

Spring 2014

# Female Athletic Trainers in Male Professional Sports

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# Female Athletic Trainers in Male Professional Sports

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The number of female athletic trainers is growing fast but there is a small amount present in male professional sports. The topics of harassment, discrimination and work-life balance challenges are talked about as trials female athletic trainers face in the industry. This research looked at why there is a lack of female athletic trainers in male professional sports using the topics of harassment, discrimination and work-life balance as three reasons why this might be. The methodology for this research consisted of sending out surveys to female athletic trainers at the professional and collegiate level. Qualitative data was collected to find a connection between harassment, discrimination, work-life balance and the shortage of female athletic trainers in male professional sports.

**Document Type**

Undergraduate Project

**Professor's Name**

Emily Dane-Staples

**Subject Categories**

Sports Management

Female Athletic Trainer's in Male Professional Sports

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### **Abstract**

The number of female athletic trainers is growing fast but there is a small amount present in male professional sports. The topics of harassment, discrimination and work-life balance challenges are talked about as trials female athletic trainers face in the industry. This research looked at why there is a lack of female athletic trainers in male professional sports using the topics of harassment, discrimination and work-life balance as three reasons why this might be. The methodology for this research consisted of sending out surveys to female athletic trainers at the professional and collegiate level. Qualitative data was collected to find a connection between harassment, discrimination, work-life balance and the shortage of female athletic trainers in male professional sports.

### **Female Athletic Trainers in Male Professional Sports**

Athletic training has allowed men and women the opportunity to work in both the health care and sports profession. Martin (2013) reported that 52% of women made up the National Athletic Trainer's Association but more male sport teams have male athletic trainers on their staff. A small number of female athletic trainers have broken the barrier in Division I male college sports. The field has grown with a number of women interested in both medical care and sports (Martin, 2013). Martin (2013) says by 2011-2012, "the participation rate had increased to 195,657" (p. 2) from the 64,390 in 1981-1982.

A few women have been reported to have been working in male professional sports. Sue Falsone was the first female head athletic trainer in professional male sports. She worked for the Los Angeles Dodgers in 2011 until her announcement to step down was made in October 2013 (Stump, 2013; Dilbeck, 2013; Gurnick, 2013). Three other women worked with male professional sports as athletic trainers: Ariko Iso worked for the Pittsburgh Steelers before returning to her alma mater at Oregon State taking the position of head athletic trainer (Martin, 2013). Michelle Leget was the first female assistant athletic trainer for the NBA. She has worked for the Houston Rockets as the head athletic trainer for the WNBA Houston Comets in 1997 (Martin, 2013; National Basketball Association, 2003). Janet Panek was with the Washington Wizards who spent four years with the NBA team as well as a head athletic trainer's position for the WNBA Washington Mystics for one year (Wagner, 2006; Martin, 2013). With women making up more than half of the athletic training field, why is it that so few women are working in men's professional sports?

To fully understand the reason why there is a lack of female athletic trainers in male professional sports is difficult to measure due to the lack of current female athletic trainers at the

professional level. The views of female athletic trainers vary, as well as the male athletic trainers who are in the hiring positions. Women may experience different situations, such as sexual harassment, discrimination, and/or work-life balance challenges, which draw them away from working with a male professional team. This research will focus on the qualities athletic trainers should possess while working in the field as well as looking specifically at sexual harassment, discrimination, and work/life balance. A connection will be made between those variables and the reasons to the lack of female athletic trainers in male professional sports.

### **Literature Review**

Those in the athletic training profession must go through a program that follows the standards set by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE), as well as pass an examination given by the Board of Certification (BOC) which requires male and female athletic trainers to meet to those set standards (Raab, Wolfe, Gould, & Piland, 2011). Raab, Wolfe, Gould, and Piland (2011) found five qualities that make up a certified athletic trainer by interviewing practitioners in different fields, such as educational and non-educational settings. Thirteen athletic trainers represented the different settings, eight were male and five were female (Raab, et al., 2011). After the data was transcribed and reviewed twice, Raab, et al. (2011) was able to group five adjectives that best described a quality athletic trainer: care, communication, commitment, integrity, and knowledge. There are connections between the five qualities athletic trainers should possess and the negative experiences, such as sexual harassment, discrimination, and work/life balance that females face in the profession. These negative experiences can be reasons why female athletic trainers do not work with male professional sports.

### **Five Qualities of Certified Athletic Trainers**

## Care

When it comes to attending an injury, an athletic trainer can show care towards an athlete while they help them. Female athletic trainers are described in various studies as caring, nurturing, and even motherly (O'Connor, Grappendorf, Burton, Harmon, Henderson, & Peel, 2010). McCurry (2013) used the term "communal" meaning women are kind, nurturing, and compassionate, to their patients more so than male athletic trainers who were described as "agentic" or forceful, self-confident, and aggressive. O'Connor et al. (2010) also used the terms, communal and agentic, when discussing their theoretical framework. Social Role Theory is described as a theory with "qualities and behavioral tendencies believed to be desirable for each sex as well as expectations regarding the roles of men and women should occupy" (O'Connor et al., 2010, p. 387). In Walk's (1999) research, his participants, female athletic trainers, exhibited a motherly instinct towards the male athletes, nurturing them when they needed something. Male athletes were seen to go to the female athletic trainer for any psychological issues instead of the opposite gender, in fear they would be seen as weak or sissy (Drummond, Hostetter, Laguna, Gillentine & Rossi, 2007). O'Connor, et al. (2010) explained that when it came to sex-related issues for male athletes, they felt more comfortable talking with a male athletic trainer. If there were psychological issues (i.e. depression), male athletes would consult a female athletic trainer because of the communal role females are stereotyped with. According to the Unruh, Unruh, Moorman, and Seshadri (2005) the National Athletic Trainers' Association's *Code of Ethics* mentions that athletic trainers must treat all athletes with dignity and respect, providing support emotionally and taking into consideration the perspective of the athletes. By doing so, athletic trainers are able to build mutual respect with athletes which can help athletic trainers in the long run.

There can be negatives for female athletic trainers if they are perceived to be too caring. In Pitney's (2006) research, he points out that there can be burnout among athletic trainers because they involve themselves too deeply into an athlete's emotional problems. This can be a downfall for female athletic trainers when trying to maintain work-life balance and keeping work and personal life separate. Because women are more likely to become more emotionally involved with the problems of the athletes than men, there is more of a chance of female athletic trainers to experience burnout (Kania, Meyer, & Ebersole, 2009). Coaches and staff might see them as too nice and babying the athletes (Walk, 1999). For example, Ohkubo (2008) states that if female athletic trainers were being friendly, they were being sociable which meant they were a distraction to the male athletes.

### **Communication**

Athletic trainers must also be able to communicate with their patients (Gardner-Shires, Marley, Barnes & Shires, 2012). Good communication of all medical issues, concerns and questions will allow the patient to understand the problem without confusing them with medical terms (Raab, et al., 2011). Athletic trainers need to have clear communication between the athletes and the coaching staff (Mazerolle, Borland & Burton 2012). If a female athletic trainer has good communication and people skills, she'll be able to build a strong relationship with relevant stakeholders (Mensch & Mitchell, 2008). Creating clear communication between the female athletic trainer and the coaching staff can build a strong relationship between both parties (Mazerolle, et al., 2012). If a newly hired female athletic trainer sits down with the head coach and lays out their expectations and philosophies of medical care, she is taking the first step to building a strong relationship (Mazerolle, et al., 2012). By coming off strong to the coach, it can take that coddling assumption of female athletic trainers out of the equation. A female athletic

trainer must show confidence and calmness all while being vocal about their beliefs and goals to demonstrate that they are capable of working in a 'man's world'. Having this quality allows trainers to adapt to different situations because they remain calm and communicate an issue with a coach or a member of the coaching and training staff (Mensch & Mitchell, 2008).

Communication was considered an important skill to possess, according to Potteiger, Brown, & Haute (2012), while working with patients as a health and medical professional. One participant in Mazerolle's, et al., (2012) study explains that with an effective communication style, the female participant was able to show the male coaches that talked down to her that she wasn't soft, but that she had self-confidence.

Building a relationship with the head athletic trainer or athletic director can be of assistance when challenges facing female athletic trainers arise. Communication with a supervisor, either with the head athletic trainer or the athletic director, can help when trying to gain support in the field (coaches, athletes) and organization (head athletic trainer, training staff). Having support from the staff or supervisor can help female athletic trainers when they begin to get frustrated with a coach, staff member, an athlete, or with the athletic training work. Even when looking at personal performance as an athletic trainer, having support can encourage female athletic trainers to push through and continue to work hard (Mazerolle, et al., 2012). This can help keep a balance between work and life because athletic trainers would enjoy their jobs and not have the frustration from work be brought home with them. Mazerolle and Goodman (2011) suggest creating support networks with colleagues can be beneficial for female athletic trainers who have families. If a female athletic trainer has a support network, she may feel comfortable asking for time off or requesting a more flexible schedule. A good relationship with

the administrative staff can be leverage if a female athletic trainer needs a flexible schedule that will accommodate both responsibilities of work and home (Mazerolle & Goodman, 2011).

### **Commitment**

Athletic trainers are instructed to treat each individual as a unique case and a high priority, even when they attend to multiple patients, such as college athletic trainers who may work in more than one sport (Raab, et al., 2011). By doing this, athletic trainers are showing that each individual and their injuries are important to them (Raab, et al., 2011). Aside from individual care for a patient, athletic trainers must show commitment to their job. Working in the sports industry, whether professional or at the collegiate level, can be very demanding. A regular season could last between four to seven months; Division I football lasts for 14 games (Katz, 2005) while in Major League Baseball there can be 162 games (McConnell, 2010) (See Appendix A). Even without looking at the travel for the teams, the commitment athletic trainers make while on home turf is extensive. Trainers must work long hours during the day, for some, starting as early as 5:00A.M and going long into the night after game days. Appointments, meetings and practices are scheduled periodically throughout the day as well (Hosick, 2006; Gorant, 2012). Athletic trainers may find this busy schedule too much if they are balancing a family as well. With all the demands of the job, finding time for family and the family's demands can be a challenge (Eberman & Kahanov, 2013). Some females in the athletic training industry have left their demanding jobs for a smaller, flexible job to help maintain a balance. They were able to work out appropriate schedules for both work and family and have job satisfaction (Eberman & Kahanov, 2013).

### **Integrity**

Integrity, according to Raab, et al. (2011), is the fourth factor essential in being a good athletic trainer. Athletic trainers need to provide their patients with accurate information and avoid misleading them or being vague for their medical issue. Integrity, as stated by Andersen (2010), is a characteristic that athletic trainers must possess to demonstrate their “ability to abide by the standards of professional practice” (p. 15). Peer and Schlabach (2011) surveyed Program Directors, head athletic trainers, and Program Directors with head athletic trainer’s responsibilities to find out the values athletic trainers should possess. Out of the 14 values found from the pilot study, integrity and honesty/truth were the top values among the participants. 56% of the participants ranked honesty/truth, integrity, and accountability as first, second, and third, in that order. Following the past three qualities, care, communication, and commitment, can be related to integrity. An athletic trainer must be honest with their athletes and the coaches and communicate the truth about an injury; it can help create a strong relationship between all parties.

### **Knowledge**

The final factor of Raab’s, et al. (2011) qualities of an athletic trainer is knowledge. It is explained that having the proper medical training will be helpful when attempting to explain an injury to a patient. It is important to have an understanding of athletic training duties to perform them successfully (Gardiner-Shire, et al., 2012). If an athletic trainer only has a small amount of athletic training experience, it will show that they don’t meet the standards of the coaches and training staff (Raab, et al., 2011). Female athletic trainers have experienced head coaches doubting their athletic training knowledge and abilities. In Burton, Borland, and Mazerolle’s (2012) study, women athletic trainers had to deal with coaches going to a male athletic trainer to make sure that the female had done it right or explained an injury correctly to them. Some

coaches would even doubt the female athletic trainers because of their age, implying they have a lack of knowledge and training experience (Burton, et al., 2012). In previous research, male football players were surveyed on their opinion of female athletic trainers. The result of this indicated that the athletes saw no problem with female athletic trainers, saying they were capable and knowledgeable of the training information (O'Connor, et al., 2010). But some athlete's perceptions of female athletic trainers have been negative. Usually the association of female athletic trainers by male athletes is that they are sexual objects, talked about in an ill manner or touched inappropriately (Shingles & Smith, 2008).

### **Discrimination towards Female Athletic Trainers**

Though it has been found that 24% of women in the United States make more than their husbands, women have been placed in a stereotype where their place is at home (del Carmen Triana, 2011; Krishna, 2013). It was always perceived that males were the breadwinners of their families while the wives held more of a supportive role (del Carmen Triana, 2011). Since the passage of Title IX in 1972, the federal law was able to remove "many barriers that once prevented people, on the basis of sex, from participating in educational opportunities and careers of their choice...prohibits discrimination based on sex in education programs that receive federal money" (Bower & Hums, 2013, p. 213). Questions such as, "who will nurse the babies or take care of the pre-school child? Who will cook for the man when he comes home from work? Who will wash and clean and take care of things?" talk about women and their role in the home over their role with being knowledgeable in sports like the men (Krishna, 2013, p. 243). Female athletic trainers have experienced discrimination based on their gender in their profession. Martin (2013) states that due to the lack of female athletic trainers having the opportunity to be hired in the administrative positions at a NCAA Division I level is because males control those

leadership positions and “set the agenda regarding hiring and work policies” (p. 9). Walker and Sartore-Baldwin (2013) suggest that there is “a mutual understanding whereby both women and men acknowledge that men have more power, control and access than women” (p. 307).

Even while on the job, female athletic trainers have dealt with discrimination by coaches and the men on the training staffs. Some female athletic trainers have experienced being called names, as Walk (1999) describes, because they are being professional. Some examples are “bitch” (Walk, 1999, p.276; Ohkubo, 2008, p. 13). Some trainers have had their athletic training knowledge questioned by coaches who would look for a second opinion (Burton, Borland, & Mazerolle, 2012). The term “team mom” came up in a focus group conducted by Hardin and Whiteside (2012) when they discuss discrimination among women in sports. Women have been discriminated against because some parts of society believe that women should be at home taking care of the family. Female athletic trainers face the challenges of finding that perfect balance between work and life, all while trying to diminish the discrimination against them when it comes to being knowledgeable in the field and a quality athletic trainer towards athletes. .

### **Defining Sexual Harassment in Athletic Training**

According to Shingles and Smith (2008), 37% of certified female athletic trainers were victims of sexual harassment. Velasquez (1998) defines sexual harassment as “unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature” (p. 171). Marks, Mountjoy and Marcus (2011) explain the underlying aspects of sexual harassment and state “that it is based upon an abuse of power and trust and that is considered by the victim or a bystander to be unwanted or coerced” (p. 1). Sexual harassment is split into two categories: quid pro quo and hostile environment. Quid pro quo is explained as an employer promising some kind of benefit such as a promotion or an increase in salary, in return for a

sexual favor by the victim (Shingles & Smith, 2008; Velasquez, 1998). A hostile environment is when a victim is mistreated daily by employers and fellow employees by them discussing sexual actions, touching the athletic trainers inappropriately, using demeaning terms and indecent gestures, and not receiving any promised benefits (Shingles & Smith, 2008; Velasquez, 1998).

The International Olympic Committee had created different training techniques to help athletes of all ages to identify sexual harassment (Marks, Mountjoy & Marcus, 2011). The International Olympic Committee had created a statement as a tool for team physicians to help focus on sexual harassment and how to stop it from occurring. To prevent sexual harassment and abuse, the signs need to be taught to athletic trainers and the whole staff for them to be able to identify how sexual harassment and abuse is described. This idea can be molded for female athletic trainers to help them prevent harassment from occurring and take the right steps to put an end to unwanted attention by male athletes and coaches. This unwanted attention can be a reason why female athletic trainers leave male teams. They are looked at as sexual objects, being called sexual names such as “baby” (Shingles & Smith, 2008, p. 106; Walk, 1999, p. 277). Athletes and coaches aren’t looking at female athletic trainers as qualified, certified workers.

### **Defining Work-Life Balance for Female Athletic Trainers**

Martin (2013) reported that 86.3% of female athletic trainers have dealt with the difficulties of balancing work and family responsibilities. The job requirements of athletic trainers are cited as a negative aspect, as stated by Mazerolle and Goodman (2013), in the athletic training profession. There is stress among women who have families and are kept away from them for days or weeks because of the travel and extensive care they must provide for a team. Professional and collegiate sports can’t offer more flexibility with schedules which becomes a reason why some female athletic trainers turn away from those levels to pursue a

training position such as at the high school level or in the clinical setting where there can be a more desirable balance (Martin, 2013). Mazerolle and Gavin (2013) explained work-life balance strategies after sending out a survey filled out by 18 female athletic trainers that volunteered to participate. The strategy explained by Mazerolle and Gavin (2013) was to create a work environment that will allow them to integrate with co-workers, work on time management skills, build on communication skills, and receive support from their supervisors and/or spouse. In a survey by Dieringer (2007) both male and female athletic trainers ranked a work- life balance important behind a communication program (voted by male athletic trainers) and the Title IX program (voted by female athletic trainers) created by the Women in Athletic Training Committee to help assist women in the athletic training profession. In past studies, research has shown that finding that work/life balance can be difficult and can affect the commitment of athletic trainers but some trainers are able to make it work and find that balance and support from the team and their families.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Social Role Theory is the understanding of gender stereotyping in organizations and their practices when hiring candidates. Burton, Borland, and Mazerolle (2012) explain that this theory has specific qualities and behaviors that are desirable in certain roles expected of males and females. Eagly, Wook, and Diekman (2000) describe Social Role Theory as “the differences in the behavior of women and men that are observed in psychological studies of social behavior and personality originate in the contrasting distributions of men and women into social roles” (p. 125). What this means, is men and women have been put into social roles that have created a stereotype that women spend less time in paid employment while men are out working. The characteristics associated with the female role are that they are affectionate, motherly and gentle.

These similar characteristics were results of a survey performed by O'Connor, et al. (2010) when they asked Division I football players to describe a female athletic trainer. This type of care given by female athletic trainers allowed the male athletes to not worry about being seen as feminine to the male athletic trainers when they had a physical or psychological issue. It was found that male athletes preferred female athletic trainers when it came to the psychological issues because they were more caring towards the athlete than a male athletic trainer (Drummond, et al., 2007).

Role Congruity Theory is based on the gender role expectations created from stereotypes that perceive women unable to be in a successful leadership role. If females were able to hold a successful leadership position, O'Connor, et al. (2010) says females are evaluated negatively because they are stepping outside of the stereotype that was built around leadership roles. Women weren't supposed to work, leaving the working position to the men. The leadership role is stereotyped to be "agentic" or forceful, confident and aggressive, as described earlier in this study. The "communal" characteristic isn't typically described as a stereotypical leader (O'Connor, et al., 2010). It is seen as incongruent because of what the expected gender role of women is and how a leader is stereotypically described.

Preference Theory is related to the choices women make when it comes to work and family/personal life. Gorant (2012) explained that women will "link themselves more closely to their role as mothers or wife than President or CEO" (p. 59). Full time athletic training positions require many hours of work, especially in the sports world where season can last four to seven months, not including preseason and post season ("How many...", 2003: McConnell: "NFL regular season...": Davis, 2013: Bonner, 2011: Katz, 2005) (See Appendix A). It was found that some women who value their roles in their family or their personal life are not interested in

working at higher ranking positions because it would take away that extra time from their personal life (Gorant, 2012). Gorant (2012) highlights previous research findings of three different mentalities women have: “work-centered, home-centered, and adaptive” (p. 46). “Work-centered” women focus all their time on their work. These women tend to be single without children and may have higher ranking positions in an organization, hoping to advance with their hard work. This group is described by Hakim (2000) as competitive, achievement oriented, and independent. Those that are “home-centered” make their families a first priority. They may not be working which allows them to establish a secure family (Gorant, 2012). The “home-centered” women are described as communal and caring (Hakim, 2000). Finally, the “adaptive” life choice looks at the women who try to work and run a household. This group tries to find the work-life balance with good, flexible house and maintain a steady income flow for their family (Gorant, 2012). There can be conflict of interests between the “work-centered, home-centered, and adaptive” groups of women because of their different characteristic and priorities.

O’Connor, Grappendorf, Burton, Harmon, Henderson & Peel (2010) noted that female athletic trainers as underrepresented at the professional level in male sports; most female athletic trainers being found at the collegiate setting. At Division I universities, 46.6% of female athletic trainers are graduate assistants, 47% are assistant or associate athletic trainers, and 18.8% are head athletic trainers (O’Connor, et al., 2010). For Division II schools, there are 46.8% female graduate assistant athletic trainers, 57.3% as assistants, and 29.6% are head athletic trainers. And lastly, in Division III colleges, females make up 48% as graduate assistants, 59.3% assistants, and 39.7% as head athletic trainers (O’Connor, et al., 2010). The number of female athletic

trainers will continue to increase while there is still an interest in sports and health care for females.

The purpose of this study was to find out why female athletic trainers are underrepresented in male professional sports. There are different hypothesized reasons as to why females have chosen a different setting in the athletic training industry, but this study found what current female athletic trainers have to say on the topic. The current study demonstrates the perceived challenges of being a female athletic trainer for a male sports team and why there is a lack of female athletic trainers at the professional level.

### **Method**

A mix of qualitative and quantitative research was used in the research, the main one being qualitative. The quantitative research was closed/pre-coded questions and was used for the demographic questions. The rest of the survey looked for the emotions and opinions of the participants, which is where the qualitative research was used in open ended questions and the participants explained their opinions. Gratton and Jones (2010) describe qualitative research as a way of capturing meanings or “feelings, thoughts, and experiences” (p. 30). Gorant (2012) quotes in her research about the purpose of qualitative research:

“Qualitative research is predominantly appropriate for five particular purposes: understanding meaning for participants of situations and of their personal accounts of their experiences, understanding the context of participation accounts as well as the influence of this context on participation actions, identifying unforeseen phenomena and influences, and ‘generating new grounded theories about the latter’, understanding the process behind actions and developing casual explanations” (p. 59).

This survey looked for descriptions of past experiences and any negative challenges such as discrimination, harassment, and work/life balance challenges the participants might have encountered while working with male teams. There is limited research on female athletic trainers

in male professional sports and by using qualitative research to answer the question; it may help better understand why there are not many in male professional sports.

### **Sample Selection**

The selection sample for this research was current female athletic trainers at the Division I college level. There were few female athletic trainers in in the National Football League, National Hockey League, National Basketball Association, Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer, Women's National Basketball Association, and National Women's Soccer League. If there were female athletic trainers on the staff of the professional teams, their contact information was unavailable. A number of professional and Division I organizations in different sports were searched to find potential current female athletic trainers to survey. This research looked at the Women in Athletic Training Committee website for contact information for potential participants but was unsuccessful in finding the information (Perez, Hibbler, Cleary, & Eberman, 2006).

The female athletic trainers at the Division I were questioned about their past experiences and any challenges they might have faced such as discrimination, harassment and work-life balance. The demographics for the potential participants are between 22 years old and over. The starting age for the participants is based off numerous researchers' survey groups. Most of the survey groups start around 25-28 years old. In Mazerolle, Dawson, and Lazar's (2012) research, they state that female athletic trainers may leave the profession at the age of 28 due to motherhood or there were issues of inequality (Goodman, Mensch, Jay, French, Mitchell & Fritz, 2010). According to the National Athletic Trainers Association, to be a certified athletic trainer, a practitioner "must earn a degree from a college or university with an accredited athletic training program", then, depending on the state regulation the practitioner is in, "take and pass

the exam administered by the Omaha-based Board of Certification” (“Get Certified,” 2014).

Student-athletic trainers will not be part of the study, for the purpose was to learn from female athletic trainers already in the profession, having one year and over experience.

### **Variables**

The variables included a series of questions pertaining to the setting (professional or collegiate) that the female athletic trainers currently work in and the gender of their primary and secondary teams they are responsible for. All of the data collected will be measured using the log linear analysis which can be defined as “a multivariate statistical technique used to analyze the relations between categorical or nominal data” (Kelecioğlu, 2006, p 854). Experiences such as discrimination and harassment from male coaches, the training staff, or the athletes were compared to the primary and secondary responsibilities in order to find a difference between having the negative experiences and whether they work with a male or female team. Participants were also asked about having past work experience with a male team. This data will be compared to the negative experiences of the participants and whether they currently work in female sports as their primary responsibility. The participants family situation (their marital status, if they have children or not) was collected for data to compare any work/life challenges that may arise while working with a male or female team.

### **Data Collection Instrument**

A survey of 20 questions (See Appendix B) was created to answer the research question, why is there a lack of female athletic trainers in male professional sports. The final questions of the survey focused on the demographics of the participants, based on age and race. The flow of the survey will follow the start by asking about the participant’s current occupational level (professional or collegiate), the gender of their primary sport responsibility and what the sport is.

Then they are asked if they have a secondary sport responsibility and what that sport is, as well. If participants selected their primary and secondary sports as female, they were requested to answer whether they worked with a male sport in the past. The next questions asked if the participants experienced discrimination and harassment. If they answered yes, participants were asked to describe the situation and how they overcame the incidents in an essay format.

Participants were then asked about their home life (live alone, partner and/or children) and to describe any challenges they've faced while working in their occupation. Demographic questions such as the participant's age and race were collected as well. The format for the questions varies between multiple choice and essay form. Depending on the responses to the questions, certain questions had a skip and display logic so the participants were asked the appropriate questions based on their answers. Questions for the survey were formatted and rephrased based on the questions Gorant (2012), Ohkubo (2008), and Burton, Borland, and Mazerolle (2012) had present in their surveys.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The data collection plan began with the creation of the survey (See Appendix C). The survey went through a pilot test, with professors and fellow students that completed the survey and approved the sequence, importance, and relevance of the questions based on the research topic. Once the survey was approved, it was emailed out to female athletic trainers. The email contained a cover letter (See Appendix D) that explained the research and asked for their help. A follow-up email was prepared to be sent out but was unnecessary because enough participants responded in the time frame that the survey was live. The responses from the participants were logged into IBM SPSS Statistics 21 where the data was translated from words to numbers for the quantitative demographic questions.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

The answers in the survey were coded in order to input them into the IBM SPSS Statistics 21. The “Yes or No” multiple choice questions were coded using numbers; Yes: 1.0, No: 2.0. The sports listed in multiple choice format were changed to numeric data as well; Football: 1.0, Baseball: 2.0,...and so on until all of the sports are coded for both male and female sports. The living situation multiple choice questions were coded in a numeric format as well (I live alone: 1.0, I live with a partner: 2.0,...). The essay answers were kept aside for record of the thoughts and opinions of the participants to find a relationship between the sport team gender(male and female) and the negative experiences the participants faced in the present and their past.

Gratton and Jones (2010) explained inferential statistics as finding a relationship between multiple variables Inferential statistics were used to look at the different between the sports that the participants work in currently and any discrimination, harassment, and/or work/life balance challenges the participants might have experienced.

To use the answers given in the open-ended questions, the researcher compared the responses to the research as well as past research to find similarities in the opinions expressed by the female athletic trainers surveyed in other studies. After examining all the essay responses from the discrimination, harassment and work/life balances questions, a sampling of direct quotes were selected based on their similarities to past research findings and are included in the “Results” section (Maverolle, Borland & Burton, 2012).

These are the qualitative responses in essay form on the survey and the questions were looking for experiences and opinions of the participating female athletic trainers. It is these qualitative responses that were chosen to help support the idea of discrimination, harassment, and work/life balance that occurs with female athletic trainers. The researcher looked for a

difference between the participant's survey answers of any experiences with discrimination, harassment and work-life balance challenges to the primary sport the participant currently works in and if they had previously worked in male sports (if primary sport was male). A log linear analysis was used to find the difference between the primary sports and the negative experiences. The responses showed a relationship between what current female athletic trainers have experienced and their primary job. Pitney, Ilsely and Rintala (2002), Mazerolle, Pitney, and Goodman (2013), Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, and Pagnotta (2001), Kahanov, Loeb sack, Masucci, and Roberts (2010) used the inductive analysis when coding their open-ended questions. A similar process was done for this study. The procedures followed by Reed and Giacobbi (2004) will be used as well: "(1) the simultaneous collection and analysis of interview data, (2) comparative methods of analysis whereby participants responses are compared among one another and within each participant" (p. 194).

### **Results**

The responses from the initial survey were small (n=54) (See Appendix C). 100 percent of the participants indicated they worked at the collegiate level. Participants were aged 22 to 40+, the most frequent age being between the ages of 26-30. The inferential statistics used for the study was Chi-square and log linear analysis. The participants that have primary responsibilities with a male team were 23, and the female primary responsibilities were 31. Of the 31 participants that primarily have responsibilities with a female team, 17 of them worked with a male team in the past and had negative experiences (discrimination, harassment, work/life challenges). This finding could answer the question of why female athletic trainers switch to female sport teams than remain with a male team. Of the 54 participants, 11 indicated they worked with a male team for their secondary responsibility, and 30 work with a female

secondary team, the remaining participants (n=13) did not indicate which gender sport they worked with.

The participants were separated by the gender of their primary responsibility and compared to how many had negative experiences. For the male sports, 14 participants experienced discrimination, 6 experienced harassment, and 21 of the participants said they had challenges balancing work and life. For the female sports, 10 experienced discrimination, 10 experienced harassment, and 26 female athletic trainers experienced challenges with work/life balance. The Chi-Square values for discrimination ( $X^2(df) = 3.594(1)$ ), harassment ( $X^2(df) = .526(1)$ ), and work/life challenges ( $X^2(df) = .949(1)$ ) was greater than the level of significance ( $p=0.05$ ) which indicates that there is no difference between experiencing discrimination, harassment, and work/life challenges in male and female sports.

Only 48 participants answered the essay questions about having negative experiences. From the results that were submitted, a connection was made between the answers given and previous research. Examples of the responses are:

This participant currently works with a female sport and explains she had worked with a male professional team in the past and had experienced discrimination:

“I was an intern in the MLS and their first female they had hired. It was challenging to change the coaches perspective of female AT's at first and I had to do a lot of "proving myself" that my male co-worker did not.”

This participant currently works with a female sport, had worked with a male team in the past, and experienced harassment by a male coach:

“On specific instance I can remember I was dropping off some pieces of paper to the head football coach. He called me "sweetheart" or "sweetie“.”

This participant currently works with a male team and explains the challenges of finding work/life balance in the athletic training industry:

“VERY difficult to have any quality time with family when traveling each weekend. Last minute changes in schedule that often happens with athletics makes it difficult to find child care. 24 hours on-call for student athletes with any issues.”

### **Conclusion**

Though all athletic trainers are required to take an equal certified examination, females still face negative experiences that may cause them to work in female sports rather than male sports. Based on the research and past studies, there can be different reasons why female athletic trainers do not work in male professional sports. This study showed that there is no difference between the experiences working with male and female sports and dealing with negative situations such as discrimination, harassment, and work/life balance challenges. There is still information that needs to be answered to fully understand why there is a lack of female athletic trainers in male professional sports. Future research can build more on the topic of female athletic trainers in male professional sports and open up the opportunity for potential female athletic trainers to pursue that level of sport and not be judged because of their gender.

Participants provided advice for future female athletic trainers interested in joining the field. Many responses suggested always remaining professional and not to let things like discrimination or harassment put them down. Some even stated that this job is possible while trying to balance a family life. The question to why there is a lack of female athletic trainers may not have one definite answer to put an end to this topic of research, but there are different reasons that can be hypothesized. As Burton et al. stated that there is “more evidence regarding the individual experiences of women in such situations needs to be accumulated” (2012, p. 316).

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**Appendix A**

<b>League</b>	<b># of Games</b>	<b>Regular Season Time Frame</b>
<b>Major League Baseball (MLB)</b>	162	April – October
<b>National Basketball Association (NBA)</b>	82	October – April
<b>National Hockey League (NHL)</b>	82	October – April
<b>Major League Soccer (MLS)</b>	34	February – November
<b>National Football League (NFL)</b>	16	September – December
<b>College Football Division I</b>	14	August – December

## Appendix B

### Female Athletic Trainers in Male Professional Sports

Q1 This survey is examining why there is a minimal amount of female athletic trainers in male professional sports. The following questionnaire will require approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. There is no compensation for responding nor is there any known risk. In order to ensure that all information will remain confidential, please do not include your name. Participation is strictly voluntary and you may refuse to participate at any time.

There are no known physical or psychological risks associated with completing the survey. You may refuse to answer any questions and may withdraw from completing the survey at any time. By completing this survey, you consent to participate. No personally identifiable information will be associated with your response in any published and reported results of this study.

Thank you for your participation.

I agree to participate in this study.

- Yes
- No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Thank you for participating in this s...

Q2 What level is the sport you currently work in?

- Professional
- Collegiate

Q3 Do you *primarily* work with a male or female sport?

- Male
- Female

Answer If Do you primarily work with a male or female sport? Male Is Selected

Q4 Which male sport is your *primary* responsibility?

- Football
- Basketball
- Baseball
- Soccer
- Lacrosse
- Ice Hockey
- Cross Country
- Track & Field
- Golf
- Other/s \_\_\_\_\_

Answer If Do you primarily work with a male or female sport? Female Is Selected

Q4 Which female sport is your *primary* responsibility?

- Basketball
- Soccer
- Softball
- Lacrosse
- Ice Hockey
- Field Hockey
- Cross Country
- Track & Field
- Golf
- Other/s \_\_\_\_\_

Q5 Do you work with a *secondary* sport?

- Yes
- No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To The following questions will be asking...

Q6 Is your *secondary* responsibility a male or female sport?

- Male
- Female

Answer If Is your *secondary* responsibility a male or female sport? Female Is Selected

Q7 Which female sport is your *secondary* responsibility?

- Basketball
- Soccer
- Softball
- Lacrosse
- Ice Hockey
- Field Hockey
- Cross Country
- Track & Field
- Golf
- Other/s \_\_\_\_\_

Answer If Is your *secondary* responsibility a male or female sport? Male Is Selected

Q7 Which male sport is your *secondary* responsibility?

- Football
- Basketball
- Baseball
- Soccer
- Lacrosse
- Ice Hockey
- Cross Country
- Track & Field
- Golf
- Other/s \_\_\_\_\_

Answer If Do you primarily work with a male or female sport? Female Is Selected And Is your *secondary* responsibility a male or female sport? Female Is Selected

Q8 Have you worked with male sport teams in the past?

- Yes
- No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To The following questions will be asking...

Q9 The following questions will be asking you about discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace. I understand this is a very personal topic, so I invite you to speak generically about situations you have experienced. You should not use names, only job titles or characteristics, when sharing your experiences. As a reminder, your answers are completely confidential and will not be shared publicly.

Q10 Have you ever experienced discrimination in the workplace?

- Yes
- No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Have you ever experienced sexual harassment in the workplace?

Q11 Please describe the experience and/or situation.

Q12 What did you do to overcome this challenge?

Q13 Have you ever experienced sexual harassment in the workplace?

- Yes
- No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Which of the following statements best describes your living situation?

Q14 Please describe the experience and/or situation.

Q15 What did you do to overcome this challenge?

Q13 Which of the following statements best describes your living situation?

- I live alone
- I live with a roommate
- I live with a partner/spouse
- I live with a partner/spouse, and children
- I am a single parent

If I live alone Is Selected, Then Skip To If you were to give one piece of advice to female athletic training students, what would you tell them about this profession?

Q14 How does this affect your work responsibilities and/or work schedule?

Q15 How do you find balance between your work responsibilities and your home responsibilities?

Q16 If you were to give one piece of advice to female athletic training students, what would you tell them about this profession?

Q17 Is there anything you'd like to add about the topic of female athletic trainers in professional and/or collegiate sports, in regards to harassment in the workplace and work/life balance for female athletic trainers?

Q18 What is your age?

- 22-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-40
- 40+

Q19 What is your race?

- White/Caucasian
- African American
- Hispanic
- Asian
- Native American
- Pacific Islander
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Q20 Thank you for participating in this survey. Your participation is appreciated.

**Appendix C**

Individual Trainer's Reporting of Issues Experienced			
	<b>Male Sports</b>	<b>Female Sports</b>	<b>X<sup>2</sup>(df)</b>
Discrimination	14	10	3.594(1)
Harassment	6	10	.526(1)
Work/Life Challenge	21	26	.949(1)

## Appendix D

Dear Participant,

My name is Catie Graf and I am an undergraduate student at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, New York. For my thesis paper, I am examining why there is a minimal amount of female athletic trainers in male professional sports. Because you are a certified female athletic trainer, I am inviting you to participate in this research study by completing an online survey.

The following questionnaire will require approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. There is no compensation for responding nor is there any known risk. In order to ensure that all information will remain confidential, please do not include your name. Copies of the project will be provided to my St. John Fisher College instructor. If you choose to participate in this project, please answer all questions as honestly as possible. The deadline for the survey is April 21, 2014 at 11:59 pm. Participation is strictly voluntary and you may refuse to participate at any time.

**Follow this link to the Survey:**

[\\${1://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[\\${1://SurveyURL}](#)

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[\\${1://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}](#)

There are no known physical or psychological risks associated with completing the survey. You may refuse to answer any questions and may withdraw from completing the survey at any time. By completing this survey, you consent to participate. No personally identifiable information will be associated with your response in any published and reported results of this study.

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Dr. Emily Dane-Staples in the Department of Sport Studies at 585-899-3803.

Thank you for taking the time to assist me in my educational endeavors. The data collected will provide useful information regarding female athletic trainers working in male professional sports.

Sincerely,

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