Thick Skin

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# Introduction

“I've learned very quickly in this industry that you have to develop a very, very thick skin and if you don't, you're not going to succeed.”   
- Erin Andrews (2009)

From the time that it was initially made possible through the invention and widespread popularity of the radio, broadcasting, the act of transmitting a radio or television program for public use, has been used effectively to [reach millions](http://www.exampleessays.com/essay_search/reach_millions.html) of people. Broadcasting has a very interesting history and has evolved over the many years it has been utilized. This was and still is by far the most convenient way to [reach millions](http://www.exampleessays.com/essay_search/reach_millions.html) of people at a time in a matter of seconds. Broadcasting has been, and will continue to be, the best source of information.

The sports department has historically been the most male-dominated space in U.S. newsrooms. Hardin, M., Shain S. (2005). Strength in Numbers? The Experiences and Attitudes of Women in Sports Media Careers. J&MC Quarterly, 82 (4), 804-819. Women have fought with men in many aspects and fields since the earliest times. While there is a number of a significant success where women have proven their abilities and worth in their respective domains, the undeniable reality of gender discrimination continues. In fact, prejudice against professional women never ceases to exit despite concrete manifestations of women’s achievements. This social justice research project focuses on Erin Andrews an ESPN Sport caster, and the video Michael David Barrett took that completely violated her privacy. You violated me and you violated all women, you are a sexual predator, a sexual deviant and they should lock you up." (Associated Press 2010)

In this paper, by using the case of Erin Andrews, I hope to clarify people’s views of female sports broadcasters, and educate the reader on difficulties that women face in the sports broadcasting industry.

# Literature Review

# Sports Broadcasters provide play-by-play commentary and analyses of games and sporting events, typically for radio and television stations. They also participate in post-game summaries and athlete interviews, along with radio or TV personalities. Broadcasters generally have a bachelor’s degree in broadcasting, several years of industry experience, and vast networks of industry contacts. (<http://education-portal.com/how_to_become_a_sports_broadcaster.html>).

## History of sports broadcasting:

The history of sports on U.S. television is the history of sports onnetworktelevision. Television got off the ground because of sports. With only 190,000 sets in use in 1948, the attraction of sports to the networks in its early period was not advertising dollars. Instead, broadcasters were looking toward the future of the medium, and aired sports as a means of boosting demand for television as a medium. Sports did indeed draw viewers, and although the stunning acceptance and diffusion of television cannot be attributed solely to sports, the number of sets in use in the U.S. reached ten and a half million by 1950. There are more televised sports today than ever before and they continue to draw a large total audience. Women have strived to gain equal rights within all social arenas, particularly the work force. Jane Chastain, Donna De Varona and Jeannie Morris are readily considered pioneers of women’s' sports casting by many. Chastain, who started her sports casting career in the mid-60's, was the first woman to work for a large network(CBS), and thought to be the first woman to do play-by-play.

## Gender Equity:

Many people study the movement of women into historically male dominated work environments. Broadcast Journalism, and media coverage of athletics is a notoriously gendered field. The role of women in athletics has been a long studied area as well. From its advent, women have played a decisively different role in sport than men. With time, the presence of female athletes has moved from non-existent to abundant. Males and females in sport, however, still face a particularly gendered experience. (Brennan S. (2004). Ceilings on the Sidelines: Gender Equity and Sports Broadcast Journalism. A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University. 14-16.) Even though women have a majority of rights today, they still feel cheated in the workplace. Women sports broadcasters still get treated unfairly. Not only is the job focused towards men, but it includes a lot of hard work. For example, working long hours, and researching to stay ahead or on top of the game. The emphasis placed on the physical appearance of females is stressed much more than that of males. (Davis, D.C., Krawczyk J. (2010). Female Sportscaster Credibility: Has Appearance Taken Precedence? Journal of Sports Media, 5 (2), 1-34.) One of the largest barriers females face are stereotypes related to appropriate behaviors, occupations, and appearances. A female’s standard of attractiveness differs greatly from that of males.

## Erin Andrews Case:

Erin Andrews is a popular ESPN sportscaster. She is known for her beauty by her male fans, and in 2007 she was voted Americas “sexiest sportscaster” by playboy magazine. On July 16, 2009 a video posted on the site "NSFW POA" hinted that a naked blond woman videotaped through a hotel [peephole](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peephole) was a popular sports personality.In the video, the woman was seen curling her hair unclothed in front of the mirror. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erin_Andrews>) The following day, Andrews authorized her attorney to make a statement that it was her in the video, and that the video was made without her knowledge. The video was automatically removed from the site, and the investigation was underway. On October 2, 2009, Michael David Barrett was charged with interstate stalking for taking the videos, posting the videos online and trying to sell them to celebrity websites such as TMZ. On December 15, 2009, Barrett pleaded guilty to the stalking charge. He was sentenced to 30 months in federal prison and ordered to register as a sex offender. Andrews Still suffers fear, anxiety and public humiliation. “I’m living public humiliation. It's my body that's on the Internet...He stalked me, he terrorized me -- this will never be over for me, and I don't want it to ever be over for you.”(<http://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/ESPN-Erin-Andrews-Stalker-Sentenced-87706997.html>).

# Method of Inquiry

Research Question**:** I am researching the experiences of males and females within the sports broadcasting industry. I am looking for information specifically on the Erin Andrews Case, and outside information from different males and females.

Participants: I use purposeful sampling (Brogdan & Biklen, 2003) to find undergraduate students to gain insights on their experiences.

Data Instrument: To collect my data I will be using a survey designed for this study. I chose this method because I am trying to collect different opinions between men and women on how women are viewed in the sports broadcasting industry.

## Data Collection Procedure:

1. I designed a survey that I thought would help me gain more knowledge to my topic.

2. I asked six basic questions throughout the survey.

3. I asked permission from my Journalism and English professor to distribute the surveys in class.

4. I received permission from my Journalism and English professors to distribute the surveys in class.

5. After collecting the surveys, I had to find an organized way to arrange the data and make it easier to read and understand.

6. I decided to make a detailed table on Microsoft Word.

Data Analysis: With this data, I will attempt to find the similarities and differences between the views of males and females in regard to the sports broadcasting industry.

# Results & Discussion

In this section, I discuss the results gathered from 50 survey questionnaires from two different courses. Table 1 illustrates demographic information of the 50 survey data collected. Furthermore, Table 2 presents the open-ended questions from the survey data. Following the two tables, I discuss my interpretation of the data collected. First, I provide a brief background of demographics (gender, class standings, and racial backgrounds). Second, I discuss in length the data represented in Table 2 in a thematic form.

## Table 1= Background Information

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Gender | Class Standings | Racial Identity |
| Female= 28  Male= 22 | Freshman= 10  Sophomore= 18  Junior= 11  Senior= 11 | Caucasian=35  African American= 10  Hispanic= 4  Asian=1  Other= 0 |

## Table 2= In-Depth Survey Data Responses

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Major: | Perceived seriousness of Female Sports Journalists | Perceived problem of Sexual Discrimination for Women in Sports Media |
| (1)Nursing=1  (2)Psychology=2  (3)Criminology=4  (4)Physics=1  (5)English=1  (6)Comm-media=12  (7)Speech-Language Pathology=2  (8)HR MGMT=2  (9)Marketing=4  (10)Spanish=1  (11)Fashion merchandising=4  (12)Journalism=16 | Yes taken seriously = 17  No, Not taken seriously=33 | Yes, it is a problem=35  No, It is not seen as a problem=15 |
| Rationale for Being in this Major:  (1)Broad Major=8  (2)Hands on experience=7  (3)Passionate=15  (4)Enjoy writing=11  (5)Job opportunity & income=6  (6)Good at speaking in front of others=3 | Provide an example   1. “Seen as sex symbols” =11 2. Perceived to have no background knowledge “…don’t know what they are talking about…” =15 3. If what they say is true and makes and impact it can’t be discredited =3 4. Men love to see women cover sports news especially if they are good-looking=5 5. Depends on the person=4 6. They watch sports shows regardless if it’s a male or female=3 7. Women are providing the same information as males=2 8. There are not enough female sportscasters in the field=2 9. Males are more interested in sports and often tend to ignore women involved in them=5 | Provide an example  (1) Men see them as a sex symbol=9  (2)They look at women for their image & not their knowledge=9  (3)Sports is primarily a male topic=15  (4)More men are hired than women=6  (5)There is a significant amount of women in sports media, but it takes a little bit more hard work for them to get there than males=6  (6)It only becomes a problem when sexual harassment is involved=3  (7)NY Jets scenario=2 |
|  |  |  |

To my great surprise there was not a lot of variation in my answers to my survey. I believe that it has to do with my questions being very broad.

## Perceived seriousness of Female Sports Journalists:

The results show that the majority of people believed that female sports broadcasters aren’t treated fairly and when asked to provide an example the results seemed to vary. The majority of people gave an example of women not being as knowledgeable with sports as much as men. For some reason, men think they own sports. They think there is some innate thing that makes them inherently more knowledgeable and that women who watch sports are anomalies they should examine. Not only do men challenge a woman’s knowledge of sports more than they challenge the knowledge of other men, they also find it their business to analyze a woman’s intentions and behavior.

## Perceived problem of Sexual Discrimination for Women in Sports Media:

The results show that the majority of people believe that sexual discrimination within sports media is a definite problem. When asked to provide an example the results seemed to vary. There were two popular responses one being, that they look at women for their image and not their knowledge, and another that sports is primarily a male topic. Female sportscasters are mainly viewed as sex objects. Women sportscasters stated that they felt pressure to maintain their appearance, constantly prove their credibility, confront inequitable treatment, work longer hours for promotions, and tolerate the network's informal policy of hiring 'beauty over intelligence'.

# Conclusion

My findings are very broad because I had a short survey and even though my results are not generalizable, I can safely state that the results have illustrated certain understanding of my topic. I surveyed approximately 50 students from campus. My study has opened my eyes on how women are perceived in the sports broadcasting industry. I feel that women in this field have a harder chance of landing a job in the sports industry, due to many outside judgments. Women are always portrayed as to not having any background knowledge on sports. They also have to have tough skin to work in the industry, because they are constantly always being critiqued. Throughout my research I learned that women sportscasters constantly feel pressure to maintain their appearance, work longer hours for promotions, and bite their tongue when the networks policy hires beauty over intelligence.

With this mini-research, I have raised awareness of what it means to be women in sports journalism. However, I should not stop with raising awareness. What I need to promote is women being treated equal in the work force. Just because you work in a male dominated field; doesn’t mean you should be treated differently. Each gender should have the same working requirements.

# Reflections

I have thoroughly enjoyed my experiences in Research Writing. I have to admit that when I found out what the main topic of the class was I was a little intimidated, because I didn’t know what I would want to research. After thinking long and hard, I became aware that I am interested in diversity topics. Sexism really caught my eye, and constantly had me wanting to learn more. I became very surprised and was not very knowledgeable on how social justice issues really do affect everyone in some way. I was very interested with some of the topics and issues my fellow students chose. My research paper really opened my eyes on how I want to succeed in being a sports broadcaster. It showed me that hard work is really all that it takes.

I felt that this course was very helpful to my writing. I saw a major improvement in myself. This course has also allowed me to grow confidence in my writing. I specifically liked how Dr. Park had us write our papers in sections. She allowed me to think in depth about my topic and take my time. It was never overwhelming and the pace was just right. I have gained a lot of knowledge from this social justice research project. In previous research projects I was never strong at making a good structured introduction. I used to stare at my paper and never know where to start. This experience helped me to relax and break things up into sections so that it’s easier to comprehend.

# References

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(Brogdan & Biklen, 2003)

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# Appendix A: Survey Questions

1. Male or Female?

2. Class Standings: freshman, sophomore, junior, senior

3. Racial Identity: Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Asian, Other

4. What is your major?

5. Why did you choose this field as your major?

6. Are female sports journalists taken as seriously by fans as male sports journalists? Why or why not? Please provide an example.

7. Is sexual discrimination a problem for women in sports media? Why or why not? Please provide an example.