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Women in sports journalism.

Sara Ellen Swanson
San Jose State University

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WOMEN IN SPORTS JOURNALISM

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Journalism and

Mass Communication

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

By

Sara Ellen Swanson

December 2009

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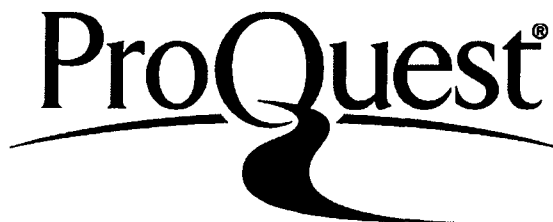
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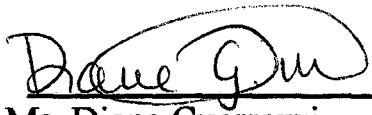
WOMEN IN SPORTS JOURNALISM

By
Sara Swanson

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION



Dr. Richard Craig, Department of Mass Communication Date 11/5/09



Ms. Diane Guarrazzi, Department of Mass Communication Date 11-3-09



Dr. Cecilia Baldwin, Department of Mass Communication Date 10-31-2009

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY



Associate Dean Office of Graduate Studies and Research Date 12/4/09

ABSTRACT

WOMEN IN SPORTS JOURNALISM

By Sara E. Swanson

This thesis is an exploration of women in sports journalism and the challenges they face when entering the locker room. It begins with an introduction focused on the history of women in sports journalism. Following the introduction, there will be a discussion in literature review format of the various challenges the women have faced.

Many of the early female sports reporters encountered various levels of treatment upon entering the locker room. Some were physically assaulted. Others were sexually abused or challenged by the players in sexually inappropriate ways. The literature review focuses on those types of moments in journalism history and explores how they shaped the industry and the character of women working in sports journalism. This paper also includes research and interviews with women currently working in sports journalism in order to find out the differences between those early years and today.

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Introduction

Before the 1960s, women were a rare sight in the world of sports reporting. If there were women reporting on sports, it was primarily for women's sports teams. When Title IX took effect in the 1970s, more women began playing sports, which enabled more women to report on sports. They soon discovered the success and prestige was not in reporting on women's sports, but in reporting for the big money-making sports such as men's professional football, baseball, and basketball.

As time passed, women started to use their sports-reporting expertise to get into reporting on major sports. Unfortunately, some newspaper editors did not want women reporting on those professional sports. Too much money was invested in them, and there was a general sense that women did not belong in male-dominated sports. One major hurdle women journalists faced was getting into the locker room. Some sports organizations had firm rules about women in the men's locker rooms, while others simply had unwritten rules. Women who attempted to report on teams that enforced these rules were stopped at the locker room door and told to wait outside for their interviews with the players and coaches. The problem with this policy was that

their male counterparts were allowed to go into the locker room to conduct interviews. Once the players conducted their interviews with the group of waiting male reporters, they were reluctant to go outside the locker room to give an interview again to one individual reporter. Women were often left no option but to do their articles without quotes from the stars of the game.

In the late 1970s, newspapers and magazines began to insist the teams allow reporters to enter the locker rooms regardless of gender. In 1978, *Time Magazine* sued the New York Yankees, forcing them to allow its female reporters into the locker room. After this action, it became almost fashionable to have women on the sports-reporting staff. The case had an affirmative-action-type effect on the demographic of the reporters on many sports staffs. However, as more and more women began to enter the locker rooms, reports of abuse of female reporters by players began to surface. Throughout the 1980s, there were many cases of players acting out negatively against women reporters.

The literature review section of this research paper was written to study the treatment of women working in sports journalism during the early years of working in the

industry, prior to 1993. It will focus primarily on the court cases that allowed women to enter men's locker rooms and the abuse endured by some of the first women working in sports journalism. It is important to look at these early years so there is a sense of understanding of how far the industry has come since allowing women into the locker rooms. This study will examine personal testimony from people who worked in sports journalism during that time. Also, this paper will also look at prior research on this topic. It will also review court cases that directly affected women in sports journalism. The second part of this research paper is an examination of the current treatment of women in sports journalism through a series of interviews with women currently in the industry.

Literature Review

The literature review section is designed to explore early research on the topic of female sports reporters and their challenges getting into men's locker rooms to interview athletes. This section discusses the people and events that took place within the sports journalism industry, both inside and outside the locker room, prior to 1993 when *Lady in the Locker Room* was written.

Lady in the Locker Room was written by Susan Fornoff who spent the majority of the 1980s covering the Oakland Athletics. Her book is about the time she worked with the A's and her experiences covering them as a beat writer for the *Sacramento Bee*. In this book, Susan Fornoff not only discussed her experiences working with the Oakland Athletics, but also her career in general working as a sports reporter in the early years of women in sports journalism. Her career began in 1977 on a chance encounter with someone who needed a typist to type the articles for the sports reporters at the Baltimore Orioles game that night. She was already in school pursuing a career in journalism and had a strong passion for sports. This encounter simply pointed her career in the correct direction. Her book and her career path were strong

examples of life as a female sports reporter in the early years after Title IX.

According to the *Association for Women in Sports Media (AWSM)*, Susan Fornoff and her peers working in sports journalism in the 1980s were far from the first women to venture into sports journalism. The *AWSM* Resource Center (2008) stated that Sadie Kneller Miller was the first known woman to cover sports when she reported on the Baltimore Orioles in the 1890s. Unfortunately, the *AWSM* reported that "her stories are bylined 'SKM,' presumably to hide her gender." The *AWSM* went on to say that in 1924, Margaret Goss began writing the first sports column written by a woman to appear on a regular basis.

This information is supported in a book written in 1926. The book, *Women in Journalism*, by Genevieve Jackson Boughner (1926), was a how-to guide on journalism for the earliest reporters in the industry. She had one brief chapter on women reporting on sports. Her focus was on women reporting on women's sports, but she had a few initial comments on women reporting on men's sports:

In California, where outdoor sports may be indulged in the year around, the various branches such as golf, swimming, tennis, etc., are important enough to justify a newspaper employing a special writer for each. There have been a few instances of women

covering major baseball games and accompanying the home team of their city when it travels around the circuit. (Boughner, 1926)

In 1971, Title IX was passed. Title IX was an amendment designed to eliminate discrimination of women in sports. This amendment was meant to allow women to participate more often in sports, especially at the college level. What was not anticipated, along with the increased presence of women in sports, was the increased presence of women in sports journalism. In his book *Sports Media: Reporting, Producing, and Planning*, Brad Schultz (2005) explained:

It has increased the importance, viability, and popularity of women's athletics, with a corresponding positive effect on women in the media. As female athletes became more empowered, so too did female reporters.

This new-found empowerment caused a dramatic increase in the number of women hoping to report on sports, and not just women's sports. There was an increase in women journalists reporting on professional male sports as well. At one point in the late 1970s, newspapers considered it fashionable to have a woman on the sports staff (Fornoff, 1993).

According to Fornoff, women reporters often found it challenging to get the players, coaches, and even the audience to see them as reporters first and as women second. Margareta Melin-Higgins argued that women reporters actually had the opposite problem. "They have in common that they (albeit to various degrees) adapt to the traditional view of women, that is, to accept that they will be seen as a woman first and a journalist second" (DeBruin & Ross, 2004). She explained, some women often revert back to the traditional views of women's roles and sometimes just stay there. This is often where the problems start. If women took a stronger stance to be seen first as a reporter, like Fornoff suggested, then the fact they are women could one day be a non-issue. On occasion, it was such an issue that it led to lengthy court battles.

One of the first court battles women journalists had to fight was not a sports-related case, but one that eventually affected the landscape of sports journalism. In 1973, a suit was filed against *The New York Times* to acquire equal rights for women journalists. The suit:

Functioned as a wake-up call for the entire newspaper industry, both because of the elite status of *The New York Times* and because the named member of the suit included an accountant, a telephone solicitor in the

advertising department, and an African-American staff member. (Chambers, Steiner, & Fleming, 2004)

The suit opened the door for women to pursue their rights as journalists on a number of different levels, including in the sports department.

Fornoff noted in her book, one of the most significant court cases regarding women sports reporters took place in 1978. According to the court documents, Melissa Ludtke, a reporter for *Time Magazine*, was denied access to the New York Yankees locker room following a World Series game in 1977. Bowie Kuhn, Major League Baseball's commissioner at the time, had an unwritten, but understood, policy with all the teams in baseball against women reporting from the locker room. When this order was applied to Ludtke following the most important baseball game of the 1977 season, *Time Magazine* took up the fight to protect the rights of their reporters. Unfortunately, Kuhn strongly believed women should not be allowed in men's locker rooms. He was quoted saying:

To permit members of the opposite sex into this place of privacy, where players, who are, of course, men, are in a state of undress, would be to undermine the dignity of the game. (Fornoff, 1993)

The court did not agree with Kuhn's sentiments. In May of 1978 they ruled:

The court holds that defendants' policy of total exclusion of women sports reporters from the locker room at Yankee Stadium is not substantially related to the privacy protection objective and thus deprives plaintiff Ludtke of that equal protection of the laws which is guaranteed her by the Fourteenth Amendment. (Motley, 1978)

This case opened the flood gates for other professional sports to change their stance on women in the locker rooms. The ruling itself was technically applied only to the New York Yankees, but most of Major League Baseball abided by the ruling. "It was not until 1985 that Kuhn's successor, Peter Ueberroth, issued regulations requiring all teams to provide both equal access and open locker rooms" (Thomas, 1990). In 1982 the National Hockey League made it a formal rule to allow equal access to the locker rooms for all reporters. Although many teams already allowed such access, it was not made official until 1982 (Chambers, Steiner, & Fleming, 2004). In fact, hockey and basketball were two major sports that had allowed women in their locker rooms without question even before the ruling. They were allowing access in 1976, and according to Ludtke (1990), "In the National Basketball Association, which gave women equal access without rancor or lawsuits, these altercations have not taken place. The players use bathrobes or rely on towels to ensure their privacy."

The ruling in the Ludtke case did not change opinions or rules across all of sports. Many teams still held on to the belief that women were not allowed in the locker room. Another court battle was fought in California in 1981. After being told to wait outside the locker room for a player to meet with her, Michele Himmelberg of *The Sacramento Bee* discovered the male reporters had been allowed in the locker room. The next day, several other papers had quotes from the player she was told to wait for, who never showed up for the interview with Himmelberg. *The Sacramento Bee* filed an injunction against the San Francisco 49ers (Fornoff, 1993). This was not the first time Himmelberg pursued legal action to obtain equal rights. Two years earlier she threatened the Tampa Bay Buccaneers with legal action using the Ludtke case as precedent. They quickly changed their stance on Himmelberg being in the locker room. She left sports journalism soon after the legal battles and began working as a business writer for *The Orange County Register*. In an interview with *American Journalism Review*, Michele Himmelberg said:

I left the business because I had two children and my lifestyle was chaotic. I somehow managed in the early years. . . I felt tugged and pulled. . . I am glad I [covered sports]; it was interesting, fun, exciting.

That was a good chapter in my life. Now I have another chapter. (Ricchiardi, 2005)

Although these court cases were important and significant, they were not the most important battle being fought at the time. Once women were allowed to enter the men's locker rooms, the battle was between the women reporters and the players. Some of the players had very strong opinions regarding women in their locker rooms. Fornoff mentioned a number of players who had religious reasons for not wanting her in the locker room. For example, Bruce Hurst, a pitcher for the Boston Red Sox and the San Diego Padres in the 1980s, politely explained to Fornoff that he was Mormon and would like to wait until she left the locker room before he would undress. She agreed to inform him when she was leaving the locker room so he would feel comfortable to proceed with showering and changing his clothes.

Unfortunately, not all players were as polite as Hurst, nor did they have such specific reasons for not wanting the women in the locker rooms. Varda Burstyn (1999) wrote a book called *The Rites of Men; Manhood, Politics, and the Culture of Sports*. In this book, she argued:

Through the mass media, sport culture spoke to successive cohorts of twentieth-century males as they contended with booms, busts, wars and migrations. As a mast narrative of masculinity, sport was able to provide points of identification, masculine regroupment, and symbolic affirmation in a social landscape with constantly changing gender, class, racial, and ethnic relations. Here, then, I want to relocate the evolution of the sport-media complex within one of the most important social dimensions with which it interacted: the shifting gender order.

Burstyn explained this essentially means sports were the last refuge for men who were being faced on a daily basis with the women's movement. Beginning in the 1920s, men's leading role in society was being challenged, and they no longer knew where they stood. They were able to turn to sports, the last place that was truly considered masculine, to help them with their identity issues in a changing society. For many years this remained true until the 1970s when women began to enter the locker rooms and enter the final masculine frontier. Some men who grew up with this mentality were reluctant to let go of that frontier. Men often lashed out at the women in the locker room. Some of these actions were done just to make the women feel uncomfortable in the locker room. Some players made rude comments behind the women's backs or tried to make it impossible to get an interview from them. Others physically assaulted the female reporters. Also, there

were players that crossed a sexual line, just because they could.

All too often, a woman in the locker room reporting on that evening's game was the only woman in the locker room. Players' wives and significant others were not allowed in the locker rooms, so a woman in there had a tendency to stand out. This made her an easy target. One woman reporter became the target of a flying jockstrap. On the *Women's Sports Foundation* website, Randi Druzin (2008) tells the story:

Cub reporter Paola Boivin entered the St. Louis Cardinals clubhouse with her male colleagues after a game in 1987. While searching for infielder Terry Pendleton, one of his teammates approached her. 'Are you here to interview somebody or to look at a bunch of guys?' No sooner had he spat out the words than a jockstrap landed on Boivin's head. She fled the clubhouse and later interviewed a sympathetic Pendleton in the hallway.

This incident was considered to be a minor one. In fact, the flying jockstrap easily could have been an accident. Other moments in the locker room could not have been explained as an accident. *Arizona Daily Wildcat* reporter, Kristen Davis, had a run-in of her own one day. While interviewing players following a game, she got the feeling someone was watching her:

I was appalled to see that the player, Derek Fisher, was leaning back in his chair with his legs widely spread apart and his towel around his neck. I of course was startled that Fisher, a rookie guard, would get my attention so that he could flash himself. (Davis, 1996)

A man walking around naked in the locker room was not uncommon and was the primary reason women were excluded from the locker rooms. Women learned to adapt to this and had their own ways of avoiding looking in the players' direction. One day, Rachel Shuster of *USA Today* found it difficult to avoid looking when a player for the Green Bay Packers "vigorously fondled" himself while she was interviewing him (Chambers, Steiner, & Fleming, 2004).

Fornoff described this moment as one that was a retaliation for a "too bad, I'm here," mentality on the part of the women reporters. Women would do everything they could to ignore the fact men were naked all around them. The men who did not want the women in the locker rooms would continue to push the envelope. "Michelle Kaufman of *The Detroit Free Press* had to tolerate a dancing football player who gyrated naked behind her back as she conducted an interview" (Fornoff, 1993).

Frank Litsky (1993) of *The New York Times* described another event involving Kaufman. He stated that Kaufman

was shoved by Jimmy Williams of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers after yelling at her that she did not belong in the locker room. Litsky spoke with Williams following the incident. "He said he 'did nothing to intimidate' and that 'it wasn't a matter of her being a woman or whether I was dressed. I was fully dressed and she was doing her job.'"

Williams may have been fully dressed, but in the incident involving Lisa Olson, the player most certainly was not. Leigh Montville explained the events of September 1990 in the May 1991 issue of *Sports Illustrated*. She described how Olson, a reporter for the New England Patriots for about two months, entered the locker room hoping to get an interview with a player who refused to appear. He was in the trainers' room receiving treatment, and nobody was allowed into that room other than players and coaches. She stood outside waiting for him for a while before giving up on her story. Several players noticed her that day and believed she was standing around to get a look at all the naked players. The next day, three players decided to confront her about it as she was interviewing another player. "Zeke Mowatt, Robert Perryman and Michael Timpson, gathered around her and made lewd suggestions while she interviewed Hurst. This was a locker room. The

players were naked" (Montville, 1991). Fornoff noted Mowatt tried to get Olson to touch his penis. Montville did not mention that detail directly, but he did mention the fallout from the incident. Olson was harassed by everyone from players to fans; even the coaches were heard calling her a bitch:

People spit on her head from the luxury boxes, the only seats in the Garden located above the hockey press box. She started to wear a hat for protection. Someone spray-painted CLASSIC BITCH on the front of her apartment house. Her tires were slashed. The letters continued. She changed her phone number again and again. In Hartford, a group of male fans seated in front of the press box chanted all night at her, asking her to show them her breasts. (Montville, 1991)

The harassment became so bad that she tried to leave sports reporting. Leaving sports did not stop the letters and the harassment at her home. She eventually decided to leave the country and moved to Australia.

Fornoff is well aware of the fact that harassment came in many forms. The examples so far have all centered around players who were sexually harassing the female reporters in their locker rooms. Most of the stories consisted of players who were naked, flaunting themselves around the fully clothed reporters. Fornoff had personal experience with harassment of a different kind, the kind that bordered on threatening, and the player who did it was

not even present in the room. According to the *AWSM*, Fornoff's story became an example of how difficult things can get while covering sports as a woman.

Dave Kingman was leading the Oakland Athletics in home runs in 1986. Fornoff and Kingman had been working together for two years, and after a number of incidents, had agreed to try and stay away from each other. When Kingman hit his 400th home run, he refused to interview with anyone until Fornoff left the group of reporters. She, of course, was the only woman in the group. On a number of occasions Kingman made his feelings clear about how he felt toward Fornoff and women in the locker room. To maintain peace, Fornoff gave him the space he requested (Fornoff, 1993).

Fornoff did not know the specific thing that provoked Kingman, but on June 23, 1986, in Kansas City, Kingman crossed the line. Kingman thought it would be funny to send Fornoff a live rat. He sent it directly to the press booth during the game. Fornoff did not find the joke funny, nor did her fellow reporters who were quick to come to her defense. *Sports Illustrated* reporter Peter Gammons (1986) explained:

Kingman's problems with women journalists are nothing new; he was involved in two incidents in New York with female writers and another in Chicago with a woman television producer. 'This is a man's clubhouse,' Kingman told reporters after the June 23 game. 'If someone can't take a simple joke, they shouldn't be in the game.' He then saw Fornoff in the clubhouse. 'Kleenex!' he cried out, throwing the box of tissues in her direction. 'Anyone want to cry? Kleenex! Man's clubhouse! Tears! Anyone want to cry?'

According to Fornoff (1993), journalists avoided reporting anything negative about players. Fans did not want to read their favorite players were jerks or were rude to the media. "The Rat Incident" was a rare and extreme circumstance. Many of her fellow reporters felt this attack by Kingman was an attack on all of them. Ultimately, Kingman received little more than a slap on the wrist. He was fined \$3,500, and the Oakland Athletics organization apologized to Fornoff. Gammons (1986) reported that the original deal was for Kingman to apologize to Fornoff directly:

But Kingman refused to apologize to Fornoff, and even tried to buy back the rat, named Kong by Fornoff, for \$75. Kong is now in the possession of five-year-old Mathew Marble, whose dad is a friend of a Royals Stadium security guard. A \$3,500 fine means little to a player who is earning \$600,000.

After the incident, Fornoff had multiple requests to speak out about what had happened. During the June 23, 1986 game, she was the only reporter who attempted to focus

on the game. She was also the only reporter who did not write about the incident in her article the following day. She gave only a few brief comments to the reporters in the press booth who witnessed what had happened, and she only gave follow-up comments to those same reporters in the days that followed. "Years later, I watched Lisa Olson on *Entertainment Tonight* and just about every other tabloid talk program discussing the 'Zeke Mowatt' incident, and I wondered if I had made a mistake" (Fornoff, 1993). She explained how, possibly, if more women were outspoken about things they went through, maybe Olson would have been spared some of her embarrassment and harassment. If women had put up more of a fight instead of trying so desperately to be one of the boys, fewer women would have had to be reminded they were not one of the boys.

The Lisa Olson-Zeke Mowatt incident took place in 1990 and was the last major harassment story in Fornoff's book. Fornoff said, "By then, women sportswriters had actually begun thinking, 'This is no problem anymore - we're just plain old sportswriters.' We were wrong."

Further Research Questions

The research completed for the literature review was based on information and material before 1993. This portion of the paper was written in 2008, which leads to the following research questions: What changes have taken place in sports reporting since the early days of women being allowed in the locker room? Was there another major turning point in the industry since 1992 when *Lady in the Locker Room* was written? How do players in professional sports currently feel about women reporting in the locker rooms, and is there a difference in opinion based on the age of the players?

These questions for further study are important because the majority of research on this topic was conducted when women were first entering sports journalism. There seems to be a certain level of complacency regarding women in locker rooms now. There is very little new information that details events or feelings of women over the last 10-15 years. These questions will attempt to explore the reasons women appear to be commonplace in locker rooms now and are not considered a novelty or threat any longer. Or are people now turning more of a blind eye to the issues women face when entering a locker room? Or

have there been new rules and regulations put into place within sports organizations that help to prevent problems from happening in the first place?

Method and Proposed Study

New research regarding women in sports journalism was explored over the summer of 2009. The best way to answer the listed research questions was through a qualitative analysis of individual perspectives. The best way to gather this information was through individual interviews with people in the industry. There are three major categories of interviews that were originally planned to be conducted: reporters, players, and public relations professionals.

The reporters were the first group that was interviewed. Susan Fornoff, who played a significant role in sports journalism in the 1980s, was one of the first people the researcher attempted to interview to obtain her perspective on journalism today. Unfortunately, she was unavailable during the research period. Current sports reporters were then interviewed to get their perspectives. It was important to gauge how people actively working in the industry feel about this topic. Susan Slusser is the current beat reporter working for the Oakland Athletics. She is the equivalent of Susan Fornoff for today's sports journalists. She is most likely the most important person to have been interviewed while exploring this topic and

comparing today with the early years of women in sports journalism.

It was equally important to explore how women in sports journalism are regarded in other types of sports. Interviews were conducted with sports reporters in football, hockey, and basketball. The researcher had a number of connections within baseball and other sports, such as childhood friends who currently work for some of the local teams or friends who correspond with the reporters on a regular basis. It was important to get a wide range of opinions across the industry of sports journalism.

Also, interviews were done with sports journalists who report on more than just one sport. There are several female sports journalists who work for newspapers or television news broadcasts. Mindi Bach of ABC, Laura Behnke of NBC, and Ann Killion of the *San Jose Mercury News* are strong examples of more generalized sports reporters. They often have the same access to the locker rooms as any other journalist and face the same challenges, or even more, than the women who work a specific beat with a specific team.

As for the interviews, the following questions are examples of what was asked of the women sports reporters: How did you become interested in sports reporting? How long have you been working primarily in sports? How were you treated in the early days of your career? Did you ever witness a difference between how you and the male reporters were treated inside the locker rooms? Did you ever witness another reporter being treated badly by players?

The second important group that needed to be interviewed was current and former players. At the start of the research, it was known that current players are more difficult to speak with due to their playing schedules. Unfortunately, when the researcher attempted to contact players, it was discovered that due to the rules of the leagues, players are not permitted to speak with people who do not have appropriate media credentials. The researcher does not have media credentials; therefore, this group could not participate in the research.

Another important group the researcher spoke with was people who work in the teams' public relations departments. The researcher discussed with the public relations professionals about their thoughts and experiences with women reporters. Some questions that were asked of public

relations professionals were: Is there a specific protocol when dealing with women reporters? Were certain guidelines put into place due to the presence of women in the locker rooms? Is there a moment in the career of a player when they are advised on how to deal with the media and specifically the female reporters? In your career, was there an incident that stands out as a teachable moment for you regarding women sports reporters?

The researcher was prepared to be flexible with the parameters of whom to interview. Because this topic was explored in such a qualitative way, flexibility was essential. As the research progressed, tactics needed to change. For example, it was originally planned to speak with athletes; unfortunately, they were not allowed to participate. This development changed the scope of the research to focus primarily on reporters. The research was completed in October of 2009.

Results

The following results were gathered during the summer of 2009, from June 2009 to September 2009. Nine journalists were interviewed, along with one public relations professional. The "Method and Proposed Study" section of this paper suggested the possibility of athletes being interviewed. Unfortunately, this researcher was unable to speak with athletes due to the regulations of the public relations departments of their teams.

The eight journalists came from both newspaper and television. The journalists include: Mindi Bach of Comcast Sports Network; Laura Behnke of NBC Sports; Ann Killion, a freelance sportswriter; Gwen Knapp of the *San Francisco Chronicle*; Janie McCauley of the *Associated Press*; Susan Slusser of the *San Francisco Chronicle*; Michelle Smith, a freelance sportswriter; Ailene Voisin of the *Sacramento Bee*; and Joan Ryan who used to work for the *San Francisco Chronicle* and is currently working as a media consultant to the San Francisco Giants. The public relations professional interviewed was Staci Slaughter, Vice President of Communications for the San Francisco Giants.

The results section is arranged into five subcategories. The first section is "Rules and Regulations," a discussion of team rules and self-imposed rules by the journalists. The second section is the "Background of the Journalists." This section is a brief overview of how the journalists decided on sports as a profession. The third section is "Current Treatment of the Journalists." In this section, the topic of their treatment will be broken down further into six subcategories: "How Different Sports Compare"; "Location, Location, Location"; "Age and Experience"; "Male Journalists"; "Personal Life"; and "The Audience." The fourth subcategory is "Why Progress was Made." This category is an examination of how the journalists feel about the industry today and how they think it got that way. The final subcategory is "Further Progress to be Made." This category will demonstrate where the journalists feel the industry still needs to go and what they feel still needs to happen for women to be fully integrated into the industry.

Rules and Regulations

Rules and regulations concerning media policies can vary from sport to sport, and even team to team within each sport. Most teams have a general policy on media access to the clubhouse, the players, and the coaching staff. For example, the Oakland Athletics list their media policies on page 409 of their *2009 Media Guide*. Their clubhouse policy is as follows:

The A's clubhouse is open to the media three and one-half hours prior to the game and then will close during the A's posted batting practice time. The clubhouse will then reopen at the conclusion of batting practice and will close one hour prior to game time. The clubhouse will open no earlier than five minutes or no later than 10 minutes following the game. At times additional restrictions may be imposed. Please do not lounge in the manager's office or in the clubhouse at any time. The break area, the trainer's room and the umpire's dressing room are off limits to the media. (Oakland Athletics Public Relations Department, 2009, p. 401)

This is one example from one team as to its media policies, but most teams have similar policies in place. These policies are typically a statement of who is and is not allowed into the clubhouse and when. At no point is gender specified. In terms of this policy, all media, as long as one can show appropriate credentials, are treated equally under the terms of the clubhouse access policy.

Staci Slaughter of the San Francisco Giants reiterated this point by saying, "Women are always treated like any other member of the press" (personal communication, September 10, 2009). She went on to explain that in spring training they do have a time when they learn how to work with the media, but that women are so common now, they do not have to differentiate them from the other media when training the athletes. Joan Ryan, who once worked as a sports reporter and now works as the consultant for the Giants, is the person who does the majority of the training on media relations. Something that occurred to her during the interview was the fact that the question of how to deal with female reporters had never been mentioned:

It has never come up. I have never brought it up, and it never even occurred to me to bring it up, and none of the players have ever brought it up to me. That is kind of interesting. We only talk about the media in general and the reporters in general, the difference between the beat writers and the columnists and the radio guys and TV guys. We work on their skills and how to present themselves. But the gender thing has never come up. And maybe I just have never brought it up because it is so not an issue, so it never occurred to me that it might be an issue for the players. Not a single player has ever brought it up to me.
(personal communication, September 28, 2009)

Even though the clubhouses have their own rules in place for the media and they do not specifically mention gender, several of the female reporters interviewed

explained how they place several rules on themselves within a clubhouse setting. Janie McCauley explained:

My kind of rules for myself is basic courtesy things, not even a woman thing. I tend not to hover in the locker room . . . I mean this is their office so to speak; this is where they do their job. I have made my own sort of rules that help in my comfort level. I don't want to be running up to them when they are naked. (personal communication, July 9, 2009)

Mindi Bach cited a similar personal policy that she has for herself. "I kind of make it a point that if a player is getting dressed and I need to speak with him, I have my back to him" (personal communication, July 16, 2009). She believes this personal policy is part of the reason she has a good working relationship with the players and why she has had minimal issues inside the locker room. "They seem to respect that my back is to them, but I am trying to hold my position and get my camera in there, and that works."

Background of Journalists

Journalists who entered the industry in the 1970s and 1980s were able to point to Title IX as the reason they were able to go into sports journalism. It opened a number of doors for the journalists that would not have been open previously. During this research, not a single journalist interviewed mentioned Title IX directly.

All of the journalists spoke of a love, or passion, for sports. The majority of them had played one or multiple sports. Ann Killion played basketball. Janie McCauley played tennis, soccer, basketball, and dabbled in many other sports. Ailene Voisin played softball, volleyball and basketball in high school. Mindi Bach even swam competitively in college.

If the journalists did not play sports at one time, they were definitely fans. Susan Slusser became a baseball fan at the young age of five and decided on sports writing at the age of nine. Ann Killion pointed to her father's love of the San Francisco Giants and 49ers as to why she became a sports fan. "I really liked the [Oakland] Raiders, which made my dad crazy. It was kind of like a teenage rebellion" (personal communication, August 4, 2009).

The positive vibe of sports journalism was something that was mentioned a number of times by many different journalists. Ann Killion described the vibe in sports this way:

People gravitate to it; it is a community builder. It was something you felt proud of because your team won. It was something that brought people together. You know high school, with all its little cliques, but if a team does well, then people come together. (personal communication, August 4, 2009)

She went on to explain that after some time in a career in public relations, she met women who worked in sports journalism. "They loved what they did, they had great personalities, they were really relaxed . . . people who enjoyed their job."

Mindi Bach went into sports journalism in 1999. Before that, she was working for regular news. "Then I realized, for news, I didn't have the wherewithal for news. It was just murder, death and mayhem. So I went to sports full time" (personal communication, July 16, 2009). Laura Behnke also mentioned her lack of enthusiasm for the news as to why sports were appealing to her. "I wasn't into chasing ambulances" (personal communication, September 4, 2009).

Michelle Smith was one reporter who had both the passion for the game and the experience of playing sports. "I played sports in high school. I remember one night, I was at an [Oakland] A's game with friends. I remember looking up at the press box and going, I would like to work up there" (personal communication, September 3, 2009). After years of working Little League games and high school football, she went to San Jose State University where she worked on the *Spartan Daily*. After covering the student union and student government stories, she got back into sports permanently.

All of the women believed their passion for sports and their journalism skills eventually led them to a role in sports journalism. Most of them were too young to have taken direct advantage of Title IX. For them, being involved in sports was a natural career choice.

Current Treatment of the Journalists

The journalists were all asked how they are treated inside the locker rooms and whether or not there were any issues with the players due to gender. The majority of the journalists had a story relating to gender discrimination, but very few could cite something that happened in recent years.

Most of the journalists believed they had a good relationship with the players. "I do believe that some of these guys open up to me more than they would a man," Janie McCauley mentioned (personal communication, July 9, 2009). Ailene Voison had a similar opinion. "Some players actually seem more comfortable speaking with women" (personal communication, September 15, 2009). A couple of journalists used the phrase "soften up" when describing the demeanor of athletes when they speak to the women reporters. Ann Killion experienced this especially when interviewing athletes while she was pregnant.

Many journalists equated their treatment with the personalities of whom they were working with at the time. "It is all personality driven. Every personality is different. Some just don't care that you are there; others take great lengths to be sure they are covered up," Mindi

Bach said (personal communication, July 16, 2009).

"Usually when I walk into the A's locker room, I know every player on that team, so I am definitely going to be more respectful of their space." Joan Ryan mentioned that every once in a while she would have a player who was "extremely Christian and would have a problem with it" (personal communication, September 28, 2009). But that was really rare. Ann Killion's response to men taking great lengths to covering up: "That is why God made towels." Susan Slusser also said the way she was treated inside the locker room is based just on the player's personality and not on her gender. "I've never had a problem with any athlete except those who are difficult with everyone, like Barry Bonds or Kenny Lofton" (personal communication, July 15, 2009).

Laura Behnke, on the other hand, simply had nothing negative happen to her directly. "I have never had or seen a bad situation. The stories that I hear are usually from women who have been doing this for a little bit longer and had interesting things happen" (personal communication, September 4, 2009). She did mention that once in Boston she had a player ask her on a date inside the locker room, but when she refused, that was the end of it.

Laura Behnke's point about incidents happening to women journalists who had been in the industry longer was consistent with the stories gathered in the interviews. Michelle Smith told a story from "a long time ago" where she was one of three female reporters interviewing a player in the 49ers locker room. "The athlete we were interviewing just stood there naked as a jaybird and just didn't make an effort to get dressed; he put his leg up on the stool and just sat there" (personal communication, September 3, 2009). When asked if she thought this was an intentional act, "Yes, it was clearly for our benefit."

A few years ago, Janie McCauley had players on two separate occasions shove her out of their way. She could not directly relate those incidents to gender, and in both cases the men denied shoving her. About one of the incidents she commented, "When a 350-pound lineman puts his hands on me, I took it as a shove. He also has done this to men in previous cities, so I don't think that was a, quote/unquote, female thing" (personal communication, July 9, 2009).

Janie McCauley was the only one of the interviewed reporters who had something happen to her in the last few

years. In fact, this incident happened the week before the interview:

So I had an issue this week with Randy Johnson and it was unfortunate. He absolutely berated me twice. It was just a case where I asked him a follow-up question about his injured shoulder, and I believe in this case, he is one of those old-school guys who isn't used to or doesn't like women in the locker room because he hasn't treated the other guys like that. I just asked him a follow-up question about his injured shoulder, and he just kind of took it out on me. 'I have pitched 605 starts, I have 22 years in the majors. Of course I have inflammation in my shoulder.' It is not the first time it happened with him, and he didn't let it go. At the end of the interview he said, 'Anything else about my inflammation in my shoulder?' And I just excused myself. (personal communication, July 9, 2009)

Due to this incident, Janie McCauley told the Giants front office she would no longer be dealing with Randy Johnson, and if at all possible, she would have a freelance writer get quotes for her. When asked if she thought it was directly related to her gender, she was not certain. "Am I 100 percent sure? No, but is he treating anybody else like that? No." She did explain that part of her rift with him may have something to do with the fact that she was on maternity leave during spring training, and he was not as familiar with her as he was with other reporters.

So did he just decide to take it out on me, man or woman? I don't know. It was right after he went on

the DL, so I think it is a combination of he was frustrated and it was easy to pick on me. I am not sure, but I am sure there are some feelings from him. He has been around for 22 years, so he has seen the transformation. (personal communication, July 9, 2009)

She also made a point to mention the sheer volume of other athletes and coaches who approached her to tell her how they felt about Randy Johnson's actions. All of them were very supportive of her and thought he was being very rude. The following day, one player made a point in the middle of another interview to say to her, "Don't let him get to you. You are great. You are doing a good job." Staci Slaughter of the Giants did not mention this incident. She was asked if she knew of anything like this that may have happened in the Giants locker room, and she said, no, she had not heard of anything. It is possible she was not aware of this particular case. But Janie McCauley did say she made a point to escalate the issue to the front office. "I don't stand for that stuff, and I don't keep it to myself" (personal communication, July 9, 2009). Staci Slaughter did mention that if something like this were to happen, she would not be the one to handle it. Most likely the manager or the coach would deal with it and try to resolve it before it ever got to her level, which

may be the reason why she was not aware of this situation (personal communication, September 10, 2009).

This incident with Randy Johnson was the only issue reported by the women to have occurred within the last few years, and it happened with the most veteran player in Major League Baseball.

How different sports compare.

When asked if there were any differences in treatment by the athletes between the sports, there was a variety of opinions. Some based their opinions on whom they had worked more closely; others had interesting theories as to why certain sports were more comfortable than others.

Ailene Voisin cites "machismo" as to why NFL locker rooms were her most difficult locker rooms. Mindi Bach agreed with her. "The football locker room is crazy, so there is a lot more in-your-face interaction there. MLB is more subdued" (personal communication, July 16, 2009). Janie McCauley also enjoyed baseball more than other sports. "There is a comfort level for me with the baseball players because I get to see them every day" (personal communication, July 9, 2009). On the other hand, Michelle Smith had the opposite perspective:

The biggest difference I found between baseball and football; football players, a lot of them have gone to college, and that seems to make a difference. Baseball players, a lot of these guys get drafted out of high school, and some of them really aren't socially mature. (personal communication, September 3, 2009)

The one sport the reporters seemed to agree on as the sport whose players generally treated them the best was hockey. More than one reporter stated that hockey was her favorite sport to cover. Laura Behnke explained it as follows:

Hockey players are the nicest people on earth, in terms of professional athletes. At all levels -- college hockey, professional NHL -- it is the easiest place ever. They are accommodating. They will answer a million questions, even the same questions if you get in late. They are great. (personal communication, September 4, 2009)

She went on to speculate as to why that might be:

In hockey locker rooms, they have the locker room, and they have a dressing room and changing room. The dressing room is where all their gear is, and that is where we are. They never change in that room. They have so much equipment in hockey, so they take that all off, and they put it in their locker. They are just wearing their undershirts or whatever. Then they go to another room and shower and to another room where their clothes are, away from us. So it is a little less awkward in hockey locker rooms. (personal communication, September 4, 2009)

Laura Behnke believed, because there was not the same level of physical exposure in hockey, players were more

comfortable with reporters being in the locker rooms. In the other sports, often you had players coming straight from the shower to conduct an interview. They were very exposed, and that could cause a certain amount of discomfort, thus creating tension between the athletes and the reporters.

Location, location, location.

Of the eight journalists interviewed for this study, only two of them had experience outside of the San Francisco Bay Area. The other six had spent the majority of their careers on the West Coast, if not in the Bay Area. Gwen Knapp and Laura Behnke were the two journalists who had spent some time on the East Coast. Gwen Knapp spent the first half of her career, in the 1990s, in Philadelphia. Laura Behnke started her career in 2002 in Minnesota and Boston. They were asked if they noticed a difference between East and West Coast teams in how they treated women.

Laura Behnke was on the East Coast most recently, and her experience was not as dramatic as Gwen Knapp's experience. Laura Behnke felt her experience on the East Coast was more subtle and had less to do with gender and

more to do with East Coast culture in general. "The Patriots were very difficult to work with, but they were difficult for everyone that was in that locker room, male or female" (personal communication, September 4, 2009). She went on to explain that it was not the players who made it difficult, but the Patriots' organization itself. She also explained that today players are traded much more frequently than a few decades ago. Today the athletes move around so much that you do not notice a difference in the player attitudes based on location, but feel it from the organization itself.

Gwen Knapp's experience was more dramatic, but it did not come from the players or the organization; it came from the fans. She found a dramatic difference between the East Coast and the West Coast fans. Gwen Knapp described a story of one fan who was harassing another colleague and her. This reader was sending pornographic holiday gifts to the women on the staff. He then began signing up the women for free magazine subscriptions, and after the free trial period, the newspaper was charged for the renewal. These were actions that the fan took in addition to nasty letters he was sending to them on a regular basis. "At one point, the harassment of myself and a couple of other writers got

so out of hand, they turned the letters over to the FBI," Gwen Knapp said (personal communication, July 24, 2009). To Gwen, treatment like this from fans was a regular thing. She moved to the West Coast in the late 1990s and was immediately impressed with the reception she received.

I remember the first time I called up my voice mail here. I was expecting to hear, wah, wah, wah . . . But I heard, 'Hey Gwen, it is good to see you here.' A couple of them were women, but there was also men. 'Can't wait to see what you are going to say.' I was like, wait, where is the person throwing racist and sexist remarks? I love Philly, but I don't think you have that level of in-your-face hostility. Even if you listen to talk radio here, it is much mellower here than it is back on the East Coast.

Age and experience.

The average professional baseball player will retire from the game at the age of 33. Football players are even younger, at the age of 28 (Biasiotto, 2008). There are some obvious exceptions to the rule. Randy Johnson and Jamie Moyer, at the time of this writing, are the oldest active players in Major League Baseball at 46 years old. But the vast majority of players in major professional sports are in their early 30s and late 20s. This means, in the year 2009, the bulk of professional athletes currently playing in their sports were born in 1980 or after. When women like Susan Fornoff and Lisa Olson were fighting their

way into locker rooms, the current athletes were still in diapers. These men have grown up watching and reading women reporting on sports their entire lives. This is why it was important to ask about the age of the athletes the women interacted with and if they felt age made a difference.

Some of the older or more experienced reporters interviewed claimed they had an easier time with the older players. "The oldest players are about my age, so they tend to relate to me better than the younger guys," Susan Slusser explained (personal communication, July 15, 2009). Ann Killion agreed with this perspective. "I have been here so long, so I kind of know everyone. Everyone my age is retired. But everyone of a certain age I have been dealing with for so long, they don't bat an eye" (personal communication, August 4, 2009).

As for the younger players, not a single reporter claimed to have a more difficult time with them. Each of them credited the easygoing nature of the younger players around female journalists to the fact that the athletes had become accustomed to seeing women in all roles in society. "You have guys who were growing up with turning on ESPN and there are women. I think the younger they are, the more

they are, like, 'whatever,'" Laura Behnke explained (personal communication, September 4, 2009). "I feel like with the younger guys they just kind of accept that I am here and I know what I am doing. . . This is just what they have grown up with."

Gwen Knapp explained that at least a portion of this mentality of acceptance was because younger athletes have spent their lives in equal roles with women. "A lot of the younger players who grew up playing baseball with girls just see women in a different way; they are better in a lot of ways" (personal communication, July 24, 2009).

Michelle Smith said this attitude had a lot to do with how early a player was introduced to the media:

It is weird. Because I think the younger players were first exposed to being in the clubhouse and the media, it is something they need to get used to but something they get used to really quickly because they don't think twice about seeing a woman in a role that is not traditional. (personal communication, September 3, 2009)

Male journalists.

When asked about treatment by male journalists in the locker room, there were very few complaints. Most of the journalists interviewed described a very welcoming

atmosphere. Michelle Smith explained that the atmosphere in the press box is one of a close-knit group:

You travel together. You spend so much time together on the road. You are in that space together. You are working in the same spot. For the most part, my experience has always been very collegial. (personal communication, September 3, 2009)

Gwen Knapp described an incident with a locker room security guard in which the security guard attempted to prevent her from entering the locker room. Her colleagues were quick to point out to the security guard that she had the appropriate credentials and that he should just let her in. She had not realized that the reason she was not being permitted entry was due to the fact that she was a woman, but they did and they were quick to defend her (personal communication, July 24, 2009).

When Janie McCauley had a problem with another journalist, she could not even be sure that it was a gender issue. She was interviewing a Seattle Mariners player, Edgar Martinez, with another journalist:

He didn't want me to use the stuff that we had both gotten from Edgar, and it wasn't earth-shattering information, and in hindsight, it was just as much my information as it was the other guy's, even if he asked a few more of the questions than I did. (personal communication, July 9, 2009)

She pointed out that this was more likely an issue of competitive journalism rather than gender bias. She was not totally sure about that, but she had no reason to believe otherwise.

Personal life.

How the reporters were expected to conduct their personal lives was also an important topic to be looked at during this research. It is important to see if they were expected to handle their personal lives differently from their male counterparts. When discussing their personal lives, the reporters did not feel they were expected to handle things differently, but many of them went into detail about how balancing the job itself and their personal lives could be difficult.

Michelle Smith explained how difficult the job could be on her children. "My daughter was born in late March, right in the middle of the NCAA tournament. I have rescheduled so many birthday parties." She went on to discuss how unusual her schedule could be with this job:

You work nights. You work weekends. You work holidays. I mean, think about when games are played: Thanksgiving, New Years. I spent seven years on the Stanford beat praying that they weren't going to get sent to the one bowl game where they play in Hawaii on

Christmas. Everyone would ask why not on Christmas, and I was like, 'We are not all going to Hawaii on Christmas, so I am going to go and work in Honolulu on Christmas and turn around and fly home.' Oh, sounds like fun! (personal communication, September 3, 2009)

Gwen Knapp blamed herself for letting the job get in the way of having a personal life. "I don't have any kids, and I think some of that is because I let the job run my life a little too much" (personal communication, July 24, 2009). She was very excited for her friend and fellow reporter, Janie McCauley, when she finally had a child because Janie did not take the same path she did. Gwen Knapp did not think the job was too inconvenient for a personal life. There were some benefits as well:

When I was in a relationship that was really working well, I wrote faster because I wanted to be with that person. I also realized, after it was over, during those three years [in a relationship], I won national awards. I felt like I had backup. I had someone supporting me.

For the journalists who had children, there were some disadvantages that came along with parenthood. "I have been told by an agent that his company wouldn't represent me because I had children. I don't think men would be turned down for that same thing," Mindi Bach explained (personal communication, July 16, 2009). "I think when you

have kids and you can't get that experience, your pay scale does take a hit."

Others said having children softened them and made it easier for the players to open up to them. Janie McCauley mentioned that when she was pregnant, she actually had a very easy time with her job. Players and colleagues helped her carry her stuff to the press box. Players seemed to be nicer to her and would be more accommodating to her during interviews. The players seemed to be softer with her during her pregnancy (personal communication, July 9, 2009).

The audience.

Every journalist had a strong reaction when asked about the audience and how they were treated by them. Some of the reactions were positive. "Women enjoy relating to a female in the sports section," Ailene Voison mentioned (personal communication, September 15, 2009). Mindi Bach confirmed the positive relationship with female audience members. "I get a lot of emails and comments from women who enjoy seeing it more because there is a woman on the broadcast. You are bringing more people to sports" (personal communication, July 16, 2009).

When the reporters moved away from discussing female fans and on to the male fans, the comments changed. Joan Ryan stated, "You get way more flack from the readers than you ever do from one of the players or your colleagues" (personal communication, September 28, 2009). Mindi Bach went on to discuss bloggers. "The Internet has opened up a whole host of ways that they can comment and be anonymous. People are very free to comment on who they do and don't like on air" (personal communication, July 16, 2009).

"That is why a lot of newspapers have taken down their commentary sections, because they feel like they are liable," Ann Killion explained (personal communication, August 4, 2009). But she went on to mention that it was not just confined to the female reporters. "My colleague, Tim, gets anti-Asian slurs. Lowell Cohen gets anti-Semitic slurs. People just find your target." Ann also mentioned that the reaction from audience members was so bad, she stopped checking her voice mail. "Don't call me late at night when you are drunk and ramble into my phone about what I wrote about the Raiders. I am not your talk-show."

With the women reporters, the criticism tended to go a step further. "If your picture is on the Internet, they are going to assess whether you are good looking enough.

They are going to decide how they feel about you sexually," Gwen Knapp explained (personal communication, July 24, 2009).

An example of this issue was the incident that occurred to sportscaster Erin Andrews over the summer of 2009. A peeping Tom videotaped her secretly while she was nude in her hotel room. According to her account on the September 11, 2009, episode of *Oprah*, she believed she had a stalker. This person then posted the video on the Internet. It was then viewed thousands of times by fans of ESPN. A number of the women interviewed for this report pointed to this incident as evidence for how extreme some fans have become. The sentiment "This would never have happened to a male sportscaster" was repeated a number of times. Fortunately for the women interviewed for this report, nothing that extreme had happened to them with their audience.

Laura Behnke did have some experience with audience members looking at her in a sexual way:

It is hard when you see postings about you, 'She doesn't know anything about sports because she is a woman.' That is automatically what they assume, and then they say, 'She is not hot enough to make up for it.' It is one thing to be told that you are horrible at your job. It's another thing to be told that you are ugly too. A man and I could ask the same question

or say the exact same analysis of a play in the exact same way. If one person thinks that what we said is wrong, all of a sudden he's an idiot and I am an ugly idiot. (personal communication, September 4, 2009)

Why Progress was Made

When the female reporters were asked their opinions as to why progress was made in their industry, only two reasons were mentioned. The first reason was the men in the locker room had become accustomed to the presence of women in locker rooms. "I think the athletes are adapting. They look at all the women doing sideline reporting in the NFL and major college basketball. These guys see that," Janie McCauley explained (personal communication, July 9, 2009). Ann Killion agreed with this. "Probably any single factor I could point to is just having women out there. Women are just part of the culture. I think that it is more than anything a generational thing" (personal communication, August 4, 2009).

The second reason for progress that most women gave was the women who pioneered in the field. Laura Behnke explained:

What the first women who went into locker rooms had to deal with was horrible, but those women stuck it out. Even when it was awful, even when players were flashing them, even when coaches were trying to kick them out of locker rooms, they didn't go anywhere. That laid the groundwork for us. I mean, I am so thankful to all of those women that were doing this 15 to 20, even 30 years ago in some cases. (personal communication, September 4, 2009)

She went on to explain why persevering through it was so important. "Kids started seeing more women, and it had a snowball effect. Consequently, I don't have to deal with people trying to flash me."

Michelle Smith concurred with this reason for the progress:

I think 25 years ago, the doors had to be busted down, and now they are open. A whole new generation of athletes, and maybe two generations of athletes, has come through since then, and they don't know any different. They don't understand that there was a time when we couldn't come in. They don't know a locker room where they don't see a lot of women. (personal communication, September 3, 2009)

Further Progress to be Made

Increasing visibility was a running theme with the reporters when asked what still needed to happen in order for women to be fully integrated into sports journalism.

Ailene Voison stated:

Outside of cable television perhaps, the numbers of women in the field remains disturbingly small. On our staff here [*The Sacramento Bee*], we are down to eight sportswriters, only one woman. (personal communication, September 15, 2009)

Ann Killion was laid off from the *San Jose Mercury* the week before she was interviewed for this report. Her perspective was similar to this. She found it was interesting she was laid off from the paper, but the two men on the sports staff remained employed. On the other hand, she believed being a woman did help with getting her next job. "I just became a regular contributor to SI.com. One of the reasons that fell into my lap within days of finding out I was losing my job was because they don't have any women." The fact she was the only woman on their staff did bother her, and she felt this was something that needed to change, along with the pay rate. "The pay is embarrassing. But I just need to keep my name out there" (personal communication, August 4, 2009).

Agreeing with Ann Killion's need for better pay was Gwen Knapp. When asked what still needed to improve, her response was, "Paying them the same amount of money across the board." She continued to explain that most women on the staff were "secondary characters" (personal communication, July 24, 2009). They were not the primary focus and rarely get the main story on the front page of the section.

Mindi Bach believed this is a problem in broadcast as well:

There are no women that are the main sports anchor. They are the weekend anchor, they are the substitute filling in, but not the main Monday-through-Friday sports anchor yet, and that might take time. I think that is going to be the next major step in sports journalism. (personal communication, July 16, 2009)

Laura Behnke was looking at the larger picture of what needed to happen, not just inside the locker rooms, but across the whole journalism industry:

In a perfect world for me, you would get hired based on your merits, not your gender, not what you look like, not things like that. That is where I would like to see the industry go. I would like to see the audience no longer want that. . . So I guess I would like society as a whole to evolve a little bit. I will just keep going out there and keep doing my job and keep trying to prove people wrong. It is the only thing I can do. (personal communication, September 4, 2009)

Discussion

When women first entered the field of sports journalism, they were faced with many challenges inside the locker room. They were taunted and threatened. They were told they were not good enough and did not know anything about sports just because they were women. A handful of women pushed through these obstacles. They not only forced their way into locker rooms, but they stayed even when the working situations made them want desperately to leave and never come back.

Today, the women working in the industry feel they owe a lot to those early women. Almost every woman interviewed for this study pointed to the bravery and the strength of the early women. Many of them said they would not have been able to face those challenges themselves, and they would have left the industry long ago under those same circumstances.

Some of the women interviewed today did experience smaller issues, such as Janie McCauley and her run-in with Randy Johnson. However she could not be certain that this was a gender-based confrontation. Most of the problems the women experience today inside the locker rooms are with players who are notorious for their personality problems

with the media or even with other players. Susan Slusser pointed to Barry Bonds as one of those players who is difficult to work with in general, but this has nothing to do with gender; he is like that with everyone.

When it comes to the attitude toward women in the locker room among various sports, hockey was the heavy favorite as most accepting. The majority of the women spoke highly of hockey players and how they were treated by them. They could not say exactly why that was, but Laura Behnke spoke of the conditions in their locker rooms and how there is never a moment where they are undressed in front of reporters. That aspect is helpful in making the players and the reporters more comfortable. The other locker rooms are not as accommodating.

The women who had experience working on both coasts reported that there were significant differences between them in how reporters were treated. But they all said that it was simply the nature of the East Coast market that made it more difficult. Teams such as the Patriots were much stricter about protocol and made working in their locker rooms more difficult for everyone, not just the female reporters.

One area where the women did say they noticed the difference was with the relative age of the players. Some assumed the players' level of education made a difference. Others believed it had more to do with the fact that the younger players had grown up watching women reporting on sports, so it was nothing unusual to them. Some of the older reporters said they had an easier time working with older players because they were the same age as them; they were peers. For the most part, the women rarely saw resistance from the younger players and found they treated them the same as the male reporters.

Fortunately, the women never felt resistance from their employers or the players when it came to their personal lives. A number of the women cited their own reasons for having difficulties with their personal lives. Michelle Smith said it was because of her own need to be a good mom that she put more pressure on herself. She did not see this same pressure on her male counterparts with children. She felt there was a distinct difference between being a working mom and a working dad that made things harder for her. She never once blamed that on her newspaper or her players. Gwen Knapp blamed her strong work ethic and drive as the reasons why she never had

children. Mindi Bach did mention there were moments in her career where she felt she was passed up for opportunities because she had children, but she could not be certain that was the reason. These difficulties were things the women placed on themselves; their employers did not hold them to a different standard.

Every woman interviewed said they had major issues with the audience. Whether it was comments on the Internet or fans sending them pornographic holiday cards, they all had a story to share. Laura Behnke, the youngest reporter interviewed, mentioned when she started in the industry, she was prepared for the challenges she would face inside the locker rooms. But she was shocked to discover the challenges were not inside the locker room, but outside with the audience and their judgments of her.

Progress for the female reporters was certainly made inside the locker rooms. The players and coaches no longer treat the women like second-class citizens of the sports industry. They are seen as equal to the male reporters. Most of the reporters firmly believed the visibility of women in sports over the last few decades is the main contributing factor to their improved treatment. As Staci Slaughter and Joan Ryan expressed, there were no new rules

or regulations put in place to deal with women inside the locker room. The players are simply accustomed to having them there; it is not given a second thought. And as Joan Ryan pointed out, none of the players even feel the need to ask how to handle female reporters, and it never occurred to her that she might have to tell them. Progress was absolutely made inside the locker room.

Even with all this progress, there are still things that could improve the quality of treatment for the women. Equal pay for the reporters is still in question. And at the time of this writing, there are no women working as the head sports anchor on network news. The female sports anchors are only working as part-time anchors or substitute anchors. But the most improvement needs to be made with the audience. Laura Behnke said it best when she said, "I guess I just want society as a whole to evolve."

Conclusion

This paper set out to answer the questions: What changes have taken place in sports reporting since the early days of women being allowed in the locker room? Was there another major turning point in the industry since 1992 when *Lady in the Locker Room* was written? How do players in professional sports currently feel about women reporting in the locker rooms, and is there a difference in opinion based on the age of the players? All three of these questions were answered with this research.

What changes have taken place in sports reporting since the early days of women being allowed in the locker room? The main change that has taken place is the general acceptance of women in the locker room. They are no longer looked at as a novelty or a threat. They are simply part of the work environment, and most of the players do not think twice about them being there, much less treat the women badly for doing their jobs.

Was there another major turning point in the industry since 1992 when *Lady in the Locker Room* was written? No, there has been no new turning point, but only gradual change over time. The majority of the women interviewed stated that the last major event to take place that

affected their treatment in the locker room was the incident with Lisa Olson. The incident that took place on September 16, 1990, between Lisa Olson and the players in the New England Patriots locker room was a major turning point for female reporters. It was also the last major incident the women interviewed for this report could think of as a turning point for them.

How do players in professional sports currently feel about women reporting in the locker rooms, and is there a difference in opinion based on the age of the players? According to the women interviewed, most of the players are comfortable with them there. They are used to the women being in the locker room and very rarely express objections. The age of the players is a contributing factor. Most of the players are in their 20s and 30s and have grown up watching women report on sports and being on the sidelines. A woman reporting on sports is not a novelty to them. Women in unconventional professional roles do not seem odd to these athletes.

Aside from the posed research questions, the most significant finding of this study was the discovery of the rift with the audience. The women still face major challenges dealing with the audience. With the Internet

and blogs, the audience is free to express themselves and their frustrations with their team of choice, and often that frustration is taken out on the reporters. The women are regarded as ignorant simply because they are women, or they are judged based on their appearance and looked at as sex objects, as became the case with Erin Andrews, sportscaster for ESPN, in the summer of 2009. Most of the women believe the problems with the audience are not getting any better, and because of the Internet they might be getting worse. This study demonstrated that women are equal in the eyes of the players, but they have a long way to go to have the same acceptance by the audience.

Recommendations

Due to the reporters' strong reactions to the audience and the reporters' indications this is where their true challenge lies, interviewing the audience needs to be the next focus of research on this topic. Some research could be done to find out how extensive the problem is affecting sports journalism. This could possibly be done through content analysis of comments on the Internet or on blogs. The audience itself could be surveyed to find out their feelings about women reporting on sports. It might be beneficial to speak directly with the owners of certain sports blogs to see if they encounter this problem on a regular basis and how they deal with it.

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