Women in Sports Journalism:
Hiring Practices Through a Feminist Lens

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By
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# Table of Contents

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ........................................................................................................... ii

**PROFESSIONAL SKILLS COMPONENT**
- Introduction ........................................................................................................................... 1
- Chronological Field Notes .................................................................................................... 3
- Evaluation of Work ................................................................................................................ 27
- Supervisor Evaluation ......................................................................................................... 29
- Physical Evidence of Work .................................................................................................. 30

**RESEARCH ANALYSIS**
- Research Topic ..................................................................................................................... 36
- Literature Review .................................................................................................................. 38
- Methods ................................................................................................................................ 44
- Results .................................................................................................................................... 48
- Discussion .............................................................................................................................. 55
- Recommendations ............................................................................................................... 62
- References ............................................................................................................................. 64

**APPENDIX**
- Original Professional Project Proposal .................................................................................. 68
Introduction

There are a number of reasons why I chose to pursue a career in sports media. Growing up in a household in which my father and I listened to the latest news from ESPN’s SportsCenter while sitting down to breakfast certainly was a spark that ignited my interest, but it became more than that when I was immersed in the world of sports as a Division I student-athlete. While I was attending Northwestern University and participating in the basketball program I was a part of regular media training sessions. Student and Chicago-based journalists would sit in on practice or ask questions at the post-game press conferences. Then, my senior year, I held an intern position at Comcast SportsNet Chicago. The fast-paced feel of that environment was what drove me to apply for the University of Missouri’s graduate journalism program.

As I began studying broadcast and strategic communications, and as I was deciding on what topic I would research to complete my degree, women were becoming more and more prominent on the sports scene. These women were not only anchoring, but also reporting from the sidelines and doing in-game analysis. This rise in numbers of women on the screen really intrigued me. I wanted to know, why the change? What was leading these women to pursue historically male positions? What steps were they taking to achieve these careers that have long been few and far between?

I chose to look at the hiring practices of women in sports journalism because I not only had experience in sports media, but because I wanted to evaluate what it
takes. I wanted to complete research to determine how this was happening and if it would become a permanent practice for women coming up in sports journalism.
Chronological Field Notes

*Getting Started*

It all happened incredibly fast. I had been applying for jobs all over the place. My goal was to find one in sports communications, however, those are terribly competitive and I have more background as an athlete than in the offices of an athletic organization.

I found a job posting online at Geile/Leon Marketing Communications in Clayton, Missouri on Friday, May 22. I applied, but I wanted to go above and beyond for this one. I emailed Mary Sawyer, the Vice President of Public Relations at the agency. I explained that I had applied and gave her a brief explanation of my qualifications. Within hours she had emailed me about scheduling a time for an interview, which we set-up for Tuesday, May 26.

My interview the following week went well, and the next day they offered me the position of Assistant Account Executive. I would be focusing my efforts primarily in public relations and I would be reporting directly to Mary.

*Week 1 (6/1-6/7)*

On Monday, June 1, I began at Geile/Leon Marketing Communications. My first day was filled with time spent familiarizing myself with the clients that I would be working with. Two of our clients had events coming up within weeks, so I was thrown into the organization and message coordination immediately.

On the afternoon of my first day I was brought in on a meeting to discuss billing and time allotment for one of the newer clients to the agency. This new client was an organization in St. Louis that is well known to tourists, but seemed to be
taken for granted by locals. We had been tasked with working with them on their marketing and public relations efforts for a new exhibit they are launching in Spring 2016.

The next day I was asked to complete public relations work that I am much more familiar with. My first task was to write the social media calendar for a hotel client of ours. They needed one calendar promoting their upcoming event, and also one promoting their weekly musical performances. During my time at FleishmanHillard last summer, social content planning and drafting was my primary responsibility, so this was something I was completely comfortable with.

Later on in the day I wrote a pitch email based on a press release that Mary had already drafted. I had only written one of these prior, and that was for a class I had completed spring semester of this year. I found it challenging to write about a client’s product launch when it was a product that I would never have been remotely familiar with if I hadn’t been given this task. I promised myself that I would spend a significant amount of time the first few weeks in my new role familiarizing myself with the clients, as well as practicing my traditional public relations writing.

The remainder of my first week was dedicated to the hotel client that we were planning an event for. I posted on all of the St. Louis area event calendars, as well as those across the river in Illinois. I also sent two email pitches and made follow-up calls to all of the media in St. Louis. We were able to secure a segment on the morning show of a local news station.
By the end of my first week I was a bit surprised at how it had gone thus far. I loved the writing and the editing – I was so grateful I had just completed a public relations specific writing course, and that my awareness of AP Style was so fresh in my mind. However, I did realize that I miss doing the graphics work that I had the responsibility of while I was at FleishmanHillard. I enjoyed having Adobe Creative Suite available on my computer and being able to create graphics and videos to accompany the social media that we were posting.

Week 2 (6/8-6/14)

My second week allowed me to complete work for a number of other clients, as well as to continue my work with the hotel that was a top priority the previous week. In addition to our hotel event, we were coordinating another event scheduled to happen during that same week. This event was for a client that is a local business. They offer a service that helps to make the greater St. Louis area a cleaner and healthier place to live.

The event for our “green” client is in conjunction with a local university. I was responsible for drafting a press release. However, the more I discussed it with Mary the more difficult the task became. She and I could not come up with a reason for the media to pick this event up. We could not make it newsworthy. This experience made me so thankful for my time at the J-School when I was studying broadcast journalism. Having the ability to think like a journalist and to understand what they are looking for in a pitch is an invaluable asset to have as a public relations professional. This was made even clearer to me as we discussed it with the assistant account executive from the marketing department. Her background is strictly in
marketing and she couldn’t understand why the media would need to be pitched anything other than the event that was happening.

After the press release was completed – through the severe editing of my work and Mary’s work combined – I wrote the media pitch to accompany the release. This was much easier once we had decided what our angle and our focus would be.

During this week I was also brought in on a new business meeting. The president of Geile/Leon Marketing Communications has a friend that was hoping to bring some public relations efforts to his tech startup. Mary and I found the framing for this pitch to be much easier than the previous client because this startup had recently won an award, however, as part of the agreement, we had a very limited number of hours so as not to exceed the agreed-upon budget.

As I began work on this pitch, my previous decision to research each client as thoroughly as possible continued to prove to be a crucial part of the public relations process. My background in technology and my familiarity with the Atlanta area are not sufficient enough for me to be able to write a pitch and press release that would make a journalist at a business journal interested in what I have to offer.

I was also surprised at the trouble that I was having while I was trying to draft a subject line. I wanted something that would grab the journalist’s attention and make them want to read what I had to say. Journalists receive a number of these a day, which must get to be overwhelming. I assume that they see the sender address for the emails and they find themselves assuming that anyone with something unrecognizable behind the @ sign, is definitely with an agency. I was determined to come up with a line they couldn’t ignore.
With the opportunity that I had this week to really work on a number of tasks for a number of clients, I became extremely appreciative of my background as a student-athlete. Of course it helped that I went through media training a number of times, but I am really thankful for the time management skills that it taught me. I have always been the type of person to plan my day as completely as possible, but it was more than that. As I finished up my second week at Geile/Leon Marketing Communications, I realized that tasks are going to come at you throughout the day. You can schedule as much as you would like, but things are going to change. My experiences adapting to change and surprises, and my time spent listening to what others (coaches, clients, teammates) need from me one minute to the next, was something that was making this job transition much smoother than I think that it might have been had I not had these experiences.

*Week 3 (6.15-6.21)*

This week I spent a lot of my time on research. As an assistant account executive, I touch on a number of accounts, but I am not involved in all of them. For each account there are different responsibilities, but a few of the tasks that I am asked to complete are consistent.

*Media Lists*

The first task that I completed more than once this week was creating a media list. With two events next week, we are in the middle of sending out email pitches and following up with phone calls. Last summer while I was at FleishmanHillard, I created quite a few media lists, but I was also using a program called Cision. This website offers a paid subscription to their services. After buying
the service, agencies have access to a list of hundreds of media personnel from both print and broadcast outlets. These lists contain names, titles and contact information. At Geile/Leon we did not have access to this service. With a public relations department of only two people we could not really justify paying monthly for that service.

While I was doing the research in order to create these media lists, I had to keep a number of things in mind. I had to decide what our target market area was, what type of media we were hoping to attract (print, digital, television), and what area of news we were aiming for (business, technology, etc.). The process of sifting through the different options could have been a tedious one, however I quickly learned to utilize the different outlets I was finding for each client. Because of the size of St. Louis, I was able to use a number of the contacts for more than one list. This really helped to speed up the process.

Although my resourcefulness served me well in that way, it backfired in another. In addition to using the lists to help to build upon each other, I also decided to add to the old lists that were saved on the server. In fact, it was suggested to me that I do it that way. As soon as we sent out the press releases I regretted my choice to do that. A number of the messages bounced back because of invalid addresses. As I began to look into the contacts, I realized that these individuals were no longer working with the outlets as listed. Although most of them were still journalists in St. Louis, they had made a move elsewhere.

This situation really taught me the importance of paying attention to details. I have always been the type of person who strives for perfection in my work, and I
now know just how important that is in the field of public relations. We were sending out materials on behalf of our clients and asking the media to choose to report on them. We were asking them for free publicity. Sure, they get a byline out of it, but they need to trust that our client is newsworthy. It is so important that we don't have typos or fact errors. We need to convey a level of professionalism at all times in order to earn the trust of the journalists. It is actually kind of funny to think that the simple act of creating media lists taught me this important public relations lesson.

*Current Events*

Another task that is consistent among the clients that I work with is my need to know what is going on in the news. Although there are other reasons to promote a client (events, product launches, etc.), there are still those situations in which you have a client that is running a successful business, yet there is nothing newsworthy about them.

For example, there was a client that we had that is a geophysical surveying company. They are doing a ton of important and interesting work, however, the majority of it is classified. In the past we have spent our time sending out news releases about new hires and that is about it.

When I found out that this was our primary responsibility, I knew that there had to be more. So, this week I spent a number of hours reading the news. I read up on the latest business news and I searched for important happenings in environmental legislation. I was able to come up with a number of angles that we began discussing as potential pitches in the near future.
For this task I felt extremely comfortable because of the skills that I had learned during my time in the newsrooms at the Missouri School of Journalism. From my first week of graduate school boot camp it was emphasized that we find story ideas that are newsworthy. I learned the absolute importance of reporting on things that people care about.

It is also understood among the media that this is increasingly important in today’s busy society. People are on their phone and emailing on their laptop, all while watching television. As a journalist I want to report something that makes the audience stop everything and focus on what I am telling them. Using this knowledge about journalists and applying it to my news releases and pitch writing really helped me to feel more comfortable with my writing in my new role as a public relations professional.

*Week 4 (6.22-6.28)*

This week I felt as though I was allowed to truly take the reins for the first time. I arrived at the office on Monday with a task already assigned. I had received an email late Friday afternoon asking if I would draft a new hire press release for one of our clients on Monday morning. I came in ready to focus on this short, but independent, task when all of a sudden I realized that my plans for the day would need to go from writing to organizing an event.

Aside from drafting this press release, our primary focus this week was a ceremony happening on Thursday morning. One of our clients was partnering with a local University to promote the earth-friendly service they offer to residents of the Greater St. Louis area.
As we had been planning the ceremony, it had seemed like it would be incredibly simple. I really didn’t think there was much involved at all. I was so wrong. Apparently this client had an event in January that we had worked on as well. The individual that was designated to speak got way off track. His messaging was all over the place. The same individual that had spoken at the last event was scheduled to speak on Thursday, so we had to be sure that we laid out exactly what we wanted him to say.

I wrote up an agenda that was a bit different than the usual layout you would see. I added a rough script to it. Under each new speaker’s cue on the agenda, I included a brief statement that aligned with the messaging we had outlined for the client from the beginning of the campaign. We made sure that we did everything that we could to help him stay on task while he was holding the microphone.

In preparation for the ceremony, we also sent out a media advisory. This was a tougher task than it may have usually been because of the client response. They were frustrated. They felt that we should be sending out a full press release prior to the ceremony. We felt that this ceremony was not newsworthy enough for that. We sent a media advisory out to alert the media, and I made follow-up calls to see what outlets planned on attending. Then, as soon as the ceremony was over we had a press release ready to be distributed. The release focused on the bigger story – the fact that this client is working to help improve air quality during the summer months. We briefly mentioned the ceremony and why it mattered as well. We agreed that I would make follow-up calls again, this time for the press release.
Once we had the client understanding our strategy behind this and agreeing to it, it was time to focus on the logistics. I researched prices for lunch delivery, I called attendants to get a rough estimate of guests planning to attend, and I created a pricing guide. All of this had to be cleared with our client. I had figured that this would be simple, but I found that making all of this communication clear and concise while working under a strict deadline and allowing time for our other clients was tough.

This week I was only in the office for three days (I had to be in Wisconsin on Thursday and Friday), so I felt even more pressure to ensure that the public relations for this ceremony went smoothly for my colleagues. I was sure to leave them detailed documents outlining what had been organized for the event. I also spent the morning of the ceremony on the phone while I was traveling. I was driving to Wisconsin, so while I was on the road I called all of the major print outlets and all of the news stations in the St. Louis area to remind them about our client’s event. In the end, one of the news stations stayed for the entire event. It felt like a win and the client was happy, however, nothing ever aired on that station. I was extremely surprised by this because that photographer had spent a significant amount of time at the ceremony. I thought that they would play just a short clip of footage, but I know how precious that time is. In the weeks that followed we continued to monitor the outlets in St. Louis for any mention of the event or the program that it was promoting, but still there were no hits. After reflecting on the ceremony and what it consisted of, I am not overly shocked. We had worked hard to make it sound exciting and to promote the program as one that is saving the environment,
however, we failed to really capture why St. Louis should care. With so many things happening in their city everyday, what made our event or the client’s program worth someone’s time?

Working to make this event happen actually taught me a lot about client communication. After writing a script/outline for the client, he still didn’t follow the messaging. While I was trying to do something as simple as order lunch, it was hard to finalize because I couldn’t count on a timely response from the client via email. These are a few of the things that taught me that I can plan ahead and be as organized as I would like, but I need to be sure that I am able to problem solve. I need to be ready to change my plans and find solutions on my own and at any moment.

*Week 5 (6.29-7.5)*

Every Monday morning we held a status meeting. The assistant account executives go into the conference room first. We were responsible for listing every project for each client on the wall-sized white board. I found it difficult to do this sometimes because the account executive that I work with is a very hands-on individual. She completes quite a few projects without my knowledge, so there were definitely moments during this weekly briefing meeting that she was talking as opposed to reading from the board. We worked on that communication.

After this portion of the meeting, each member of one of the two teams that we were split into presents something they found that they feel is a potential trending topic for a blog post. This was my first week presenting a topic and it was very well received. My topic was chosen as a focus for the blog post during this week.
As I said last week, I felt I was beginning to act more independently and my blog post being chosen was another example of that. I found that the effort that I had put forth in finding an interesting and engaging topic was recognized. It may seem like a small thing, but this was the one meeting each week that the whole office came together, so it was definitely a place that you wanted to make a positive impression. I felt that by simply working to find a trending topic that was worthy I was showing my new colleagues that I was their teammate and that I was worthy as well.

This positive start to my week carried itself into the rest of the work that I did the following three days (it was the July 4th holiday). I was responsible for much of the same work that I had been last week. I did a lot of research and story building for two of our clients. They didn’t have much going on that was newsworthy, or their only projects were confidential. However, this week I was more independent because I was able to take that research and do something with it. Instead of creating a simple bulleted list or an Excel spreadsheet I was able to create a document that was ready to be sent directly to the client. As I began my new career and I started to feel more comfortable in my role I found that little steps forward, such as this, helped my confidence in a big way.

*Week 6 (7.6-7.12)*

This week I was able to do a lot more of what I enjoyed most – writing. I started my week off with the task of drafting a press release. The announcement was to highlight the appointment of one of the C-suite executives for one of our clients to the position of chairperson for an upcoming charitable event. I had to do
extensive research on the event, its effectiveness (fundraising, attendance, etc.) in the region, and the executive’s connection to the organization.

Before I even began drafting, my supervisor and I discussed the need for this release to be an announcement about the executive being appointed. But, she felt that it actually needed to focus more on the actual charity/event than on the client. I found this particularly challenging. I wanted to highlight this man’s honor, but I had a fear of it coming across as insensitive to the charitable cause.

As I began researching all of the components that I previously mentioned, I found this fear to be slowly alleviated. I felt that the more I read about the national organization involved, and also the efforts of the St. Louis branch, it was easier to really highlight what this event meant for the cause. I also was determined to find the connection between the executive and this organization. They wouldn’t choose him just because of his status in the community, right? I searched until I found the answer – his family had a tie to the organization from a past personal experience. I was careful to only mention what was very public knowledge. I had searched hard to find out what I had, so I thought it safe to assume that a lot of that which was hidden so well was meant to stay that way. With determined research and mindful execution, I was able to write an appropriate news release for the client.

This situation taught me a lot about the importance of preparation in public relations writing. It is easy to take the information that the client gives to you and to rewrite it. You can easily draft a simple, to the point document, but that also means that the client could do the same. It is not hard to write a press release, but it is hard to write a good one. You need to go above and beyond. The client is giving you the
bare bones and as a professional it is your responsibility to make it mean something. Take the information that anyone could find and make it newsworthy. Mine a story from the outline of information given to you and you will catch the attention of journalists. That is what the client pays us for, and this assignment in particular really drove the importance of that home for me.

**Week 7 (7.13-7.19)**

As we were right around the middle of the year, I had noticed one thing that nearly every client began to request – reports. Clients requested that we send them a report of the coverage that we earned them so far during the year.

This seemed odd to me because every month we send a clip report of all coverage that the client receives through print, broadcast and digital media outlets. This was sent at the same time as the billing paperwork.

Each client made the same request of us - that we send a simple list of coverage instead of the actual clip that we have on file. So, as I began compiling these clips it occurred to me that we were missing coverage.

During my first month here I had sent out new hire announcement news releases for one client to the local publications, with a special focus on the Business Journals in that area. While I was compiling the list of total clips for June I realized that these were not included. I specifically remembered back and forth communication between The Memphis Business Journal and I about the information that I had sent, yet there was no coverage to be found.

I found this very odd. We subscribed to a clipping service for the Metropolitan St. Louis area for our local clients, and we also received monitored
clips from a service that was supposed to cover clips nationally. I decided to take a look for myself just to be sure that the clips were not missed by the service. I was planning on reaching back out to the Memphis market if we actually did not receive the coverage I was assured that we would.

As I began manually looking for the clips, I realized that with a bit of digging they were right where they should have been. I found them without much effort at all. So, I decided to contact the national service. We had recently decided to cut the local clipping service at the end of the month, so I didn’t want to risk us doing that and then relying on another service that was only sending us half of the coverage.

After emailing back and forth with the customer service representative we had it all worked out. I had to tell her the outlets to monitor. My supervisor and I were very disappointed about this because there is always the chance of a client receiving coverage without us sending a news release. We decided that even though it was corrected I would still monitor as best I could in our target markets on a weekly basis.

This situation only furthered my feelings that this industry is really all about the details. In public relations it is so important to take the time to think through every aspect of the client and their needs, as well as the results that you are earning on their behalf. I am one of those people that like to get things done as quickly as possible, and although I am often very accurate I have come to find that I have to slow down. I may think that I am covering all of my bases, but there are so many moving parts it is impossible to get everything right one hundred percent of the time if you aren’t completely focused on the process from start to finish.
Week 8 (7.20-7.26)

This week my lesson learned tied in directly with what I wrote about last week. In the office, I had adopted a new role as an editor. Whenever something was written my colleagues brought it to me. I was responsible for proofreading the work before it was sent to the client.

In all honesty I absolutely love this job. I love spelling and punctuation. I had my AP Stylebook sitting on the shelf right next to me at all times. I truly enjoy hunting down the tiniest mistake and fixing it. I have always enjoyed this part of writing, but the time I spent in my public relations writing course last semester really heightened that.

While I was at the agency, my new skill was made known when I was asked to edit a blog post before it went live on our website. Someone other than the author had already reviewed this particular post, however they wanted a second opinion. As I was working my way through the document, I found a few mistakes that the others had overlooked.

My focus on the details and my decision to read the post slowly and thoroughly was the only reason that I caught the mistakes that had been previously overlooked. I don’t have superior editing skills; I have just found that it is so much easier and more efficient to only have to read something once or twice. My choice to be thorough and attentive earned me the responsibility of editing all types of documents moving through the office and I was absolutely fine with that!
Week 9 (7.27-8.2)

This week was different than the previous weeks for one reason: my supervisor was on vacation the entire week. I did not assume that this would be an issue because I like to think that I am fully capable of working independently, but the first day I was at a loss for what to do. Normally, I am not given a lot of direct access to the clients so it is not as if I could reach out to them about upcoming work. I sit in on calls between my supervisor and the client, and I often take notes, but when it comes to voicing any sort of ideas or suggestions I am not consulted.

That being the case, I came into this week dreading work for the first time, because I was afraid that I would have nothing to keep me busy. I hadn’t been left much work at all. After Monday I really had to turn my mentality around from dread to determination. I was going to mine the public relations folders on the server until I found a project that was both productive and engaging.

After only a bit of searching for work that needed to be done, I realized that I could always update media lists for our clients. That does not sound all that engaging; there is only so much Google searching and spreadsheets that my brain can handle in a day, not to mention an entire week. But, it was the work that had to be done, so I made my way through all of our media lists.

I made these updates by manually searching for any organizational changes that had occurred at the targeted outlets. Last summer, while I was at FleishmanHillard, I had access to Cision. This was a subscription database. It allowed users access to a list of every journalist and media personnel in the country.
I built media lists using this database, and now that I didn’t have access to it I realized that I had taken it for granted.

Having updated our lists a bit here and there at the beginning of my time at the agency, I didn’t expect that many changes would be needed. I was wrong. The turnover and movement within newsrooms really surprised me. I also spent my time focusing on what contacts would be most beneficial to each client. After I spent time working on all of them, I was more aware of what type of pitch we would write for each, giving me a clearer understanding of who in a newsroom would be most interested in telling that story.

This week I learned that it is incredibly important to work independently. I know that I have said that before as I have spent more time in this field during my project, however this opportunity to really take it upon myself and find areas that I could improve to make everyday work easier for the department was one that I enjoyed. I know that we will be more effective as an agency having finished the research before it is needed.

*Week 10 (8.3-8.9)*

This week I had an experience that really solidified what I had been feeling during my first two months in public relations. I mentioned this before, but clients didn’t appreciate the importance of having a story to tell. One particular client that we worked with had a major issue understanding the need for a pitch to grab a journalist and make him/her want to learn more and to share that story.

Two weeks ago, one of our public relations clients decided that they did not want our services anymore at the end of the month. The client made the call that all
of the work we were doing could be done in-house. I can’t say that I agreed with her.
The contact that we were directly engaged with explained that because of their
presence as a St. Louis destination, she didn’t think that PR was necessary. She
shared her opinion that their reputation as a historical hotspot made them relevant
enough that our services were no longer needed.

I didn’t agree with this because I felt like she didn’t know how much work it
was to do the projects that she tasked us with. I felt as though she may have gotten a
taste for that relatively quickly. Each month I drafted the Facebook calendar for this
client. I wrote the copy and found the appropriate, approved images. I also schedule
the posts from week to week. For two accounts we posted roughly six to eight times
per week.

I think that this amount of time spent on a social media platform surprised
the client because on the following Monday, after her decision to move forward
internally, the client came back and asked us to finish out the month, and to draft all
of August. This was not a problem, because I actually really enjoy community
management responsibilities, but it was a perfect example of how clients often don’t
understand what goes into PR. They don’t understand that PR is earned, not paid.
Meaning, we are trying to appeal to journalists who are looking for the absolute best
story to tell, and we are also making efforts to use tools such as social media to
increase brand awareness. Journalists and potential customers alike don’t want to
talk about a company that is going about their day-to-day operations.

This experience with clients was one that I had over and over during my time
at the agency. I wrote a blog post for the agency website detailing this issue.
Week 11 (8.10-8.16)

This week I was tasked with A LOT of research, and not just for the public relations department of the agency. I spent most of my time working on new business research for First Team.

Over the previous month we lost a couple of public relations clients making it crucial that we generate new business leads. We lost these clients not because of the quality of work, but because of what I have talked about over and over again - the idea that PR is something these clients don’t necessarily need because of the assumption that they are important and relevant enough to attract a journalist’s attention. They see earned media as something far easier to gain than it actually is.

As a member of the team at this agency, the generation of new business is not something that I stress out about. Our president is a very personable individual. He is member of a number of associations and boards in the St. Louis area, giving him the ability to network with a number of other business owners and influential people.

One of the leads that he wanted me to research was an electrical cooperative in the area. This organization chose to focus their advertising on events and games held by St. Louis professional sports teams. I was able to find a lot of very important information about this organization, except for the one piece that my boss was really focused on. He wanted to know the names of all of the board members. This would allow him to see if there were any connections between these individuals and anyone in our agency. My boss really valued networking opportunities.
I researched for hours trying to find these names and it seemed impossible. But, I did a search of the archives on STLToday.com and found photos of some of the members. The information in the captions was enough to give me the names of a few of the members, but I was never able to identify the whole group.

This situation is one example of the many research projects that I completed this week. I found that with the loss of clients I became a person that people in the office turned to for research. Although I focused primarily on new business development, I also did research on how we could improve PR for our current clients. This new role was not an issue for me, but it was not what I thought would take up most of my day. I enjoy writing and pitching, and I have no problem with research, but it takes up so much time and my hours were billable. As I was spending the majority of my days trying to find any information that was relevant and useful for the leadership at the agency, I found it hard to bill those hours because I felt almost guilty. That sounds strange because I was doing what I was asked, but I felt that with the hours being billed to projects and clients, I should have found it as fast as I possibly could. This was not always possible, and it was a task that it seems I just had to get used to.

My experiences this week really helped me to learn about the value of the client and their level of satisfaction. During my time at this agency I was a part of meetings that had both parties frustrated and that ended with internal chatter the moment the agenda was fulfilled. But, with the loss of clients in the past few weeks I realized that there needs to be absolutely clear communications at all times. Clients are likely to not agree or understand what you have in the media plan or what you
envision for the campaign. It is our job as an agency not to get frustrated. We may think that this is the best route for them to achieve optimal success, but if they aren't on board how effective can it really be? This is especially true in public relations. As I have experienced, the clients may not fully understand what earned media is. They may think that because the outlets are not picking up what is being pitched, that means that we aren’t doing our jobs. This is not the case. It is only true if we are not communicating with the client what we are doing to meet the campaign goals. We needed to work with the client to help to promote all events and news that was relevant to them. As a marketing or public relations professional we have not done our job the absolute best we can if we are running a campaign that the client only knows enough about to pay the bill.

Week 12 (8.17-8.23)

This week one of our clients had big news - they were acquiring a smaller engineering firm. This move expanded their business into Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana. We had been doing PR work primarily for their St. Louis office, but we had recently held a meeting with them to discuss expanding our duties to corporate PR as well. They had been happy with our presentation and had expressed their interest in the agency giving corporate PR a try. This acquisition announcement was the perfect opportunity to show them the reach that we could achieve with a major announcement.

My supervisor drafted a press release, and I completed the final revisions. While she had been away on vacation at the end of June I had updated our media list. I included local outlets for all offices that this company ran in the South and Midwest.
I had also included contacts for trade publications associated with their business. This was a tough list to make because I was not familiar with engineering or construction. There were so many different things that were associated with different parts of the process - I did a lot of research in order to complete this. I also made a list of newsletters for relevant associations. I listed the editors or publishers depending on what information was available. At the end of the whole thing we had a very long list that seemed to include anyone who would need to know about an announcement such as the one that we were getting ready to make.

We worked with our client to determine when the best day to release the information would be. They were planning to tell their employees before it was made public. So, the struggle was, when to make it public. It was not as though the employees were required to keep it quiet. It was requested, but as a PR professional, I thought it best to assume that the information would get out fast and that we would need to get in front of the local media. It is not as much a concern with the trade publications when it is only personnel being informed, but it is something that the local media is likely to jump on because of the size of the company and the importance of this acquisition.

We decided to send out the press release within a day of the personnel meeting. We were all set to go, until there was a hang-up with client approval. Our client sat on the release for two full days. I was worried that the local media were going to find out about it and not report all of the accurate information. I felt as though their decision to not make approval a priority put them in jeopardy of falling victim to reporting of false information.
Once we received the okay for the release, we sent it out to the entire list. Within hours there was online coverage from the business journals in the affected areas, as well as local and trade publications. This release was by far the most successful one that I had been a part of thus far at the agency.

Gathering the clips for the coverage was a good feeling. Seeing that the journalists had wanted to pick up a story that we thought important enough to share was a feeling of success. Throughout my time at this agency I had not always felt that our efforts had been rewarded with coverage. We had sent out releases that sometimes achieved zero hits, and that was just frustrating. This was a welcome change.
Evaluation of Work

A Reflection of My 12-Week Experience

Now that I have spent twelve weeks as a Public Relations Assistant Account Executive I have begun to wonder if this is what I want to do long term. I love the writing and editing duties associated with the work, but there is not a lot of face-to-face interaction. I sit at a desk all day working on my computer. I go to a ‘meeting’, which includes my team talking to the client over a phone. I think I would really enjoy work that allows me to meet with people and to hear what their goals are. I understand that this is not always possible, but spending ninety-five percent of my time communicating over the phone or through email is frustrating to me.

Also, I have found that the focus of the work is not appealing to me. In this role I have spent my time working with clients ranging from an engineering firm to a ridesharing program. I feel that I can’t create content to the best of my ability, because I don’t fully understand the client’s industry. Of course, I understand that research is a major part of this job and that it is my duty to learn everything that I can about the client, but it is just not information that I am interested in. I don’t feel that is fair to my clients.

That being said, I know that I could do a better job working in sports. This industry is something that I understand. I was a college athlete. I did media training and wrote blog posts. I worked with the Women’s Basketball Sports Information Director every day. I saw what she did on a daily basis, and I think that is where my skills would be best utilized. I understand that the sports industry is competitive. So
many college students want to pursue sports, but I feel that my skills and experiences have trained me to be truly effective in the sports industry.
November 30, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

Anna Cole worked for Geile/Leon from June through August 2015 as an Assistant Account Executive.

Among her duties were gathering and assembling background information and research as needed in development of reports, plans and strategies; preparing media lists; monitoring story placements; and assisting with writing of conference reports, client interviews and other materials relating to account management.

In fulfilling these duties, Anna was a smart, capable, honest and diligent employee.

As she moves on to a new job, I wish her well in it and all of her future endeavors.

Sincerely,

Mary Sawyer
Vice President of Public Relations
Physical Evidence of Work

During my time as an Assistant Account Executive, a lot of the work that I completed was research. I conducted research to learn more about clients in order to be able to create the best work that I could. In public relations it is so important to mine for a story, and if you are not familiar with the client’s industry as a whole, or more specifically, their work, you are not able to create effective public relations materials. This research assisted me in drafting traditional public relations materials, as well as media lists.

In addition to research, I collaborated on pitch emails, press releases and media advisories. These resulted in a number of placements. A few of those are featured below.
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Cincinnati engineering firm gets acquired

Aug 10, 2015, 11:29am EDT

INDUSTRIES & TAGS: Construction, Mergers And Acquisitions

A Greater Cincinnati engineering firm founded in 1971 has been sold.

St. Louis-based Geotechnology Inc. purchased Thelen Associates in a deal that closed on Aug. 17.

Financial details of the deal were not disclosed.

Thelen provides geotechnical engineering and construction materials testing in Greater Cincinnati and surrounding areas. It has provided services for more than 35,000 projects, including Paul Brown Stadium, Great American Ball Park, the Banks, RiverCenter, Miami University’s Farmer School of Business and more.

Thelen’s 108 employees will continue to work in its four offices and join Geotechnology’s existing 172 employees in six other offices.

Geotechnology expects the acquisition to help it more efficiently serve clients in the middle of the country and is part of its geographic expansion that includes new branch operations opened in Oxford, Miss., and Jonesboro, Ark., earlier this year.

“Thelen Associates has a highly regarded reputation in the industry, along with excellent staff and equipment.” Geotechnology president and CEO Ed Altrudeh said in the company’s announcement. “Currently, Thelen Associates does not offer geophysics or environmental services, which have been highly sought after services by our other clients. With more resources available, we will be able to help our clients solve problems and grow their businesses.”

Thelen expects the expansion of its specialties to allow it to better serve clients in the region and open more opportunities in the future.
Engineering firm Geotechnology makes acquisition

Aug 18, 2015, 5:39pm EDT  Updated Aug 18, 2015, 3:45pm EDT

INDUSTRIES & TAGS: Environment, Mergers And Acquisitions

Brian Feld
Reporters: St Louis Business Journal

Geotechnology Inc., a Maryland Heights-based environmental engineering firm, has acquired the assets of Erlanger, Kentucky-based Thelen Associates as part of a strategic plan to grow geographically.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed. Geotechnology reported billings of $20.2 million in 2014.

Ed Alizadeh, Geotechnology president and CEO

The acquisition adds 108 employees and four offices to Geotechnology’s footprint, mostly in the Midwest and mid-southern United States. With the acquisition, Geotechnology will have 280 employees operating from 10 offices. Geotechnology is led by President and CEO Ed Alizadeh.

The company has worked on projects for the St. Louis Cardinals, Illinois and Missouri departments of transportation, Metropolitan Sewer District and Washington University School of Medicine among others. Recently, the company worked as a consultant to the St. Louis NFL stadium task force.

Geotechnology’s last acquisition happened in 2013, when it acquired Environmental Operations of Illinois LLC’s operating assets. Terms of that deal weren’t disclosed. In 2010, it bought Hall, Blake & Associates out of Memphis for an undisclosed amount.

Now, the company has offices in Mississippi, Arkansas, Kansas, Illinois, Tennessee, Kentucky and Ohio.

Thelen Associates, founded in 1971, provides geotechnical engineering and construction materials testing services in the Greater Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky area, and regionally in Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana and Tennessee.

Geotechnology is one of the largest engineering firms in St. Louis, though between 2014 and 2015, the company’s local licensed engineers fell 15 percent to 17.
RICH HEPPE NAMED CORPORATE CHAIR OF LIGHT THE NIGHT WALK

BY Gisele Leon | Posted: Friday, August 07, 2015 10:36 AM
Contact: Mary Sawyer
Mary@giseleon.com
314-777-5950

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rich Heppe Named Corporate Chair of Light the Night Walk

ST. LOUIS — (August 7, 2015) Nidec Motor Corporation President of Industrial Motors and Systems Rich Heppe has been named corporate chair of the 17th annual Light the Night walk benefiting the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS).

The Light the Night event will be held on Saturday, September 26, 2015, at the Forest Park Central Fields, with the walk beginning at 5:30 p.m.

“I am proud to serve as the Chairman for the 2015 Light The Night Walk. Personally, my family has been supported by LLS through the volatile and emotional times of treatment prior to the loss of my wife and sister. Since 1995, we have been participating in the Walks, which have been a great support for us as well as the large number of people in our community who care. I urge all residents and businesses in the region to join us to make a difference and help us to find a cure.”

The Light The Night walk brings together communities to honor blood cancer survivors, as well as those lost to the disease. This annual event is helping to shine a light on the importance of finding cures and providing access to treatments for blood cancer patients.

The St. Louis walk is currently ranked 10 among 200 walks across the country that raises funds for the 1.1 million Americans living with a blood cancer. The St. Louis walk has set a fundraising goal of $1,000,000. Supporters have until January 31, 2016, to continue to raise money to meet that goal.

For additional information on Light The Night, contact Jane Smith at 314-590-2236 or Jane.Smith@lls.org or Ryan Miller at 314-590-2237 or Ryan.Miller@lls.org

To register for the walk, please visit http://pages.lightthenight.org/gat/StLouis15.

About The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society® (LLS) is the world’s largest voluntary health agency dedicated to blood cancers. The LLS mission: Cure leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and myeloma, and improve the quality of life of patients and their families. LLS funds lifesaving blood cancer research around the world and provides free information and support services.

Founded in 1947, LLS has headquarters in White Plains, NY. LLS has chapters throughout the United States and Canada. To learn more, visit www.LLS.org or contact the Information Resource Center at (800) 955-4572, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET. www.LLS.org/gat
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5:00 - 8:00 PM

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Music by Ted McCready, live painting by Kim Foster, and caricatures by David Zamudio.

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New England Baked Beans

Fresh Blueberry Pie
Boston Cream Pie
Mixed Berry Trifle Shooter
Research Analysis

Research Topic

Women have been entering the world of sports journalism in growing numbers. From ESPN to the local news, it has become hard to find a sports newscast without a female presence. This presence marks a victory for women, but it is also the beginning of new obstacles. Fighting for total equality has been a long battle, and it is one that may not be solved for many years to come.

In sports journalism, the issue goes beyond inclusion. Women have begun to make the cut, but they are being recognized in many cases for the wrong reasons. These females are being hired as "token" hires. They are put on the screen because of what their looks have to offer as opposed to their knowledge of sports. This is an objectification of the women. This puts females in a lose-lose position: choosing to be included seems to mean choosing to be objectified based upon your looks.

When conducting research into this prevalent and troubling social issue, I will take a feminist perspective. Feminism is the "theory that men and women should be equal politically, economically and socially" (Feminist Theory, p.1). Within this theory there are three relevant branches to the women in sports journalism objectification issue. The first is gender feminism. This states that there are fundamental differences between the sexes and that those differences aren’t bad or shouldn’t be equated. They should instead be "celebrated" and enhanced to benefit that individual (Feminist Theory, p.1). The next branch is moderate feminism. This is the perspective of feminism by the younger generation. Females at a younger age recognize that there was once discrimination, but they themselves have not
experienced it (Feminist Theory, p.2). The last offshoot of feminism that is relevant to this topic is cultural feminism. This is the idea that men and women have personality differences that navigate their roles in society (Feminist Theory, p.1).

This research study would be important because it would enhance the current research. There is a large amount of research done about what women in sports journalism think about their role. A number of researchers have conducted surveys, interviews, and focus groups about what these women perceive their career paths to be and what they think that their roles mean in a newsroom. The following proposed research would add to the current literature in that it would ask a different group - news directors and executive editors - what they see women as offering to their newsroom.

This research would offer real world relevance because it is something that is an increasing issue. According to research by Hardin, Dodd, and Laufer (2006), sports journalism is growing rapidly (p. 429). They found that this growth is the fastest it has ever been since the enactment of Title IX in the 1970s, and as a result universities are offering more and more programs in sports journalism (Hardin, 2006, p. 437). This will just keep the industry growing. With such growth it is important to understand the social implications it is having on the issue of gender discrimination. If women are choosing to pursue this as a career they deserve to be taken seriously and not objectified as a visual object.
Literature Review

Lack of Equality in the Newsroom.

For the women who aren't turned away from pursuing sports journalism by the perceptions and the training biases there is a common understanding amongst their female peers. Hardin and Shain (2005) conducted a focus group of women in the Association for Women in Sports Media. They found that women in sports journalism feel that they need to support each other and form a network of communication and common struggles (Hardin, 2005, p. 28). Although that may help them in certain situations, this study also had found that there are characteristics bred from public perceptions of the industry, and they were things that a support system wouldn't always be able to remedy. This study found that women felt a lack of respect from not only their male counterparts, but also from sports fans (Hardin, 2005, p. 28). The women interviewed reported "feeling constant pressure to prove themselves" (Hardin, 2005, p.29).

In another study conducted by Hardin, Shain, and Shultz-Poniatowski (2008) they interviewed professional women in the field and found that women feel the constant need to prove why they are there. They found that this feeling stems from the general belief by female sports journalists and their colleagues that each woman is a "quota" hire (Hardin, 2008, p. 69). Females were put in positions that made them feel insignificant and that they were a "quota" hire instead of a "merit" hire (Miller, 1995, p.887). Hardin et al. (2008) reported that women were treated as being ignorant to sports in general and that when they were a part of any office conversations it was about things such as dating issues or other "off-color"
discussions (p. 74). The overall consensus was that being a woman got these journalists the job, but being a woman also left them at the disadvantage when it came to performing it (Hardin, 2008, p. 74).

According to the research, performing well is not the biggest concern for women in this industry. They are more concerned with lack of promotional opportunities. A survey of women in the Association of Women in Sports Media conducted by Smucker et al. (2003) found that women in sports journalism encountered a glass ceiling very quickly once they started their careers (p. 405). They found that younger reporters were not as skeptical about their advancement opportunities as their older colleagues. This was because when they were first in their role they had small, quick promotions, which stopped coming and left them at a place that did not satisfy their career ambitions long-term (Smucker, 2003, p. 405). They tied this directly into hegemonic ideology when they said:

"In such structures, men will often allow women to break into the male-dominated profession through entry level positions and early promotional opportunities. However, the resistance to women moving up becomes greater and women find their promotional opportunities more limited as they attempt to progress upward in their careers. The male hegemonic structure of sport and sports journalism is such that entrance can be gained and initial promotions obtained, but the glass ceiling is still firmly in place in terms of upper editorial positions within the sports department" (Smucker, 2003, P. 405).
This study found that other than dissatisfaction with promotion, women were overall doing well. They were satisfied with their level of pay, supervision, the work itself, and they had a general satisfaction with co-workers (Smucker, 2003, p. 406). The big problem was promotion and most women reported that when they hit the point in which their career had reached its peak, they felt forced to change jobs and/or organizations rather quickly (Smucker, 2003, p. 407). This caused a lot of instability in their lives, which posed another major issue - family life.

Women in sports journalism reported in many of the surveys and research that family life and stability are a major drawback to choosing this profession. Women in sports reporting feel that they have a "socially constructed responsibility to sacrifice career mobility for childrearing" (Hardin, 2008, p. 75). Women also revealed in a survey the feeling that their employers were not flexible with hours and assignments and that they weren't being helpful in coordinating schedules for their reporters that would work with traditional childcare responsibilities (Hardin, 2005, p. 31).

A more general study about women and the alignment of their careers and their family lives puts this into perspective. Hite and McDonald (2003) conducted focus groups with women in non-managerial positions. They reported that women who set goals often change them as their lives go through a major transition such as marriage or having a child (p. 228). Even for monetary reasons women in other fields had to choose whether to devote more time to their families or to building their careers (Hite, 2003, p.229). This study found that women working for organizations that were willing to help them to plan and coordinate both aspects of
their lives had happier employees who stayed at the same company for longer periods of time (Hite, 2003, p. 232).

**Stereotypes and Assumptions of Male/Female Roles.**

There have been many issues raised as more women have become active in covering national and international sporting events. The first of which is the sexualized comments and the harassment that has been tied to it. Research conducted by Mastro et al. (2012) found through participant response that women who work on sports shows are few and that they are evaluated on their looks as opposed to their knowledge (p.459). But, they also found that race and gender played a major role in perception of the effectiveness of the sports reporter. They found that in white, female-dominated sports, white female reporters were more trusted by their audience (Mastro, 2012, p. 469).

They also found that black female reporters were viewed most favorably when they were reporting about the WNBA (Mastro, 2012, p. 469). The connection between positive view of the reporter being tied to a similar race and gender of the majority of athletes in the sport was a commonly found factor for both male and female reporters, until it came to evaluating the NFL. The group that was surveyed said that they trusted white male reporters because they are usually in the "high-profile" position in that sport (i.e., quarterback) (Mastro, 2012, p. 469). Other than the difference in the NFL, the results show that people view someone most similar to the athletes to be most knowledgeable about the sport. The issue with this is the lack of coverage that women’s sports receives which ties back to the audience seeing women reporting revenue sports with less belief in their credibility.
One possible solution to this issue was to ask the editors. Editors have access to data about their audience and they also have more of a role in determining the direction of a publication. Hardin conducted an interview with 285 editors about women's sports coverage. Only four of these editors were female. The results showed that these editors were basing their opinions on their own sense of audience interests. They reported viewing female athletes as less athletic and less interesting than men (Hardin, 2005, p. 73). They reported that around half of the editors felt that Title IX put too much pressure on expectations of news coverage for women's sports and they viewed female athletics with resentment (Hardin, 2005, p. 73). Hardin (2005) suggests that this view of athletics could be alienating potential readers (p. 72). The author ties in hegemonic ideology to the decisions and beliefs of the editors. She reports that these beliefs and preconceived notions are justifying the decisions of the editors (Hardin, 2005, p. 72).

In all areas of news, women are being assigned the human-interest pieces. The Routledge Handbook of Sport Communication evaluates assignments of female sports reporters in broadcast news using the post-structural theory. It says that assigning female broadcasters to working on the sidelines at sporting events as opposed allowing them to be a part of in booth analysis is forcing them to cover "human interest" stories (Whiteside, 2013, p. 35). It continues on to read:

"Not only is she doing what might be characterized as "woman's work" (for example, reporting on the "softer," off-the-field stories), but she is occupying a space that is less valued in the profession compared with the television booth where the announcers authoritatively inform and explain the game to
the viewer. From a post-structural perspective, these types of practices are a technology through which gendered identities are produced; in other words, it is not that female reporters are relegated to working in certain spaces, but that we come to understand the category of a female reporter through seeing her work in those spaces" (Whiteside, 2013, p. 35).

This shows that females are assigned a role within their gender and their career. It shows that they are following that direction despite feelings that it is narrowing their chances of advancing in their careers.

Although females in sports journalism face these challenges, they are not alone; others in communications roles face similar hardships (Oakley, 2000, p.321). The book titled Strategic Sport Communication (2007) suggested networking as a means of overcoming the setbacks that women face in their roles in the industry (p. 40). Pedersen et al. (2007) stressed the need for women to communicate with other women following the same career path, as well as those in other roles in the industry. The authors stated that “to advance in sport communication, professionals must be willing to build relationships and network with colleagues in the field and in those fields related to the discipline” (Pedersen, 2007, p. 40). By related fields they are referring to journalists in print and broadcast, as well as women in sports operations, marketing, management, and sales. The unity of the women pursuing these roles in sports allows for them to “amass a significant level of personal power and loyalty, which can ensure a successful and fulfilling career in sport” (Pedersen, 2007, p. 40). So, although women in sports journalism feel that they have a glass
ceiling, they are not alone in the industry, and their ability to connect and collaborate will only help to provide additional opportunities for their career.

**Methods**

One of the most effective methods will be conducting interviews. Due to the fact that all previous research on this topic has used information gathering from the journalists themselves, the proposed research is focusing on interviews with news directors and editors in newsrooms, as well as individuals working in sports promotion. This is because these individuals are responsible for hiring, and that means determining the effectiveness of men and women at completing the jobs being filled.

The sample size for this research will be three. I chose this number because this will allow me to talk to one person in every hiring capacity for sports journalism. Choosing the company, and the employee of that company, from each category of the sample will be random selection.

The first individual that is important to interview is a news director at a broadcast outlet. This person will be able to answer questions as someone who interviews and hires on-air talent. They can speak to what qualities they are looking for. This perspective will allow for the interviewer to assess what the attributes are that the individual looks for in both male and female reporters, and also what is something that would deter them from hiring a candidate.

The second individual that will be interviewed is a talent agency representative. This person has experience working with media and media placement. They know what a client is looking for to represent their brand. They
will have experience working with the selection of reporters and media outlets. This perspective will allow for a clearer picture of the impact that the selection of a specific journalist can have on a brand or company.

The third interviewee will be a sports editor of a print publication. This individual, much like the news directors, has input relative to the selection of reporters and anchors at the outlet they are working for. This individual also assigns story ideas to each reporter. The editor has experience with the direction that their publication is looking to go, and the public feedback or reaction to certain reporters. They have the ability to work with recruiters to find individuals that meet the qualities they are seeking. These leaders will offer a perspective that is different than the other two being interviewed, in that they will need to address not only the newsroom’s immediate needs, but also a need to fulfill what the reader reacts with the most.

The interviews will be unstructured. This is because I am attempting to understand the behaviors of these individuals and their social thinking in terms of gender. Fontana & Frey (1994) stress the importance of unstructured interviews in attempting to "understand the complex behavior of members of society without imposing any a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry" (p.366). Understanding the interviewees responses without making them feel attacked or using accusatory questions is the goal of using unstructured interviews in this research. The comfort level will be extremely important. These individuals are being asked questions to understand their level of comfort in hiring women for roles in sports journalism. They are going to want to give socially acceptable answers. The
interviewer is going to have to ask questions that are not accusatory at all - wording will be crucial. The interviewee can't feel attacked or accused of sexism in any way or the results will be inaccurate.

With this in mind, it will be a productive strategy to ease into the specific gender-based questions. This will assist in building rapport with the interviewee. The interviewer will start with more broad questions about hiring and then narrow them down to get to the base of the interviewee’s thoughts regarding gender differences in these roles.

In terms of topics to cover, the interviewer will ask questions about the interviewee’s thoughts on the changing role of women in sports journalism. They will ask questions such as “What changed that allowed women to break into this industry?” and “What is the ideal role for a woman in the newsroom?” They will focus on the ideal candidate for different jobs in sports (i.e., anchor, analyst, color commentator, reporter). Establishing what qualities makes each individual successful will help transition into questions about which of those qualities men have an advantage in, and also which women may have an advantage in.

After completing the interviews, this researcher will conduct a case study of two female sports reporters. The first reporter will be someone who has had significant success in the field. The subject will have had a career lasting longer than five years, and is now working at a major broadcast outlet (e.g., ESPN, FOX Sports, CBS). This person will also have success and recognition outside of the world of sports. For example, Erin Andrews has endorsement deals and hosts Dancing With The Stars. This will help to demonstrate that their broadcast career has surpassed
basic reporting and resulted in public recognition off of the field/court. The aforementioned research found that women in sports journalism felt they had a limited opportunity for promotion; this success beyond journalism will assist in refuting that and allow for the evaluation of why that was not true in this case.

The second person to be researched in the case study will be an individual who was not able to find lasting success or career satisfaction. This woman will have started out on a path to sports reporting, but will have switched to another profession along the way. The contrast of these two professionals will allow for the evaluation of the contributing factors in their differing outcomes.

This research will be credible because of the structure. Choosing the sample is specific. This sample shows the different characteristics that individuals in charge of hiring, but in various roles, value in a female sports reporter. It also covers different size organizations which makes the results applicable to all levels of journalism. This allows for it to be relevant to the entire industry. Also, the emphasis on individual hiring practices, as opposed to an institutional level approach, increases the likelihood that the results are representative to the industry and not just one station or agency. All of these factors increase validity, while also increasing transferability to the industry as a whole.

Using both interviews and a case study will also enhance the validity of the research. This triangulation methodology uses a qualitative and a quantitative approach, both of which are establishing the same thing. These methods are applied to recognize the motivating factors in the hiring and success of female sports journalists. Together, the results of these methods will help define what it takes for
a female to be hired in this industry, as well as key characteristics and/or requirements for these women to have a long and successful career in sports broadcasting.

One study that used a similar methodology was a study conducted by Cindy J. Price and Michael R. Brown in 2010. This study, titled "Adapting Small Market Rural Media to the Challenges of New Media: Interviews with Small Market Rural Managers," was similar in a few ways. The first is the method of interviewing. Price and Brown selected a group of small market managers and administrators at newspapers in rural areas to ask their thoughts on the changing media and addition of new media. Much like my proposed method, the researchers were looking to find out about the evolution of their targeted media group. This study was also the first of its kind. In the same way that my study is one of the first to interview the hiring personnel in sports journalism, this is the first to target the specific group that Price and Brown were studying. Although this study chose a semi-structured interview format, they were still looking for answers that could be built upon, making it not completely structured.

Results

Unstructured interviews were the first method used in this research study. As outlined in the methods, three individuals in the news industry were chosen. The first interview was completed with a talent agent for broadcast news personnel. The second interview was with the associate managing sports editor for a major Chicago newspaper. The third and final interview was with the assistant news director at a top-25 market size news station.
Unstructured interviews were chosen in order to make the interviewee feel more comfortable about gender-based questions. All of the subjects were aware of the topic of this research, so creating a discussion rather than a question and answer session was key in terms of not receiving unauthentic or “politically correct” answers.

The first interview – with the broadcast talent agent – was the longest of the three. The subject was very straightforward with his thoughts about what it takes to succeed in broadcast journalism, and more specifically in sports reporting. He described having presence and a good voice consistently throughout the interview. Also, from the beginning, he spoke about the importance of appearance. He referenced a number of his own clients that have had success primarily because of their appearance, but he also mentioned instances in which networks asked for specific characteristics relative to personal appearance.

The interview with the agent had the theme of appearance throughout. He put a high level of importance upon a journalist's looks and their presence on-air and off. He described the process of acquiring clients – they send him tapes and he evaluates. During this process he focuses on the importance of the first few seconds of a candidate's reel. He said that many news directors and others in a hiring capacity don’t have the time to sit through the entire tape, and they often make almost immediate decisions based on the first few shots that they see.

In regards to females in sports specific journalist roles, he said that knowledge is not necessarily what will carry a career. As with the beginning of the interview when the discussion was about news in general, he referenced the
importance of what a person looks like. He indicated that good presence is about a number of things (i.e., voice, setting, experience), but it is primarily focused on looks.

When discussing the importance of knowledge in sports reporting on the network level, he indicated that it was not as important in certain roles. He said numerous times that “knowledge is power,” but he also said that candidates in sports can often get away with a lack of knowledge as long as their looks are appealing. However, on more than one occasion, he did reference the fact that people who don’t have the sports knowledge may be caught in an embarrassing position when they are on the air. He felt that the passion that someone may feel about sports is not reason enough to pursue a sports career and certainly is not going to lead to a completely successful career in sports journalism.

The second interview, with the associate managing sports editor of a Chicago-based newspaper, highlighted many important factors when hiring candidates - many of which were different than those emphasized by the first interviewee. The most notable difference was that this interviewee did not mention the gender of the journalist at all. This interview was significantly shorter and it focused entirely on a candidate’s knowledge of journalism. This individual felt very strongly that a journalist who is to be successful in sports needs to have a strong ability to be a good writer, but, aside from that, there were no other universal themes. He repeatedly stressed the point that, to work in the Chicago market at a newspaper the size of the one he is at, the candidate must have a number of years of experience or internships in order to come in and work as a full-time writer. He didn’t stress experience in sports or expansive knowledge of sports. Instead he
stressed the ability to take a story and make it unique. He looks for people who can take the story for that day’s edition and make it unlike the one that every other journalist covering that same event will be writing about.

This interview had a focus on technical skills in journalism. The interviewee wasn’t extremely interested in where a candidate went to school or their grades while they were completing their studies. Rather he was focused on their past work. When looking to hire a candidate he said that he will look at their past work and also their conduct in a fast-paced, newsroom environment. He will call upon past contacts that worked on the same team as the candidate. He will use that information to evaluate whether the individual that he is interested in can keep up with the Chicago sports news cycle, and whether they can write columns, features, or game recaps and previews that are going to grab the audience in a way that no other journalist at a competing outlet is able to.

One topic that became a focus near the end of the interview was this editor’s preference for those interested in news, and not just sports. He said that he would “prefer” someone that had done news before. He avoids candidates that only want to write about sports. He finds that a number of people pursue sports journalism simply for the opportunity to be near athletes or events. He said that the best journalists are those that are focused on journalism as opposed to being a fan.

The final interview was with an assistant news director in a top-25 market, and it was similar to the second in focus. The interviewee did not mention gender before being directly asked about it. She said that in hiring a candidate, her focus is on their ability to tell a story. She looks for people that can take a typical story that
other journalists are covering and make it something that is unique to their storytelling style. She finds that the most successful journalists are those that have an ability to connect a story to the audience they are speaking to.

She also spoke to the crossover between news and sports in broadcast journalism. She felt that people who pursue sports need a special kind of command, and that they need to be able to think quickly when they are going live on the air. She said that people in sports could be very successful in news with a lot of hard work to make that transition. In her experience, she has found that people who cover sports need to be aware of the community, and they need to be aware of the general news just as much as the journalists that aren’t covering sports. This is because they need to be able to discuss sports news with a more marketable lens. That is, they need to be able to make it relatable to the mass audience, and appealing to those who may already be familiar with the general aspects of that story. She felt that sports journalists need to be focused on what is happening in all news, not just the world of sports.

Following the unstructured interviews, a case study was conducted directly comparing the career trajectories of Kristen Ledlow, a sports broadcaster, and Paula Faris, a woman who started her career in sports journalism, but chose to accept a network position in New York City with ABC.

Ledlow, 27, is currently a host for NBA TV. She appears on the weekly show “Inside Stuff,” makes appearances during the NBA season on NBA TV’s “NBA Style” and “GameTime,” and also attends/hosts events as a Turner Sports representative (kristenledlow.com).
Ledlow, a Florida native, graduated from Southeastern University. During her undergraduate studies in broadcast and communications, she was also a key member of the women’s volleyball team and the women’s basketball team. She earned All-American honors in volleyball. Despite double majoring and being a very active student-athlete, Ledlow was able to hold two internships that would prove to be key in her future career. Ledlow was an intern in Orlando during the NBA Finals, and she also did some intern work at the 2010 ESPY Awards.

During her senior year of college, Ledlow earned titles outside of sports and sports broadcast. She competed in, and was crowned, “Miss Capital City USA” (2012), and she placed in the top 5 at the Miss Florida USA competition. During this time, she served as the in-game reporter for the Southeastern University men’s basketball games. She conducted interviews and did the play-by-play work (kristenledlow.com).

As soon as she completed her degrees, Ledlow was hired as the host of the “Good News Show.” This was a daily program on WTXL-TV in Tallahassee. After working on this show for two years, she entered the sports industry. She began working as a team member for 97.9 ESPN Radio station in Tallahassee. Her primary reporting responsibility was coverage of Florida State athletic events (kristenledlow.com).

The following year Ledlow made the move to Atlanta where she still lives and works today. She accepted a position with FOX Sports as a Southeast Field Reporter. She focused her reports on SEC and ACC football and basketball. After only a year in that position she moved into the role of host when she began work for 92.9 The
Game. She was the host of “The Opening Drive with Rick Kamla, Randy Cross and Kristen Ledlow.” Within 13 months, she began working for NBA TV in the same capacity that she does today (kristenedlow.com).

Similar to Ledlow, Paula Faris also served in a number of newsrooms before accepting her current network position. Faris, a Michigan native, graduated in 1997 with a degree in broadcast journalism from Cedarville University in Ohio. Upon graduation, Faris began working behind the camera. She was responsible for shooting, producing and editing at WKEF/WRGT-TV. In 2002, Faris began working on-air full-time. She continued at WKEF/WREG-TV as a sports reporter, but she also worked as a weekend sports anchor at WPCO-TV in Cincinnati for three years. Following this assignment, Faris moved to Chicago to begin working at WMAQ-TV as a sports reporter. She worked in this market and at this station for six years (ABC News).

Since she and her family’s move to New York, she has served as a co-anchor on “Good Morning America’s” weekend show. She has also spent time as co-anchor of “World News Now” and “America This Morning.” In September of 2015 she began working as a co-host on “The View.” In addition, she is a reporter for ABC’s online platforms (ABC News).

Although Faris left sports reporting, she has been able to cover a few major sports scandals/developments for ABC programs. She has done some reporting of the head trauma issue that is currently a focal point in both amateur and professional athletics. She also reported on the New England Patriots when the
“Deflate-gate” scandal surfaced. However, the majority of her on-air presence is focused in general news (ABC News).

**Discussion**

There are a number of key findings in this study when considering female sports journalists. The initial research questions were as follows:

1. *What characteristics are decisive in the hiring of a female sports journalist?*
2. *Once hired, why are women unable to advance beyond entry-level sports journalism positions? (For this study, advancement is referring to upward movement within newsroom management.)*

The three interviews revealed valuable information when considering the first research question. All of the interviews had entirely different focal themes throughout (appearance and knowledge, journalism skills, storytelling), but one theme was consistent: the idea that a prospective sports journalist has to have more than a passion for sports; they must instead have a passion for journalism. The interview with the broadcast talent agent addressed this when he spoke to the idea that many of the individuals that he works with have a desire to be on TV. He stated numerous times that it takes more than that to be successful in broadcast journalism. He indicated repeatedly the importance of looks in sports in order for a woman to stand out. He even went so far as to negate the importance of knowledge specific to sports, but he repeatedly referenced the desire to succeed as a journalist.

He gave the examples of the women that he has worked with in the general news-reporting arena of journalism. When discussing these examples he talked about the need for them to have a presence, and for them to be well spoken. He spoke to the
fact that these women need to be commanding when they are off camera as well. His discussion of the need for him to be able to “sell” their abilities to news directors is indicative of the need for a woman to be able to have skills aside from appearance. Although he did focus much of his interview on looks, he seemed to only speak to that when asked questions directly related to women. He emphasized the need to be able to be a good on-air personality and a good in-person interview in order to achieve the network level of success.

These characteristics of presence and personality were also mentioned in the second interview, however the print editor was very adamant that success is directly related to good technical journalism skills. Although he spoke about print, he also mentioned that a candidate that is able to provide television, radio, or other multimedia clips is someone that he will give additional consideration to. He looks for someone that practices journalism and has the ability to take a story and make it his/her own.

This skill directly relates to the final interview’s emphasis on storytelling. She said that this fundamental journalism skill is one that is often missed. She pointed out that it requires a person that has the training, but also the desire to mine for, and tell, a story. The assistant news director that was interviewed spoke to the presence and the “command” that were referenced in the first interview as well.

In all three interviews those in hiring positions in the world of sports journalism were focused on the need for a candidate to be a journalist first. The focus on presence and command of the room or area was something that makes candidates stand out from the pack. The ability to capture the attention of the
audience during the first few seconds of a clip in both broadcast and in print was crucial to being hired at a mid-major or major outlet. Also, the desire to dig for a story within something that may be reported by numerous outlets was so important in these three interviews. For a candidate to know that their story needs to tell a different angle in order to make the game of the day or the trade of the week more of a story was something that the three interviewees noted not every candidate has.

During the literature review of this research, not much attention was given to the technical or reporting skills of females in the industry. One study referenced the fact that women were being assigned to human-interest pieces when working in the sports department.

The Routledge Handbook of Sport Communication evaluates assignments of female sports reporters in broadcast news using the post-structural theory. It says that assigning female broadcasters to working on the sidelines at sporting events as opposed to allowing them to be a part of in-booth analysis is forcing them to cover "human interest" stories (Whiteside, 2013, p. 35). It continues on to read:

"Not only is she doing what might be characterized as "woman's work" (for example, reporting on the "softer," off-the-field stories), but she is occupying a space that is less valued in the profession compared with the television booth where the announcers authoritatively inform and explain the game to the viewer. From a post-structural perspective, these types of practices are a technology through which gendered identities are produced; in other words, it is not that female reporters are relegated to working in certain spaces, but
that we come to understand the category of a female reporter through seeing her work in those spaces” (Whiteside, 2013, p. 35).

This analysis of the work that women are assigned may have been conducted without giving much weight to the idea of telling the story behind the game. Two of the three interviewees emphasized the importance of storytelling and finding the untold angle. The Routledge Handbook of Sport Communication focusing on the idea that females working the sideline is “soft” news reporting is ignoring the fact that these are often the audio clips and quotes used in highlights. People are interested in the athletes or coaches and what they think. Calling this “soft” news is using a feminist lens to evaluate the journalism as opposed to more broadly considering what the audience is interested in, and the storytelling side of journalism.

The second interview question asks about what may hold women back from advancing in their careers. The case study highlighted those challenges when discussing the different career and family lives that Faris and Ledlow have.

When directly comparing the successful journalism careers of both Ledlow and Faris, a few differences are key. The first is promotional opportunities. As discussed in the Literature Review, a survey of women in the Association of Women in Sports Media conducted by Smucker et al. (2003) found that women in sports journalism encountered a glass ceiling very quickly once they started their careers (p. 405). They found that younger reporters were not as skeptical about their advancement opportunities as their older colleagues. This was because when they were first in their role they had small, quick promotions, which stopped coming and
left them at a place that did not satisfy their career ambitions long-term (Smucker, 2003, p. 405).

This research draws attention to the age difference between Ledlow (27) and Faris (40). When Faris began her career she worked off the air because of a lack of opportunities for on-air work in sports. Once she did acquire an anchoring job, she spent three, and then six years, at each station before moving on. Ledlow spent an average of one year in each role that she held leading up to her current position with NBA TV.

When Faris left her sports reporting job in Chicago in October of 2011, she was quoted by the Chicago Tribune as saying [of the career move], “Sometimes you have to leave to be seen in a different light. I’ve always felt that if you can be a sports reporter, you can be a news reporter.” She stated in other interviews after announcing the move, that she is passionate about sports, but that this network opportunity was one that she could not pass up.

This drastic career move aligns with what Smucker et al. (2003) stated when they addressed skepticism about advancement opportunities. Faris had been working in the Chicago market for six years covering sports. This market is a larger one, but the opportunity to move to a network would take her to the national stage. As a woman over 35 years of age at this time, it could be seen as her taking her once in a lifetime opportunity to work for a network.

Another difference between Ledlow and Faris are their responsibilities outside of the newsroom, more specifically related to familial duties. Women in sports journalism reported in many of the research that family life and stability are
a major drawback to choosing this profession. Women in sports reporting feel that they have a "socially constructed responsibility to sacrifice career mobility for childrearing" (Hardin, 2008, p. 75). Women also revealed in a survey the feeling that their employers were not flexible with hours and assignments, and that they weren't being helpful in coordinating schedules for their reporters that would work with traditional childcare responsibilities (Hardin, 2005, p. 31).

When considering Faris’ decision to leave sports for a network anchoring and reporting position, her husband and three children were a factor. In every interview that she gave when announcing her decision to leave Chicago, Faris referenced the decision as one made by her and her husband. Working as a sports reporter/anchor means covering games on weekends or in the evenings. In one interview she specifically said, “I’ll have Sundays off” (timeout.com). Although she does still work on Sundays in her current position, she now has a set schedule. This quote speaks to her ability to enjoy time that is traditionally (professional sports, particularly the NFL, are often aired on Sunday afternoons and evenings) a full workday for a sports journalist. As a mother of three, her choice to move to her current position gives her much more stability in terms of working hours.

In contrast, Ledlow is a 27-year old, unmarried sports reporter. Although she is based in Atlanta, her responsibilities take her nationally when she is reporting on-site at games or acting as a Turner Broadcasting spokesperson/personality.

A more general study about women and the alignment of their careers and their family lives puts this into perspective. Hite and McDonald (2003) conducted focus groups with women in non-managerial positions. They reported that women
who set goals often change them as their lives go through a major transition such as marriage or having a child (p. 228). Even for monetary reasons women in other fields had to choose whether to devote more time to their families or to building their careers (Hite, 2003, p.229). This study found that women working for organizations that were willing to help them to plan and coordinate both aspects of their lives had happier employees who stayed at the same company for longer periods of time (Hite, 2003, p.232).

This study conducted by Hite and McDonald (2003) is applicable to Faris' career change. She had served as a sports producer, photographer and editor prior to spending just short of a decade reporting on collegiate and professional sports. It could be stated that this was the path toward achieving her sports career goals. However, her goals had to be shifted to accommodate family life. The fact that she was able to obtain a network job, which is something that a number of journalists work their whole careers for and never achieve, can be seen as reaching an ultimate broadcast journalist’s career goal, however it is a slight variation from what she had initially aimed for. Her marriage and the birth of her three kids led her to make the adjustment toward something with more regular hours and traveling.

In the case of Ledlow's career, she has not had to adjust her goals as she has not been married or had any children. That being said, many sports reporters can balance the irregular work and travel schedules (i.e., Sage Steele at ESPN), however, the referenced research found that this is not the case the majority of the time.

The research that was conducted during this study led to multiple conclusions. The first is that women need to approach sports journalism
assignments in a way that will tell a story. It isn’t considered "soft news" if they are giving a commonly reported issue or event an angle that is engaging. These women, much the same as men in this field, need to find what is unique to their audience and report the news that way. The most effective sports pieces are those that walk a viewer through what is happening to the coaches or players. People want to read a story, and not just a straightforward recap of what they just saw during the game.

This research also found that women are most successful in sports journalism when they are not faced with the challenge of balancing their work life and their home life. Females that do not have familial ties to one specific region have more availability to travel and report on events across the country. These assignments are most often at the network level. If females hope to achieve the network level of sports reporting they need availability in time and location.

**Recommendations**

In the future, I would suggest that individuals studying the hiring practices of women in sports journalism make a few key changes to their methods. The first change would be focusing on the audience’s perception of the female sports broadcasters. Surveys or focus groups asking for feedback on male and females reporting in the field, conducting play-by-play analysis, and anchoring sports-focused shows, would give a better idea of what the key characteristics are that receive the most favorable response. Success in news, and sports news, is all about ratings and viewership. With a better understanding of how the audience sees those delivering the news, and what they value, there can be a better understanding of what is, and what is not, successful or effective. This, combined with findings as to
what individuals in hiring positions look for, would be crucial in identifying key characteristics for sports broadcasters.

Another angle that should be considered is viewer response on social media. In recent months journalists have been gaining media attention of their own for both positive and negative responses to fan criticism on social media. More specifically, women are being called out for their appearances and stereotypes. In fact, some male sports reporters have even criticized their female counterparts. With a textual/social analysis of the comments that are being directed at different females in their specific roles (host, analyst, anchor, reporter) research can better uncover what it is that makes specific reporters, both male and female, successful in the sports broadcast industry.

Future research should also focus more on advancement past the level of reporter or anchor. The researcher in this study did not ask any of the individuals interviewed for their thoughts about advancement within the newsroom hierarchy. This subject is important because it speaks to the “glass ceiling” that much of the current research highlights as being an issue for female sports journalists. The Status of Women in the U.S. Media 2014 report stated that over 150 print publications and websites with a focus on sports news are employing ninety percent male editors (p.32). Including this topic in future research will give a better understanding of the attitudes and experiences of those in the newsrooms concerning women moving up this historically male dominated hierarchy.
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Appendix

Original Professional Project Proposal

Introduction

When deciding what path I want my career to follow, there have been many twists and turns along the way, but never a change in direction. I entered the Missouri School of Journalism Graduate program hoping to pursue broadcast journalism. During my undergraduate studies at Northwestern University I was an intern at Comcast SportsNet. It was during this experience that I realized that I could take my desire to pursue journalism and my love for sports and combine them to form my dream career.

During my first semester I was enrolled in the required broadcast classes, but I also chose to take Sports & Entertainment Promotions with Professor Frisby. I had some limited experience with marketing, but this class really opened my eyes to strategic communications as a whole. I saw that content creation was only a small part of something bigger - to promote and brand an organization as a whole. I realized that I wanted to be a part of the entire process.

After this realization I switched my studies to convergence journalism. With the importance of the internet and social media I knew that this was a field that was growing and it would allow me to learn to create and promote content simultaneously. From the skills that I developed in my introductory convergence class, combined with my experiences while I was working at Newsy and Mizzou Network I was able to have the opportunity to intern at FleishmanHillard in St.
Louis. My time in the Social Content Studio was invaluable and it assured me that I was on the right path.

Over my time in the journalism school I have learned photography skills in both still and video imaging. I have gained knowledge with programs such as Avid NewsCutter, Final Cut Pro, and PhotoShop. I have developed the basic skills and ethics needed to be successful in traditional journalism, as well as strategic communications. By changing my interest area I was not halting my progress, but I was instead expanding my opportunities for learning.

As I move forward, I am aiming to take what I have learned and combine it with what I know about the world of sports. As a former college athlete I am aware of all that it takes to engage fans. There is so much more than the three hours that the fans see their favorite athletes on the field or the court. I want to create content that is engaging and that will only enhance the affinity that fans feel.

**Professional Skills Component**

During my professional project I am aiming to land in either an agency or a marketing/public relations department of a sports program. Both of these selections will allow for me to develop a stronger understanding of the motives behind building a brand, which ties in directly with choosing representation. In the case of this research that representation is a female sports reporter.

There are two specific agency programs that I am interested in pursuing. The first is the Graduate Development Program with FleishmanHillard. This program is for graduate students and it is in the New York offices. It is similar to their internship program, but this individual has more independence while completing
projects. This position works directly with other FleishmanHillard professionals on client work. They also have a network of mentors in the office. This student participates in an office learning program, and has the opportunity to give a presentation to senior management. This opportunity would allow for me to build upon what I learned about FleishmanHillard and the industry in general during my time as the Social Content Intern in their St. Louis offices.

The second program that I am hoping is a good fit is the Associate Enrichment Program at Edelman. This is an 18-month rotational program in their Chicago office. Although this position is not specifically for graduate students, it is still an opportunity for independence in my work while learning. This program would give me the opportunity to expand on what I have learned during my time in graduate school. I have spent the majority of my time working on the social media side of advertising and public relations. This program gives the participating individual the opportunity to rotate through consumer marketing, corporate communications, crisis communications, digital employee engagement, financial communications/investor relations, health, media services, new business, and strategic planning. With all these experiences I would be able to feel comfortable in any sector of an agency in my future career, which would be extremely beneficial.

If I go in the direction of a marketing/public relations department of a sports program I am looking to work at a university. This would be more of an influential experience than working for a professional organization because it would allow for me to work for, and with, more than one sports team. At a university there is the challenge of representing and promoting female and male sports, and sports that
receive varying levels of attention. Being in a role that allows me to work with the coordination of coverage for these sports by female journalists will aid in my research in that it will allow me to see which situations a female is the best fit for that coverage. This will give me a better understanding of motivations behind the hiring of female sports journalists.

In any of these situations I would be utilizing what I have learned in graduate school. During my time at the Missouri School of Journalism I have studied Convergence Journalism and Strategic Communications. I have focused mostly on content creation. I have taken a number of courses that have helped me to develop these skills.

The first course that would tie in with my project experience is Broadcast News. This course taught me the basics of shooting video. I learned about angles and types of shots. I learned how to be both on camera and behind the lens. I also developed the skill of script writing for news. These skills will be helpful because it will allow me to evaluate the best broadcast media outlet placements for our client's needs. I will also be able to use my understanding while I am onsite with a client, helping to develop the best possible product for their brand.

The second course was Advanced Global Converged News. This course placed me in the Newsy newsroom. In recent years it seems that news consumers have become more comfortable with taking in shortened versions of the news. People want the main points as directly as possible. Newsy places an anchor on camera and talks through the coverage from a number of outlets for the event being covered. This newsroom was much different than any time that I had spent in a traditional
newsroom. It was not as fast-paced because the need was not immediate and the content wasn’t broadcasting live. However, the feedback on this product was from a national audience teaching me the importance of framing as well as accuracy.

The third course that has helped me to get to this point was Sports & Entertainment Promotions. My end goal is to be in the sports industry, so this course opened my eyes to what goes into the promotion and branding of a sports team or organization. This course is what sparked my interest in strategic communications. I had the opportunity to work on a rebranding presentation for the University of Missouri Athletic Department. There were so many components to consider when planning a rebranding effort and this course gave me the opportunity to impact each and every subgroup involved.

The fourth and final course was Fundamentals of Television, Radio, and Photojournalism. This was my introduction to convergence news. I learned the basics of web development and the fundamentals of multimedia presentation for the internet. This course opened my eyes to what it takes to draw traffic to a site and the importance of having more than words on a page. This was also my introduction to social media in news. We shared our work in the course via our social media channels. I was able to take my basic understanding of social media and apply it to what I was learning about audience engagement and social analytics.

All of these courses have prepared me for the programs that I am hoping to pursue during my professional project. I have the basic skills of content creation and social media efforts in brand development, but these programs will allow for me to expand my expertise to more traditional advertising and public relations. I am
enrolled in courses to help expand upon my writing of traditional strategic communications materials in the upcoming spring semester, but the experiences available next summer are ones that would take me from being prepared in an academic sense to integrated into the profession.

**Research Topic**

Women have been entering the world of sports journalism in growing numbers. From ESPN to the local news, it has become hard to find a sports newscast without a female presence. This presence marks a victory for women, but it also is the beginning of new obstacles. Fighting for total equality has been a long battle and it is one that may not be solved for many years to come.

In sports journalism, the issue goes beyond inclusion. Women have begun to make the cut, but they are being recognized in many cases for the wrong reasons. These females are being hired as "token" hires. They are put on the screen because of what their looks have to offer as opposed to their knowledge of sports. This is an objectification of the women. This puts females in a lose-lose position: choosing to be included seems to mean choosing to be objectified based upon your looks.

When conducting research into this prevalent and troubling social issue, I will take a feminist perspective. Feminism is the "theory that men and women should be equal politically, economically and socially" (Feminist Theory, p.1). Within this theory there are three relevant branches to the women in sports journalism objectification issue. The first is gender feminism. This states that there are fundamental differences between the sexes and that those differences aren’t bad or shouldn’t be equated. They should instead be "celebrated" and enhanced to benefit
that individual (Feminist Theory, p.1). The next branch is moderate feminism. This is the perspective of feminism by the younger generation. Females at a younger age recognize that there was once discrimination, but they themselves have not experienced it (Feminist Theory, p.2). The last offshoot of feminism that is relevant to this topic is cultural feminism. This is the idea that men and women have personality differences that navigate their roles in society (Feminist Theory, p.1).

This research study would be important because it would enhance the current research. There is a large amount of research done about what women in sports journalism think about their role. A number of researchers have conducted surveys, interviews, and focus groups about what these women perceive their career paths to be and what they think that their roles mean in a newsroom. The following proposed research would add to the current literature in that it would ask a different group - news directors and executive editors - what they see women as offering to their newsroom.

This research would offer a real world relevance because it is something that is an increasing issue. According to research by Hardin, Dodd, and Laufer (2006), sports journalism is growing rapidly (p. 429). They found that this growth is the fastest it has ever been since the enactment of Title IX in the 1970s, and as a result universities are offering more and more programs in sports journalism (Hardin, 2006, p. 437). This will just keep the industry growing. With such growth it is important to understand the social implications it is having on the issue of gender discrimination. If women are choosing to pursue this as a career they deserve to be taken seriously and not objectified as a visual object.
Research Questions

1. What characteristics are decisive in the hiring of a female sports journalist?

2. Once hired, why are women unable to advance beyond entry level sports journalism positions? (For this study, advancement is referring to upward movement within newsroom management.)

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for conducting the proposed research would be the use of the feminist theory. This is defined as the theory that "men and women should be equal politically, economically and socially" (Feminist Theory, p.1).

Within this definition it is important to consider how feminist theory is being looked at. Frey (1991) states, “a feminist view must be cultural, humanist, interpretive, phenomenological, and value oriented (p. 517). The inclusion of all of these elements makes feminist theory a very complex one.

Within feminism there are branches that tie even more closely to the research. The first is gender feminism. This is the idea that there are differences between men and women; these differences are unique to each gender and should be "celebrated" and enhanced (Feminist Theory, p.1).

Another branch within feminism that is relevant to the research is moderate feminism. This is focused on the view of feminism from the younger generation of women. These women are aware of the discrimination that the women before them faced, but they don’t want to be labeled as 'feminist' and they no longer view this discrimination as an issue (Feminist Theory, p.2).
The last relevant branch is cultural feminism. This is the idea that men and women have personality differences that navigate their roles in society (Feminist Theory, p.1). An example of that is the idea that women are kind and gentle in a way that men are not.

All three of these branches of feminism are important to the proposed research. Women in sports journalism are at a place where they have found a role and built a relevance in the industry, but they are not yet respected for the same qualities in this job that men are. Women in sports journalism aren’t turned to for sports knowledge despite being an expert on the topic. These women are seen as opposed to being heard. With these branches of feminism brought into consideration, it enhances one’s ability to recognize what women can offer to the field that men can’t. With more nurturing personalities, women are able to conduct interviews with sports figures and get different responses than a male journalist would. With the appreciation that older women were discriminated against in this field, the younger journalists are able to better appreciate their continuously growing roles and appreciation by both fans and coworkers, but they are still aware that they need to fight to earn more rights and equality with their male peers. These frameworks of feminism will offer the proposed research an additional level of analysis when coding and understanding interview responses for such gender differences.

One study that used feminist theory to conduct its research was done by Marie Hardin, Stacie Shain, and Kelly Shutlz-Poniatowski. These researchers, particularly Hardin and Shain, are known for their extensive work focusing on
women in sports journalism. This particular study was analyzing career longevity for women in this industry. Hardin et al. (2008) interviewed ten women. The interview with the participants was conducted after the participants had worked in sports journalism for less than two years. The interviews were semi-structured and used only non-directive questions (Hardin, 2008, p.71).

The findings of this study showed that those interviewed felt that they were seen as “quota” hires in their departments (Hardin, 2008, p. 73). They felt proud of their breakthrough into such a historically male industry. They also felt it was important to form a sort of alliance with their fellow female journalists against discrimination. The interesting thing that they heard was that the women felt that the biggest barrier was actually their age because of the lack of experience that they had. Hardin et al. (2008) reported that participants even went on to say that they felt that being female was an advantage in interviews with people in the sports industry because they felt that the people they were interviewing were opening up to them and showing a side that they wouldn’t show a male reporter. Hardin et al. (2008) chose to use a feminist lens for this study because of the fact that journalism is a gendered institution, and sports is as well (p.70). The approach they took “seeks to expose these individual power relations, examine how they are accepted, negotiated, or even contested by individuals, and, ultimately, advocate for a system in which the ideology itself is eradicated (Hardin, 2008, p.70). Hardin et al. used this study as the first round of interviews in a longitudinal study to determine the reasons that many of these women would leave sports journalism.
Hardin and Shain also conducted another study utilizing feminist theory. This study was concerned with what women find most challenging about their work and the environment that they are expected to complete it in. Following the feminist theory, Hardin and Shain (2005) state that “sports journalists use an ideology of neutrality that allows them to be misogynist and resistant to the coverage of women’s sport while simultaneously allowing them to claim neutrality (p. 806). They found that liberal feminists believe that female gatekeepers are the solution to this problem. The editors and journalists that they included in the study reported feeling that more females in the newsroom would result in increased coverage of women’s sports and a more positive work environment overall (Hardin, 2005, p. 806).

The methodology used in this study was quantitative. Hardin and Shain sent surveys to 288 members of the Association of Women in Sports Media. One-hundred and forty-four of those surveys were completed and returned. The results found that women see discrimination and harassment as part of the job (Hardin, 2005, p.814). Women also reported not having hope for career advancement and no feelings of obligation to advocate for coverage of women’s sports (Hardin, 2005, p.815).

Considering what Hardin and Shain discussed in this study regarding feminism it seems that the use of female gatekeepers is not an issue if those women are not advocating for that cause. The use of feminism in both of these studies is important to understand moving forward in my research because it is such a complex theory. According to what was stated earlier about gender feminism, the
differences between men and women are causing women to feel that the way they are being treated is acceptable and just a part of being a female in the sports department. This can also be placed under the second branch of feminism, or modern feminism. Women don’t want to be seen as feminist. In these studies women were not completely happy with work. They didn’t foresee much upward movement in their careers. They chose to only raise these as issues in a study - the label of ‘feminist’ that would come with increasing awareness with the masses would more than likely devastate their careers. The third branch of cultural feminism declares that women and men have distinct personality differences and that may be what causes women to be more passive in their discontent with their work. All of these subsections of feminism allow for a better overall analysis of the issue making it an ideal theory to utilize in my proposed research.

**Methods**

In answering these questions, the most effective method will be conducting interviews. Due to the fact that all previous research on this topic has used information gathering from the journalists themselves, the proposed research is focusing on interviews with news directors and executive editors in newsrooms, as well as individuals working in sports promotions and marketing. This is because these individuals are responsible for hiring and that means determining the effectiveness of men and women at completing the jobs being filled.

The sample size for this research will be three. I chose this number because this will allow me to talk to one person in every hiring capacity for sports journalists.
Choosing the company and the employee of that company from each category of the sample will be random selection.

The first individual that is important to interview is a news director at a sports broadcast outlet. This person will be able to answer questions as a person who interviews and hires on-air talent. They can speak to what the qualities are that they are looking for. This perspective will allow for the interviewer to assess what the attributes are that the individual seeks out in both male and female reporters, and also what is something that would deter them from hiring a candidate.

The second individual that will be interviewed is an agency representative. This person has experience working with media and media placement. They know what a client is looking for to represent their brand. They will have experience working with the selection of reporters and media outlets based upon what the clients that they are working with are looking for in term of brand representation. This perspective will allow for a clearer picture of the impact that the selection of a specific journalist can have on a brand or company.

The third interviewee will be an executive editor of a print publication. This individual, much like the news directors, has a say in the selection of reporters and anchors at the outlet they are working for. This individual also assigns story ideas to each reporter. The executive editor has experience with the direction that their publication is looking to go and the public feedback or reaction to certain reporters. They have the ability to work with recruiters to find individuals that meet the qualities that they are seeking. These leaders will offer a perspective that is different than the other two being interviewed in that they will need to address not only the
newsroom's immediate needs, but also a need to fulfill what the readers reacts with the most.

The interviews will be unstructured. This is because I am attempting to understand the behaviors of these individuals and their social thinking in terms of gender. Fontana & Frey (1994) stress the importance of unstructured interviews in attempting to "understand the complex behavior of members of society without imposing any a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry" (p.366). Understanding the interviewees responses without making them feel attacked or using accusatory questions is the goal of using unstructured interviews in this research. The comfort level will be extremely important. These individuals are being asked questions to understand their level of comfort in hiring women for roles in sports journalism. They are going to want to give socially acceptable answers. The interviewer is going to have to ask questions that are not accusatory at all - wording will be crucial. The interviewee can't feel attacked or accused of sexism in any way or the results will be inaccurate.

With this in mind, it would be a productive strategy to ease into the specific gender based questions. This would likely help to add to the building of rapport with the interviewee. The interviewer would start with more broad questions about hiring and then narrow them down to get to the base of the interviewee’s thoughts regarding gender differences in these roles.

It will be important for the interviewer to be aware of the individual they are talking with as a whole. These interviews would not be as effective on the phone, but Skype is an acceptable alternative if in-person interviews are not possible. The
interviewer will have to pay close attention to what is not being said. They will need to be focused on both information gathering as well as interaction. In terms of topics to cover, the interviewer will ask questions about the interviewee's thoughts on the changing role of women in sports journalism. They will ask questions such as 'What changed that allowed women to break into this industry?' and 'What is the ideal role for a woman in the newsroom?' They will focus on the ideal candidate for different jobs in sports (i.e., anchor, analyst, color commentator, reporter). Establishing what qualities makes each successful will help transition into questions about which of those qualities men have an advantage in, and also which women may have an advantage in.

After completing the interviews, this researcher will conduct a case study of two female sports reporters. The first reporter will be someone who has had significant success in the field. The subject will have had a career lasting longer than five years, and is now working at a major broadcast outlet (e.g., ESPN, FOX Sports, CBS). This person will also have success and recognition outside of the world of sports. For example, Erin Andrews has endorsement deals and hosts Dancing With The Stars. This will help to demonstrate that their broadcast career has surpassed basic reporting and resulted in public recognition off of the field/court. The aforementioned research found that women in sports journalism felt they had a limited opportunity for promotion; this success beyond journalism will assist in refuting that and allow for the evaluation of why that was not true in this case.

The second person to be researched in the case study will be an individual who was not able to find lasting success or career satisfaction. This woman will have
started out on a path to sports reporting, but will have switched to another profession along the way. The contrast of these two professionals will allow for the evaluation of the contributing factors in their differing outcomes.

This research will be credible because of the structure. Choosing the sample is specific in that it evaluates the different characteristics that individuals in charge of hiring, but in various roles, value in a female sports reporter. It also covers different size organizations which makes the results applicable to all levels of journalism. This allows for it to be generalizable to the entire industry. Also, the emphasis on a focus of individual hiring practices as opposed to an institutional level approach increases the likelihood that the results are more generalizable to the industry and not just one station or agency. All of these factors increase validity, while also increasing transferability to the industry as a whole.

Using both interviews and a case study will also increase the validity of the research. This methodological triangulation uses a qualitative and a quantitative method, both of which are establishing the same thing. These methods are set in place to shed light on the motivating factors in the hiring and success of female sports journalists. Together the results of these methods will speak to what it takes for a female to be hired in this industry, as well as what it takes for these women to have a long and successful career.

One study that I found that used a similar methodology was a study conducted by Cindy J. Price and Michael R. Brown in 2010. This study, titled "Adapting Small Market Rural Media to the Challenges of New Media: Interviews with Small Market Rural Managers," was similar in a few ways. The first is the
method of interviewing, Price and Brown selected a group of small market
managers and administrators at newspapers in rural areas to ask their thoughts on
the changing media and addition of new media. Much like my proposed method, the
researchers were looking to find out about the evolution of their targeted media
group. This study also was the first of its kind. In the same way that my study is one
of the first to interview the hiring personnel in sports journalism, this is the first to
target the specific group that Price and Brown were studying. Although this study
chose a semi-structured interview format, it was still looking for answers that could
be built upon to make it not completely structured.

**Conclusion**

This study is one that will produce results that are generalizable and it is
likely to produce results that could change the hiring practices of sports journalism.
I expect to find that the news producers, executive editors, and sports marketers
and promoters hire women with a few things in mind. As previous research suggests,
women feel that they are quota hires. I believe that this research will reveal that this
is true. Women are still hired as the woman on sports shows and productions. They
still serve the purpose of introducing the men and their thoughts on the
athlete/game. This research will reveal that those in the hiring position are not fully
aware, although they have beliefs of women best serving an assistance role, that
they don't even consider women for full journalism services on their shows.

The limitation of this research is the need for individuals to fulfill a societal
role of creating and maintaining equality between the sexes. The interviewees will
likely frame their answers in a socially acceptable way. Although the questions will
be carefully worded to not come across as accusatory, it is likely that the interviewee will catch on that they are being questioned about gender differences. This may result in them carefully crafting their answers to what they should say. If not handled carefully and correctly, this would create false results that would reveal nothing new as an end result of the research.

All of the past research was conducted with a focus on the journalists and their perception of their role in the newsroom. This would be one of the first studies to focus on those in the hiring position and what they are looking for in a candidate. Future research could expand upon this and look more in depth into what those in the leadership positions are pressing for in terms of the hiring of new talent. It would also be beneficial to conduct research with a focus on audience. Discovering what the audience prefers is important to the hiring of talent. Also, if the audience does not trust a woman as a sports journalist then there is an issue hiring women into that role. It may be an issue of lack of exposure to females as credible sports journalists, but it is cyclical in that the audience needs exposure to gain that trust but if the audience isn't accepting the female then hiring her is a risk. Future research into audience engagement would be very relevant to the success of hiring women in the role of sports journalists.

**Suitable Targets**

Upon completion of this research, the most relevant conference to select for presentation would be the Association of Women in Sports Media national convention. This meeting is held annually as a way for the women in this organization to come together and discuss the issues surrounding women in the
industry. The findings in this study would provide some insight into the hiring process that these women are a part of and will allow for them to draw attention to the issues it brings to light, as well as possible solutions.

The publication best suited for a study of this nature is the Journal of Sport & Social Issues. The focus of this journal is to discuss and analyze current sports issues. It is an international journal that has been in print since March of 1977 making it one that is seen as reliable and long-standing. Among this publication’s most read articles are a number of pieces focusing on females in the sports industry.
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