
Role Of Women in Sports Journalism

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Abstract

Even though women have gained wide acceptance in the workplace as an equal to men, the field of sports journalism lacks modern gender equality due to the still-evident practice of gender discrimination against women. Women are discriminated against both in and on the field, by both the coaches they cover and the players with which they interact. Many female sports journalists can attest to verbal, in addition to sexual, harassment. In the workplace, female reporters face discrimination from their coworkers and sometimes editors. These factors make it extremely difficult for women to advance in the career, despite the fact that they have remarked that they love the job. Even though the field is said to have been desegregated, females should be fully integrated for the industry of sports media to finally establish the modern ideal of gender equality.

Keywords- Role Of Women, Sports Journalism, modern ideal and gender equality.

Introduction

There are few symbols more masculine than the image of a group of men, clad in the jersey of their team of choice, avidly watching a Sunday night football game while all emotions rise and fall with the score. Every minute detail about the social institution of sports is projected for the attention of men, from the attractiveness of female sideline reporters during athletic events to the male-targeted commercials during the Super Bowl. The field is regarded as “sacred” to some, a place where everything else is forgotten and natural human competitive nature can take the stage. Even the nature of sporting contests implies a masculine feel: the sweat, blood, and violence of raw competition is hardly associated with femininity. Many traditional minds still do not think women belong in the garage, in the White House, or on the field – not as an athlete, but as a journalist. Sport analysts are the crème de la crème of sports enthusiasts, those who are not only avid fans, but have made their profession in sports journalism: men, traditionally, not women. As time has progressed, traditional gender roles have lost their rigid shape and women are acknowledged as being just as capable as men, while a scarce few of the previously male-dominated aspects of society remain resistant to the integration of women. Even though women have gained wide acceptance in the workplace as an equal to men, the field of sports journalism continues to resist the integration of women as seen in the still-evident practice of gender discrimination.

As the women of the world continue to make strides in society, the fervor of male hegemony grows and traditionally male-dominated themes are determinately less accepting to the addition of women. While women have won and are generally regarded as man’s equal in modern times, male hegemony grasps hold of these few masculine fields with no intent to release them, especially in the case of the sacred sport. According to Marie Hardin, “Notions that women are naturally less competitive, less athletic, and less interested in sports than are men have become commonsense” (2022, para. 10). The common notion that Hardin suggests is true, yet preposterous; women biologically may not be composed the same as men, but interests are not gender stratified. Some women are interested in sports, and those women may seek to further their interest by making a career of sports journalism.

Discrimination in (and on) the Field- In the field, women are forced to fight the belief that sports journalism is an improper place for females. Male sports journalists are automatically given a certain level of respect as the assumption is that men know their sports; women, on the other hand, must continuously prove themselves. Women sports journalists, however, deserve that respect; if women are working in the field as a sports journalist, their occupation alone should attest to the fact that women sports journalists know what they are talking about. The only real position in the field of sports journalism that women can achieve without contest is that of sideline reporter. Unfortunately, with that occupation comes the necessity for the epitome of the perfect woman. A sideline reporter's qualifications are often overlooked for the one crucial aspect: attractiveness. According to a local sports journalist, "An awful lot of players, coaches, and media members consider female sideline reporters as nothing more than pretty faces. Their contributions are often overlooked and passed off as coming about because of that very quality"

The household name, Erin Andrews, is the of using a prime example sideline reporter for attractiveness. She is placed in outfits that are very fitting while she broadcasts; behind the heels is a woman who has immense sports knowledge, yet she is valued for her pretty face. This treatment seems to be uniform among the "successful" women sports journalists: those who actually receive on-air time, yet not because of their understanding of the sport. Possibly the most evident result of discrimination against women in sports media is reflected in the actual on-air time that women sports journalists receive in comparison to their male counterparts. Sarah Brennan, a graduate of Georgetown who completed her master's thesis on gender studies, compiled a study comparing female to male airtime during the pinnacle of football, the Super Bowl; in this chart, readers can see the relatively disproportionate distribution of on-air time:

Mean On-Air Time		
	Men	Women
Sideline Reporter	87.9 seconds	36.8 seconds
Broadcaster	8371.4 seconds	36.8 seconds

In the Super Bowl, male broadcasters take up most of the time on-air; in a situational broadcast like the Super Bowl, this is to be expected. However, when the occupation of sideline reporter is focused on, women still lack. In an independent study of ESPN's *Sportscenter*, a similar domination of males was found. Not only were the analysts male, almost all of the subject matter in the show was focused on men's sports. If dealing with discriminatory male coaches, players, and fans was not enough, women in sports media also have to cope with discrimination by their coworkers. It is a completely unwarranted practice, as due to basic traits acquired through gender, women are very well-suited to work in the field of journalism; these traits can even give women an advantage over men in editorial positions.

Generally speaking, women enjoy the job of being a sports journalist; however, they despise trying to make it a career. A full 98% of women in sports media can attest to discrimination on the job. Women at the top have been noted to have no families. Women in sports media that achieve success are constantly reminded of her “place” – as a mother, and a wife. As for those women who try to both maintain a career and a family, it is a challenge in any field. Women always have what is known as a “second shift” of work, chores, and basic home tasks to complete; these can add up to almost 40 hours a week, more than double that of men). , “Such gender-related disparities in familial roles, combined with work sites that have been slow to integrate women, have been cited by researchers as much of the reason that women continue to work on the margins. Due to this constant exclusion, women have bonded together and formed the Association for Women in Sports Media, which provides an outlet for oppressed female sports journalists. The addition of women into sports journalism departments has made the once male-exclusive industry “desegregated;” however, to have a fully functional workplace without gender discrimination, women need to become integrated into A desegregated workplace is one in which the majority group (men) tolerate the presence of the minority group (women) but do not make an effort to meet women on their terms. An integrated workplace offers “a recognition of difference but an embrace of that difference and an incorporation of difference as something healthy, important, and valuable.” sports journalism newsrooms.

In many instances, women are only introduced into the field for newsrooms to “fill the quota” of having a woman on staff. According to a local writer, “there’s also a brewing sentiment among sports writers that I’ve heard firsthand where people are convinced that female sports reporters are in an era of affirmative action”

Mass Media in Modern Society - It is important to note that the mass media is representative of the current attitudes, values, and opinions of society. Sports journalism is no exception, as sporting in nature is thought of as a "gendered cultural institute. There are significant differences between sports designed specifically for the different genders. As noted by Creedon, "female professional basketball players don't dunk, don't swear, and aren't seven feet tall. The reporter has identified a central theme in sport: the concept of male superiority and female inferiority" (1998, p. 89). This observation is a common one in every facet of sports and embeds itself in the sports media. Sports journalism reaches a large target audience; the sports page doesn't "simply reflect the status quo, it helps shape it" (Hardin, 2005, para. 5). Sports media does carry weight as to what society thinks, even though it has to stray between close normal cultural lines. According to Jones, “Culturally, sport reflects men’s dominant values and ideals about, for example, who can play and the ideal athlete. Through the media, society receives notice that certain sports are for white, able-bodied, heterosexual males and other sports, if they must compete, are for females” (Jones, 2007, p. 132).

Society needs to accept that women’s sports will never be “equal” to men’s sports, as the two are incomparable; therefore, female journalists should not only be limited to “women’s” sports, since they are not an inferior mimic to men’s sports, but a separate kind of competition all together. In an interview with a local sports journalist, he questioned, “Is softball really girls’ baseball? Are guys and girls playing the same golf course if they tee off from different boxes? The sports are different because of the physical difference between men and women. We need to move past lining them up against one another Even in the sporting events of the past year, such comparisons have arisen in the college basketball sphere. When the University of Connecticut’s women’s basketball broke the record for the most

consecutive wins, analysts and fans alike invoked a comparison to the legendary University of Central Los Angeles men's team. However, that comparison is unfair – both teams may have their names in the record book, but the natures of the respective sports are incomparable. The hope that men's and women's sports are regarded as different sports translates to the wish for integration of women in sports media. If society will accept a female sports journalist as just that (and therefore ceases the comparison to male coworkers), integration of the field can occur. Women as sports journalists may have separate strengths and weaknesses than their male counterparts, but this fact should not exclude them from the workroom. Male hegemony and its resistance to change should be eliminated in these increasingly diverse times. The combination of the talents residing in both aspects of gender, the ultimate social stratification, could make for an exquisite and impressive modern sports newsroom.

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