterparts; whether they believe their sources take them seriously and what other difficulties they face when doing their job compared to male counterparts.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Sports journalism is becoming widely popular with the continued popularity of sports in the United States. This chapter reviews literature in mass communication regarding women's roles in the field. To add to the literature of a rarely studied area, the challenges women have faced in sports journalism is also examined. This study contributes to mass communication by enhancing our understanding and knowledge of the roles and challenges female reporters face in covering sports in the United States. The study also applied and tested standpoint theory in the context of women and media. The discussion begins with an examination of literature on women's roles in sports journalism.

#### **Women In Sports**

Sports are globally recognized as a largely male domain, one that women are not invited to or are uninterested in. According to Koppett (1994), American men turn to sports when they want to "feel separate from women" (p. 214). Therefore, there is a hegemonic perspective to how gender is perceived in sports in general and sports journalism in particular. In society, the idea of hegemony helps "the powerful (able-bodied White men and their primary institutions), but disadvantages others, women and racial minorities" (Hardin, Dodd & Lauffer, 2006, p. 431). The media also perpetuate this belief in the way they cover sports. Male sporting events are the most covered or featured. Hardin, Dodd and Lauffer (2006) found that even though 40 percent of sports participants are women, sports media dedicate only 5 to 8 percent of their coverage to

sports participants are women, sports media dedicate only 5 to 8 percent of their coverage to women's sports. This suggests that male sports are more important than female sports. "By neglecting and marginalizing female sports, the media reinforce a value system that discriminates against women, both as athletes and as sports journalists" (Hardin, Dodd & Laufer, 2006, p. 431). In the end, "women in sports journalism are 'outsiders' by virtue of their gender, but 'insiders' by virtue of their adherence to journalistic norms and values" (Hardin & Shain, 2006, p. 323).

Nevertheless, that has not stopped women from covering participating in or watching sports. In fact, according to Women's Media Center's 2014 report, more women than ever are sports fans. Forty-five percent of the NFL's fans are women (Women's Media Center, 2014). However, the same report states that women are a rare breed in sports journalism and it failed the U.S. media overall for its efforts to bring women into the field. Today, women account for only 14.6 percent of staff in sports journalism. Though this shows that more women have entered the field since 1940, considering the growing number of women in media and sports' fan base overall, women are truly a rare breed in sports journalism. Why is this so?

One reason may be that women have faced and continue to face various challenges in covering sports since the 1940s that may discourage women from joining the ranks. These challenges vary from policies to how women are seen in the field. For instance, before 1978, women were not allowed into locker rooms, which were considered the ideal place to get spontaneous quotes from athletes and coaches after games (Garber, 1994). It took a federal court order in 1978 for women to have the same access to a locker room as men (Ricchiardi, 2005). The National Football League was slow to come around, waiting until 1985 to officially state that men and women can have equal access to the locker room (Whitaker, 1990). Despite the

change, women still faced other challenges after that order from the NFL. Lisa Olson, a reporter for the Boston Herald, accused five members of the New England Patriots of sexual harassment in September 1990 and the accusations took a personal toll on her (Huckshorn, 1990). According to Olson, the players walked naked in front of her. One player, Zeke Mowatt, fondled his genitals in front of her and according to Olson, said, “Is this what you want? Do you want to take a bite out of this?” (Kunen & Brown, 1990). Olson later described the incident as “mind rape” (Ricchiardi, 2005).

She also said she received more than 100 obscene phone calls and about 250 pieces of hate mail from Patriots fans after the news broke (Ricchiardi, 2005). Her tires were slashed and the perpetrator left a message that said, “Next time, it will be your neck” (Ricchiardi, 2005, p. 56). Former Patriots owner, Victor Kiam, even publicly called Olson “a classic bitch” (Ricchiardi, 2005, p. 56). He later apologized in a full-page ad in the *Boston Herald* (Whitaker, 1990).

Shortly after the Olson-Patriots locker room incident, Christine Brennan, then a *Washington Post* sports writer, revealed that such an incident was quite common. As she told CNN: “I’ve been in 500 lockers. I have rolled my eyes. I have laughed. I’ve had towels thrown at me. I’ve had whoops and hollers. I’ve been taking it for 10 years. Lisa’s been taking it for that long. We’ve had hundreds of women taking it, taking it, and taking it, and we continue to do so because we love these jobs” (“The Sidelines,” 1990). But players and owners have not been the only barrier women have faced in covering sports.

Women have had to overcome sexism from their male counterparts as well (Hardin & Shain, 2006). As one female sports journalist put it, “People talk about harassment in locker rooms, but I’ve never heard anything in the locker room as bad or as offensive as that which I’ve

heard in my office” (Miller & Miller, 1995, p. 888). This has affected how they view themselves. Rather than think they are making a meaningful impact on the sports staff, some women think their male counterparts see them as “quota” hires, rather than “merit” hires to meet diversity standards (Miller & Miller, 1995, p. 887).

The quota belief comes from Title IX. Although Title IX makes no mention of sports, it is largely responsible for creating equal opportunity for girls and women in high school and college sports (Hardin, M., Simpson, S, Whiteside, E. & Garris, K., 2007). An argument can be made that Title IX has also had an effect on private enterprise, including media. Some of the entities believe they must hire women to meet diversity standards or a so-called quota system. However, the only sports organization that has made deliberate and continued efforts to diversify its staff is ESPN, a cable and satellite sports network (Women’s Media Center, 2014).

Male colleagues are also skeptical of women’s work. According to one respondent in Miller and Miller’s (1995) study, “Men don’t trust my answers. Even though they have looked up and confirmed my facts in the past, they still have no confidence in me” (p. 887). Respondents in another study said they felt they needed to “prove themselves” to their male editors and colleagues (Hardin & Shain, 2005, p. 29).

The difference in the number of male sports writers to female sports writers will also affect the way female sports are depicted (Kian & Hardin, 2009). “Female journalists frame women’s sports in ways that present them as more legitimate” (Kian & Hardin, 2009). Because there aren’t as many female sports writers, women athletes in general have been portrayed as “sex objects” and are more likely to “delve into the personal lives of female athletes and minimize women athletes’ accomplishments and skill by regularly comparing their abilities to men, who are set as the standard” (Kian, 2009).

Another obstacle for female sports journalists is they are often depicted as nothing more than eye candy. This mainly applies to women in television where appearances can be just as important – or maybe more – than journalistic ability. In 2003, NFL reporter Suzy Kolber was forced to hold back the drunken advances of Hall of Fame quarterback Joe Namath during an interview on the sidelines of a game involving Namath’s former team, the New York Jets. While answering questions, Namath told Kolber, “I want to kiss you” (Hiestrand, 2012). He added that he “couldn’t care less” about what was happening with the Jets at that moment (Hiestrand, 2012). Such situations do not just happen on the job though.

In 2002, a website called Sportsjournalists.com had a message board called, “Sports Babes,” which invited sports journalists to offer feedback on their female colleagues (Skwar, 2002). Sports journalists from around the country frequented the website, which had numerous message boards that list job opening and sports topics. Most of those who registered on the website were anonymous. With that shield of anonymity, contributors to the message board seemed emboldened to respond without worry of repercussions. One major complaint of the message board was that it “panders to the degradation of women sports journalists. On this board, names of women writers and sports TV reporters are pilloried and slandered. The filth on that message board is filled with slander, the very antithesis of what we are supposed to be about” (Skwar, 2002, p.). Another sports journalists’ blog also featured an altered photo of former ESPN reporter Erin Andrews grabbing her breast (“They Love,” 2006).

But the perpetuation and reinforcement of hegemony is not limited to the mass media. It can come from a number of platforms. According to Block (2013), “even ordinary citizens armed with laptops, tablets or smart phones can potentially concentrate symbolic power through the exchange of culturally and politically meaningful patterns or symbols, such as words, images,



beliefs and traditions and practices” (p. 259). Over time, this value system that discriminates against women becomes the norm. This makes the obstacles that women face in order to break into a traditionally male-dominated field like sports journalism difficult. It reinforces the notion that sports are a male thing. This line of thinking is not an easy one to break. Male hegemony in sports “has been more complete and more resistant to change than other areas of culture” (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 23). Overall, these challenges are quite important and point to the fact that women face unique challenges in sports journalism. However, chronically lacking from the literature are current challenges that women face as sports journalists and how women are managing them. Has progress been made in some areas? This study aimed to fill this gap in the literature. Communication scholars have also developed models and theories to explain the relationship women have with the media and how media can influence the lives of women. This study used Georg Hegel’s standpoint theory to explain the impact oppression or hegemony can have on women’s lives.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The mass media are important and influential institutions in any society. Its functions include informing, educating, entertaining and even persuading the society. Therefore, the media are one of “the most powerful and pervasive sources of ideology” in society (Conradie, 2011, p. 402). They are dominant “vehicles for molding public opinion and determining people’s perception of social reality” (Okunna, 1996, p. 24). Based on how the media portray people, events and issues, the public can have a positive or negative image of people, events and issues. Take the issue of women’s portrayal and participation in the media.

Scholars, particularly feminist scholars, have contended for decades that despite women’s advancements, the mass media are “still resistant to embracing realistic and emancipatory

portrayals of women” (Sarikakis & Shade, 2010, p. 69). Globally, research indicates that women are less newsworthy and often framed in the context of love, family and body image. In many instances, their contributions are marginalized or not recognized. For instance, while the British media celebrated Andy Murray’s 2013 Wimbledon win as the country’s first Wimbledon win in 77 years, the truth was it was actually a Briton’s fifth win in 36 years. Was the oversight because the previous winners were women? One can conclude that the experiences women face in sports journalism mirrors how the media marginalize women and their issues generally. Why is this so? One way we can understand media structure and hegemony is to start the inquiry from the standpoint of women.

### **Standpoint Theory**

A standpoint, according to Em Griffin (2015), is “a place from which to view the world around us. Whatever our vantage point, its location tends to focus our attention on some features of the natural and social landscape while obscuring others” (p. 444). Standpoint theorists argue that “the social groups within which we are located powerfully shape what we experience and know as well as how we understand and communicate with ourselves, others, and the world” (Wood, 1997, p. 250). Standpoint theory helps us understand the experience of others who are not in the mainstream. Wood (2011) adds that standpoint theory “focuses on how membership groups, such as those designated by gender, race, class and sexual identity, shapes what individuals experience, know, feel, and do” (p. 58). To understand the inequalities that exist on the basis of race, gender, class and sexual identity, one must look at these issues from the standpoint of those specific groups.

The idea of standpoint theory dates back to the 1800s when German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Freidrich Hegel wrote about his observations of the master/slave relationship (Zaytseva,

2010, p. 3). He wrote that “although masters and slaves participated in the same society, the standpoints that they occupy are vastly different, which affects what each group can and cannot see” (Zaytseva, 2010 p. 3). Hegel believed that in a society where power relationships existed, “there can be no single perspective on social life” (Wood, 2005, p. 59). Understanding a group’s standpoint is important because

The social group that gets the chance to define the important problematics, concepts, assumptions, and hypotheses in a field will end up leaving its social fingerprints on the picture of the world that emerges from the results of that field’s research process (Harding, 1991, p. 192)

Beginning in the 1960s, some feminists took Hegel’s observations and began applying it to the difficulties women faced in society, which bore the idea of the feminist standpoint theory (Zaytseva, 2010). One of the key tenets of feminist standpoint theory is society is divided into power structures between men and women. Men are the dominant and/or privileged group (Wood, 2005). Women, on the other hand, are subordinates (Hallstein, 1999). From this subordinate position, “women see both how their culture tells them what it means to be female and how their own experiences of being female often do not mesh with these cultural prescriptions” (Hallstein, 1999, p. 36). Women are described as “outsiders within” (Collins, p 514). Women’s standpoints are “distinctively different and less distorted than those of men, whose visions are always partial and interested in persevering their position” (Hallstein, 1999, p. 36).

Another German philosopher, Karl Marx, built on standpoint theory and used it to explain the relationship between the “bourgeois” (or middle class) and “proletariat” (or working class) (Wood, 2005. p. 61). Marx believed the work each person did shaped their identities and knowledge. Lugones and Spelman (1983) also wrote that dominant groups didn’t have to

understand the perspective of a subordinate group because the dominant group didn't need that knowledge to survive.

The theory has also been applied to topics outside of gender such as race, sexual orientation, economic class structure. For instance, James Weldon Johnson wrote in his 1912 book, *Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man*, "I believe it to be a fact that the coloured people of this country know and understand the white people better than the white people know and understand them" (p. 22). Wood (2011) wrote that standpoint theory claims that marginalized groups can "generate unique insights on how society works" and that "marginalized perspectives can inform all of us about how our society operates" (p. 59).

The theory has also been applied to studies in parenting. In studying the idea of "maternal thinking," Sara Ruddick argued that mothers didn't not have a natural instinct to be mothers. In other words, they weren't born with the knowledge on how to take care of young children (Wood, 2011). Instead, "maternal thinking" was gained from a woman's "frequent location in domestic and caregiving roles" (Wood, 2011, p. 60).

### **Criticisms Of Standpoint Theory**

Critics of standpoint theory, particularly feminist standpoint theory, say it assumes most women share the same experiences (Zaytseva, 2010). This produces a homogenized standpoint based on those of "white, middle-class, heterosexual women" without regard to race, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. (Zaytseva, 2010, p. 6). Because of that, it's impossible to say that one view stands for all or most views. Standpoint theory doesn't necessarily account for multiple views. As Wood (2005) noted that critics of standpoint theory assert one could have "a lesbian standpoint, a feminist standpoint, a Black standpoint" (Wood, 2005, p. 63). There was an assumption that

women had a prevailing opinion and it was shared by most. That viewpoint was “sharply criticized for its partiality” (Lloyd, 2005, p. 123.).

### **Relevance To This Study**

When researching challenges that female sportswriters face, standpoint theory offers a good framework to guide the study. Standpoint theory helps us understand the experiences of those who are not in the mainstream. There are documented stories about how challenging it is for females to break into what has traditionally been a male-dominated field.

One of the major challenges women have faced in sports journalism over the years is males have dominated the work force, the majority of participation, the majority of coverage, and therefore, a perception has developed that it is near-exclusive men’s profession. As more women have entered the sports journalism workforce, it has been difficult for some men to accept a female’s ability to do an effective job.

The study offered a chance to allow female sportswriters, who are in the extreme minority compared to male sportswriters, to offer their standpoint on their lives as sports journalists. Because research into the views of female sportswriters face is limited, these women’s stories will shed light on the experiences of these women and unjust practices in the profession. Moreover, stories from individuals who have lived experiences can create meaning, credibility and validity for other women who are considering the profession.

Given this, this study asked the following:

RQ 1: What challenges do female sports journalists face from their sources?

RQ 2: What challenges do female sports journalists face from their male colleagues?

RQ 3: What challenges do female sports journalists face from their male superiors?

RQ 4: Why do females chose to pursue sports journalism?

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Research Methodology**

Research for this thesis was gathered through qualitative methods. Qualitative research allowed the researcher to seek in-depth answers from subjects using open-ended questions. It also allows the researcher to study an issue in-depth to gain understanding of it (Keyton, 2001). To add to the literature of a rarely studied area in mass communication, the study examined the challenges female sports journalists face in carrying out their duties.

Female sports journalists who work for or have worked for newspapers and/or websites for at least two years in the United States participated in the study.

#### **Rationale For Research Methodology**

To answer the research questions, the researcher used a qualitative method. According to Patton (1990), qualitative methods are “ways of finding out what people do, know, think, and feel by observing, interviewing and analyzing documents” (p. 94). Qualitative methods are also used to examine situation about which little is known. Data can be gathered used direct observation, in-depth interviews and written documents. In-depth, open-ended interviews were used to gather data for this study as the area of interest, female journalists’ experiences, happened over time. Interviews also provide rich data through which a researcher can learn about an event or issue he/she did not experience or observe first hand.

## **Research Procedures**

The population for this study was female sports journalists in the United States. To get a sample as the entire population could not be used, the researcher used a purposive sampling technique. The object of purposive sampling is to target sources who can shed light on the questions under study (Patton, 1990). The key to making purposive sampling effective lies in finding “information-rich cases” for study or depth (Patton, 1990, p. 169).

For the purposes of this study, “information-rich cases” were subjects who worked as professional sports journalists. In order to ensure these journalists had enough experience to give insightful feedback, the study sought those with at least five years’ experience in print/online sports journalism. In five years, these women sports journalists should have had enough interaction with coaches, athletes and colleagues to provide the information the study seeks. Because the researcher has more than 20 years’ experience in sports journalism, he has made some contacts who helped him recruit participants for the study.

Before beginning the research, the researcher submitted a human subject review form to the Institutional Review Board of The University of Texas-Pan American for approval to conduct the interviews. University research guidelines require a human subjects review to ensure the safety of research participants. On receiving approval, the researcher emailed several possible participants with an email approved by the Institutional Review Board at The University of Texas-Pan American. The email introduced the researcher and included an introductory statement that described the purpose of the study.

The researcher then asked those who agreed to participate to forward the email they received about the study to any female sports writers they thought would be interested in the study. Participation was voluntary. Participants were also given an option to remain anonymous.

The researcher left telephone and email contact information and asked if these potential targets wanted to participate to contact him. By contacting the researcher, participants were electing to take part in the study and their feedback was used for the thesis.

Information gathered for the study was obtained through telephone interviews. The researcher obtained information via a set list of questions. Six were demographic questions and 20 were questions directly related to the study. The questions for the study were open-ended to get detailed answers to the questions the researcher sought. The interviews were recorded using a recording app on the researcher's mobile phone. From there, the audio recordings were uploaded onto a jump drive and were transcribed by the researcher.

The researcher found participants by making contact via email with those contacts he knew were female sportswriters. The researcher asked those who had been interviewed for the study if they would forward the information of the study to those who they thought would be good subjects. This is a form of snowball sampling, which begins by asking "well-situated" people "Who should I talk to?" about this study (Patton, 1990, p. 176). This technique was done not only by asking those who had already participated. The researcher asked a person in charge an email list serve that is distributed to approximately 400 (both male and female) current and ex-sportswriters who had participated in the Sports Journalism Institute, an internship program that began in 1993, to send it to members on that email list.

### **Participants**

The sample consisted of 10 participants. However because of a technical glitch involving the recording device used, two interviews were lost. Efforts to reschedule those interviews were unsuccessful. In the end, only eight participants' information was used in the study. All of those interviewed were on college or professional sports beats. They ranged from ages 24 to 63.



All eight subjects agreed to have their names used in the study. But if they were uncomfortable having their names attached to specific comments, they were promised anonymity for those comments. This was allowed in order to get forthcoming answers the study sought without fear of possible repercussions from the subjects' superiors and co-workers. The participants were as follows:

Rachel Cohen has been a general assignments sports reporter for the Associated Press since 2007. She has also worked for the *Dallas Morning News*. She has covered several Olympics, college sports and high school sports in her 15-year career.

Jenny Dial-Creech has worked at the *Houston Chronicle* for her entire 10-year professional career. She covers the Houston Rockets of the National Basketball Association. Dial-Creech has also covered high schools, the Women's National Basketball Association and has served as a high school sports editor.

Ros Dumlao has worked at the *Clarion-Ledger* newspaper in Jackson, Mississippi since 2013. She covered Jackson State athletics.

Kate Hairopoulos has covered college sports and the Olympics for the *Dallas Morning News* since 2003. She has also covered high school sports. She worked at the *Greensboro* (North Carolina) *News and Record* for three years before heading to Dallas.

Cathy Harasta is semi-retired and works as a freelance writer. Her work primarily appears in *Texas Catholic* magazine. She previously worked as a general assignment reporter and columnist at the *Dallas Morning News* for 25 years before leaving the publication in 2007. While she was the *Dallas Morning News*, she covered nine Olympics, two Super Bowls, three World Series, the Kentucky Derby, the Masters Golf tournament and the America's Cup yacht race, among other events.

Rachel Lenzi has covered the University of Michigan sports for the *Toledo Blade* in Ohio since 2012. She has worked as professional journalist since 1997 and has worked as a sports writer at *The Brownsville Herald* in Texas, *The Coloradoan* in Fort Collins, Colorado and *The Press-Herald* in Portland, Maine.

Kami Mattoli has worked at *The Sporting News* magazine and website since 2012. She began as a college basketball writer and has been the college basketball editor for the publications' website since 2014.

Shannon Owens covers Central Florida athletics for *The Orlando Sentinel*, where she has been since 2005. Prior to that, Owens was a sports reporter and columnist at the *Des Moines Register* in Iowa.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### **Findings**

The data collected from interviews are presented here. The findings were organized to report the challenges female sports journalists experience in their jobs and to answer the research question. Data collected from the interviews were analyzed inductively. Inductive analysis means “the patterns, themes and categories of analysis came from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis” (Patton, 1990, p. 390).

#### **Getting Established**

Research question one asked what challenges female sports journalists face from their sources.

When dealing with sources for the first time – i.e. coaches and athletes – most of the participants said getting established is the key to building a healthy working relationship, regardless of gender.

“It’s what everyone goes through, trying to connect with them, earn their respect, trying to write something that’s somewhat critical or what they don’t like and showing your face the next day and having them accept that’s the way things are,” Hairopoulos said. “I feel sometimes – with some players and coaches – striking a rapport might be personal on a case-by-case basis. The challenge any reporter faces is you have to find your own way to find people to connect with.”

However, most of them said they had to work on it a little harder than their male counterparts simply because they were women. In their cases, getting established meant convincing coaches and athletes they were knowledgeable enough about the sports they were covering.

“Some will embrace you, some won’t,” Owens said. “We work in the relationship business where we are constantly trying to create relationships for the purposes of getting information and I find that sometimes, I have to go about my relationship-building different than a man.”

“It’s harder when you are getting started and earning your stripes,” Hairopoulos said. “You might be making the same mistakes as other (male) cub reporters, but it might be held against you because you are a woman.”

Some of the participants also shared that when working through those initial stages, they had to be next-to-perfect.

“I feel like I have to ask the right question and I have to prove my knowledge and I can’t mess up at all,” Dial-Creech said. “And after I do that for a while, it’s fine. As opposed to a man walking into the room for the first time, I have this window where I have to make-or-break it with this source. Not that I don’t have my A-game all the time, but it’s something I have to think about.”

Owens added: “I don’t think a man would have to go through as many situations like that as a woman (does). With men, it’s implied that you know everything, and if you don’t, then it’s OK.”

Even Cohen said that she had to be perfect when she covered Texas A&M football for the *Dallas Morning News* in the mid-2000s.

“I had a little bit of a feeling in the back of my mind that you do have to be better than everybody else (men) in order to be viewed the same, a little more perfect,” Cohen said. “Then, dealing with A&M, which is ‘old school’ for lack of a better term, I felt that I had to be perfect in every way. I felt like if I had one, minor, factual error early on, it was going to be perceived as worse than if a man had done it.”

But Cohen added that the high-level of scrutiny actually turned out to be a positive thing in the end.” It actually helped keep me on my toes and helped me on the beat because I had that level of precision that other people weren’t as conscious of.”

Cohen, like most of those interviewed, covered football at some point in her career. None of them had ever played football. Therefore, most of the participants said when covering the sport they had to work the hardest to establish credibility with coaches and athletes.

“The fact I’m covering football... obviously, I’ve never covered the sport, so I don’t know the ins and outs of football or what it’s like to go through a two-a-day in training camp or what it’s like to be an offensive lineman,” Dumalo said. “You only know from observing. In terms of being a woman and not having played the sport, you are not able to be on the same level of understanding as the guys on the sport.”

However, Owens said understanding the full intricacies of football is not required for the purposes of the reporting on the sport.

“I think I have to work a little bit harder to gain their trust, especially if you are covering a sport like football where they don’t feel confident that I know I am talking about,” said Owens, who covers Central Florida football for the *Orlando Sentinel*. “I do feel like we have to have these icebreakers or these moments where they finally learn that I know how to do my job.”

Owens added that when she senses her sources are not taking her seriously because they believe she doesn't know every single detail about football, she hasn't been afraid to be direct with them.

"I tell them, 'I don't know your entire playbook, but guess what, so don't your players,' "

Owens said. "I don't like to assume that I know everything. It's not my job to know everything. It's my job to ask questions to get information reported. If you don't want to work with me because I don't know everything, then that's going to affect your coverage."

Occasionally, when football sources do speak to female sports writers, the experience can be insulting.

"I can think of a handful of instances I'll walk away from a football player and think, 'Wow, he's really into mansplaining.' I asked a question, and he's dumbing-down his answer for me, but then he wouldn't give the same answer to a different man," Lenzi said. "I think, 'This guy doesn't think I know what he's talking about. Does he think I'm stupid?' I learned not to take that personally."

While most of those surveyed said male sports writers get the benefit of the doubt during the initial stages of credibility-building, it doesn't take long to see it fall apart. The key to establishing credibility with coaches and athletes is simple, according to Lenzi: "I find if you ask good questions, show that you are prepared, show that you are knowledgeable, you get respect for that." Even if it takes a little time, female sports writers can establish the same level of credibility as males.

"Once you start dealing with me and other female sports writers, you can earn their respect real fast," Hairopoulos said. "It's just like any dumbass guy reporter. He might have some built-in respect to start, but he can lose it real fast when he opens his mouth or when he

writes something. That always helps me with criticism or when I feel that way. I feel that I'm just going to put my head down and do my job and that takes care of itself in most cases with the people I deal with daily.”

Dumalo, who at 24 was the youngest one surveyed, still fights through the credibility issue with coaches and athletes because she is not as established in her market. Dumalo has been covering Jackson State football the Clarion-Ledger in Jackson, Mississippi for two years.

“I think eventually they did take me seriously when you prove yourself and keep your work professional,” Dumalo said. “At some point, you do you have to prove yourself and that’s fine if that’s the way it has to be.”

### **The Age Factor**

Apart from credibility issues, several of the participants shared that they believed age played a part in why they may not have been initially seen as credible purveyors of sports reporting.

“I think eventually, they take me seriously and I think it’s an age thing in my experiences,” Dial-Creech said.

Hairopoulos added: “Once you prove yourself at a certain level, you know people, that goes away a lot.”

Cohen said: “Once you get to know people, it’s fine.”

At 63 years old, Harasta is in semi-retirement after leaving the *Dallas Morning News* in 2007. During her 25-year career there, she covered sports media, college athletics, all of the major professional teams in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and the Olympics. She broke into sports writing when she was 35. She said her difficulties with coaches and athletes have been minimal, and if there were any troubles, she didn’t think they were gender-related. Because she began

sports writing at a relatively older age than most, Harasta believes that helped her put her male sources at ease.

Early in her career, she was dispatched to Lubbock, Texas to work on a Texas Tech baseball feature.

“I remember being 35 and covering college athletics,” Harasta said. “(The Texas Tech baseball players) were so open. I was halfway between the ages of their girlfriends and their mothers and it was wonderful because they stopped all the preening they would do with the co-eds they were dating, but they didn’t look at me as their mom at their bridge club.”

It wasn’t always that easy for Harasta. Following an AFC playoff game in the 1990s, Harasta went into the Buffalo Bills’ locker room to get quotes for her game story.

“The players had lost, and I was on a tight deadline and I got a little of that ‘What are you doing here? Are you here to gawk at our bodies?’ That kind of thing,” Harasta said. “I would just have to say, ‘I’m a working mother on a deadline. There’s nothing in this locker room that I couldn’t get right on a multiple choice test.’ ”

Harasta believes standing her ground like that helped when dealing with male sources, especially when she covered the Dallas Cowboys.

“I had a very no-nonsense attitude,” Harasta said. “I was not in the daily grind of sports journalism as a young woman, and I think that’s where that came through. I had a wonderful rapport with some of the wise guys – (former Dallas Cowboys head coach) Barry Switzer never failed to return a phone call. (Former Dallas Cowboys head coach) Jimmy Johnson, knowing that I was a feature writer, would slip me tid-bits for stories (that other male sports writers probably wouldn’t want to write).”



## Proving Yourself To Male Colleagues

Research question two asked what challenges female sports journalists face from their male colleagues. For female sports writers, establishing credibility stretches beyond coaches and athletes. Most of those surveyed said they've had to prove themselves to male co-workers and/or colleagues. Some of them believed they were seen as "token-hires." They were given jobs simply because they were female. Most of them scoffed at that notion.

"... Over the years, I've heard comments that I have my job because they needed a chick on the staff, which is absurd. If they needed a chick on the staff, I wouldn't be the only female on the *Houston Chronicle* (sports staff). They would be trying to pad their numbers if that was the case," Dial-Creech said.

Another participant said once she got a sports writing job, she felt like she had to constantly prove to her male colleagues that she earned it and it wasn't given to her.

"Respect is expected for men, and women are expected to earn it," she said. "I do think there's a difference there – the constant needing to prove that I'm good. That was the problem with some of my managers – that someone comes in who was 25 (and male) and wet behind the ears and you give him opportunities (that you didn't give me)."

Dial-Creech said early in her career, when she sensed she was seen as a "token-hire," she made every effort to diffuse that notion by being aggressive in news conferences to show others that she knew what she was doing.

"At this point, I don't feel this anymore, but early on, when there was a press conference, even if I didn't have a question, I would come up with one and ask because I didn't want anyone to think that I couldn't do my job," Dial-Creech said. "I was being very aggressive, double- and

triple-checking my work. Trying harder than most of the guys so they were seeing me as a person and not just a girl hanging around.”

Still, she didn't believe that always stopped the speculation, particularly when male athletes chose to talk to her instead of them.

“Players do flirt, but it's easy to manage that with them because I tell them, whatever, I'm here to do my job. (Male) reporters see that happen and they wonder what's going on. I'm dealing with enough here and you are judging me too. You want to be friendly with the players because you want to be able to do your job and build that rapport with the players, but you can't do anything that can come off to any person as flirting. They'll think, 'She's flirting her way into stories.' There is this line.”

Although Cohen has never overheard comments from male colleagues about whether she was a “token-hire,” she said she did receive feedback from readers early in her career stating they were surprised that she handled the job as well as she did.

“There's the perception that they only hired (me) because she's a woman,” Cohen said. “I've had more than a few readers tell me, 'I thought you were going to be terrible, but you are actually fine.' I always felt that you could prove yourself to people that you belong, and that's very doable. I think most people are open-minded enough to notice that.”

### **‘One Of The Guys’**

Because they are working in an industry that is overwhelmingly male, most of the participants also said it's inevitable they will either be on the receiving end or find themselves within earshot of an off-color, or perhaps, sexist remark.

One considered contacting the human resources department when a co-worker joked with her that she was “barren and dried up” because she was single, in her mid-30s and did not have any children.

Cohen added: “It’s an interesting dynamic because you want to be perceived as one of the guys, but you are laughing at a joke you shouldn’t be laughing at. But, so much of it is context. If you know someone well, and you know the kind of person they are, you joke around and it’s cool, because you know that person respects you.”

### **Problems From Above?**

Research question three asked what challenges female sports journalists face from their male superiors. Apart from one participant stating she believed she was demoted as a columnist to a writer, the consensus was generally positive in this regard. When there have been problems, they’ve been isolated and seemingly few and far between.

“I’ve had an issue with a co-workers saying inappropriate things,” Dial-Creech said. “The editor brushed it off. It was a case of him not having my back. Other than that, I’ve been lucky with that.”

Lenzi added: “Some of my editors have been old-school guys. The women were the ones getting coffee for them 30 to 40 years ago. Most of them have been pretty progressive. The good definitely outweighs the few bad instances. . . . (and the bad instances) had nothing to do with sexism.”

Harasta said she was recruited by the *Dallas Morning News*’ now-retired sports editor Dave Smith to write sports features. She said he believed she could write stories from a different angle because she didn’t delve into sports journalism like most others.

“Dave Smith believed in me,” Harasta said. “I wasn’t the person from the cradle who said, ‘I have to be a sportswriter or nothing else. I had the goal of teaching English literature at an ivy-covered university.’”

The participant (who is African-American) who was demoted as a sports columnist said she was told she was being demoted because her editor didn’t believe she could connect with the newspaper’s audience. She said the newspaper’s audience was white and conservative. In general, she said they didn’t like her point of view when she wrote about issues involving race. She added that she connected more with her online audience. She felt the demotion was unjust.

She said: “It didn’t matter what I wrote, they just weren’t going to like it, which is fine. I understand that. That’s all right. The problem is when your manager starts to use that as guide to say ‘Maybe you don’t need to be writing columns.’ That’s when you need someone to support that you are different and that everyone is not going to embrace you.”

She didn’t believe, however, her gender had anything to do with her demotion.

### **Why Get Into It?**

Research question four asked why females choose to pursue sport journalism. The common answer among most of the respondents was they love writing and sports.

“My dad read the newspaper every day, and he’d read about the Astros. I always loved sports, and I always loved writers and have never faltered much from that,” Dial-Creech said.

Lenzi added: “I like sports and I like to write and when I was 12, I thought, ‘It would be really cool to get paid to do this.’”

Hairopoulos said: “My dad was a big sports guy. I was always around sports. As I grew up, I read a lot, and I was a decent writer, so it was a natural, hand-in-hand kind of thing.”

Some like, Cohen and Owens, were former athletes and saw their love of writing and sports as a natural progression.

“I knew enough about sports and had some interest in it,” Cohen said. “Once I started doing it, I got some internships and kept going from there.”

All were aware of the difficulties the female pioneers had faced in varying degrees.

“I remember an article that ran in the Baltimore Sun about Lisa Olson and the New England Patriots,” Lenzi said. “I cut it out and put it on my wall. I was thinking, ‘This can’t happen.’ ”

Some didn’t become aware of these difficulties until they enrolled in college and studied the history of journalism in the United States. Many said pioneers like Mary Garber and Lisa Olson helped break down the barriers and there enough female sports writers around that they didn’t see why they couldn’t follow in their footsteps.

“I was lucky there were plenty of examples,” Hairopoulos said. “I wasn’t necessarily a trailblazer by any means. That had already been done. There were plenty of people. I never really had to stop and think, ‘They are never going to treat me right.’ ”

Cohen added: “From my experience, I saw women doing it first hand, and they were fine. It seemed to me I viewed these stories (about the female pioneer sports journalists) as horrifying and very important, but historical. These are things that happened a long time ago.”

## **Other Findings**

### **Social Media**

With the rise of the use of social media – particularly Twitter and Facebook – direct access from fans to celebrities and athletes has never been closer. The same is true for readers

and journalists. While Cohen's experiences with readers via email have been relatively pleasant, she is not as active on social media as some of the others.

Dial-Creech and Hairopoulos are active on Twitter. They said their worst experiences on the job have come from dealing with those who tweet at them. According to Dial-Creech,

Social media for female sports journalists is horrible. I deal with it every day. I can't say enough negative things about how bad social media is for women in sports. I joined Twitter in 2007 when we really weren't sure what it was, and I've been around since the beginning of it and I've seen all the ugly that can come from Twitter. It's crazy. My co-workers tell me all the time, that it must be so bad being a woman and having to deal with all that. I think if you ask any female reporter in sports, they would tell you social media can be real terrible to deal with.

"It's difficult, but you always have to have a little bit of a hard shell when you are in this profession whether you are a woman or a man," Hairpoulos said. "But, I think the immediate feedback and the anonymous feedback is hard to deal with."

They said most of their difficulties stemmed from the fact they were women writing about sports. Although Dial-Creech and Hairopoulos said they were able to brush aside any criticism levied at them via social media, there were cases when the vitriol was taken to the extreme, and it was alarming enough to concern them.

Dial-Creech felt it the most in 2014 when she posted what she thought was a fairly harmless blog post about former Houston Rockets guard Jeremy Lin, an American basketball player of Chinese descent, who was pulled out of a game because he was suffering from the flu.

She sent out a tweet with the blog link and the response to it was immediate and confusing to her.

“He has a very passionate following that’s very active on social media,” Dial-Creech said. “Reporters who have covered Jeremy Lin have had problems with them, a lot of trolling. Jeremy Lin just got pulled out of a game and then you get 75 people tweet at you that you are racist, immediately.”

Those were only the beginning of her troubles. The next blog post showed a clip to a link where Lin shot a ball that didn’t hit the rim. Because it didn’t show Lin in a positive light, it only fueled Lin’s Twitter followers to scary extremes for Dial-Creech.

“I ended up getting death threats for posting that,” Dial-Creech said. “They tried looking up my address and posting it on Twitter. Luckily, they didn’t get the whole address, but they had the street. I had to call Twitter and get it removed.”

Soon after she discovered a link to a site that she described as a gossip web site in China akin to TMZ in the United States. On it, she said, was a doctored picture of herself.

“It was a porn-star body with my face and the item was about how I was having an affair with (current Houston Rockets player) James Harden,” Dial-Creech said. “I had to call China and needed to take legal action.”

Dial-Creech works the Rockets beat for the *Houston Chronicle* with a male. She noted: “It was a big deal over a blog post. My co-worker posts blogs all the time, and he’s a man, and no one has ever threatened his life.”

Hairopoulos also found herself on the receiving end of an avalanche of criticism via social media from fans of Heisman Trophy winner and former Texas A&M quarterback Johnny Manziel, who plays professionally for the Cleveland Browns.

In 2012, months after he won the Heisman Trophy, which honors the nation's top college football player, Manziel became embroiled in a scandal in which he was suspected of autographing memorabilia for money, an NCAA violation. Ultimately, the NCAA was not able to determine if Manziel did. He acknowledged he had autographed items, but he did not know they would be sold. He denied receiving money for his autograph. He was suspended for one half of one game.

In his first media appearance after the scandal broke, Hairopoulos, who is the Texas A&M football beat writer for the *Dallas Morning News*, was overheard asking Manziel about the autographs in the news conference that was televised.

“I was the only one who asked him about his autographs in a press-conference setting and I got a lot of ‘you’re a dumb bitch’ type comments,” Hairopoulos said. “Yeah, people go after men sports writers, too, but when it’s women you are immediately the ‘dumb bitch. Why don’t you go back to the kitchen? You’re fat.’ It’s like a different level of personal attack when readers get angry with me. That’s what I really dislike the most about my job.”

One reader took a personal attack to a different level when he sent her a message on Facebook, something she only has for personal use.

“After the Manziel incident, someone messaged me on my personal Facebook account, which I don’t use for work and it was pretty nasty. I was lying in bed checking my phone in the morning, and it felt very invasive because it wasn’t where I wasn’t expecting it, like my Twitter mentions or my work email.”

### **A Different Perspective**

Most of those surveyed also said having a female who writes about sports can be a benefit because they bring a different perspective to issues or stories. Some of those surveyed see



it as a different way of looking at things. They spoke of bringing a “human” element to stories, and that’s a major reason why diversity in the newsrooms is so important, Lenzi said.

“Women will bring a different perspective to the newsroom, to an event,” Lenzi said.

“They might be very good at bringing the human into something.”

Dumalo added:

Being a female in the field, you bring a different perspective, a different look to how you want to cover something and what you think is a story and what your male colleagues do. I think we see the human aspect in a story and are moved by it a little more. I feel males look at a game story more analytically. One said having a female on staff helps when dealing with sensitive topics. Owens said: I think women have a different approach to how we deal with sources and how we deal with people in general. I think women, in general, are more relational, (have) a more friendly and warm approach. It does make sources feel more comfortable talking to me. There have been several stories, hardcore stuff, and I think being a woman helps cut through that stuff because I feel people are more comfortable talking to a nurturing figure.

Cohen added: “When dealing with male sources and sensitive topics, I think they are more comfortable having that conversation with a female reporter than a male reporter.”

### **Other Advantages**

While most of those surveyed said they have faced difficulties that male sports writers usually don’t, there are instances in which it is advantageous being a woman in the field. For starters, you stand out.

“You get noticed faster,” Owens said. “When you go into a press conference and you see a sea of old, fat white guys and you are in a dress, guess what? They are going to notice you first.”

Hairopoulos added: “You might be a little more memorable to the coaches and sources that you cover than if you are just blending into the masses of white, middle-aged males.”

Harasta echoed those sentiments: “Standing out and being able to ask a question,” she said about an advantage a woman has over a man in sports journalism. “I think your name would end up sticking faster than the same (male) person with the same experience.”

Appearances aside, Harasta believes sources took her more seriously because she did stand out from her male colleagues.

“Sometimes, they took me more seriously because I wasn’t part of the pack,” Harasta said. “Sometimes, they were simply more interested in me than the guys who came up through the regular drill and looked alike and had the same old tacky pants and notebook stuff in their belts. The novelty probably opened doors for me.”

About half acknowledged that being female has helped in getting their jobs. But, none of them believed they were given their jobs simply because they are female.

“We are considered a minority and if a company is looking to diversify, your resume may get queued up to the top of the pile if you are qualified,” Hairopoulos said.

If companies are looking to diversify, Cohen said “they may be more aggressive in looking for a talented female sports writer.”

One respondent confessed to dressing provocatively when approaching a male coach, who had been stonewalling her from doing a story she wanted to write. It was something she later regretted doing.

“I wore a low-cut shirt and confronted him,” she said. “He told me, ‘I’d listen to you, but I’m too busy looking at your cleavage.’ I said, ‘That’s my whole point.’ I ended up getting the story out of him. I really needed to get that story. At the same time, I was 22 and I didn’t know any better. I was never told by anybody about the rules of engagement.”

### **Conclusion**

This study sought to explore what challenges female sports writers currently face. Historically, it has been a difficult field for a female to break into because it has been male-dominated and there has been a prevailing belief that sports in general are geared almost exclusively to males and that includes those who wish to cover sports for a living.

According to statistics, the number of female sports writers is on the rise. However, it still a male-dominated profession and that includes those in power positions such as editors.

Because females are in the minority (number-wise) sports writing, this study sought to document their challenges. This falls in line with the basic tenet of standpoint theory, which helps us understand the experiences who are not in the mainstream. This was used as a guide to collect the research and used to shed light on the challenges female sports writers face.

Standpoint theory was especially useful when uncovering topics the study didn’t specifically target, such as social media obstacles. Based on the responses given in this study, there is an indication female sports writers have a different experience on social media than their male counterparts.

Several respondents said they believed being female allowed them to see story possibilities in a different way and that has been a useful on-the-job tool.

Based on the information gathered through in-depth interviews with the female sports writers who participated in the study, they still face challenges. However, they don’t seem to be

the same as the ones that Mary Garber or Lesley Visser faced. No one in the study revealed they had been denied access to areas designated for sport media.

For the most part, all participants in the study believed significant progress for female sports writers has been made when compared to those who preceded them.

Although Cohen still runs into troubles and coaches on occasion, it doesn't happen as often anymore. She's also noticed that it doesn't seem to happen to her female colleagues as well. "I think that's a great sign of progress," Cohen said. "I really think by the time I was starting out – although there wasn't a lot of female sports writers – I think there had been just enough in critical mass that most coaches and athletes had had to deal with them."

### **Limitations**

Although the study's participants offered strong feedback and most had extensive experience that painted a strong picture of the challenges female sports writers face, it had targeted more participants. Two interviews were lost due to technical problems because of the recording device on the mobile phone app and those interviews could not be rescheduled. The researcher reached out to approximately 50 potential targets, but only 10 responded and two of those interviews were lost.

Obtaining more interviews could have offered more descriptions of the obstacles female sports writers face.

Because the nature of the study was qualitative and involved an interview that could have taken as long as 45 minutes, that could have warded off potential participants. A handful of potential participants who further inquired about the study asked if there was a survey form they could fill out instead of doing an interview. When the researcher explained the only information

that could be used for the study had to be gathered via telephone interview, some declined or never responded back.

### **Future Research**

Time is always a limitation in research. Enough time and better access to participants would have allowed the researcher to examine a larger sample of participants. Nevertheless, the study found important data on female sports journalists in the United States. The fact that women are a growing sports audience makes continued studies on this subject relevant and important. For the future, work on the lives of female sports journalists must continue to give women a voice in sports media, allowing them to be seen as more than objects.

Another area that could be examined here is the lives of female sports journalists in television as well as sports-only networks such as ESPN, FOX Sports and TMZ Sports. Sports has become a television-heavy activity and since ESPN is seen as the example to follow in the field, it would be interesting to see what experiences women in this medium have.

Overall, the findings answered the four research questions in this study. In this chapter the findings of the study were shared and suggestions for future research were made. The study's limitations were also discussed.

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## APPENDIX

## APPENDIX A

### LIST OF QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

#### Demographic information

1. How old are you?
2. How long have you been a sports journalist?
3. What beats/sports have you covered as a sports journalist?
4. What publications have you worked?
5. Where do you currently work?
6. How long have you worked at your current publication?

#### Questions for study

1. What are the biggest challenges you have faced a sports journalist?
2. How much of a factor do you believe being a woman contributed to these challenges?
3. Specifically, what have been some of the most difficult experiences?
4. How much of a factor do you believe being a woman contributed to these most difficult experiences?
5. What difficulties have you faced from sources the beats you have covered?
6. How much of a factor do you believe being a woman has contributed to the difficulties from the sources on your beats you have covered?
7. Do you believe sources take you less seriously because you are a woman? If so, please explain.
8. What difficulties have you faced from male colleagues (co-workers included)?
9. How much of a factor to you believe being a woman has contributed to the difficulties you have faced from male colleagues?
10. Do you believe some male colleagues take you less seriously because you are a woman? If so, please explain.
11. What difficulties have you faced from male superiors (editors)?
12. How much of a factor do you believe being a woman has contributed to the difficulties you have faced from these male superiors?
13. Do believe male superiors take you less seriously because you are a woman? If so, please explain.
14. Why did you get into sports journalism?
15. Knowing the difficulties that woman have faced in the profession in the past, how did that not deter you from pursuing sports journalism?

16. How long do you think you will stay in sports journalism?
17. If you choose to leave the profession, do you believe it will be because you are a woman?
18. What advantages do women have over men in sports journalism?
19. Have there been any instances where you believe being a woman helped you when dealing with a source? If so, please explain.
20. Have there been any instances where you believe being a woman helped you when dealing with a male superior? If so, please explain.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

David Hinojosa graduated from the University of Texas-Pan American with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Studies with a concentration in print journalism in 1994. He earned a Masters of Arts degree in Communications from the University of Texas-Pan American in August 2015. He has worked a professional sports writer since 1993. He began working as a sports writer with the *San Antonio Express-News* in 2013. He has previously worked at the *Edinburg Daily Review*, *The (McAllen) Monitor* and *The Dallas Morning News*. For inquires or concerns, please contact the author at 12301 Blanco Road, Apt. 1516, San Antonio, TX 78216 or at [dhinojosa@aol.com](mailto:dhinojosa@aol.com).