

Sports journalism textbooks don't address gender inequities in sports departments

*Instructors should supplement course texts
to make them more relevant, study finds*

A content analysis of eight sports reporting textbooks published since the early 1990s shows no improvement in the way women sports journalists and women's sports are presented, according to a study by the John Curley Center for Sports Journalism.

The number of sports journalism texts is limited but growing. This study looked at books published between 1993 (Bruce Garrison's *Sports Reporting*) and 2003 (Abraham Aamidor's *Real Sports Reporting*). Researchers analyzed the references to male and female athletes and reporters and found that overwhelmingly, the number of examples and references in almost all books were to men and to men's sports. There was little change between the older texts and the new ones, according to the analysis.

References to women's sports in the texts were particularly outdated. Although the highest growth sports for young women are team sports such as soccer and basketball, the books most often referred to women in traditionally feminine sports such as figure skating and gymnastics or individual sports such as golf.

The books also kept references to female sports journalists, and examples of their writing, to a minimum. References to women in journalism generally referred to the same core group of writers, such as Christine Brennan, a columnist for *USA Today*. Using few references to women as sports writers can alienate female students who want to pursue sports journalism careers, said Marie Hardin, lead author.

The two most progressive texts, according to this analysis, were Steve Craig's *Sports Writing: A Beginner's Guide* and Aamidor's *Real Sports Reporting*. Both books contained more references to women and to women's sports than the other texts. The Craig book was especially notable because it emphasized popular women's sports.

The Craig book also stood out, the researchers found, because it focused most sharply on basic skills entry-level sports journalists need. Although many texts focused on coverage of men's professional sports such as football, the first jobs for most sports reporters involve covering high school sports, which received relatively little mention in any book except Craig's, Hardin said.

Center researchers recommend that sports journalism instructors supplement their textbooks to make their courses more useful and welcoming to all students:

- Use coverage of women's sports as writing examples in class so students will become comfortable with such coverage.
- Use a wide variety of sports writing examples in class, including articles by a variety of female reporters and columnists.
- Supplement texts with discussion and assignments on coverage of high school and college sports to prepare students for their first jobs. Most entry-level reporting

jobs will involve covering girls' and boys' prep sports, and textbooks often do not emphasize this type of coverage.

For the full report:

Hardin, M., Dodd, J.E., & Lauffer, K. Passing it on: The reinforcement of male hegemony in sports journalism textbooks. *Mass Communication & Society*, 9 (4), 429-446.