

Implicit Discrimination as a Lens to Understanding the Lack of Women in Men's Collegiate Basketball

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In the sport of basketball, rules are almost identical for both women and men. Both play on the same court, the same height basketball goal, and display the same skill sets. There are many male coaches and leaders in collegiate men's and women's basketball; however there is significantly less female involvement in coaching and leadership roles of collegiate men's basketball. Although it is not currently the norm for women to coach men in basketball, it is discriminatory for a woman with the qualifications, experience and knowledge to be overlooked for a coaching and leadership position if it is with the men's team.

Through the passage of anti-discrimination legislation and continuous confirmation of an array of forms of discrimination in many sports organizations, women continue to be implicitly discriminated upon and face differential treatment, leading to access discrimination in sport organizations (e.g. Cunningham, 2004; Cunningham & Sagas, 2002). This places an unfair disadvantage on women when it comes to obtaining leadership roles in collegiate basketball. It has been proven repeatedly that minorities encounter discrimination in the hiring process (Acosta & Carpenter, 2002; Lovette & Lowry, 1994; Stangl & Kane, 1991; Cunningham & Sagas, 2005). The idea of women leading men in sports is still one of dismay, however, in society as a whole we have come much closer to this ideal and it is time for sports to catch up.

A conceptual model based on implicit discrimination can be very explanatory toward attaining hypotheses to test this phenomenon. The belief is that in the forming of leadership roles in collegiate basketball, in-groups and out-groups are formed by means of homologous reproduction based on our assumption of gender roles. When resume reviewing in the hiring process takes place, in-groups implicitly discriminate on out-groups according to perceived gender roles. This implicit discrimination consequently produces a group of people who are placed in leadership roles and a group that is routinely placed in non-leadership roles. Over years and years of being placed in non-leadership roles, the discriminated group suffers from a lack of skill development, no direct access to influential people and many other lost opportunities. As a result of the implicit discrimination taking place much earlier in this process, this group is now experiencing access discrimination because they are never given the fair opportunity to gain the skills and networking needed to become successful.

Homologous reproduction has been used in previous research of this topic (Lovett & Lowry, 1994; Stangl & Kane, 1991) and utilizes Kanter's (1977) theory. This theory proposes that managers hire and promote individuals who are most like them physically and socially. Social identity theory (Taifel & Turner, 1979) tends to go hand and hand with this idea because it suggests that individuals put themselves into groups according to the people who are most like them physically and socially. As suggested by Cunningham & Sagas (2005), people who are similar to the manager are in-group members and people who are not similar to the managers are considered out-group members. In terms of collegiate basketball it is suggested that head coaches hire assistants who are socially and physically similar to them. The idea of head coaches and athletic directors employing homologous reproduction in the hiring process poses serious worries for possible female candidates. As suggested by Sagas et al. (2006) the system of discrimination is sustained by the fact that athletic directors do the hiring of new coaches and the "old boy" network is much more prevalent than the "old girl" network. According to Acosta and Carpenter (2008) only 21.3 % of athletic directors are women, thus men are not in jeopardy of being left in the out-group. In contrast, when women are applying for coaching jobs in men's basketball programs they are extremely susceptible to being a victim of athletic directors and head coaches employing homologous reproduction. As seen in Acosta and Carpenter (2008) only 2-3% of men's teams are coached by female head coaches. Men are overwhelmingly dominant in the leadership roles of collegiate men's basketball. These in-groups are formed by what athletic directors and coaches believe to be the characteristics of the individuals in their group. These characteristics are shaped by society's view of gender roles.

Role congruity theory explains the congruity between gender roles and leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Female coaches are marginalized to leading other females on women teams who are also less adept to lead, but are looked upon as significantly less competent to lead men. As stated by Ridgeway (1977), gender supplies an "implicit, background identity" (p. 231) in the organization. In men's collegiate basketball, these gender roles and social identities contribute to the implicit discrimination of women and in-group favoritism shown to men. Implicit discrimination is done unknowingly and not a premeditated reaction. However it is just as damaging as deliberate discrimination. Implicit discrimination is that done unconsciously. Bertrand et al. (2005) describes implicit attitudes as "unconscious mental associations between a target and a given attribute. Therefore, when one expresses nondiscriminatory explicit attitude, but partakes in discriminatory behavior, then implicit discrimination may

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surface. If asked publicly many reporters, athletic directors, and men's basketball coaches would say that women are as experienced in basketball, knowledgeable in tactics and should have an equal opportunity to coach men's or women's basketball. However, I propose that when prompted with having to choose the top candidates from a stack of resumes, they will often choose more male candidates and rate their qualifications higher. Individuals would implicitly discriminate on female applicants based solely on their mental association of what a men's coach should look like, which is a male. The idea that by quickly looking over a resume and identifying a male name would give an advantage to candidates who are male is extremely unfair to qualified women. The above assumption would generate a future study to test the perceived existence of implicit discrimination. Access discrimination as described by Ilgen & Youtz (1986) is when a group, usually minority, is reduced access into a particular organization not because of ability or future potential, but because of discriminatory practices. In many cases women are readily welcomed into the profession of coaching women's teams, but through lack of social acceptance and encouragement are discouraged from embarking on a large and lucrative field of coaching men's sports. The previous implicit discrimination taking place early in the resume and evaluation process causes access discrimination as the end result.

The cycle perpetuated in men's basketball of implicitly discriminating against women applicants based solely on gender is institutionalized by the society's negligence to address this topic. This conceptual piece provides in depth underpinning and framework that could bring to surface concerns and attempt to yield a remedy for impeding the institutionalized discrimination of women in men's collegiate basketball.