College sport in general is typically a male-dominated field (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). The passage of Title IX in 1972 paved the way for girls and women to increase participation in sports from the youth level to scholastic level to the collegiate level. However, the overall percentage of women in leadership or authority positions (i.e., coaching, athletic director) has decreased (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). The lack of women in authority positions in collegiate athletics may lead to the perception that women should also not be in positions of authority (i.e., faculty members) in sport management classrooms.

Jones, Brooks, and Mak (2008) reported 66% of sport management programs had fewer than 40% female faculty members, and 81.39% of sport management programs had fewer than 40% female students. Women comprised 32.8% of the membership in the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM), the professional organization for sport management faculty (R. Ammon, personal communication, June 9, 2015). Males dominate the sport management classroom, teaching profession, as well as coaching and administrative positions across all levels of sport. Issues between female faculty members and students—either male or female—may arise both in and out of the classroom in the form of sexual harassment and incivility by the student toward the female faculty member because of the minority status of women in sports. These actions are known collectively as contrapower harassment.

Sexual harassment and incivility can take several forms, but is typically the unwanted attention one might receive from another individual (Rospenda et al., 1998). This unwanted attention is often experienced by the employee or subordinate—not the supervisor or person of power. In the case of contrapower harassment, the supervisor, or superior (i.e., faculty member) is the victim of the unwanted harassment and incivility by the other person (i.e., student) (Grauerholz, 1989). Sexual harassment might be verbal (i.e., comments on appearance), non-verbal (i.e., feedback on student evaluations), or physical (i.e., touching, hugging) that are deemed sexual in nature (Benson, 1984; Grauerholz, 1989; Lampman, 2012). Incivility might include disrespect toward the female faculty member, but can also include bullying (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001; Lampman, 2012). As with sexual harassment, incivility can be expressed by students in several ways. Some may use physical cues by rolling their eyes or sleeping in class. Verbal incivility might be comments insinuating that the female faculty member is not “qualified” simply because she is a woman in the sport industry. Written comments in emails and end-of-course evaluations might be confrontational and provide a lack of respect toward the female faculty member as well. The extreme end of incivility is bullying (Lampman, Phelps, Bancroft, & Beneke, 2009).

Bandura’s (1962, 1977) social learning theory suggests people learn by observing others. Once the behavior is learned, it can lead to imitation and exhibiting the learned behavior. Each sport management student brings a unique set of life experiences to the classroom. However, women in an authority position in a sport setting may be a new and unfamiliar experience for students based on previous experiences as a child and teenager. It is then imperative to ensure contrapower harassment does not occur as students may perceive this as an acceptable behavior in a professional setting.

This study extends the work of (Authors, in press) where contrapower harassment between female sport management faculty members and students and types of contrapower harassment experienced were examined using qualitative methodology. The study found nine of the 10 participants experienced some form of contrapower harassment (i.e., sexual harassment or incivility from students) (Authors omitted to maintain anonymity, in press). The participants reported contrapower harassment did exist as they received verbal and written comments of incivility from both male and female students. These included comments about their content knowledge, teaching
ability, and gender. They also reported nonverbal or physical incivility such as sleeping in class or engaging in non-class activities. Female sport management faculty members also experienced incivility from other (often male) faculty members. This incivility included sexist comments and making a mockery out of contrapower situation experienced by the female faculty.

The current study took a quantitative approach to assess contrapower harassment experienced by female sport management faculty members in order to gather a larger sample size to be able to draw more conclusive, generalizable results. One hundred seventy-four female sport management and sport studies faculty members completed the survey. Age of the participants ranged from 24 to 69 (M=42.8 years), 77.6% (N=135) identified as White/Caucasian, 67.2% (N=117) identified as heterosexual, and 19.5% (N=34) identified as homosexual. Experience as faculty member ranged from 1 semester to 44 years (M=11.65 years) and faculty identified their ranks as instructor, senior lecturer, adjunct, assistant, associate, and full professor. Approximately 50.0% (N=87) indicated they had experienced incivility from a female student whereas 75.9% (N=132) stated they had experienced incivility from a male student. Additionally, 1.7% (N=3) specified they had experienced sexual harassment from a female student while 13.8% (N=24) expressed experiences of sexual harassment from male students.

Common experiences of incivility from male and female students include: requesting to make an exam or assignment easier, creating tension by dominating conversations, showing disdain or disapproval during class, submitting inappropriate or hostile comments on course evaluations, and making a derogatory comment concerning race, ethnicity, sex, or sexual orientation. Fourteen women have experienced a student making a hostile or threatening comment during class. Additionally, 15 indicated they had been yelled or screamed at by a student. Common experiences of sexual harassment from male and female students include: being treated differently because of their sex, being put down because of their sex, being stared/leered/ogled at in a way that made them uncomfortable, and hearing crude/offensive sexual remarks either publicly or in private. Two of the participants indicated they had a student expose themselves physically in a way that embarrassed them or made them feel uncomfortable. Participants also offered suggestions for combating contrapower harassment from students in the classroom. Suggestions include: keeping doors open during meetings, establishing classroom policies and printing them in the course syllabus, minimizing/ignoring comments and moving on, and documenting the incident and meeting with administration and the student at a later date. Outcomes of this project will have implications in curriculum, classroom environment for female faculty and female students, and students’ behavior in the professional workplace post-graduation.