

# **Hegemonic Masculinity and the Institutionalized Bias Toward Women in Men's Collegiate Basketball: What do Men Think?**

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Women coaching in men's college basketball are anomalies. Whereas women occupy 58.3% of the head coaching positions for women's college basketball teams, they possess a mere 0.01% of men's college basketball head coaching positions (Zgonc, 2010). The purpose of this study was to investigate men's basketball coaches' perceptions and overall attitude toward women in the institution of men's college basketball and within the male-dominated organizational culture of sport. In doing so, the authors provide insight of core participants (i.e., NCAA Division I men's basketball coaches) who reinforce hypermasculine institutional norms to form impermeable cognitive institutions. Building on previous research, eight men's basketball coaches were sampled using semistructured interviewing methods. Results suggested that men's college basketball is hypermasculine, gender exclusive, and resistant to change. Given these findings, the authors propose sport managers should consider organizational culture and individual agency when developing policies that are sensitive to gender inequality and promote inclusion of underrepresented groups.

The late Shirley Chisholm, educator and politician, once said, "The emotional, sexual, and psychological stereotyping of females begins when the doctor says, 'It's a girl'" (Hoard, 1973, p. 36). Over three decades later, the stereotyping of women still exists and plays a meaningful part in the gender roles that are designated to women (Duehr & Bono, 2006). As it stands, women are consistently stereotyped as being less fit for leadership roles than are their male counterparts (Embry, Padgett, & Caldwell, 2008). To counteract the barriers women may face in the organizations within the United States, lawmakers have developed policies to protect the access of women. One such policy is the enactment of Title VII, Civil Rights Act of 1964, which was passed to prohibit the discrimination of women in the workplace. As articulated by The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Title VII states that, "it is illegal to discriminate against someone on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, or sex" (EEOC, 2010, p.1). Another policy enacted by Congress is Title IX of the

Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), which aims to prohibit sex discrimination in educational institutions that receive federal funding (Rhode, 2008; Swaton, 2010). Title IX was later applied to athletics within educational institutions, as well. Although this policy is part of constitutional law, which regulates the acceptable behavior of United States citizens, it is often misunderstood and taken for granted (Rhode, 2008). Likewise, anecdotal data, descriptive statistics, and empirical studies continue to provide evidence that women are immensely underrepresented as leaders in the American workforce and especially sport organizations.

As it stands, women are often marginalized and afforded far fewer opportunities in the workplace than their male counterparts. For instance, according to the EEOC, women represent approximately 44% of the total workforce (EEOC, 2009). However, women only occupy 27% of upper-level leadership positions in the workforce (EEOC, 2009). These numbers are mirrored in sport. According to the NCAA Student-athlete Ethnicity Report 2010, female student-athletes account for 42.8% of all NCAA student athletes (Zgonc, 2010). We could assume, based on these numbers, that the leadership positions in NCAA sports would reflect similar gender representation. However, this is not the case. Currently, women serve as coaches for just 20.9% of all college athletic teams (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). In agreement with the literature, which presumes that the viable pool of college

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coaches and leaders include college athletes (Everhart & Chelladurai, 1998), anecdotal evidence suggests female athletes have unequal representation in leadership positions in college sports (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012).

Although women are greatly underrepresented in sports as a whole, women in men's sports are an anomaly. Women currently represent less than 3% of the coaching positions in men's sports, while men represent more than half of the positions in women sports and roughly 97% of the positions in men's sports (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). As presented in the data, this poses a dilemma where there is a double standard: men are represented as the majority in both men's and women's sports, whereas women are nearly nonexistent in men's sports and underrepresented as minority leaders in women's sports. Over the years scholars have become deeply entrenched in the issues that influence the underrepresentation of women in women's sports. However, with the exception of a few examinations of women being underrepresented as leaders in high school boys' sports (Kane & Stangl, 1991; Lovett & Lowry, 1994; Staurowsky, 1990), and more recently Kamphoff, Armentrout, and Driska's (2010) investigation of tokenism in men's sports, very little literature exists on the influences and factors that contribute to the position of women in men's sports.

The previously mentioned descriptive data, along with empirical research, suggest that sport is one of the most widely accepted preserves for male domination and masculinity (Whisenant, Pedersen, & Obenour, 2002). While the enactment of Title IX in 1972 prompted an exponential increase in participation opportunities for women in sport and physical activity, it also led to a drastic decline in the representation of women as leaders in sport (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012; Cunningham & Sagas, 2008; Sartore & Sagas, 2007). The growing discrepancy between the participative opportunities and the leadership opportunities for girls and women in sport creates a substantial dilemma for female athletes who wish to pursue a job in sport. Indeed, despite investing substantial time and dedicating profound segments of their lives to sport, female athletes who want a career in the sport context perceive several barriers to entry and are therefore unsure of what to do with the social capital that they have accumulated while playing (Cooper, Hunt, & O'Bryant, 2007; Kamphoff & Gill, 2008).

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether the discrimination and institutionalized practices influences the underrepresentation of women in men's sports. We build on the discrimination in sports work of Cunningham and Sagas (2005) and Sagas and Cunningham, (2005), which examined the relationships between social capital, human capital, and discrimination in sports. For instance, all else being equal, and having no coaching experience, one would assume a woman who has played the highest amateur and professional levels of basketball would be more qualified than a man who has never played beyond grade school; however, this is not the case (Walker, Bopp, & Sagas, 2011). Through in-depth, semistructured interviews, we seek to identify male basketball coaches'

perceptions and overall attitude toward women in the institution of men's college basketball and within the male-dominated organizational culture of sport.

Overall, we look to respond to Washington and Patterson's (2011) call for more sport research directed at the tenet of institutional research, which examines institutionalized practices. In this case, we examine how the practices that restrict access of women in men's sports is institutionalized in intercollegiate sports, in return, making intercollegiate men's sports nearly impermeable for women. Further, this particular study reveals an impermeable cognitive institution in sport, where the foundation of change seems to reside in the core constituents. A review of the pertinent literature and our theoretical framework are presented in the following sections.

## Review of Literature

Several theoretical, empirical, and anecdotal "explanations" for the continued underrepresentation of women in leadership position within the sport context have been offered in the sport literature (Cunningham, 2008; Sartore & Cunningham, 2007; Walker & Bopp, 2011). While all unique in their individual contributions, there exists a common thread between them—gendered barriers, perceived and actual. Gender ideology has led to the belief that "masculinity is synonymous with sport" (Anderson, 2008, p. 7). Likewise, gender ideology has constructed coaching as men's work and identified good coach as a male coach (Kamphoff, 2010). Therefore, maleness and men have historically been considered the norm and viewed as superior to femininity and females within sport and sport organizations. Indeed, the congruence between the traditional gender meanings of masculinity (e.g., men as tough, strong, confident, and leaders; West & Zimmerman, 1987) and leadership positions within sport can result in the perception that women are not viable candidates for such positions (e.g., Burton, Barr, Fink, & Bruening, 2009). This is particularly true within men's sports where there is scant representation of women as leaders (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012; Zgonc, 2010). Of primary interest here is the underrepresentation of women as coaches in intercollegiate men's basketball.

## Female Coaches in Men's Basketball

Basketball is the focus of this study due to its similarities in both women's and men's intercollegiate basketball (e.g., equipment, techniques, strategy); nearly equal participation opportunities at the intercollegiate level; and international recognition. Women's college basketball is one of the most watched women's collegiate sports. The WNBA is currently the most visible and marketed professional women's team sport in the United States. In addition, basketball is one of the few sports internationally recognized and commercially identifiable as both a women's and men's sport. Women and men play by almost identical rules, plays, and techniques. The skill sets are almost identical, and in nonformal settings

women and men often times, play the sport together in pick-up games.

As it stands, women occupy 58.3% of the head coaching positions for women's college basketball teams, while only occupying 0.01% of men's college basketball head coaching positions (Zgonc, 2010). Likewise, women are vastly underrepresented as assistant coaches in men's college basketball, serving as assistant coaches for only 3.5% of men's college basketball teams. Men, on the other hand, occupy a substantial proportion of both head and assistant coaching positions in women's sport. Currently, men comprise 41.7% and 33% of head and assistant women's basketball coaches, respectively (Zgonc, 2010). Taken together, these descriptive data identify vast differences between men and women occupying coaching positions in women's and men's college basketball.

Based on the aforementioned statistics, Walker and Bopp (2011) sought to identify the barriers unique to women working in men's college basketball. Following Moustakas' (1994) methods for phenomenological analysis, the authors identified three overarching themes and several elements within their data: double standards, exclusive social networks, and organizational fit issues. Elements specific to the individual experiences of the women coaching in men's college basketball were also identified, including the presence of a glass wall, the traditional old boys' network v. old girls' network, organizational fit, over-compensation, and coaching intentions. These themes and the elements provide insight into the perceptions and experiences of women working in men's college basketball. Perhaps most importantly, they illuminate the factors that influence the intentions of the women interviewed to pursue positions in men's basketball in the future or their intentions to leave men's college basketball. In fact, many of the participants felt as though women, in general, may have fewer intentions to coach men's college basketball because of barriers like the glass wall (i.e., access discrimination) and traditional old boys' network (i.e., treatment discrimination). As one participant stated, "They're not interested [in coaching men's college basketball] because they feel they're not going to get the opportunity, that it's already a closed door" (Walker & Bopp, 2011, p. 59).

Building off these works, this study sought to extend the literature by investigating this phenomenon from the perspective of male coaches in men's collegiate basketball. Through semistructured interviews of men who are the potential colleagues and stakeholders in men's college basketball, our aim is to identify the perceptions and overall attitude toward women in the institution of men's college basketball and within the male-dominated organizational culture of sport. Our theoretical framework is presented below.

## Theoretical Framework

Institutional theory is a relevant and useful tool in analyzing sports organizations (Washington, 2004; Washington & Patterson, 2011; Washington & Ventresca, 2008).

However, diversification is needed in the research questions and tenets of institutional theory that are analyzed in sport. Washington and Patterson suggest that in marrying sport and institutional theory there is much to gain.

We think the marriage between institutional theory and sport research can be less of a hostile takeover—where institutional theory uses sport research just as a setting to highlight tried and true concepts within institutional theory—to a joint venture—where the sport field can be used to extend institutional theory and institutional theory can direct research in sport to questions that are currently not being answered. (p. 2)

According to Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin, and Suddaby (2008) institutional theory is the "dominant approach to understanding organizations" (p. 2). Institutional theory and institutions have been investigated and defined through conceptual and empirical research for over 70 years. Hughes (1936) and Selznick (1957) are among those who sought early definitions and understandings of institutions. However, for this work, we will base much of our interpretation and conceptual framework for institutions and institutional theory on the more recent work of Washington and Patterson (2011), who suggest:

Institutions can also be represented through ideologies or states that represent a social order or pattern that is perceived as stable through chronological repetition. Marriage, racism, and presidency are all examples of institutions despite the absence of concrete structures connected to these practices. Rather types of institutions are reinforced through supporting mechanisms and socially understood value systems, which consistently strengthen their viability (p. 3).

In this case, we examine the institution of intercollegiate sports, as a gender biased mechanism, which perpetuates gender inequality in sports leadership. In particular, this study hopes that through the use of a unique sample (i.e., men's basketball coaches) we are able to advance sport research geared toward diversity and discrimination (Cunningham, 2008; Cunningham & Sagas, 2005; Sagas & Cunningham, 2005), hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Norman, 2010), and institutionalization (Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings, 2002; Leblebici, Salancik, Copay & King 1991; Washington & Patterson, 2011; Washington & Ventresca, 2008).

## Hegemony and Hegemonic Masculinity

Many researchers have adopted hegemony theory as a lens through which to study inequities within the sport context. Hegemony refers to the literal and ideological forces that hierarchically organize and structure individual lives and social practices (Gramsci, 1971).

Specifically, through persuasion, enforcement, and consensus, certain social groups are accorded lower levels of social power and status and are subsequently labeled subordinate. Members of both the dominant and subordinate groups consent to this hierarchical arrangement, as the ideological beliefs of the dominant group or ruling class have been disseminated, accepted, and naturalized. Within sport, profound hierarchical arrangements have been established in relation to gender ideology and the traditional meanings of masculinity (Messner, 1992). Specifically, sport is a historically masculine context in which hegemonic masculinity has relegated women, and some men, subordinate (Connell, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Beginning at a very young age, society reinforces male dominance in sports by communicating men are more knowledgeable about sport, natural physically superior, and better sport leaders and participants than are women (Messner, 1992). This gender order can be explained by *hegemonic masculinity* or, “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell, 2005, p. 77). Indeed, the subordination of women in the sport context has been demonstrated across various areas. Whisenant et al. (2002), for instance, concluded that hegemonic masculinity was present within athletic administration at the college sports level. Overall, men had significantly higher success ratios than women in their job performance. However, women had significantly higher success ratios than men at the lower level divisions of the NCAA (i.e., Division II and Division III). Although the presence of women in powerful positions at the lower levels of NCAA institutions may be a sign of hope, men still dominate the powerful NCAA Division I positions. Likewise, hegemonic masculinity as a cultural norm seems to be deeply embedded within NCAA sports.

The linkage between the role of hegemonic masculinity and societal perceptions of women in men’s college basketball was demonstrated by Walker et al.’s (2011) analysis of female men’s basketball coaches. This study addressed how traditional gender attitudes may contribute to the lack of public encouragement in the hiring of women as men’s college basketball coaches. Overall the findings suggested that despite society’s apparent acceptance of the nonexistent role of women in men’s sport, the female coaches experienced feelings of inequality and unfairness (Walker et al., 2011). Likewise, Walker and Bopp (2011) provided evidence that women may have increased barriers to coaching positions in men’s college basketball. Therefore, a major hindrance to the upward mobility of women in the ranks of men’s college basketball seems to lie in the institutionalized hegemonic masculine culture of men’s college basketball. The next section will explore the deeper meanings of institutionalization and how it intersects with hegemonic masculinity in sports.

## Institutionalization

Several theoretical perspectives suggest that ideologies and stereotypes form the way institutions and individuals organize society such that they become maintained and legitimized over time (e.g., systems justification theory; see Jost & Banaji, 1994, and social dominance theory; see Sidanius, Levin, Frederico, & Pratto, 2001). According to institutional theory, the greater the unquestioned acceptance and internalization of practices within a social system, the greater the “uniformity of cultural understanding and resistance to change” (Zucker, 1977, p. 742). Indeed, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) identified institutionalization as a well-documented feature of contexts that exemplify socially dominant masculinities (e.g., sport). Drawing upon these insights, Cunningham (2008) effectively argued that the phenomenon of gender inequality in sport organizations has become institutionalized such that the marginalization of and discrimination against women in sport are engrained practices. Thus, it can be argued that the belief that females should not coach men’s sport teams has been legitimated and the notion of men coaching men normalized, as this is just the “way things are to be done” (Scott, 1987, p. 496). Likewise, Greenwood et al. (2002) suggest, “Full institutionalization occurs as the density of adoption provides ideas with cognitive legitimacy (i.e., cognitive institution) and the ideas themselves become taken-for-granted as the natural and appropriate arrangement” (p. 61). This notion of institutionalization is very similar to hegemony and hegemonic masculinity. For this reason, we are using this research to suggest that when considering gender, hegemonic masculinity, and sports, researchers must consider institutionalization. In this case institutionalization can be defined as the norms and practices adopted by the organization and assumed to be an integral part of how the organization functions. Intercollegiate sports, in particular men’s sports, have an institutionalized bias against women as coaches. However, for an institution to segregate, deny access to, or prohibit one group from a certain profession is discriminatory in nature. Therefore, we will examine types of gendered discrimination that has taken place in regards to sport and gender, and whether discrimination may be present in the institution of men’s college basketball.

## Discrimination in Sport

Gender discrimination in sport has been identified as a hindrance to the representation of women in sport (Cunningham, 2008; Cunningham & Sagas, 2008). On the contrary, diversity in sports organizations has been examined as having a positive influence on organizational outcomes (Cunningham & Fink, 2006; Fink, Pastore, & Riemer, 2003). Therefore, gender discrimination and a lack of gender diversity within an organization would seem to be a problem that an organization would want to change. However, in men’s college basketball, this institutionalized practice of excluding women, is seen as a nonfactor.

Access discrimination and treatment discrimination based on race has been examined in the sport context (Cunningham & Sagas, 2005). Access discrimination suggests that certain individuals are prohibited, via exclusive networks or extensive barriers, entrance into certain professions or careers (Cunningham & Sagas, 2005). Treatment discrimination can be described as certain individuals having differential outcomes for equal work, accomplishments, or credentials. For instance, Cunningham and Sagas (2005) found that based on the race of the head coach, Black assistant coaches were given less access to coaching positions, than their White counterparts. Treatment discrimination on the other hand, would suggest that once becoming an assistant coach, Black coaches were given different and maybe less beneficial task than their White counterparts, thereby prohibiting their ability to grow professionally and be prepared for a head coaching position. Walker and Bopp's (2011) results suggest that women coaching in men's college basketball felt as though they were experiencing access discrimination in that they were prohibited from certain social networks, necessary for advancement. However, in this study, we will examine how access and treatment discrimination plays a role in the institutionalized bias of women in men's college basketball.

Applying the tenets of hegemonic masculinity and institutionalization to men's collegiate basketball, it is suggested here that there exists a mutual understanding whereby both women and men acknowledge that men (i.e., dominant social group) have more power, control, and access than women. Further, neither group is willing to suffer the negative consequences of speaking out against the status quo. Walker and Bopp (2011) examined this phenomenon from the perspective of female coaches and found that while females were optimistic about women coaching in men's college basketball, they themselves made no significant attempt toward changing the status quo. Also, in Walker et al. (2011), while the majority of the participants in their study had a positive attitude toward women coaching in men's college basketball and felt that a qualified woman would be a capable candidate who fit well as a coach in men's college basketball, their recommendations within a hiring scenario were lower for qualified female coaches than for qualified male coaches. These recommendations were lower despite rating female applicants similarly to male coaches on capability of coaching a men's college basketball team and job fit. Individuals understood that women are viable and competent candidates, but they did not want to go against the institutionalized practice of hiring men for men's college basketball positions. Using the above theories and an institutional framework, in this study, we sought to extend the literature by investigating this phenomenon from the perspective of core constituents of this particular institution, male coaches in men's collegiate basketball.

## Method

### Participants

Donaldson (1993) identified coaches and sportsmen as being profoundly influential in establishing and maintaining hegemonic masculinity. Accordingly, the sample of participants for this study was purposive in nature and comprised of (a) men who have coached men's college basketball and (b) men who have coached both men's and women's college basketball. The utility of this sample is twofold. First, as the aim of the current study was to identify any characteristics of men's college basketball that makes it a gender exclusive domain, there was a need to explore the experiences of those exclusively connected to men's college basketball. Secondly, in an effort to identify the factors that make men's college basketball culture different from women's college basketball, we sought to explore the experiences of those few men who have coached both men's and women's college basketball.

The first three participants were chosen from a large NCAA Division I university in the southeastern part of the United States. After choosing the first few participants based on criterion sampling methods (i.e., male, has coached or is currently coaching men's college basketball, or has been both a men's and women's college basketball coach) the remainder of the sample was chosen based upon criterion and snowball sampling methods. Specifically, the first few participants were asked to identify anyone else they may know who fits the criteria. This participant referral continued until the data became saturated (for further sampling methods see Lee & Koro-Ljungberg, 2007; Walker & Bopp, 2011). To avoid biases based on certain cultures of the United States (e.g., southern culture), or certain ultra competitive athletic conferences (e.g., Southeastern Conference) we asked participants to refer potential new participants from a different conference and region of the United States.

In sum, a total of eight participants took part in the study. Demographically, two participants identified as African American/Black and six identified as White. All participants identified as being American. Participants ranged in age from 25 to 61 years old. Geographically, participants lived and coached in the northeast (e.g., Massachusetts, New York, and Connecticut), the southeast (e.g., Florida), west coast (e.g., Arizona), and the central regions of the United States (e.g., Colorado). Therefore, participants were embedded in American sport cultural norms that may have existed in all parts of the country. These efforts to include participants from a wide range of geographical regions and ages were done to identify any bias that may exist within certain age groups or regions of the United States. However, we found that the culture of college basketball is stable, dependent on the organization (e.g., NCAA) and level (e.g., Division I). Table 1 provides a list of participants, as well as individual demographics.

**Table 1 Participant Description**

Participant	Pseudonym	Age	Conference	Race/Ethnicity	Experience
#1	Matthew	27	SEC	White/Caucasian	5 years
#2	Jake	29	SEC	White/Caucasian	4 years
#3	Bob	61	SEC	Black/African American	35 years
#4	Ricky	29	Atlantic 10	White/Caucasian	9 years
#5	James	46	Big 12	White/Caucasian	24 years
#6	Garth	25	Atlantic-Sun	White/Caucasian	3 years
#7	Harold	27	Atlantic-Sun	White/Caucasian	2 years
#8	Kevin	37	Pac-10	Black/African American	7 years

## Data Collection

The data were collected using semistructured interviews, the format of which began with the interview guide. The interview guide consisted of an introduction to the study, interview questions, and concluding comments from both the interviewer and interviewee. Interview questions are based on the exploratory nature of a phenomenological study (Lee & Koro-Ljungberg, 2007; Moustakas, 1994), previous research on women coaching in men's basketball (Walker & Bopp, 2011), and the theoretical tenets of hegemonic masculinity and institutionalized practices. The interview guide consisted of questions such as, "What is your perception of women coaching in men's college basketball?" and "Describe your perceptions of the role of women in collegiate sports." Interviews lasted from about 47 min to the longest being 78 min long. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed immediately following the interview during which each participant was assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality.

## Data Analysis

NVIVO 8 was used to analyze the data. By using NVIVO 8, reliability was established in the organization of data into nodes (i.e., themes) and the identification of specific quotes. In an effort to remain consistent with previous qualitative work exploring women coaching in men's college basketball (Walker & Bopp, 2011), this study employed a phenomenological approach when analyzing the data. In accordance with Crotty (1998), phenomenology is a lens used to explore the essence of those most closely involved. In this case, men's college basketball coaches are those most intimately involved with the phenomenon of women's underrepresentation in coaching men's college basketball. In addition, by using a phenomenological approach, we allowed for easy comparison with the work of Walker and Bopp (2011).

We adhered to Moustakas (1994) methods for analyzing phenomenological data. This method for data analysis has been successfully applied to qualitative data in many fields (Creswell, 1998; Lee & Koro-Ljungberg, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Walker & Bopp, 2011). The primary advantage to this method is that the perceptions,

attitudes, and experiences "regarded as the primary source of knowledge, the source that cannot be doubted" (p. 52), can be easily sifted and systematized so that the essence of the phenomenon surfaces and is easily acknowledged (Moustakas, 1994; Walker & Bopp, 2011). Invariant constituents and themes were member checked by an outside researcher, familiar with the topic and literature. The purpose of this outside researcher was to ensure that the verbatim quotes and analysis was filled with a strong description of the culture, to provide other researchers and readers a basis to make judgments on the transferability of our research (Bryman, 2008). Data were member checked by participants to ensure themes and the verbatim quotes that followed each theme were accurately categorized and interpreted. Only those themes and verbatim examples that were agreed upon were used in the results section. These rigorous methods were administered to the data to provide evidence supporting the reliability and validity of our data as a result of the trustworthiness and authenticity of our research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The results of this data were frank and candid, thus, allowing for rich data analysis and deep, meaningful discussion. Participants expressed a high level of comfort with the researcher conducting interviews. This level of comfort was attributed to the researcher sharing her/his experience as a collegiate NCAA Division I basketball player, coach, and trainer of both men's and women's collegiate basketball players with participants. Participants expressed feeling as though they were talking to someone who has "been in the trenches" and was a part of their exclusive institution.

## Results and Discussion

The results suggest that there is a masculine culture present in men's college basketball. Specifically, this culture was acknowledged by most participants as being hyper-masculine, gender exclusive, and resistant to change. The following sections provide the major themes that emerged from the data, verbatim quotes from participants, which reaffirm the meaning of each theme, and contextual discussion on how thematic evidence from this study may act as barriers to women in men's college basketball.

## Masculinity and Culture: "Men's College Basketball is a Masculine Culture"

Most participants expressed feelings that the natural masculinity present in men's college basketball is a major hindrance to men accepting women into their culture. One participant in particular described the influence of masculinity in men's college basketball below.

In the locker room, on the floor, and in coaches-players relationships masculinity is often toughness, the idea of toughness, the idea of being a man, playing like a man. Those things are all prominent in college basketball and then on coaching staffs there is a locker room mentality environment that exists within the dynamics of a coaching staff. I have been to three different places and it has existed like that at all three places. In my experience it has been a consistent thing, so to bring a woman into that type of masculine environment would be uncomfortable for a lot of men. Men would not want to do it because it is an old boys club to be honest and bringing a woman into that would be a challenge.

This statement reflects how this culture of masculinity and sexism is deeply embedded within the sport culture. Another participant, who suggested that the masculine environment was evident in staff meetings and locker room conversations, echoed the notion of men's college basketball as a masculine culture.

I have been in meetings before where there are conversations that would be different if a woman was in the room. I have even been on the practice floor where things that were said by a head or assistant coach, or the terminology used to express signs of weakness would be different if a woman was present because the present language used would be offensive to women. I think this environment is a heavily masculine based environment.

Similarly, another participant stated, "It's [men's college basketball] definitely a culture of manliness and probably some jokes that would affect the day to day culture of things that may be said in practice or meetings." In the same regard, another participant stated that, "they [men] would feel a need to adjust their behavior which could make men feel restricted and awkward in their job, because if we have woman we would have to be polite and take extra measure."

The presence of this masculine culture in men's college basketball is consistent with previous societal studies of masculinity (Connell, 1987). As Bird (1996) suggested women are "othered" from the very beginning of boy-girl interactions. The strong masculine culture of men's college basketball has become deeply established as a male domain thus relegating women as intruders. There are many professions where men and women work side by side, such as in academia, in the medical field, and in the military. However, participants seem to believe that men's college basketball is unique in that sexist language

and masculinity is so necessary for men's sports to thrive, that it is worth completely shutting women out men's sports as a whole. Claringbould and Knoppers (2012) found similar results in their work and identified this phenomenon as paradoxical practices of gender normalcy. Paradoxical practices of gender normalcy emerges when gender inequality within an organization is considered normal, while the numbers of women and men in the organization suggest that gender equality should be the norm (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2012). Participants use societal stereotypes of leaders and coaches in men's sports to justify the gender inequity taking place in men's college basketball, thus, embedding these inequitable paradoxical practices of gender normalcy deep into the institution. These beliefs reinforce sexism, breeds discrimination, and perpetuates complete disregard for women in the institution of men's sports.

Participants expressed that if women were present they would change their language and terminology because much of what they currently use would be offensive toward women. The current environment and culture of men's college basketball is not welcoming to women and as stated before, would not only make men feel "awkward," but would also be offensive to women. All eight participants communicated that men's college basketball was a very masculine culture in which women would most likely not feel comfortable entering unless the men within changed their ways. Therefore, the current data and participant quotes suggest that the masculine culture of men's college basketball serves as a profound factor that influences the lack of women as coaches. As Anderson (2008) suggested, the exclusion of women from men's sports supports the recreation of a strong male-exclusive culture and reinforces the masculine hegemonic culture of sport.

## Access and Opportunity: "The Biggest Challenge Would Be Just Getting in the Door"

Previous research has shown that women may face barriers that hinder their access to the coaching profession (e.g., Sagas & Cunningham, 2004), in general, and to men's college basketball coaching positions specifically (Walker & Bopp, 2011). Participants in this study believed that one of the most difficult barriers to women coaching in men's college basketball would be "just getting in the door." As one participant stated, "I don't think the biggest challenge is a woman being on the staff or being with the players, I think the biggest challenge is getting hired." Access discrimination in men's college basketball has been relevant to other minorities, such as African American coaches in NCAA Division I men's basketball (Cunningham & Sagas, 2005). Therefore, it is not a surprise to find that the men's college basketball coaches in this study believed that access discrimination is a factor that hinders women from gaining access to men's college basketball coaching positions. Another participant believed that "it's just so many challenges



that come with it [women gaining access to coaching positions in men's college basketball], it would have to be a special individual that could rise above the messy little tedious things that would present themselves." Another participant suggested that "if a woman steps into that, she would be under a microscope," thus suggesting treatment discrimination. In the same accord as the previously mentioned statements, when asked whether access discrimination takes place in men's college basketball, one participant, who has coached both women and men's college basketball, replied with "yeah I definitely think there is discrimination and it's unfortunate when it happens, but I can just think of people I have associated with." This participant in particular continued to recount a situation when the culture of his staff in particular, led to inappropriate comments about a fellow staff member:

I can remember sitting in a men's coaching staff meeting and they were making some very derogatory statements about women. There were four to five men in the room, we were doing some scouting and one of the female coaches poked her head in the room. After she left they closed the door and had something to say about her. Those comments were of the sexual nature, nothing violent or anything, just about how they would not mind being with her in a sexual manner.

The environment of men's college basketball seems to be one in which women would not only feel unwelcomed, but also face overt discrimination. When participants were asked whether women were unwelcomed because of their knowledge of the game, experiences or other competencies related to coaching, all eight participants agreed that this was not the case. One participant in particular stated that, "It's not that men know the game better than women, it's not that women can't coach the way men can, it's a matter of opportunity." The fact that women do not have perceived access to coaching positions means that there are less opportunities for women to see other women coaching in men's college basketball. One participant, who has been coaching in men's college basketball for over 15 years, and is a minority, believed that the two minorities have similar roads to equality. He stated, "until they [women] see someone and are exposed to the possibility it doesn't register as an opportunity and they are just doing what they see. What I see is women coaching women and men coaching women and men." This participant went on to parallel the plight of women coaching in men's college basketball to the struggles African Americans have had in coaching men's college basketball. "It only takes one and eventually when I look at any type of social justice, civil rights in particular, typically as time goes on, progression moves toward equality." This participant was hopeful that just as African Americans have had a small, yet significant increase in coaching position in men's college basketball, one day women too will have a presence and increase in access and opportunities.

### **Institutionalized Norms: "I Think it's Probably Just a Part of Society"**

Although participants as whole felt that women may suffer from differential access and opportunities in men's college basketball as well as cultural barriers due to the hyper masculine culture of men's college basketball, most felt that this was "just a part of society." Such acquiescence supports the institutionalized gendered order present within the sport context (Cunningham, 2008). Participants felt as though societal gender attitudes were unchangeable, as one participant put it:

I would say that societal gender roles are established. If you look at what a coach is and what a coach is supposed to be, it's a very authoritative position and if you ask people what a coach does, most of the traits or characteristics that they would say, are those things related to the male gender in terms of social norms.

Another participant stated that, "in terms of society's gender roles, the coach position is seen as a very male position of power. It's authoritative, it's tough, it has a presence to it and if you ask a kindergarten to draw a picture of a coach, they would draw a male."

Participant comments were geared toward the notion that preference for men as coaches in general was normal and natural; therefore, the preference for males coaching men's college basketball over women should also be perceived as normal. This is not to say, however, that only men hold these beliefs. Women have also been found to share this sentiment, as they too have expressed the belief that society was more welcoming and accepting of men as coaches (Walker & Bopp, 2011). Further, women are also accepting of the belief that the lack of women coaching in men's college basketball was "just the way things are" (Walker & Bopp, 2011, p. 55). One participant, who has worked under both male and female head coaches in both men's and women's college basketball, suggested that gender stereotypes and social norms play a significant role for the nonexistence of women in men's college basketball.

For women there are stereotypes and boundaries that will have to be broken down. People will say she is not going to be tenacious and she can't handle players getting in her face and the confrontations that happen off the court behind the scenes with the players. A lot of people think of women as having a more passive nature about them and they are seen as less aggressive. This perception would be a major barrier to women gaining access to coaching in men's college basketball.

Previous research has suggested that gender stereotypes have influenced perceptions of what positions each gender should or should not occupy in intercollegiate athletics (Burton et al., 2009; Kamphoff, 2010). Likewise, participants of this study suggested that society shares



the belief that men are more natural leaders or coaches in men's sports, specifically men's college basketball. This idea of men being more naturally fit in sport is not unique to men's college basketball, as this naturalization of men and masculinity has been supported in the work of Theberge (1990) and (1993). Like Duehr and Bono's (2006) research showing most people agree on the characteristics that are necessary for a good manager, participants in this study also believed that in women's and men's college basketball "you still need the same traits to be a great coach." However, "in terms of society, men are more qualified to fill that role regardless of what the sport is" because "society views men as more dominant and it is just easier to accept [men coaching men as oppose to women coaching men]." Participants also believed that "it's a boys club because the sport is a male dominated industry. The strong male dominance comes with social pressures of being a society where males dominate." Therefore, most participants felt that the risks of hiring a woman in that culture would bring about strong social and career threatening repercussions for the individual who hired a woman. This concept of a "boys club" is similar to the "boys club" identified in previous works (e.g., Kamphoff et al., 2010; Walker & Bopp, 2011) that acts as a major barrier to women entering the coaching ranks of men's college sports.

Overall participants felt as though society and social norms play a large role in the nonexistence of women in men's college basketball. They felt that gender beliefs and stereotypes were against women and although they agreed that inequity did exist, one participant summed up many of their sentiments by stating, "I don't perceive it as a real problem; I just perceive it as America. It's the way it is. It's a reality." It would be easy to say that these participants are simply sexist and have a warped perception of women in American culture. But these beliefs were identical among all participants, as well as in previous studies (Walker & Bopp, 2011; Walker et al., 2011). In analyzing these seemingly sexist and gender-biased beliefs, one must consider the unique culture of sport. As mentioned in the introduction, even the most conservative of institutions such as the military has had an increase in the number of women as leaders. So what makes men's collegiate sports such a unique institution for perpetuating unquestioned gender inequality? We believe impermeable, cognitive institutions provide a deeper insight into this phenomenon.

### **Impermeable, Cognitive Institution: "It's Something You Don't Even Think About"**

The last major theme that emerged from the data were the phenomenon of few women present on the coaching staffs of men's basketball teams. In fact, most participants mentioned that in discussing this topic with their peers, most of their colleagues admitted to the fact they never even considered women coaching in men's college basketball. We suggest that this is a phenomenon due to the impermeable cognitive institution that exists. Women

coaching men's college basketball is not a relevant topic of discussion among men in men's college basketball. As one participant describes, "the first time it [women coaching in men's college basketball] was brought up to me, I was blindsided. It's something you don't even think about because it doesn't exist. It's not even like it's rare, it's nonexistent at the Division I level." Although these men have coached with women at some point in their careers, they still consider this topic unimportant because it does not have any relevance in their current positions and in the institution of men's college basketball. As one participant explained:

It is not even going to cross his [a men's basketball coach] mind to hire a woman. If a women applied, or someone said, 'hey this women is a great coach' then all of a sudden a flurry of challenges would enter that coach's head and there would be way more reasons why not to hire her than to hire her. Chances are, if she is a good candidate, then her skill set if probably very similar to a man's skill set who does not present the same risk and challenges as she would.

This comment speaks to the cognitive institution is men's sports. Women as coaches in men's college basketball are so unfathomable and unthinkable, that most people cannot imagine it as a possibility. As this above participant explains, there is so much dissonance between the thought of women as coaches and the institutional norms of excluding women, that men would immediately begin to reaffirm their belief system with challenges to the thought of hiring a woman. Participants also believed that the perceived lack of interest by women was also a phenomenon in itself. However, they justified women's lack of interest with a realized lack of opportunity and access. Again, this reaffirms that the access discrimination Blacks have experienced in sports (Cunningham & Sagas, 2005; Sagas & Cunningham, 2005), may parallel to the access discrimination women face in men's sports.

My question is how many ladies even exists right now who would want to be coaches or who have been exposed to the idea of coaching in men's college basketball? Until you are exposed to the fact that the possibility exists, it does not register as an opportunity. I remember when I was a kid growing up as an African American boy, I did not think Black people could be positive characters on television. I did not think Blacks could be doctors and lawyers until I watched the *Cosby Show* and realized Black people can be lawyers, doctors, and actors. I didn't realize that opportunity exist until I saw someone who look like me in that role.

While the participant's comments are well-taken, we also suggest that gender bias and sexism might be more deeply rooted in the culture of men's intercollegiate sports than is racism.

Another participant suggested that, due to societal norms, the male dominated culture of men's college

basketball, and the lack of a presence by women, men in men's college basketball do not even think of women and men's college basketball as being in the same domain:

I think the main issue [barriers to women] is that it has rarely happened before and I think so many things in the environment is regenerative. So from generation to generation you learn the norms within the organization wherever you are. There is a set of norms that exists in the coaching profession that has existed for a long time. The norms have evolved in some ways, but in most ways they haven't. That's why women coaching in men's college basketball would not even dawn on most coaches. That's why it is a phenomenon.

The thought that the institution is "regenerative," suggests that the perpetuation of these institutional practices is what has led to the current cognitive institution. In addition, the tone of this comment suggest that one would not dare go against these institutionalize norms. Previous studies examining women coaching in men's college basketball have found similar results (Walker & Bopp, 2011; Walker et al., 2011). Both studies found that this issue is indeed a phenomenon due to the rarity of it presence, the lack of research on the topic, and an overall acknowledgment and acceptance of the exclusion of women as an institutionalized norm.

## Conclusions

Overall these results support the theoretical tenets of hegemonic masculinity and institutionalization. As suggested by Walker and Bopp (2011), women identify as disadvantaged by the male exclusive and male dominant norms of men's college basketball. Likewise, men are aware that they have a clear advantage in more opportunities and proportions of positions in men's college basketball over their female counterparts. However, both men and women accept these unequal and prejudice institutional norms as a part of the culture of men's college basketball. This dynamic is the very root of hegemonic masculinity and has been examined throughout the history of hegemony in political and economical situations (Gramsci, 1971). However, unique to sport management research is the identification of such an impermeable, cognitive institution. Cognitive institutions are norms socially accepted by the people and are so embedded within the institution of the organization that the thought of change cannot be fathomed (Kostova, 1999; Scott, 1995). Our conclusion is that the institution of intercollegiate athletics is a cognitive institution. By that we mean, as oppose to prioritizing regulatory components of their environment (i.e., Title IX and Title VII) intercollegiate sports, particularly the institution of men's college basketball, places more emphasis on preserving the cognitive components (i.e., social norms such as women are less accepted as coaches of men's teams), thereby forming a cognitive institution. However, this cognitive institution of men's

intercollegiate sports is unique in that it has been nearly impermeable since its existence, with women consistently representing 2–3% of the positions in men's sports since the recorded existence of intercollegiate descriptive data.

A managerial implication of this research is that managers must be cognizant of the culture and norms that their organization perpetuates. For instance, the men in this study were candid in saying that their institution did discriminate against women as coaches in men's college basketball. However, they also felt uncomfortable with the current state of their institution as a male exclusive domain. One participant, a 27-year old coach in a major NCAA Division I basketball conference, was uncomfortable with the fact that he was a part of an institution that was so discriminate against women. He even stated, "If I got the opportunity to be a head coach, under the right circumstance, I would actively seek out a woman to hire." He believed there were benefits to having a diverse staff. He went on further to say, "many single moms would love to see their sons have a woman as a role model on the coaching staff." These comments, while idiosyncratic, suggest that individuals within the organization of intercollegiate sports may appreciate men's sports becoming more gender diverse. Again, referring to the work of Cunningham (2008), Cunningham and Sagas (2008), and Fink et al. (2003), gender diversity in sports organizations may have positive organizational outcomes. In addition, as suggested by Walker et al. (2011) society is ready and comfortable with women leading men in sports. Recent changes in the US military, which allow women to serve closer to the battle lines, gave women access to over 14,000 new jobs that was previously only offered to men (McGregor, 2011). So there are access barriers being broken down in even the most strict and conservative of organizations. Therefore, sport organizations that neglect to consider the organizational outcomes from gender inclusion, risk being left behind by more progressive organizations. In addition, as a few participants in this study mentioned that they would hire women, leaders in sport, specifically men's sports must understand the agency they have in initiating change. As a leader in sport, managers make decisions on whom to recruit and hire. Therefore, sport managers are an intricate core group for initiating the inclusion of women in men's sports.

Theoretical implications in the study of hegemonic masculinity in sports and institutionalization are powerful. This study suggests that when examining gender issues in sport, hegemonic masculinity is still a useful tool when paired with institutional theory. To examine a hegemonic environment without also mentioning institutional theory would be neglectful. Hegemonic masculinity suggests that an environment exists in which masculinity becomes the status quo and anything that doesn't exemplify heterosexual masculinity (i.e., women, homosexuality) is seen as being inferior. This research suggests that this hegemonic environment is institutionalized in sport, and in the case of men's sports, an impermeable, cognitive institution. There has been

much research on hegemonic masculinity in sport, but very little on cognitive institutions. Therefore, by suggesting a cognitive institution is present, we lend another angle for sport researchers to examine the phenomenon and new alternatives for interventions used to change the institution. For instance, Leblebici et al. (1991) used institutional theory as a framework for observing change in the radio broadcasting industry. They found that although a cognitive institution did exist, change was possible through the core constituents. Once the core adopted the new institutional practices, the cognitive institution was changed, norms were altered, and the seemingly impermeable institution was broken. Thus, allowing diverse thought and practices to surface. We suggest that by marrying institutional theory and hegemonic masculinity, we open the range of interventions possible for change. Thus, allowing sport organizational change researchers, diversity researchers, and gender researchers another angle to examine this phenomenon.

Based on the tenets of both hegemonic masculinity and institutional theory, we suggest that change in the gender biased institutional practices of men's college sports must come from the core. Stakeholders and decision-makers in the organization of intercollegiate sports must first realize that this gender exclusive institution exists. They must also realize that this institution, which remains so impermeable to one particular group (i.e., women), is one of the last of its kind. Now that this institution is identified, the next step for sport managers and researchers alike is to examine where and how change can take place.

### Limitations and Future Research

As is with all research, there are limitations to this study. To begin, although this research does provide a deep and rich perspective of a few men who have coached with women in men's college basketball, a quantitative approach may produce a broader perspective. Specifically, survey research and mixed method designs may provide a more robust insight into this phenomenon. In addition, many of the participants in this study question the intentions of women to coach in men's college basketball. They believe that the problem may lie in the desire of women to coach on the men's side. Therefore, future work should attempt to directly measure women's attitude and intentions to coach in men's college basketball. While our focus was basketball, we expect that hegemonic masculinity and institutional bias could play a role in attitudes toward women coaching in other men's collegiate sports; future work exploring this opportunity is needed. Finally, this study, along with Walker and Bopp (2011) and Kamphoff et al. (2010), all suggest that exclusive old boy's networks may act as a major barrier to women coaching in men's sports. However this study, as with the others, do not provide evidence as to why these networks exist, how these networks can be more open and inclusive, or techniques for changing the gender exclusive nature of men's sports. Therefore, future

research should investigate gender exclusive networks in sports and how to break down the glass wall.

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3. How would having a woman as a men's basketball coach affect a coaching staff? Players?
    - a. PROBES: Positive outcomes? Negative outcomes?
  4. Can you describe any barriers to women coaching in men's collegiate basketball? If so, name and describe some barriers to women that inhibit them from coaching in men's collegiate basketball. If not, how would you explain the lack of women coaching in men's collegiate basketball?
  5. Is there a presence of discrepancies, inequalities, or discrimination that may hinder women from coaching in men's collegiate basketball? (Types of discrimination: access, occupational, treatment, implicit/explicit)
  6. Would you ever consider hiring or coaching with a woman in the future? Why or why not?
  7. Are their advantages/ disadvantages to having a woman coach on a men's collegiate basketball team? If so, what are they?
  8. Explain your knowledge of women coaching in men's collegiate basketball?
    - a. PROBES: Do you know of any women who have coached men's basketball? Have you ever coached with a female men's college basketball coach? Explain that experience.
  9. What is your perception of women coaching in men's sports? Specifically men's collegiate basketball?
    - a. PROBES: Are women welcomed, recruited, or encouraged to coach men's collegiate basketball? Are women allowed to participate in practices, summer skill camps, team camps, and internships?
  10. Do you think there will ever be an increase of women coaching in men's collegiate basketball? Why or why not?
  11. What is the root of the double standard in collegiate basketball (women having less/nonexistent access to men's college basketball coaching positions, while men have open access to coaching positions in women's and men's college basketball)?
  12. Do you believe that this phenomenon is a problem? If so, describe why? If not, describe why not?
  13. Is there anything that you think that could be done to help promote the acceptance, recruitment, and promotion of women coaching in men's collegiate basketball? If so, what? If not, why?

## Interview Questions

1. Describe your perception of the role of women in collegiate sports?
2. Describe the “phenomenon” which is the lack of women coaching in men's collegiate basketball.
  - a. PROBES: Is there a lack of interest by women? Lack of social acceptance? Lack of role models for women in men's collegiate basketball? Presence of discrimination? Are women and men's basketball different sports? If so, how?

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