

Why Communication and Sport Matters

I don't believe anyone could argue against the fact that sports bring people together. Whether one enjoys them or not, hundreds, thousands, and even millions of people are brought together by sporting events. Most notable within American culture would be the Super Bowl, which brought in an estimated 111.5 million viewers this past year during Super Bowl XLVIII, Seattle Seahawks vs. Denver Broncos, according to the International Business Times (Riccobono). Fox News reported the same numbers, indicating that for the fourth time in five years, the Super Bowl set the record for the most-watched television event in U.S. history (Associated Press). Quoted in the same article, is Fox Sports' current Executive Vice President for programming and research, Bill Wanger, who states, "big-event television is a great way for people to have a communal event, to talk about it socially and to talk about it as a group[....] You see that in the Super Bowl numbers of the past four or five years. They've just gone up to a different level" (Associated Press).

Sports bring people together. When people are brought together, they talk, they communicate. Bill Wanger said it himself that sports have brought communication to a different level. The fact that 111.5 million people were connected through one singular event is astounding. For the effect of comparison, President Obama's State of the Union address for 2014 brought in approximately 33.3 million viewers according to ratings given by the Washington Post (Sullivan). This means that an additional 78.2 million people were connected to the Super Bowl, to football, than to our President's State of the Union address. Some people

might see this as sad, as a loss for democracy. But I see it as an opportunity, something to learn from, and as something that is significant.

There is something about sports, and the communication of them that clearly matters to society. Moreover it's not just the action of viewing itself that's making an impact, it's the production. As renowned communication scholar, Nick Trujillo points out in his academic article titled "Reflections on Communication and Sport: On Ethnography and Organizations," "sport is closer to a trillion dollar industry and shapes cultural values in most countries on the planet" (69). Behind that enormous amount of money invested are people. Those people come together and create a kinship, a community of sorts. As authors Brad Schultz and Mary Lou Sheffer put it, it's the community of sport: "The community of sport can be viewed as a myriad of forces and processes related to how sport is developed, played, consumed, and understood on the individual and societal level. As such, it cuts across several areas, including history, economics, law, media, philosophy, and sociology" (180). With the sports industry spanning across so many fields, there are many ways people can be involved and connected to sports, which all stem from communication.

Schultz and Sheffer go on to describe the community of sport and its relationship to the media. They propose an inequitable relationship, as the media is the dominant force that reshapes and redefines how sport is presented, which, in turn, influences the community (180). Journalism and communication scholars Paula Poindexter and Maxwell McCombs connect this relationship further by examining how "in recent years, the growth of new media technologies has been stunning, both in terms of size and speed. The development of digital technology has

created a media environment defined by more channels and options, high-speed communication, and above all, consumer choice and empowerment” (124). The broadcasting world has been forced to evolve over the years in order to accommodate the attention spans of viewers. Having commentary for the games, sideline interviews, and slow motion play-by-play’s are just some of the ways in which sports broadcasting has maintained their connection to their audience.

With technology being the central point of connection between sports and spectators, the element of broadcasting sports has altered in order to accommodate the increasingly high demand of viewers. “Televised sport is a spectacle that increasingly relies on technology, including visual elements such as slow motion, instant replay, statistics, sophisticated graphics, and multiple camera angles” (Desmarais & Bruce 339). As a result, there is a need to incorporate more features, a change that sports broadcasting must undergo. As of 2004, Schultz and Sheffer reported little change over the past 25 years amongst local sports media outlets (187). Ultimately, changes in the media directly influence the community of sport, and by resisting that change, local sports media is abdicating its traditional role as sports provider to local sports provider (Schultz & Sheffer 188). National outlets are what service the masses. Networks such as ESPN and Fox Sports are responsible for reaching the millions; they are the ones communicating to them (Schultz & Sheffer 189). Through these big providers, dedicated solely to sports, the national sports media and the sports consumer are more involved, more connected (Schultz & Sheffer 189). The complexity of the relationship is what has led to sports broadcasting as a production, as a profitable big business. “However, sports

broadcasters have long understood that, on its own, the enhanced visual and technological experience that televised sport offers does not guarantee that audiences will stay tuned for the entire event or will become regular sport viewers” (Desmarais & Bruce 339). “Therefore, to successfully capture viewers, live sport broadcasts rely on the linguistic craft of commentators to dramatize and bring meaning to the events unfolding on the screen” (Morris & Nydahl 102). By being highly attuned to the physical and temporal dimensions of context that sports carries, broadcasters and the lens through which the audience perceives the game.

Referencing back to communication specifically, there is a language context that surrounds this discipline. Outside of the sports realm, there are phrases, terms, and jargon whose meaning completely changes when used outside of the context of the game. Field goals, touchdowns, free throws, and fouls are all examples of such framing remarks. The way such communication resonates with players and audience members in a sports setting is what holds together this bond that the spectators and players have. In order to communicate with each other, both must have an understanding of the language. Therefore, in order for broadcasters to connect to their audience, they too must understand the language.

Communication in sports exists in multiple forms. The communication between player and coach, player and player, coach and coach, referee and coach, referee and player, referee and referee, spectators and referees, spectators and spectators, etc. is quite literally everywhere in sports. Wenner further developed these connections in terms of how mediated sports determines “core cultural values, political sensibilities [and]...national ideology” (45). While researchers have really

begun to dig deeper into these communication relationships, I believe that the connection of sports broadcasters to their audience exclusively is yet to be fully understood. Especially when it comes to looking at the gender of sportscasters and how their communication to an audience has been and is perceived differently. Communication through sports broadcasters is what ultimately kept the audience informed throughout the sporting event, bringing together 111.5 million people for player/coach interviews and sideline scoops. Given this, I believe that taking a closer look at the impact females have made in sports might bring a more enlightened perspective to the integration of more women in the sports broadcasting world.

My Journey with Communication and Sport

The gender aspect of communication and sport, in the broadcasting sense, is really just a piece of the overall impact of the mass communication of sports. When I think of what draws people to sports, I automatically think of the spirit of the game, of competition. I started playing organized sports when I was just six year old. I started out with soccer. Really thinking back though, I cannot remember anything about soccer itself that made me want to play. It was the crowd. I loved to score goals, and it wasn't because my team got a point, it was because I loved the way the crowd cheered...the way my parents cheered. I think it was because of that cheering element that I found myself involved in competitive dance soon after. I know, that in and of itself is a whole other argument in regards to sport, so for the sake of staying on topic that's where I'll leave that.

As I reached middle school, the options of sports to play opened me up to not only soccer, but basketball and volleyball too. For the next three years that was the rotation: soccer in the fall, basketball in winter, and volleyball in the spring. It was in these years where I really remember communication coming into play, being told by coaches that communication is key to a winning team. We learned signals for plays, how to talk to each other during the game, even made up code words for different play sequences to distract the other team. Communication was everywhere.

Upon entering high school, sports as you once knew them change. The aspect of fun isn't as prevalent as making varsity, or having scouts come to watch you play. It's also less acceptable to play multiple sports. Now there's an off-season where you are expected to still practice and even join your schools club teams. When I entered high school this became my biggest problem, and communication really did become the key. I played volleyball in the fall, soccer in the winter, and track and field in the spring. For my first two years of high school I also kept dancing. Having to adapt so quickly from sport to sport required a lot of communication between parents, coaches, players, and myself. My parents told me if I wanted to stay on top of all these sports, it was my responsibility to keep my coaches informed, send the emails, and organize my schedule. Here I was, just a player, but already I was so involved in the set up of each sport. As most would predict, all these sports became too much. I really fell in love with the game of volleyball so by the end of my sophomore year, I put all my efforts into that one sport.

It was during my junior year that the flow of the communication during the game really forged a connection. We were all so in tune with each other, knowing our habits, seeing the court as a whole, to the point where our coach could change a play while the ball was in midair and we could recover. We ended up making it to the NCS Tournament in my senior year. We got to the second round of playoffs before we were finally beat. In those final games of my high school career, that's where I realized that the love of the crowd, the cheering, and the energy really hit me as being one of the most driving forces to the outcome of a game. I had a profound realization that there was incredible power in this, which led to my decision shortly thereafter that, no matter what, I wanted to be a part of sports in any way I could.

In order to continue playing volleyball at the collegiate level, I would have had to grow an additional three inches to be considered. Because of the high level of competition, there will always be someone just as good but twice as tall... at least in my case. This was, and sometimes still is, a very hard fact to accept. Sports had been my life since I was six years old, and I wasn't sure how to be me without them. I thought I had to say goodbye to this chapter in my life, but that's the beauty with sports. There is more than one avenue to be a part of them, more than one way to get involved. And this is where my next chapter starts.

When I first came to Cal Poly, I was thrilled that there was not only intramural volleyball, but also a fairly strong club volleyball program. While I really hoped to keep playing, I realized that I could be more involved and put my Communication Studies major to good use by accepting an internship with Cal Poly

Athletics. It still amazes me all the ways spectators get to still be part of the game, and how its production that makes it possible. The behind-the-scenes communication between a coach, a player, and school, is a whole other intricate organization that depends on the people who work in the athletics office. Gathering sponsors, creating game scripts, the production of it all is what helps to create that atmosphere, the energy that only a sports game can bring about.

My interest in sports and gender began in Fall 2013, the start of my last year as an undergraduate student. I had just completed an internship with the San Francisco Giants that summer, and came away knowing that field was where I wanted to be after graduation. This prompted my search of the wide variety of jobs available in the sports industry. While Communication Studies is my major, I did not realize how easily I could piece these two passions together. However, my search revealed the obvious gender inequality that still exists within the sports industry. Because sport broadcasting is a major component in the industry, I realized that a lot of my research had to start with women in journalism as a whole. When I first think about sports, gender was not something that came to mind; and that is precisely where I believe the problem lies.

Focus: Gender Representations in Sports Communication

This paper will prove to be a source of interconnectivity, looking at the history of women in journalism/broadcasting, and how they have come to be apart of the sports industry utilizing communication. I will tend to discover and expand upon what the possible implications are of representing gender in sports in such limited terms. I will be pulling research from the disciplines of psychology and

sociology in addition to communication scholars so that this project may serve as a link conducive to a wider branch of knowledge in order to draw together a new perspective on the representation of gender in the sports realm. While some of this project uses supportive evidence from athletes themselves, the primary focus will be on sports communication in the industry, rather than on communication in the sport itself. Data on athletes and athletics may be used to help connect research conducted on gender as a whole. Ultimately, my aim with this project is to explore the ways in which the sports industry affirms and refutes classic gender representation, and to develop an understanding of how the sports industry has experienced change over the years in terms of female versus male leadership within production.

Upon reviewing my current research on women in sports, two clear statements are present:

1. Women have made significant strides when it comes to being a part of the sports industry,
and
2. Those strides and efforts are not enough; women are still underrepresented in the sports community, both as athletes and in corporate positions.

According to a study conducted by Randal Beam, "U.S. newsrooms traditionally have been male-dominated organizations. On a superficial level, this is evident in statistics on the representation of women in newsrooms: In 2009, they accounted for only 37% of the professional employees and 34% of news supervisors at U.S.

newspapers. The representation of women in newsrooms has remained about the same for a decade” (393). While these statistics propose that the progress women have made in the newsroom has plateaued, they do not show how far and how long it took to get here in the beginning.

First, to look at how women have overcome adversity in journalism, which led to a breakthrough into sports some historical background is needed. The Associated Press (AP) was one of the first big journalism companies in the United States. With the appointment of Kent Cooper as general manager in 1926, the first female reporter was hired that year (Watts 15). Previously women had only been hired to work as telegraph operators or in receptionist/assistant positions (Watts 15). Shortly following were seven more, who worked for either the New York or Washington D.C. offices (Watts 15). It was first noted that these women were meant provide the female readers with “stories of women’s activities, their style of dress, and other social news” (Watts 15). It wasn’t until the early 1930’s that women reporters were allowed to cover athletics and politics. However, their assignments were designated to a “woman’s point of views,” so only interviewing female athletes, politicians wives, etc. (Watts 15). Watts goes on to explain how the admittance of women into journalism expanded coverage, leading to a shift in the purpose of reporting:

These women did bring a new level of reporting to the Associated Press. Had the AP continued its practice of hiring only men, they would have covered women, their issues and organizations, but in the example of covering the political conventions, the women’s news

would have gotten short shrift. They would not have had the time to tag after Gann and persuade her to do a story, and they would not have thought of asking Eleanor Roosevelt for a press conference. Cooper got what he wanted—a broader spectrum of coverage—and more. He got material the women reported by their drive and initiative. By working at the Associated Press, these eight women helped open the way to a time when news reporting would not be so divided by gender (25).

Women overcame milestones in these early years, once they were given the opportunity to prove themselves. Therefore, in order to succeed women must rise to the challenge first.

While female reporters were finally reaching a time where they were seen as an asset, female athletes received a big break from the government in 1972. When Title IX passed, which ensures that all “girls and women receive opportunities equal to those for boys and men in any government-funded institution”, the sports realm was experiencing the same acceptance in the integration of women (Hardin & Whiteside 58). Although still a question of controversy, Title IX aimed to give equal participation, quality, and quantity in sports and sports coverage, especially in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) (Hardin & Whiteside 58). Overall, the introduction of Title IX has led to a growth of women’s sports and participation in the U.S. (Roedl 3).

The Associated Press integrated women into reporting, which played a big part in breaking “through the glass ceiling of having the role of studio head as being

a male prerogative” (Fox 185). By 1980, Sherry Lansing became the first woman to head a major studio, 20th Century Fox, and later Paramount, before stepping down in 2005 (Fox 185). “Dawn Steel at Columbia, Nina Jacobson at Buena Vista, Stacey Snider, CEO at DreamWorks, and Amy Pascal, who currently chairs Sony Pictures, followed” (Fox 185). While being a studio head mainly refers to film production, it is an aspect of production worth noting because of the fact that it proves women have successfully been in an executive position, running a big-brand and big-budget production company.

It may seem like the connection of female athletes and female reporters is weak and not associated. I see the connection very clearly, and as a vital point in realizing how the trends of females in sports, in any status---as player, reporter, etc.--can be and are connected. The increase in women’s sports coverage is still a relatively recent phenomenon, much the same for females in sports broadcasting (Angelini 16). Women’s sports make up approximately 5% of total televised sports coverage/commentary shows, even though the athletes themselves compose over 40% of sports participants (Mastro et. al. 459). The contrast to male sports coverage lies within the focus of the commentary, which, for me, is on ability, skill, strength, etc. and on how the emphasis in female sports news is on the athlete’s beauty, agility, grace, and body (Mastro et. al. 459). In comparison, those females who work within the sports industry struggle just as much for their recognition (Schmidt 248). “A study conducted for the Associated Press Sports Editors found that women account for 6.3% of sports editors, 10.5% of assistant sports editors, 9.9% of sports columnists, 10.6% of sports reporters, and 16.1% of sports copy editors and

designers” (Schmidt 248). The study also made a point to note that the involvement of women has actually decreased in recent years. The report gave newspapers and websites the grade of “F” for gender hiring practices (Schmidt 248). In terms of broadcasting alone, women are similarly marginalized on television sports networks and programs where women account for 5.6% of sports news and highlights anchors (Schmidt 248). So, as history shows that progress for women in sports, as a whole, is progress in comparison to where they started. Unfortunately, this is where I reference back to my second statement above: how these efforts are not acceptable as being enough, and that underrepresentation of women in sports is still pertinent.

While success is apparent throughout women’s history in journalism and production, most research focuses on the “lack of representation of women” in a “male-dominated organization” (Beam 395; Schmidt 246; Wanta 80; Hardin & Whiteside 1). Sport Management scholars Marie Hardin and Erin Whiteside discuss how “women have ‘token’ status in sports information, where they generally make less money, deal with negative stereotypes and populate low-level positions” (2). Schmidt also posits the “theory of tokenism,” and describes it further as “lacking the critical mass needed to improve the field, such token groups— including women in sports journalism—often suffer from stereotyping, and end up leaving their field at higher rates than larger groups” (249). Both Hardin and Schmidt agree that the way in which the stereotyping of token groups can prove problematic is explained “by a relational perspective on communication, which suggests that people define themselves through their relationships” (Schmidt 250). Over the course of the

given history, dating back to when women first were “allowed” in journalism, there are three themes that have proven to be the biggest “concerns” within women holding a sport-related position. This leads me to the next section of this paper, a discussion of each theme that stems from the research, which are all used as identifiers in labeling the successes of females in sports. These themes are: 1. Education/Experience, 2. Acceptance, and finally, 3. Job Satisfaction. Lastly, I will incorporate how identity is present throughout all these terms and how it is connected to my work as and grounding in communication studies.

Education/Experience

Of the eight women discussed in Liz Watts’s article documenting the first female reporters of the Associated Press, all eight had some degree of a college education (17). Five of those eight were graduates of an accredited university, leaving only three with partial educations (Watts 17). However, the fact that all eight of the women were enrolled in higher education at the time period between 1926 and 1933, is already an impressive fact on its own. The first response that came to me upon this realization was that if a college degree was so significant for a woman in journalism in the 1920’s, how is a woman’s college education viewed today when applying for a journalism job, sports or otherwise? I think there is an even higher standard now being set for women, especially those who wish to pursue a career in sports production and broadcasting. Education, in and of itself, is no longer adequate, which is why I included the addition of experience with education. Even so, Hardin and Whiteside reported their finding after issuing a survey for *Sports Illustrated* in 2009 about the employee experience level and gender within

the sports department.

Twenty-two percent of respondents said they had fewer than five years of experience, 31 percent had between five and 15 years and 47 percent reported more than 15 years of experience. Tenure differed significantly based on gender. Almost half the men reported their tenure to be at least 15 years, and 44 percent of women reported their tenure to be five years or less... More, 83 percent, said they agreed or strongly agreed that sports departments needed to include more women. Women ($M=3.52$, $s.d.=.511$) were more likely than were men ($M=3.11$, $s.d.=.688$) to agree with the latter statement as indicated by a one-way ANOVA test ($F = 7.785$, $df = 1/274$, $p<.01$) (62).

Ultimately, the interpretation of these findings can lead to multiple conclusions. One would be that women are not remaining in the sports department, due to the low number of women working for five or more years. Another interpretation could be that this is a sign that women are just now beginning to infiltrate the field. Therefore, the potential of more women having the opportunity to work at an executive level is going to increase. Either way, research is undoubtedly showing that a rounded combination of education and experience is crucial in the process of getting hired into the sports industry in the first place.

Acceptance

Once hired into a sports organization, leadership makes an impact for female journalists. Stepping up and taking on assignments with full force is important for

career development. As Beam notes, “female journalists may have different news values than their male colleagues, leading them to embrace a broader range of topics that they consider legitimate to cover” (395). While men hold the majority of the authority, it can be hard for women to feel accepted into the department (Hardin & Shain 24). “Evidence to date suggests that women journalists make little difference; a combination of their low numbers and the overwhelmingly ‘macho’ habitus of sports journalism makes for complex negotiations for female journalists” (Bruce 130). In order to limit the presence of hegemony within the industry, then, a level of acceptance must be reached. Indeed, as if to confirm this, Bruce shares that “research reveals that male sports journalists believe they are gender neutral; an ideological position of objectivity that precludes ‘promotion’ of those felt to be outside the norm” (130). Hegemony is a powerful ideal that is deeply rooted in U.S. history. While the sports industry continues to limit female sports and broadcasters, the industry is essentially procuring cultural imperialism. When women are not seen for sports networks the ideal that they do not belong there is reinforced. This abstract of power is what has continued to keep undermined in the sports realm. There is such a rich history with male sports and male journalists covering sports that subsequently, there is an underlying notion of privilege that connects males to sports (Bruce 131). “More particularly, ‘media-sport’ valorizes elite, able-bodied, heterosexual, and professional sportsmen, especially those who bring glory to the nation” (Bruce 128). Simultaneously, there is an exclusion and marginalization of female athletes and sports broadcasters who do not fall into this narrow realm (Bruce 128). Before there can be a significant change within the

industry, then, it is clear there has to be an acceptance of that change, and in turn, an acceptance of women being capable and adequate in broadcasting and producing sports content.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction has revealed that women differentiate between job satisfaction and career satisfaction (Hardin & Shain 28). Several studies (including, but not limited to, Hardin & Shain, Whisenant, and Schmidt), report findings that the job aspect of being a female sports reporter/journalist has been met with male discrimination. However, Hardin especially makes a point that women enjoy the career of sports journalism: “They acknowledged their gender as a potential advantage in getting entry-level jobs, but also they saw gender as giving them token status” (29). A primary reason for leaving the industry was linked to family priorities (Hardin & Shain 29; Whisenant 377; Hardin & Whiteside 20; Wanta 80). Specifically, Whisenant’s study produced an analysis of the perceived inputs and outputs women felt within the organization (370). He notes that comparisons are made constantly between pay, seniority, job status, etc. (370). In order for one to be satisfied with their position, all of these aspects must be in a balance, according to the employee. For women in sports journalism, pay comparisons and the length of time one had been in their position were the highest of disassociation (Whisenant 377). Ultimately, the trend shows that there is a significant time gap in which women feel as though they are not being promptly promoted in order to reach their career goals. Applying these results further offers up another explanation as to why the progress of women in the sports industry is still ongoing.

Identity

One of the most difficult things for a woman to do in most organizations, especially in sports, is to find her identity within the organization. All of the above themes can be categorized together as being part of what creates one's identity within a work place. Throughout my communication studies courses, I can say with confidence that gender is one of the most common and simplest components by which people choose to interpret and communicate their identity. With courses such as Interpersonal Communication, Communication Theory, Performance Literature, and Organizational Communication, gender is a key factor that determines certain outcomes in how we, as humans, communicate with each other. Using some of the theories and topics discussed in these courses, I will intertwine academic research that has applied some of these theories and topics to sports communication.

Speaking first about the sports organization itself, Hardin and Whiteside looked into a classic organizational communication theory, Acker's theory of gendered organizations (3). Acker's theory looks into speculations of institutions and employment rates as not being gender-neutral, but instead are embracing men as the ideal worker. "This is not surprising for sports, which, as many scholars contend, defines and reinforces the very definition of masculinity in western culture" (Hardin 3). This allows for women to be subject to "a variety of tasks considered 'emotional labor', that are suitable for women (Hardin 4). The view of women as empathetic, nurturing and accommodating (motherly-like qualities), then, is the standard by which women are judged both as competent and as

incompetent in the work place (Hardin 5). Ultimately, this can play into how women are accumulating such qualities to make up their work identity.

When I use the term, “work identity”, some may argue, “shouldn’t ones identity be consistent no matter the setting?” This is where performativity comes in. Judith Butler’s notion of performativity is a tool that researcher John Caldwell uses in describing the ways the industry is sexualized and gendered (160). The performance theory incorporates our actions, behaviors, and gestures that are based off of the identity(-ies) we assume (Caldwell 160). Angelini even writes out a list within his research, accumulated from multiple sources, of the inherent qualities seen as masculine and feminine:

These traditional ideas of what the inherent qualities of masculinity include strength, self-control, aggression, stamina, discipline, fearlessness, and competitiveness... Therefore what is not masculine is feminine; more specifically, the traditional qualities of femininity include beauty, passivity, grace, emotion, and expressiveness (17).

Consequently, women have over-masculinized themselves in order to prove their competence in multiple areas of production, such as camera operations, director/producer, and even reporter (Caldwell 160). With sports already having the stigma of a masculine industry, it is concluded that the de-feminization of women working in sports is unavoidable if they wish to pursue a leadership or executive role (Schmidt 250).

Journalism and communication scholars Dana Mastro, Anita Atwell Seate, Erin Blecha, and Monica Gallegos utilized communication accommodation theory as a

basis for their experiment, which “predicted that the gender and racial compositions of sports (i.e., female/male sport, predominately black/white athletes) and the gender/race of the reporter would interact in predicting evaluations of reporters (with existing gender and racial attitudes as covariates)” (458). The framework of communication accommodation theory traditionally focuses on “how or why individuals alter their communication patterns when interacting in interpersonal/intergroup contexts” (Mastro et. al. 459). However, the experiment revealed that many sports reporters use accommodation strategies in mediated contexts, which led to “insights into how audience members interpret and evaluate sports/news reporters” (Mastro et. al. 459).

In the context of sports reporting, the implication is that a limited boundary of tolerance may exist in terms of audiences’ acceptance of sports reporters themselves. Put differently, group memberships (e.g., gender and race/ethnicity) may set expectations about reporters’ knowledge, ability, appropriateness, and even welcome-ness in the broader sporting domain. Research rooted in communication accommodation theory provides insights into this possibility (Mastro et. al. 460).

With this groundbreaking research, one’s performance of their identity can potentially be a reason as to why women have such a difficult time establishing themselves in the sports community. By being highly efficient in the diversity of communication styles, women have the ability to utilize the various styles of management in order to further infiltrate the executive roles in sports broadcasting

and production. In order to be successful in communication, you not only have to know your audience, but know yourself and where your identity is rooted. Gender is a key concept that most people use to identify themselves, which leads to different perspectives on communication styles.

There are multiple theories as to why communication is different between males and females. There are different communication styles, gender norms, gender roles, societal expectations, etc. which all play into how we react. Going back to athletes, few studies have been done that look at how athletes communicate with each other. Scholars, such as Philip Sullivan, speculate that because “sports teams are one such setting and there is a limited amount of literature on communication and gender within sports teams” (123). His initial predictions going into his experiment began with looking into communication style differences, specifically self-disclosure (122). However, his findings support that “males and females do not communicate differently in sports teams” (127). While non-verbal messages account for a vast majority of communication, both during sporting events and communication in general, there is an emotional involvement of players in particular that Sullivan suggests may have an impact on the audiences and broadcasting companies (127).

Ultimately, then, there is no “main reason” why women are less prominent in the sports realm, and female sports are covered infrequently. Because the honest truth is that there are multiple factors working against women in sports. As Hardin and Shain explain, “the position of female sports journalists and female athletes is the same: both are not male, and, as such, are not valued within the sport/media

complex because they do not and can never meet the masculine standards on which it is built” (33). There is a strong sense of hegemony, which “shape[s] young people’s behavior in socially acceptable ways and... define[s] and entrench[s] hegemonic femininity and masculinity” (Lenskyj 146). Hegemony persists as long as society enforces it. In utilizing powerful communicative tools, such as broadcasting, showing more female sportscasters and athletes, then, the perceptions of women not belonging in sports won’t have any merit.

With the continued growth and interpretations of gender within sports, a new model of females within sports has an opportunity to emerge (Lenskyj 147). While hegemony surrounds the sporting world still, found both in athletics and production of athletics, a “broader cultural and journalism discourses shift sufficiently to shake up the articulation of sport and masculinity” (Bruce 132). Women might have to work a little harder in order to move “beyond the documentation of marginalization, sexualization, trivialization, and ambivalence to actively incorporate a focus on media sites of change, of creative representations of gender, of individuals who are making a difference, of places such as social media where visibility for women’s sport is being created” (Bruce 133). We can see, then, that there is a certain call to action for women “because sport media reproduce dominant ideologies and practices that systematically position sport as an exclusive—or certainly far more important—male terrain, they go beyond creating a false narrative.. the media actually suppress knowledge about, and deny the reality of, the ever-expanding and highly accomplished world of women’s sports” (Kane 233).

Conclusion

The world of broadcasting is full of communication. One of the key relationships broadcasters have is the one with their viewers. The world of sports is also full of communication. One of the key relationships athletes have is the one with their fans. The combination of communication through broadcasting and sports is what made the production of the Super Bowl possible. For the duration of that game there were at least 111.5 million people communicating about sports. How that communication is created, interpreted, and understood is important. The use of broadcasting as a key communication tool stands as a representation of our society and its values. When one tunes in to major sports networks, such as Sports Center and ESPN, those networks represent what our society thinks of sports. The fact that there are multiple networks committed to broadcasting only sports, I believe proves in and of itself how important sports have become over the years. Therefore when women are rarely shown on these networks, it reinforces and underlying message that women in and around sports is not acceptable.

As a student of communication, and a rather enthusiastic sports fan, I not only believe that females can and should be involved with sports, but that females can and should be seen just as credible as their male counterparts in the sports industry. I think communication within the sports realm is something to be appreciated as it exists throughout multiple mediums. Men and women together use so many different communication styles that in order to serve a full, more conducive audience, both genders must be present in communicating through the

broadcasting process. I think that once we can achieve this, the spotlight on female athletes will also have a chance to evolve into a respected and sought after profession. While women are continuously overshadowed in the sports realm, society is accepting and perpetuating the stigma that women do not have the knowledge, skill, ability, etc. to be successful in the sports industry.

Overall gender and communication present society with a challenge: to utilize communication aspects each gender possesses and use them to better the presentation of sports related content. The concept of performance comes to mind specifically. When a person has the ability to self-monitor, to tailor a message to an audience based on the best way they will best receive it, the message itself will carry more meaning and develop an even greater connection between the audience and the person delivering the message. Ultimately people process and learn information through many different mediums, the primary ones being TV and the Internet. Broadcasting is a way to have that greater connection. Especially with sports, where there is already the connection of a fan base, but as the person providing the additional information, the audience develops a connection with the broadcasters too. In a way, the entire way the sports realm operates is through this communication connection. This not only helps me to understand the power of communication, but also the ways in which sports has grown, and continues to grow, as an industry.

I believe that Cal Poly has not only taught me the tools to succeed in a male-dominated field, but it has also allowed me to practice communication in such a way that I can be a leader within this field. In reviewing the research, I have not only

engaged multiple divisions of the Communication Studies courses at Cal Poly, I have also integrated research spanning across the disciplines of communication studies, psychology, sociology, and history. In conclusion, I believe that, while the sports industry has so far not been fully integrated, it is facing a time of change. As more women continue to pursue sports related careers, the hope that gender bias will disseminate is still alive, and communication is at the root of it.

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