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## Women and Sportscasting: A Different Kind of Ballgame

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# Women and Sportscasting: A Different Kind of Ballgame

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by Bruce Kuiper

## Introduction

Sports announcers appear as though they have it all together: they look good, they sound good, they work in a fun industry, and they can show off their knowledge in front of millions of fans. For the average armchair quarterback, being a sportscaster might seem like a dream job. In this perception of sports commentators, women are no exception, but behind all the fun and glamour is a profession still heavily dominated by men, a situation that often makes the job of sportscasting more stressful than enjoyable. Women working in this field often have a very difficult time establishing themselves as credible professionals in the minds of their colleagues, the viewers, and even their own families. Specifically, women in the world of sports broadcasting face direct discrimination, reduced cred-

ibility, and increased division of loyalties as compared to their male counterparts.

It has been only within recent history that women have been able to be part of the sports broadcasting industry, beginning with Jane Chastain's brief tenure with CBS in 1974 as a sportscaster for NFL games. Her experience is one of many examples that showcase both the joys and the struggles of trying to break into this demanding industry. Since the realm of sports has been a "man's world" for many years, examining how women entered one arena of that world will highlight how rhetoric has been and is used to prevent and to foster such dramatic changes. By focusing especially on the relationship between the audience and various situations, this paper will emphasize the power of mediated messages in this specific area. Since the introduction of women into sportscasting was a fairly radical move, the ways in which the media facilitated or blocked such a move—and how the audience knew or didn't know about the machinations—will prove to be especially helpful in our outlining the changes that took place in society.

As will be shown below, women have experienced difficulty establishing a professional presence in sports broadcasting, perhaps more difficulty than they have faced in other professions. Very frequently, any foray by a woman in this field has been met with mixed feelings, sexist perceptions, and a strong resistance to the new faces in front of the camera. These issues will be explored through three main research questions:

1. How has the role of audience affected the introduction and the utilization of women in the

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world of American sportscasting?

2. How does the perception of women in sportscasting affect issues of perceived credibility and professionalism?
3. How do the specific experiences of Jane Chastain and Phyllis George inform the history and status of women in sportscasting?

We will approach these questions through the framework of feminist theory, evaluating the experiences of two female sportscasters to help high-

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light the history and status of women in broadcasting. Appropriating the feminist framework seems especially well-suited for Christianly analyzing the ways in which women have dealt with the sportscasting profession. This analysis first looks at pertinent writing on the general situation of women in sportscasting, on the perceptions female sportscasters have of their profession, and on the proposed analytical frameworks. Next, it examines the beginnings of women in sportscasting through a feminist theoretical framework, followed by the actual analysis and its significance. Finally, it concludes with the implications of the findings and possible avenues for further research.

### **Literature Review**

To frame the discussion of women in sportscasting, we will examine related literature that shows the major issues of gender and discrimination in the profession. The following literature review covers a wide range of material, but this material can be categorized into three main areas: the general perception of women in sportscasting, the perception women have regarding their work in the sports in-

dustry, and the ways in which feminist theory and media theory can be applied to this subject. The review shows that even though the process of women's entrance into the sportscasting profession has been difficult, it has also provided opportunities for both men and women to think and act more deliberately in terms of equality and mutual respect.

### ***General Perception of Women in Sportscasting***

One significant area of pertinent research is the primary struggle that women have faced and still face: the typical sports audience's general perception of women and the industry's perception of women. Eastman and Billings, who deal with the issue of how women are perceived in sports by analyzing the perceptions of the athletes and the announcers in college basketball, discovered that the announcers' perception plays a significant role in taking down or building up stereotypes.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, Billings, Angelini, and Duke discovered a similar phenomenon when they looked at the way athletes and announcers interacted in the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Their results clearly show that male athletes received positive kinds of descriptions more often than did female athletes.<sup>2</sup> Such findings prove the overall gender imbalance in the sports world, which in itself can paint a picture of the foundation women sportscasters have to fight against. More specifically, the study indicates a relationship between the sex of the announcer and the way in which the announcer refers to athletes or even other announcers. Such studies show a relationship between athletes in general and the reporting of their athleticism—often including the downplaying of women's roles.

However, the perception of women in sportscasting can become even more specific. An oft-cited facet in this issue is how much less credibility female sportscasters enjoy compared to male sportscasters. In this light, Etling and Young undertook a 2007 study in which they examined the effect of the sports commentator's sex on his or her perceived credibility. They discovered that both men and women gave more authority to male sportscasters than to women sportscasters.<sup>3</sup> Gunther, Kautz, and Roth, in 2011, also covered the subject of credibility in their historical overview of the profession. In an interesting dichotomy, they found little bias against female sportscasters in a quantitative-based

survey, but they found high bias in several qualitative-based studies.<sup>4</sup> When Mastro, Seate, Blecha, and Gallegos studied the perception of women in sportscasting in 2012, they focused on the differences a sport itself might have in various perceptions of credibility. The results of their study showed that men are perceived as having more credibility when they commentate on sports as compared to women.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Sargent and Toro's 2006 study examined "the impact of attractiveness and knowledge on impressions of credibility of male and female sportscasters," proving that not only are male sportscasters given more credibility than female sportscasters, but that female sportscasters are criticized in especially negative ways.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Women Sportscasters' Perceptions of Their Profession***

The previously mentioned studies show clear differences in how women and men are portrayed in the sportscasting profession. With this establishment of difference, the next step is to examine what people in the broadcasting industry think about the world of sportscasting. Hardin and Shain's 2005 study looks at self-perception among female sportscasters. In it, they attempt to discover women's motivations for getting into this profession, revealing the high level of discrimination against women in the process.<sup>7</sup> Surprisingly, their subsequent study in 2005, a quantitative study that analyzed the "attitudes and experiences of women in sports media careers," showed general job satisfaction despite discrimination and abuse.<sup>8</sup> They followed up that study in 2006 with a more comprehensive look at how women feel about their professions and about femininity in the field of sportscasting. Once again, the results showed frequent discrimination in the way female journalists are treated as well as the divided loyalties in their lives. Discrimination was often seen as something inherent to the job that the women just had to tolerate.<sup>9</sup>

In a similar way, Hardin and Whiteside performed a qualitative study in 2009, primarily to explore how women in sports broadcasting balance the various aspects of their jobs. The results of the study had three major ramifications. First, the overall dialog about one's career was often couched in idealistic terms, but actual choices of career paths

and job placement were often made pragmatically in response to various societal structures. Second, nearly all the women cited some sort of discrimination in their jobs, but most downplayed this aspect of their lives. Third, the most significant aspect of their lives tended to be the "juggling" or balancing that was needed in family, work, and social circles.<sup>10</sup> Their study was confirmed by that of Grubb and Billiot, in 2010, who found that women sportscasters faced more challenges in the profession than did their male counterparts.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Application of Feminist Theory***

Another area of literature that helps explore the issues in this subject is the proposed rhetorical analysis of feminist theory. Although an older article, Hargreaves' 1986 study on gender relations in sports provides key ideas on the entirety of the sports world and, thus, on the role of women in the specific role of sports commentator. Hargreaves pointedly says, "In all countries in the West[,] sporting attitudes, values and images are products of a long and relentless history of male domination."<sup>12</sup> Such a viewpoint becomes an underlying theme for several other articles along the same lines. Hardin, Dodd, and Lauffer examine the role of journalism textbooks in their 2006 study, showing how such textbooks can be highly influential upon students going into sports broadcasting, but also finding that such books do little to fight against the prejudice against women.<sup>13</sup> Weiller, Higgs, and Greenleaf, in 2004, more specifically look at the way in which the 2000 Summer Olympic Games were presented and how the perception of both the commentators and the athletes "reinforce traditional gender ideology."<sup>14</sup>

Two other studies take a slightly different approach. Sargent's 2003 study examines the fundamental ways in which men and women appreciate different sports, ways that underscore basic gender roles in the world of sports.<sup>15</sup> Mean and Kassing's 2008 study, which examines the basic constructs of identity found in sports, is primarily geared toward perceptions of athletes, but many of the considerations are applicable to the sports commentary profession as well.<sup>16</sup> In a similar way, Whiteside and Hardin's 2011 study, which looks at the ways in which sports are perceived by the viewers, un-

derscores the relationship of the viewer with the sportscaster.<sup>17</sup>

### **Conclusion**

These studies give a behind-the-scenes glimpse into a world that is not nearly as glamorous as it might appear on television. Because of the general limitations of gender in athletics, because of a tendency to give female sportscasters little credibility for their work, and because many women in the field plainly see the problems they must face every day, the role of a female sportscaster is a tough one to play. The reviewed literature shows general discrimination against women in sportscasting, and it shows the conflicting attitudes women have toward the profession. The literature also reveals the great extent to which the male perspective and dominance affect the perceptions of gender. By revealing this world to both men and women, we can perhaps initiate change and begin to provide opportunities for everyone in the profession, regardless of sex.

### **Methodology**

In light of the findings listed above, Christians can appropriate elements of feminist theory to analyze women in sportscasting. As Sellnow suggests, a key point in this perspective is how “the hegemony (dominant American ideology)—which is reinforced and reproduced by both women and men—simultaneously empowers men and oppresses women.”<sup>18</sup> This perspective is “useful” because it shows “the subtle ways in which patriarchy and masculine hegemony are embedded in popular culture texts.”<sup>19</sup> According to Foss, “feminism is, at its core, very simple: the belief that men and women should have equal opportunities for self-expression.”<sup>20</sup> When such self-expression is hampered, the results prove that gender perceptions affect the freedom of both genders.

To carry out a feminist criticism of a given artifact, Foss suggests a four-step process:

- (1) analysis of the conception of gender presented in the artifact;
- (2) discovery of the effects of the artifact’s conception of gender on the audience;
- (3) discussion of how the artifact may be used to improve women’s lives; and
- (4) explanation of the artifact’s impact on rhetorical theory.<sup>21</sup>

With this outline in mind, we will explore two different events, each highly significant to the role of women in sportscasting. The first rhetorical artifact is the work of Jane Chastain, one of the first women to become a national sports commentator. The second artifact is the work of Phyllis George, who followed Chastain on the same network just a few months later. These two women shared the same television network, the same sport, and essentially the same job, but their experiences were markedly different. As different as the two experiences were, however, they both revealed key elements of how perception of gender affected the perception of these women’s abilities.

### **Rhetorical Artifact Analysis**

#### **General Introduction**

The first experience under scrutiny here is Jane Chastain’s brief tenure as a commentator for CBS, a role that is often cited as being the first nationally televised female sportscaster.<sup>22</sup> Ryan agrees, citing the significance of “when she broke network ground and arrived at CBS Sports in 1974.”<sup>23</sup> Walburn also says that Chastain’s impact on wom-

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*The reviewed literature shows general discrimination against women in sportscasting, and it shows the conflicting attitudes women have toward the profession.*

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en in sportscasting was especially significant, citing current Hall of Fame sports reporter Lesley Visser as saying Jane Chastain is “our Jackie Robinson.”<sup>24</sup> According to Grubb and Billion, it was against tradition and amidst a male-dominated viewing audience that CBS hired Jane Chastain to be one of their NFL broadcasters.<sup>25</sup> However, met with complaints about a “broad on football,” CBS dropped Chastain after only one season, explains Rader.<sup>26</sup> Walburn claims, “Chastain has said in interviews since her personal Waterloo that CBS executives told her ‘she wasn’t the girl we hired.’ Not surprising. She says they made her wear her hair in a bun

and vetoed her makeup.”<sup>27</sup> Quoting Bernie Rosen, Ryan says about Chastain, “Every woman sportscaster ought to kiss the bottom of her feet for what she went through to pave the way for them,”<sup>28</sup>

Following Jane Chastain’s time with CBS, Phyllis George took the position but with different results. According to Walburn, “After firing Jane Chastain, CBS later decided that maybe sexy was okay after all. The company hired Phyllis George, a former Miss America, as a commentator on Monday Night Football. Then Ms. George proved that pulchritude absent pigskin erudition simply ticked off real fans.”<sup>29</sup> According to the Paley Center for Media’s report, “As a result of the publicity she garnered after being crowned [Miss America in 1971], CBS producers approached her to become a sportscaster in 1975. That year, she joined the cast of *NFL Today*, cohosting live pregame, halftime, and postgame broadcasts of National Football League (NFL) games.”<sup>30</sup> By many accounts, it was more than clear that CBS hired George for her looks and not her knowledge of the game. Interestingly, she “became a permanent... ‘decorative’ fixture of CBS football telecasts,” outlasting the perhaps more-qualified Chastain, explains Rader.<sup>31</sup>

As is evident in the George story, the portrayal of female broadcasters has been an issue since women started working in the field of sportscasting. The “looks” of these first female broadcasters predominantly influenced the male perception of women reporters. Early on, women in sportscasting added an image, rather than knowledge value, which slowed their acceptance in the studios and on the field. Grubb and Billiot cite George herself as indicating that “despite her hard work, viewers positioned her as a sex symbol.”<sup>32</sup> In fact, according to Schwartz, “Although she was good on air, George had little journalistic background, thus she often presented what someone else wrote.”<sup>33</sup> This kind of reputation, of course, only added to the perception that she was hired more for her looks than for her journalistic or sports writing abilities.

Women sportscasters also faced negative responses from viewers. In these first years, many people, male and female, opposed the idea of women reporting sports. Men considered the new (female) sportscasters uneducated in the sports, while women thought the occupation did a ter-

rible disservice to their gender, often inferring the idea that “Sports programming is an area which is the preserve of men. Not only is it dominated by masculine sports and male commentators, it... celebrates the male values of competition, toughness, endurance and physical prowess.”<sup>34</sup> Often female sportscasters were seen as not fully belonging to the world they were trying to enter.

### *Analysis of Jane Chastain’s Experience as the First Female Sportscaster*

This perception of an “unwelcome stranger” is highlighted in the experience of Jane Chastain, especially given her status as the first woman to be featured as a nationally televised sports commentator. It was a difficult year for her in many ways. Ryan quotes Chastain—about her entire sports career—as saying, “I had 15 great years, and one miserable one—the one at CBS.”<sup>35</sup> A major factor in this evaluation was the concept of gender, which seemed to have especially strong connotations in the world of sports. Rose et al explain gender as “defined by society and expressed by individuals as they interact while shaping evolving societal expectations regarding gender.”<sup>36</sup> Chastain certainly did encounter such notions of gender during her year at CBS. For example, Schwartz says that Chastain “contended with difficulties from the male TV crew who were not ready to accept a female sportscaster.”<sup>37</sup> Such response is not terribly surprising, since Etling and Young, among others, indicate that more credibility has often been given to male sportscasters as compared to female sportscasters.<sup>38</sup> Ryan details some of the gender ambiguity Chastain faced during this year at CBS:

One week she’d be instructed to “not sound so much like a woman” and the next be told that she sounded “too technical, too much like a man.” On top of that, as the first woman on a man’s turf..., *she* was often the story. While on assignment in some cities, Chastain would grant more interviews than she conducted.<sup>39</sup>

In short, Chastain had to be somehow both a representation of femininity and a credible force in the sportscasting world. Such a difficult balancing act underscores Grubb and Billiot’s findings that “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.'"<sup>40</sup>

Not only did Chastain have to deal with gender-related problems from colleagues and her workplace, but she had to deal with audience expectations as well. Andy Rooney, as cited by Gross, said as a spectator of sports,

The only thing that really bugs me about television's coverage is those damn women they have down on the sidelines who do not know what the hell they are talking about. I mean, I am not a sexist person, but a woman has no business being down there trying to make some comment about a football game.<sup>41</sup>

Such a curmudgeonly statement is reflected in Gunther, Kautz, and Roth's suggestion that sports-viewing audiences often do give female sportscast-

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ers less credibility than male sportscasters.<sup>42</sup> In one surprising twist, Ryan says Chastain "was even burned in effigy by some feminists who thought it demeaning to women that she did things like use a shopping cart in a supermarket aisle to demonstrate to viewers how to set a basketball pick."<sup>43</sup> Sargent and Toro discovered similar ideas in their study--that often the harshest critics for female sportscasters are female viewers.<sup>44</sup>

Although Chastain had to deal with negative gender perceptions, the experience seems to have positively affected the way that women are now able to enter the sportscasting world. According to Grubb and Billiot, Chastain and subsequent women sports commentators are "female pioneers

who helped to create paths for other women pursuing sportscasting careers."<sup>45</sup> Because of Chastain's struggles, it is more common now for people from all spheres of life to accept women in the role of a sportscaster. Summing up the effect, James Brickhouse, as quoted by Schwartz, says, "Women have another dimension that men cannot give. They can give a female's insight into women athletes in swimming, golf, basketball, tennis, etc. How does a man know what problems a woman would have in a particular sport?"<sup>46</sup> More specific about Chastain's effect, Ryan writes, "many of the doors were opened, the barriers pushed aside, and the narrow minds widened a long time ago by a somewhat unlikely pioneer: a soft-spoken, petite brunette named Jane Chastain."<sup>47</sup>

Chastain opened many doors for subsequent female sportscasters, but her experience also provides insights into the broader scope of rhetorical theory. The concept, for example, that a female sportscaster's appearance is somehow more important than a male sportscaster's appearance seems to affect any given sportscaster's rhetorical ability. Mastro, Seate, Blecha, and Gallegos find evidence that the perceived expertise of the sportscaster is often related to the reaction of viewers toward a sportscaster's sex.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, Hardin and Shain suggest that the discrimination female sportscaster face in their jobs ultimately hurts their overall rhetorical power.<sup>49</sup> Referring to rhetorical power, Roy Firestone, as quoted by Ryan, says that Chastain "got things done by being persistent, not militant. If she were more uppity, she could have raised a ruckus, but that would have probably set back the cause."<sup>50</sup>

### *Analysis of Phyllis George's Experience as the Second Female Sportscaster*

Like Jane Chastain, her "successor" in sportscasting, Phyllis George, had to struggle with acceptance in sportscasting. However, there are a few differences in their experiences. While Chastain was often criticized for trying to break into a man's domain, George was often criticized for being just a pretty face and not really knowing what she was doing. In fact, Chastain "admits to being ranked... by the fact that too many people think it was a certain ex-Miss America who broke the gen-

der barrier in TV sports.”<sup>51</sup> In George’s experience, the concept of gender seemed especially highlighted by how often her looks were contrasted with her knowledge of sports. As outlined above, the move by CBS to hire George seemed blatantly made to find “eye candy” that provided no real threat to the male perspective on sports. According to Grubb and Billiot, “the looks of female sportscasters were perceived as a major concern by the networks and that image was a higher priority for female than for male sportscasters.”<sup>52</sup> They add that “This objectification serves a vital function in the sports culture by reinforcing women’s role in a male-dominated society and for men their cultural position.”<sup>53</sup>

In spite or because of the gender effect, George’s connection with the viewers is unique. For example, her experience lasted nearly three times as long as Chastain’s did and might be explained by the fact that “Though viewers originally questioned the network for choosing George over a woman with more experience, audiences soon warmed to her.”<sup>54</sup> Grubb and Billiot observed that “female sportscasters may have to prove their credibility with information about sports in a way not expected of male sportscasters,”<sup>55</sup> and for George, that credibility became a matter of conducting personal interest stories rather than “hard sports” as was the tradition. The Paley Center for Media suggests, “Her ease in interviews caused numerous athletes to open up and reveal a personal side, which, though common today, was not part of the sports reporting landscape of the midseventies”<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, an opinion piece published in *The Newnan Herald* remembers several of the negative comments surrounding George’s time as a CBS sports commentator: “What the hell is a woman doing in the locker room? She doesn’t know anything about sports. She never played the game.”<sup>57</sup> However, she seemed to weather such criticism and eventually gain a measure of respect in the industry.

George’s experience served to improve the status of women in a couple of ways. First, the fact that she, like Chastain, was a pioneer in the sportscasting world provides a positive example to other women interested in developing careers as sportscasters. Like many other women in the field, George had to endure a series of harassments, which Grubb and Billiot list as the ways “fans,

coaches, athletes, employers, colleagues and viewing audiences humiliated women sportscasters with derogatory comments, sexual innuendos and hate mail.”<sup>58</sup> A second way that George’s experience can serve as a model for women is how she handled discrimination. Hardin and Shain indicate that many women sportscasters see discrimination “as something inherent to the job” that women just have “to tolerate.”<sup>59</sup> However, a model like George shows that working as a female sportscaster means more than just toleration; it entails head-on confrontation with the discrimination and working to end it. For example, Lesley Visser, as quoted by Schwartz, says, “When women (sportscasters) are given greater responsibilities and prove that they can manage them, they build a good reputation as sportscasters,” and in the end, “The three most important things for a sportscaster are knowledge of the game, a passion for sports and the profession, and the stamina to struggle.”<sup>60</sup>

The effects of George’s experience on rhetorical theory are also significant and are similar to the effects of Chastain’s experience. “As sports journalism evolved,” and as “women sought careers as sports journalists...[,] the challenges they encountered were perhaps more distinctive because they entered a domain which many have considered sacred for men,” write Grubb and Billion,<sup>61</sup> a domain that depends on rhetoric. Their entry emphasizes the fact that the language used to both undermine and enhance George’s credibility was powerful. When women sportscasters are seen as being deviant from the normal considerations of sportscasting, explain Mastro, Seate, Blecha, and Gallegos, how people react to such deviancy can create either receptive or resistant atmospheres.<sup>62</sup> In George’s case, the initial reception was generally negative, but through her persistence and her overall rhetorical ability, she was able to establish a sense of credibility. Further, even though they feel divided loyalties in this career, explain Hardin and Shain, ultimately they find fulfillment despite – or because of – such challenges.<sup>63</sup>

## Results and Discussion of the Analyses

### *General Results*

In both women’s experiences, the common factor of discrimination seems to be a hallmark of their



years forging the path for other female sportscasters. Billings, Angelini, and Duke suggest that there is an overall gender imbalance still taking place in the sports world, a problem that in itself can cause the difficulties any woman might have in any role in the world.<sup>64</sup> In fact, suggests Douglas, the presence of “successful, attractive women journalists in front of the camera” can often belie “how vastly outnumbered women are by men as experts and pundits,” and how often such roles indicate a dichotomy of “dismissive coverage of powerful, successful women versus their real achievements.”<sup>65</sup>

Even though both Chastain and George fought their way through a profession dominated by a male perspective, the fight can be perceived as disheartening to those interested in more equality between the sexes: disheartening in how much discrimination still exists in sportscasting, even 40 years after these described experiences. Still, it can also encourage women to the extent that it cracked the door open wide enough to allow more women opportunities in the sportscasting field. Even with this trailblazing, women will still find sportscasting a demanding job. Since, according to Grubb and Billiot, “Men have used sport to transform boys into men and affirm their masculinity” and since “As spectators, society has approved these rituals,” women sportscasters have, “as in other professions, . . . encountered traditional barriers such as not being considered for promotion and being relegated to covering minor sports or lesser roles.”<sup>66</sup> An atmosphere so based in male hegemony will be difficult to change and will, as Sowards and Renegar suggest, happen on a smaller scale before achieving national prominence: “In most accounts, the rhetorical strategy of consciousness-raising has been defined as a small group process.”<sup>67</sup>

An essential aspect that emerges in these studies is how much both Chastain and George loved their work. They did not fight their battles for overall women rights per se but instead fought for the opportunity to work in a field that they loved and in which they worked well. Because of that love, Chastain felt compelled to fight against the general reluctance to allow women into sportscasting, and George felt compelled to fight against the perception that women just did not know anything about sports. But in the end, their respective victories and

failures helped to change the face of the profession. Such experiences support Hardin and Shain’s findings that most women in sportscasting like and are satisfied with their career choice, while at the same time recognizing lingering effects of discrimination that can hurt their chances for job advancement.<sup>68</sup> Analyzing the experiences of people like Chastain and George can provide one step in the road toward more equal treatment.

### **Basis of Study**

As this analysis reveals the discrimination women often face in sportscasting, we should consider the Scriptural and faith-related concepts that have guided our thinking. For example, the sports imagery found in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 suggests that as women in sportscasting face a difficult challenge, their situation will require extra discipline in order to “win the prize.” 1 Timothy 4:7-8 similarly uses the concept of training to highlight its potential rewards. Outside of Scripture, the example of Mary Ashton Rice Livermore in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century shows someone who connected faith to equality, providing another example of a woman trying to succeed in male system. When Gayle and Lattin say that “Livermore’s argumentation style allowed her to counteract the hostility of many of her audience members as she reinterpreted key biblical passages to support women’s equality,”<sup>69</sup> such use of skill and ability foreshadow the ways that Chastain

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and George found a niche within the sportscasting profession. In a broader sense, Austin argues that the general field of sports is a place where “humans can reflect God’s nature in their relationships and other common activities and goals.”<sup>70</sup> For a profession in which women still face discrimination, the Bible offers a vision of the world without such chal-

lenges. Galatians 3:26-28, for example, holds much promise for the unifying power of Christ: “So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”<sup>71</sup> Until then, we wrestle with human-created inequalities, all the while striving toward the harmony that God intended for his world.

### Conclusion

The profession of sportscasting can act as a microcosm of society in general, especially in terms of how it perceives gender. Like many other areas of life, sportscasting shows a male predominance of power and authority, and often preference is given to men for job placement, credibility, and general acceptance by peers and viewers. Even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the opportunities in sportscasting are clearly more limited for women than they are for men. Grubb and Billiot overview the prospects by saying, “For women to have equal opportunities as sportscasters, the sports culture needs to change . . . . These changes to the sports culture rely on men seeking to define themselves not through their masculinity but as human beings which requires a wider cultural shift.”<sup>72</sup> Any woman interested in developing a career as a sportscaster should be advised on the deep challenges that await her.

She should know that even though cracks in the overall male-dominated sports world are becoming larger, much room for improvement remains, thanks in part to the efforts of women like Chastain and George. As in other professions, the discrimination against women is still readily apparent in sportscasting. But whenever the potential for job advancement, salary earnings, or even a pleasant work environment is hindered by discriminatory concepts of gender, any given culture needs more awareness and policy development to ensure that both genders are treated fairly. Sportscasting might still be a man’s world, but with continued improvement, it can become a human world.

### Endnotes

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