Moms, Sisters, and Ladies
Women Student Trainers in Men’s Intercollegiate Sport

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Few areas of contemporary society construct dualism of gender and sexuality and maintain heterosexual male dominance more vigorously than sport. Historically, sport has been characterized by bonding activities that are linked to antisocial and misogynistic behavior by male athletes, coaches, and other members of the male sporting fraternity (McKay, 1997; Messner, 1992b; Messner & Sabo, 1994; Schacht, 1996). As was demonstrated vividly in the 1990 sexual harassment of Boston Herald sportswriter Lisa Olsen by several members of the New England Patriots, the locker room has become a flash point for the conflicts that can arise when the misogynist milieu of some sporting subcultures encounter the small but increasing number of women who are entering this traditionally androcentric domain (Kane & Disch, 1993). Despite such incidents, the sexual harassment of women in sport is only beginning to be documented (Brackenridge, 1997; Katz, 1995c; Lenskyj, 1992b, 1992c; Volkwein, Frauke, Schnell, Sherwood, & Livezey, 1997).

Athletic trainers, who provide ongoing acute and chronic health care services to athletes, have started to enter sport in expanding numbers. Like sports journalism, the profession of athletic training is characterized by a gender hierarchy. The National Athletic Trainers Association does not publish figures for percentages of men and women trainers, but one of its representatives stated that women make up only 2% of the athletic training staffs for professional baseball, basketball, football, and ice hockey, and about 20% of head athletic trainers in intercollegiate sports programs (B. Unruh, telephone conversation with the author, March 6, 1997). Nevertheless, the number of women in intercollegiate athletic training positions
represents a substantial increase in recent years, and it appears that these women have joined a number of others who are challenging hegemonic forms of masculinity in traditionally male sporting subcultures (Young, 1997).

This study extends the growing literature on sexualities in organizations (Hearn & Parkin, 1995; Hearn, Sheppard, Tancred-Sherrif, & Burrell, 1989) by investigating the experiences of women working as athletic trainers in an intercollegiate sports program at a large Midwestern university, hereafter referred to as Great State University (GSU). It involved interviews with 9 women student athletic trainers (SATs) in an internship program and was part of a larger study that also included men SATs (Walk, 1994). The central focus of the study was the process by which students become athletic trainers and the nature of student-trainer relationships among peer athletes and others within the social structures of intercollegiate athletics. Given the scant literature detailing the experiences of women within male athletic subcultures, the interactions of these women with men during assignments to traditionally male athletic teams were of particular interest.

**Participants**

All of the women were either college seniors or graduate students in a program that required both course work and internship experience. All of the participants had at least 2 years of experience as interns as well as a series of assignments to various collegiate athletic teams. They also had either previous or current assignments to the football team, along with placements with other sports in the GSU athletic department. Out of concern for revealing identities, the teams to which particular student trainers in the study were assigned cannot be reported.

**Methodology**

I began with the premise that the student-trainers belonged to multiple and overlapping subcultures (e.g., athletic training, intercollegiate athletics, college student life). Each participant took part in a group session and a subsequent individual interview. The questions discussed in both situations focused on a number of issues, including the students' personal expectations of their internships, the daily problems they confronted, and the