NO TITLE IX IN JOURNALISM: AN ANALYSIS OF SUBJECT GENDER IN
NEWSPAPER SPORTS COLUMNS

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The purpose of this study is to examine gender bias in sports media from the perspective of the sports columnist. The research analyzed 1,082 sports columns written by ten columnists (five male, five female) at newspapers across the United States. The columns were scrutinized to determine if the column subject was male or female. Results found that 84.4% of the sports columns were written about male athletes or men’s sports compared to only 9% devoted to female athletes and women’s sports. The research also found that female sports columnists write about female sports 12.7% of the time, while male sports columns only dedicate 6% of their columns to female athletes or women’s sports. Newspapers with a larger circulation were more likely to have sports columns about female sports than were newspapers with smaller readerships. Six of the columnists were then interviewed to get their opinions on gender issues in sports journalism.
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Frequency of Subject Gender in Newspaper Sports Columns
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is no secret that men’s sports receive more media attention than women’s sports. Female athletes are newer on the scene, having crashed the testosterone-laden party when Title IX was passed in 1972. Now known as the Patsy T. Mink Equal Opportunity Act, Title IX forced sports programs to offer equal opportunities for men and women. Female sports teams should, under Title IX, be given the same advantages as the male teams, from uniforms to venues to funding. Huge strides have been made toward equality in many sporting areas—including equipment, venues, funding and promotional support—but media attention seems to have missed the Title IX bandwagon. How could the important and influential institution of mass media be so far behind the rest of society?

While other areas of the newsroom have made great strides in gender equality, the sports department largely remains stuck in the “old boy’s club” mentality of 1955. A recent study requested by the Associated Press Sports Editors (APSE) found that 94% of sports editors are men (Lapchick, 2008). Men don’t just occupy the head-honcho jobs; they dominate the entire sports department. Males occupy 90% of the assistant sports editor jobs, 93% of the columnist jobs and 84% of the jobs in copy editing/design (Lapchick, 2008).

Two years ago, I was a member of my university’s volleyball team while also serving as a sports reporter for the local newspaper. I have been inside the editorial room when coverage decisions are made, but I have also been inside a locker room as part of a team that had much success yet failed to garner media attention. My experience as both a female sports journalist and a female athlete provided me with a unique perspective as I undertook this study.

Researchers have analyzed mass media’s treatment of woman athletes from many different
angles, but there is very little existing research examining the issue from the perspective of the sports columnist.

Within the newspaper sports departments, columnists occupy a uniquely powerful position. J. Sean McCleneghan (2006), a researcher who has dealt extensively with sports columnists, said these special journalists have the “acumen to paint any type of picture they wish.” Sports journalists aspire to be columnists because it is considered a position of prestige reserved for the top experts in the department. Not to be confused with beat writers assigned to cover a specific team or event, sports columnists can generally choose any athlete, any sport or any subject as the topic of their column. This freedom of choice is relatively unique in the newspaper world and gives sports columnists a special opportunity to shape public perception with their own opinions.

The question is, what do sports columnists do with this freedom? With little supervision, do sports columnists hold themselves accountable for having a diverse range of topics? Do columnists strive to cover both men’s and women’s sports in their columns? Or do they “keep on doing what they’ve always done,” and focus the majority of coverage on male sports? We know the majority of the sports page is devoted to covering male athletic pursuits, but does this trend continue in sports columns? This study aims to analyze how often sports columnists write about women’s sports and female athletes while also examining the way male and female columnists perceive their roles in coverage of men’s and women’s sports.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the male-dominated world of sports, women have always been fighting an uphill battle. In sports journalism, the battle has just begun. Sports departments at media outlets are often considered “old boys clubs” that have yet to be affected by the push for diversity in newsrooms (Lapchick, 2008). Along with the clear lack of gender diversity in sports departments, there is a lack of gender diversity in sports media coverage as well (Fink, 1998, p. 38).

Women in Journalism

Women have a long history in journalism, but they have consistently battled discrimination in the male-dominated profession. Ann Franklin took over the printing house of the *Rhode Island Gazette* when her husband died in 1735 and is considered the first American woman to be involved in printing a newspaper (Whitt, 2008). Mary Katherine Goddard, one of the first American female journalists, ran the *Maryland Journal* during the 1770s and landed the important job of printing the first official copy of the Declaration of Independence. She was the first woman appointed to federal office, serving as Baltimore’s postmistress for 14 years before her gender became a problem. She was removed from the position in a case of sex discrimination despite personal pleas to President George Washington and the U.S. Senate and 200 citizens petitioning Postmaster General Samuel Osgood on her behalf. The reason she was dismissed and ordered to be replaced by a man? The position was about to be given more supervising duties and “more travelling might be necessary than a woman could undertake” (Beasley & Gibbons, 1993, p. 52).
During the 19th century, women were expected to be refined, delicate creatures largely confined to the household. Fewer women worked in printing during this era, but a few managed to make their mark. Anne Royall published newspapers — *Paul Pry*, followed by *The Huntress* — in Washington, D.C., from 1831 to 1854 (Whitt, 2008). Jane G. Swisshelm became the first woman Washington correspondent when she was hired by Horace Greeley to write for the *New York Tribune* in 1850. Amelia Bloomer started a temperance newspaper in 1849 and became famous for advocating the right for women to wear pantaloons, or as they came to be known, “Bloomers” (Beasley & Gibbons, 1993).

It was during this era that feminist Sarah Margaret Fuller burst onto the scene. She gained notoriety as the author of a transcendentalist journal, but today she is remembered as the first female foreign correspondent, traveling to Europe in 1846 as a reporter for Greeley’s *New York Tribune*. Horace Greeley described her as “the most remarkable, and in some respects, the greatest woman whom America has yet known” (Whitt, 2008, p. 10).

Women emerged as newspaper columnists both before and after the Civil War. Writing was becoming a respectable pursuit for women, and woman columnists helped illuminate the female role in society. Sarah Willis Parton, writing under the pen name “Fanny Fern,” possessed the common trailblazer gene of other early female journalists. When she shocked society by leaving her husband, she wrote satirical columns to support herself. She was hired by the *New York Ledger* in 1853 and wrote a weekly column for the newspaper for the rest of her life (Beasley & Gibbons, 1993).

The 20th century brought mass circulation magazines and marked another change in American journalism. Investigative journalism came into fashion, and Ida M. Tarbell was one of the best female “muckrakers,” as President Theodore Roosevelt called them (Whitt, 2008, p. 12).
She became famous when *McClure’s* published her investigative series, “History of the Standard Oil Company,” in 1904 (Beasley & Gibbons, 1993).

More women went into journalism after World War I, but they still received second-class treatment behind the male journalists. Very few were assigned to cover the elite beats like government and crime. Ishbel Ross worked for the *New York Tribune* for more than a decade and covered some of the biggest stories of the time. City editor Stanley Walker said most female reporters were “slovenly, incompetent vixens,” but said Ross was “closer than any of the others to the man’s idea of what a newspaperwoman should be” (Beasley & Gibbons, 1993, p. 131).

One of the hardest positions on a newspaper staff for a woman to obtain was that of war correspondent. Rheta Chile Dorr is the most famous World War I correspondent, covering the Russian Revolution. She wrote front-page stories for the *New York Mail* but was refused access to the front lines because of her sex. World War II changed the landscape for American female journalists, and photojournalist Margaret Bourke White set the tone. She gained fame for her powerful war photos for *Life* magazine in 1936 and was the first woman correspondent accredited to the U.S. Air Force. When she was denied equal access to the war because of her gender, she was forced to travel by sea to North Africa for the Allied Invasion. Her ship was torpedoed, but she continued to shoot pictures as she escaped on a lifeboat (Beasley & Gibbons, 1993).

The road was tough for female journalists, but it was twice as difficult for female African American reporters. Ida Wells-Barnett was an advocate for equal rights for her race and became an owner of the *Memphis Free Speech*. She confronted controversial racial stories head-on, and, fearing violence from angry readers in Memphis, Wells-Barnett took a job with the *New York*
Age. She condemned lynching and was one of two African American women to help found the NAACP (Whitt, 2008).

Lucile Bluford was editor and publisher of the Kansas City Call and fought to be admitted to the master’s program at the University of Missouri-Columbia in 1939 (Beasley & Gibbons, 1993).

The 1960s and 1970s brought radical social change, and feminists needed a medium to get their message across. In order to avoid the gatekeepers of traditionally male-dominated publications, the women’s liberation press emerged. The Voice of the Women’s Liberation Movement, off our backs, and Ms. were some of the most important women’s liberation publications of the time. In 1989, Ms. had a paid circulation of 543,000 (Beasley & Gibbons, 1993).

The Role of Feminist and Masculinity Studies

During the women’s liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s, media became an important channel for feminists to have their voices heard. Women were tired of the demeaning and enduring stereotypes of what a “lady” should be, and part of their anger was directed at the media for continuing to portray women in stereotypical roles. The National Organization of Women (NOW) conducted a study of the portrayal of women in advertising, which was published in the New York Times Magazine. Analyzing more than 1,200 commercials during an 18-month time frame, the study found many examples of women being portrayed as “unintelligent” and as “decorative objects.” More than one-third of the advertisements depicted women as dependent on men (Gill, 2007). Other studies were conducted during this era, and all came to the conclusion that women were either absent or trivialized in mass media representations.
In her book *Gender and the Media*, Rosalind Gill defines feminism as “a concern with enduring gender inequalities and injustices” (2007, p. 25). Gill goes on to describe the three different types of feminism that emerged during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s: liberal feminism, socialist feminism and radical feminism. Liberal feminists believe their lives are limited by gender stereotyping and support initiatives that help women catch up to the status males have achieved, especially in male-dominated career fields. Socialist feminism forms a link between female subordination and class-based societies while radical feminists believe women and men are fundamentally different and women’s lives have been consistently dominated and controlled by men (Gill, 2007).

Feminists continued to criticize our male-dominated society into the 1990s, leading to a new idea or classification, “masculinities.” Men had never really been classified by their gender before, but now the male gender is studied similarly to females, including all social strata and walks of life (Gill, 2007). Out of these studies emerged the important idea of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987). In *Media, Communication, Culture*, author James Lull writes that “Hegemony is the dominance that a certain social group holds over others… hegemony is more than the sum of differences in social power; it is a method for gaining and maintaining power” (2000, p. 48). Donaldson argues that hegemony “is about the winning and holding of power and the formation (and destruction) of social groups in that process” (1993, p. 645).

Out of the concept of hegemony came hegemonic masculinity, which proposes the idea of multiple masculinities in which some are more powerful and dominant, and that there is an ideal masculinity for which to strive (Gill, 2007). Hegemonic masculinity is built on the idea that men are usually oppressive to women (Donaldson, 1993). “One aspect of ruling class hegemonic masculinity is the belief that women don’t count in big matters, and they can be dealt with by
jocular patronage in little matters,” Donaldson wrote (1993, p. 654). The idea of hegemonic masculinity is an issue that comes up over and over again in different areas of research, from criminology to education and business. The concept has been used to study the way men are represented in the media and to analyze the gendering of bureaucracies, particularly in the corporate and military settings (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). It has become a popular topic in investigations of gender equity in journalism and more specifically, sports journalism.

The Impact of Title IX

According to the words of the Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

Title IX was passed in 1972, mandating equality for females in educational and sports programs receiving federal financial opportunities. The law was not created with women’s athletics in mind, targeting gender discrimination in academia instead (McDonagh & Pappano 2008). Essentially, Title IX gave women the same amount of sports opportunities as men. Since Title IX was passed the amount of females participating in high school sports has grown by 800% to approximately 3 million girls (Hardin, 2005).

Many male sports journalists have a negative opinion of Title IX and believe women’s sports profited at the expense of men’s sports (Anonymous, 2007). From the moment the law was proposed on the Senate floor, concerns arose over giving women equal sporting opportunity as men (McDonagh & Pappano, 2008). In its initial passing, however, little thought was given to the law’s implications on sports. News reports focused on its effect on financial aid and college admissions (Blumenthal, 2005).
Once others realized the law’s implications for sports, there were complaints they were taking away sports from males to give more opportunities to females. The concerns came to a head during the 30th anniversary of the law in 2002 when the Bush administration created a commission to explore the law and its effect on men’s sports. The commission’s report left the law open to changes, and many pro-Title IX advocates were upset (Hardin & Whiteside, 2009). The debate over the merits of Title IX continues to this day and remains a hot button topic for many journalists. Survey results showed 77% of reporters think their newspapers provided enough coverage of female sports, but those newspapers only gave women’s sports approximately 8% of their sports sections. Men and women were both asked about Title IX in the survey, and more men thought the law is bad for men’s sports and should be changed (Anonymous, 2007).

Title IX provided progress for female athletes, but many of those gains aren’t felt in the newsroom. Many roadblocks remained for female sports journalists in the 1960s and 1970s. Greater numbers of women were starting to invade the press box in the mid-1970s, “igniting the worst rash of sexism ever witnessed against a group of reporters” (Ricchiardi, 2004-05, p. 55). Women struggled to get interviews in locker rooms and other traditionally male sports areas until 1978-79, when court battles prompted a federal judge to give equal access to female sports journalists (Ricchiardi, 2004-05).

Women as Sports Journalists

Perhaps the first female sports journalist was Midy (Maria) Morgan, who covered horse races for the New York World as early as 1869. Annie Laurie of the San Francisco Examiner is considered the first woman to cover a prizefight in the late 1890s. Mary Bostwick, a stunt reporter for the Indianapolis Star from 1914-1958, covered hunting, basketball, baseball,
football, boxing, and car racing. She was the first female reporter to cover the Indianapolis 500 when she disguised herself as a man to gain access (Creedon, 1994).

In the battle against gender inequity in sports journalism, Margaret Goss was one of the first on the frontlines. On February 17, 1924, the Sunday edition of the *New York Tribune* featured a front-page article by Goss about the emergence of intercollegiate sports for women. The article was the first of a weeklong series about the subject, and all of the articles were featured in the news section of the *Tribune*. Within a week, however, Goss had followed up her series with articles in the sports page, which until that point had been reserved for male reporters (Kaszuba, 2006).

Though she only wrote for the *Tribune* for 18 months, Goss is known as the first female sports journalist who covered women’s sports for a daily newspaper. She brought a distinctly female perspective, writing about tennis star Suzanne Lenglen and golfer Glenna Collett while continuing to cover the rise of female collegiate sports. Goss continued to break new ground for female sports journalists. Her column, “Women in Sport,” was the first regularly appearing sports column by a female writer. Her column was almost exclusively about female sports and athletes and was a monumental groundbreaker at a time when female athletes were often chastised for being “unladylike” (Kaszuba, 2006). There were other female sports journalists that followed her lead, including Dorothy Lindsay, who was named the Women-In-Sports editor at the *Boston Herald* in 1925. Ann Haber’s column, “The Woman in Sports,” was in the *New York Evening World* in 1928, and Cecile Ladu was the women’s sports editor for the *Albany Times Union* in 1929 (Creedon, 1994).

Goss and her counterparts were trailblazers for both female sports journalists and female athletes. Their advocacy of women’s sports in their columns was the beginning of media
coverage for women’s sports. Years later, sports columnist Elinor Kaine remembered when she was denied press credentials for a big football game in which the two New York professional teams, the Jets and the Giants, were facing off for the first time in 1969. Kaine and her lawyer sued, seeking a seat with the rest of the male reporters in the press box. She won, but the wording of the settlement was altered from press “box” to “area,” and Kaine ended up being segregated below the press box in her own area (Kaine, 2009).

Nearly all female journalists, not just those in sports, have experienced discrimination in their career. Even today, horizontal and vertical types of segregation are still evident. Gill (2007) wrote:

Horizontal segregation refers to the way that media industries and different roles within them are segmented along gender lines, with women concentrated in low-status parts of the industry (e.g., local papers and women’s magazines), and in particular types of roles (e.g., administration and support).

Vertical segregation is a way of capturing the fact that even when in the same general field (e.g. television production) they tend to be concentrated at lower points in the hierarchy, while men dominate senior management. (p.121)

While women have made considerable inroads in other newspaper sections, female reporters remain marginalized in the sports department (Hardin & Whiteside, 2006). The Associated Press Sports Editors (APSE) has recognized the lack of gender and racial diversity in sports departments of newspapers and ordered a detailed demographic study in 2006, eventually releasing the “2006 Racial and Gender Report Card of the Associated Press Sports Editors.” The data in the initial report, which included the racial and gender demographics of more than 378 Associated Press websites and newspapers, were used as a baseline to measure future
improvement (Lapchick, 2008). Another report was released in 2008, and the website and newspapers were graded on the gender diversity of APSE total staffs, sports editors, assistant sports editors, reporters, copy editors/designers and columnists (Lapchick, 2008). They received grades of F in all gender equity categories. In a separate article for ESPN.com, Lapchick said the lack of progress for gender in the 2006 report card was “one of the most striking finds” of the analysis (Lapchick, 2006).

According to APSE’s 2008 Racial and Gender Report Card, 94% of sports editors are men and 90% of assistant sports editors are men. In addition, 91% of sports reporters are male and 84% of the sports copy editors/designers are men. Of particular interest to this study is the gender of sports columnists. The report showed 93% of the columnists are male (Lapchick, 2008). A survey conducted by the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) found that only slightly more than 5% of sports columnists were female (Hardin & Whiteside, 2006). When comparing the gender of columnists in the 2006 and 2008 reports, the percentage of female columnists remained the same but increased in total by 8 in 2008 (Lapchick, 2008). APSE has recognized it has a gender diversity problem in its newsrooms, but recognizing the problem is only the first step toward change.

As women try to break into the male-dominated world of sports journalism, they still face serious prejudices. The sports department of the newspaper has largely remained an “old boy’s club,” and the club doesn’t always want women on its turf. Koppett (1994) wrote, “What [women sports journalists] do not have, of course, is precisely the macho mystique that made so many boys sports fans in the first place, and that the middle-aged professionals in the field still cherish. But the obstacles are entirely (and literally) manmade, and they are crumbling” (p. 210).
Some newspapers are making more effort than others to encourage gender diversity in their sports departments. At the Orlando Sentinel in Orlando, Florida, women comprised 25% of the sports staff in 2006 (Terzieff, 2006). Richard Lapchick, who prepared the gender and racial report cards for the APSE, writes, “Sports is a culture that has been white-male dominated for decades, and when it comes time to hire people the prevalence of the old boys’ network shows itself” (Terzieff, 2006). Jemele Hill, the only black female sports columnist at a major U.S. newspaper that was found in the 2006 APSE report, thinks the location and sports saturation of cities allow some newspapers to have a more diverse staff. “News outlets can feel more comfortable breaking new ground when there isn’t the intensity involved with a large concentration of professional teams” Hill said (Terzieff, 2006, para. 5). “When you look at female athletes who are out there getting it done, accomplishing as much as the men, then at some point female sports reporters have to stop being a novelty, stop being questioned” Denise Cullen, a 10-year sports broadcasting veteran, said (Terzieff, 2006, para. 11).

Not only do female sports journalists have to break into the “old boy’s club,” they also have to break the locker room barrier. In 1978, Sports Illustrated journalist Melissa Ludtke and her editors had to file a civil rights lawsuit against Bowie Kuhn, the Major League Baseball Commissioner, to gain equal access to the Yankees’ locker room for interviews. Ludtke won, opening locker room doors for female sports journalists. The victory did little to stop the discrimination and harassment from those inside the locker rooms, however (Everbach & Matysiak, 2009). In 1990, Lisa Olsen was covering the New England Patriots for the Boston Herald. While interviewing a Patriots player in the locker room, several other naked players exposed themselves to Olsen and made lewd remarks. The story made national news and brought visibility to the treatment female sports journalists were enduring (Creedon, 1994). Sportswriter
Karen Crouse told researchers Everbach and Matysiak (2009), “When you feel you are unequal, it does things to you. I used to be the person who walked in and smiled at everyone and be the press box social director. But you will find I am much more standoffish because people have not been very nice” (p. 10).

When women do get hired into sports journalism jobs, many do not last long in the face of gender discrimination. The average career span for women in sports journalism is 10 years (Hardin & Shain, Winter 2005). Women are less likely to be married or in long relationships than male counterparts, and they are less likely to have children (Gill, 2007). It is blamed on the fact that journalists have to be ready to chase a story 24 hours a day, but it doesn’t help that most media organizations are not family-friendly, usually not offering parental leave or daycare like other professions.

Female sports journalists face discrimination and potential harassment on the job (Hardin & Shain, 2005a). Female sports columnists often get the most harassment because they are putting their opinions out there for criticism. One female columnist talked about the hostile treatment: “It’s cruel. It’s vicious. It’s personal. It’s attacking. And if you put an opinion with your picture, oh Christ. You can’t imagine the stuff I get” (Hardin & Shain, 2005a, p. 28).

Female journalists are always trying to pull even with men, and they feel a constant pressure to prove their worth (Hardin & Shain, 2005a).

Coverage of Women’s Sports

Women have traditionally been underrepresented in the media, especially in newspaper sections considered more masculine. The first cross-national study of the portrayal of women in the media in 1995 showed that only 17% of newsmakers or interviewees in newspaper articles
were female (Gill, 2007). Women subjects tend to appear in the arts or social sections of newspapers and are continually absent from stories focused on politics or the economy. The amount of coverage of women is only one part of the struggle; the type of coverage is another part of the problem. When women become newsworthy, the news printed almost always focuses on the women’s physical appearance (Gill, 2007). In 1975, Gaye Tuchman wrote that nearly all women are represented in one of two ways in the media— their domesticity or physical beauty (Gill, 2007). On the other side, men are rarely described by their looks or domestic capabilities.

The biased treatment of males and females in the media has been thoroughly documented in politics. Women politicians receive much less media coverage than male politicians. Their coverage routinely references their marital status and age, and they are often referred to by their first name and are usually photographed in domestic settings (Gill, 2007). Studies analyzing the media coverage of Hillary Rodham Clinton’s political campaigns show that the coverage only turned favorable and sympathetic after her husband’s relationship with Monica Lewinsky was made public. Gill (2007) wrote, “As Parry-Giles (2000) points out, this leads to a troubling conclusion: ‘we are to fear women with power, yet admire women with the status of the victim’” (p. 221).

Underrepresentations and misrepresentations of women extend to the sports pages. In 1990, a study showed that men’s sports are given 28.8 times as many column inches as female sports (Fink, 1998). Another study of 3,723 articles in Sports Illustrated found that only 9% of the total coverage was dedicated to female sports (Fink, 38). Female athletes are often portrayed as victims, or written about in regard to their personal relationships or domestic situations (Fink, 1998; Macey, 2005). Studies have shown that certain female sports—those deemed feminine, such as golf, tennis and figure skating—receive more media attention than women playing
traditionally male sports such as basketball and softball (Fink, 1998). Creedon (1994) wrote, “By their symbolic annihilation of the female athlete, the media tells us that sportswomen have little, if any, value in this society, particularly in relationship to male athletes” (p.34).

Some experts and feminists say that any media attention shown to women’s sports, regardless of the type, is a step in the right direction. Others argue that articles propagating the messages that “further entrench ‘appropriate’ feminine roles rather than accurate athletic roles” could actually do more harm than good (Fink, 1998, para. 21). A 2001 study compared the perception of Olympic athletes depending on whether the coverage was attractiveness-based or athleticism-based. Female athletes whose coverage focused on their appearance were perceived as more attractive than those whose coverage focused on athletic performance. However, those perceived as attractive were also seen as less talented, less aggressive, and less heroic than those portrayed by their athleticism (Knight & Guiliano, 2002).

Many scholars and media analysts believe the lack of women in newspaper sports departments is the reason for the lack of coverage of women’s sports. They think that as the female presence becomes more prominent in sports departments, female athletes will subsequently get more attention on sports pages and television coverage (Hardin & Shain, 2005b). In sport, hegemony “has been more complete and more resistant to change than in other areas of culture,” Jennifer Hargreaves was quoted (Hardin & Shain, 2005b). This hegemony is enforced and perhaps even magnified by inequitable media coverage. The media have halted female progress in the sports world through non-coverage or ambivalent coverage that trivializes their athletic abilities (Hardin & Shain, 2005b). Women have been vastly ignored in sports coverage, which perpetuates the idea that female athletes have less value than their male counterparts.
Many people place the blame for the lack of female sports coverage on the “gatekeepers,” the traditionally male sports editors who decide which articles are published. Sports editors justify not covering female sports by basing their decisions on “what’s interesting”—namely, not women’s sports. It is widely believed that as more women become sports editors, female sports and female athletes will receive more media coverage (Hardin & Shain, 2005b). Research examining the effect of female journalists on newspaper staffs hasn’t shown a definite trend. A 1997 study found that sports sections with female editors ran higher female sports content than those run by men, but a more recent study found no difference between sports departments run by men or women (Hardin & Shain, 2005b). “Hegemonic masculinity is entrenched in sports media regardless of the gender of the persons making the decisions, writing the stories or taking the photographs” (Hardin & Shain, 2005b, p. 807). A 2008 study had similar findings, noting that sports departments run by men and women didn’t show a significant difference in the amount of coverage devoted to female sports, indicating that “no matter what sex is in charge of the sports section, women’s sports will still take a backseat to men’s in American newspapers” (Everbach, 2007, p. 64).

While some believe that increasing the amount of females in sports departments is critical, others believe that “employment = representation = empowerment is a ‘feminist fallacy’ based on faulty assumptions about gender and power” (Hardin & Shain, 2006, para. 2). A recent study examined the difference between sports departments run by female editors and those run by male editors (Pedersen, Whisenant, & Schneider, 2003). In the study, nine out of 10 articles were written under the supervision of a male sports editor. Female reporters did not write about women’s sports more than male journalists did, and female sports editors did not run more articles about women’s sports than male editors did (Pedersen et al, 2003).
Not all female sports journalists feel a responsibility to write about female sports. Women are sharply divided on the issue (Hardin & Shain, 2005). In the study, 58% of women don’t agree with the idea that adding women in positions of power in sports departments will make a difference, and 44% of woman reporters don’t believe they should be the ones who make a difference (Hardin & Shain, “Winter 2005). Another study found that female writers were more likely to write about women in news stories, and that the opinions and judgments of the reporter were the biggest influence on news content (Armstrong, 2004).

Sports editors have argued that women aren’t well represented in sports media because women don’t read the sports pages, don’t watch sports and aren’t avid sports fans. A study by Scarborough Sports Marketing found that 50 million women follow professional sports. The same study showed that 58% of females above age 18 who are loyal sports fans was 58% in 2002, which was more than double the number recorded in 1998 (Gibbons, 2003). A 2005 study found that 27% of female newspaper readers read the sports section on a regular basis (Hardin, 2005). Koppett (1994) states that women remain a “minority of the dedicated sports audience” because they are “less intensely trained in the special joys of spectating” (p.211). Koppett (1994) also states that this situation is changing because today’s young girls can watch sports on television just as much as their brothers. He believes that it won’t be until 1994’s 20-year-old woman sports fan, who he writes is “not, very often, the daughter of a mother who is a sports fan,” has a daughter who can share her interest in sports with her mother that female versus male fans will start to balance (Koppett, 1994, p. 211).

The amount of female sports fans has grown significantly in recent years, but coverage of women’s sports hasn’t experienced the same increase. Studies of the New York Times and the Indianapolis Star were conducted in 1989 and again in 1999. In 1989, female sports accounted
for 2.2% of the coverage in the *Times* and 2.7% of the *Star*; 10 years later, female sports coverage had only increased to 6.7% for the *Times* and 8.6% for the *Star* (Gibbons, 2003).

*USA Today* general sports columnist Christine Brennan is one of the biggest supporters of women’s sports, but even she admits that the majority of her columns are written about male athletes or men’s sports. During the 2004 Olympic year, 18 of her 72 *USA Today* columns were about female athletes or teams. Brennan (2006) wrote:

> So in a year when topics about women’s sports abounded, I devoted just 25 percent of my columns to women exclusively. I’m guessing that’s higher than any other general sports columnist at a major daily, which says everything we need to know about coverage of women’s sports in the twenty-first century.

(p. 223)

The Columnist

According to Gill (2007), “the rise of the columnist” is considered by some to be the third major change in journalism over the last decade. Researchers argue that columnists and their style of storytelling demonstrate “a shift from reporting to interpreting” (p.128). Gill (2007) wrote, “Views, it is sometimes said, have replaced news. Columnists are not experts or specialists in a particular area of journalism, but generalists, adept at expressing their opinion” (p. 128).

Being a columnist is one of the most coveted jobs in print journalism. “Columnists are the celebrities of the newspaper world,” according to Braden (1993, p. 2). A columnist does not have to follow the traditional journalism ideals of objectivity or fairness, needing only to have an opinion and be able to share it with readers. Political columnist George Will once wrote, “What
distinguishes a valuable columnist is a distinctive way of seeing the social landscape. It is an ability to see what everybody sees, but not quite the way that everybody sees it” (quoted in Braden, 1993, p.2). Will also writes that newspaper readers consistently read a column because they feel familiar with the writer’s personality and general perspective (Braden, 1993).

With the advent of television and radio news outlets, newspapers included less who, what, when and where and started to focus on the why element of a story. Columnists have been very influential under this new style, but few women have had the opportunity to extend their influence as columnists. Most female columnists were originally relegated to the women’s page of the newspaper, and female journalists were rarely allowed to voice their opinions on male-dominated discourse, such as economics, politics, and sports. Fanny Fern, a 19th century columnist, was the highest paid newspaper journalist of her time when she was paid $100 per column by the New York Ledger in 1856. Her column was often satirical, examining issues such as women’s rights, the Civil War, and prostitution. When she died in 1872, her column had been running in the Ledger for 16 years (Braden, 1993). Anne O’Hare McCormick is the owner of several journalism “firsts.” She was the first foreign affairs columnist for the New York Times and the first female named to the Times editorial board. In 1937, she became the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize in journalism (Braden, 1993).

It is generally agreed that women see society differently than men, and women columnists present their views differently than their male counterparts (Braden, 1993). This difference is a valuable asset to the woman columnist, allowing her to tap into the minds of female readers in a way foreign to the male columnist. Susan Stamburg of National Public Radio hopes that women columnists will always retain their female view and “not feel they have to do the news like a man does” (Braden, 1993, p.11). By putting a column written by a woman on a
prominent page in a newspaper, it shows readers that the woman columnist matters and is worth
listening to. There are more female columnists now than ever before, but it’s still an area of
journalism that hasn’t reached gender equality.

The Sports Columnist

Sports occupy an interesting subset of journalism. Some argue that sports departments are
less important than hard news departments while others say the sports section of the newspaper
have traditionally housed some of the best writing in the entire paper. It was written in The New
Yorker in the 1920s that “the quality of writing in the sports pages is, in the large, much
superior—wittier, more emotional, more dramatic and more accurate— to the quality of writing
that flows through news columns” (Poole, 2009, p. 19). Sports columnists are the heart of the
sports page. One column has the ability incite anger, elicit sympathy or sway a reader’s views on
a subject. In the passionate world of sports, columnists have great power.

“Sports writing is the little red caboose behind the powerful steam engine of institutional
news reporting within the Fourth Estate,” according to Sean J. McClaneghan (1997, para. 4).
McClaneghan argues that sports reporting changed forever when television went mainstream,
and since then sports columnists have had to change their way of doing business. Since sports
fans have already seen the game on television, they aren’t coming to their newspaper to find out
what happened; they are coming to read about events from behind the scenes (McClaneghan,
1997). The change went even further with the popularity of the internet and blogging (Poole,
2009). Instead of being renowned narrators of sporting events, sports columnists must now seek
out controversy to ensure readership.

McClaneghan (2006) writes that many readers think a sports columnist has a “dream
job,” when in fact the career is becoming more challenging because of “outside pressures to be
different and entertaining as societal pressures change the newspaper business” (p. 320). McCloneghan (1997) found 85% of columnists consider any pressure they face on the job as their own doing. The routine of a sports columnist revolves around generating column ideas and then chasing down interviews while trying to meet strict morning-cycle deadlines (McCloneghan, 1997). Sports columnist Cathy Harasta (then of the *Dallas Morning News*, said, “The sports section should supply some amusement. Readers expect and deserve some diversion and humor belongs in sports section opinion writing” (McCloneghan, 1997, para. 40).

Very little empirical research exists specifically pertaining to sports columnists, and even less examines female sports columnists or the gendering of sports columns. Most researchers agree that female journalists in general produce slightly different news stories than men. Women tend to delve into the emotional, human elements of a story more than their male coworkers, and the same can be argued with women sportswriters (Gill, 2007). Deborah Macey (2005) analyzed the columns of two female sportswriters during the 2004 Olympics to examine how female columnists use their column to discuss gender issues. She found that the columnists wrote feminist issues such as equal funding and equal participation but also had a tendency to write about female athletes in terms of their significant other or physical appearance. Despite the columnists’ efforts to shine the spotlight on female issues in sports, these columnists simultaneously demeaned female athletes by conforming to the male journalist tradition of writing about women in terms of their looks (Macey, 2005).

Christine Brennan is a general sports columnist for *USA Today* and one of the few female sports columnists at newspapers with national readership. In her memoir *Best Seat in the House* (2006), she writes about the lack of female athletes in the newspapers while she was growing up:
It makes no sense to me why so many reporters won’t cover women’s sports. Newspapers are losing readers by the hundreds of thousands. Wouldn’t it be logical to try and attract new readers through the sports section, which has always been an entry point to the newspaper? And aren’t new sports section readers by definition likely to be women and girls? (p. 221)

Today’s sports columnists are being forced to be more opinionated, more controversial, and more entertaining than ever. The question is, whom are the columnists expressing their opinions about? Do they give female athletes equal space in their columns? Are female sports as “interesting?” And in the end, are female athletes getting the short stick because sports columnists do not think they are important or relevant enough to compete for readership?
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

This research examines the gender-bias of male and female sports columnists at newspapers with either national or local readership. The subject of each column analyzed was categorized by gender, sport, and level.

Research Question 1: Do male and female athletes get equal amount of coverage in newspaper sports columns?

Hypothesis 1: Male athletes receive more coverage than female athletes in newspaper sports columns.

RQ 2: Is the gender of the subject of the sports column related to the gender of the sports columnist?

H 2: Female sports columnists focus their columns on female athletes and women’s sports more than male columnists.

RQ 3: When sports columnists write about men’s sports and women’s sports, do they tend to focus on a certain level of sport for each sex?

H 3a: When columnists write about male sports, it will mainly be at the professional level.

H 3b: When columnists write about female sports, it will mainly be at the Olympic level.

RQ 4: Is there a relationship between circulation numbers of the newspaper and the gender of the sports column subjects in that newspaper?

H 4: Newspapers with small, local circulations will have more sports columns written about female athletes and women’s sports than newspapers with large, national circulations.
CHAPTER 4
METHODOLOGY

Content Analysis

To analyze the subjects of sports columns at daily newspapers around the United States, a content analysis was performed. Ten columnists from nine newspapers with circulations above 200,000 were selected from different regions of the United States. Of the 10 columnists, five were male and five were female. The columns written over the past year (between September 1, 2007 and August 31, 2008) by each journalist were analyzed based on the following criteria: author, gender of author, date of publication, gender of subject, sport of subject, and sporting level of each subject. Circulation numbers were also tabulated separately into three categories: Monday-Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. See Appendix A total of 1,082 columns were analyzed. The columns were read through the digital archives of the respective newspapers.


When determining whether the article had a male or female focus, the columns were categorized into four areas: male, female, other (idea, thing) or both male and female topics. Columns focusing on specific athletes were divided according to the gender of the athlete. If the article was about a sport that is only played by males (ie: football in the National Football League), it was classified as male. Likewise, if the column focused on a female sport such as
synchronized swimming, it was classified as female. Columns about a thing or an idea (ie: human rights in China during the Olympics), it was classified as “other.”

The articles were divided into 30 categories based on the sport played by the subject of the column: baseball, golf, football, basketball, softball, track and field, soccer, swimming, gymnastics, volleyball, archery, horseracing, car racing, dog racing, figure skating, tennis, hockey, wrestling, distance running, fantasy football, table tennis, diving, poker, bowling, martial arts, boxing, broadcasting, and cheerleading. If multiple sports were mentioned in the column, it was coded accordingly. If the column didn’t mention a sport, it was deemed not applicable and coded accordingly.

The sporting levels of the subjects were coded into six categories. Columns about professional athletes or professional sports leagues were categorized as professional. In order to be considered professional, the sport has to have financial compensation for the athletes or winners. Columns about Olympic athletes and sports played at the Olympics were classified as Olympic. Columns about college athletics were categorized as collegiate. All other levels, including youth leagues, high schools recreational sports, were classified as amateur. If the column spoke generally and applied to all levels of sport, it was categorized accordingly. If the column didn’t mention a specific sporting level (the subject was an idea or thing), it was labeled “not applicable.”

The newspaper circulation totals were taken from numbers obtained by Audit Bureau of Circulations and covered a six-month period ending on September 30, 2008. The circulations were divided into three categories: Monday-Friday circulation, Saturday circulation and Sunday circulation. The Monday-Friday circulation was coded into two categories: newspapers with local readership (1) and newspapers with national readership (2). The five papers categorized as
local readership had circulations lower than 500,000. The four newspapers categorized as national readership had circulations above 500,000. One of the newspapers used in the content analysis, USA Today, did not have Saturday or Sunday circulations, so only the Monday-Friday numbers were used when comparing the five newspapers.

The data was analyzed by SPSS. Descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations tables were used to determine the relationship between the variables. Chi-square tests were used to compare two categories of the total data and summarize the relationship between the gender of the columnist and the gender of the subject, as well as the relationship between newspaper circulation and gender of the subject. The same test was used to discover what levels of sport were written about in relation to gender of column subject.

Personal Interviews

Of the 10 columnists analyzed during the content analysis, six participated in an in-depth interview. The interviews were intended to allow the columnists to explain their thought process in choosing topics, their feelings on coverage of women’s sports and their perceptions on their roles as sports writers. This qualitative method allowed description of the columnists’ motivations and decision-making. The six columnists were Christine Brennan of USA Today, Shannon Owens of the Orlando Sentinel, Jennifer Floyd Engel of the Fort Worth Star Telegram, Bill Plaschke of the Los Angeles Times, Harvey Araton of the New York Times, and Martin Fennelly of the Tampa Tribune. Each columnist was asked to state his/her age and give his/her years of experience in the journalism business, as well as his/her years of experience as a sports columnist. The columnists were each asked the same open-ended questions, which can be found in Appendix B. The questions asked related to the findings of the content analysis and the future of women’s sports coverage. Each columnist was given the option to answer the questions
through a phone interview or by e-mail. Five of the interviews were conducted over the phone.

Jennifer Floyd Engel was the only columnist who answered the questions in e-mail format.
CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Content Analysis

In total, 1,082 columns by 10 different columnists (five male, five female) from nine different newspapers in the United States were analyzed. The total includes all columns written by the 10 journalists between September 1, 2007 and August 31, 2008. This time period was selected because it included the 2008 Beijing Olympics, an event of particular interest to sports columnists. Women’s sports historically get more attention during Olympic years, a factor that should be considered when analyzing the results of the data.

Research Question 1: Do male and female athletes get equal amount of coverage in newspaper sports columns? The hypothesis was that male athletes and male teams receive more coverage in newspaper sports columns than women athletes or women’s sports. Of the 1,082 columns included in the analysis, 84.4% of the columns were focused on male athletes or men’s sports and 9% were focused on female athletes or women’s sports (Figure 1). Columns that were written about ideas or things and could not classified as a certain gender accounted for 4.3% of the total columns written, and columns about both male and female athletes made up 2.3% of the total columns.

The columns were also classified by sport of the subject, which indicated further gender bias. Of the 1,082 columns, 31.2% were written about football, which is a sport played almost exclusively by male athletes (Table 1). The second most popular sport was basketball (both men’s and women’s), which accounted for 19% of the total columns. The columnists wrote about baseball 18.6% of the time. The baseball total did not include the female version of baseball, softball, which was the focus of sports columns less than one percent of the time.
Figure 1. Frequency of subject gender in newspaper sports columns.

Rounding out the top five sports were hockey (male only) with 7.4% of the total columns and swimming, with 4.2% of the columns. The unusually high popularity of swimming can be attributed to the Olympics and the historic achievements of American swimmer Michael Phelps. It is likely that an analysis of a non-Olympic year would see a significant decrease in the amount of sports columns written about swimming.

Male athletes and sports received an overwhelming majority of the space in newspaper sports columns. Therefore, Hypothesis1 was supported.

RQ2: Is the gender of the subject of the sports column related to the gender of the sports columnists? The researcher hypothesized that women columnists write more columns about women’s sports and female athletes than male columnists. As stated in the literature review, existing research is divided on whether female sports journalists are more likely to write about female sports than male journalists. A chi-square test was performed to compare the columnist gender with the subject gender of the columnist’s articles. This research found columnist gender
Table 1

*Frequency of Sport*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple sports mentioned</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t mention specific sport</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car Racing</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track &amp; Field</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnastics</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcasting</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horseracing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marathon Running</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Softball</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total (N = 1,082)         | 1,082     | 100     |

Note. Volleyball, wrestling, and figure skating all totaled 0.3% (3 articles each). Boxing was 0.2% (2 articles). Table tennis, diving, martial arts, cheerleading, and archery were each 0.1% (1 article each).
to be a significant indicator of the gender of the column subject, $\chi^2 (3, N=1,082) = 62.751$, $p < .001$. Male columnists wrote about male athletes and sports 91.7% of the time, while female columnists wrote about male sports and athletes only 75.2% of the time (Table 2).

Table 2

Column Subject Gender by Columnist Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column Subject Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>91.7% (553)</td>
<td>75.2% (360)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6.0% (36)</td>
<td>12.7% (61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Thing/Idea)</td>
<td>2.0% (12)</td>
<td>7.3% (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male/Female</td>
<td>.3% (2)</td>
<td>4.8% (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total ($N = 1,082$)</td>
<td>100% (603)</td>
<td>100% (479)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 (3, N = 1,082) = 62.751, p < .001$

Male columnists focused their columns on female sports 6% of the time while female columnists wrote about women 12.7% of the time. Male columnists wrote about ideas or things that couldn’t be gendered 2% of the time compared to female columnists, who wrote about ideas or things 7.3% of the time. Columns about both male and female athletes accounted for less than one percent of the male columnists’ articles and 4.8% of the female columnists’ work.

Female columnists wrote about female athletes and women’s sports significantly more than male columnists. Therefore, $H_2$ was supported.
RQ3: When sports columnists write about men’s sports and women’s sports, do they tend to focus on a certain level of sport for each sex? H3a predicted that the majority of columns written about female athletes and sports would be focused on the Olympic level. It should be considered that the total of sports column space devoted to female athletes would likely be even less if the researched time period had not been an Olympic year. A chi-square test was performed to compare the subject gender to the subject’s playing level in the 991 columns in the content analysis (Table 3).

The number of total columns dropped from 1,082 to 991 because columns about things/ideas and columns with both males and female subjects were eliminated for this cross tabulation. Columns not specifying a certain level of play were also removed for this analysis.

The results indicated a significant difference in the level of sport between the subject genders $\chi^2 (3, N=991)= 173.75, p<.001$. It should be acknowledged that one of the cells had an

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column Subject Playing Level</th>
<th>Columnist Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td></td>
<td>80% (721)</td>
<td>20% (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olympics</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.8% (70)</td>
<td>32.2% (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amateur</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.4% (13)</td>
<td>14.4% (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collegiate</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.8% (97)</td>
<td>33.3% (30)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total ($N = 991$) 100% (901) 100% (90) $\chi^2 (3, N=991)= 173.75, p<.001$
expected count less than five. When the column subject gender was male, the level of play was professional 80% of the time. Male athletes were written about in the Olympic context 7.8% of the time and at the collegiate level 10.8% of the time. When mentioning female athletes in sports columns, the most popular level of play was collegiate (33.3%), followed closely by Olympic (32.2%). Of the columns devoted to female athletes, only 20% focused on professional women’s sports. It is interesting to note that female athletes were written about at the amateur level ten times more than male athletes (14.4% for females and 1.4% for males).

Sports columnists devoted 80% of their columns about male athletes and sport to the professional level. Therefore, $H_{3a}$ was supported. Although a significant amount of the columns focusing on females were at the Olympic level (32.2%), it was beaten out slightly by women’s sports at the collegiate level (33.3%). Therefore, $H_{3b}$ was not supported.

Table 4

*Column Subject Gender by Newspaper Circulation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column Subject Gender</th>
<th>Newspaper Circulation (Monday-Friday)</th>
<th>Low Circulation</th>
<th>High Circulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>87.6% (594)</td>
<td>79.0% (319)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.1% (48)</td>
<td>12.1% (49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Thing/Idea)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.5% (17)</td>
<td>7.4% (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male/Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.8% (19)</td>
<td>1.5% (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total ($N = 1,082$)</td>
<td></td>
<td>100% (678)</td>
<td>100% (404)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 (3, N=1,082) = 25.443, p<.001$

Note: Low Circulation = less than 500,000; High Circulation = more than 500,000
RQ4: Is there a relationship between circulation numbers of the newspaper and the gender of the sports column subjects in that newspaper? H₄ states that newspapers with smaller, local readerships would give more attention to female sports and athletes than larger newspapers with national readership (Table 4). The newspapers considered to be large, national readerships had circulation numbers above 500,000 (USA Today, New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Washington Post). The newspapers considered to have smaller, local readerships had circulation numbers under 500,000 (Long Island Newsday, Dallas Morning News, Orlando Sentinel, Fort Worth Star Telegram, Tampa Tribune).

A chi-square test was performed to compare the circulation numbers to the subject gender of the columns, and the results $\chi^2 (3, N=1,082)= 25.443, p<.001$ were significant. One cell had an expected count less than 5. Columnists writing for newspapers with larger, national readerships wrote about men’s sports 79% of the time and women’s sports 12.1% of the time. The rest of their total columns were divided between things/ideas (7.4%) and both male and female subjects (1.5%). Columnists working for newspapers with smaller, local readerships devoted 87.6% of their columns to men’s sports and 7.1% to female sports. Columns focusing on things/ideas accounted for 2.5% and those about both male and female sports accounted for 2.8% of the total columns at the smaller-circulation newspapers.

Sports columnists employed by newspapers with larger, national readerships gave more attention to female sports and athletes than columnists working at smaller, local papers. Therefore, $H₄$ was not supported.

Personal Interviews

After the results of the quantitative portion of the study were compiled, six of the columnists participated in interviews conducted over the phone or by e-mail. The interviews
were intended to gain further in-depth knowledge of the subject, to provide insight into the columnists’ writing process and to provide qualitative description of the columnists’ work. Questions were developed based on the findings of the content analysis, and each columnist was asked to answer the same questions. The list of questions can be found in Appendix B on page 68.

Three male columnists and three female columnists consented to interviews. The columnists were also asked to identify their age, years of experience in sports journalism and years of experience as a sports columnist. The average age of the columnists interviewed was 45.2 years old. The average age of the male columnists was 52.6 while the average age of the female columnists was 37.6. The average years of experience in sports journalism for the columnists was 22.8. Broken down by gender, the average years of experience in sports journalism was 29.8 years for males and 15.7 years for females. The average amount of years each columnist had been a sports columnist was 11.5 years. The male columnists average out to 17 years as sports columnists while the females averaged only 6 years of experience as a sports columnist.

The columnists agreed to be named in this study. They are: Christine Brennan of USA Today, Harvey Araton of the New York Times, Jennifer Floyd Engel of the Fort Worth Star Telegram, Bill Plaschke of the Los Angeles Times, Shannon Owens of the Orlando Sentinel and Martin Fennelly of the Tampa Tribune.

During the interviews, the columnists were informed that the content analysis showed that 84.4% of sports columns are written about male athletes or men’s sports while only 9% focused on female athletes or women’s sports. Some of the columnists expressed surprise that women’s sports even get 9% of the space. “I’m surprised [the amount of coverage devoted to
male sports] isn’t higher,” Brennan remarked, attributing it to the fact that the study was conducted during an Olympic year. “I’m heartened by the fact that it’s 85 percent.”

All of the columnists, male and female, agreed that men’s sports dominate the landscape of sportswriting. “It’s only sports like tennis and Olympic sports where women have achieved equity,” Araton said. “A match between the Williams sisters would be considered as important as Roger Federer against anyone.” Araton went on to explain that men’s sports get the most television coverage, and there is pressure on columnists from the editors to write about the event with the highest television ratings because that is an indicator of popularity. “Sports writers are conditioned to write about what’s newsworthy and popular as opposed to what’s fair,” Araton said. Brennan agreed: “Mainstream sports media by and large ignores women’s sports. Not interested, doesn’t care, doesn’t want to spend the time, doesn’t have the money to spend the time.”

The idea of reader interest was a theme that came up more than once in the columnist interviews. “The reason [there isn’t more coverage of women’s sports] is strictly interest,” said Plaschke. “I’ll write a women’s sports column and get zero response. It’s hard to keep doing that time and time again.” Floyd Engel agreed that audiences don’t seem to be interested in women’s sports. “The job of the columnist is to opine about the stuff people are talking about or give opinions that get people talking. The reality is I’d guess 95 percent of the time that is men’s sports.”

Fennelly acknowledged that he usually writes about men’s sports because it is what he thinks of first. “For me to write about a woman now, it’s usually something national, something extraordinary… I’ve written about women dying. I’ve written about women battling diseases. There seems to have to be something extraordinary if we write about women.”
“Some of the stories I’m most proud of are about women,” Fennelly said. “I’m aware that I don’t write about them as much as men, and I think there is a certain amount of guilt to go along with it.”

The columnists were asked who bears the most responsibility for the lack of women’s sports coverage. Is it the readers, the sports columnists and writers, the editors, or the newspaper publishers? The columnists were hesitant to peg the blame to one group of people, but acknowledged that it should probably be divided among all of the elements. Brennan put the responsibility on the columnists. “Most columnists get to choose [a topic], and it’s simply that we cover what we’re interested in,” she said. “The columnists drive the bus, and in this case most columnists are driven by men’s sports.”

Owens said she doesn’t get as much response to her columns about women’s sports, but she also thinks the editors play a big role. “I do think if more editors took a proactive role in setting the agenda, making this more important, I think they could influence that,” Owens said. “A lot of [sports editors] just choose not to.” Plaschke remembered his struggle to get a column about a high school softball team into the paper during the Los Angeles Lakers’ playoff run. The softball team “had lost a bunch of games in a row, and they had no funding and a terrible field … it took me a week and a half to get them to run it. They just wanted Lakers everyday. When it finally ran, it got a ton of e-mail, but those stories that really touch readers involving women’s sports are rare. They have to really touch on the human experience.”

The overriding theme from the columnist interviews was that the readers steer the ship when it comes to sports column subjects. Floyd Engel said she caters to her readers, saying, “This is not about sexism or anything other than what readers are interested in. Trust me, columnists are egotistical. We like to write stuff that will have people talking, and the fact is that
is not women’s sports.” Plaschke’s views were similar. “I think the columnists will go anywhere for a good story. Look at our coverage of the Olympics—we do as many women’s sports as men’s at the Olympics. I love a good story, and my boss loves a good story. I think [the lack of coverage comes from] the readers first, and the editors responding to the readers.” Fennelly said that reader response definitely has an effect. “I find myself defending why I write about women,” Fennelly said. “I wrote a column about Title IX that talked about my daughter, and I remember getting anti-Title IX e-mails.”

When asked if the increase in female sports participation should affect media coverage of women’s sports, the majority of the columnists agreed that maybe it should, but it usually doesn’t. The columnists cited sports like soccer and golf, which have high participation levels but low amounts of media coverage. “It’s not a gender thing,” Araton argued. “There are a lot of sports that involve men that don’t generate enough coverage. It’s all based on the notion that not enough people care.”

Plaschke talked about the difference between the sports section and the rest of the newspaper. “People root for the sports section, and that’s a passion, so we have an obligation to react to the readers’ passions and we go by what they are passionate about,” Plaschke reasoned. “What they are passionate about is not necessarily what they play.” Floyd Engel came to the same conclusion: “The fact that girls are playing softball does not mean softball deserves coverage.”

Brennan said that she thinks female sports participation should influence coverage, but she doesn’t think it will. She thinks readers somehow separate the idea of females playing sports from the idea of sports coverage. “Our nation has completely embraced the notion of girls and women playing sports, and that is a huge accomplishment-- HUGE!” she said. “Participation is
huge, but it hasn’t translated yet, and maybe never will, to the actual coverage of it and watching it on a mass level.” Along the same lines, Owens said she thinks the way female athletes are viewed affects the sports coverage. “We as a society like girls playing sports, but we don’t like women playing sports. Something happens in the marketing of an athlete when they are still innocent and amateurs. I think they are viewed completely differently once they leave college.”

The one area where the columnists do believe participation levels should affect coverage is in high school sports. Floyd Engel, Owens and Fennelly all said they think the coverage of women’s sports is proportionate on the high school level as a result of the participation numbers. It is unknown whether they are correct in this assumption.

When the columnists were asked if the increasing number of women reading the sports section of the newspaper had any effect on their choice of column topics, nearly all of them said no. Plaschke said it does influence his choices, but not necessarily in a way that results in more coverage of women’s sports. “It affects my thinking because women overwhelmingly don’t like women’s sports. The diehard women sports fans don’t follow women’s sports,” Plaschke explained. “They get mad at us for thinking they want to read about women’s sports.” Floyd Engel says that she tries not to give readers a gender when she writes. “When I sit down to write a column, I imagine I am sitting at a bar, talking to my friend who knows a lot about sports, and I am telling them exactly what is on my mind that day,” Floyd Engel said.

Fennelly said the only woman he takes into account when he is writing is his wife, a former journalist herself. He wonders, “What would she think about this story?” Brennan said readership studies wouldn’t affect her choices because she doesn’t necessarily think about the readers when making decisions. She chooses to write what is interesting and topical. She also acknowledged that breaking news can easily influence a column topic, remembering when she
planned to write about Olympic softball and then the Rick Pitino/Louisville basketball scandal hit the headlines. She changed her subject to Pitino because it was newsworthy.

Owens said she already focuses on a broad audience, not just the committed sports fan. She said that it’s important to address a broad range of topics so that men and women alike will find something to read, but she said that starts at the top when hiring columnists. “I think it’s important to have such a broad diversity on a sports staff, including diversity and experience, not just race and gender. Your column is an extension of your thoughts,” Owens said. “You can’t afford to be limited in your thinking.”

Plaschke said he suspects women follow women’s sports more than men’s only once every four years: during the Olympics. “I think that it is discriminatory to women to say they need to like women’s sports. They’re not bound by it. They like what they like,” he said. “That is the biggest myth today in sports coverage, that not covering women’s sports is a disservice to women readers.”

The columnists agreed that female columnists shouldn’t bear more responsibility for covering women’s sports than male columnists, although some admitted that it sometimes plays out that way. “Journalists are journalists,” Araton said. “Good journalists should go to where the story is. Sometimes it ought to be just a story you think is worth telling.” While he said both male and female columnists should bear the responsibility, he also said he thinks women sports columnists are more likely to be seen at a women’s sporting event than male columnists. “I can tell you that a lot of male sports columnists want nothing to do with women’s sports,” Araton said. “They are thick headed and old-fashioned, and they don’t think [women’s sports] are important enough.”
Owens doesn’t think it’s fair to say that because a columnist is female, she should write about women’s sports. She likened it to her editors asking her to cover African American athletes because she is African American. Araton brought up the race argument as well, comparing asking female journalists to only cover women’s sports to saying that white journalists should have a bigger interest in white athletes. Brennan said she has encountered this problem on the job and says she often asks her editors if a man can write about [a women’s sporting event] rather than a woman. “I’m very disheartened when our editors say, well, the women will cover it,” Brennan said. “I believe men should cover women’s sports and I encourage them to do so.”

Floyd Engel said it’s not the responsibility of the male or female columnist to cover women’s sports. “The job of a reporter/columnist/editor is to put out the best sports section possible and give their readers the content they desire,” she said. “There is no Title IX in journalism.”

When asked if having more women in the newsroom would make a difference in women’s sports coverage, the columnists were divided. Plaschke said that more women are needed in the newsroom to bring different perspectives, but he didn’t think it would affect judgment. Araton said that at one point, really good strides were being made in the print media with regard to hiring more women. He remembered having six or seven female reporters out of a staff of 11 or 12 at the Torino Winter Olympics in 2006. He said the dire economic situation newspapers are currently facing has halted progress in that area. “In times when newspapers are fighting for survival, the high mindedness tends to disappear a lot,” Araton said. “You’ll see numbers of minorities and women go down simply because newspapers feel like they don’t have the ability to pay as much attention to those kinds of issues when they are fighting for survival.
When you get in a situation like that, you wind up thinking less about the right thing to do and more about what they have to do to survive.”

Brennan agreed that the current economic climate is not helping bring more women into the newsroom. “I think it would be great to have more women, but in this economy, that isn’t happening. Having said that, I would hope women would be more open minded toward women’s sports, but I would also hope men would be,” Brennan said. “I would hope gender wouldn’t matter. It should be about important issues, important stories, important news events. I would hope that would include women’s sports.”

Fennelly said that having more women in the newsroom might make a difference in coverage, but only if the person at the top was committed to making a difference in covering women’s sports. He argued that coverage is very event-driven, and men’s sporting events are more popular. “An average male athlete on the [Tampa Bay Buccaneers] will get written about, but an average female athlete? Not happening,” Fennelly said. When other columnists were asked if more women in management at newspapers would make a difference, some believed it would and some believed it wouldn’t. Plaschke said that even at the management level, the responsibility is to the reader. “The reader tells us what we do and what we don’t do,” Plaschke reasoned. “Doesn’t matter who the boss is, it’s all about the reader.”

Floyd Engel said her sports editor is a woman, and it would be disappointing if her editor took it upon herself to increase coverage of women’s sports. On the other side of the coin, Owens said that more women in newspaper management would definitely make a difference, saying that it would “make a difference in terms of the perspective of how we view our coverage of women’s sports.” Her newspaper, the Orlando Sentinel, has several women writers on the sports staff but doesn’t have any women in management in the sports department.
Considering the challenges facing newspapers, the columnists were asked if they could see any reforms taking place regarding the coverage of women’s sports in the near future. The majority was not very optimistic. “It’s a climate of uncertainty, and I think that makes it hard to move in any one direction,” Fennelly said. “That other stuff is on the backburner.” Floyd Engel said layoffs and cutbacks have resulted in fewer people and fewer resources to devote to the nonessential coverage areas, noting, “if anything, this will hurt women’s sports.” Plaschke said sports writers and columnists must work really hard during this rough patch for newspapers to make sure they don’t write less about women’s sports. “We are under more strain than ever because we have been losing readers,” Plaschke said. “We have to give them what they want, and they don’t want women’s sports. [Women’s sports] could disappear.”

The columnists were asked to predict the future of women’s sports coverage. Some were more optimistic than others, and several pointed to opportunities the Internet presents for women’s sports. Owens predicted that because of the Internet, coverage will become more itemized and divided into niche sports. She predicts more blogs and websites that cover specific niches, which she thinks presents a positive opportunity for women’s sports. “Now, instead of putting women’s softball head to head against baseball, you are able to market it to its niche audience. Then we can avoid unfair comparisons.” Araton had similar ideas, predicting more targeted websites for women’s sports. “I think that the growth of the Internet is allowing people to go look for different things they are interested in, and there will be less of a reliance on traditional newspapers than there was in the past.”

Araton was hopeful that women’s sports coverage would be able to increase without dealing with the problem of having a space crunch like newspapers are experiencing. “If I were involved in the women’s sports business, I would be going that direction and not trying to draw
the coverage of newspapers, which traditionally have been pressed for space and are now more pressed for space than ever,” Araton said. “In the coming years there is going to be a substantial opportunity for women in sports to actually get more attention because the Internet is a more democratic institution [than print media] because there are no space limitations.” Fennelly agreed that women’s sports could benefit from not fighting for space in print and heading online, instead. “There’s a lot of space on the Internet, last time I checked. “

Plaschke and Floyd Engel were less optimistic about future coverage of women’s sports. Women’s sports coverage “is going to decrease unless we can find a way to write about it because women are playing it and we think it’s our duty,” Plaschke said. “More and more we have to bow to the general population.” He said that in past eras of newspaper writing, columnists had more freedom and could write whatever they want because newspapers were a monopoly. He said that the Internet has created a situation where “now everyone is writing.”

“Mark it down, in 20 years, somebody will write a paper on why blogs and new media do not cover women’s sports. The problem is not the medium. It is that there is hardly any interest from fans,” Floyd Engel said.

Brennan said a road to change would have to be paved by the readers, and women need to speak out about the lack of coverage. “I’m stunned that moms and dads and women who played sports are not speaking out,” Brennan said. “I’m stunned they aren’t demanding more coverage. If the sense out there is that no one cares about it, then you know what? I have to throw my hands up and say, where are the fans?

“Why are women’s sports fans so uninterested? That really is the crux of the issue.”
The purpose of this study was to examine the gendering of newspaper sports columns and examine whether columnist gender or circulation size was related to the gender of the column subject. The findings clearly show that gender bias permeates the entire sports section of the newspaper, including the sports columns. The overwhelming majority of sports columns written today—by both male and female journalists—are focused on the athletic pursuits of males. Men’s sports accounted for 84.4% of the columns written over a full calendar year. Women’s sports and female athletes were the focus of sports columns only 9% of the time, even though the year of the study included the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Women’s sports gain considerable popularity during the Olympics, and it is likely that the number of columns devoted to women’s sports and female athletes would be lower if the analysis were conducted during a non-Olympic year.

This obvious inequality supports the findings by previous researchers that women are greatly underrepresented in sports coverage and supports the theory that hegemonic masculinity plays a role in the sports department. With nearly 84.4% of sports columns written about male athletes or men’s sports, and only 9% devoted to women’s sports, women’s sports continue to be pushed aside. The hegemony is obvious—men’s sports have all the power. They have more television, radio, and print media coverage, and the media are perpetuating the dominance of men’s sports over women’s. As long as sports columnists continue to devote only 9% of their commentaries to female athletes and women’s sports, these sports will continue to be considered less important.

Most of the sports columnists interviewed in this study said they believed that readers have very little interest in women’s sports. Without reader interest, they reasoned, why should
we write about them? “If the sense out there is that no one cares about it, then you know what? I have to throw my hands up and say, where are the fans?” Christine Brennan of USA Today said. It involves the idea of agenda setting. The lack of reader interest is a valid concern, but the lack of interest in women’s sports could be attributed to a lack of media coverage of women’s sporting events. If the media do not treat women’s sports as important enough to be given space in the newspapers, it may cause the readers to be less interested.

Since Title IX was passed in 1972, the numbers of women competing in sports has increased exponentially, but coverage of women’s sports hasn’t increased with nearly the same velocity. It takes media coverage and analysis to develop a strong fan base in any sport, and women’s sports are no different. Without fair media coverage, reader interest can’t be developed. Without reader interest, columnists will not feel compelled to write about these sports. Without columnists commenting on women’s sports and helping readers develop opinions and passions for the sport, readers will continue to be disinterested. It’s possible that coverage of women’s sports is suffering from a vicious cycle that encourages reader disinterest and continues to reinforce hegemonic masculinity in the sports pages.

The results of the study also show that female sports columnists write about women’s sports and female athletes more than twice as much as male columnists. The women columnists in the study dedicated 12.7% of their columns to women’s sports and female athletes while male columnists only wrote about women’s sports % of the time. Past research has documented that some women columnists overcompensate for their gender by writing about men’s sports even more than male columnists do in an effort to prove that they aren’t biased toward women, but this study doesn’t reinforce those findings. Brennan, Harvey Araton (New York Times), Jennifer Floyd Engel (Fort Worth Star Telegram), Bill Plaschke (Los Angeles Times), Shannon Owens
(Orlando Sentinel) and Martin Fennelly (Tampa Tribune) all agreed that female columnists shouldn’t bear more responsibility for covering women’s sports, however. As Plaschke said, “That pigeonholes them.” Despite the fact that the columnists agree that both male and female columnists should be equally responsible for covering women’s sports, the results of the content analysis show that women are much more likely to be the ones covering the female sporting events.

Why are women more likely to devote coverage to women’s sports? Is it because they feel more sympathy toward the cause of the female athlete, or is it because editors are assigning them to write about these sports because they are women? “I’m always saying to USA Today, can we have a man write about this?” Brennan said. “I’m very disheartened when our editors say, well, the women will cover it.” The fact that some sports editors like to assign women columnists to women’s sports events is a sign of lack of progress for both female athletes and female journalists. As Owens noted, saying female columnists should bear more responsibility to writing about women’s sports events is like saying that she should bear more responsibility for writing about African American athletes because she is African American. Or as Araton said, “It’s like saying that white journalists should have a bigger interest in white athletes.” However you phrase it, it’s unfair.

Araton said “a lot of male columnists want nothing to do with women’s sports. They are thick headed and old fashioned, and they don’t think [women’s sports] are important enough.” These opinions and comments by sports columnists, who are part of the decision making process everyday, are a sign that women’s sports are far from equal to men’s sports in the eyes of sports editors and sports columnists. Araton says that in an ideal world, journalists should gravitate
toward good stories regardless of the subject’s gender. Clearly, the sports journalism world is not ideal.

Newspapers across the country have been struggling to remain afloat during an economic downturn and an increasing popularity of online news. Because of these challenges, many of the sports columnists interviewed were not optimistic about the future of women’s sports coverage. As space in the sports page becomes an even greater commodity, columnists fear that women’s sports could disappear from the sports section altogether. “We really have to work hard to make sure we don’t write less about women,” Plaschke said. “We have to fight even more now because we are under more strain than ever because we have been losing readers.” The columnists assert that sports editors and publishers have to make a concentrated effort to cover women’s sports or women’s sports are in very real danger of receiving no print newspaper coverage whatsoever. “The layoffs and cutbacks mean less people and less resources to devote to nonessential coverage areas.” Floyd Engel said. “If anything, this will hurt the coverage of women’s sports.”

While most columnists agreed that the future is bleak for print media coverage of women’s sports, many saw hope in the Internet as a new place for fans of women’s sports to get their news. Without the space limitations facing newspapers, women’s sports could flourish through online coverage. Some columnists predicted that women’s sports will develop their own niche websites to promote their leagues and will find success through that business model. “I think there will be more blogs and websites that cover specific niches. I think sports coverage will become more isolated,” Owens said. “Now instead of putting women’s softball head to head against baseball, you are able to just market it to its niche audience. Then we can avoid unfair comparisons.”
Print columnists should not be let off the hook for covering women’s sports, however. As long as print newspapers still exist, women should advocate for coverage. The columnists said they receive very little feedback from readers when they do write about women’s sports, and that they don’t receive e-mails or letters asking for more coverage, either. Brennan said she is “stunned” that women’s sports fans aren’t demanding more coverage. She’s right: women’s sports fans must advocate for coverage. If they do not ask for change, change will not happen. It’s as simple as writing an email or letter asking a sports columnist or editor to consider more coverage of women’s sports. If fans were to unite and clamor for fair coverage of women’s sports, it would be hard for columnists and editors to ignore. The job of the sports section is, as Floyd Engel said, to “give their readers the content they desire.” If the readers advocate for women’s sports and make it clear they want more coverage, the editors and columnists would be hard pressed to ignore them.

Sports columns are very popular with newspaper readers, and the opinions related by the columnists can greatly shape the minds of the audience. The fact that sports columnists devote so little space to female sports is discouraging and demonstrates the lack of progress being made toward the equitable treatment of male and female athletes. By choosing not to bring attention to female athletes and women’s sports in their columns, sports columnists are giving females second-rate status.

Suggestions for Future Research

One of the most interesting points the columnists brought up in their interviews was that they believe coverage of women’s sports is fairly equitable on the high school level. Research could be undertaken to see if this is true. It’s possible that the discrepancy between the coverage
of high school boys sports and high school girls sports may not be as big as in the professional ranks, but it would be interesting to know exact numbers.

With many of the columnists pointing toward the Internet as a future haven for women’s sports coverage, research could be done to see how much online space is devoted to female athletes versus male athletes. Most newspapers have websites where they post extra coverage of sporting events they couldn’t fit into their print editions. Are any of these extra stories about women’s sports, or does the same pattern of hegemonic masculinity continue into the online realm? Aside from newspapers, how much space on a website like ESPN.com is devoted to women’s sports? Has there been an increase in blogs focused on women’s sports? A study could be undertaken to determine the amount of for-profit websites like LonestarVolleyball.com, a website dedicated to covering girl’s high school and club volleyball in Texas, or WNBA.com, the website for the Women’s National Basketball Association. It would be an interesting measure of the potential the Internet holds for women’s sports coverage.

Conclusion and recommendations

Hegemonic masculinity is a traditional, albeit outdated, viewpoint that won’t go away overnight. For sports departments, the first step is admitting the problem. Sports editors need to acknowledge the gender inequity and begin taking steps toward fixing the problem. Women reporters should not only be hired but should be allowed to occupy positions of power within the department so the feminine voice can be heard. A 2008 study showed that 94% of sports editors are men, and 93% of sports columnists are men (Lapchick). Editors should also hold their columnists accountable for improving the gender distribution of their column subject selections. Readers should do their part to indicate that coverage of women’s sports is important to them. If the majority of people in the sports journalism take small steps toward equality, the impact could
be widespread. However, the current economic situation facing most newspapers makes this unlikely to happen.

Whether online or in print, sports journalism is a powerful enterprise. Sports columnists have the power to shape the opinions of sports fans with their perspectives on what is happening in the world of sports. If sports reporters and columnists do not put an emphasis on covering women’s sports, very little progress will be made toward gender equity in sports journalism. As with any solving any problem, there have to be changes made. The opportunities are there for sports journalists to make changes, but it remains to be scene if they will. This research only give a view of the current culture in sports journalism and in sports column writing, which is that women’s sports are not even close to being on par with men’s. The future is impossible to predict, but the results on this study indicates that there is a long road ahead in the quest for gender equality in sports media.
APPENDIX A

CONTENT ANALYSIS CODING SHEET
Columnist:
1 = Dave Anderson
2 = Tim Cowlishaw
3 = Harvey Araton
4 = Martin Fennelly
5 = Bill Plaschke
6 = Christine Brennan
7 = Sally Jenkins
8 = Shannon Owens
9 = Jennifer Floyd Engel
10 = Barbara Barker

Sex of Columnist:
1 = Male   2 = Female

Year: 2007, 2008

Month: 01 – 12

Date: 01 – 31

Sex of Subject:
1 = Male   2 = Female
3 = Other (Anything that cannot be classified as a gender, such as an idea)
4 = Mentions both male and female athletes

Sport of Subject:
1 = Baseball
2 = Golf
3 = Football
4 = Basketball
5 = Softball
6 = Track & Field
7 = Soccer
8 = Swimming
9 = Gymnastics
10 = Volleyball
11 = Archery
12 = Horseracing
13 = Car racing
14 = Dog Racing
15 = Figure Skating
16 = Tennis
17 = Hockey
18 = Wrestling
19 = Marathon running
20 = Fantasy Football
21 = Table Tennis
22 = Diving
23 = Poker
24 = Bowling
25 = Martial Arts
26 = Boxing
27 = Broadcasting
28 = Cheerleading
29 = Multiple sports mentioned
99 = Not Applicable (does not mention a specific sport)

**Playing Level of Subject:**
1 = Professional
2 = Olympic
3 = Amateur
4 = Collegiate sports
5 = All levels of competition; speaks generally
9 = Not Applicable (Does not mention a specific sport or level)

**Circulation (Monday through Friday):**
1 = Low circulation, local circulations below 500,000 (*Dallas Morning News, Tampa Tribune, Orlando Sentinel, Long Island Newsday, Fort Worth Star Telegram*)
2 = High circulation, national circulations above 500,000 (*USA Today, New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times*)
APPENDIX B

PERSONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE
1. Name
2. Newspaper
3. Age
4. Gender
5. Years in sports journalism
6. Years as sports columnist

7. I recently completed a study in which I found 84.4 percent of sports columns are written about male athletes and men’s sports. Why do you think this is the case?

8. Which of the following has the biggest influence on the lack of women’s sports coverage: readers, sports columnists and writers, editors, newspaper publishers/owners? Why is that the case?

9. Studies show that women’s sports participation is higher than it has ever been. How should that affect media coverage of female athletes and women’s sports?

10. Studies show that significant numbers of women read sports sections. How does that affect your column topics?

11. How could coverage of women’s sports and female athletes be increased?

12. Whose responsibility is it to cover women’s sports and female athletes?
   a. Should women bear more responsibility for this than men?
   b. Would having more women in the newsroom make a difference?
   c. Would having more women in management positions make a difference?

13. In this time of layoffs and cutting back in the newspaper industry, is there a chance reforms will take place? Why or why not?

14. What is likely to happen in the future as far as coverage of female athletes and women’s sports? (e.g. will newspapers ever change or will it be the venue for blogs and other forms of new media?)

15. What sorts of solutions would you suggest to increase coverage of women’s sports?
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