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## Females Perspective in Overcoming Professional Obstacles

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FEMALES PERSPECTIVE IN OVERCOMING PROFESSIONAL OBSTACLES

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Master's Project

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## **Introduction**

Females in the field of athletic training have undertaken the daunting task of striving to align themselves with their male counterparts. From early on, women have faced significant challenges related to joining the profession of athletic training for the simple fact that many academic programs failed to admit women (Momsen, 2014). Once females were accepted into academic programs, they were faced with many other challenges that would burden not only their clinical, but also their professional growth. The Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE, 2012) has been working greatly to eliminate the barriers that women face in the profession by implementing non-discrimination standards within athletic training education, for example, Standard 49, stating “clinical education assignments cannot discriminate based on sex, ethnicity, religious affiliation, or sexual orientation” (p.7). During a seminar at the National Athletic Trainers’ Association Athletic Training Education Conference in 2013, numerous educators argued against this standard solely because they felt their clinical educational sites were superior, despite those sites not allowing female athletic trainers (Momsen, 2014).

Evidence suggests that significantly lower numbers of females possess head athletic training positions in the field of athletic training (Martin, 2013). While research has demonstrated that females are still facing a great amount of deterrents in hopes to hold head leadership positions, there has been a lack of direction for those females that aspire to hold head positions in athletic training (Momsen, 2014). The purpose of this paper is to look at the history of females as well as their current

status in athletic training and she light on the uphill battle that they have overcome and are still working on overcoming. This research sought to compile information and gather insight from females that have been successful with their achievements of holding a head athletic training position. Specifically, this lit review will give insight to the history of women in athletic training, their current status, the glass ceiling effect, gender biases and issues of work-life balance that practicing female athletic trainers face.

### **History of Women in Athletic Training**

The National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) is the "professional membership association for certified athletic trainers and others who support the athletic training profession" (NATA, 2014). This association was founded in 1950 and was comprised exclusively of male athletic trainers. It was not until 1966, that the first female, Dorothy "Dot" Cohen, became the first female member in the NATA (Martin, 2013). By 1972, the number of active female members rose to eight. In 1972, a monumental event occurred that would open up the door of opportunity and allow females to become part of the athletic training profession as well as the NATA. Title IX amendment was passed stating that "no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance" (dol.gov). With the passing of Title IX, women were given opportunities in athletic training.

However, it was not until 1973 that opportunities increased for women. At that time, 15 undergraduate athletic training programs existed, five of which accepted females (Momsen, 2014). However, by 1974, out of 23 NATA approved schools, 15 of those schools accepted women. (Momsen, 2014). Despite the rise of women in the profession, it was clearly an uphill battle. The first attempt to conquer this uphill battle came in 1984 with Janice Daniels, who became the first woman elected to the NATA Board. In 1996, the Women in Athletic Training Committee (WATC) was recognized as an official NATA committee delegated the authority to vote on numerous programs and money allocation regarding females in the profession focusing on “leadership, life balancing, mentoring, and women’s health” (Martin, 2013, p.7). In 2000, Julie Max became the first female president of the NATA and was known for her advancement of the profession and development and of athletic training education programs, which garnered national acclamation.

### **Current Status**

Many changes in perceptions have been made in favor of females in regards to athletic training. Today, “women made up over 52% of the National Athletic Trainers’ Association, and are now part of the medical team on the sidelines for almost every sport...” (Martin, 2013, p.7). In 2006, Michelle Hosick published in a paper titled “Athletic Training as a Career is No Longer a Man’s Domain.” This article gave a variety of viewpoints from prominent female athletic trainers that have risen to success by demonstrating persistence, dedication, and passion for their career. As Hosick (2006) states, “many women credit the expansion of athletic training in general with increase in women on the field.” The passage of Title IX has paved a

way for women in athletics, generating more opportunities for women to excel in their athletic careers as well as allowing women to receive an equal opportunity education in athletic training. As women became more involved and accepted in sports, female athletic trainers were given the opportunity to amalgamate their interest in athletics with a profession in health care. With the increase of women breaking into the field of athletics, it slowly but surely became more acceptable for women to hold higher ranked positions. Also, with the rise of popularity in women's sports, an increased demand for female athletic trainers has become evident. While it is noted that the profession has deviated away from the perception of the profession being for those in the "good ole boys club", many roadblocks still exist. Females must become aware of what challenges they may face, such as "gender challenges, crude remarks, or even physical obstacles" (Hosick, 2006). Although there has been considerable progression, women still face challenges with acquiring head athletic training positions. According to Mazerolle, Borland, and Burton (2012), "female athletic trainers are still underrepresented at the collegiate level in the National Collegiate Association (NCAA)" (p.8). In 2009-10, the NCAA showed that at the Division I level, only a "quarter of the full-time staff athletic trainers (AT) were female" (Martin, 2013, p.8) and that 16.3% of those females held head athletic training positions in the 2009-2010 school year. While females are underrepresented in collegiate positions, they are also marginalized in administrative positions in professional male sports (O'Connor, 2010). While there are few female athletic trainers in the venue of professional male sports, such as Michelle Leget with the Houston Rockets, Ariko Iso with the Pittsburgh Steelers, and

Janet Panek with the Washington Wizards; all were assistant positions. It was not until June 2011 that a female obtained a senior position in a male professional sports; Sue Falsone was hired as head athletic trainer for the Los Angeles Dodgers. Despite these great strides, women still battle with breaking through the glass ceiling.

### *The Glass Ceiling Effect*

Throughout the years, there has been a substantial increase of women participating and working in intercollegiate athletics. Despite the rapid growth of females working in a variety of healthcare jobs, there is a severe lack of women that hold upper-management positions; this phenomenon has been titled the “glass ceiling” (Crawford, 1993). The “glass ceiling” simply describes “women who are near the top of the corporate ladder, can see the top rug, but they can rarely ascent to it” (Crawford, 1993, p.335). This difficulty with climbing the ladder to senior positions is a result of gender discrimination and the belief that the corporate culture is male dominated. Eiser & Morahan (2006) demonstrated that while women make up around 50 % the workforce, only 5% of those women hold an executive position. Moreover, those 5% of women earn substantially less pay than their male counterparts in similar positions. Dreher (2003) describes the glass-ceiling phenomenon being a three-part issue.

First, Dreher describes that if females currently holding lower-level management positions perceive that their opportunities are limited when it comes to senior management positions, based on their gender, then this could deter their motivation and aspiration to compete for advancement. Dreher (2003) states “A

belief that hard work and perseverance will not pay off, among a large segment of the workforce, would be likely to have negative productivity effects at all levels of organization” (p.2). The second reason for concern deals with a lack of diversity among those of top management teams, stating “too much homogeneity may lead to poor and costly decisions” (p.2). Lastly, gender-based barriers will help to decrease the supply of needed resources and talent. The resources dependent theory suggest that it would be an asset as well as an advantage to companies to eliminate barriers and “focus on moving women into key management positions because they may better match demographic characteristics of significant customer segments” (p.2). Females, in spite of their experience, skill set, or college degree, are still under-represented in most areas of leadership (Eiser and Morahan, 2006).

Crawford (1993) describes that the concept of gender socialization is a compelling concept in terms of role assignments within the America society (p.337). Crawford (1993) states that “traditionally male traits are rewarded and female traits rejected (p.337). Gender socialization is described as the process by which males and females are informed about the social norms, behaviors, values, and beliefs of group memberships as men and women (Nowaczyk, 2003). Crawford illustrates that there are three steps of the female and male socialization process, which were identified by Kooker (1986). The first step deals with jobs and careers and differentiating between the two. Men tend to consider a job and a career as being inter-linked with a job leading into a career. Women however, tend to perceive a job as being something in the present time, while career is for some future time. Therefore, personal and career goals are two separate goals from a

woman's perspective, but are the same thing from a man's perspective. Secondly, from youth, men have learned how to play and work as a team member, just as in sports, though women tend to strive for individual "personal best" (Kooker, 1986). Within today's society, team play is a quality that is lacking by many women. Thirdly, men tend to view relationships as a "means to an end" while in contrast; women view them as "ends in themselves" (Kooker, 1986). Men are more likely to be future oriented and women are present oriented. As Crawford (1993) asserts, "Therefore this 'feminine' posture of women can render them outsiders in executive administrator milieu, where 'every man for himself' is the rule" (p.338). Their still remains this incapacity for females to advance in their careers, specifically females trying to earn a head position at the collegiate level. Female head athletic trainers are significantly underrepresented in the area of collegiate athletics, encompassing only 27.4 % of full-time staff (Kahanov, 2010). While the glass ceiling is a crucial issue, gender bias and discrimination against women plays a considerable role in the underrepresentation.

### *Gender Bias*

Women today have had significant impact with opening the door of opportunity for those in the field of athletic training; nonetheless, there are still many barriers that need to be broken. Gorant (2012) states that while discriminatory behavior still is prevalent, "the most notable discrimination and exclusion sometimes occurred after they [females] were promoted to the head athletic training position" (p.93). From the beginning in the 1960's to the 1970's

women have dealt with gender discrimination and their inability to be accepted into athletic training educational programs. Women during this time were become athletic trainers for higher risked sports such as football, missing vital opportunities in the clinical setting. A study by Momsen (2014) showed that women encountered disempowerment and sexualization when the female athletic training students were assigned to sports that ranked lower on the pyramid in the athletic department, failing to give the females the opportunity to be with those sports of higher risk. It was also noted that those female students were given significantly less responsibility than those of male students, making it challenging for them to advance their clinical competency as an athletic training student. For example, female students were unable to attend men's basketball practices as well as their post-practice meetings due to the explicit language that was used (Momsen, 2014). Gorant (2012) expresses the notion of the profession being an "old boys" club stating, "most people in the higher ranking positions and athletic departments are men, and people like familiarity. Men communicate with men in a more comfortable level; it's still not a place that women are truly equal at the table" (p.94). While progress has been made to deter from the concept that the profession is an old boys club, males still are shown to overshadow females when it comes to holding positions at the NCAA Division I level.

Martin (2013) shares, "the research states that although Title IX allows for equal participation in collegiate athletic, legislation does not require equal work environments for male and female athletic trainer" (p.9) It was noted by the NCAA (2009-10), males dominated positions of athletic directors at the Division 1 level

(90% male), assistant athletic directors (70% males), and head AT positions (81.3% male). Maserolle, et.al, (2012) states that it is clear that as males control leadership positions within collegiate sports, this has “set the stage for me to set the agenda regarding hiring and work policies.” Females also face much resistance from male athletes, which contributes to the underrepresentation and discernment of women in head athletic training positions. It has been stated that males have claimed to feel greater discomfort when a female is providing care in gender-specific injuries and medical conditions rather than men, however, they felt females to be more nurturing than males (Martin, 2013, O’Connor et. al, 2010). Young female athletic trainers have also dealt with discrimination by male coaches; nevertheless they have become accustomed to and accepting of the inequalities instead of focusing on the dissimilarities. For instance, women tend to allow repugnant behaviors to take place because they are trying to make the work ambiance agreeable for men, and do not want the males to feel obliged to change their behavior around the presence of women. One variable that needs to be examined and researched further is gender and the role (if any) that is has on the career experiences of females.

### *Work-Life Balance*

One of the weightiest barriers that women are challenged with in the field of athletic training is the perception of their inability to handle work-life balance. Many females face juggling the numerous roles they often undertake eg., being a mother, caretaker, athletic trainer, and wife. Crawford (1993) describes that family responsibilities are a great barrier to overcome management because “employers

perceive a mother as someone who would not, or cannot, give of herself completely to the demands of executive management” (p.337). Women tend to feel obliged to prove themselves to their employers and show that family commitments, though as taxing as they may be, will not impede with their professional responsibilities (Crawford, 1993). Nussbaum and Rogers (1999) state “86.3% of certified female ATs experienced greater conflict between professional and family responsibilities when compared to their male counterparts.” Eason (2014) sheds light upon the unique challenges that encompass working as a head athletic trainer in the National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I clinical setting stating that specific setting brings about “long road trips, nights away from home, pressure to win, supervision of athletic training student’s, infrequent days off, high athlete-to-AT ratios...and extended competitive seasons” (Eason, 2014, p.533). Within athletic training, research has suggested that motherhood is one of the principal factors of females leaving the profession (Eason, 2014). The responsibility of nurturing and raising a child has been a task traditionally taken on by the mother. The decision for some females to be a mother and work in the profession of athletic training is one that is not deemed to be favorable (Momsen, 2014). As Momsen (2014) describes an interview with one of his participants, she [the participant] stated, “I was told that if I ever thought about getting tenure and promotion, which of course I had to get or I was to lose my job...I better not think about ever having another child” (p.54). It is often noted that females tend to delay their advancement in their professional career in order to help advance one of their own family members (Gorant, 2012). Gorant (2012) believes that the stereotypes that many perceive about the role of a

head athletic trainer are “so strong that even women have a difficult time imagining a situation where family and job responsibilities can coexist” (p.91). Dieringer (2007) looked into the work-family conflict survey that had existed in 2006 and related it back to a survey that was completed in 1996. The female respondents noted that they felt it to be more challenging to reenter the profession after taking time off from having children (Dieringer, 2007). She also noted that since 1996, the perception of the work family conflict had significantly increased for women. The Women in Athletic Training Committee (1996) found 62.8% of women within the field of athletic training felt that there was an absence of female role models and mentors. The WATC noted that women believed that the presence of “more role models and mentors would have helped them to be more successful in the profession” (Conroy, 2008, p.17). One variable that needs to be further examined is the importance and significance that mentorship has on females at retention rate within the profession of athletic training.

### **Problem Statement**

Statistics suggest a significantly lower number of females, compared to males, in head athletic training. While the literature has showed a decrease in discrimination towards females in athletic training (Martin, 2013 & Momsen, 2014), little research has focused on the factors that are keeping females out of head athletic training roles. The purpose of this research is to explore the barriers female athletic trainers face.

## **Research Questions**

1. What do expert females in athletic training report being their significant barrier for attaining leadership positions in athletic training?
2. What is the perceived level of importance (i.e., significance of contribution) of those barriers?

## **Method**

### *Participants*

**PHASE 1:** 6-member panel made up of expert practitioners and educators of athletic training. The criteria for establishing expertise for the females in the expert panel are: “1) knowledge and practice experience regarding the area under investigation; 2) ability and willingness to participate in the study; 3) adequate time to contribute to the Delphi panel; and 4) effective communication skills” (Sandrey & Bulger, 2008, p.139). Other criteria for identifying the female expert panel came from previous research, in which was a minimum of 10 years of experience and more than 10 000 hours of concentrated time in the field (Malasaran, Bloom, Crumpton, 2002). These women were invited to participate based upon their impact on the profession of athletic training as an expert practitioner and/or educator.

**PHASE 2:** 132 female ATs with current National Athletic Trainers’ Association (NATA) memberships were randomly chosen from the NATA public database. The inclusion criteria consisted of currently being a practicing athletic trainer and female.

### *Instrumentation*

The instrument used for this study was a survey that utilized a Modified Delphi Technique. A Modified Delphi Technique was used in this study. The purpose of using a Delphi Technique is to “achieve a convergence of opinion on a specific real-world issue” (Hus & Sandford, 2007, p.2). A Delphi technique uses a series of questionnaires to collect various data from a panel of selected subject. Other characteristics inherent when using a Delphi technique are the “ability to provide anonymity to respondents, a controlled feedback process, and the suitability of a variety of statistical analysis techniques to interpret the data” (Hus & Sandford). The National Athletic Trainers’ Association (NATA) was utilized to distribute a National Survey of the Phase 1 findings from the 6-member expert panel.

The use of a self-administered survey allows the researcher to gather explicit information from a precise population at a definite point in time, with the intent of generalizing the results to a larger population (Dieringer, 2007). Through this survey, the researcher will be able to get background information of the participants and will ask questions to help understand, explore, and explain subject’s responses on the subject matter. The survey looks to measure personal motivation within the field of athletic training, any gender bias faced, and challenges that arose in athletic training, when trying to attain leadership positions. **Phase 1:** A Modified Delphi Technique was used to identify issues important to females and validate the survey sent to participants.

**PHASE 2:** was a mixed-method, non-experimental descriptive study distributed to female certified athletic trainers, which asked them to indicate their perceived level

of importance of the barriers for women attaining leadership positions in athletic training.

## **Procedure**

An email was sent out to 15 expert females in athletic training extending an invitation to participate in Phase 1. A link to the survey was included in the recruitment letter. An informed consent letter was attached to the email with a detailed description of the purpose, procedures, securing confidentiality, possible benefits, possible risk or discomfort, and right to withdraw. The Phase 1 questions asked demographic questions including race/ethnic background, work setting, employment, age, education/highest degree earned, years of experience, years certified, marital status, family status, present annual salary before taxes, and current district/ state of employment. Following demographics, thirteen (13) questions were asked in regards to barriers that were noted within the literature and rated by “Yes, No, or Unsure”, and two (2) open-ended questions regarding which setting they have experienced the most barriers and what were/are those barrier(s), and to list any other reasons or experiences they believe to have interfered with being able to fully execute their job responsibilities as an athletic trainer or in the realm of healthcare. For phase 2, Qualtrics was used again in which the same experts were asked to rank their perceived level of significance of all confirmed professional obstacles by utilizing a five-point Likert scale. Phase 2 consisted of nine (9) barriers that were identified for women in athletic training. These nine barriers were established based off of the results from the Phase 1

survey sent to the 6-member expert panel. Thirteen questions in regards to barriers that females in athletic training face were asked to the expert panel, out of those thirteen, nine barriers were identified. A response rate of two or more “Yes” was needed for each question to be identified as a barrier. Nine barriers had greater than two or more “Yes” responses. Once those nine barriers were identified, a survey was created by utilizing a five-point Likert Scale to rate the level of importance (i.e., significance of contribution” for the barriers from women attaining leadership positions in athletic training. 1 on the scale was noted to be “Not at all important” and 5 was noted to be “Extremely important.”

## **Results**

Demographics of experts were Caucasian (83%), Asian (17%). The mean age was 55 ± 2 years with 67% having more than 25 years of experience (See Table 1). **PHASE 1.** Yielded nine barriers. These barriers included :(1) Stress associated with child rearing responsibilities and ability to perform athletic training duties, (2) Time associated with child rearing responsibilities, (3) Family care taking issues beyond child rearing responsibilities, (4) Travel requirements and responsibilities, (5) Lack of respect by male peers and supervisors, (6) Misconception about females role in athletic training, (7) Discrimination within athletic training workplace, (8) Misunderstanding about the role of athletic trainers in healthcare, (9) Expectations to always be “present” at all practices, games, travel obligations, etc.

**PHASE 2:** Content validity was established by using items previously identified in the literature and a 6-member panel of experts utilizing a Modified Delphi

Technique to identify nine items. Cronbach's Alpha was  $\alpha = .77$  and item analysis ranged from  $\alpha = .71$  to  $.77$  indicating satisfactory internal consistency and reliability. 132 females responded to the 1, the national questionnaire, a 13% response rate. The highest ranked barrier was question 9, *Expectations to always be "present" at all practices, games, travel obligations, etc.*; 42% of respondents reported it as a very important barrier. The second highest ranked barrier was question 2, *Time associated with child rearing responsibilities*; 54% of respondents reported it as a very important barrier ( $M=3.87\pm 0.95$ ). The third highest ranked barrier was questions 3, *Misunderstanding about the role of athletic trainers in healthcare*; 35% of respondents reported it as an extremely important barrier ( $M=3.78\pm 1.22$ ). The fourth highest ranked barrier was question 1, *Stress Associated with Child Rearing*; 44% of respondents reported it as a very important barrier ( $M=3.6\pm 0.96$ ). The fifth highest ranked barrier was question 3, *Family care taking issues beyond child rearing responsibilities*; 45% of respondents reported it as a very important barrier ( $M=3.38\pm 0.95$ ). The sixth highest ranked barrier was question 4, *Travel requirements and responsibilities*; 37% of respondents reported it as a very important barrier ( $M=3.37\pm 1.67$ ). The seventh highest ranked barrier was question 6, *Misconception about female's role in athletic training*; 25% of respondents reported it as a very important barrier ( $M=3.27\pm 1.32$ ). The eighth highest ranked barrier was question 5, *Lack of respect by male peers and supervisors*; 29% of respondents reported it as a moderately important barrier ( $M=3.24\pm 1.29$ ). The ninth highest ranked barrier was question 7, *Discrimination within athletic training*

*workplace*; 25% of respondents reported it as a very important barrier (M=3.09±1.29). (See table 2)

Table 1. Demographics of Expert Female Athletic Trainers

| Participants | Ethnicity (%)  | Age          | Work Setting                    | Highest Degree Earned | Years of Experience |
|--------------|----------------|--------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| N=6          | Caucasian= 83% | 55 ± 2 years | College/ University= 83%        | M.S= 67%              | 15-19= 17%          |
|              | Asian= 18%     |              | Business/ Marketing/ Sales= 17% | PhD= 33%              | 20-24= 17%          |
|              |                |              |                                 |                       | 25+= 67%            |

Table 2. Descriptive Table

| Perceived level of Importance for the following barriers for women attaing leadership positions in athletic training<br>N= 132 | Mean/ Standard Deviation |
|--|--------------------------|
| Expectations to always be “present” at all practices, games, travel obligations, etc.  | 3.9 ± 0.99               |
| Time associated with child rearing responsibilities and ability to perform athletic training duties.                           | 3.87 ± 0.95              |
| Misunderstanding about the role of athletic trainers in healthcare.  | 3.78 ± 1.22              |
| Stress associated with child rearing responsibilities and ability to perform athletic training duties.                         | 3.6 ± 0.96               |
| Family care taking issues beyond child rearing responsibilities.   | 3.38 ± 0.95              |
| Travel requirements and responsibilities   | 3.37 ± 1.67              |
| Misconception about females’ role in athletic training   | 3.28 ± 1.32              |
| Lack of respect by male peers and supervisors  | 3.24 ± 1.29              |
| Discrimination within athletic training workplace.   | 3.09 ± 1.29              |

Table 3. Four questions with the highest rated means.

| Barriers   | Mean: >3.5 out of 5-point Likert Scale |
|--|--|
| Q1. Stress associated with child rearing responsibilities and ability to perform athletic training duties.   | 3.61 ± 0.96                            |
| Q2. The time associated with child rearing responsibilities and ability to perform athletic training duties. | 3.88 ± 0.95                            |
| Q8. Misunderstanding about the role of athletic trainers in health care.                                     | 3.78 ± 1.22                            |
| Q9. Expectation to always be "present" at all practices, games, travel obligations, etc.                     | 3.90 ± 0.99                            |

### Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to explore the experiences and perspectives of women in athletic training. We found that nine barriers are perceived to play a significant role in women attaining leadership positions in athletic training. With utilizing a 5-point Likert Scale, the females were able to rate their perceived level of importance (i.e., significance of contribution). Four of the barriers had a mean above 3.5 out of 5 signifying *that Stress associated with child rearing responsibilities and ability to perform athletic training duties, The time associated with child rearing responsibilities and ability to perform athletic training duties, Misunderstanding about the role of athletic trainers in health care, and Expectation to always be "present" at all practices, games, travel obligations, etc.* are very important barriers for women trying to attain leadership positions in athletic training. Role Congruity Theory indicates that due to stereotypical gender-role expectations, women in the profession are viewed to lack the stereotypical traits that are required of successful leaders. Female ATs also deal with the demands and stereotypes that are associated

with childbearing and cultural issues regarding the “traditional” woman’s role in American society (being the primary caregiver to immediate family and the caretaker of the home). Surveying women who have been successful in the profession of athletic training gives better insight into the barriers that they have overcome and what barriers they feel to be most significant. With the given information, future females in athletic training may be better equipped to break down these perceived barriers.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There were a few limitations of the current study. In Phase 1, the participants were primarily Caucasian (5) with one participant being Asian. With the ethnicity of the majority of participants being homogenous, which makes the results of the study difficult to generalize. Another limitation of the study was the low response rates for Phase 1. This could be due in part to a few reasons. The first reason being, the survey was sent out in February, in which for most athletic trainers, the winter sports season has begun. With there being a busy work load at the beginning of a new season, that could have played in part to a low response rate. Secondly, some of the questions that were asked in the survey may not have applied to said individual, which may have contributed to the low response rate.

### **Recommendations**

Future research should examine and understand the leadership aspirations of women in athletic training as well as investigate whether or not women who rise to leadership positions are more proficient at eluding barriers. Future studies should include demographics for the Phase 2 of the Delphi Technique. Future

studies should also include a larger sample of female ATs as well as a more diversified sample of employment setting, age range, and years of experience. Another aspect that is worth investigating in future research is salary equity. Unequal pay could be a significant barrier and or deterrent for women who might have otherwise pursued head athletic training leadership positions. It is possible that women may not be interested in head positions due to the salary difference being significant compared to males, or that they need to work extra hours to be able to make the same salary as their male counterpart. The future is bright for females and their quest to hold head athletic training positions and I hope the field can advance in equality even greater in years to come.

### **Conclusion**

Females have struggled with proving their place and significance in the profession of athletic training, and while they have overcome much adversity, there may always be that struggle. Using a Modified Delphi Technique, nine (9) barriers were determined by six female expert practitioners and/or educators in athletic training. A survey containing those nine barriers was sent out to females in the NATA, in which they were asked to rate their perceived level of importance for women attaining leadership positions in athletic training, using a five (5) point Likert Scale. The results found that out of those nine barriers, one barrier was perceived to be an extremely important barrier, seven barriers were perceived to be very important, and one barrier was perceived to be moderately important. Further research will

help to gain better insight with how the barriers that women face may or may not have an impact with attaining leadership positions in athletic training.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Letter for Expert Panel

Dear Certified Athletic Trainer:

I am a Master's student at Bowling Green State University, requesting your participation in my research study, which is part of my degree requirement. I am conducting an investigation titled: **FEMALES PERSPECTIVE IN OVERCOMING PROFESSIONAL OBSTACLES: A DELPHI TECHNIQUE**. Within the National Athletic Trainers' Association, there are currently more females in the profession than males, however those numbers do not correlate with females that obtain head athletic training positions. This study has the potential to provide knowledge and understanding about the challenges that females face while obtaining leadership positions and supervisory clinical roles in athletic training and to gain insight how females in the profession overcame obstacles.

I am extending to you an invitation to be a part of a 15-member expert panel. You have been selected (with the guidance of my graduate school advisor, Dr. Matthew Kutz) as a possible member of an expert panel for of my research study (a two-phase Delphi Technique). Phase One, will consist of collecting demographic information as well as an initial validation of identified obstacles that are perceived as hindering females in athletic training. Phase Two, will consist of further validating the list of perceived obstacles according to their level of significance. Your invitation to participate was based upon the impact you have had on the profession of athletic training as an expert practitioner and/or educator. By completing and submitting the survey, you are identifying that you 18 years of age or older and that you are consenting to be a participant in both phases of the investigation The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has approved this study.

As a fellow certified athletic trainer, your knowledge and opinions regarding this topic makes your input valuable. If you would like to be a member of the expert panelist for this investigation, simply click the link to the survey below. By clicking on the link you will be directed to the informed consent form. After reading the form and having questions answered, by clicking to the next page of the survey you will indicate consent to participate.

Thank you for you time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Caroline Berger, AT, ATC

Appendix B  
Informed Consent



**BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY**

**School of Human Movement, Sport, & Leisure Studies**

227C Eppler Complex  
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403-0280  
419-372-3165

<http://www.bgsu.edu/colleges/edhd/hmsls/index.html>

## **FEMALE'S PERSPECTIVES IN OVERCOMING PROFESSIONAL OBSTACLES: A DELPHI TECHNIQUE**

**Researcher:** Caroline Berger, AT, ATC  
Graduate Student, HMSLS  
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[ceberge@bgsu.edu](mailto:ceberge@bgsu.edu)

**Advisor:** Matthew Kutz, Ph.D., AT  
Bowling Green State University  
[Mkutz@bgsu.edu](mailto:Mkutz@bgsu.edu)

### **Directions for the Participant:**

You are being asked to participate in a study that is being conducted by myself and my advisor Dr. Matthew Kutz. The study is titled, "Female's Perspectives in Overcoming Professional Obstacles: A Delphi Technique." We invite you to ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate. Additionally, you are free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this study. Your participation is completely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without repercussions of any kind.

**Purpose:** The study is looking to gather information and get some insight from expert practitioners and educators within athletic training. While positive change has occurred for females in athletic training, there still are significant barriers that hinder females from holding leadership positions or director-level clinical roles.

**Procedures:** This study will consist of Delphi Technique, with at least two phases. 1) Approximately 15 expert athletic trainers will be asked to confirm and generate a list of obstacles that female athletic trainers encounter in their professional advancement; 2) The same experts will be asked in a second phase to rank the significance of all confirmed professional obstacles. The surveys should range 15-30 minutes in total. Both phases will take place via email with links to electronic surveys.

**Securing Confidentiality:** Your identity in this study will be treated as confidential if you choose to participate. The researcher (Caroline Berger) and the project advisor (Dr. Matthew Kutz) will know the names of the members of the expert panel. Identity of the participants will be known by the researchers and kept confidential, however the responses will be anonymous. In Phase Two, you agree to validate the obstacles that are confirmed from Phase One. By clicking yes to submit survey, you are agreeing to participate in both phases.

All of the data gathered during this study will be kept confidential by the researcher. All information will be held in strict confidence. Data will be store in locked files located in a locked athletic training faulty office and will be destroyed two years following the completion of the research. Once surveys are complete be sure to clear the browser and page history.

**Possible Benefits:** There are no benefits to participating in this study. However your participation on this Delphi Panel will provide valuable information concerning female's advancement and promotion within athletic training. Therefore, your input is valuable and the results of the data will be shared through professional outlets.

**Possible Risk or Discomfort:** The study involves minimal risk. You may find that some of the questions may be sensitive and personal in nature. In addition, participation in this study will require minimal amount of your time and effort.

**Right to Withdraw:** You are free to choose whether or not to participate

in this study as well as skip a question if you do not feel comfortable answering. Participating or not will not affect your relationship with Bowling Green State University.

### **Additional Consent Information**

Consent and authorization for both phases will be obtained by agreeing to complete the survey (survey link below).

Additional questions or concerns about this study may be directed to Caroline Berger (419-345-2044, [ceberge@bgsu.edu](mailto:ceberge@bgsu.edu)) or my advisor Dr. Matthew Kutz ([mkutz@bgsu.edu](mailto:mkutz@bgsu.edu)). If you have questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair, Human Subjects Review Board, Bowling Green State University (419-372-7716, [hsrb@bgsu.edu](mailto:hsrb@bgsu.edu)).

By completing and submitting the survey, you are identifying that you are 18 years of age or older and that you are consenting to be a participant in the survey.