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Women in sports journalism: Do the barriers still exist?

Brandice A. Padgett

Eastern Illinois University

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WOMEN IN SPORTS JOURNALISM:
DO THE BARRIERS STILL EXIST?

PADGETT

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Women in Sports Journalism:

Do the Barriers Still Exist?

(TITLE)

BY

Brandice A. Padgett

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THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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Running Head: WOMEN IN SPORTS JOURNALISM

Women in Sports Journalism:

Do the Barriers Still Exist?

Brandice A. Padgett

Eastern Illinois University

Abstract

This study examines women in sports journalism and barriers they face. Many questions have been asked about the barriers women face in the advancement in a field that has always been male dominated. Questionnaires were sent out to women sports journalists concerning condescension, advancement opportunities, and job assignments in their field. Open-ended questions asking about obstacles faced were clustered and themes emerged. The findings suggest women still face barriers but have learned how to cope with them. Three-fourths of the respondents find their current job satisfying despite any barriers.

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Chapter One: Review of Literature

Many questions have been asked about barriers that women face in the advancement in a field that has always been male-dominated. Women feel they are being ignored, even with the increase in numbers of women in sports journalism. Miller and Miller (1995) identify road blocks women encounter as they attempt to do their jobs and move up the career ladder. However, in spite of the discrimination, three-fourths of the respondents said they are satisfied with their jobs. Women in U.S. sports journalism face obstacles in their quest for equality and advancement in this traditionally male dominated field despite their increasing numbers. More women report on sports, but continue to be regarded as an outsider. Numerous articles in both the popular and professional press (Miller and Miller, 1995; Fuller, 1992; Lublin, 1972; Pogrebin, 1992) indicate women sports journalists cite condescending attitudes, lack of access to desirable assignments and opposition to their advancement as professional roadblocks.

Interpersonal Behaviors/Attitudes:

Many women in sports journalism face condescending attitudes from co-workers, supervisors and athletes. Female sports journalists have found some of these behaviors and attitudes intolerable. Some of the interpersonal issues included a lack of respect through verbal communication, including sexist language and terminology, and verbal behavior through phrases used to describe female athletes and journalists.

Sportswriter Lorraine Kee notes that she had to prove her worth as a female sportswriter before she gained the respect of her colleagues (Bishop, 1995). Kee considers sports a reflection of society. She continues then, there ought to be more female sports reporters. Kee dealt with less respect from males in the locker room and the press box. She was constantly scrutinized

and felt she had to prove herself. Today though, Kee and other women, have gained the respect of colleagues after years of hard work. Respect for the white male sports writer comes much easier in the business (Bishop, 1995).

Females in sports must also break the language barrier through the sexism in sports terminology. The language used to describe men's sports is routinely violent (Nelson, 1991). The very language of sport is the language of assault and dehumanization. Descriptive phrases and words like "pummeled", "killed", and "pulverized" are used to describe male sport plays. Women are use to being referred to as "soft" or "gentle" and view "athletes" as males in Nelson's article. Great women athletes don't associate athletic ability with being female. Athletes are seen as masculine and any woman serious about sports is categorized as a lesbian. Nelson also points out that athletic directors even change school mascots; cougarettes, apparently unaware that female cougars are also called cougars. Women athletes are sexualized through phrases such as "little Janet Evans". Women's attitudes toward sports often differ from men's, thus, there is no need for a special word that highlights "femaleness".

The sexist attitudes and behaviors from colleagues and supervisors are a problem faced by women in sports journalism (Miller & Miller, 1995). Men expect women to make more mistakes and know less about the background of sports. Women are constantly trying to prove themselves in the office to their colleagues. Supervisors are quick to turn first to the males in the office when clarification is needed for a story. Miller and Miller (1995) indicate that women in sports journalism receive more condescension by their male colleagues and are not given the coveted beats.

Crude, sexist behavior and sexual harassment goes beyond the executive offices to the

athletes themselves. Sportswriter Tracy Dodds suffered from sexual attitudes and behaviors such as masturbation, athletes sitting around naked eating food and spitting on and in front of female reporters (Stein, 1991). Stein also reports that female reporters who go on the road with the sports teams can expect nuisance calls in their hotel rooms in the middle of the night from players. Dodds still fears locker rooms, even after twenty years as a sportswriter. She prays there won't be a scene or a player standing in front of her naked (Stein, 1991).

Lisa Olson brought a sexual harassment suit to court based on the sexist behavior of the New England Patriot football players. In an article in Chicago Sun-Times, Olson described the harassment she received while attempting to interview in the Patriot's dressing room after a game. The players approached her in the locker room, flashed their genitals and tried to get her to look while the other players egged them on (Fitzgerald, 1997). The results were that female sportscasters were criticized worse than before the incident (Stein, 1991). The turmoil these cases have caused, results in reporters receiving further harassment and eventually having to relocate.

Job Assignments Related to Gender:

Women sports journalists face barriers when it comes to responsibilities and job assignments (Miller & Miller, 1995). Access to locker rooms and covering "soft" beats are problems women face. If it is not the supervisor hindering women from harder beats, it is the coaches and athletes who refuse women sports writers' entrance to locker rooms. The locker room issue moves beyond the sexist behaviors and attitudes of athletes. The issue with the assignment is that locker room interviewing is part of the job (Visser, 1991). The locker room aspect of a sports journalist's job only equals about ten percent of the job itself. Visser also

explains the American public has absolutely no concept of the locker room environment. Job assignments aren't fulfilled with coaches and players insisting a woman should be escorted out. Women are only trying to do their job and not see naked players. Many men can't believe that for women, the locker room is not a sexual experience (Visser, 1991).

The locker room controversy has been prominent since the Lisa Olson case in 1990. The NFL has developed educational materials to teach players how to deal with the press (News Media & Law, 1992). Incidents of reporters being harassed or assaulted by players have led to the introduction of legislation to control locker room access in certain states (Fuller, 1992). Women sports journalists are legally entitled to access to the locker room for interviews, but the issue continues to excite controversy.

Fuller (1992) notes that locker room interviews are a necessary aspect of sports journalism, but some coaches object to the presence of women. The issue involves privacy rights, gender, notions of respect, employment discrimination, and social roles of athletes and access to information. Women sports journalists are often blamed for any disruption their presence causes regardless of their legal guarantee into the locker room (Fuller, 1992). Women still face problems with their job assignment even after receiving the most coveted beats from their supervisors.

The Lisa Olson case detailed a 1990 New England Patriots professional football team sexual harassment incident and it led to the end of the sports world's resistance to women journalists in dressing rooms (Fitzgerald, 1997). Publicity from the event paved the way for acceptance of women sports journalists. Society started to see the whole "locker room issue" as just another aspect of the job and not a way for a woman to get a date. However, the issue is not completely gone. Reporter Michelle Kaufman asks "Why aren't we beyond this now? Why is this

still an issue? Every time one of these things happens (sexual harassment), it reminds you how uncomfortable a place the locker room is for women" (King, 1993, p.98).

Women face contradictory issues when dealing with their job assignments. They are constantly fighting for better stories to cover including football, baseball and other "hard" sports. If women finally get their "sought after assignments," they still must face the "locker room" problem. Women reporters who interview players must be prepared to adapt themselves to the changing moods of the players (Media Report to Women, 1994). How are athletes' rights to privacy protected while respecting a reporter's professional duties? The issue revolves around mutual respect for the job of sports in general, from the athlete and reporters' sides (Himmelberg, 1991).

Women learn quickly that they must observe certain unwritten rules in order to be a sportswriter (Ludke, 1990). They must tolerate the teasing that occurs in the locker room. If they linger in the locker room or converse in too friendly a manner with players, they are accused of flirting. This results in being talked about in unflattering ways that in time undermine their credibility and wear them down. Women have to go in, get the story, and get out as a part of their job.

Another issue is not receiving priority assignments from editors or managers. Eberhard and Myers (1980) report that nearly 80% of the respondents indicate there were not enough women in newspaper sports writing. Reasoning included, hiring one token or quota woman for staffs and not enough women with solid sports background to fill assignments in general. There are a limited number of women in newspaper sportswriting and only half of them cover major sports beats (Eberhard, & Myers, 1980).

The conflicts created for women sports writers are related directly to the issue of women covering men's sports. Editors and producers claim that as long as the "Big Three" (men's baseball, basketball, and football) dominate, all other sports, including women's events, will play second fiddle (Keaton, 1991). Men's sports stories outnumber women's twenty-three to one. The problem is that women are usually given the "soft" sports (women's sports) to cover. Also, women's sports aren't even covered so there is a smaller chance for women to cover sports at all. Women strive for the opportunity to cover all sports regardless of gender. Sports pages in newspapers can be of interest to women too, but editors do not know what sports are most likely to appeal to women (Stemple III, & Hargrove, 1996). If women become a larger part of the sports watching audience, their chances increase of being seen as equal.

Job Advancement Related to Gender:

Equal opportunity to advance has been an issue for decades for women in sports journalism. Women face poor advancement opportunities based on their lack of acceptance by supervisors, colleagues and audiences. Women still faced these advancement problems even when only few women were in the field of sports journalism. Women sportswriters have come a long way in the past five decades (Flannery, 1992). Mary Flannery first handled stories involving minor sports events and athletic award functions fifty years ago. She was later assigned to provide coverage of highly popular college and high school sporting events. Even in the 40's a sports reporter had to work his or her way up to cover major events; however, gender wasn't a factor. More women are interested in sports journalism, yet continue to be discriminated against when it comes to acceptance by colleagues and audiences.

Generally, women journalists believe that they hold less than an equal chance of

promotion, compared with similarly qualified newspaper men (Lublin, 1972). More than half of the news-executives agreed with female journalists that women with comparable qualifications would neither advance as quickly nor earn as many top newspaper positions as men (Lublin, 1972). The "glass ceiling" starts with the network executives, whose hiring and advancement practices have created a ceiling beyond which women cannot progress. Financially, male Caucasians are considered safer choices, particularly at the affiliate level, where news directors are fearful of offending audiences by gambling on young, unproven women as sports reporters (Jenkins, 1991).

Women lag behind their male colleagues when it comes to acceptance from the audience. Female commentators need to learn a "male" communication style to get more slots and assignments (Wolf, 1993). Some women feel the media still considers the white male voice to be expert (Pogrebin, 1992). Women will never be accepted in sports reporting, if this is the case. The authoritative voice can be so disconcerting for many women to use. They get called a "bitch" versus "aggressive". If they tone down their story, they are too "emotional". Women sportscasters have to find a medium to their reporting voice in order to be heard.

Slightly more than one-third of those enrolled in sports journalism classes in U.S. higher education are women, which would indicate that significantly more women may be interested in careers in sports reporting than are currently employed in the field (Creedon, 1993). More women fill up journalism and mass media classes, yet don't get the same jobs as their male counterparts. Only 9 percent of sports reporters in the 69 newspapers in Creedon's study were women.

Women are accused of using their sexuality for promotion and advancement in the field of

sports journalism at a younger age. A woman who ages and doesn't stay "cute" will be taken off the air. On the other hand, men will continue to do sports even when they start to gray (Baughman, 1985). All female sportscasters are young, slim and lovely, including former athletes. There are no standards where men are concerned. Not only do women have to fight for positions in broadcasting, they have to make it fast before they get too "old". Acceptance by the audience is a sensitive topic for women sportscasters when personal appearance enters the discussion (Jenkins, 1991). Several sportscasters have been asked to dye their gray hair, watch their weight and guard against thick accents (Jenkins, 1991).

Women's self reports on these issues are a better way to determine how discrimination is affecting their careers and lives, although the research is insightful. First hand knowledge is more credible than articles written on a certain subject. Women can report on the obstacles they have personally faced in the field of sports journalism through questionnaires and interviews. Research (Barrett, 1973; Miller, 1985; Giobbe, 1993; Mulvoy, 1992; O'Brien, 1992; Boyles-Sprenkel, 1994; Ryan, 1991) suggests that women in sports journalism have learned to cope with the barriers of condescension, job assignments and lack of opportunity in their workplace. Women sports journalists can answer these questions through the use of surveys and interviews in this study.

Chapter Two: Method

Phenomenological research is an approach found in naturalistic inquiry. It is through reflection that the intentional mechanisms responsible for the judgements abiding validity are brought to light (Pilotta & Mickanus, 1990). This type of research is essential for insight to all objects and experiences. The subject with its internal states and processes is understood in terms of a more fundamental level of experience based on meaning. Phenomenological study is also descriptive research but recognizes the value of the investigator's reflection in addition to the analysis of data/capta. Reflection is essential but can be achieved only after bracketing the event to permit the researcher to step out and study the experience as a whole. Reflection is the recollection of an experience (Parcells, 1983b).

Patton (1980) argues that the difference between the scientific and natural paradigms is more apparent than real and that a compromise position should be devised that takes advantage of there complementarily. Complementarily is not only possible but also desirable.

“There is no reason why both camps should not exploit both quantitative and qualitative techniques, should not be concerned with both relevance and rigor, should not be open to empirically grounded theory as well as to flashes of insight from conceptual leaders in the field, should not be interested in both verification and discovery, and soon” (p. 77).

The investigator tests the assumptions of these paradigms in terms of the phenomenology studied in order to determine whether natural or scientific is better for the study.

Both in naturalistic and scientific inquiry, tests of rigor are a requisite for establishing

trust in the outcomes of the inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). This method establishes the trustworthiness of the data/capta provided and the interpretation drawn from it. Internal validity (rigor), external validity (relevance) and reliability are seen through this type of methodology. Validity is provided by cross-checking different data sources and by testing perceptions against those of participants. Validity checks to see if the results measure what they are supposed to measure. Multiple methods and triangulation of observation contribute to methodological rigor (Patton, 1980).

Lanigan (1979) indicates that capta is "that which is taken," while data is "that which is given" (p. 5). Triangulation, or "sophisticated rigor," forces an observer to combine multiple data sources, research methods, and theoretical schemes in the inspection and analysis of behavioral specimens (Pilotta & Mickanus, 1990). Filstead (1979, p. 42) states that great advantages come from the creative combining of qualitative and quantitative methods. Triangulation also makes data and explanatory schemes as public and replicable as possible. It forces the researcher to check the validity of the causal propositions and specify the character of the hypothesis or research questions in a naturalistic paradigm. It compares the theories of behavior with emerging theoretical scheme. Triangulation provides credibility for data and findings. Each data source has strengths and weaknesses (Patton, 1980, p. 158). The evaluator-observer using a variety of resources can build on the strengths of each type of data collection/capta and minimize the weaknesses of any single approach. It increases reliability and validity in data evaluation. The most persuasive evidence comes through triangulation of measurement processes (Pilotta, & Mickanus, 1990).

The most important criterion from which to appraise the quality of an investigation in the

rationalistic paradigm is rigor (internal validity), while relevance (external validity) is stressed in the naturalistic paradigm (Parcells, 1983a). Quantitative methods are best portrayed as techniques such as randomized experiments, multivariate statistical analysis and sample surveys, such as questionnaires. Meeting tests of rigor is a requisite for establishing trust in the outcomes of the inquiry (Pilotta & Mickanus, 1990). For the scientific paradigm, there is one reality and information is internally valid if it describes that reality and facilitates its control and manipulation.

The scientific paradigm of research uses rationalistic characteristics that are concerned with experimentation and objectivity. Quantitative methods, such as attitude surveys and experiments form the basis of the scientific paradigm. The most important criteria in the rationalistic paradigm is rigor as opposed to the naturalistic paradigm which focuses on relevance (external validity). Using questionnaires and the electronic mail interviews in this method validates the statistical results collected through the initial survey.

Qualitative methods include case studies, in-depth interviews, participant observation and open-ended questionnaires. The naturalistic paradigm is highly flexible and adaptable to change as research is viewed as holistic and process-oriented involving the researcher and the researched as independent. Qualitative data should yield useful data bound by context as opposed to generalization (Patton, 1980). The same criterion for rigor is used for naturalistic as it is for scientific but requires some reinterpretation in order to better fit the assumptions of the naturalistic paradigm. The naturalistic inquirer deals with multiple realities which exist in the minds of people. External validity is the extent to which findings can be generalized beyond the units studied to the entire population of interest (Wright, 1979).

Both phenomenological and phenomenal study place naturalistic inquiry into the realm of

field study as including emergent descriptions characterizing the experience of investigation. Patton (1980, p.198-200) stresses observation and interviewing techniques for this type of research. Question formation is an important part of naturalistic inquiry. The purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else's mind. Open-ended interviewing accesses the perspectives of the person being interviewed. The assumption is that the perspective is meaningful, knowable and able to be made explicit. Wright (1979) stresses that valid and reliable measurement requires much more than simply drafting any questions; survey items must be clear, understandable and unambiguous. Whenever possible previously used instruments and standardized questions with known methodological properties should be adopted.

Interviewing is the ability to tap into the experience of others in their own natural language, while utilizing their value and belief frameworks. Interviewing in itself should be thought of as an almost indispensable tool in the tactics of the naturalistic inquirer. In order to improve measurement in social survey research, we must develop a model of the interview process that will specify a comprehensive but limited number of variables that allow us to investigate the principle sources of response effects in interviews (Sudman, & Bradburn, 1974). Analysis of the data in the open-ended questions is done through thematic clustering, categorization, and interpretation (Patton, 1980, p. 295). The use of closed-ended and open-ended questions enhances the validity of the survey data. This is accomplished through the use of rigor from the scientific paradigm in comparison to relevance from the naturalistic paradigm (Guba, 1981, p. 78). Multiple operations research, or triangulation of methods is the best means of ensuring that one will be able to make sense of data collected through interviews.

Qualitative interviewing is done in several ways including a standardized, open-ended

interview (Patton, 1980). This method is ideal if there are time constraints. The questions are written in advance exactly the way they are to be asked during the interview. The purpose of the standardized, open-ended interview is to minimize interviewer effects by asking the same question of each respondent. The interview is systematic and the necessity for interviewer judgement during the interview is reduced. Capta is easier to understand using this method because it is possible to locate each respondent's answer to the same question. Capta is a method for systemic analysis consisting of four steps: (1) the process of discovery or hypothesis, (2) the testing of possibilities or verification, (3) the description of results and (4) the achievement of understanding (Lanigan, 1979). The limitations of the capta can be known and discussed with this type of interviewing. The fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which respondents can express their own understandings in their own terms (Patton, 1980). Phenomenological research is a describing tool; therefore, the open-ended question interview is a method used to draw out descriptions or feelings from the participants.

Lanigan (1982) suggests that human value becomes a social fact through communication. There is a problem in human behavior as we study the data/capta from our findings. "Semiotic phenomenology provides a methodology in which the phenomenon studied can be handled validly as a perceived object (data) or perceived subject (capta) in a modality that is an empirical value or an eidetic value"(Lanigan, 1982, p. 70). The human sciences do not have to be modeled on the natural sciences. Both a theory and a method for the valid, scientific study of human communication are available in the innovative work of semiotic phenomenology.

There are several different types and criteria to consider when constructing surveys. The greatest strength of mail surveys is that they require the least amount of sources (Salant, &

Dillman, 1994). Fewer people are required to conduct the survey and mail surveys are the easiest to do for people who have no experience and no professional help. Mail surveys allow the researcher to minimize the sampling error at relatively low cost and are less sensitive to biases introduced by interviewers as well as to the tendency for respondents to give answers they think the interviewer wants to hear.

Phenomenological study uses a three-step process of description, reduction to definition, and interpretation to explicate the data (Lanigan, 1979). The first step in phenomenological method is description. This procedure is called bracketing of conscious experience. The idea of this technique is that our thinking should establish brackets around the experience to be described, not so much to isolate the experience "in" brackets as to keep external presuppositions which are "outside" the brackets from influencing our description.

The second step in the phenomenological method is definition. The overt goal of this step in the method is to determine which parts of the description are essential and which are not. The technique used for accomplishing the phenomenological reduction is called imaginative free variation. The researcher is able to reduce the description to those parts that are essential for the existence of the consciousness of experience by eliminating and comparing.

The third and final step in the method is interpretation. In a general sense this step is an attempt to specify the "meaning" that is essential in the reduction and description of the conscious experience being investigated. The experience is interpreted through a system of codes that specify the relationship that unites the phenomenological description and reduction.

Guba and Lincoln (1981, p. 128) refer to the researcher as an instrument for an observational study, underscoring the importance of guarding against personal biases. Patton

(1980, p. 131-132) however, describes the role of the researcher in observation as one on a continuum from moving closer to the subject as a participant (qualitative) to a detached observer (quantitative). The researcher records and reports the experience of others from a subjective perspective while searching for common denominators in the empirical data generated. The relationship of the researcher to the data is closer in phenomenological study than in phenomenal study due to the co-constitution of intentionality without subject-object split and including reflection. Themes emerged from my research through the triangulation of a quantitative survey, personal experience and qualitative interviewing.

Hypothesis and Research Questions

H1: Women face less obstacles advancing in sports journalism than they did five years ago.

RQ1: What is the relationship between women advancing in sports journalism and the barriers they face?

Procedure

I conducted a pilot study to develop themes. Questionnaires were mailed out to 468 women in sports journalism and contained various questions pertaining to roles, job assignments, promotions, job satisfaction, and advancement problems. A total of 88 surveys were returned for a 19% response rate. Hsia (1988, p. 126) states that mail survey return rates are usually low, despite the prestige of the institution that conducts the survey. Generally returns fall within a range between 10 and 25%, if no elaborate enhancement or incentive is given. The names and addresses were taken from the 1997 Directory of the Association of Women in Sports Media (AWSM). The AWSM does not include all female sports journalists but a sample was drawn from the names in the directory. The women in AWSM appear more satisfied with their

profession and seem to desire contact with other women in this field. These women make it a point to be involved with issues surrounding their jobs through conventions and newsletters.

The survey was designed to explore the women's experiences both in the office and in the field. The women were asked questions pertaining to their job assignments, advancement opportunities and obstacles faced from supervisors or colleagues. See Appendix A for a complete copy of the initial survey. Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the statements on the survey by choosing from a range of responses on a 5-point Likert scale: (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) disagree, and (5) strongly disagree.

Insert Table 1

The question ratings were alternated to ensure the validity of the instrument. If all of the questions were worded the same way, the respondents might not read the questions thoroughly, skewing the results. They were also asked two open-ended questions about obstacles faced based on gender and opportunities for advancement in their current job. Demographic questions included age, years of sports reporting, education and salary. The quantitative measurements of the survey provided a standardized framework limiting data collection to certain predetermined categories.

The open-ended question responses were reviewed and grouped into categories based upon similarities and differences found in the responses. The language of the responses was not altered but rather merely merged into similar categories. Themes emerged from these categories. A follow-up interview questionnaire was electronically mailed to nine respondents. A review of the literature was conducted along with examining the themes. These questions asked the respondents to describe their satisfaction or dissatisfaction in their current job and to express

attitudes about women in the sports journalism field. The use of qualitative methods consisted of detailed descriptions of events and situations; these provided depth and detail and validated the quantitative measures (Patton, 1980).

The data was recorded using the Number Cruncher Statistical System 6.0.2 (NCSS) on Microsoft Word. The data was compiled and run through various programs including a descriptive statistics, factor analysis and frequency table report. The descriptive method yielded the means and standard deviations. The factor analysis included the eigenvalues and factor structures. The frequency table yielded counts and percentages on each of the questions in the survey. The means and standard deviations were important in order to see the mean response for each question. The factor analysis was used to show which groups of questions had the most significant results among the respondents. The frequency table was compared with the mean scores of the results for any discrepancies.

Interrelating procedures, research paradigms and maximizing the usefulness of the results increases validity, reliability and believability of a communication study. Patton (1980) indicates that multiple sources of information are sought and resources are used because no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective on any one program. Triangulation proves validity by cross-checking the evaluation of results. Each data or capta source has its own strengths and weaknesses. The evaluator can build on the strengths of each type of data or capta collection while minimizing the weaknesses of any single approach using a variety of sources and resources. The data analysis must be presented to others in a way that they can verify and validate the findings of the analysis for themselves. The answers provided must relate directly to the questions that have been asked and the perspective presented will hold up

under careful scrutiny.

Guba and Lincoln (1981) describe triangulation as comparing data collected through some kind of qualitative and quantitative methods. Validity is proved by cross-checking different data sources and by testing perceptions against those of participants. Triangulation encourages the evaluator to check the validity of casual propositions. My study is also valid since the results are similar to the study done by Miller and Miller (1995). Their study showed that the majority of the respondents felt they had to face condescension, sexist attitudes and lack of promotion but were satisfied with their current job. Miller and Miller (1995) broke the survey into themes and discussed their implications. The themes that emerged from my data were similar to the study done five years ago.

Chapter Three: Results

The survey questions and responses were tallied and compiled into tables. The respondents ranged in age and occupation in the field of sports journalism.

Insert Table 2

The mean age was 34 years with an average of eleven years experience in sports journalism. All women had a college degree and some continued with a master's or doctoral degree. The average salary ranged from \$10,000 to \$400,000 with the mean salary of \$51,000.

Insert Table 3

Table 3 shows the factor analysis of the questions in the survey. Factor one loaded independently three times. All of these questions pertained to sexist attitudes and condescension from male colleagues. Factor two loaded independently four times. Questions concerning promotion and opportunity to advance were asked in these questions. The responses showed there was a lack of opportunities to advance for women in sports journalism as a whole. Two questions loaded independently in the third factor, which dealt with positive aspects in the respondent's current job. Although the majority of the women felt there wasn't an equal chance for promotion and growth overall, they felt optimistic about opportunities to advance in their current job.

Insert Table 4

These results are based on questions that had a strong response rate from respondents. Women in sports journalism feel they face more condescension and are expected to make more errors and know less about the background in sports by their male

colleagues. One interesting result was the question pertaining to equal opportunity for women to advance in sports journalism. See Table 4 where the respondents were equally divided on this topic. However, the next question about promotions in their own news organization resulted in agreement by almost half of the women. Two-thirds strongly agree or agree they are satisfied with their current job despite the sexist behavior and lack of opportunity for women sports journalists.

Insert Table 5

The open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire asked respondents to list or describe any obstacles they faced in sports journalism due to their gender. The majority of women listed issues that emerged into themes. Sexist language and behaviors and attitudes were frequently identified. These sexist behaviors came from athletes, colleagues, supervisors and audiences. Respondents also mentioned lack of respect, assumptions they wanted to date the athletes and their lack of knowledge of sports as factors. Another issue in this theme of interpersonal attitudes and behaviors is the fact that the "good old boys" are starting to fade. Women stated that men had made comments about the emerging females in the field of sports.

Insert Table 6

Job assignments relating to gender is another theme that emerged from the data. Women are assigned to "softer beats" and these beats are primarily in women's sports, which is different than the assignments of their male colleagues. The assignments that cover the male sports aren't one of the "Big Three". The biggest issue seemed to be the hassles and problems with access to the locker room. The locker room posed problems

from access to sexist behavior and attitudes from coaches and players. Women demand better assignments and responsibilities; men receive the top jobs because they are viewed as more competent in sports reporting.

Insert Table 7

The theme of job advancement related to gender also emerged from the responses. Women have been accused of using sexuality as a tool for promotion or their hiring as a "token" or "quota" for a company. There is a lack of promotion in general as well as a lack of acceptance from their male colleagues and supervisors. The idea of a "glass ceiling" still exists for many women in sports journalism. They feel they have to prove their worthiness of advancement in their job.

Insert Table 8

There are ways the women deal with these issues despite the obstacles that were described. Having a sense of humor and knowing when to laugh things off are strategies that women use to cope with the barriers in their field. The discrimination is what pushed them to work harder and get past the problems. Not taking things personally helps them deal with situations that may hinder their advancement.

Insert Table 9

Some of the questions that loaded independently in the factor analysis also emerged in the qualitative results. The women indicated positive aspects in their current jobs. They have great bosses and mentors in their current or previous jobs, which helped them advance in sports journalism. Many women have equal opportunity to advance and receive coveted sports beats.

Insert Table 10

Some other barriers and obstacles were mentioned by a few of the women. Salary differences and lack of experience in sports were two of the problems women faced in sports journalism. Raising families also interfered with advancing in their jobs. Others mentioned that being aggressive has its disadvantages by being labeled a "bitch".

Insert Table 11

The follow-up interviews were electronically mailed to nine of the previous respondents with three returned. Their ideas of satisfaction varied. They enjoyed meeting fascinating people and getting positive feedback. Dissatisfaction came with negative feedback, lower salary and lack of promotion. Attitudes of women sports reporters were described as competitive and harsh. All three of the respondents indicated women in sports are out for themselves.

Chapter Four: Discussion

The hypothesis that stated there are less barriers for women in sports journalism than five years ago was supported by the evidence in my results. Women feel there are obstacles in sports journalism, but the number of barriers haven't increased. Some of the women believe that they have decreased within the past five years. Almost 40% of the women agreed there are positive aspects in their current jobs. They have better opportunities to advance in their jobs and receive coveted assignments despite any barriers they face. The issue of barriers and their impact depends on the attitudes of the women.

My research question asked what the relationship is between women advancing in sports journalism and barriers they face. There is no direct relationship between advancement and the number of barriers women face. The relationship depends on the sports writers' positions and their desire to advance. Women face a variety of barriers depending on their job responsibilities and whether they want to advance within their organization.

There are several factors to consider when evaluating the results of the information from the questionnaires. Two important themes were sexist language and the lack of opportunities in the field of sports journalism. These themes emerged from a factor analysis of the responses. Women still have problems with condescension, lack of respect and sexist attitudes and behaviors from athletes, colleagues and audiences. They also complain of "glass ceilings" and lack of advancement opportunities in sports journalism.

The third theme that emerged in the factor analysis was positive aspects in their current job. The majority of respondents explained that they have excellent opportunities in their current job to advance and receive coveted assignments. This could also be related to the fact

that 73% of the respondents agree or strongly agree they are satisfied with their current job. The mean age was 34 which could also play a role in the responses. By the time women are in their thirties, they might have already found a job they found satisfying. Therefore, they face less barriers because they have already worked their way to a top position.

Some of the other factors contributing to these answers are family and desire to advance. Women in their thirties might have started a family and aren't as concerned with advancing and working on their career as women in their mid-twenties. Jobs might be secondary due to the fact that women are finding other things in which to put their energy. This issue might deal with gender differences on a deeper level. Women have primarily been care-takers while men have been the providers. Do men feel that raising a family hinders their opportunity to advance? The issue of family might not even come into play for males. Are their wives at home raising the family? Men might not have that obstacle unless they are single parents.

Some women also feel that advancing is not what they want in their job. They are happy with their current positions and don't feel the need to advance any further. Others might find themselves in jobs where they cannot advance anymore and would have to relocate or switch jobs in order to advance. This may also be the case for males; however, this study focused on the effects and results of the female population in sports journalism.

Salary differences were not one of the main concerns from the women in this field. Only three of 68 mentioned a lower paying job. This could be tied to the fact that five of them also mentioned a lack of experience in the field of sports journalism. They also stated that the fact they never played a sport themselves may contribute to a lower pay. However, regardless of the job, women continue to complain of lower salaries in most occupations.

Several of the women also noted that being labeled a "bitch" caused some barriers in their jobs. While men are labeled aggressive, women are seen as "bitchy" when they try and get a sought after story or assignment. On the other hand, they are seen as too "feminine" if they back down. Women are expected to speak and act like females, yet are told they must adopt a male communication style. It is a no win situation for women who cannot find a happy medium between the two extremes.

A better attitude has been one of the ways women sports journalists' cope with the barriers they face. The majority of women journalists have found strategies that have made obstacles easier to deal with and overcome in their current jobs. This leads to an overall satisfaction in their job, despite all of the shortcomings.

Some of the women suggest taking subjects seriously, and yourself not so seriously. Letting things slide and keeping focus on your job is a way to overcome obstacles in the sports arena. Women try to challenge themselves to find out things about personalities nobody else knows. Having a high level of tolerance along with staying alert helps some of the women deal with the obstacles that they face.

Focusing on the job and balancing it with family can help. Some women sports reporters find their jobs more relaxing if there is a balance between work and home. Most want to look past the obstacles and get on with their lives. They want to do the job they are trained to do as sports journalists. Women sportscasters don't want to be the center of a controversial issue. They want to do the news, not be the news.

Learning more about the field of sports writing is another way women find solutions to the obstacles they face in their jobs. Sometimes the glass ceiling isn't there; it is a lack of

understanding and knowledge. Reporters have found in order to become confident in their job and gain respect, they must learn more about what they were reporting. Improving skills may be the answer to many of the frustrations that women hold.

A final strategy of coping with the barriers of sports is taking the mentality that women are better than the sexist behaviors they have been receiving from their male colleagues. Women have to rise above male discrimination in sports. The issues of discrimination have helped women rise to the occasion. The mentality of "I have to be better than average" pushes women to do their best. There are many barriers for women in sports today but they vary depending on the actual job.

Strategies to deal with these barriers seem to be the difference for women in sports journalism today. They know barriers exist, but choose to deal with them. Their suggestions are not taking things personally and having a sense of humor. Women have learned to adapt to this discrimination and have proven that they can cope with the attitudes of males in sports journalism. They see these obstacles as stepping stones, which require them to push harder for success in their jobs. Women overcome these barriers and succeed in their sports writing careers, proving themselves to society.

Triangulation proved to be helpful in my study. The data and capta was justified by combining research methods into my study. The quantitative data was used for numbers to justify my hypothesis and research question. I was able to use numbers as support for my study. The qualitative capta reinforced the information from my quantitative data. Themes emerged from the open-ended questions on my survey. I counted the number of times certain responses were mentioned. The results from the open-ended questions were similar to the research done in

my review of literature and the results from my quantitative data.

The follow-up interview was done to justify my qualitative responses. I wanted to reinforce my results by asking some of the respondents three more questions regarding job satisfaction, dissatisfaction and attitudes of women sports reporters. These responses were parallel to all of the data/capta collected throughout my study.

Internal validity (rigor), external validity (relevance) and reliability are seen through this type of methodology. All of the data sources cross-checked one another. The study is valid because the results measured what they said they were going to measure. The multiple methods and triangulation, with the use of surveys, open-ended questions and follow-up interviews contributed to the methodological rigor of this study.

The triangulation in this study makes it replicable for other researchers. Each of my methods reinforced the strength of each other, making the data easy to interpret. This form of methodological approach increases the reliability and validity in data evaluation. Trust is therefore established in the outcomes of the inquiry by meeting the tests of rigor. The combination of methods allowed me to collect the data and reduce it to themes for evaluation. I was able to interpret and describe the results after the data was analyzed.

Some implications for future research might include a follow-up quantitative study measuring the barriers that males face in sports journalism and the intensity of their attitudes towards the women in this field. Men might have different views on the barriers faced by women sports journalists. Men may also feel they receive barriers now that they are competing against women.

Another problem that hasn't been addressed is the factor of age discrimination. Women

who age and start to gray aren't kept on the air as long as their male counterparts. Research should be done on the length of time women are in the broadcasting arena versus their male colleagues. Do the males keep their jobs for a longer period of time? Some long term studies could be done monitoring the behaviors and attitudes that both males and females face the minute they enter the field of sports journalism. Future studies could lead to a better understanding and interpretation of the discrimination in the field of sports journalism.

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TABLE 1

<u>Survey Rating</u>	<u>Representation</u>
5/1	strongly agree
4/2	agree
3/3	neither agree/disagree
2/4	disagree
1/5	strongly disagree

TABLE 2

<u>Demographics</u>			
	<u>Count</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>
Age	86	34	8
Years in Sports Journalism	87	11	7
Salary	78	\$51,000	45

TABLE 3

Factor Analysis			
	2.322	2.360	1.356
Eigenvalue			
% of Variance	38.32	38.94	22.37
Variables	Factor 1 (sexist language)	Factor 2 (lack of opportunity)	Factor 3 (positive aspects)
4	-0.062403	-0.491613	0.106578
5	-0.261661	-0.649661*	0.163589
6	-0.160711	-0.680722*	0.072578
7	-0.452158	0.036921	0.188192
8	-0.821031*	-0.141290	0.224764
9	-0.769427*	-0.254993	0.163762
10	-0.733800*	-0.197929	0.178139
11	-0.222991	-0.316677	0.643007*
12	-0.301139	-0.166459	0.709667*
13	0.014502	-0.651254*	0.184000
14	-0.126770	-0.711094*	0.247616
15	-0.241908	-0.222265	0.394585

Eigenvalue = or less than 1.00

% of variance = or less than 5

* loaded independently

TABLE 4

Frequency Tables

Question	Count	Mean	Response
1. Women face more condescension in sports than news.	62	70.46	SA or A
2. Women in sports get better beats than women in news.	71	80.68	NA/D or D
3. There is equal opportunity to receive coveted beats for women in sports journalism.	36	41.38	A
4. There is equal opportunity for promotions for women in sports journalism.	27 26	31.03 29.89	A D
5. Promotions are better for women in sports journalism in my news organization.	36	41.86	SA or A
6. Male colleagues expect me to know less about the background of sports.	46	52.28	SA or A
7. I am expected to make more errors than my male colleagues in sports journalism.	49	56.32	SA or A
8. I am satisfied in my current job.	63	72.41	SA or A

SA-strongly agree; A- agree; NA/D- neither agree/disagree; D- disagree; SD- strongly disagree

TABLE 5

Responses to Open-ended Questions Concerning Obstacles Faced in Sports JournalismInterpersonal Attitudes and Behaviors

<u>Problems</u>	<u>Respondents</u>
sexist language	
condescension	
"women know less about sports"	43/68 = 63%
lack of respect	
got job to date athletes	
"old boys network"	

TABLE 6

Responses to Open-ended Questions Concerning Obstacles Faced in Sports Journalism

Job Assignments Related to GenderProblemsRespondents

getting assigned "soft beats"

assigned only women's sports

24/68 = 35%

locker room issues

men seen as more competent

TABLE 7

Responses to Open-ended Questions Concerning Obstacles Faced in Sports JournalismJob Advancement Related to Gender

<u>Problems</u>	<u>Respondents</u>
using sexuality to advance	
lack of promotion	
lack of acceptance	35/68 = 51%
"glass ceiling"	
having to prove self to advance	
token woman	

TABLE 8

Responses to Open-ended Questions Concerning Obstacles Faced in Sports Journalism

Strategies to Cope with Obstacles

better mental attitude

proving yourself through work

having a sense of humor

20/68 = 29%

not taking things personally

using obstacles to strive higher

TABLE 9

Responses to Open-ended Questions Concerning Obstacles Faced in Sports Journalism

Positive Aspects About Current Job

Great bosses/mentors

Great advancing opportunities

19/68 = 28%

Positive attitudes of co-workers and supervisors

Equality

TABLE 10

Responses to Open-ended Questions Concerning Obstacles Faced in Sports JournalismOther BarriersProblemsRespondents

salary differences

3/68 = 4%

raising families

4/68 = 6%

never played a sport/lack of experience

5/68 = 7%

worn out by the time promotion is reached

1/68 = 1%

labeled a "bitch" for being aggressive

3/68 = 4%

TABLE 11

Responses to Follow-up Interviews

Job Satisfaction

Meeting interesting people
Working on special projects
Knowing I did my best
Getting positive feedback from managers
Covering sports figures with goals
Making a small change for women journalists

Job Dissatisfaction

Men promoted quicker
Not being taken seriously
Hearing negative feedback
Salary differences
High level of stress
Having to prove self to colleagues

Attitudes of Women Sports Journalists

Tough
Hard to get to know
Being "bitchy"
Suspicious
Competitive
Work compulsive
Sports junkies
Understanding

APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

Appendix AQUESTIONNAIREQuestionnaire for Women in Sports Media
(taken from Miller and Miller, 1995)

1. What is your current age? _____
2. How many years experience do you have in sports journalism? _____
3. What is your primary job? _____
4. Do you have a college education? _____ If yes, what is your major? _____
5. What is your current salary? _____

Check the appropriate blank: SA-strongly agree, A-agree, NA/D-neither agree nor disagree, D-disagree, SD-strongly disagree

6. Women face more condescension in sports than in news.

SA A NA/D D SD

7. Women who work in sports face more sexist language from supervisors than do women who work in news.

SA A NA/D D SD

8. Women who work in sports face more sexist language from co-workers than do women who work in news.

SA A NA/D D SD

9. Women who work in sports get better beats than do women in news.

SA A NA/D D SD

10. There is equal opportunity in the workplace for women sports journalists.

SA A NA/D D SD

11. There is equal opportunity to receive coveted beats for women sports journalists.

SA A NA/D D SD

12. There is equal opportunity for promotions for women sports journalists.

SA A NA/D D SD

13. Job assignments are better for women sports journalists in my news organization.

SA A NA/D D SD

14. Promotions are better for women sports journalists in my news organization.

SA A NA/D D SD

15. Male colleagues expect me to know less about the background of sports.

SA A NA/D D SD

16. I am expected to make more errors than my male colleagues in sports journalism.

SA A NA/D D SD

17. I am satisfied with my current job.

SA A NA/D D SD

What obstacles have you had to overcome because you are female? (feel free to elaborate) _____

What do you feel about the opportunities to advance in your current job? (feel free to elaborate) _____

APPENDIX B

Follow-up Interview

Appendix B

1. Describe satisfaction in your job.
2. Describe dissatisfaction in your job.
3. Describe attitudes of women in sports journalism you have witnessed.