TRAINED TO BE SEXIST: OPERATIONALIZING INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS AS RULES, TRUTHS, AND BULLSH*T IN THE CO-CONSTRUCTION OF GENDERED DISCOURSE IN SPORT

By

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To the associates, friends, and family who carry me
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I like to joke that so much in my life has been an outcome of my ability to effectively get in the way of inflated rubber. The reality is that the opportunities I was blessed with were more closely associated with the people who carried me along the way. My experiences in playing and coaching platformed my research, but the relationships I built in soccer threaded into my opportunity to exit it, and now the opportunity to use my story.

Boats, Christmas decor, doggy day care, the shower cap, burlesque, poetry, grammar games, and hikes represent those I wish to acknowledge – those who shaped this journey.
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Proposed theoretical model of discourse. 

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The intersection of my career in sport and my education in formal research positioned me to employ an autoethnographic methodology to map my indoctrination into a fundamentally and explicitly sexist sport structure. My research objective in this project was to translate the co-construction of sexism embedded in sport discourse through a critical examination of the common language, behaviors, and practices (i.e., discursive practices) that constituted the process through which I was trained to be sexist. The translation of local agent-structural interactions operated as the archaeology dimension of a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis conducted on the data, which produced four common logics that dictated delivery of sport across my story: “less than”, “conform socially”, “protect girls”, and “vision of value” or potential. The genealogy dimension of the FDA exposed access points into disrupting the co-construction of gendered discourse in sport as four spaces that patterned to pivot points demonstrating variance in how they carried the identified dominant logics in delivery: networks, mentorship/sponsorship relationships nested in networks, the vertical or horizontal organization of power across concurrent contexts in a system, and the organizational design in-context. The genealogy of the data also provided for the operationalization of the proposed model of discourse in which agency
and structure were positioned as local co-constructions that aggregate to the meso level as a theoretical rendering of discourse. The proposed model exploits that the semiotic and material strands of discourse cannot be decoupled, and thus the manifest structures that deliver logics might operate as ideal spaces for disrupting the reproduction of gendered cultural ideologies through sport.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: TRAINED TO BE SEXIST

Prelude

I was born in 1976. As a youth athlete, I was the only girl in multiple boys’ leagues in multiple sports. I was eventually coerced into joining girls’ leagues. Before puberty I was dominant in both gender spaces; after puberty I was *the star* in girls’ leagues (though, as a woman, I am not supposed to say those words). In college, I played soccer at a major Division 1 program in the Top 25, starting as a freshman in the program’s inaugural season in 1994 (a Title IX expansion program). During college, my first National Team camp was in 1996, when I was 19; I became a regular at National Team camps for the next five years. In 1998, as a graduate transfer, I joined a different Top 25 soccer program (which had started in 1995 as a Title IX expansion program) where I won an NCAA National Championship and was the NCAA College Cup Defensive MVP. As a pro, I was the first goalkeeper selected in the 2002 Women’s United Soccer Association (WUSA) draft. In 2003, I was named the defensive player of the year as a World Champion of the United Soccer League (USL) W-League with the Central City Fire. During and after my playing career, I coached soccer at camps, in recreational programs, in competitive youth soccer, in elite youth soccer (e.g., US Soccer Developmental Academy, Olympic Development Program), in college, and in the USL (pro). As a professional coach in soccer, I recognized that I was privileged because of the level at which I had played (I did not see my white, cisgendered privileges at the time). However, there were boundaries to the privilege I enjoyed by way of my playing career: gender boundaries that I co-constructed but could not recognize (Cunningham & Sagas, 2008; Wells, 2016).

On paper, my CV as a soccer player and coach makes a strong case for a wonderful, feel-good story that celebrates the fantastical account of my remarkable achievements as a Title IX-
era female athlete. That story would be true, but would likely not be much different from, if less populated with accolades, Hope Solo’s story (Gagne, 2015), or perhaps Julie Foudy’s (Christopher, 2009; Clarke, 2019). However, underlying these homogeneous celebratory stories is a tension that few want, or are positioned, to examine critically. The successes in those stories cannot be decoupled from the failures, as the feats and the defeats in one’s career are locked in an exchange that shapes the athlete and the person (Giddens, 1984; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). We are told as athletes that ‘we can learn more from the losses than we can from the wins’. But what if even a fraction of the losses, defeats, or failures could be attributed to barriers, or to discrimination embedded in the organization of power in sport structures, as the structures were literally built for white, able-bodied men (Burton, 2015)?

As a player and as a coach, prior to exposure to the literature on the gender-based power structures in sport, I thought, and said out loud to my graduate advisor (now committee chair) that “women make their own problems” in coaching. I believed that; it was what I had been told my whole life. Anecdotal evidence confirmed the thesis – I had seen it everywhere. I definitely saw it in my own story.

Then I started to read the literature.

Then I started to think back on my story; and I saw, like it was scripted, all the times that I had been diagnosed as the problem.

My indoctrination into academic research bound me to reflect on my sport experiences through the lenses of empirical data and theory, or in other words, published literature on gender issues in sport. As I was exposed to bodies of knowledge on the structures of sport, my memories were exposed as having been conditioned – I began to look back at my anecdotes through a critical lens and was left wondering if my “truths” at the time were true at all.
Trained to be Sexist

Among the most influential thinkers in contemporary sport sociology, and in grounding my research, Jay Coakley (2015) proposed the label ‘The Great Sports Myth’ (GSM) as a baseline explanation for why major social issues, as they play out in sport, are largely written off or rationalized as part of a natural order of power and competition. Coakley (2015) argues that the GSM, or the “pervasive and nearly unshakable belief in the inherent purity and goodness of sport” (p. 403) prevents critical analysis about the organization of power and privilege in sport. The complicit acceptance of sport as inherently good and pure leads to accepted truths that “the goodness of sport is transmitted to those who participate in or consume it” (Coakley, 2015, p. 403) and thus anything associated with sport takes on its purity.

Through this characterization of the relationship stakeholders have with sport, the stage is set for the indoctrination into the sets of rules, truths, and ‘bullshit’ that are embedded in both the logics and the delivery of sport. The GSM explains that the way sports are organized, and the way sports operate are congruent with the natural order of society, and that, within those constraints, is a wide open meritocracy for all – as long as you are willing to work hard enough (Coakley, 2017). The GSM explains why amateurism is central to the mission of the NCAA, or why youth sport remains unregulated. The GSM explains why any deviant behavior or mistreatment in sport is attributed to one actor, or set of actors, as an anomaly who perverted the real meaning of sport as a truth (Coakley, 2017). It puts sport and sport discourse above logic that is critical of any social context in which sport plays out, but provides for the silencing of voices that do not fit in or buy in to how sport is organized (Burton & Leberman, 2017; McGinnis, McQuillan, & Chapple, 2005).

Coakley (2017) theorizes that, because of the complicity of the GSM, social issues such as racism or sexism in sport are trivialized, or simply refuted without evidence, and that
questions around the complicit truths that allow us to explain away the issues are unfounded. For example, a 2020 US court decision struck down equal pay litigation based on the logic that women soccer players were demonstrably less valuable and athletic than the US Soccer men were (Cater, 2020). Prominent sport sociologists have, in fact, argued that even academic research on sport is often neatly situated within the Great Sport Myth, amplifying the relevance of profiteering over human capital (Coakley, 2015; Messner, 2011).

The GSM is the backbone of the process of being trained to be sexist that I interpret, translate, and map in this project. It underpins (a) the access to sport that girls and women have as participants and as leaders (Staurowsky et al., 2020), (b) the treatment girls and women are subjected to in sport (Burton & Leberman, 2017), and, recursively, (c) the co-construction of the very reasons that girls and women have less access to sport and are marginalized as participants and as leaders (Burton, 2015; Sagas & Cunningham, 2004a). The process of being trained to be sexist occurs across time and space, through the delivery of sport as functionally gendered, where girls and women are considered “less than” as part of a natural order; and that we are is nothing more than just a truth (Coakley, 2015; Messner, 2011).

I believed it too. And I perpetuated it. I was trained to.

Overview

This project is an autoethnography on the process of being trained to be sexist through sport engagement from my perspective as a white, able-bodied, cisgendered woman. The overarching objective of this autoethnography was to integrate theory related to (and conceptual models of) agency, structure, and logics into my story as a former professional athlete and professional coach, who is female, with the intent of using those illustrations to translate and expose complicit discourse that constitutes the process of being trained to be sexist as it occurs across time and space (Fairclough, 2005; McIlveen, 2008). From this analysis (analytic
autoethnography), readers should take away a conceptual road map for disrupting gendered
discourse across contexts and potentially in their own research.

The research questions that guided the design, data collection, and discourse analysis of
the autoethnography were:

1. In what ways is sexism implicitly or explicitly layered into language and discursive
   practices in local interactions in sport contexts, and what are the contextual micro
   outcomes?

2. How do sensemaking, discourse, and macro-level ideologies intersect across time and
   space to co-construct and deliver sexism through sport?

This Chapter, the introduction, explains the project, and critically, operates as a
demonstration of both storytelling and author positioning. In the Introduction Chapter, Trained to
be Sexist, I provide the platform from which I wrote this analytic autoethnography, a brief
justification of the project, and the propositions that guided its framing, data inclusion, and
conclusions.

In the second Chapter, Sites of Sexism, I develop the relationship between agency and
structure as it integrates into a multi-level analysis. Agency and structure are proposed as the
temporally contingent components of the recursive relationships between the micro, meso, and
macro levels of society. I conceptualize each theoretical level of society as qualitative ‘sampling
distributions’ that represent the aggregate of agency and structure parameters that are generated
across time and space. These stratifications were intended to locate the specific sites of sexism
that can be operationalized to study and disrupt.

Chapter three, The Dissemination of Sexism, provides the lens and methods of
disruption. In Chapter three, I explain institutional logics as a meta theory that constrains culture,
and as a method that operates in single datum units that can be aggregated (as ideal and
archetypes) to representations of culture. I position institutional logics as an extension of
institutional theory, supra ordinate to agency, structure, and discourse, wherein logics constitute both the overarching truths that constrain social design and, concurrently, are micro-generated through agentive reflexivity: institutional logics are conceptualized as the informational energy that flows through intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extrapersonal processes, functioning as a theoretical thread that maps recursive informational flows.

Chapter four, The Delivery of Sexism, overviews the ontological and epistemological lenses through which the project was designed. Critical realism, as the ontological lens, places my story in a common space that is co-constructed with other agents and constrained by the organization of power in sport (Easton, 2010); post structuralism, as the epistemological lens, provides for the co-construction of discourse, specifically, as a site for disrupting gendered logics (Aitchison, 2000; Shaw & Frisby, 2006). Chapter four also details the methodology of an analytical autoethnography and the tenets of a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA), which guided data generation and analysis, and provided the genealogical data to support the proposed model of discourse grounded in and subsumed by institutional logics.

Chapter five, A Description of the Process, is the archaeology of the data derived from the FDA. The chapter corresponds to research question number one: the sensemaking, rules and truths in context, and organization of power are described. The archaeology is a description of the local conditions under which the story was created.

Chapter six, Mapping the Process, is the genealogy of the data as the second dimension of the FDA, which corresponds to research question number two. The genealogy places the archaeology into greater societal conditions that carry the latent and manifest components of discourse. The Chapter links common patterns of sensemaking and structural conditions to pattern the co-construction of sexism in sport.
In Chapter seven, Tools for Disrupting the Discourse, I interpret the results of the archaeology and genealogy of the data as tools to locate where and how gendered logics were carried, or operationalized locally and across time and space. The Discussion Chapter identifies and explains the delivery spaces that were pivot points in the process of being trained to be sexist as possible locations to disrupt the discourse.

In Chapter eight, the conclusion folds the illustration of the co-construction of sexism and the spaces through which it occurred into a proposed model of discourse. Also included in Chapter eight is a description of the boundaries and proposed contributions of the study.

**The Positioning**

The depth of the bodies of knowledge produced by the leading researchers in institutional theory and gender in sport spaces is vast and intimidating, but has provided me with a platform (i.e., shoulders to stand on) to interpret my experiences as a female athlete and coach from the Title IX era who is now armed with information and theory. As an aspiring academic, two papers have left an epiphanic imprint on me: Shaw and Frisby’s (2006) *Can Gender Equity Be More Equitable?*, and Mike Messner’s (2011) *Gender Ideologies, Youth Sports, and the Production of Soft Essentialism*.

Shaw and Frisby’s (2006) manuscript operated as a filing cabinet for my memories, in which I could place anecdotes by categorical frame of gender equity: (1) fix the woman, (2) value the feminine, or (3) provide equal opportunity. I lit up when I read this paper for the first time. The frames that Shaw and Frisby (2006) had adapted from Ely and Meyerson’s (2000) call for the disruption of systemic sexism through intentional discourse stratified my memories from my sport career into *behavior* and *consequences* as functions of being a white, cis-gendered female (where these variables are identified here explicitly as constraints on my story, my data, and any extractions or conclusions drawn from my data). In their fourth frame, they proposed
strategies to affect discourse through the active disruption of gendered logics. Shaw and Frisby (2006) had framed my entire experience with sport through a post-structural feminism lens – I have pushed gender boundaries since I was a toddler; my experiences in sport trained me to know, as my own truth, that disrupting the discourse has consequences.

The second piece that is foundational to my research lens is Messner’s (2011) paper on soft essentialism (in regard to binary gender conceptions) as a socializing logic that is embedded in the delivery of youth sport, which, for many, is the site of the indoctrination into the GSM (Coakley, 2017; Aspen Institute, 2019). In his paper, Messner (2011) proposed that differential treatment of boys and girls in youth sport serves to create and reify gendered logics that co-construct meanings of ‘athlete’ and ‘sport’ in concurrent spaces. My experiences taught me that deconstructing gender-based logics at a grass-roots level has consequences that get you fired.

**The platform**

The job offer at the University of Alabama was exactly the one I had hoped for; the first assistant job at an SEC soccer program would fast-track my career. The imminent next step would be my job as the Head Coach of an NCAA D1 program, and in the meantime, I would enjoy a significant pay increase coaching in the SEC. I had put more than 15 years worth of work into coaching: learning the craft, rejecting much of what I was learning of ‘the craft’, and constantly vying for opportunities and connections to advance my career — a practice that is fundamentally woven into the fabric of the coaching profession (Burton, 2015; LaVoi, 2016; Sagas, Cunningham, Pastore, 2006). The position offered to me at Alabama was my break – the prized coaching opportunity that I had been tirelessly working toward and coveted. But the decision of whether or not to take the job had me pinned at a crossroads, because I did not want it. To decide to accept the position, which I knew was my ticket, was to decide to go ‘all in’ on coaching as my past, current, and future career. Choosing to accept the position was to accept
that the work I believed in, my work, would always be situated within what I had come to know as a toxic and abusive system (Cain, 2019; McMahon & McGannon, 2019).

I know the system well; I was raised by it. It was through my own playing and coaching experiences that I developed a conditional awareness of the toxicity (Cain, 2019; McMahon & McGannon, 2019). I held closely the ideological beliefs that I had been trained to hold about what sport was and what it could be, how it should be delivered, and to whom – overwhelmingly at a theoretical level. I was trained to hold ‘sport’ as a divine space for personal development for all. But my purely theoretical ideologies did not stand up against the daily instances of abuse and exploitation that I was first-person party to as a player and as a coach, sometimes as the perpetrator.

The tension between what I believed about sport and what I saw play out on the field strikes me, retrospectively, as an iteration of ‘the emperor’s new clothes’. My teammates, coaches, and later, my colleagues, were along-side me throughout our indoctrination into a system that was designed on the meritocratic ideals of neoliberalism (Coakley, 2017). The hard part of that to accept is that the indoctrination was complicit. We were trained in the complicit truths of sport, where sport operated as ‘the emperor’ in terms of its divinity. I was convinced that sport was ‘fully clothed’ and that I could blindly buy in to how it was organized, without question, and that I would resultantly be rewarded with achievement and advancement as part of a natural order. I knew, as a truth, that sport was a meritocracy for all. I had been trained to know that. I was trained to know that my failure or success in climbing the playing or professional coaching ladder was of my own volition (Burton & Leberman, 2017; Sagas, Cunningham, Pastore, 2006).
At the time that I had to choose whether or not I would take the coaching job at Alabama, I was acutely aware of the gravity of my decision, but I could not have expected what my decision would eventually expose to me about my relationship with sport. I knew I wanted out of coaching, and I knew that the reason I wanted out was because I was no longer willing to watch, or be party to, the systemic abuse that I saw at every level. At that time, however, my empathy was wholly centered on players. Though I had been coaching for 15 years, I had not considered the ‘treatment’ of coaches through the same lens; in fact, I had never considered that coaches might be subject to differential treatment at all (Burton, 2015; Cunningham & Sagas, 2008; LaVoi, 2016), despite that I came to see that the players were. It was that empathy for players that drove me out of coaching – it was why I knew I would not take the job at Alabama, but that I would, instead, choose an entirely different adventure (Wells, 2016).

The decision

In the end, it had not been a difficult decision. I turned down the job at Alabama, opting to go to graduate school in sport management. Naturally, pursuant to the organization of sport, my opportunity to get a Ph.D. was coupled with coaching at University, as the volunteer assistant (Burton, 2015; Wells, 2016). Thus, my transition out of coaching was not immediate, nor agentive.

Admittedly, I had no idea what I was getting into when I signed on for a Ph.D. – the research learning curve was steep. I did not even know what ‘research’ was, and I had certainly never read any. In a nearly deterministic way, what populated in my Google Scholar searches (as I worked through my graduate course syllabi) collided with my playing and coaching careers. I had been warned the collision was coming.

When I began to read the research about motivation in sport, positive youth development (PYD), long-term athlete development (LTAD), barriers to participation, ... I was both starstruck
AND incensed. I was starstruck because I had no idea that all of that work had been done by thousands of scholars to build bodies of knowledge within and across sport domains. I was starstruck because I had been raised by, and rejected by, the very system that those brilliant minds were actively deconstructing and trying to change (Burton & Leberman, 2017; Coakley, 2015; LaVoi, 2016). I was starstruck because I wanted so badly to manifest what I had seen in sport into a contribution.

I was incensed because no one ever told me that all of this knowledge existed. I was incensed because it took me years of uninformed experimentation to try to build a poor-man’s iteration of a PYD or LTAD model. I got out of coaching because I was no longer willing to watch the Dylan Davis’ (of Albion Soccer Club in Houston, Texas) of the coaching world abuse children – never standing more than 15 feet away from me, while I watched the abuse play out: I could never do anything about it. I was incensed because (though this claim will remain unconfirmed) there was no way Dylan Davis, a professional colleague, was told that any of the knowledge on youth development through sport existed – I had not been told either. I had been coaching in college and youth sport for more than 15 years, and I had been through US Soccer’s formal coaching education program; no boss or organization or coaching education presentation offered me any research or frameworks for youth development. I was incensed because the system of sport that I implicitly knew was structurally flawed, appeared to be so by design. The design was to not ask questions about the emperor’s clothes (Coakley, 2017), and that is what brought me to start asking questions.

The transition

As I started conducting my own research, the first questions I asked were grounded in the reasons I left coaching: how the player-coach interactions dictated participation patterns. Those
questions were critical for me to explore, both personally and for what I believed would be my ‘research line’ and contribution. It was at the outset of my second year of study that I defended this research line to my advisor as the line of inquiry that I wanted to develop. In that meeting, during one of our typical casual exchanges, was a moment that existentially shifted my awareness of myself in relation to sport. As I defended to my advisor why it was personal for me to research participation patterns, and specifically patterns as they are dictated by the coach-player relationship, he asked me: “Have you thought about looking at gender issues in sport?”, or some words exactly like that.

It was a broad question, and I had read a few papers on the topic to that point, but ‘gender issues’ were not on my research radar. I was certain I did not want to research gender issues; I did not want to go anywhere near gender issues because I knew all about them – I had seen how they played out, in real time, again and again and again. Thus, I already knew my answer to his question; I told him: “I do not want to research gender issues in sport because women make their own problems.”

I believed that. That was a truth for me. It was what I had been told my whole sporting life and I had seen it everywhere. I definitely saw it in my own story.

I was more than woefully uninformed in my advisor’s office that day – I was naïve. At the time, I did not know how academia operated, and I did not know that I had just said “women make their own problems”, in earnest, to one of the original gender researchers in sport. I did not know that my advisor studied gender, nor that gender was a thing that should be studied.

My advisor’s response to my ignorant position, made in his very unique way, is what embedded that moment in my memory. He simply told me: “Well, you’re just going to have to get over that.” I do not remember anything else from that meeting past his response to me.
because I did not know why he cleanly shut me down without discussion, which was unlike him. His response opened an intrapersonal ‘pandora’s box’ around gender issues because I could not see why he would say, so categorically, that my position was unwarranted. I could not accommodate that my views on ‘gender in sport’ would diverge from his so unequivocally. I thought: “Clearly I should know – I am the woman who lived it.”

I have found, since that meeting, that the research journey dictates that one’s original questions, across multiple degrees of separation, invariably lead to entirely new sets of questions (Rudestam & Newton, 2014). While I was solidified in a research line on coach-player interactions, those questions, inextricably coupled with the coursework I took led me to explore the body of knowledge on gender issues in sport. Speaking from my perspective now, I can remark on the difference between my reaction to the literature on youth sport and my reaction to the literature on gender in sport: I was not incensed as I became familiar with the literature on gender issues in sport. In the case of structural sexism, my fury came later.

Where I had willingly dove into the literature on youth sport contexts, I approached the gender literature at an arm’s length. I had been trained to be sexist by a fundamentally sexist system in which success is affected by one’s willingness to fit in or buy in (Burton, Barr, Fink, & Bruening, 2009; Burton & Leberman, 2017). My cultural training process in sport constrained me in my relationship with the gender literature. While I could read and understand the literature, and I could apply it externally at a theoretical level, I had a difficult time negotiating the divide between what I was reading with (a) the ideological truths I had been trained to know, (b) what I was actively seeing in my concurrent treatment as a female coach embedded in multiple coaching contexts, and (c) the anecdotal experiences that had comprised my playing and coaching careers. The most cognitively and emotionally taxing facet of negotiating the gender
literature was extending the theories and propositions to my exact experiences that, when they occurred, I had not been able to see as shaped by gendered logics (Cain, 2019).

As I read the literature, I had to work to apply the theoretical concepts to my story, retrospectively, as I was still actively coaching. In my course work, I was able to negotiate how gendered logics would shape other women’s experiences. I was not comfortable, however, with applying the concepts I was reading about to my specific memories. I fundamentally resisted the idea that gendered logics had shaped my experiences. While I could read about how discourse perpetuates gendered structures complicitly (Fairclough, 2005; Shaw & Frisby, 2006), and I could apply that knowledge to intentionally change how I presented myself to players at training that day, I resisted accepting that those concepts and practices were layered into the stories of my playing or coaching careers.

It took me two years from immersion in the gender literature to realize what my commander in chief, Oscar (Director of my state’s Youth Soccer Association and program director and Head Coach of the State Olympic Development Program; characterized as a mentor) had meant a decade before when he valued a player to me because she “played like a boy”. We were sitting together, level with the penalty box, on the sideline of a 7v7 college showcase tournament at the University of West Virginia’s indoor facility; we had an ideal perspective to evaluate the player in the middle of midfield going left to right. After he told me he “liked her” (coach speak), I peacocked and explained to him why and how she played like a boy in terms of her tactical vision, ball distribution, and her movement off the ball. It worked for me – I had validated my coaching knowledge in his eyes. I knew I had performed for him because his response was: “It sounds like you’ve been coaching boys.” I had been.
Until I embarked on this project, memories like this one escaped my own critical reflection. In the moment, as Oscar spoke, I took his wisdom as an educational and professional development opportunity because *he told me* that was what the moment meant; I could not see the grooming as it occurred, real time. I was raised in a system that trained me to be sexist, and that training constrained me from accommodating gendered logics into my own stories, through a research lens. I would not have been able to conceptualize the anecdotes, or the totality of my story, had I not been immersed in the gender literature (Messner, 2011; Shaw & Frisby, 2006).

From my current perspective, I believe it was Shaw and Frisby (2006), Mike Messner (2011), and the scores of other researchers, such as Coakley (2017), who positioned me to subvert the cognitive and/or emotional barriers that hamstrung me in accepting how gendered logics shaped my own stories. The intersection of (a) my personal development through exposure to the literature, (b) the research training I have now been privileged to receive, and (c) reframing thousands of anecdotes that constructed my playing and coaching careers in sport, in the aggregate, incited in me a *windfall of fury*.

Where I was *incensed* that I was never told about the research on youth development in sport, I am *moved* that I was trained to be sexist, and that I was complicit. I do not accept that, and my intent is to, through my research, affect the structures that dictated my complicity. This dissertation is a response to my fury, yes; but my fury here is retrospective. I wish I had known then what I know now. I wish that the nature of the co-construction of discourse, based on the organization of power (Fairclough, 2005), had been translated to the coaches I trained under and I who I looked up to. I wish that I could have seen it, because I wish that above all else, I had not perpetuated abuse or gender discrimination.
Another piece of sage advice that my advisor gave me early in my academic career was that my experiences in playing and coaching do not translate to, nor matter in my academic career – that only research counts. At the time, I thought he was superfluously convincing me to quit coaching (I already had, cognitively, but he was not convinced yet). What I came to understand later as his message was: anecdotal evidence should be handled with caution.

When considering if I could or should divert to an autoethnography on sexism in sport for my dissertation, after having laid out an extensive proposal for an alternative project, I was scared. Quite simply, I was scared to propose to my committee that the totality of my story actually mattered and could substantiate a contribution, because my story is only mine and cannot be generalized to others, per science (rightfully so; Wall, 2008). I buried myself in questions about my legitimacy as I ruminated about the change in direction for my dissertation. I questioned if I was even justified to retrospectively interpret my anecdotes that compounded to the totality of my story; and I questioned that, if my interpretations can be justified, what value could they hold (Wall, 2008)?

Those questions I asked of myself strike at the heart of imposter syndrome, but more consequentially here, those very questions are identified throughout the gender literature as what I was trained to ask of myself as a woman (Burton & Leberman, 2017; Wall, 2008).

This dissertation was a product of the constellation of circumstances that positioned me to drill down into a research line that will be systematically designed to effect structural change in sport through institutional logics (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). The intersection of my experiences in sport and my formal training in research have positioned me, uniquely, to translate how institutional logics play out, shape, and provide the structure to social contexts, such as sport (Clough, 1998; Ellis et al., 2011; Shaw & Frisby, 2006). This project, specifically,
was intended to translate the co-construction of sexism in sport as a function of the recursive relationship between agency and structure (Giddens, 1984; Scott, 2001), through a methodology that allows for that translation to be scientifically justified, theoretically grounded, and practically accessible (Denzin, 2006; Ellis & Bochner, 2006). In other words, this autoethnography maps how I was trained to be sexist through language and behavior that is taken for granted, complicit as the natural order of truths (Clough, 2009), such as the back-handed compliment “she plays like a boy” as a tell of superior athletic value. This single example of juxtaposing a female athlete with a male proxy often escapes critical evaluation in common sport discourse (i.e., GSM; Coakley, 2017) but reifies the structures that marginalize girls and women (Burton & Leberman, 2017); however, I doubt Oscar was ever told that in words he could hear. The overarching objective for me, in interpreting and translating my training in sexism, is that unveiling the process of the co-construction of sexism in sport might expose the normative behaviors and ideologies that implicitly, explicitly, and complicitly perpetuate the marginalization of girls and women in sport.

The State of Play

The US sport system was created by and for men (Burton & Leberman, 2017; Staurowsky et al., 2020); for women and girls to engage with sport is to operate within structures that are organized on the qualities, values, and positions of power associated with orthodox conceptions of men and masculinity (Burton & Leberman, 2017; Coakley, 2017; LaVoi, 2016). Title IX, policy-based research, and changing socio-cultural norms have forced the boundaries of sport inclusion and organization (dramatically over the past few decades), improving sport access and opportunities for women and girls (Staurowsky et al., 2020). Public pressure and the nature of media platforms have propelled gender issues in sport to prominence among national
narratives (e.g., Montaño, Cantor, Jensen, & Crouse, 2019), exposing but still operating within the constraints that are illustrated through either the very public, and very data-driven, discrepancy in pay between men and women in sport (Cater, 2020), or through the very private and protected systemic sexual abuse of athletes by men in positions of power, such as Larry Nassar or Jerry Sandusky (Dure, 2019). Though these issues might now be coming widely known through public exposure and outrage, the issues are not new.

Sport structures are designed, intentionally, to reify the organization of power that privileges the perspective of those who have the power (Burton et al., 2009; Coakley 2017; Eitzen, 2016). Media companies reproduce narratives about rags to riches miracles that sport so graciously provides, convincing us that sport is an ideal space for social class mobility (Eitzen, 2016). Professional leagues continue to struggle with systemic racism, but only men’s pro leagues likely come to mind when that point is made because there are so few opportunities for women to play professional sport. Ideologies about the superiority of the Black athlete and the inferiority of the female athlete, for example, are presented as truths that any ‘knowledgeable sports fan’ would know (Coakley, 2017; Spaaij, Farquharson, & Marjoribanks, 2015). As participants or fans of sport, we are trained to accept the truths about it that are presented to us by the media, the organization of leagues, and micro-level interactions that complicly shape conceptions of “value” around the ideologies of the ones who generate the ideologies (Eitzen, 2016). We are trained to believe that sport is one of the few spaces that follows the true, natural order of society where winners win because they are better, and losers lose because they did not try hard enough (Coakley, 2017; Eitzen, 2016).

Success or failure as a function of the natural order in sport is embedded in the GSM, presented to us as proof that the institution of sport is pure, and thus we need not question it
To survive in the trenches of sport, one must accommodate the narratives of those positioned to dictate the narratives. The complicit nature of sexism in sport, grounded in the organization of power, shields gendered logics and discourse from being critically evaluated as substantiating the marginalization of women and girls (Burton & Leberman, 2017; Coakley, 2017). Overt sexism, such as the pay discrepancy between men and women, easily folds into public discourse on social justice. What is absent from sport discourse, however, is how easily the gendered logics that precipitated the pay gap in the first place are embedded into the organization of power in sport (Burton & Leberman, 2017; Shaw & Frisby, 2006).

The organization of power in sport is heavily resistant to change, and remains minimally affected by legislation, such as the application of Title IX to sport (that resulted from legal action on behalf of women), or organizational policy like the Rooney Rule in the NFL (Burton & Leberman, 2017; Lapchick, 2019). Despite the stability of power distributions in sport, shifts in cultural logics surrounding social justice, coupled with the accessibility of media, have accounted for substantial change in the status and treatment of women and girls in this space. For example, a New York Times (NYT) Opinion piece, which was produced as part of a series that the publication ran on gender inequity in sport, forced Nike’s hand in implementing maternity leave for their female athletes, for the first time, in 2019 (Montaño et al., 2019). Nike’s treatment of female athletes had been exposed through the NYT stories by Montaño et al (2019) and Cain (2019).

The change in Nike’s maternity leave policy represents a change in discourse, where discourse is the manifestation of a change in logics (e.g., change in public sentiment on women’s rights) that is interpreted and implemented at an organizational level (e.g., Nike’s written policy change; Fairclough, 2005; Shaw & Frisby, 2006). The movement Nike made on maternity leave
is a single example that, when positioned at a micro level, is monumental for the treatment of current and future Nike female athletes. Perhaps more consequential in terms of the degree of effect of Nike’s change in their organizational discourse, grounded in a shift in logics regarding maternity leave, is the change among Nike’s competitors that might likely follow (i.e., isomorphism and organizational legitimacy; Scott, 2001). This issue is dynamic, and this example is occurring, real time for me as I write these words, which makes me question what content I would be exposing six months from now, or five years from now, and if it would be any different.

When platformed, Alysia Montaño affected Nike’s formal organizational policy from an agentive position. Subsequently, as Nike is a major actor in the industry, the change in policy could substantially affect logics surrounding organizational treatment of female athletes (Scott, 2001). The effect that Alysia Montaño’s story had on Nike cannot be decoupled from the effect Nike might have on the organizational field, nor can Montaño’s story or Nike’s policy change be decoupled from the shift in gender logics that has been amplified in media, and substantiated the NYT line of inquiry that led them to Montaño and Cain. The relationship between Montaño (agent) and Nike (structure) was mediated by macro-level logics (public sentiment on gender issues) and a media platform, provided by the NYT, that positioned Montaño’s story to introduce new logics (or change the priority level of previously non-dominant logics) into Nike’s organizational discourse (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012). Her story rising to the level of effecting structural change for individual athletes is an example of the interplay between individual agents and the structures within which they operate, where structures are substantiated by discourse (Fairclough, 2005; St. Pierre, 2000).
The relationship between discourse and structure is elemental to post structuralism, which holds that social contexts, or structures, are constituted by the logics and practices that constrain them (Clegg, 2006; St. Pierre, 2000). Where discourse constitutes structures, when those who hold power control the discourse, the structures will be stable (Clough, 2009; Easton, 2010). Through a post structural lens, discourse can be stratified into material and semiotic strands that can be examined as differentiated analytical spaces (see Fairclough, 2005 on Foucault).

Stability in power and stability in discourse underpin the complicit nature of being trained to be sexist through sport engagement. Where post structuralism operates as an epistemology (Aitchison, 2000) through which the co-construction of sexist discourse in sport can be examined, critical realism operates as the ontological lens that provides for the concurrent spaces in which sexism is delivered through sport discourse (Flatschart, 2016). A critical realism lens situates phenomenological processes as nested in micro, meso, and macro levels of society, or a common set of theoretical parameters that, broadly, constrain agency and structure as they interact recursively, co-constructing gendered logics across time and spaces (Clegg, 2006; Jessop, 2004). It is at this juncture of agency and structure, where structure is constituted by discourse, that my autoethnographic dissertation on sexism in sport was situated.

An autoethnography is both process and product (Ellis et al., 2011), which couples an insider’s research perspective with the study of broader culture, bringing a phenomenon to life through relatable personal story. Autoethnography parallels a qualitative analysis of multiple people’s accounts of a phenomenon, where those anecdotal experiences are aggregated, triangulated with augmentative data sources, and analyzed to describe or deconstruct the phenomenon under investigation (McIlveen, 2008; Wall, 2008). The methodology is commonly employed in emancipatory research, telling the story of the marginalized, in context, as it
changes across time and space, to provide a new lens or perspective for critical analysis of the structures in which the story occurred (McIlveen, 2008).

The effectuation of my story is grounded in the degree to which my writing positioned the reader to critically evaluate the nuance and depth of sexism in sport, and to position the academic to relate my story to the literature in a way that would not otherwise be possible (Anderson, 2006). As a formally trained researcher with an insider’s perspective on the experiences and construction of being female in sport, my autoethnography was designed to address the research questions:

1. In what ways is sexism implicitly or explicitly layered into language and discursive practices in local interactions in sport contexts, and what are the contextual micro outcomes? (Research question one is associated with propositions one and two)

2. How do sensemaking, discourse, and macro-level ideologies intersect across time and space to co-construct and deliver sexism through sport? (Research question two is associated with propositions three thru five)

The practical and theoretical implications of this project are presented as a set of research propositions associated with each research question. The research propositions below platform a story that (a) provides a medium through which the process of being trained to be sexist can be accessibly interpreted (practical implications), and (b) is proposed as support for a model of the co-construction of discourse grounded in institutional logics and embedded in the results of the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA; theoretical implications).

**Practical implications:**

- Proposition 1: Through language, a personal narrative, triangulated with other data sources, will translate and interpret contexts through which macro-level logics manifest as barriers for girls and women in sport (translating top-down parameters).

- Proposition 2: Through language, a personal narrative, triangulated with other data sources, will engage the reader in a dyadic exchange that encourages the reader to reflect on their story (or their interpretations of the writer’s story) in a way that positions the story as co-constructed by the relationship between agent and structure (translating bottom-up sensemaking and agency).
**Theoretical implications:** The theoretical implications of the propositions are that the proposed model of discourse could be used to explore the spaces through which sexism or other phenomena are co-constructed: propositions three through five provide for exploiting the structural operations in the co-construction of sexism to locate defined access points to interrupt the perpetuation of the marginalization of girls and women in sport by disrupting the discourse (Shaw & Frisby, 2006).

- **Proposition 3:** Institutional logics operate as information – they are supra ordinate to agency and structure, manifesting as informational energy that flows via institutional carriers, within and between contexts, grounding discursive practices of individuals and entities.

- **Proposition 4:** As supra ordinate, institutional logics constrain and enable discursive practices of individuals and entities, which aggregate to the ‘structures’ and ‘discourse’ that translate, as the meso level, to culture (where structure is a rendering of the temporally constrained sets of logics that, when aggregated across time and space, constitute the discourse that constructs culture and recursively constrains structure).

- **Proposition 5:** Institutional logics are the intermediary, or link, between agent and structure, a proposed theoretical ‘work around’ to the tension around the primacy of agency or structure (bottom-up/top-down) that plagues institutional theory (i.e., the process of institutionalization; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008) where logics are granted primacy.

The first research objective in this project was to translate the co-construction of sexism, which is embedded in sport discourse, through a critical examination of the common language, behaviors, and practices (i.e., discursive practices) that constituted the process of being trained to be sexist. The second objective in this project was to pattern the process of being trained to be sexist through a hierarchical systems lens in which contexts and discourse are co-constructed locally and culturally. The research questions were answered through an FDA to describe and position the co-construction of gendered discourse in sport as a process. The research propositions were designed around the archaeology and genealogy of the FDA, where the results
were used to manifest a model of discourse that positions the meso/structural level as the targeted space through which the co-construction of sexism can be disrupted.

The aim for the delivery of the project was to build a story about how and why I was trained to be sexist, and to provide specific, engaging examples of complicit discursive practices that underpinned the training process. The intersection of my career in sport and my education in formal research positioned me to employ an autoethnographic methodology to map my indoctrination into a toxic, abusive, and fundamentally sexist structure.
CHAPTER 2
MULTI-LEVEL REVIEW OF GENDER IN SPORT: SITES OF SEXISM

Chapter two provides an overview of the co-construction of gender ideologies in sport. Presented first is a review of process elements that demonstrate the historicity of gendered discourse in sport and how it has culminated in a ‘separate but equal’ sport system that operates on an embedded male proxy. Second, a review of the recursive relationship between agency and structure is presented to ground the examination of the process of being trained to be sexist. Agency and structure are conceptualized as the relational space in which cyclical informational pathways recursively interact, reifying or reorganizing parameters in temporally immediate contexts. Finally, agency and structure are layered into a multilevel framework as the temporally contingent data points that aggregate across time and space to constitute the theoretical societal parameters in which barriers for girls and women in sport are grounded.

The Co-construction of Gender Ideologies and Sexism in Sport

Sport structures were organized by and for men, where orthodox definitions of ‘male’ and ‘masculinity’ have historically operated as the metrics for definitions of ‘athlete’ and ‘leader’ in a hyper-masculine space (Anderson, 2009; Burton & Leberman, 2017; Coakley, 2017). The complicitly accepted ‘truths’ in sport (i.e., ‘ideologies’) have evolved by the rules and boundaries set by men, and are consequential to the co-construction of sport stakeholders’ experiences and positioning as gendered (Burton, 2015; Burton & Leberman, 2017; LaVoi, 2016).

Socialization into sport occurs through the multitude of contexts that operate as sites for translating macro-level logics into the delivery of sport (i.e., top-down constraints; Messner 2011). Structures that deliver sport are renderings of localized interpretations of macro ideologies embedded in our culture, constraining individual cognition and behavior (Burton, 2015; Messner, 2011). Macro level ideologies (e.g., ‘girls aren’t interested in sport’) are
manifested through context-specific delivery, such as a team or ‘the media’ (Hardin & Greer, 2009; Messner, 2011; Messner, Dunbar, & Hunt, 2000). How those logics play out in-context, as implicit and explicit social messages, shape girls and women’s interpretations of their role and value as athletes or as leaders in sport; and perhaps more consequentially, those social messages also shape what boys and men (who tend to rise to decision-making authority positions in sport) think of women’s sport (Messner, 2011; Messner et al., 2000). The resultant strategies stakeholders develop to negotiate gender issues in sport are grounded in their positioning: girls learn how to behave within the imposed constraints around the meanings of ‘female’ and ‘athlete’ (affecting motivation and engagement across contexts and time; Burton & Leberman, 2017), and boys learn about the seriousness of girls’ sports, where boys’ sports are allocated more resources and men hold the majority of positions of power in both boys’ and girls’ environments (Fink, 2008; Messner, 2011; Messner et al., 2000; Staurowsky et al., 2020).

When a logic of ‘male’ as the proxy for comparing athletes (between binary sex categories) is coupled with metrics of ‘athletic’ based on size or speed, women’s sports are devalued and female athletes are dismissed, or alternatively... sexualized (Anderson, 2009; Fink, 2008; Spaaij, Farquharson, & Marjoribanks, 2015). The direct comparison of female bodies to male bodies in sport operates as a justification for the marginalization of women in sport, as the direct comparison occurs in a space that, through its very construction, is organized around sexism and structural privilege granted to men and boys (Anderson, 2009; Fink, 2008; Spaaij et al., 2015). The consequences of direct comparison have reach – the binary contrasts made throughout a participant’s youth career translate to shaping ideas about female athletes and, in turn, ideas about women as leaders in sport (Burton & Leberman, 2017; Fink, 2008; Messner et al., 2000). The crux is, of course, that when the time comes for women’s sports to be funded, or
for women to be promoted into leadership positions (an appropriate direct comparison between women and men), the script was already written.

Gender differences and gender stereotypes in sport (male and female) reflect the intersection of biology and socialization, through which gender roles are defined in-context (snapshot) as well as reflexively practiced across time and space (Claringbould, & Knoppers, 2012; Hardin & Greer, 2009; Messner, 2011; Messner et al., 2000). Biological differences between males and females have historically been conflated with socialized differences, providing justification for differential treatment as well as disparity in access to sport (Messner, 2011; Spaaij et al., 2015). Traditionally masculine qualities (e.g., competitive, physical, aggressive) are juxtaposed with traditionally feminine qualities (e.g., relationship-oriented, passive, emotional) throughout our indoctrination into sport; the binary assignment of sport-specific characteristics, which underpin all facets of engagement for girls and women in a male-constructed space, serves to reify the gender structures on which the assignment of those characteristics was predicated (Anderson, 2009; Messner, 2011).

Sex-based socialization in sport compounds across an individual’s experiences, mediated by social reflexivity, to shape patterns of engagement as adult stakeholders (Messner et al., 2000; Veliquette, 2013). An agent’s negotiation of sexist ideologies in sport extend beyond simple participation patterns among boys and girls, compounding to leadership expectations of men or women, or treatment disparities in organizations (e.g., hiring, pay, media portrayals; Burton & Leberman, 2017; Messner et al., 2000; Sagas & Cunningham, 2004a). The intersection of socializing messages and individual reflexivity, or accepting or rejecting imposed narratives, illustrates the “duality of structure” proposed by Giddens (1984) where structure both constrains and enables agentive cognition and behavior.
Structures are constrained by macro-level ideologies as they are cyclically reified or reorganized through micro-initiated discursive practices in the temporally immediate context (Clegg, 2006; Veliquette, 2013). Drawing on the writings of Clegg (2006) and Fairclough (2005), discursive practices were conceptualized here as data points that comprise the micro level of society, or an agent’s (individual or entity; micro-based) explicit and implicit language and behavior that demonstrate their accommodation, through reflexivity, of socialized messages, or structurally-imposed parameters for cognition and behavior (Veliquette, 2013). Structure, in this sense, is an inclusive conceptual rendering of the resources and rules that extend from manifested, local contexts to the theoretical ideologies by which the composition of ‘structure’ is constrained, such as institutionalization (Giddens, 1984; Goodrick, & Reay, 2011; Veliquette, 2013).

Agents negotiate context-specific interpretations of ideologies, accepting or rejecting (or some combination thereof) the localized narrative, and subsequently reifying or reconstituting the structure through agentive behavior (i.e., bottom-up agency; Giddens, 1984; Rose, 2006). For example, ‘feminism’ is a culturally contingent concept that, when interpreted locally, will hold different sets of truths. Though ideas about ‘feminism’ can be accepted as a broad set of institutionalized logics with innumerable variants, the meaning and detail is context-specific (Rose, 2006); some social groups embrace some or most of the concept, some groups reject or pervert it, and individuals operating in the local spaces will interact with the extrapersonal ideas uniquely. An agent’s reification or rejection of a local narrative, such as ‘women’s sports are not serious’, is an example of a discursive practice situated at the micro-level, where inductively generated ideas about girls and women in sport are demonstrated through the agent’s language and behavior (Cooky, 2009; Rose, 2006; Veliquette, 2013). In the same temporally contingent
space, the agent’s inductively generated ideas are sourced from reflexive monitoring around the culturally embedded ideologies and local messages that provide the agent with sexist narratives in the first place (Clegg, 2006; Rose, 2006; Veliquette, 2013).

Agency and structure layer into a multi-level framework that accommodates their variation across time and space to provide a schematic for examining the process of the co-construction of sexism in sport as an interaction between material and semiotic elements of informational flows (Fairclough, 2005; Rose, 2006). In a multi-level framework, the recursive relationship between the agent (micro) and structure (context/meso) is subsumed by macro-level, culturally contingent information (Rose, 2006; Veliquette, 2013), which I conceptualized here in the frame of Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury’s (2012) institutional logics. Context-specific interpretations and delivery of institutional logics, proposed in this project as the semiotic and material strands of ‘discourse’ (Clough, 1998; Fairclough, 2005), constitute the localized processes that constrain and enable local agential discursive practices (Rose, 2006; Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012). It is agents’ discursive practices, as individuals or entities, that aggregate across time and locale to co-construct macro-level logics that delimited the boundaries for the interpretation and delivery of the initial discourse (Rose, 2006; Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012; Veliquette, 2013).

Where institutional logics (macro) operate as semiotic parameters for agential cognition and behavior, they also ground meso level discourse (structure; Fairclough, 2005; Veliquette, 2013), in which institutional logics are manifested through localized translation and delivery (Rose, 2006; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Recursively, agentive discursive practices accommodate and/or reorganize local narratives, where positioned agents (individuals or entities) affect imposed constraints and discourse, shifting local structures or macro-level logics (Rose,
As an analytical schematic, the agency/structure relationship patterns information flows across theoretical macro/meso/micro levels of society to support a stratified deconstruction of the localized discourse that constitutes the process of being trained to be sexist (Rose, 2006; Veliquette, 2013). Put simply, the individual and structural processes across time and space, grounded in the rolling relationship between context-specific ideological parameters and individual reflexivity, are where the construction of sexism is embedded, normalized, and can alternatively be exposed (Skirstad & Chelladurai, 2011; Veliquette, 2013).

**Agency, and Structure, and Positioning**

Agency and structure are widely accepted as axiomatic concepts that constitute the co-construction of society in an open social system (Scott, 2001). Structuration Theory (Giddens, 1984), Sensemaking (Weick, 2005), Institutional Theory, and Neo-Institutional Theory all hold, while primacy of agency or structure is a ubiquitous tension, that the recursive nature of the relationship between agency and structure is such that structure both enables and constrains agency (Scott, 2001). Agency and structure are constituted by the interactions between the individual and their environment, as each evolves across time and space.

**Agency**

The foundational recursive nature of the relationship between agency and structure is such that the individual agent reflexively interacts with macro ideologies through structure, or context-specific discourse that enables and reproduces the ideologies as they are manifested through delivered language and practices (Giddens, 1984; Oppong, 2014; Rose, 2006). Agents’ discursive practices in a given structure are their rendering of structural parameters, or the individual’s accommodation of context-specific socio-cognitive and behavioral constraints (Veliquette, 2013). Micro level agents holding power are positioned to affect the existing parameters, or constraints, recreating or reproducing the structure over time. This duality of
structure accounts for the influence an individual agent has on their environment, where that environment is both a reflection and reproduction of the aggregate of all agents’ decisions and actions in-context, across time (Giddens, 1984; Rose, 2006).

Both agent and structure have dynamic histories that, constrained by supra ordinate systems (e.g., team as an individual; organizational field as an entity), compounded to current positioning and parameters in a temporally and context-specific snapshot (Rose, 2006). In a structure, positioned agents influence the boundaries, but it is the structure that constitutes the agent’s range of possible decisions and behaviors (Giddens, 1984). Entities and individuals can both operate as micro level agents, both constrained and enabled within the immediate suprasystem’s parameters, where the suprasystem is embodied as social context/organization, field, or institution (Veliquette, 2013). A prominent voice or a positioned organization can introduce new logics that could consequentially shift the parameters around complicit ideologies (i.e., have power through social media presence or organizational behavior, respectively; Rose, 2006; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008).

Media operates as a primary interface between (or carrier of) macro-level logics and (a) the contexts that translate them, and (b) the agents who/that reify or reconstitute the context-specific discourse (Clough, 1998). Media, however, is organized around corporations that select and broadcast narratives based on some combination of (a) the personal positions of those who make decisions on the narrative chosen and shaped, and (b) the audience or target market for the generated narrative (Hardin & Greer, 2009). Thus, ‘the media’ is, here, expressly identified as a meso-level operator, or a configuration of corporeal media/broadcast companies that manifest narratives, which are then accepted or rejected as context-specific (Veliquette, 2013). The intersection of (a) media as the provider of information (i.e., as a source of context-specific
parameters that constrain agents) and (b) public opinion, which operates within and shapes those informational boundaries, illustrates the multiplicity of meso-level spaces that interpret and manifest top-down ideologies as they are, to some degree, shaped by public opinion, or the aggregate of bottom-up language and behaviors (Clough, 1998).

Agents affect their immediate social contexts when positioned (CNN or Fox News can be considered positioned agents as corporeal media outlets), and can affect the macro-level logics that constrain them when well positioned (Giddens, 1984; Rose, 2006). For example, agent Megan Rapinoe earned a media platform because the broadcasting rights for the 2019 Women’s World Cup (gender distinction noted) were purchased by a major media player (carried in the U.S. by FOX). The event was broadcast internationally, viewed by 1.12 billion unique viewers worldwide (Glass, 2019); Rapinoe was a promoted player on the U.S. Women’s National Team as the captain and eventual winner of both the Golden Ball and Golden Boot, drawing massive audiences to her person (Staurowsky et al., 2020).

Rapinoe’s platform, which evolved into an equal pay initiative, was complemented by corporate (NYT) and social media, which has indeterminately affected how macro level logics are subject to public opinion to an exponential degree; as technology provides access to new social communities online, public opinion through crowdsourcing has a voice that can connect directly to, and condemn, the narrative generators (Sisjord & Kristiansen, 2008). Despite Rapinoe’s immense popularity, she was criticized, and excoriated by some communities, for her on and off-field abrasiveness; Rapinoe was labeled as unsportsmanlike and boastful – common tropes about women in sport that are not applied to men (Sisjord & Kristiansen, 2008).

Megan Rapinoe effectuated her platform to reorganize gendered ideologies through media, which operates as a paramount interpreter of logics and driver of discourse (Clough,
Rapinoe was able to activate her interventionist logic in the U.S. because: (a) a media player bought the broadcast rights to the Women’s World Cup and broadcast it widely; (b) media groups that transcend politics covered her performance and political/gender equity positions; and (c) she was positioned to assert her agenda based on her star-status as athlete. This story is not different from Alysia Montaño’s story in the NYT, as both demonstrate how positioned actors and entities, as agents, can affect logics as mediated through context, where context is constituted by discourse (Rose, 2006; Veliquette, 2013).

Drawing on Weick’s (2005) and Giddens (1984) explanations of sensemaking and agency, respectively, I conceptualized agency here as a representation of (a) an individual’s (or entity’s) intrapersonal decisions that demonstrate their reflexive relationship with structurally imposed ideas, paired with (b) their capacity to act. Giddens (1984) proposed that agency is concerned with the capacity to act to a greater degree than with the intention of the action, where the intention is indicative of reflexive monitoring of contextually driven consequences, and the demonstration of that monitoring is only effectuated by agentive power. ‘Agency’ implies the power of effect, and so is not determined by the intent or outcome of an act, but that the individual is the perpetrator of the act; agency is based on the capacity of the individual to have chosen a different act, or none at all, at any juncture in the act of the discursive practice (Giddens, 1984).

An illustration of agency, or lack thereof, is accessible through an anecdote of my introduction to the men who established the Elite Clubs National League, through which the primacy of the capacity to act in agentive behaviors is demonstrated:

In the winter of 2007, after the boys’ US Soccer Developmental Academy (USSDA) had been implemented by US Soccer, I sat at a table in a hotel in New Jersey representing my
youth club in the construction of a new, national soccer league for youth girls. At the
table were seven men, each a Director of Coaching representing a powerful youth soccer
club from across the country. I had been assigned as the lead liaison for my very
powerful youth club, the Central City Arsenal. My boss, a ‘grandfather’ of US Soccer,
had sent me; the men had expected him to attend as my club’s representative. At that
table, I was well prepared to demonstrate my reflexive relationship with structurally
imposed ideas, or to contribute to the conversation on planning the new national league.
However, when speaking, or trying to, I quickly realized that I was not positioned to
contribute to that conversation, based on the organization of power at the table. Thus,
when I was spoken over or not recognized as I spoke, it became evident that there were
significant constraints on my capacity to act in that space. I had a seat at the table but no
voice (McGinnis et al., 2005).

The brief anecdote reflects Claringbould and Knoppers’ (2008) work on how women tend
to navigate the boundaries and barriers associated with being integrated into sport power
structures. Women who are positioned at the table, such as on a board, negotiate agency through
the constraints that dictate their voice where those constraints are imposed and determine their
depends on the capability of the individual to make a difference to a pre-existing state of affairs
or course of events. An agent loses the capacity to do so if he/she can’t exercise power” (p 46);
even when at the table (and equipped to contribute), where I was not afforded a voice, I was not
afforded agency.

A tension around the primacy of agency or concept of ‘structure’ that constrains it is
ubiquitous in multi-level inquiries, and specifically those that consider forces that are imposed
top-down, such as in organizational and management research (Rose, 2006; Scott, 2001). Concomitantly, the primacy of the constitution of agency, in terms of temporal constraints or the stratification of agency, are also contested. Where Giddens (1984) gives primacy to the power of effect over other conceptually proposed elements of agency, such as interpretive schema, in Weick’s (2005) sensemaking conceptualization of agency, interpretations of context-specific stimuli supersede the power of effect temporally, and thus are given primacy in the constitution of agency. In other words, Weick (2005) proposes that agency can only occur if the individual can formulate incoming messages into a plan for their outgoing messages, or discursive practices, in contrast to Giddens’ (1984) assertion that agency can only occur if the agent has the power to act.

Giddens’ (1984) conceptualization of positioning is such that it moderates the power embedded in an agent’s relationship with its structure, or capacity to act (Veliquette, 2013); Weick’s (2005) sensemaking conceptualization promotes the effectuation of agency as action based on schema development and accommodation of information at a psychological level. For Weick (2005), the power of effectuation is less concerned with mechanisms of choice (i.e., dominant response, instinct, or reaction), but is manifested as action that is an outcome of interpretation of incoming information and the range of possibilities for action based on the circumstance.

Contrasting ideas about the sources of agentive power, or effect on the immediate context, are helpful to ground the process of being trained to be sexist as dynamic across time and space, in which an individual agent’s (or entity’s) negotiation of sexist ideologies cannot be decoupled from intrapersonal reflexivity (Cooky, 2009; Veliquette, 2013). Weick’s (2005) linear patterning of interpretation to action, coupled with Giddens’ (1984) non-linear employment of
resources, provide a platform for stratifying the process into intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extrapersonal dimensions. Both lenses are valuable for deconstructing how agential discursive practices pattern into ‘process’ within and across contexts, where positioning is unstable (Giddens, 1984; Rose, 2006; Veliquette, 2013). Interpretations and action will be configured differently in different temporally contingent/context-specific snapshots (Veliquette, 2013; Weick, 2005), where the aggregate over time and space will be considered to pattern the process of being trained to be sexist. Intrapersonal factors couple with interpersonal and extrapersonal factors, such as logics parameters and agent resources, which might be more stable, if progressive, across compounding experiences (Cooky, 2009; Giddens, 1984; Veliquette, 2013). In other words, interpretations of information and ideologies are a function of the agent’s historicity based on the aggregate of experiences that shape an individual’s relationship with a phenomenon (Veliquette, 2013).

**Structure**

Linear and non-linear arguments consume conceptualizations of agency throughout research framed in institutional theory or post-structuralism (i.e., top-down), however, a qualitative rendering of the aggregate of those conceptualizations would likely generate the assumption that agency has reach beyond the individual’s intended outcome (relative to the self), affecting the environment in which the act is perpetrated. In other words, a person can affect snapshot social interaction in an immediate context, challenging or iterating its norms (where the person has agency; Giddens, 1984; Veliquette, 2013). It is this fundamental assumption of agency: that an agent can, to whatever degree, affect their immediate context, whatever position that context might hold in a system, that underpinned this project (Rose, 2006; Veliquette, 2013). This is particularly salient in the sport environment, as the athlete’s, coach’s, or admin’s choice in behavior is never fixed or conclusive, but is a function of reflexive monitoring that
accommodates new narratives across time and space, and thus agents can choose to affect the reification or reorganization of gendered discourse, when made aware of its consequences.

Agency cannot be decoupled from the intrapersonal process of reflexive monitoring (Giddens, 1984; Veliquette, 2013). As experiences compound across time and context, the progression of behaviors influences the environments in which the acts are perpetrated, and subsequently, cognition and behavior are trans-contextual across the individual’s compounding experiences (Giddens, 1984). Agents learn adaptive behaviors (reorganization) and interpersonal skills (cultural capital) across their indoctrination into sport (Coakley, 2017; Giddens, 1984). Agentive decision-making is not only affected by the agent’s evaluation of their own behaviors, but also by the agent’s evaluation of the behaviors of those around them, and the associated social consequences of both (Cooky, 2009; Giddens, 1984). The observed consequences, both first-person and third-person, socialize agents into discursive practices that are socially acceptable, or normalized, within structural parameters (Rose, 2006). Thus, decisions an actor makes are dependent upon their compounded observations of consequences within and across environments. In other words, agency does not move on its own, and preferences do not propagate in a vacuum: agency interacts with structure, accepting and moving structural parameters based on positioning (Giddens, 1984; Rose, 2006; Veliquette, 2013).

Per Giddens (1984): “structure thus refers, in social analysis, to the structuring properties allowing the ‘binding’ of time-space in social systems, the properties that make it possible for discernible similar social practices to exist across varying spans of time and space and which lend them ‘systemic form’” (p. 17). Structure was conceptualized for this project as the contextually organized formal rules and informal truths that were constrained by institutional logics and were, recursively, the aggregate of the discursive practices of agents and entities.
across contexts and time (Rose, 2006; Veliquette, 2013). Put simply, structure is a conceptual instantiation of discourse, or the meaning and delivery of information that stabilizes across time and space (Veliquette, 2013) and aggregate in a field to pattern the central tendencies of field discourse.

Structural parameters provide for the organization of power in-context, affecting resource generation processes that underpin the positioning of agents, where specific sets of discursive practices will be privileged over others (Giddens, 1984; Veliquette, 2013). Rules were conceptualized here as the formal patterns and policies in context (e.g., dress codes/uniforms), juxtaposed with truths, which represented informal, common practice (i.e., routines, socialized norms) that coupled to enable agents to make decisions, as well as demonstrate an understanding of normative behaviors within the structure, reconstituting the common practice (Rose, 2006; Veliquette, 2013). Structure operates as a conceptual mediator of institutional logics, or the context through which logics play out, are translated, and are co-constructed locally (Rose, 2006; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008; Veliquette, 2013).

Where rules and truths (i.e., structural parameters) dictate the range of possible agentive decisions or behaviors, resources are the means through which an agent performs an act (Giddens, 1984; Rose, 2006). According to Giddens (1984), the unique configuration of resource holdings, or ‘allocative resources’, and the associated opportunity to deploy those holdings, or ‘authoritative resources’, dictate an agent’s ‘positioning’. Resources enable action and effect as temporally stratified elements in which the recursive relationship between agency and structure is constituted.

**Positioning**

Agency and structure intersect through the constitution of an agent’s positioning, where positioned agents drive narratives (Rose, 2006). Giddens (1984) proposes that positioning is
determined by the actor’s access to and employment of resources, which are the source of power, or agentive impact on structure. Individuals within a structure will be uniquely positioned based on their contrasting levels of allocative and authoritative resources. It is this balance (or imbalance) of distribution of resources that both enables and constrains the agent’s potential for influence in the structure (Giddens, 1984; Rose, 2006).

Allocative resources are those that are tangible: (a) control of material or intellectual holdings and (b) knowledge of how to manifest those holdings (Giddens, 1984; Veliquette, 2013). Examples of allocative resources in a sport context are the opportunity and access to participate (e.g., finances, location, offerings), the agent’s skill set brought to the team structure (e.g., coach, good player), or as a leader in organizations, her resume. Allocative resources are any holding that enables the agent or entity to influence the current practice within the context (Veliquette, 2013).

Education, cultural capital, or economic capital are all allocative holdings that require acumen to employ – while the holdings constitute a resource, an agent must be knowledgeable on how to leverage those holdings (Veliquette, 2013). For example, knowledge of how women are supposed to behave in a specific context is a holding, and a woman’s social reflexivity in selecting what of those narratives about femininity she chooses to accept or reject, then enact, demonstrates her sagacity in negotiating how to employ her knowledge of femininity. Across time and space, allocative holdings and how they are employed are shaped by the feedback loops driven by observed consequences of discursive practices (Giddens, 1984; Rose, 2006).

Allocative resources and the knowledge of how to leverage them are salient concepts for girls and women negotiating narratives about themselves in a hyper-masculine space (Burton & Leberman, 2017; Cooky, 2009). Where girls’ and women’s athlete identities, bodies, and
behavior are excessively criticized and governed (Burton & Leberman, 2017; McGinnis et al., 2005; Messner et al., 2000), often inconsistently, the ability to not only understand context-specific expectations of femininity, but the knowledge of how and where to exhibit (or employ) a range of ‘feminine’ behaviors is a critical holding. Capital-based resources ground the knowledge and cognitive schema configuration that enable girls and women to evaluate gendered discourse imposed on them, sourcing as the web of information that girls and women use to accommodate, reject, or manipulate narratives (Cooky, 2009; Weick, 2005). Survival in a hyper-masculine context requires not just knowledge of contextual discourse about women in sport, it requires the ability to negotiate sexism actively, choosing what to believe, which battles to fight, and how to present according to circumstance (Messner et al., 2000; Shaw & Frisby, 2006; Weick, 2005).

Authoritative resources, like allocative resources, are context-specific, as the valuation and metrics of a resource is relative, or unstable at a macro level (Veliquette, 2013). For example, a woman’s elite athletic skill is an allocative holding, but is relative to level of competition and unstable in valuation across contexts (Cooky, 2009). Authoritative resources differ from allocative resources in that, while they could be considered holdings, a more specific characterization of authoritative resources is as the medium through which allocative resources are employed (Giddens, 1984); authoritative resources enable an activation of allocative resources (Veliquette, 2013). For an elite female athlete, authoritative resources provide her the opportunity to leverage her skill (i.e., an allocative holding) into an effect on her environment.

Less tangible than allocative resources, authoritative resources are the platforms through which holdings are demonstrated (Giddens, 1984; Veliquette, 2013). Where allocative resources are personal/micro-level holdings, interpersonal conceptions of an agent’s legitimacy or clout
ground their authoritative resources (Cooky, 2009). It is important to note that agents can hold allocative resources, such as knowledge, and be without a platform to disseminate that knowledge where lacking authoritative resources. Conversely, an agent can be with authoritative resources, but lacking context-appropriate allocative resources; as would be the case if a platformed politician with no medical knowledge made claims about health care, or when an uneducated coach perpetuates gendered ideologies through their platform as an authority.

Regardless of the quality of allocative resources, actors with authoritative resources are positioned to affect local discourse (Rose, 2006; Veliquette, 2013).

As the basis of power and influence, authoritative resources dictate the capacity of an agent to employ allocative resources, and consequentially dictate the potential for influence in the structure (Giddens, 1984; Veliquette, 2013). The recursive nature of agency and structure is predicated on authoritative resources, as it is the capacity to influence the structure that results in the reorganization or reconstitution of it (Giddens, 1984). An agent’s positioning is a function of their holdings and the capacity to employ those holdings to affect structure, or discourse (Rose, 2006; Veliquette, 2013). The configuration of allocative and authoritative resources (as they dictate positioning) is foundational to the negotiation between agency and structure, where structure operates on a naturalized hierarchy in which agents who are positioned have the most effect on the discourse (Clough, 2009; Veliquette, 2013). In other words, those in power make the rules. Because authoritative resources translate to power, they are often hijacked to silence marginalized voices and to perpetuate the normative discourse that sustains the positioning of those holding power (Clough, 1998; Cooky, 2009).

It is the recursive nature of the relationship between agency and structure that is foundational to the intersection of the theoretical micro, meso, and macro levels of society.
Positioning the agency/structure system as the temporal component of a multi-level framework provides a manifest, temporally bound space for how cultural information is co-constructed and concurrently travels through and across theoretical societal stratifications (Giddens, 1984; Veliquette, 2013). The conceptual system integrating agency and structure into a multi-level framework stratifies macro-level logics, the constitution of contexts, and discursive practices as functionally bound (Rose, 2006). The conceptual stratification, but not decoupling, of agent and structure and how they operate in complex society provides for the analytical spaces for unpacking the process of being trained to be sexist (Giddens, 1984).

**Aggregating Agency and Structure into a Multi-Level Analysis**

Macro level logics are a representation, or rendering of cultural knowledge, where narratives that are constructed through the organization of power aggregate to institutionalized beliefs and values (cite Foucault Clough, 2009). The macro level is entirely composed by extrapersonal information, there is no corporeal space or location that it occupies; it is the aggregate of latent informational energies that constrains and enables discourse and its delivery (Scott, 2005; Thornton et al., 2012). Macro level information can be characterized as the ideologies that are brought to life as sets of parameters that substantiate interpretations in local structures (Scott, 2005; Thornton et al., 2012).

The overarching inequity between men and women in society is given structure through sets of ideologies that reflect the rationalization or justification for the inequity (Burton & Leberman, 2017; LaVoi, 2016; Messner et al., 2000). Inequity in society is a phenomenon: it is demonstrable by data; the logic that women are “less than” when compared to men underpins the ideologies that embed inequity into discourse (see Cooky, 2009), resulting in the trends or patterns exposed by data (Burton et al., 2009; McGinnis et al., 2005). The tentacles of the “less than” logic are that (a) females are physically and emotionally weaker and thus (b) are inferior
athletes and leaders, as females do not have the necessary leadership or character traits to supplant men as leaders across sports, and most certainly in men’s sports (Burton et al., 2009; Cooky, 2009; Lavoi, 2006; McGinnis et al., 2005).

The set of ideologies around the inferiority of women play out as cultural knowledge, given structure through the complicitly accepted truths, such as that women’s sports do not garner mass popular interest, and thus do not earn or deserve broadcast coverage (Cunningham, 2003; Hardin & Greer, 2009; Messner et al., 2000). In this example, inequity is real, grounded in the complicitly accepted ideologies around the assumed ‘naturally occurring’ differences between men and women that drive into the treatment of girls and women through what we are trained as truths about them, such as that women’s sports do not deserve coverage or promotion (Cunningham, 2003; McGinnis et al., 2005). Each element, ideologies or truths, exists only as information, which is the delineation between the macro level as ideas and ideologies, and the discourse that aggregates to the meso level, as local manifestations of logics, interpreted (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Skinner, Stewart, & Edwards 1999).

The macro level barriers imposed on women in sport have a recursive relationship with discourse and with agents, particularly agents who are positioned with power to affect or control sport-specific discourse (cite Foucault; Burton & Leberman, 2017; Cooky, 2009). Sets of ideologies around institutionalized sexism are delivered through contexts, in which discursive practices around gender in sport are both constrained and enabled by the set of ideologies (Cooky, 2009; Skinner, Stewart, & Edwards 1999). It is the macro level, or the ideologies that get recursively (a) inputted as the aggregate of localized discourse across time and space, and (b) exported through the lenses of those in power (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2012; Lenskyj, 1990; Rose, 2006; Veliqueyte, 2013).
Gender barriers that are grounded in macro level ideologies have garnered substantial attention from researchers employing a liberal or radical feminism perspective (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Lenskyj, 1990; Roth & Basow, 2004). Issues such as equal opportunity and access to athletic programs, and sex integration, have been central to the liberal feminists’ agenda (Burke, 2004; Lenskyj, 1990). In this frame, solutions are often proposed as services that support girls and women in assimilating into the existing sport structure, as micro level solutions to macro level barriers, or in the form of legislation, as meso level solutions to meso level barriers (Burke, 2004; Roth & Basow, 2004). The primary argument against employing a liberal feminist lens is that it does not challenge the underlying hegemonic structures of sport that perpetuate the inequalities (Lenskyj, 1990; Shaw & Frisby, 2006).

Much of the macro level research on gender inequity in sport identifies ideologies that impact equal opportunity and access to athletic programs, or that justify developing programs and services that support women in assimilating into the existing sport structure (Burke, 2004; Lenskyj, 1990; Roth & Basow, 2004; Staurowsky et al., 2020). The ideologies about women’s inferiority in sport interact with their delivery through context, across time and space, training women on the ‘right way to woman’, or arming us with the strategies necessary to survive sports (McGinnis et al., 2005; Roth & Basow, 2004). The assumption layered into macro level research is that girls and women need to be prepared to navigate the ideologies that disadvantage them by either negotiating the structure, or earning positioning to change it (e.g., more women need to get themselves hired; Burton, 2015). In this sense, the macro level is presented as fixed, and that the barriers identified as operating at the macro level, such as institutionalized sexism, are opaque, and merely ‘identifiable’ (Burton, 2015). Consequentially, traditional views of how to bridge ideologies and the specific discursive practices through which they are manifested operate within
the very structures that generated the sexist ideologies in the first place (Shaw & Frisby, 2006). In other words, strategies for addressing inequity have commonly failed to affect macro level ideologies because they fail to affect the construction and organization of power in society that dictates macro level logics (Shaw & Frisby, 2006).

In gender in sport research, macro level barriers are framed in the data that demonstrate inequity or in the lenses that explore the inequity (Aspen Institute, 2019; Burton, 2015; Staurowsky et al., 2020). Macro level research can be considered as operating through lenses that explain or pattern ideologies and their outcomes, though the links between ideologies, delivery, and agency are not effectively developed in the descriptive research. The aim of demonstrating gendered patterns or identifying macro level barriers is to improve the opportunity and treatment of girls and women in participation and sport management through mere exposure of the inequity of the patterns and barriers (Burton & Leberman, 2017). Such research has been largely guided by a liberal feminist lens, a popular lens in multi-level approaches to research on gender inequity as it accommodates the recursive relationship between agency and structure as a space for identifying where and how barriers play out (Lenskyj, 1990; Ely & Meyerson, 2000).

Multi-level research on equity conducted in a liberal feminist lens is credited with early iterations of where and how to address equity in terms of a stratified, top-down framework (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2012; Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Lenskyj, 1990). Where an overarching logic sourcing inequity is that girls and women are “less than”, propositions grounded in a liberal feminist lens provide for strategies for structural changes that mitigate the effects of the logic, or work within the assumptions associated with it (Lenskyj, 1990; Ely & Meyerson, 2000). However, the inherent concern layered into the liberal feminist lens is that it does not effectively disrupt the co-construction of macro level gendered ideologies in which the strategies operate –
proposals in the liberal feminist lens are criticized as treating the symptoms without addressing the causes of inequity. More progressive iterations of propositions to address inequity accommodate the potential for disrupting and reorganizing macro level logics by positioning them in a recursive relationship with meso the meso level discourse, or delivery of the logics; gendered ideologies serve as information in the co-construction of discourse, and thus any conceptualization of macro level barriers that does not interrupt that pattern will inherently be constrained by the processes that generated the ideologies (McGinnis, 2005; Shaw & Frisby, 2006). This argument is at the center of the criticism of feminist lenses that do not consider intersectionality or that do not critically challenge the sets of ideologies that rationalize or justify sexism.

Ely and Meyerson (2000), in a novel examination of feminist theory and gender inequity in organizations, identified three overarching frames traditionally employed to promote gender equity through a liberal feminist lens. Those three frames: Fix the Women, Value the Feminine, and Provide Equal Opportunity, have historically guided much of the thought and organizational strategy to address gender inequity in organizations (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Shaw & Frisby, 2006). Considering the faux progress that strategies operating within the existing structures have produced, Meyerson and Kolb (2000) proposed an alternative lens for addressing sexism through interrupting its delivery: through disrupting the discourse.

On the heels of Ely and Meyerson (2000), and specific to sport, Shaw and Frisby (2006) adapted the three liberal feminist frames in terms of critique, and mapped the fourth frame into a proposal for addressing inequity outside of the parameters in which the first three frames were configured. The four frames examined by Shaw and Frisby (2006) offer penetrating insights into
the treatment of girls and women in sport, and provide an ideal framework for demonstrating how macro level ideologies are delivered as barriers through instantiations at the meso level.

Frame one, Fix the Women, centers on providing support and training for girls and women to prepare them for assimilating into the male-dominant culture in a way that mimics or embodies traditionally masculine characteristics (Shaw & Frisby, 2006). This frame holds that, in order for girls and women to compete with men boys in sport, as participants or leaders, we must demonstrate as ‘fitting in’ or ‘buying in’ as requisite for receiving the social rewards that support an athlete identity or career prospects (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000; Shaw & Frisby, 2006; Sherry, Osborne, & Nicholson, 2016). The lens Fix the Women squarely places the blame for gender inequity on women through the assumption that the inequity is caused by lack of skill or ability (allocative resources), rendering them unable to effectively compete with men unless skill deficits are fixed (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Shaw & Frisby, 2006). Through this lens, girls and women are responsible for engaging in their own personal development to remedy the deficit.

The idea that girls and women can be fixed, or prepared to assimilate into sport structures, is a critical element of the training to be sexist. As participants, the strategy underpins the contextual messages that tell youth athletes ‘the right way to girl’ in sports (Burton & Leberman, 2017; Sherry et al., 2016). Common tropes, such as ‘she plays like a boy’, or ‘you throw like a girl’, generate proxies for performance that are grounded in differences between sexes, where girls are less than (Messner, 2011; Roth & Basow, 2004). These logics are culturally accepted narratives that are not context-specific, but are understood across sport and society (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2012; Lenskyj, 1990; Roth & Basow, 2004). Here, the language is the manifestation of a logic that drives into delivery of sport programs, translating
macro ideologies into micro level parameters for how girls should present if they are to demonstrate that they understand and can operate within the constraints placed on them (Messner, 2011; Sherry et al., 2016).

The macro level logic that athletic deficits are inherent to females, and need to be fixed, manifest in discourse through which girls are trained to match the ideologies that shape masculinity in sport (Burton & Leberman, 2017; Roth & Basow, 2004). In the ‘play like a boy’ example, the message conveys that, for girls to perform or be taken seriously in sport, they must learn to embody athletic characteristics defined on male bodies. Fixing girls in order to prepare them to compete in sport is to imply that ‘female’ and ‘athlete’ are not inclusive unless amended. Macro level logics and barriers around fixing females are purported to manifest at the micro level through a myriad of consequences for girls, including body dysmorphia, as was the case for Mary Cain (Cain, 2019), or attrition as examples of micro level behavioral outcomes of sexism (i.e., discursive practices; McGinnis et al., 2005; Staurowsky et al., 2020). These outcomes operate as demonstrations of girls’ understanding of what their body, training, and behavior should look like as athletes (Burton & Leberman, 2017; Sherry et al., 2016).

The same overarching logics that shape the experiences of girls as participants in sport bleed into expectations and treatment of women as leaders in sport (Burton & Leberman, 2016; Lavo, 2016; Sagas & Cunningham, 2004b). Macro level logics around women’s deficits in the workplace are embedded in gender equity strategies, and in treatment. Sport is a hyper-masculine space, and thus amplifies the drive to fix or prepare women to survive the embedded inequity on the job: they must be trained to be assertive, to be confident, and to navigate the fixed barriers they will encounter as treatment discrimination, such as surviving the adult locker-room
mentality, that are co-constructed in sport organizations (Burton, 2015; Claringbould & Knoppers, 2012; Cunningham & Sagas, 2008).

As leaders, women arrive on the job having been trained through the compounding of their experiences across time and space that culminated in the skill sets and outlook they bring to sport leadership (Burton & Leberman, 2017; LaVoi, 2016). The training women experience across contexts, which operated within the logics around gender in sport, cannot be decoupled from how they navigate the workplace in sport (LaVoi, 2016). Once women arrive as leaders, we have been exposed to the constraints on what is expected from us – and have been forced to negotiate to what degree we will fit in or buy in to the way sport is organized (Burton & Leberman, 2017; LaVoi, 2016; Sherry et al., 2016).

‘The right way to woman’ in sport leadership is outcome of women’s reflexive negotiation of the gendered constraints on their discursive practices, where the constraints are grounded in the organization of power that privileges conceptions of traditionally male characteristics as leadership traits (Burton, 2015; Burton & Leberman, 2017). When male-centered valuations of merit are coupled with the requisite behavioral accommodations expected of women, the outcome is the reproduction of the ideologies that grounded the process of being trained to be sexist; women are not only trained how to navigate sport as leaders, we are trained on how other women should present (Burton & Leberman, 2017; LaVoi, 2016; McGinnis et al., 2005). The contention that women are able to be fixed in order to fit into complicitly accepted leadership structures and styles operates on the assumption that the conception of the leadership structure is fixed and correct, and that, broadly, women who are successful in sport leadership are those who are able to demonstrate ‘the right way to woman’ (Burton & Leberman, 2017).
Women who demonstrate the capacity to fit in or buy in are rewarded by those in power, which will include women.

A second frame that offers an alternative view on the ‘right way to woman’ holds that women are not lacking male traits, but that the traits layered into their DNA, which are categorically feminine, should be celebrated. The contrast between the frame Fix the Women and the frame Value the Feminine is reactionary – they are polar strategies that operate on the same assumption: that men and women are distinctively different (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Shaw & Frisby, 2006). Traditionally male characteristics are not imposed on women through the lens of frame two, but traditionally female characteristics are promoted as having equal value (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000; Shaw & Frisby, 2006). In this frame, the source of inequity is grounded in the assumption that, in organizations, female characteristics are valued less (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2012; Ely & Meyerson, 2000). Thus, to remedy gender inequity, organizational practice and policy should recognize that males’ aggressiveness and leadership are not more critical to organizational functions, but that females’ “listening, collaborating, and peace making” (Meyerson & Kolb, 2000, p. 562) skills are of complementary value.

The criticisms of Value the Feminine are that it is fundamentally grounded in assumed innate sex differences, and that simply appreciating these differences reifies the dominant male structures through the perpetuation of stereotypes (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Messner, 2011; Shaw & Frisby, 2006). Examples from sport structures that reflect this frame include differential rules for men’s and women’s complementary sports (e.g., hockey, lacrosse), in which rule variation is designed to protect the female participants (Coakley, 2017).

Sport research has highlighted differential treatment between girls and boys predicated on the assumption that girls have different needs, such as cohesion and social support, in contrast to
boys, who are assumed to need competition and physical challenge (Messner, 2011; Miller & Levy, 1996; Eys, et al., 2015). In the workplace, the dominant assumption that women bring special characteristics, like caretaking or collaboration skills, is layered into their treatment discrimination (Burton, 2015; Darvin & Sagas, 2017). These ideas of what women bring to work are false binaries based on sex that do more harm than good for equity (Shaw & Frisby, 2006). When specific traits are tagged to a specific sex, the ‘othering’ that segregation is based in becomes a tool for differential treatment (Eitzen, 2016). The assumed gender differences in athletes’ characteristics and the broad categorization of traits as either masculine or feminine are the logics that constitute the provision of social rewards, which, when valuing the feminine in a space designed for the masculine, will only serve to reify the power structures that disadvantage girls and women in the first place (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2008; Roth & Basow, 2004). In other words, when traits are valued for sex orientation, and not relation to athletic performance or leadership outcomes, consequences such as sex-testing, sexualized coverage in the media, and gendered tasking on the job are sourced in the conception that femininity is a critical element of women’s sport (Burton & Leberman, 2017; LaVoi, 2016; Messner et al., 2000; Spaaij et al., 2017). Consequentially, Value the Feminine as an equity strategy excludes non-white and non-normative femininity or masculinity (queerness; Shaw & Frisby, 2006).

When contrasting the first two frames of gender equity that are proposed in a liberal feminist lens, the constraints on women become very narrow, grounded in the confluence of the logics on which the frames are predicated. While both frames operate on the assumption that females and males are fundamentally different, each lens is imposed from its polar position in the same space. As participants, girls are trained to embody male characteristics as indicators of performance (i.e., play like a boy), but must embody those characteristics in a manner that
simultaneously (a) recognizes that the proxy for performance, or bodies, is male, and (b) does not threaten or undermine the feminine space that she occupies (Etizen, 2016). As leaders, women are trained to assimilate into the hyper masculine space through acquiescence or assertiveness, but must do so in a manner that asserts acquiescence or acquiesces assertiveness: the balance must be struck or the woman is evaluated as not strong enough to take on leadership tasks and roles, or too combative to work with (LaVoi, 2016; Sagas, Cunningham, Pastore, 2006). It is these narrow constraints on girls and women that train us to be sexist: we learn our place and we learn ‘the right way to woman’, which we, in turn, apply broadly (Burton & Leberman, 2017).

Shaw and Frisby (2006) label the liberal feminist frames of gender equity as a “wolf in sheep’s clothing” (p. 487) because the frames fail to affect the logics that substantiate them – if the equity strategies operate within sexist ideologies, they do not change the organization of power in sport, which is the source of inequity. As a result, though these strategies might appear as an inappropriate but well-intended lifeline for improving the treatment of girls and women in sport, as polar, Fix the Women and Value the Feminine are mechanisms of control that are applied disparately in the same space. Though the intent of equity strategies around Fix the Women is to train a woman to be more assertive, she might ultimately be fired for being too combative, or not conforming to conceptions of appropriate feminine assertiveness (Burton & Leberman, 2017; LaVoi, 2016). Conversely, where girls are prepared for competition differently than are boys (gendered socialization as participants), and women are tasked with feminine roles on the job, the same girls and women are punished, cut, not promoted, or underfunded because they are less deserving than are boys and men, who are ‘real’ athletes or leaders (Burton & Leberman, 2017; LaVoi, 2016; Staurowsky, 2020).
The consequences of the process of being trained to be sexist is a narrow pool of ideas among leaders around the co-construction of gender constraints, and a narrow pool of female candidates who survived within the parameters in which we were trained (Anderson, 2009; Burton & Leberman, 2017; LaVoi, 2016). The pool of future leaders in sport is derived from the pool of former athletes and stakeholders; thus when the pool of women has been pared to include those women who have effectively navigated the way sport is organized, the ideologies that they were trained on are likely to be reconstituted (Darvin & Sagas, 2017; Anderson, 2009). Thus, the third frame of gender equity that was born of a liberal feminist lens, Create Equal Opportunity, has also resulted in limited gains in changing inequity, particularly in leadership (Shaw & Frisby, 2006). Those who survive and excel in the system might not be the ones who should be tasked with changing it – a possible fatal flaw embedded in the third frame of gender equity through a liberal feminist lens.

Frame three, Create Equal Opportunity, promotes the need for women to have an equal space in sport, on the field and in the workplace (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000; Shaw & Frisby, 2006). The third frame addresses structural constraints that are not sourced by women themselves – equity strategies around Create Equal Opportunity do not place the blame for inequity on women, but on existing differential structures in funding, hiring, and promotion (Meyerson & Kolb, 2000; Staurowsky et al., 2020). In this frame, a clear parallel can be drawn to Title IX as applied to sport, through which legislation mandated that girls have equal opportunity to participate and required commensurate funding for girls’ and boys’ programs in federally funded organizations. Affirmative action metrics in hiring is a policy example of supporting equal access to opportunities for women as leaders in sport that is also legislative action.
While Title IX dramatically changed the landscape of opportunities for girls in interscholastic sport, there are still vast divides between opportunities for boys and girls (Staurowsky et al., 2020). Girls and women have fewer opportunities to play at every level of sport: youth, college, and professionally (Staurowsky et al., 2020). Compounding the issue, girls’ programs are often underfunded and under-supported compared to boys’ programs (Adams & Leavitt, 2016; Hoeber, 2007). Title IX enforcement (a) has not turned around the treatment of girls and women as participants in sport as less than and siloed; (b) does not apply to private, professional sport, or sport media coverage, and (c) has not improved equity in hiring practices across sport organizations (Staurowsky et al., 2020).

For leadership opportunities in sport, organizational studies have examined the potential to improve opportunity and treatment of women through affirmative action, recruitment programs that target women, and changes in organizational cultures through the inclusion of policy, such as explicit sexual harassment guidelines (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). However, affirmative action and its specific federal requirements go largely ignored and unenforced, much like the tenets of Title IX do, as do organizational policies that fail to address the antecedents to the narrow pool of women candidates and their treatment on the job (Ely & Meyerson, 2000).

Legislation such as Title IX and affirmative action are predicated on the assumption that providing equal opportunities would provide a platform for women’s welcomeness and advancement in sport (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). However, legislation and best practice organizational policy does little to challenge the underlying structures of inequality (Burke, 2004, Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Roth & Basow, 2004). As a result, broad claims about the efficacy of creating equal opportunity, in practice, have generated moderate results for opportunity as athletes, but poor results in opening up leadership opportunities for women as the opportunities
in sport operate within the existing hegemonic parameters that are entrenched in organizations and their cultures (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Shaw & Frisby, 2006).

The limited scope of feminist strategies that strive to remedy inequity by operating within the parameters of existing structures might also be an explanation for their rampant acceptance (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). The organization of power in sport is resistant to change as those who are positioned with power would likely not benefit from a reorganization (LaVoi, 2016). Even within the limited frame of equity strategies, Fix the Women, and Value the Feminine, which both operate at the micro level, dominate as the local logics (organizational discursive practices) that dictate access and treatment for girls and women (Shaw & Frisby, 2006). Though the frame Create Equal Opportunity is widely understood through the accommodations of Title IX, much of the premises of those equal opportunities are undermined and rejected by people in positions of power (Shaw & Frisby, 2006). For example, the gains for girls made possible through Title IX are continually criticized and questioned based on the purported detrimental effects that serving girls and women has had on boys and men; people in power in sport position even gender equity legislation as centering on the positions of men (Staurowsky, 2011).

Shaw and Frisby (2006) proposed that strides can only be made in sport if the sexism embedded in logics that guide strategies for access and treatment is disrupted. Through this lens, the logics that have driven ideas about assimilating women into the way sport is currently organized, or the “less than” logic, is rejected. Similarly, the broad premise that simply making space for girls and women in sport will change their treatment is accepted only with the condition that it might contribute to improving the landscape for girls and women in sport, if paired with the disruption of the logics that led to the disparity that necessitated equal opportunity strategies in the first place (Shaw & Frisby, 2006).
To move beyond the constrained strategies that are born of a liberal feminist lens, Shaw and Frisby (2006) proposed a map for disrupting the discourse that co-constructs the opportunities and treatment of girls and women in sport. Paralleling Ely and Meyerson’s (2000) original account of a fourth frame of gender equity that operates outside of traditional lenses, Shaw and Frisby (2006) contend that discourse is the optimal site for disrupting sexism. The fourth frame is grounded in a poststructural feminist perspective that challenges the discourse that occurs in sport and undermines the construction of sex differences and stereotypes that erect the barriers to gender equity (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000; Shaw & Frisby, 2006).

Ely and Meyerson’s (2000) fourth frame applies a poststructural feminist perspective to gender inequity in organizations. The fourth frame is predicated on the constructed meaning of gender that is not binary (essentialized) nor specific to trait, but “is a complex set of social relations enacted across a range of social practices” (Ely & Meyerson, 2000, p. 113). Social arrangements include intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extrapersonal interactions that might be formal, such as organizational design, or informal, such as family support. These arrangements both reflect and construct meanings associated with gender that are foundational to the organization of sport (Ely & Myerson, 2000). Shaw and Frisby (2006) purport that, through a post structural lens, the social arrangements on which sport is organized are prime spaces for disrupting sexist logics.

According to Shaw and Frisby (2006), exposing and disrupting existing discourse occurs in three phases: (a) identify gendered social practices, (b) change the narratives that construct gendered social practices, and (c) experiment with ways to disrupt gendered social practices. Identifying gendered social practices, inclusive of formal and informal discourse, begins with the
recognition that many of the practices are created by and for men, and are constructed “to maintain a gendered social order in which men and particular forms of masculinity predominate” (Ely & Meyerson, 2000, p. 113). Examples of gendered social practices and policy include the masculinization of women in power, valuing individual achievement, dress codes, and sexual harassment policy (Burton, 2015; Cunningham & Sagas, 2008; Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Shaw & Frisby, 2006). Per Ely and Meyerson (2000), exposing the gendered social practices within organizations enables individuals and organizations to challenge the status quo on gendered practices.

The second element of the fourth frame is to change the narratives that construct gender inequality. Changing narratives begins with the vision of an alternative reality, and the construction of a new story that undermines complicit assumptions (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). With a voice, women are empowered to question existing practices and provide a different story that reflects not only their experiences, but directs the lens onto the construction of gender inequality at the meso level within organizations, actively challenging existing practices with alternative viewpoints (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000). Changing the narratives involves engaging in conversation and stimulating discourse that questions the status quo by proposing dissenting perspectives.

Interestingly, Meyerson and Fletcher (2000) propose to include men as agents for change in gender equity. In changing the narratives, men might have a valuable voice within male circles in presenting alternative viewpoints and disrupting the narratives that construct social practices, particularly at the meso level, and particularly in a sport context. While engaging men might not be within the frame of traditional feminism, as it operates within the hegemonic structures that are in place, poststructural feminism can certainly accommodate male voices that actively
undermine complicit assumptions. As poststructural feminism departs from the ‘woman as a victim of oppression’ perspective (Azzarito, Solmon, & Harrison, 2006), men’s narratives could significantly challenge common practices cite this later: (Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000). Including men in the fourth frame is particularly relevant in the sport domain, as the male leaders and coaches in sport hold a prominent voice in shaping gender construction.

The third element of the fourth frame, which could be the most impactful, is to actively experiment with changing the narratives (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000, Shaw & Frisby, 2006). It is in this element that a universal challenge to existing gender assumptions and stereotypes can exact genuine action. Experimenting with changing the narratives is the employment of overt behaviors that refute gendered social practices (Shaw & Frisby, 2006). Meyerson and Fletcher (2000) acquiesce that experimentation will occur incrementally, that wide-scale experimentation is unlikely to undermine existing structures, but that incremental change can disrupt power structures within organizations and initiate the process for change. Examples of experimentation might include not laughing at explicitly sexist jokes (see McKay, 1997 in Shaw & Frisby, 2006), or changing organizational meeting times to accommodate those with family responsibilities (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). Experimentation is grounded in actively generating alternative local discursives and policy that challenge the organization of power and consequently men’s privilege in organizations and contexts.

A critical contribution of the the fourth frame as a map for disrupting narratives is the inclusion of intersectionality, or the explicit promotion that gendered narratives are produced and reproduced differently around race, ability, or class characteristics (for example). One of their most salient justifications for proposing a post structural lens is that it supports the inclusion of women’s voices that are not white, cisgendered, and able-bodied, which are absent, or
homogenized in a liberal feminist lens (Shaw & Frisby, 2006). Though this project does not fulfill that tenet (intersectionality) of the purpose and value of the fourth frame, as my story does not extend race or ability-based factors, the methodology used and implications for disrupting discourse derived from the proposed double helix model of discourse could be extended to other voices that are different from mine.

The over-arching premise of this project was to apply and extend the map that Shaw and Frisby (2006) provided for disrupting the discourse in sport: (a) identify complicit language and behaviors (discursive practices) that grounded the process of being trained to be sexist, (b) translate and interpret the co-construction of sexism in sport (as it is constrained by agency/structure relationships) through accounts of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extrapersonal interactions (i.e., micro, meso, and macro), and (c) experiment with affecting localized narratives through stratifying the discourse that constrains strategies for equity; stratifying discourse into ‘information’ and ‘delivery’ components (i.e., material and semiotic strands; Clough, 1998; Fairclough, 2005) was proposed here as an extension of the third phase of disrupting the discourse. Delineating the strands of discourse and extending the meso level conception of discourse as subsumed by institutional logics provide theory and method for dissecting the sites of sexism. Where the process of being trained to be sexist occurred across time and space, through compounding interactions between agent and structure, stratifying but not decoupling the components of discourse that constrain agent/structure relationships provided precise, nuanced, and layered spaces through which the construction of sex differences and stereotypes manifest in barriers to gender equity, and can be disrupted (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Fairclough, 2005; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000; Shaw & Frisby, 2006).
CHAPTER 3
INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS: THE CO-CONSTRUCTION OF SEXISM

Agency and structure, conceptually, were proposed as the temporally constrained, manifest sites in which culture and its process are co-constructed across time and space by the recursive interaction between micro and meso levels of society (Fairclough, 2005; Friedland & Alford, 1991; Giddens, 1984). Where agency and structure operate as the local spaces for the production or reproduction of culture, institutional logics operate as the information embedded in the process of culture; logics are the latent component, or the meaning conveyed through discursive practices that aggregate to discourse (Friedland & Alford, 1991). However, logics are not constrained by societal level nor by agency or structure; institutional logics, instead, operate as supra ordinate to the conceptual strata of the production of culture, as macro (Thornton et al., 2012; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Similar to how Fairclough (2005) positions ‘discourse’ in a Foucauldian lens as subsuming “linguistic and other semiotic elements of the social” (p. 916), Friedland and Alford (1991) proposed that institutional logics subsume the symbolic and the material simultaneously. Institutional logics were proposed here as subsuming discursive practices and discourse as the micro and meso levels of society, respectively, which cannot be decoupled from one another nor from the interinstitutional system that constitutes each (macro; Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008).

Institutional logics were born of the fundamental tension between agency and structure that is embedded in and underpins a multitude of ontological and methodological praxes, and specifically institutional theory (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Institutional theory is an explanation of the patterns and process of institutionalization in society, or how things in our society and come to be (Scott, 2001). Institutional theory has historically been plagued by debate over the primacy of agency or structure in driving the process of institutionalization, as the concepts
cannot be decoupled. Where early iterations of institutional theory assumed the archetypal representations of rational agents (e.g., ‘economic man’) as the force for institutionalization, later iterations theorized that structure was the defining component as the constraints imposed on individuals, and thus was more salient in the institutionalization process (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Scott, 2001).

The conflict over the primacy of agency or structure in institutional theory gave rise to institutional logics as a theoretical explanation of institutionalization in terms of informational energies, as opposed to attempting to locate and define the institutionalization process as a product of exclusively manifest spaces (i.e., agent as archetypal, or organization as structure; Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Thornton et al. (2012) proposed institutional logics as supra ordinate to agency and structure, positioning logics as the information that both constrains and enables discursive practices. Deductively, institutional logics are imposed on structures and agents, constituting their recursive relationship; inductively, institutional logics are micro constructed by infinite variation that aggregates to dominant or non-dominant ideas as the reorganization of agent and structure play out (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Per Thornton et al. (2012), mapping logics as deductive or inductive and as dominant or non-dominant is the basis for their proposition that, in addition to providing a theoretical explanation for institutionalization, institutional logics operate as a method when reduced to local informational energies.

Institutional logics are supra ordinate as reproducing culture, context-specific as interpreted locally (i.e., discourse), and subject to reorganization across time and space as culture and locations interact (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Where logics are informational energies, it is discursive action through which institutional logics manifest.
Information is dynamic in-context and subject to reflexivity (Weick, 2005), and when paired with a delivery system, such as media or interpersonal relationships (e.g., language) to manifest the information, grounds discourse (Lammers, 2011). Discourse, here, was considered through a post structural lens as context or field specific, or meso level in the aggregate, and comprised by latent and manifest structural components of communication (Fairclough, 2005; Lammers, 2011). Thus, as proposed here, discourse is subsumed by logics, which are not bound by stratification or manifestation, but are the latent component of the constitution of society that pervade the micro, meso, and macro levels (Thornton et al., 2012; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008).

Though logics are not bound by manifestations, they cannot be decoupled from them functionally, as logics dictate delivery (Thornton et al., 2012). Thus, institutions and the fields that comprise them (including social/informal), or the meso level across time and space, are central to the dissemination of logics deductively, which is at the center of post structuralism (Scott, 2005; Friedland & Alford, 1991). In a temporally contingent site, logics play out through contexts (organizations formally, social contexts informally), which theoretically represent the structure that constrains and enables agency (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008).

A post structuralist argument holds that structure is discourse, as structure is the rendering of dominant semiotic (i.e., logics) and material (i.e., manifestation) elements that constitute the parameters in which agency operates, theoretically (Clough, 1998; Fairclough, 2005; Hook, 2007). Post structuralism lends primacy to the power of structure in the agency/structure relationship, as agency operates within the boundaries of structure, and thus is wholly constituted by it (St. Pierre, 2000). Discourse is an opaque concept of Foucauldian roots, which has been proposed as operating across states of material and semiotic distinctions, or any combination thereof (Fairclough, 2005; Hook, 2001). Fairclough’s (2005) explanation of
discourse as ‘social practices’ positions the concept as inclusive of linguistic and semiotic elements of discursive action, or the manifestation that brings “social objects into being” (p. 919).

Conceptually layering institutional logics onto the post structural view of the constitution of discourse mitigates the criticisms of post structuralism in terms of stratifying agency/structure on their power of effect (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Where institutional logics are inclusive of the information manifested through the discursive practices of agents or entities, a post structural lens accommodates logics as the semiotic strand of local discourse (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). As Institutional logics cannot be decoupled from their delivery in the constitution of structure nor agency, that coupling substantiates post structuralism as an epistemological lens for analyzing logics as supra ordinate tools for disrupting the discourse, where dominant, non-dominant, and interventionist logics are the mechanisms that dictate delivery (Thornton et al., 2012; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999).

The pairing of institutional logics, as theory and method (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008) with a post structural lens accommodates the conceptualization of macro level ideologies, meso level discourse, and micro level discursive practices as threaded by information. Where it is the information that is woven into the practices that produce and reproduce sexism as institutionalized, interrupting sexist logics is enabled and constrained by those threads (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999).

Sexism is layered into institutions, infecting religion, education, politics, and sport; sexism is a foundational logic that is woven into how our society was designed (Coakley, 2017; Messner, 2011). Applying institutional logics as the threads that bind agency and structure, micro meso and macro levels of society, and post structural conceptions of discourse position logics as
both theory and method for disrupting the inequity that is produced and reproduced both locally and ideologically (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Institutional logics are not corporeal until they play out through corporeal spaces, such as churches, schools, on the senate floor, or on the field, court, and sidelines (Friedland & Alford, 1991). Stratifying, but not decoupling logics from delivery, where logics are supra ordinate as informational energies, provides theory, method, and lens for unpacking and challenging the discourse that co-constructions sex differences and stereotypes that erect the barriers to gender equity (Shaw & Frisby, 2006; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008).

Institutional Logics as Meta Theory and Method

Institutional logics are the most basal unit of information that travels intrapersonally, interpersonally, and extrapersonally (socio-culturally) across time and space (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Thornton et al. (2012) propose institutional logics as a meta theory that encompasses the cognitive and behavioral parameters that constrain our social system as a whole unit, and concurrently, as micro generated through discursive practices of agents or entities. “The institutional logics approach offers precision in understanding how individual and organizational behavior is located in a social context and the social mechanisms that influence that behavior” (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008, p. 122). The complexity and supra ordinate nature of institutional logics is reflected though their proposed duality as both meta theory and as method (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Where logics are proposed as constraining even (what is theorized as) the macro level of society, they are also proposed as the foundational component of micro level processes (sensemaking and agency) that can be operationalized as demonstrations of the “interests, identities, values, and assumptions of individuals” (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 6).

Institutional logics as a meta theory are most simplistically conceptualized as the culmination of ideologies, rules, and truths that compose the macro level of society – as the
macro level of society does not operate with a manifest component (Friedland & Alford, 1991). However, institutional logics could equally be characterized as subsuming the macro level, as institutional logics explain its constitution, theoretically. “This idea distinguishes an institutional logics perspective from the macro structural approach, which emphasizes the primacy of structure over action” (p. 6). Through an institutional logics perspective, structure is integral in manifesting and accommodating localized sets of logics, but functions as secondary to the institutional carriers, or the dimensions of logics’ dissemination that constrain structures across time and space (Scott, 2001; Thornton et al., 2012).

As method, institutional logics encompass the sensemaking of individual agents and entities, where the discursive practices that manifest sensemaking aggregate to micro level processes and thus can be operationalized through qualitative or quantitative indicators for analysis (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). The aggregate of agents’ and entities’ sensemaking have been represented in institutional theory research as archetypes, ideal types, and in typologies. In those frames that illustrate common discursive practices as sets of central tendencies, institutional logics are operationalized as the informational inputs and outputs that ground the snapshot depiction of ideal and archetypes as temporally constrained agent or structure (Lammers, 2011; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Thornton et al. (2012) propose that positioning institutional logics as both supra ordinate in social systems (theory) and as the foundations of micro processing (method) contributes a novel lens for patterning social practices as they become institutionalized, and thus as an ideal lens for disrupting institutionalization (Skinner, Stewart, & Edwards 1999).

**Logics as Theory**

Institutional logics are the theoretical threads that bind agents and structures across micro meso and macro levels of society, or the ethos of social contracts and constraints of institutions
Thornton et al. (2012) defined institutional logics as "the socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices, including assumptions, values, and beliefs, by which individuals and organizations provide meaning to their daily activity, organize their time and space, and reproduce their lives and experiences" (p. 2). Extending beyond the constraints of the debate over the primacy of agency or structure, institutional logics are proposed as “a meta theoretical framework for analyzing the interrelationships among institutions, individuals, and organizations in social systems” (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 2). Institutional logics operate as theoretically supraordinate to institutions and institutionalization, and concurrently as the leptonic components of culture that can be localized as a method for analyzing culture’s co-construction, or institutionalization as historically contingent across time and space (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008).

Logics, as supraordinate, are the aggregate of the variation that patterns each of the micro meso and macro levels of society (Thornton et al., 2012). The variation that is captured is the oscillation and reorganization of dominant, non-dominant, or interventionist logics as they are employed in competition for power among positioned agents or inter-institutional shifts, such as market demands (Thornton et al., 2012; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999).
Institutions comprise an inter-related system of social contracts and constraints, substantiated by a history of centrality to society and the practices and norms that present as complicit through the process of institutionalization (Scott, 2001; Thornton et al., 2012). As culturally contingent, institutions are domain specific parameters that organizational fields or specific social contexts aggregate to, such as to ‘sport’ (Scott, 2001; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Examples of institutions are politics, religion, education, or economics, where sets of delivery systems operate commonly and as contingently related, but are still non-corporeal (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Scott, 2001); the subsystems that comprise an institution are constrained by the same sets of institutional logics, which operate as parameters (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008).

Related fields and contexts that are contingent on one another are organized into three pillars of an institution: regulative, normative, and cognitive-cultural (Scott, 20001). The pillars of institutions operate as specific dimensions through which the production and reproduction of institutional logics are delineated by domain. The pillars segment institutions into domains that vary much like paradigms: as theoretical knowledge that frames their constitution or reorganization ((Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008).

The regulative pillar of institutions is situated in what would be a positivist domain, on the most concrete/enforced end of a continuum of the degree of complicity in cognition and behavior (Scott, 2001). The regulative pillar is represented by coercive rules, laws, or sanctions that constitute the power held by those who control the regulative pillar (Scott, 2001). In contrast, the cultural-cognitive pillar is situated on a constructivist end of the continuum in a paradigmatic analogy, opposite the regulative pillar. The cultural-cognitive pillar is uniquely sociological in that it is substantiated by latent, or subconscious, taken for granted beliefs and truths that Scott (2005) argues are the socially complicit cultural forces between micro entities
and macro culture as they constitute agency and structure. Complicity in the cultural-cognitive pillar operates through hegemony, as mimetic forces normalize sets of logics based on the organization of power in the social system (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Scott, 2001).

The normative pillar, situated midway between the regulative and cognitive-cultural pillars, would operate in a realist or pragmatic paradigm in which constraints are assumed as common in-context, or where agentive reflexivity and structural negotiation of isomorphic of logics play out (Scott, 2001); immediate social contexts translate, and thus constrain and enable the cognition and behavior of entities (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). The normative pillar can be characterized as morally-governed social obligations embedded within social contexts, under the assumption that social contexts are fluid and specific norms will differ by context (Goodrick & Reay, 2011). Where mimetic forces in the cognitive-cultural pillar operate as latent, in the normative pillar, normalizing forces operate as a medium through which levels of society interact, in terms of common expectations (Scott, 2001). The normative institutional strand of society might be conceptions of how justice is designed and enforced in a society (i.e., delivery). Those conceptions of justice are inherently linked to the ideas of the people who are positioned with the power to design or construct law, embedded in the regulative institutional strand (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999).

Each of the pillars plays out within an institution, as a theoretical schematic for organizing the types of mechanisms that define the institution; pillars are an orienting strategy and theoretical fault lines (Thornton et al., 2012). Using sport as an institutional example, and specifically sexist logics within the institution of sport, (a) the regulative pillar is demonstrated through its rules, such as a ‘separate but equal’ sanction, (b) the normative pillar is demonstrated through the expectations of the differences between female and male athletes, typified by the pay
gap; and (c) the “less than” logic myths that are woven into the integration of girls and women into sport (e.g., she plays like a boy) as representative of the cognitive-cultural pillar.

The overarching theoretical conception of logics is useful for framing future work that should place specific contexts within a greater interrelated institutional system while threading pathways of logics into analyses that dissect and disrupt logics locally (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Two conceptual mechanisms that underpin institutional logics as a meta theory, and institutionalization, are isomorphism as an orienting strategy and institutional carriers as the dimensions through which logics are disseminated across time and space, and across and within institutions (Scott, 2001).

**Isomorphism**

Where logics are proposed as the information that constrain and enable institutionalization, the forces that align organizations and contexts within an institution, such as sport, are orienting strategies. Isomorphism is an orienting strategy that fixes, or codifies, the patterning of structural behaviors of subsystems within an institution (Scott, 2001; Skinner, Stewart, & Edwards 1999). The components that comprise an institution are functionally linked as subsystems of the institution, constrained by the parameters of the institution, and reflecting complementary sets of resources, resource configurations, and purpose (Scott, 2005). As an orienting strategy, isomorphism provides a theoretical explanation for why the subsystems constrained by an institution tend to resemble or rely on other subsystems as a patterning within the institution, predicated on the inputs and outputs of each structure, temporally (Scott, 2001).

Across time and space, within an institution, isomorphic forces set institutional practices in fixed designs or practices in a temporal snapshot that illustrates the historicity of the institutionalization of what came to be understood as common, necessary, or ‘right’ in an organization or context (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Isomorphic forces are theorized as
predominantly top-down parameters that are imposed on fields, organizations, and contexts in terms of the ideologies that get codified into the composition and definition of the institution (Friedland & Alford, 1991). For example, in sport, isomorphic forces would dictate how university athletic departments implement and enforce Title IX mandates, or how youth sport programs structure separate but equal spaces for boys and girls. Isomorphic forces in sport are also demonstrable through the common tendencies of media companies’ patterns of promoting or covering female athletes and women’s sports, or in merchandising production and strategies within the sport equipment sector.

The concept of isomorphism, itself, can be characterized as a meta logic that underpins the process of institutionalization; isomorphism explains how we arrive at *truths* as imposed through a top-down perspective (Skinner, Stewart, & Edwards 1999; Thornton et al., 2012). The parameters that instantiate isomorphism: coercive, mimetic, and normative logics, are imposed by the mechanisms of the pillars within the institution, which are maximally impacted by positioned actors or entities in the institutional field (Thornton et al., 2012; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). In other words, isomorphic parameters are the product of the organization of power within an institution. Regulative, normative, and cultural cognitive energies that operates as fundamentally coupled within an institution configure to the set of logics that drive isomorphism as complicit (Scott, 2001; Skinner, Stewart, & Edwards 1999).

Where isomorphism is evaluated retrospectively in a snapshot of the design elements or decisions that pattern current resource configuration and practices within fields or among interrelated entities, the ‘process’ of isomorphism plays out across time and space. Organizations and contexts in sport, and the sets of logics that enable and constrain them, are demonstrations of the historicity that compounded to the current ways sport is organized and delivered (Thornton &
Ocasio, 1999). The sets of imposed logics that constitute isomorphism in a field or institution are operationalized through organizational design, or more broadly, an entity’s discursive practices that function as indicators of the temporally contingent isomorphic parameters (Scott, 2001; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). The logics that underpin a field or institution’s historical patterns that culminated to the indicators that we use as demonstrations of isomorphism in a snapshot are, themselves, products of [an evolutionary process that constitutes] institutionalization (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008).

The supra ordinate informational pathways that institutional logics travel, including isomorphic logics, are categorized into theoretical dimensions of institutional carriers (Scott, 2001). A systems approach to examining the informational pathways that constitute structural parameters is helpful as a schema that provides for the integration of both theoretical pathways, or carriers, and manifest delivery through physical settings (i.e., manifest structures) or tangible objects associated with a specific meaning (Scott, 2005). Positioning formal or informal contexts as systems in an institution or institutional field accommodates the intricacies of the multi interactional, theoretical information pathways in which institutional logics are embedded (Scott, 2005). Where logics are embedded in the theoretical pathways that carry information within, between, and among theoretical institutions, they are also subordinately embedded in subsystems of the institution as the ethos that is physically manifested through local discourse, contemporaneously (Scott, 2001; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999). The theoretical distinction between the physical spaces that institutional logics are demonstrated as manifest (temporally contingent structures) and institutional carriers is the historicity embedded in the institutional carriers; institutional carriers are the meta level delivery mechanisms, or the theoretical dimensions, that carry logics across time and space as their meaning is reproduced or reorganized (Scott, 2005).
The theoretical role of institutional carriers was used here to conceptualize the imposition of logics that underpin discursive behaviors, and thus locating which threads might be more sensitive to change than others (stability), and through which subsystem of an institution they are produced and reproduced (Lammers, 2011; Scott, 2005). This offers categories of where an overarching logic, such as the “less than” logic, is instantiated as knowledge (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). The theoretical schema generated enables investigation into the dynamics of why, how, and where sexist logics are produced and reproduced, locating access points through which the central tendencies of the logics in question can be shifted (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008).

Carriers

Carriers are integral to institutional logics as a meta theory as they provide, from a meta perspective, for the delivery of logics into structures; without carriers, logics (as informational energy) would not be manifested (Scott, 2001). Institutional carriers are delineated into theoretical categorical dimensions in which logics are embedded, and through which logics are corporealized, or manifested, locally (Scott, 2001; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Each theoretical category of carrier weaves through each theoretical institution, each pillar within each institution, and across time and space through contexts that disseminate normative standards and value patterns in the institutionalization process (Scott, 2001; Scott, 2005).

Institutional systems and their subsystems are bound by institutional carriers, both theoretically and locally, where local carriers are manifest; each dimension of carriers hold both a theoretical composition and a local composition (Scott, 2005). Scott (2001) conceptualized carriers as the repositories of information that produce and reproduce institutions and their subsystems as (a) the symbolic systems of meaning, (b) relational systems as social arrangements and positioning, (c) routines and practices that pervade society, and (d) physical elements as artifacts in which institutional logics are embedded. Each carrier dimension varies in degree of
institutional or orienting primacy, and in the granular processes through which they transmit their information (Scott, 2001).

Symbolic systems are sets of guides that organize latent concepts that convey a representative meaning, such as rules, expectations, or schemas associated with symbolic effects (Thornton et al., 2012). At a theoretical level, symbolic systems carry ‘culture’ (Friedland & Alford, 1991); at a local level, symbolic systems carry context-specific meanings associated with the organization of power (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Symbolic systems convey ideas that are functionally latent at a theoretical level, such as ‘justice’ or cultural expectations, and take on variation in meaning at a local level (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Symbolic systems hold both grand and specific meanings within culture that are positioned not by corporeal existence, but by the sentiment or processes of generating sentiment that is associated with the symbol (e.g., law; Friedland & Alford, 1991; Scott, 2005). Symbolic systems are relatively stable as theoretical, but greatly vary in their degree of institutionalization as localized instantiations (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008).

Relational systems as carriers are social in nature, where interpersonal interaction or organizational juxtaposition are underpinned by comparative logics (Scott, 2001; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Relational systems are role systems that “rely on patterned expectations connected to networks, of social positions” (Scott, 2001, p. 79). Ideas around positioning, and what substantiates positioning in an institution, theoretically, or in an organizational field or context, locally, are produced and reproduced through relational systems (Scott, 2001; Scott, 2005). Isomorphism, as theoretical, is an example of a set of logics that are carried by the relational system in-institution – isomorphism is contingent on the juxtaposition of one entity with another.
Routines as carriers are structured activities through which tacit knowledge of institutions is demonstrated by actors or entities (Scott, 2001). Differentiated from symbolic or relational systems that are latent carriers of logics, routines and artifacts as carriers are foundationally manifest components of institutions and institutionalization. Habitualized behaviors that constitute routines as an institutional carrier are both active and passive, both formal and informal, and both concrete and abstract (Scott, 2001). Much of what constitutes routines is not conscious in thought, but is the patterned behavior learned through repetition and reflexivity (Barrett, 2005; Scott, 2005). Routines represent ‘how things are done’, complicitly, and are theorized as a prominent source of stability in institutions (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Scott, 2001).

Artifacts are the physical representations that carry institutional logics, such as technology or law, that have meaning associated with a corporeal state (Scott, 2005). Artifacts are anthropological in nature, more specific to domain than are symbolic systems, as the logics embedded in artifacts are corporealyzed through objects (Scott, 2001). In contrast to symbolic systems, which are exclusively latent, artifacts will be a common, broad category of inanimate manifestations that weave through and across institutions. The physical symbols that are associated with artifacts will look differently as the domain becomes more specific (Scott, 2005). Objects that represent an artifact, where artifacts are an overarching theoretical category of carrier, are physical symbols that operate as indicators of the local logics they carry across time and space (Scott, 2001).

**Logics as a Method**

Conceptualizing institutional logics as both meta theory and method reflects the nature of logics as unbound by the contexts in which they are manifested. Institutional logics operate as a method for investigating schema development, agency, and the discursive practices (i.e., micro...
level processes) that represent individual data points that aggregate to central tendencies of dominant logics (Thornton et al., 2012; Lammers, 2011). Contrasting logics as meta theory, where they operate as imposed constraints, logics as a method are embedded in single data points or units that are rendered for analysis (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Institutional logics operate as a method in the form of archetypes or ideal types as theoretical units of analysis between and within subsystems of institutions and within or across time eras (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Analyses of logics as a method are underpinned by the shifts in and conflict between dominant and non-dominant logics that are differentially positioned in context and consequently inter-institutionally (Thornton et al., 2012); archetypes and ideal types are analytical tools that operationalize distributions of dominant and non-dominant logics (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008).

As method, institutional logics encompass the sensemaking of individual agents and entities, where the discursive practices that manifest sensemaking aggregate to the micro level processes and thus can be operationalized through qualitative or quantitative indicators for analysis (Lammers, 2011; Reay & Jones, 2016). The aggregate of agents’ and entities’ sensemaking have been represented in institutional theory research as archetypes, ideal types, and in typologies, and in organizational theory as organizational design (Scott, 2001; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999). In those frames that illustrate common discursive practices as sets of central tendencies, institutional logics are operationalized as the informational inputs and outputs that ground the snapshot depiction of ideal and archetypes (Reay & Jones, 2016).

Through a systems lens, which Friedland and Alford (1991) suggested as an optimal lens for evaluating the organization of interinstitutional systems, culture cannot be decoupled from institutions, which cannot be decoupled from contexts or organizations (i.e., structures), and on to individual agents, none of which operate as orthogonal at any subsystem level. Where
institutions are non-corporeal, the interinstitutional system can be conceptualized as constellations of logics (i.e., parameters) in which dominant and non-dominant logics compete and fluctuate as a broad set of parameters for micro level discursive practices (Goodrick, & Reay, 2011); institutional logics as a method ground the process of institutionalization in the production and reproduction of logics themselves through micro level processes (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Logics subsume intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extrapersonal information, where the aggregate of local interpretations of the information compose dominant logics, or central tendencies of the threads of information across societal level (Lammers, 2011; Thornton et al., 2012).

Lammers (2011) acknowledges the potential of logics as theory but also provides for their operationalization as micro processes; he frames institutional logics as the information ascribed to institutional symbols, artifacts, or knowledge that is shared between micro level agents as nested in organizations or contexts. Lammers (2011) specifies that logics are the patterns of beliefs and rules that are non-corporeal and, thus, institutional messages that have a delivery component carry institutional logics. In his juxtaposition of logics and institutional messages, Lammers contends that the “endurance, reach, and incumbency” (p. 174) of institutional logics results from an interaction between the purported viability, or quality of the logic, and the positioning of the agent or entity promoting the logic. Through this characterization of logics, which he largely drew from Thornton and Ocasio (2008), institutional messages operate as the manifest component that delivers logics through discursive practices, and a logic that enters the constellation of informational parameters will sustain or fall out of favor (legitimacy) based on the power and potential backing it (Lammers, 2011). The fluctuation of dominant and non-dominant institutional logics are the source of institutional change, but are
manifested through discursive practices that can be examined as indicators of logics in single data points (Lammers, 2011).

**Competing Institutional Logics**

Reification or reorganization in institutions is a function of the positioning of agents or entities, constrained by structures, and their discursive practices that are constrained by and aggregate to system parameters (Lammers, 2011). The constellation of logics that operate as system parameters are fluid and contested: non-infinite variation in micro level processes (discursive practices of entities or agents) operate as instantiations of dominant logics, which are rooted in the norms, beliefs, and social orders of greater society, or institutionalized practices (Goodrick & Reay, 2011; Lammers, 2011). It is this patterning of competing logics through micro level processes in which logics as a method are grounded. The movement of logics is an observable phenomenon through the discursive practices of agents or entities and is purported as an ideal theoretical space for interrupting institutionalized practices (Lammers, 2011; Thornton et al., 2012). The fluctuation of logics over time grounds the process of institutionalization and it is why institutions are stable in a snapshot, or short temporal interval, but are dynamic over time – because what is dominant as a logic is fluid (Goodrick & Reay, 2011; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999).

The critical component of logics as a method is the interplay of dominant and non-dominant logics as the process of institutionalization (Lammers, 2011). Goodrick and Reay (2011) term the “constellation of logics” (p. 399) as metaphorical representation of the range of possibilities and configuration of logics, as they are in constant competition and reorganization; a foundational tenet of institutional logics is that they operate in multiplicity and in inherent conflict. Goodrick and Reay (2011) characterized the conflict between logics as naturally, hierarchically organized on the efficacy of a logic, or its positioning in the distribution of the
constellation of possible logics. In their examination of professional logics, Goodrick and Reay (2011) proposed three tenets of the “relationships among multiple coexisting institutional logics: (a) among existing logics, one is dominant and guides behavior, (b) multiple logics battle with each other for dominance, and (c) multiple logics differentially affect different actors, geographical communities, or organizations” (p. 376).

A dominant institutional logic is so because it is taken for granted, not by providing specific scripts for action, but by establishing core principles for organizing activities and channeling interests (Lammers, 2011). Dominant logics provide order to reality (Goodrick & Reay, 2011) as the most common, accepted ideologies that recursively underpin local narratives. The most abstract dominant logics are represented as macro level ideologies that are elaborations of narratives employed across the aggregate of discursive practices (discourse; Friedland & Alford, 1991). In other words, discursive practices are concrete, observable manifestations of sets of logics that cascade from culture, regulation, and normative functions of institutions (Goodrick & Reay, 2011).

Dominant logics layer into discursive practices as widely understood meanings, and as comfortably situated across the normative, regulative, and cultural cognitive pillars of institutions; the promulgation of a dominant logic is possible through its perceived legitimacy, which will be institutionally grounded in its activation across institutional pillars (Goodrick & Reay, 2011; Thornton et al., 2012). Where a logic (or domain-specific narrow set of logics) permeates the institutional pillars, it will have staying power and be resistant to change in a snapshot because of its centrality to the domain over time (Skelcher & Smith, 2015). A logic comes to be dominant out of its historicity and importance to those positioned in the system, who are the agents who dictate if the logic even warrants consideration (Goodrick & Reay, 2011). In a
snapshot, dominant logics are what primarily constrain discursive practices; dominant logics are known and seen as how things operate in institutions (Goodrick & Reay, 2011). Dominant logics dictate how ‘sport’ is delivered.

An example of a dominant logic on which sport is organized is an orthodox gender conception, under which more specific and localized sets of logics, or a local distribution of logics, would vary more greatly than the ideological position (Goodrick & Reay, 2011). As a macro level ideology, orthodox gender conceptions are that ‘male’ and ‘female’ are binary and ostensibly ‘different’ (Coakley, 2017). This macro level logic cascades into branches of the ideology, bleeding into a ‘separate but equal’ logic between genders that pervades sport, or a logic that women must assimilate into leadership structures that are organized on the naturalized characteristics of men (Messner et al., 2000). Those branches of the logic then cascade into domains in sport, such as youth, college, or leadership where ‘separate but equal’ and the deficiencies of girls and women layer into context-specific interpretations and delivery of sport, such as hiring and funding differences (Messner, 2011; Staurowsky et al., 2020). Ultimately, individuals are constrained by local manifestations of a logic that is abstract at the macro level, but pervasive throughout its diffusion from ideology to personal schema development. The nature of a dominant logic is that its recursive effects of cascading and reorganizing underpins the process of its institutionalization (Goodrick & Reay, 2011; Skelcher & Smith, 2015).

In contrast to dominant logics, non-dominant logics are those that are widely known or seen but are not accepted as mainstream ideas. In other words, non-dominant logics are present and active inside constraints on behavior and cognition, but are in competition with, and thus subordinate to, dominant logics (Goodrick & Reay, 2011). Where dominant logics are activated across the three pillars of institutions, non-dominant logics tend to be absent from one or more of
the pillars, or the logic is not one that positioned agents believe to warrant support, implementation, or enforcement. For example, orthodox gender conceptions, as a dominant logic, are accepted complicitly in the cultural cognitive pillar, are central to socialization in the normative pillar (particularly in sport; Messner et al., 2000), and are codified into law in the regulative pillar. In contrast, a non-dominant competing logic is the inclusion of multiple sexual identities, including transsexuals – a contentious issue in sport. Trans inclusion has been on the national debate stage for decades, building prominence in the cultural cognitive pillar where identities and scripts are developed. However, trans inclusion as a normative function is less accepted, where the values and expectations that have historically been embedded in sport reject the non-binary (Spaaij et al., 2015), a testament to the stability of the dominant logic. Finally, trans inclusion is actively rejected by regulative bodies, banning trans athletes from competition or denying entrance into existing structures that cannot or will not accommodate them (Brassil & Longman, 2020). As a non-dominant logic, the inclusion of multiple sexual identities in sport has entered the constellation of logics on which sport is organized and delivered, but has not yet been accepted or positioned to supplant the dominant logic (Goodrick & Reay, 2011; Skelcher & Smith, 2015). Gidden’s (1984) conceptions of allocative and authoritative resources are central to conceptualizing how dominant and non-dominant logics operate because without viability and a platform, a logic will never enter the distribution of competing logics.

Operationalization of Institutional Logics

Institutional logics as a method of analysis can be captured qualitatively or quantitatively, and most completely in some combination thereof (Reay & Jones, 2016; Thornton et al., 2012). The third relationship tenet that Goodrick and Reay (2011) proposed as assumptions of the interaction between dominant and non-dominant logics, that “multiple logics differentially affect different actors, geographical communities, or organizations” (p. 376), is central to
operationalizing logics for analysis. It is this variation at the micro level, through discursive practices of agents and entities, through which dominant and non-dominant logics can be fleshed out and organized into quantitative models (Thornton et al., 2012) or qualitatively through patterning “a set of symbols and beliefs expressed in discourse (verbal, visual, or written), norms seen in behaviors and activities, and material practices that are recognizable and associated with an institutional logic or logics” (Reay & Jones, 2016, p. 442). Both quantitative and qualitative renderings of logics operate as a proxy: aggregating indicators of logics into distributions, into ideal or archetypes, or into a retrospective, historical account of the shifts in or co-construction of logics, a comparative element that differentiates between ‘what was’ and ‘what is’ of logics is necessary (Thornton et al., 2012). Logics are measured in change across time and/or central tendencies of discursive practices of agents, entities, fields, or institutions (Reay & Jones, 2016; Thornton et al., 2012; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999).

Based on “institutional complexity” (Reay & Jones, 2015, p. 442), any method through which logics operate as the theoretical constraints and/or as a unit of analysis (which is why they can operate as both meta theory and as method; Thornton et al., 2012) will necessarily include a qualitative component. As logics are latent, they cannot be decoupled from their delivery, thus, even in quantitative modeling, qualitative codes, names, or categories will be embedded. Quantitative models are demonstrations of logics distributions in snapshots, rendered into ‘typical’ or common representations (Goodrick & Reay, 2011; Thornton et al., 2012). The sets of logics that comprise the central tendencies and dispersion of the distribution are represented as a theoretical unit of analysis as ideal and archetypes (Thornton et al., 2012). Where the patterning of dominant and non-dominant logics can be characterized as the parameters for activation of logics in discursive practices and micro processes, the analytical representation that results from
aggregating those activations are considered a theoretical distribution of agent or structural boundaries (Goodrick & Reay, 2011). In other words, ideal and archetypes are theoretical representations of discursive practices that demonstrate variation in, adherence to, and valuation of localized institutional logics (Thornton et al., 2012). Ideal and archetypes operate as quantitative models of logics against which micro level instantiations of logics are measured in the same or comparable set of constraints, or parameters (Thornton et al., 2012). What could be characterized as a null model against which variation is measured, ideal and archetypes are illustrations of how macro level abstractions of logics and micro level process intersect and are corporealized (Thornton et al., 2012).

Ideal and archetypes are also rendered qualitatively, though many analyses employing logics as method juxtapose time sequences as the units of comparison (Reay & Jones, 2015). Examining fluctuations of logics in a retrospective lens is common in phenomenology, in which logics are layered into ‘process’ (Reay & Jones, 2015). Reay and Jones (2015) label qualitative analyses of logics as “capturing a phenomenon” (p. 442) and suggest that logics can be qualitatively captured most effectively through case study, ethnography, or discourse analysis. In a qualitative analysis, logics are juxtaposed through historical analysis, personal experience, textual data, and interview data (Reay & Jones, 2015). From the data, deductive or inductive patterning might be employed, but the units of comparison are grounded in what is qualitatively extracted from cultural symbols, language, and practices that demonstrate as associated with specific logics (Reay & Jones, 2015). Qualitatively rendered ideal and archetypes differ when employed in process investigations, or research on changes in culture, organizations, or institutions, based on the time sequence the theoretical depiction represents – ideal and archetypes can be used as proxies in qualitative or quantitative studies, in a single snapshot
comparing discursive practices between units of analysis (horizontally) or across time comparing the fluctuation of logics in a delimited space (vertical; Reay & Jones, 2015; Thornton et al., 2012).

Where institutional logics are operationalized qualitatively, interpretation of a phenomenon is ontologically relevant: assumptions of interactions within open social systems, and across time and space, necessitate that any extractions of logics must be commensurate with the theoretical position in and between institutions, and in and between micro, meso, and macro levels of society (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Reay & Jones, 2015). Framing institutional logics as both (a) meta theory, where logics constitute the parameters that constrain systems, and as (b) a method, where competing logics are corporealized and exposed through juxtaposition across a temporal sequence, provides a theoretical schema for unpacking the process of being trained to be sexist. Macro level abstractions are carried by symbolic and relational systems, routines, and artifacts that impose the cultural ideologies that play out in local contexts (Friedland & Alford, 1991). As meta theory, sexist logics are imposed as symbolic macro level abstractions that generate parameters, or that ground the justification for differential treatment of girls and women as “less than” in the delivery of sport. As meta theory, culturally dominant logics dictate that male dominated leadership and power structures beget the siloing of girls and women by design and differential funding or treatment as natural.

As method, employing a qualitative analysis of the co-construction of logics, and personal and structural shifts in logics around gender in sport that have played out across the Title IX era, supports the critique, revision, and experimentation of narratives that Shaw and Frisby (2006) proposed as phases for disrupting the discourse. The discursive practices of agents and entities within local contexts operate as the data points that, when organized and evaluated in
research, indicate patterning of competing institutional logics (Reay & Jones, 2015). In contrast to logics as imposing behavior and cognitive parameters as meta theory, logics as a method incorporates micro level processes as a rendering of the common behavior and cognition that recursively ground meta parameters (Thornton et al., 2012). Through logics as method, micro level processes of structure and agency, as they compounded across my sport experiences, were detailed in succession and juxtaposed with historical and interview data to extract the patterning of logics and their delivery in the constitution of the process of being trained to be sexist.

In this project, the purpose of drilling down into the patterning of how abstract logics intersect with micro level processes was to construct a theoretical illustration how the process of being trained to be sexist played out for me, an elite female athlete and professional soccer coach who now is positioned to disrupt that discourse (Thornton et al., 2012; Ellis et al., 2011). The construction of the environments in which I was trained to be sexist in sport operated on common sets of dominant and non-dominant logics across time and context, while those logics reorganized dynamically across time, both personally and societally (Goodrick & Reay, 2011; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999). Though macro level logics about girls and women in sport play out uniquely between any two contexts locally, the discursive practices that corporealize the sets of competing logics across contexts aggregate to a theoretically ‘common’ space, or a recursively generated set of behavioral and cognitive parameters (Easton, 2010; Thornton et al., 2012). Where my personal anecdotal experiences amount only to one data point, the multitude of contexts across which my experiences were shaped aggregate to render a sport history that is theoretically accessible as a qualitatively rendered archetype that would fall in the distribution of sport logics, grounding a ‘common experience’ against which the experiences girls and women in sport can be compared (Easton, 2010). While the nuance of my experiences might not have
been shared exactly by other girls and women in sport, the contexts in which they were co-
constructed are theoretically common through a critical realist ontology. Positioning the spaces 
in which the process of training to be sexist occurs as common, or theoretically representative 
(archetypal), provided for positioning my anecdotal experiences as occurring within that 
distribution of dominant and non-dominant logics.
CHAPTER 4
ONTOLOGY, EPISTEMOLOGY, AND METHODOLOGY: THE DELIVERY OF SEXISM

Logics as a metatheory and method provide an optimal frame for an autoethnography, in which more traditional theoretical frameworks and applications are often omitted or outright rejected (Ellis et al., 2011). Autoethnography is a fluid method that centers on the human connection to a story more so than to a theoretical or conceptual framework that might constrain inductive development (Ellis et al., 2011). In this project, institutional logics provided the schema for mapping information flows as they constituted the discourse that was locally co-constructed through discursive practices, but a logics framework does not impose specific constructs that would frame my story deductively; employing logics as metatheory and method grounds the autoethnography theoretically without constraining it to a specific set of constructs.

Logics as a meta theory placed my story as theoretically occurring or taking place across time and space in a common set of competing logics by which other agents in context would be constrained (Thornton et al., 2012). Logics as a method, in which a proxy for analysis can be designed as an ideal or archetype (Thornton et al., 2012), positioned me and my story, though unique and not generalizable, as an illustration of the patterning of the process of being trained to be sexist. Commensurately, institutional logics as meta theory and method align with a post structural epistemological lens through their constitution of discourse, or the context specific sets of discursive practices that are comprised by latent and manifest components of communication patterning ‘structure’ (Fairclough, 2005; Lammers, 2011; Reay & Jones, 2015). Logics were operationalized here as the semiotic strand of discourse, and the delivery of logics that is constituted by discursive practices as the material strand, which is also constrained by a set of logics (Thornton et al., 2012). My story in this autoethnography was positioned as a function of
the interplay of agency and structure as a micro level processes constrained by macro level ideologies that co-constructed the sexist logics embedded in my sport experiences.

In chapter four, I outline the ontological and epistemological lenses that ground my autoethnography. Critical realism operated as the ontological lens, placing the data and the story as occurring in an assumed common reality with other agents and entities, despite variance in interpretations of discursive practices that instantiated that reality (Jessop, 2004). The epistemological lens, post structuralism, grounded the study in discourse as it constituted the structures in which the training to be sexist occurred (Poutanen, 2007). Specifically, post structural feminism supported the data as co-constructed within the constraints imposed by the patriarchal organization of power in sport (Burton & Leberman, 2017; Jessop, 2004). The second segment of chapter four is a report on autoethnographic methods, including a report of how data were generated, collected, and analyzed to tell the autoethnographic story.

**Ontology**

A critical realist ontology guided the methodological design of the study. A critical realist ontology placed my experiences across time and space as constrained by the same sets of logics in which other agents and entities acted (Easton, 2010); the assumption of occupying a common distribution of logics, or theoretical parameters, underpins the critical realist ontology (Jessop, 2004). Autoethnographies are commonly framed in a critical realist ontology as the lens does not operate on the assumption of universal truths, but that slight variation in interpretations of the same set discursive practices are possible: different people can interpret the same instance/practice as having different personal meaning, but still occurring in the same set of parameters (Easton, 2010). The variance in interpretations around discursive practices that might occur in a common space is at the center of critical realism, as the lens assumes an extrapersonal reality that exists outside of what we might know (Easton, 2010). In other words, the co-
construction of reality is constrained by available information, and a critical realist lens assumes that there is extrapersonal information that is knowable, but has not yet been discovered (Easton, 2010).

Several iterations of the key methodological assumptions of a critical realist lens have been compiled. Jessop (2004) proposed two: (a) that the relationship between agency and structure constrains and enables agents, but that agents are effectual within structures based on the pre-structured, and (b) retroduction, or moving backward in analyzing process, allows for identifying how “causal powers, liabilities, and other real mechanisms” (p. 208) are activated, or the conditions in which agency occurs. Sayer (1992) proposed a more granular, detailed, and progressive set of methodological assumptions of critical realism that included, or extended ideas around the co-construction and conditions of agency and structure, folding in the construction of knowledge and how it is central to positioning structure through a critical realist lens. In sum, Sayer’s (1992) eight methodological assumptions were that (a) an extra personal reality exists and that any knowledge can be interpreted and applied differently – our knowledge is incomplete and socially constructed; (b) social phenomena are reliant on the assumption that knowledge is socially constructed, where cultural understandings and normative behaviors, or discursive practices, are reflexively constructed across time and space; and (c) “science or the production of any kind of knowledge is a social practice” (p. 6).

The central tenets of critical realism: schema, mediation, historicity, and causality, primarily revolve around the sets of the methodological assumptions that ground the co-construction of reality, variance in interpretations, and a temporal component that grounds commonality in structures (Flatschart, 2016; Fleetwood, 2005; Jessop, 2004). Schemas represent micro processes that underpin agency, consistent with Weick’s (2005) conception of
sensemaking. The critical realist assumption about schema is that our sensemaking is constrained by structures; schemas and sensemaking fold into concept mediation, which can be conceptualized as delivery (Fleetwood, 2005; Parr, 2015). In a critical realist lens, social practices are mediated by the processes of their co-construction. Where structure is the provider of delivery, mediation plays out through both manifest and symbolic elements, including discourse (Fairclough, 2005; Parr, 2015). Concept mediation aligns with the theoretical assumptions of how institutional carriers flow in and between institutions; in a critical realist lens, mediators operate as the carriers of logics (Flatschart, 2016; Fleetwood, 2005).

Historicity and causality, as central tenets of a critical realist ontology, can be stratified but not decoupled (Fleetwood, 2005; Jessop, 2004). Historicity refers to the nature of stability and instability in structures over time, which is grounded in the flow between the pre-structured and the temporally immediate co-construction (Parr, 2015; Sayer, 2000). Where the negotiations between agency and structure occur in real time, or in temporal snapshots, those processes are argued to be pre-determined, or at least pre-structured, based on the history that culminated in the snapshot negotiation (Parr, 2015). The historicity of agency and structure cannot be decoupled from causation, as experiences and parameters shift over time, reorganizing constraints on agency and structure, thus temporal ordering can be established for inferring causation (Easton, 2010; Sayer, 2000). While agency and structure cannot be decoupled in a snapshot, retroduction can identify cultural shifts, or shifts in normative in behavioral patterns, to which the snapshot negation can be attributed (Jessop, 2004; Easton, 2010). Drawing from institutional theory, a shock point, such as the application of Title IX to sports, is a simple example of a cultural shift to which the opportunities and access for girls can be causally attributed through retroduction.
The methodological assumptions around the central tenets of critical realism, overwhelmingly grounded in the co-construction of agency and structure across time and constrained space, make the lens ideal for emancipatory research (Jessop, 2004). The organization of power is embedded in critical realism work, as we cannot operate outside of the knowledge that exists and that existing knowledge is produced within the constraints imposed by the organization of power (Clegg, 2006; Harding, 2003; Jessop, 2004). The tension between the constraints on existing knowledge in a critical realist lens and the objective to disrupt existing knowledge (e.g., the “less than” logic that pervades women’s sport), which is central to a post structural lens, can be mitigated by applying institutional logics as supra ordinate to agency and structure (Thornton et al., 2012). Clegg (2006) argued that the tension between a critical realist lens and a post structural lens is tenable based on the primacy afforded to structure in a post structural lens, in contrast to the importance that a critical realist lens places on agency in terms of schema (sensemaking); a critical realist lens, by its very nature of imposing sets of ‘known’ constraints on knowledge production, is in direct conflict with any post structural argument that could only then be constructed within the constraints of the existing organization of power, which is antithetical to post structuralism (Clegg, 2006).

While arguments around the compatibility of critical realism and poststructuralism as ontological or epistemological lenses might be warranted for fleshing out the chasms between the two lenses, Jessop (2004) argues that the very differences embedded in the lenses actually make them compatible. Jessop (2004) negotiates the tension between the constraints imposed by the organization of power and emancipatory work in terms of how privilege can be analyzed through structure:
[Through a critical realist lens] … structures are treated analytically as strategic in their form, content, and operation; and actions are treated analytically as structured, more or less context-sensitive, and structuring. This involves examining how a given structure may privilege some actors, some identities, some strategies, some spatial and temporal horizons, and some actions over others; and the ways, if any, in which actors (individual and/or collective) take account of this differential privileging by engaging in ‘strategic-context’ analysis when choosing a course of action. (p. 209)

Specific to gender issues, Jessop (2004) also recognizes how gendered discourses can be deconstructed through a critical realism lens:

Analysis of gender relations would refer to the constitution of competing, inconsistent, and even openly contradictory identities for both males and females, their grounding in discourses and fantasies about masculinity and/or femininity, their explicit and/or implicit embedding in different institutions and material practices, and their physico-cultural materialization in human bodies. It is particularly important how specific constructions of masculinity and femininity, their associated gender identities, interests, roles, and bodily forms come to be privileged in the state’s own discourses, institutions, and material practices. (p. 211)

Implicitly embedded in Jessop’s (2004) arguments are the tenets of institutional logics. The concerns around the primacy of agency or structure and the inherent constraints around positioning post structural arguments in a pre-structured set of constraints within operating power hierarchies are mitigated by positioning institutional logics as supra ordinate to the co-construction of agency and structure across time and space (Thornton et al., 2012). Additionally, as institutional logics as a meta theory accommodates (interventionist) logics that are introduced
from outside the subsystem’s parameters, the chasm between the knowable and strategies to disrupt the knowable is mitigated (a systems lens supports how logics can permeate a reality, and thus a post structural argument is not invalidated; Thornton et al., 2012).

**Epistemology**

Post structuralism is the epistemological lens through which institutional logics as meta theory and method were folded into project design. In this study, discourse was tagged as the medium through which logics are both interpreted and reproduced in-context, as discursives. Paralleling the patterning of structure as constituting agency in a post structural epistemology, logics and their delivery cannot be decoupled from discourse, as logics constrain yet constitute both the semiotic and material strands of discourse (Fairclough, 2005; Thornton et al., 2012). Discourse, as a manifestation of logics, mediates the flow of information and delivery (semiotic/material) across micro, contextual (to meso), and macro levels, where the macro is purely theoretical (Aitchison, 2000; Flatschart, 2016).

Post structuralism is grounded in the structural organization of power and its deconstruction (Barrett, 2005). Post structural work patterns complex power systems that substantiate positioning of and relationships between cultural contexts (Poutanen, 2007; St. Pierre, 2000). Structure is afforded primacy over agency in a post structural lens, as it is the organization of power, translated through social contexts, that defines the meaning of any language or behavior, with little room for reflexivity of the agent (Clegg, 2006; Hook, 2007). According to Barrett (2005), “poststructural analysis reveals ways in which dominant discourses can trap us in ‘conventional meanings and modes of being’” (p. 80; see Davies, 1990).

Emancipatory agendas and critical research are commonly framed in a post structural epistemology, as it holds that social agency operates only within the constraints imposed by the organization of power, rejecting degrees of human rationality (St. Pierre, 2000). Work in a post
structural epistemology depicts ways in which cultural narratives and structures of notions, or taken for granted common sense and behavioral expectations “are produced, regulated, and productive of the subject” (Barrett, 2005, p. 80). Where narratives and structures are the source of production and regulation, post structuralism provides a corporeal space, in terms of language and behavior, for the disruption of complicit discourses (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008; Hook, 2007). “It is a mode of analysis [that] shifts attention from individualism to subjectivity and discursive practices that signify in practices of dominant discourses. Its focus is on how language works, in whose and what interests, on what cultural sites and why” (Barrett, 2005, p. 80; see Kelly, 1997) to expose patterns that sustain power hierarchies that lend to the marginalization of non-dominant voices.

A post structural lens subsumes language and interaction as socially contingent, yet stable over time only as the context enables and reproduces stability (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008; Hook, 2007). Through this lens, words and objects only carry meaning that is socially ascribed, and those meanings operate within power structures that constrain and reproduce the meaning (Hook, 2007). Cultural narratives, or sets of structurally-contingent meanings that are imposed as interpretations of events and experiences, parallel institutional logics as context-specific interpretations (Clegg, 2006; Fairclough, 2005; Thornton et al., 2012). Cultural narratives are at the center of discourse: not fixed, but “produced through the discursive and interactive processes of everyday life” (Barrett, 2005, p. 81) that are indicators of different interpretations in different contexts or situations; discursive action is the micro manifestation of an agent’s understanding of cultural narratives and reflexivity.

Post structural feminism operates on the assumptions of post structuralism, grounding post structural feminist inquiry on the principle that: if feminist agendas operate within the
existing masculine hegemonic structures, little can be done for advancement in gender equity (Hoeber, 2007). Post structural feminism is designed around disrupting gendered discourse that privileges ‘the right type of woman’, which is highly variable across local sets of logics, as constructed by structural expectations of femininity and assimilation into a white, male dominated space (Burton & Leberman, 2017; LaVoi, 2016). As such, the alternative objective of post structural feminism is to disrupt the power structures through challenging the complicit assumptions that create the power inequities (Azzarito, Solmon, & Harrison, 2006; Hoeber, 2007; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000). Through a post structural feminist lens, women, as active agents, have power to reconstruct malleable assumptions in which inequity is grounded (Azzarito et al., 2006). A paramount implication of post structural feminism is that research recognizes the opportunity to exact agential powers at the meso level, supporting girls (in education and sport) in interpreting traditional gendered discourse (Azzarito et al., 2006). Operating on the assumption that culture and meaning are constructed through discourse, post structural feminist agendas aim to disrupt the logics, and thus practices, that reify the inequity (Azzarito et al., 2006; Birrell, 2000; Hoeber, 2007).

**Operational Description of Discourse**

Critical tenets of post structuralism are (a) discourse as ‘structure’, constituting agency within an imposed set of parameters; (b) subjectivity and reflexivity in interpersonal contexts, driven by imposed interpretations of cultural narratives; and (c) discursive action that is a display of social understandings and complicity toward rules (Hook, 2007). The recursive nature of agency and structure is set in post structuralism as both culturally embedded phenomena and surface phenomena that play out, simultaneously, through daily human micro-processes (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008; Barrett, 2005). Micro processes manifest the organization of power through contextual interpretations, demonstrating how meanings and bodies are
understood and why particular voices, practices, or narratives are valorized and others are silenced (Barrett, 2005; St. Pierre, 2000).

Discourse is an opaque concept that has been defined and refined through the evolution of work that has moved on the back of Foucault’s work (Hook, 2007; Fairclough, 2005). The operational definition of discourse here is concerned with the stratification of discourse into two strands: the semiotic, or the information (contextual) and the material, or the manifestation or active delivery of the semiotic, translated and conveyed in a manner such that the overarching logics constrain and enable the local information (semiotic; logic) and their delivery (material; manifest; Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008; Fairclough, 2013; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). The semiotic strand of discourse is the meaning ascribed to language, action, or entity, each of which are considered materially ‘corporeal’ in this project, as manifestations of the semiotic strand (Hook, 2007; Fairclough, 2005). Meaning and delivery cannot be decoupled, as the material strand of discourse is the delivery of meaning that recursively patterns into agency and structure, where micro level discursive practices (material) translate sensemaking into behavior/agency (Hook, 2007; Fairclough, 2005).

Discourse, as the overarching stratified conception of structure and its constitution, is a function of a multiplicity of variables that interact uniquely across time and space (Hook, 2007). History, discursive practices, language, beliefs, for example, all play out differently in different configurations across spaces to constitute the set of parameters (i.e., structure) that confines agency (Barrett, 2005; Hook, 2007). For post structuralists, discourse is structure; “discourse organizes a way of thinking into a way of acting in the world” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 485). “Once a discourse becomes ‘normal’ and ‘natural,’ it is difficult to think and act outside it” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 485).
The intersection of agency and structure in a post structural lens dictates that the individual, even the self-conception, is a product of the “rules, systems and procedures [that] comprise a discrete realm of discursive practice, or the ‘order of discourse’” (Hook, 2007, p. 2). Foucault’s proposed ‘order of discourse’ grounds post structuralism’s holding that structure is “a conceptual terrain in which knowledge is formed and produced” (Hook, 2007, p. 2), and thus given primacy over agency. In a Foucauldian discipline of post structuralism, the production of knowledge, while subjective and dynamic, is a function of the confluence of the history that lead to the embedded constraints on cognition and behavior in a set context and the temporally proximal discursive practices that dictate positioning of an agent as “spoken into existence within the terms of available discourses” (Davis, 1997, p. 278, see Davies, 1991) or agentive power only occurs when recognized by dominant discourses.

Aligned with a critical realist ontology, history is a critical component of all discourses, as history dictates the positioning of an entity in context (in power hierarchies and thus strength of voice), and the aggregation to the active set of constraints for current practices in-context (Hook, 2007). Contextual history can be considered as the discursive practices, rules, and symbols that were a priori, as constituting the current frame’s discourse, and thus knowledge (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). History becomes stable only in retrospective analysis (Weick et al., 2005), as temporally proximal variation in parameters shift and reorganize based on shifts in supra ordinate logics and reaction to the agenda of well-positioned micro level agents (i.e., feedback). Contextual history intersects with current practices to constitute discourse (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008; Hook, 2007).

“Discourse itself is both constituted by, and ensures the reproduction of, the social system, through forms of selection, exclusion and domination” (Hook, 2007, p. 3) of ideas and
patterns or control of delivery. Discourse is not necessarily textualized or spoken word, but is the
effectuation of meaning through patterned practices, linguistic and behavioral, including
structural designs in contexts (Barrett, 2005). Fairclough (2005) calls this stratification a
differentiation between the linguistic and semiotic, juxtaposing language, specifically, with
meaning in discourse analysis. The linguistic/semiotic note is important to layer into the semiotic
and material strands of discourse, where common language in a space is privileged as the
organized, regulated, and constitutive functions of meaning (Barrett, 2005); language is
foundational to the transmission of the semiotic – it is a local interpretation of logics (Aitchison,
2000).

St Pierre (2000) argues that Foucault’s ideas about discourse aggregate, as context and
domain-specific, “to socially constructed rules and regularities that allow certain statements to be
made and not others” (p. 485) based on the organization of power. The emancipatory power of
discourse, nested in post structuralism, is the provision of a site to challenge the “rules of
discourse” (St Pierre, 2000, p. 495) that privilege one set of people (i.e., entities; agents) as the
provider of statements, or the subject voice, where marginalized voices are the spoke to, or the
object. Complicity of discourse is such that “the effects of discursive practices is to make it
virtually impossible to think outside of them; to be outside of them is, by definition, to be mad,
to be beyond comprehension and therefore reason” (Hook, 2007, p. 2). Through this lens, the
constitution of society lies in controlling the discourse that produces, selects, diffuses, and
defines practices, which, when controlled can be designed to reconstitute the existing
organization of power (Hook, 2007).

Clough (1998) describes the material and semiotic strata of discourse as “apparatuses of
discourse” (p. 12) that provide spaces for deconstructing and reorganizing logics, “grounding
cultural criticism in the ability to intervene in the ‘material-semiotic apparatuses’ of information” (Clough, 1998, p. 12). She proposes that the emancipatory potential of analyses of discourse is grounded in the stratification between the semiotic and material elements, specifically in critical and feminist research, which subscribe to discursive power relations in the disruption of discourse; power is manifested in affecting discourse.

**Operational Description of Discursive Practices**

The method for disrupting complicit discourse is embedded in the material strand of discourse, which provides the delivery of meaning in context, and logics supra ordinately, for the purpose of this project (Shaw & Frisby, 2006; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999). The material strand of discourse plays out through discursive practices, primarily grounded in language at the micro level (Aitchison, 2000; Barrett, 2005) and in organizational design or policy at the context level. For this project, the material strand of discourse is represented locally by discursive practices (of agent or entity) that translate meaning, or manifest localized interpretations of supra ordinate logics, reflexively (Fleetwood, 2005). Discursive practices were operationalized here as the manifestation that brings ‘social objects into being’, or the manifest delivery (through language, design, symbols) of information that produces context-specific interpretations of macro level logics.

The construction of meaning is fundamental to the questions that a post structural inquiry asks: “In what specific contexts, among which specific communities of people, and by what textual and social processes has meaning been acquired” (Barrett, 2005, p. 80)? The questions that challenge the organization of power underpin the transformative potential of a post structural lens, operating on the assumption that privileged communities drive processes that construct meaning (Barrett, 2005; St. Pierre, 2000). Penetrating questions, such as: “How do meanings change? How have some meanings emerged as normative and others have been eclipsed or
disappeared? What do these processes reveal about how power is constituted and operates?” (Barrett, 2005, p. 80), which, when asked addressed through a post structural inquiry, provide a lens and space to drill down into the stratification of (a) micro, meso, macro level intersection of logics, (b) agency of individuals and entities, and (c) discourse, as the aggregate of the localized representation of culture through discursive practices that constitute structure.

To interpret Clough’s (1998) conception of the semiotic and material apparatuses as subordinate to institutional logics fits neatly into the reorganization of institutional theory that has extended ‘logics’ theoretically, where logics are applied to spaces beyond the contexts of institutions (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Goodrick, & Reay, 2011; Thornton et al., 2012). The theoretical convergence between: (a) the material/semiotic model of discourse as a tool for cultural criticism and (b) Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury’s (2012) positioning of logics as the locally interpreted (and thus culturally constrained) information that links agent and structure across micro, meso, and macro levels of society, platforms the process of being trained to be sexist, and theoretical spaces through which it can be deconstructed and disrupted.

The assumption embedded in this project was that logics operated as the latent component (i.e., information) that cannot be decoupled from their manifest component, represented here by discourse, which delivers information as interpreted in a context-specific set of parameters (Hook, 2007; Thornton et al., 2012). Cultural criticism around the co-construction of sexism in sport, then, was dictated by the translation of logics in immediate contexts as those interpretations and performances shaped individual cognition and behavior, and thus discursive practices. Post structuralism lends to cultural criticism, and specifically through ethnography as it exposes the variation in stories and experiences that reflect personal interpretations of the structures that constitute the story (Britzman, 1995). Clough (1998) called for research to engage
“a deconstruction of the narrative logic” (p. 5), which she suggested can be done methodologically through ethnography.

**Methodological Process and Product**

Uniquely, I am positioned to speak to the social structures constituted by gendered logics that affected the four-year old girl, the elite female athlete, the coach, and the sport program manager. As an athlete and coach on the front edge of the shift to integrating girls and women into sport, my N=1 narrative holds the potential to provide a transformative voice in unpacking the cultural transition of conceptions of females in sport and the barriers that are theorized at a macro, meso, and micro level (Cunningham & Sagas, 2008; Spry, 2001; Wall, 2008). The unique part of my unique positioning is grounded in the expertise of a formally trained researcher who has been trained to aggregate theory, concepts, and empirical data from multiple bodies of knowledge (e.g., systems, institutional theory, critical theory, post-structural feminism; Muncey, 2005).

The story I have to tell about a female athlete from the Title IX era, who later became a coach, is populated by anecdotes of epic moments and heart-breaking failures. More consequentially, my story culminated in the pursuit of knowledge as a researcher who operates at the intersection of sport management and sport sociology. My story, taking the methodological form of an autoethnography, is “both process and product” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 273); the aim for the delivery of the project was to build a story about how and why I was trained to be sexist, and to provide exact, specific examples of discursive practices that were complicit to the degree that, in many cases, I not only did not recognize the crippling sexism embedded in the practices, I welcomed it as a truth.

Autoethnographies, and their contested criticisms and contributions, embody sensemaking, structuration, and institutional logics as constraining and enabling narratives and
discourse. The purpose of this project was to pattern the process of being trained to be sexist through a hierarchical systems lens in which contexts and discourse were co-constructed locally and culturally. The research questions that guided the design, data collection, and discourse analysis of the autoethnography were:

1. In what ways is sexism implicitly or explicitly layered into language and discursive practices in local interactions in sport contexts, and what are the contextual micro outcomes?
2. How do sensemaking, discourse, and macro-level ideologies intersect across time and space to co-construct and deliver sexism through sport?

Autoethnography

An autoethnography will “describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experiences” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 273). Autoethnography is a method and research design that operates on the periphery of normative qualitative forms of knowledge development. Divisive at least, the research design extends beyond a methodology, connoting a rejection of traditional conventions that presume to propagate ‘good scholarship’ (Ellis et al., 2011; Spry, 2001). Through embodying a multitude of substantive forms that exist as a negotiation between writer and reader, autoethnography is, most simply, an account (graphy) of the intersection of the individual self (micro; auto) and culture (macro; ethno).

Autoethnography parallels a qualitative analysis of multiple people’s stories of a phenomenon, where those anecdotal experiences are aggregated, triangulated with other data sources, and analyzed to describe or deconstruct the process or phenomenon under examination (Clough, 1998; Wall, 2008). As sample sizes in qualitative studies are not expected to substantiate nor warrant generalization of research conclusions, neither are conclusions drawn from an autoethnography. However, theoretical generalization is frequently an objective of an autoethnography; the text of an autoethnography should place the phenomenon being elucidated
as accessible and relatable, engendering an exchange between the reader and the story (Spry, 2001).

Autoethnography is supported in realist and relativist paradigms, with historic roots in realism, where objectivity on the part of the researcher was a necessary condition in ethnography (Anderson, 2006; McIlveen, 2008). Epistemologically, the lens through which an autoethnography is written can vary, though constructivism, critical lenses, and post-structuralism are commonly employed (McIlveen, 2008). The ontological and epistemological boundaries in autoethnography extend beyond simple contrasts: they present a Hatfields and McCoys-like duality among camps of researchers who have defined modern autoethnography and set out the parameters for publishing rigor, ... or not (Anderson, 2006; Ellis et al., 2011). The two camps are softly delineated by conceptions of appropriateness of standards of scientific rigor in autoethnography, where analytic autoethnographers generally fall into a realist paradigm and value standards of rigor as they are applied to other qualitative research designs (Anderson, 2006; McIlveen, 2008).

Conversely, the proponents of evocative autoethnography reject the complicitly accepted ‘rules’ for rigor and publication, as “…those who advocate and insist on canonical forms of doing and writing research are advocating a white, masculine, heterosexual, middle/upper classed, Christian, able-bodied perspective” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 275). Researchers conducting evocative autoethnography reject that traditional conceptions of rigor and validity are even applicable to the method, contending that the only metric of an autoethnography’s merit should be the connection the reader makes with the story (Ellis et al., 2011; Spry, 2001).

**Analytic Autoethnography**

In any type of autoethnography, traditional ideas about rigor and validity might be rejected (Ellis et al., 2011). However, an analytic methodology in autoethnography bridges the
outright rejection of the imposed constraints around conceptions of ‘good scholarship’ through the provision of triangulating data sources and/or support from a theoretical or conceptual framework. Scientific rigor, or appropriate conceptions of it in autoethnography, is what delineates an analytic methodology from an evocative methodology (McIlveen, 2008; Spry, 2001).

This project was designed as an analytic autoethnography, though elements of evocative autoethnography were employed in the delivery of the results of the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) in the form of story. Analytic autoethnography folds in either traditional forms of presentation or traditional use of supporting literature (to some degree), or in other words, will provide some benchmarks for evaluating validity external to the story (Denzin, 2006; Ellis & Bochner, 2006; McIlveen, 2008).

Several conditions have been proposed as supporting validity of an analytic autoethnography, which is not a necessary condition in any autoethnography, but some benchmarks for rigor are broadly applied in an analytic methodology. Anderson (2006) explains the minimum conditions necessary for validity of an analytic autoethnography, specifically, as (a) triangulation of multiple data sources to support conclusions, and (b) theoretical development. The delineation between a more constrained objective of an autoethnography that describes cultural processes and a more extendable (generalizable) autoethnography that aims to build theory (i.e., ideal and archetypes) dictates that even in an analytic methodology here, measures of validity are wide in scope (Ellis & Bochner, 2006).

The method is grounded in narratives: those presented as first-order data (personal), and those that are interpreted as second-order, from an external data source (McIlveen, 2008). The benchmarks for rigor, or measures of validity in an analytic autoethnography center on the
narrative of the story: (a) how the narrative proposes to “understand a self or some aspect of a life as it intersects with a cultural context” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 279), and (b) “invite readers to enter the author’s world and to use what they learn there to reflect on, understand, and cope with their own lives” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 280); validity issues and generalizability is what the reader takes from the story, so those rigor elements are dependent on story telling (Ellis & Bochner, 2006).

Anderson (2006) provided five specific elements of analytic autoethnography that dictate validity: (a) complete member in-group status, (b) acknowledgement of reflexivity that co-constructs or co-constructed the context, (c) the centrality of the author to the story, (d) augmentative data sources, and (e) aiming to use empirical data to advance knowledge or theory. Complete member in-group status requires that the researcher does not enter a group in order to study it, but that they are ingrained in the context as an agent who has a history of the context’s co-construction. As a measure of rigor, complete member in-group status “supports validity because organic group membership enables members to more accurately interpret social norms, cues, and parameters” (Anderson, 2006, p. 381). Complete member status is a necessary condition for acknowledgement of reflexivity that co constructs or co constructed the context (Anderson, 2006). Similarly, validity is supported when the author conveys their agency in-context(s), as the provider of the written autoethnographic product (McIlveen, 2008). The first three elements of validity sum to the positioning of the author as an integral part of the story that is told (Ellis & Bochner, 2006).

The fourth and fifth elements that Anderson (2006) proposed as measures of validity in an analytic autoethnography are organized around the data and their extension. A central condition for an analytical methodology is the inclusion of augmentative data sources, or those
that are external to the story teller used to triangulate the story (Ellis & Bochner, 2006).

Augmentative data might be in the form of a simple application of literature or guiding theoretical framework, but can extend into qualitative and quantitative analyses incorporated into support for the story (Ellis & Bochner, 2006). Derived from the augmentative data sources is the final condition of validity in analytic autoethnography: that data analysis and conclusions of the study, however presented, develop empirical or theoretical knowledge on the topic (Anderson, 2006).

Writing an autoethnography is a reflexive process: one in which the writer constantly interacts with the data, including the self and the self-story (personal narrative) as a primary data source (McIlveen, 2008). In this project, my personal narrative was triangulated by interviews, media stories, historical markers (e.g., the proliferation of women’s sport programs in the NCAA system), and the literature on gendered barriers to participation and leadership in sport (Boyle & Parry, 2007; McIlveen, 2008). Collecting and contrasting multiple data sources operated as assurances of rigor, epistemologically grounding the project as an analytic autoethnography through triangulating my story. Data points from interviews, media stories, historical markers, and literature provided support for the emergent structure-agent activities (and the associated linkages and patterns across time and space) that constituted the process of being trained to be sexist, as well as support for trustworthiness of the ‘product’ (Anderson, 2006; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011).

The format for the final presentation of the data was around the archaeology and genealogy of a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA). The personal narrative, as the primary data source, was told chronologically and analyzed across eras as temporal frames in which logics or their delivery would theoretically shift: childhood, elite youth play, college play,
professional play as it overlapped with my entry into coaching, and finally, the coaching era, which was delimited by regional system (A, B, and Ph.D.).

**Foucauldian Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis is based on the hermeneutic cycle of the co-construction of meaning through language, primarily, but has also extended to include symbols, media productions, or institutional artifacts (Bondarouk & Ruel, 2004), such as a pay-for play model of youth sport. The hermeneutic cycle, as it relates to discourse, is the recursive production and social reproduction of meaning ascribed to a communication or event, or the unstable latent component that gets paired with a representation, such as language or a symbol (Bondarouk & Ruel, 2004).

Discourse analysis is a theory, method, or data analysis technique through which the production of meaning is examined, where meaning is positioned as historically and culturally instantiated through its associated delivery (Bondarouk & Ruel, 2004). The purpose of a discourse analysis is to unpack how artifacts, language, and practices, as discourse, carry culture and the production and reproduction of social worlds (Breeze, 2011).

Discourse analysis has a variety of frames through which it is conducted, varying on the degree of interpretation or level of meaning and positioning that can be extracted from the data corpus, or on how study design positions the organization of power in the co-construction of the discourse (Breeze, 2011). Despite the different variants of discourse analysis, the underlying premise of the method is that any artifact, text, or communication can be stratified into latent and manifest components (Fairclough, 2005; Liao & Markula, 2009). The definition or operationalization of a unit of analysis in discourse analysis is highly variable across mediums that operate as discursive, but text segments, the body of a text, a media image, or an artifact, such as an organizational chart, are examples of what might operate as datum (Bondarouk & Ruel, 2004).
In the discourse analysis variants that operate as emancipatory, such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) or Political Discourse Theory (PDT), the construction of the latent component is positioned within the organization of power that dictates discourse (Glynos et al., 2009). A CDA method positions power as the driver of discourse, but, as an overarching method that specifies that the analysis operates under the command of the contextual power structures, it does not give primacy to how the power was constructed (Liao & Markula, 2009). An FDA method situates power as a process, where discourse is used as a tool to generate power and to maintain and deliver it, giving the intentionality of constructing power primacy in analysis (Hook, 2007). The analyses produced with an FDA method are not intended to interpret meaning from the artifacts and discursives examined, but to organize or map how the relations of power are executed through them (Hook, 2007).

Foucault positions individual subjectivity (or variance in sensemaking) as the proxy of discourse analysis, where “the contemporary practices through which individuals constitute themselves as subjects of knowledge” (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008, p. 111) are demonstrated through the individual’s discursive behaviors. The conceptualization of the role of individual subjectivity in discourse runs parallel with Weick’s (2009) sensemaking, in which interpreting and subsequently acting on cultural and context-specific knowledge is an individual rendering. Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2008) explain Foucault’s assertion that individual’s ‘focal points of experience’ (see Foucault, 2010) manifest in three dimensions of his analytical framework:

- the axis of knowledge, the rules that govern discursive practices that determine what is true or false
- the axis of power, or the rationalities by which one governs the conduct of others
- the axis of ethics, or the practices through which an individual constitutes itself as a subject
While most theorists associate FDA with CDA, Glynos et al. (2009) argue that FDA more closely aligns with PDT because FDA does not assume an emancipatory lens, and does not fix power structures as truths to be dismantled. Glynos et al. (2009) contend that FDA, as a relative of PDT through the game-reduction frame, more accurately reflects a PDT lens than a critical lens. PDT operates on an ontological position that a ‘language game’ (Glynos et al., 2009) produces the relational configurations that capture the rules and truths around objectivity and social patterns. Similarly, Foucault positions ‘truth games’ as the conditions under which truths become actualized (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). Though Glynos et al. (2009) make the case for FDA as a vein of PDT, much of the literature on FDA associates it with CDA because the methods both center on the organization of power specifically, and both fit cleanly into a post structural lens; despite the lack of intent for disrupting discourse or to give voice to marginalized populations specifically, the purpose of an FDA is to explain the cycle of the co-construction of discourse as a tool of and for knowledge and power, and operates in a systems lens as supra ordinate to the context in which discourse is substantiated (i.e., a post-structural lens; Liao & Markula, 2009).

The data were analyzed through an FDA lens, which holds that the analytic value of and extractions from the study corpus (i.e., codes or patterns) are not functions of interpretive ‘meaning’ that an agent produces or experiences in a snapshot context, but the analytic value and extractions are grounded in (a) describing the structures that dictated the meaning for an agent in the snapshot, and (b) how those structures connect to grander ideologies, culture, and history (Liao & Markula, 2009). Foucault termed these two strands of discourse analysis (later FDA), respectively, the archaeology and the genealogy of the discourse, which represent the two
analytic tenets of an FDA (Liao & Markula, 2009). Liao and Markula (2009) succinctly explain the tenets of an FDA as:

The archaeological phase focuses on how discourses are formed by identifying the object, enunciations, concepts and theories that then constitute discourse(s). The genealogical analysis links the discourse(s) to the power relations determining their specific cultural and historical context. If an archaeological analysis identifies discourses, a genealogical analysis connects the discourses to the operation of power at its cultural and historical context. (p. 46)

In an FDA, data are not intended to reflect interpretations or meanings ascribed to single experiences that might be patterned, but to show how demonstrations in snapshots reflect the intersection of macro level ideologies and meso, or context level delivery, based on the organization of power in context and the discourse that it privileges (Hook, 2007). Because this project was an autoethnography, extracting or interpreting meaning from the narrative or other's accounts via interview text, as is the premise of a phenomenology, is not central to developing the story or to answering the research questions. However, other's accounts do provide information about the structuring of the context, such as gender of the leaders in context or the informal practices in down-time, which can be derived through simple language and conversational interaction. Bondarouk & Ruel (2004) explained that interviews in discourse analysis and interviews for other qualitative methodologies differ on (a) rationale: where discourse analysis interviews are more complex for their intent to produce data that is indicative of structural levels (not feelings or sentiments toward the topic) and (b) the researcher is situated in the organization of power that produces the text.
The archaeology of the data generated through an FDA describes the conditions under which the data were produced (i.e., data as my story: the sensemaking and structures that dictated rules and truths in-context); the genealogy of the data places those snapshot descriptions, or the archaeology, into a process orientation that patterns central tendencies of logics and their delivery, across time and space, as a demonstration of the co-construction of a phenomenon (Liao & Markula, 2009; Skinner, Stewart, & Edwards 1999). In other words, an FDA, which does not interpret meaning from instantiations in the text, holds that the very production of the personal narrative and interview text that operated as data sources were written within the frame of the current organization of power in real time, which, because this is an autoethnography, now subsumes my familiarity with the body of knowledge on gender and gendered narratives in sport. Thus, I produced the personal narrative and conducted the interviews from a position that privileges the contextual organization of power of my now, which is my theoretical and operational knowledge of the barriers girls and women encounter in sport. The media data, however, were produced in the organization of power that was retrospectively described in the personal narrative.

In FDA, sentiments around an experience or the meanings they construct are immaterial. What is central to developing the discourse analysis is that the organization of power under which the textualization of the data was situated at the intersection of (a) my knowledge on gendered practices in sport, (b) my knowledge of the historical placement and the organization of power around the contexts depicted in the data, and (c) my intimate knowledge of the sensemaking, as constrained by the organization of power in and historicity of the context, that composed the retrospective personal narrative.
The Foucauldian lens adds to discourse analysis the principle that discourse is an *intentional* tool and outcome of power, or that discourse is *used* as a means for power. Hermeneutics are not stable in this view (Hook, 2007; Liao & Markula, 2009), and so FDA is not intended to extract ‘meaning’ from discursives, but to pattern discursives to historical and ideological organizations of power. An FDA does not produce meaning as interpreted from the text, it explains how power relations dictated the construction and content of the text.

**Data Construction**

The narrative was written in a critical realism paradigm to support trustworthiness of the narrative itself (Anderson, 2006). As my story was a first-person retrospective account of interactions with other actors in-context, writing the accounts in a critical realism paradigm was necessary to frame the deconstruction of logics as they played out interpersonally; a critical realist lens placed both myself and the ‘other’ in a common space that occupies a standard set of parameters for all entities (McIlveen, 2008). Where the assumption of FDA is that the organization of power dictated the construction of the personal narrative (and interview data; Hook, 2007), the product of the data corpus was constructed under an operational awareness of Foucauldian and post structural lenses associated with my knowledge of the literature on gender in sport, paired with my positioning as an academic researcher nested in higher education in the US.

Per the tenets of analytic autoethnography, my personal narrative simultaneously reconstructed my experiences in sport and illustrated the logics that underpinned the story and supported analysis of the story’s archaeology and genealogy (Anderson, 2006; Liao & Markula, 2009). The frame for constructing the narrative was narrow in that I wrote to actively avoid extrapolating from my memories, and thus ‘speak into existence’ extrapersonal meaning; as I wrote, I was conscious of excluding or intentionally framing (a) what I thought that someone else
might have thought or experienced in-context (at the time), and (b) how an illustration related to the literature or socialized ideologies.

The linear progression of the narrative was not clean across the eras because different contexts overlapped temporally, and thus contexts were introduced in a broadly ascending temporal order that was segmented by context; richer contextual detail was developed by telling the story of a specific space, such as coaching in Regional ODP, which temporally spanned a set of other contexts, without breaking up the context to provide depth to the account of the space.

The narrative opened with my earliest memories of physical activity and my sense of self as it revolved around physical activity, without a clear antecedent, or explicit socializing factor in the story as to why all I wanted to do was run. The youth era of the narrative spanned my entry into sport and the grey area of transition into elite sport that happened later in my high school years, as I started to gain traction as an elite player. The playing era of the narrative spanned entry conditions for college and through my tumultuous professional and National Team experiences. The coaching era overlapped with the playing era because my first coaching experiences were in a camp context that I entered in high school, and I had continued to play while I held coaching jobs in college and in Director of Coaching (DOC) positions. The coaching era spanned from its overlap with the playing era to my exit from soccer, which overlapped with my entry into higher education.

Writing the personal narrative as the primary data source and as the orienting story that grounded the study as an autoethnography was exceptionally taxing. The accounts of my memories were easy to textualize, but the frame of the narrative was difficult to negotiate as I wrote. I entered the writing process with an awareness of how the narrative would be analyzed as data, and how my familiarity with the literature on gender in sport shaped my writing lens, which
both operated as constraints on writing: as I wrote, I constantly gauged the story against the
depth I was providing about the context (to adequately explain the structures that would be
analyzed) and against the barriers around gender in sport that I could see as I wrote, but actively
avoided applying to my story in the narrative itself. In other words, I had a difficult time
managing the boundaries of the narrative as I wrote it to only include my first-degree memories
of my experience and the first-degree account of the context/structure in which the experience
occurred while omitting interpretations or applications (extrapolations) that would be part of the
data analysis process.

As I wrote the narrative, I constantly checked myself to gauge if I was exaggerating or
dramatizing the story for the sake of writing it, or if another, from a third person view, would
have described the story or anecdote differently than I did. I also struggled with what to include
in the narrative because my personal life and disabilities are highly impactful on the retrospective
accounts. I had to remind myself as I wrote to explain what I thought or felt in-context, but to
also explain the structures: I had to remind myself that I was describing sensemaking and the
structures that would be analyzed, not my feelings now or what I thought or projected other
people might have been thinking or feeling in the anecdote. Avoiding accounts of what others
might have thought or felt at the time was difficult to negotiate because part of the story was my
interpretations of other actor’s behaviors, while acknowledging that I might have been wrong
in my attribution, or without a ‘truthful’ read on intentions to report. I also struggled with trying
to mask language to protect identities, or to make the language less identifiable without losing
the story or the context, but as I negotiated identities in anecdotes in which egregiously sexist
behaviors occurred, I would get emotional in retrospect. Some anecdotes elicited strong
emotional responses that I layered into my writing, which I then had to revisit and re-write to
back off or soften my language and try to bracket, or make my report less subjective. Notably, I really struggled with happily recalling a good memory about a space or a group of people only to continue writing about it through a structural lens and being struck with how disgustingly sexist an interaction or punishment in the context might have been; seeing the space through the new lens left me feeling defeated and demotivated – it felt like every new story I wrote had a new dimension to it that I had not turned over before. I also had some moments of enlightenment, such as realizing why I can see a problem coming that might get me fired, or putting together why I always had a difficult time relating to and respecting other girls and women in my spaces.

Negotiating identities was also a threat to confidentiality and the researcher’s duty to exclude potential identifiers in report: some of the depth to particular contexts was lost in trying to de-identify, such as the college programs I played in or coached for, where the latent component of the context was affected because the level at which the program operated was a meaningful element of the context that was ultimately obscured.

Though the narrative was constructed retrospectively for the purpose of generating the primary data source, it was not written within the frame of producing the archaeology of the story; in other words, the narrative was written as an autobiographical story around the theme of my gendered experiences in sport (as constrained by my familiarity with the body of knowledge on gender in sport), told as operationalizations of the sensemaking and structures in-context, and compounded to the process of being trained to be sexist. The final narrative used for data analysis was 98 single-spaced pages.

**Triangulation**

The personal narrative was triangulated with interviews, media stories, historical markers, and literature (Anderson, 2006). Interviews were conducted with actors from my story, including coaches, teammates, coworkers, and direct-report supervisors (Boyle & Parry, 2007).
The interviews (N=8) were conducted over the course of two months; three of the interviews necessitated two sessions to complete. All of the interviews were unstructured and entirely guided by the participant, by design: to extract structural components, the data needed to explicate structural components through story about the actors in the context, the formal and informal rules and truths, and the interactional climate in-context. Two of the interviews were conducted as happy hours that extended to 4 hours long (including one of the three that necessitated a second session) and 6 hours long. Seven of the interviews were conducted and transcribed via Zoom, one was conducted in person. A benefit of using the Zoom platform was the opportunity to interact with the interviewee’s body language or demeanor, which added depth to their description of the context.

I intended to engage in the interviews on a level that reflected the state of my present or past relationship with the interviewee, for authenticity; the interviews did not resemble what would be a traditional qualitative interview, and I did not expect or design them to. One of the meta themes that came out of the interviews was that the participants frequently apologized for dominating the conversation and not letting me get to my interview questions, even though I told each at the outset of the interview that I did not have any questions, but that the interview would just look like reminiscing. The other meta theme that came out of the interviews was that the participants also frequently drove the conversation back to sexism, either implicitly or explicitly, despite that I did not ask about sexism nor did I need for them to speak to it. When approaching the participants for interview, I emailed them with solicitation language that was IRB approved, but accompanied the language with a personal note, as each interviewee was a personal contact, by necessity to support study design. The personal note intentionally minimized the topic of the project (i.e., sexism) and reassured the interviewee that I would not ask them about sexism or
their thoughts or experiences with it, but that they were welcome to share any ideas about it that came up for them in conversation. I reiterated that I would not directly address sexism on its face at the beginning of each interview, as I described the purpose of the interview, the study, and the informed consent. I intentionally minimized the topic to reduce any anxiety participants might have around uncertainty about what I would bring up from our past together or what they would be expected to have to answer during interview; I did so with both male and female interviewees (all identified as binary m/f). Despite repeating that I would not ask about or directly speak to sexism in our shared context unless they folded it into conversation, the participants returned to the topic, without prompting, and sometimes surprisingly; it would come up as: “But I don’t think that was because she was a woman”, or “Do you think that was sexist?”. 

The other reason I minimized the topic was because their meanings or interpretations of sexism or the sexism surrounding me was not the data that was to be extracted from interview. The interviews were designed to let the participants speak freely about people and secrets and consequences in a safe, familiar space, where the latent (or in some cases, technological, per Foucault) extractions were what, in those stories, reflected formal and informal rules and truths in context that spoke to power and discursives. It is that purpose and that frame that made the interviews an emotionally gutting experience that I cannot describe as other than weird. I occupied two spaces simultaneously in interview, where I was a friend reminiscing, and sometimes playfully arguing with interviewees, I was also a researcher searching language for patterns or artifacts that represented the components of the contextual structure we shared. During interview, I was consciously aware of vacillating between lenses, reminding myself to keep looking for structural indicators and then reactively reminding myself to be present as a friend who contacted them out of the blue for my own gain. I struggled with the sense of
emotional obligation I had to the participants when soliciting, scheduling, and conducting the interview, and in debrief. I wanted to present as professional enough for them to take my project seriously, but also as the same person I had been when we had shared a space.

Media stories were accessed through volumes of scrapbooks from my playing career, as well as media productions that were associated with my playing and coaching careers (e.g., Gatorzone, 2015). Media data were analyzed for relevance and contribution to the depth or richness of the story or to triangulate and element of the personal narrative or interview data (Anderson, 2006; Ellis et al., 2011). The media data that were selected for inclusion were framed in the genealogy segment of the FDA as demonstrations of the organization of power or logics in the context around which the media was generated, as the media data, specifically, was historically situated. Application of relevant historical markers and literature were also threaded into the genealogy of the data to triangulate logics or patterns in their delivery (Liao & Markula, 2009).

**Data Analysis**

The data were configured into their archaeology and genealogy through an FDA, for which the personal narrative was the primary data source. The personal narrative was edited and reduced to describe the (a) sensemaking, (b) rules and truths that composed structure in context, and (c) the organization of power as those composed the archaeology of the data. The archaeology of the data described how I made sense of interactions in-context based on my own interpretations of my placement or positioning, and how my context-specific sensemaking and agency operated within the organization of power.

The archaeology of the data was written in an autoethnographic frame, depicting anecdotes as the data points through which I explained my sensemaking, my perception of agency in context, and my interactions with the rules and truths that constituted the incoming
messages and local interactions that compounded to structure. Anecdotes from the full personal narrative were included or excluded based on their contribution to developing the sensemaking, organization, or rules. Where several anecdotes might have been written into the depiction of a single context in the full narrative, anecdotes that operated as exemplars or unique descriptions of a necessary element of the context were selected for inclusion in the edit of the narrative and presentation as the archaeology. The dominant logics that underpinned my experiences were extracted from the archaeology and employed as qualitative logic dimensions in the genealogy.

Where the archaeology of the data corresponded to research question one, as a depiction and translation of the co-construction of sexism locally, the genealogy of the data corresponded to research question two, through which local co-constructions were mapped across time and space, positioned historically and within the literature on gender in sport. The genealogy provided a contrast of gendered practices that operated as data points in the distribution of how logics were delivered, which constituted the manifest/material strand of the process of being trained to be sexist. The genealogy of the data mapped the co-construction of the discourse which exposed nodes in the process that were particularly elemental to it and might operate as access points into disrupting sexist logics through their delivery, or manifestation in structures. The access points for disrupting the discourse that emerged from the genealogy, as findings/outcome extrapolations from the FDA, provide support for the proposed model of discourse associated with research question two.
CHAPTER 5
ARCHAEOLOGY: A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS

This chapter corresponds to research question number one and the associated propositions. The first objective of the project was to translate the process of being trained to be sexist through a description of the discursive practices in context that produce and reproduce sexism in sport through implicit messages and explicit language and behaviors, including those that are formalized organizational or contextual practices. In accordance with the tenets of autoethnography and an FDA, the archaeology of the process of being trained to be sexist is depicted (Liao & Markula, 2009) using story to translate the co-construction of gendered discourse in a manner that makes the patterning accessible to the reader (McIlveen, 2008).

In this chapter, I provide a descriptive analysis of my personal narrative, the interview data, and the media data as they triangulated the contextual structural and sensemaking interactions. In the archaeology, the intersection of my interpretations of rules and truths in the context, which cannot be decoupled from the past experiences I brought to the context, are juxtaposed with the manifest organization of power in context, such as the leadership structures. The interview and media data are integrated into the story to provide richer context on the structural parameters that constrained the sensemaking depicted in the narrative.

The archaeology of the data stratifies and explains sensemaking, agency, and structure in the co-construction of my experiences. Through the description, the reader should experience with me how I navigated an evolving awareness of being female in sport, and how local and macro level logics about gender in sport operated as the rules, truths, and ‘bullshit’ with which I interacted in understanding or defining what it meant to be a girl and woman in sport.

The archaeology opens with my childhood, explaining my entry into gender socialization and sport, building into a chronological account of my playing career, which overlapped with my
coaching career. My coaching era is not reported chronologically, but by context; across my coaching career, I occupied several spaces simultaneously (each with variants on local rules, truths, and ‘bullshit’). The accounts of my childhood and youth era, my college era, and my coaching era are designed to weave into story the sets of contextual parameters for cognition and behavior that I interacted with through sensemaking and agency, written as accessible translation of sensemaking, and the organization of power and that associated rules and truths in-context.

Playing Era

Childhood and Youth

As a child, my energy was off the charts – I am ADHD. My boundless energy and difficulty reading social cues meant that I was always on the run, and never sure when or how to stop. My mom told me that she had to “hold on for dear life” as she watched me move from one activity to the next, just trying to follow wherever I was running to (interview).

All I wanted to do was run. To play. My childhood memories from my first house are of riding bikes with the neighborhood boys, doing handsprings in the yard, and climbing all over the giant rock the size of a jump-house in the back yard. I was the youngest of four, but I don’t remember running with my older siblings; they weren’t the reason I ran. I ran because it was who I was. My mom used to bring me around to my brother’s football games, which my sister’s cheer squad was associated with, where I was “like a mascot” (interview). I was too young at the time to participate in the organized activities, and I didn’t remember that I had been in tow to Pop Warner games in my early childhood but watching my sister cheer for my brother’s team must have left an impression on me, if not the one that most girls might have taken.

The memories I have from my early childhood are fuzzy, snapshots, like short-frame bursts of me and the people around me, layered in with the wonder, fear, excitement, or what I can only describe as a manic immersion I found in running, in playing. I remember being afraid
of breaking my neck doing back handsprings, but front handsprings became routine. I remember that I ran and jumped and played like the boys in my neighborhood; and I remember that I made them call me “John”. I asked my mom to change my name to John before I was 5 years old.

She said no, thankfully, but as a four-year-old, I wanted to be called John because I thought I was a boy. There weren’t other girls who ran like I did, there weren’t other girls who I saw doing front handsprings or driving their bike into the hedges for fun, as the other boys and I did. I wasn’t like a girl; I was like a boy. I hadn’t asked to be a boy because I knew what it meant to be a boy and I chose it over being a girl, at four, I only knew that boys ran around doing front handsprings and crashing bikes. And that’s who I was.

I had a slow start on being trained to be sexist because I was either allowed to explore who I was without having rules and truths about being a girl imposed on me at home, or more likely, I was simply dismissed from the rules and truths because my single mom was doing all she could to hold on to whomever I was headed to be. When I was little, my mom didn’t train me to know hard and fast truths about what it meant to be a girl. And I wasn’t able to get a read on much of the implicit cultural rules and truths about what it meant to be a girl: they didn’t track with the messages at home about who I was supposed to be, as well as who I felt like I was, like they didn’t apply to me until I saw the consequences.

In my early childhood, the social rewards I saw the boys receive around their performance or prowess in sport, or unstructured physical activity among children, was what I wanted. I could see the other boys being praised for physical shows of athleticism in ways that I wasn’t; the same sets of rules and truths didn’t apply to me in the ways they applied to the boys. Even in childhood play, the sets of logics imposed within my local group of neighborhood rascals and the boys at school in free play presented a different set of parameters for me as the
only girl running with the boys; I wanted to be called John so that when I won the race or jumped my bike the highest, I would be praised like a boy, not sent off, rejected because I shouldn’t have been in the race in the first place.

I started school just before I started organized sport for the first time: soccer. Transitioning into organized sport brought with it coaches and teammates and team roles and rules that didn’t make sense; I couldn’t understand why I had to be in a particular position when the ball was somewhere else, or why, even if I followed those rules, a goal might score. Soccer didn’t work for me at six. I do think that was about the time that my mom started to be able to keep a shirt on me outside of school, though.

Figure 5-1. Youth Baseball Team. Photo courtesy of author.

My second first sport was coach-pitch baseball a year or two later. Some time in school had socialized me more effectively to follow rules, or to assimilate into the structure that mirrored team sport. I was bad at baseball, I thought. I didn’t play much - most of my memories of baseball are from the bench. When I did play, I played in right field. I did like baseball though; I loved fielding in practice. It was like fetch and I just wanted to run.
At the end of my second baseball season, I was frustrated and disappointed because the coaches thought I shouldn’t continue in baseball. They recommended I switch over to softball, where I could play with girls. I remember feeling really let down that I was a bad baseball player. The impression was that I had been “too weak to make some of the throws” and that I would be a better player and have a better experience playing with the girls (interview).

Figure 5-2. Youth softball team. Photo courtesy of author.

The next season I tried out for softball. One field. A few teams of girls. Ground balls were hit at me to field from a short stop position and throw to first. The ground balls were routine, and the throw was easy. There was a “where did she come from?” sentiment among the coaches because of the advanced skill I already held. I hadn’t had great expectations about how I would be as a player because my baseball coaches told me I wasn’t good enough to play. But softball was SO EASY. I could field and catch and throw better than nearly all the girls (none of us hit well); despite having been “too weak” to make the throws in baseball, I was the best athlete at softball, and maybe the best player. Softball would be a constant for me through high school, as would being among the best, if not the best softball player on my teams or in my league.
I had gone from not good enough at fielding and throwing to play with the boys in baseball to being the best at fielding and throwing among the girls, including those who had played for years. It was another example, like I saw in free play at school, that girls weren’t the same caliber player as boys. The baseball coaches moved me to softball because that was where I belonged: with the lesser players.

Softball was the first sport that was organized, or privately structured, that I entered with the tools to survive the context. I better understood, because I was getting a little bit older, how the coaches, players, and I fit together in practices and in games. I learned the social structures of team sport through softball. Or perhaps I should more accurately say that I observed the social structures of team sport, or began to be able to negotiate how I fit into the team structure, because assimilation into the structure was difficult for me; even though I had the sport skill, I didn’t have the social skill to interpret and demonstrate the “appropriate” behaviors consistently. I’d like to say that I developed the skills to assimilate into a team structure later in my sport career, but I don’t know that I did. As an athlete, I’m not sure how much I changed, or learned assimilation skills to fit into the context or how much increasing levels of competitiveness and demands in-context evolved across my career to more effectively reflect what I wanted out of playing – to be the best and to win.

I was exceptionally competitive, and I had “a temper”. In softball, specifically, I was a problem child. I was a strong willed and fearless player with an undeveloped set of social skills already, particularly gendered skills like how to talk to others with humility or how to know when my aggression was out of bounds. In softball, more so than in any other sport (even into high school), I had catastrophic meltdowns. When I was embarrassed by my performance or when a play came down to a wrong call by an umpire, I threw a fit. I was a powder keg.
But I was also the best player, and I was vocal – I organized the plays, baited runners into getting off base to tag or throw them out, called pitches, etc. I started out at short stop when I was young because I could cover most of the infield and make all the throws. Eventually I was moved to catcher where I could run the game. I was the “different player” on every team I played for. I had all the elements – advanced skill, advanced understanding of the game and how to exploit that, and fearless vocal leadership – I was ALWAYS talking, directing, organizing.... and definitely always edgy, even at 8 years old. I had all the elements to be a leader, to be “the man”, but my hyper competitiveness and difficulty navigating social constraints dictated that I was “a problem child”, and my social “deficits” meant that I was socially ostracized by my teammates. I wasn’t accepted socially by my teammates and I wasn’t accepted socially by my peers in school (until I made a small group of girlfriends in high school), but I did win the 3rd grade pull up contest.

I didn’t spend time with girls, with few exceptions, outside of my softball team throughout my childhood. I didn’t fit in with them. Though I wanted them to like me, I didn’t want or know how to “act more like a girl”, as I felt an implicit pressure to. I knew that I should like to do the things the other girls in school liked to do, but I just wanted to run, to play. At recess, at lunch, in PE class, I was not a girl, I was an athlete. I didn’t understand why the other girls didn’t want to or weren’t “good enough” (in my eyes) to play with the boys. I played with the boys; I played a lot of football with the boys. When I was playing, I knew I didn’t fit in with the boys socially, but I didn’t have to mask, or try to fit into what they were doing – because I knew how to play.

It was a stark contrast: the girls from my class sat in a loose circle at lunch time, with their backpacks and often books (maybe as a prop), out at the field, but just off to the side. I tried
it a few times... I tried to join the circle, but not only did I not want to be there, the girls didn’t want me there – I was awkward and loud, or silent, and when I just randomly showed up every few months to try it again, because it was obvious to me that I was supposed to want to sit with them to talk, I was rejected, ignored. I didn’t know how to talk to them; I didn’t know how to “girl” in elementary or middle school.

So, excluding the rare, random attempt at “girling” every now and again, I played. Every break we had – before school started, recess, lunch – we played (the boys and I), and almost all of the play included a ball. Football was our go-to. It wasn’t real football. It was one boy who “hiked” the ball to another boy who was the “quarterback”, and the rest of us ran downfield at the snap trying to be the one receiver the quarterback chose to throw to, with no prior plan or play call. It was throw and catch chaos. And I lived in it. In those moments of play, I was completely immersed in physically performing in whatever way I thought was necessary. I was more athletic, I was insanely competitive, and I didn’t care what I had to do to make a catch or to defend a throw – I was in collisions with boys or with the ground on most plays. I loved hitting. Real football was a perfect fit for me.

The first season we registered for Pop Warner football, my registration got lost, likely confused with a registration for cheerleading (interview). After realizing that the practices had started, my mom took me out to the middle school where the teams practiced, to recoup our money from the registration fee. We found a woman in the concession stand who looked connected and explained to her that we had registered me to play but had never heard from the coach. The woman behind the counter looked down on me and asked: “Do you want to play football?”
I lit up. I’m sure I looked at my mom for permission, but I don’t remember anything except for that hot-red anticipation about being able to play. Of course I told her “yes”, and I can’t imagine the heat behind my assent, but she walked out the back door of the concession stand and told us to follow her.

The concession-stand woman led us through a maze of team practices being conducted and presented me to a coach. With censure in her voice that I didn’t understand at the time but did note, concession stand woman told the coach that I had registered to play but never heard anything from the team, and that I wanted to play. The coach looked at me and asked me, again, if I wanted to play. I very much wanted to play. He wasn’t so sure.

He called the team over, about 25-30 boys, introduced me by name, and told them I wanted to join their team. I remember that I felt more comfortable in that moment than I ever felt trying to figure out how to appropriately sit in the girls’ circles at lunch.
Figure 5-4. Youth football newspaper article. Image of Vista Press article captured from personal effects.
His introduction held a challenge in it, almost a “yeah- you think you want to play football? Ok, let’s see.” He told the team to line up on one of the chalked boundaries in the practice area – shoulder to shoulder. We were going to race. He told me to line up with them and explained to all of us – I was on the cusp of being part of the “us” of the team – that we were going to race to the other side of the field boundary, which was about 50 yards away.

No problem. I don’t remember feeling anything that I probably should have been feeling – I wasn’t nervous, I didn’t feel like everyone was looking at me with side-eye (though they probably were), and I wasn’t uncertain. I was ready to race. It was who I was. He yelled: “Down, Set, Hut”, mimicking the pattern of ready-set-go, and I took off. I won the race by yards. It wasn’t even close. I was much faster than the boys. Coach made us do it again. The second race had the same results. After the second race, he looked at my mom and said: “OK, let’s get her some pads.”

Football became my main sport through middle school and into high school. In my first year, Coach made me the running back on offense and the “rover” on defense. On offense, I got the ball so I could run. On defense, I had no position – my job was simply to go wherever I needed to go to make the tackle. I settled into a linebacker’s starting position, moving in behind the down tackles pre-snap, trying to figure out where the play was going. I was the best player on the team. And I wasn’t a problem child or discipline case in football, ever. I loved to run and hit. The sport was made for me.

I was the only girl in my town’s Pop Warner; there had never been a girl play football before me. I was also the only girl in the league that was comprised by other local cities’ Pop Warner teams. I never “made friends” with the boys on my football teams. But I did fit in as a teammate. Rarely, with some exceptions, did any of the boys on my team explicitly insult or
bully me for being a girl. The ones who did give me a hard time were usually the boys who
didn’t play much, and so their voice didn’t carry much weight.

As I developed as a player, and as the boys developed into young men, my positions in
football evolved. I played full-back my second year and was moved to receiver on offense in my
third year. Defense was where I found my niche, though. I developed into a smart, disciplined,
and flat out mean left defensive end after two years at linebacker. I was a hard- hitter.

Figure 5-5. Youth football newspaper article. Image of Vista Press article captured from personal
effects.

On the rare occasion, there were reminders that I wasn’t exactly an insider on the team.
The game was always just the game and the coaches rarely treated me different from the boys,
especially in-play. However, there were instances, like jokes about taking snaps as a quarterback
with my hands under the center’s genitals, that were served up as light-hearted ribs at me or the boy playing center.

The jokes and the shows of masculinity were just part of the culture of football – they taught me how to survive in the men’s locker room. Baked into my experiences in football were implicit and explicit lessons about how to show power through masculinity and truths about how boys became men through football, and the socialization of hyper-masculine locker-room culture. For example, at a practice, in the 7th grade, the running back fumbled the football, and our new coach threw a fit; he wanted to make sure that we understood how valuable the ball was and how to hold the ball properly without fumbling or getting it stripped, and to make his coaching point, I couldn’t be in the team circle. Coach called the team together after the fumble and told me to go stand in a spot about 30 yards away, by myself, away from the team. I had no idea what was going on, but I went and stood away from the team as instructed.

Figure 5-6. Youth football newspaper article. Image of Vista Press article captured from personal effects.
About a minute later we got back to practice drills. I asked the boys later what the circle was all about, but most of them didn’t want to tell me. Later in the practice, one of the guys I got along with told me. Coach brought the boys together to explain that, when you hold a football, you hold it by the points with both hands and hold it close to your chest. The way he explained how important it was to hold on to the points of the football was by likening holding it to holding “a set of tits – hold on tight to those because you don’t ever want to let go”. That’s why he didn’t let me in the circle – his coaching point was how to hold on to the football like “tits”.

Figure 5-7. Youth football coaching delivery. Photo courtesy of author.

I rarely had moments in football when I felt awkward because of my gender. I played like the boys, and the boys played like me. But the lesson about a female body and how, through a fumble analogy, it should be valued by boys was extremely awkward for me. Puberty was coming for all of us. In school, the social discrimination between boys and girls was drawn along feminine and masculine bodies as well as personality characteristics. I didn’t act like the other girls, and I wasn’t physically maturing like the other girls. In the 7th grade, at the time that Coach told my football team to hold on to the points of a football like a woman’s tits, I was still a long way from puberty. The gap between what a girl was supposed to be and look like, and who I was and what I looked like, was widening.
High School

My freshman year in high school, I made the freshman football team. I was 99 pounds. The coaches moved me to defensive back from my normal defensive line position because I couldn’t compete at defensive end, but I could at D-back; I was still top five in fastest players. I could fly. What the high school coaches didn’t tell me was that I should pick my battles – I had played as an “older/lighter” on my Pop Warner team because of my weight. My football career ended in a practice at the very end of the tryout process, when I took on a 230-pound pulling guard and lost. I never played another down; I quit football that day.

Figure 5-8. Youth football picture. Photo courtesy of author.
Into high school, football and softball had been my sports. Down football, with high school softball season was in the spring, I needed a fall and a winter sport. An upper classman, and one of the school’s revered athletes, a 5’8” athletic, perfect-bodied blonde, invited me to join the field hockey team with her in the fall season. Field hockey was not the sport for me. There were rules that you couldn’t run through someone.

I didn’t like the field hockey coach, and she didn’t like me very much. I was an excellent prospect for her, and she was very excited about that, but when “the me” arrived out of a football pre-season, I was much more than she could handle. I was a discipline case. Coach regularly engaged me in power struggles. In my freshmen year, she challenged me to a push up contest in front of the whole team. She didn’t win the push up contest, and I phrase it as that – passively – because I later figured out that my life would have been a lot easier had I let her win. Over the next four years, I was the best player and her worst problem. She coached me in a way that I can only explain as rooted in claiming power over me. She coached every move of mine in a way that she didn’t with other players.
For my winter sport, I chose soccer. My freshman year, I made the Junior Varsity (JV) team as a goalkeeper, because I severely lacked any skill with my feet. My first jersey was hot pink with black padded sleeves and little 1’s all over it. I had big black padded shorts too. And I was a linebacker again. What I lacked in skill and any tactical understanding of the game I more than made up for with my fearlessness, disregard for bodily harm, and competitiveness that often bordered, and sometimes crossed the threshold of, an unsportsmanlike mean streak. I played nearly every minute that JV season as a first time soccer player, though I shouldn’t have – I should have been ejected several times. I didn’t know it then, but looking back now, that bright, shiny pink jersey, and my hair in a long blonde ponytail probably insulated me from being ejected for the fouls I committed: running through and over players in the box for sport.

Figure 5-10. JV soccer newspaper article. Image of Vista Press article captured from personal effects.

The JV season in my freshman year changed the course of my playing career. That winter, I was recruited to join a club soccer team by a JV coach from another high school who was part of the local elite club soccer landscape. The U15 club team was my entry into a playing and coaching career in soccer.
I had been the best player on all of my teams throughout my youth sport experiences, nearly exclusively, unless I had been playing up an age group (or weight group). When I joined the club soccer team, it was the first time that I was the worst. I wasn’t only a bad player, my general lack of skill, such as not being able to kick a ball, was embarrassing for my teammates at times.

I had better athleticism than the other players on my new team, but an observer wouldn’t have known it because I was so bad at soccer. I had an upside as a goalkeeper though, because I had been a catcher. I was very good at getting my body behind the ball. That was my start. When I got thrown into a soccer lion’s den of players who had been competing at elite travel levels, I wasn’t a problem child. I played for that team and that coach throughout my elite sport pathway and I was never a discipline case, just a “crazy goalkeeper” to be managed. Goalkeepers had a reputation for that, and it suited me perfectly.

My spring season in high school was always going to be softball. Entering my freshman year, the softball coaches already knew that I was a discipline case; I wasn’t new to softball. I had gone into tryouts being confident that I would make the varsity team because I was a better prospect and a better talent than many of the players on varsity; but I was put on the freshman team. Some of the other freshman who I had played with for years made JV. I never told anyone in administration or any of the other coaches, but she, the freshman team coach, teased me mercilessly for not looking like a girl. I broke 100 pounds and got my period at the end of that year. After that season, the high school softball staff turned over, including my freshman team coach. The Head Coach who took over was not familiar with my local reputation as a discipline case or did not care, and I played varsity softball for the next three years. The new coach taught me how to slap hit from the left side of the plate. I had always been a “different” payer in how I
Figure 5-11. Varsity softball newspaper article. Image of Vista Press article captured from personal effects.
managed the field, but I had been an average hitter. After Coach taught me how to slap hit, my batting average was in the 800s in my senior year. I was the number two high school recruit out of California when I graduated.

The softball pathway took me from youth to being rostered on the freshman high school team in my freshman year to playing summer ball with the NCAA players from UC Irvine and Cal State Fullerton in my junior and senior years of high school. I didn’t know that my softball or soccer trajectories could carry me into elite college sport blindly. I just wanted to play. No one ahead of me went on to play in college and I wasn’t focused on it, because moving on to play in college became a natural progression. It was what needed to happen for me to be able to continue playing something, anything. I didn’t know anything about the prospect or process of playing in college, it was nothing more than what was going to happen next.

I didn’t end up choosing to play softball in college, though. The club soccer team I joined in my freshman year of high school opened doors to an identity that I embraced: I was a goalkeeper, and I chose soccer. The fall of my sophomore year in high school, I started to train. I loved to train. I had always been with a ball and a wall since I could remember, but playing for an elite, privatized youth soccer organization (PYSO) with a Director of Coaching, training curricula, and specialized goalkeeper training folded my “ball and a wall” training mentality into a professionalized training structure.

In a very short period of time, I got be a very good goalkeeper. I could read the flight of high balls because I loved to play fetch, and I was learning how to dominate and control the game from in behind the line of the defense: my coach allowed me to, and my teammates either accepted it or dealt with it – I’m not sure which. That became a pattern for me.
In my senior year with the club, my club coach funded the registration fee to a goalkeeper camp that would lead me to the US National Team. The camp was headed by the goalkeeper coach for the National Team who saw me play for the first time in that summer after my junior year in high school. I fit in at TopFlight Camp; I stayed with TopFlight through my junior year in college – attending as a camper again after my senior year in high school, then joining the staff when I was in college. TopFlight was as much my introduction to the National Team staff as it was my introduction to coaching. The camp was central to my goalkeeper identity, and association with the camp carried an elitist identity itself because it was the place of National Team staff and players (as staff). It was the best in the country hands down, and I was at home.

In the first session of the first TopFlight camp I attended, I was placed in the bottom group based on my playing experience (girl’s travel soccer in the early 90’s). The camp had about 10 groups of 8-10 goalkeepers each, organized on ability. There was an individual performance-based promotion-relegation system that played out on the first full day of camp: the best player(s) in a lower group were promoted and the weakest player(s) in a higher group were relegated to a lower group. In the end, the objective was to make each of the groups in the division as homogeneous as possible in terms of ability. Groups were not based on gender – only based on ability to compete and train in one’s respective group. I only trained in the bottom group for my first session; for the afternoon session, I was promoted to the #2 group. I was the only girl in the second group, and no girls were in the first group. There were also no female coaches in the camp.

The boys in my group treated me as a competitor and the staff was, as I can best describe, surprised, impressed, and often entertained by what I would call an “immersion fury”. I played at 1000 miles an hour in every activity and never backed down from directing or organizing,
breathing fire at times toward the boys or the staff coaches, who often played with us in the sessions.

That camp is what landed me a partial (2/3) scholarship to play in college. The Head Coach of my college team, a Title IX expansion program, never saw me play in goal. She recruited me based only on the recommendation of the National Team coach and staff from TopFlight.

My most salient identity through my junior year in high school had been as an athlete. In my senior year, that identity became more refined: I was a goalkeeper. At TopFlight camp I had been in an environment where I was immersed in goalkeeping as an activity, but also where I had found others who showed me that goalkeeping was a personality trait: the crazy one, the director/organizer, the one who reveled in the pressures. In a pack of goalkeepers, I learned what it meant to be “a goalkeeper”. I carried that identity to school.

My senior year in high school, on the inside, and with my club team, I was an unbound goalkeeper; however, the goalkeeper traits were not as appreciated among my peers, or at least those who were distant from me, as acquaintances. As high school seniors, we were all maturing, and the lines between the cool kids, the nerds, the outcasts, etc. were blurring. I was tight with my circle of four girlfriends and was able to hold on to social capital with the nerds from my advanced-placement classes for the most part, but I had gone from (a) the weird kid to (b) the weird “girl who played football” to (c) the weird, over-confident, loud braggart. At our senior class assembly, I won “biggest ego” in the class superlative competition, and was gifted an ornately fashioned, purple hand-held mirror that looked like it was purchased at the Dollar Store. I still have the mirror.
After the mirror episode at the assembly in the gym, at which another classmate was awarded “most athletic” (girls division), I didn’t want to be embarrassed again. So, when Senior Appreciation Night came around (the ceremony that celebrated the seniors and their school accomplishments and plans for after graduation) I pulled my name from being recognized. One of our football players had earned a scholarship to play D1, a basketball player was headed to play D2, and I had my 2/3 scholarship to State to play in the premier women’s D1 conference, but I was absolutely not going to walk across that floor – I was not going to give anyone a chance to think I was “showboating”. I watched from the bleachers as the two boys were celebrated for their athletic grants in aid.

**College**

I went into my freshman year in college as the unknown underdog. The roster was a mixed bag of mostly freshman with a few upperclassmen transfers because the program was just kicking off. I was one of three freshman goalkeepers; I was slated to be the number two. The goalkeeper ahead of me had been a Regional-team goalkeeper, and I had never made my State team in ODP.

The Olympic Development Program (ODP) was then, and is now (though to a lesser degree of importance in the youth soccer landscape), a national talent identification and training program in US Youth Soccer (USYS). It is organized around geographically grouped states that fold into four regions of the country that fold into youth national teams. I had tried out in my local district every year, finally making it to the State level in my senior year, but never beyond that. ODP was the fertile ground for developing and identifying soccer talent, and the players on the National and Regional teams were the gold standard of recruiting prospects. I had always been rated as an athlete at ODP, but never as a goalkeeper. I was recruited off word-of-mouth, and I don’t think my college coaches knew what to expect with me.
The sheer ignorance of not knowing what I had gotten myself into, coupled with my coaches’ low expectations for performance, insulated me from any sense of pressure or fear. Coming out of pre-season camp, I had secured the number one spot.

We weren’t very good, but we played hard and fast, and reactionary; in goalkeeper-speak, I was “standing on my head” every game, which means that I was haphazardly but effectively playing like my ass was on fire – we all were... we had no idea what we were doing. In my freshman season, my team was the premier first-year program ever, and the only one to make the NCAA tournament. We lost in the first round, as we would every year I was at State, but I earned the honor of being named Second team All-Conference goalkeeper my freshman year, behind a National Team player.

I didn’t get along very well with the number two goalkeeper on my team. In my eyes, she was “the chosen one”, and I resented that. I often felt that my coaches coddled her and wanted her to be the goalkeeper they had hoped for. And she was weak, or passive by nature; she didn’t have fight to her. And I bullied her – stepping in front of her to take reps when it wasn’t my turn, or trash talking when she made an error or I made a play. I thought I was competing, and I didn’t see anything wrong with treating her that way because all I cared about was playing, and winning... I cared a lot about winning.

I entered State as a sophomore academically because I tested out of most pre-requisites through standardized advanced placement tests in high school. I was an excellent, if non-present student. It was my academic excellence that landed me in my first conflict with my coaches at the beginning of that first fall semester.

Study hall was mandatory for all incoming freshman student athletes for a minimum of one semester. However, my incoming freshman class (across the athletic department) exceeded
the capacity for the study hall rooms in the academic center for State athletes. Due to the overflow of athlete bodies that year, the academic support staff selected a handful of high-achieving students (based on high school and incoming academic records) to be exempted from study hall. There were only about 15 of us across the athletic department selected as study hall exemptions; I was the only player on the soccer team identified. I was notified by my team’s academic advisor that I was exempted.

My coaches intervened.

It was their position that I should not be treated differently from the other freshmen on our team. It was my position that I had done the work before-hand – that the exemption from study hall was an outcome of studying in high school... that it was something I had earned. None of the other athletes exempted were forced into the pre-canned two-hour study block by their coaches. It felt like they were punishing me for being good at school, like they were stripping from me something that made me special. Their justification was that if all the other freshmen on the team had to endure study hall, then I had to – they wanted to make sure they treated everyone “the same”. But they didn’t insist on “treating everyone the same” in many other circumstances, and I wasn’t “the same” as my teammates academically. In the end, I spent two hours every night in study hall that fall, but I refused to do any studying, on principle. I was nothing but disruptive.

My sophomore season went without much fanfare. I entered the season as the pre-season pick for All-Conference, and followed through wire-to-wire, being named to the Conference first team at the all-team banquet.

After my sophomore season, I went “on tour” with TopFlight goalkeeper camp. “On tour” meant I joined the traveling circus of soccer camps: 6-8 weeks of moving, week to week, to a different site across the country to be staff coach. The staff at the camp was mostly untamed
college goalkeepers, and the people managing us were college coaches: former players and some National Team staff. The college players I was coaching and competing with were both men and women from college programs all over the country, primarily D1. It was at those camps that I gained a foothold in coaching. I loved eyeing every micro-detail of movement to be able to show and explain (teach) to the campers. The degree of depth in detail in technical training for goalkeepers drew me in, and I was very good at seeing it, showing it, and translating it to the players. I really bought into the art of teaching goalkeeping that the camp delivery was designed around; I really liked coaching.

The strangest thing about the TopFlight camps were that they were both the most safe and comfortable space I had felt since football, and concurrently silently toxic (interview). This was TopFlight... where I fit in – always had – from my first step onto the upper field on that cliff in La Jolla in the summer after my junior year in high school. These were my people. Training was hard, but I knew what to expect, and I LOVED training. That feeling – when I finished a session, sitting on the ground recovering with a water bottle, soaked in sweat with an ice bag or two secured to some part(s) of me – that’s where I lived. I lived in the physically exhausting work and the solace that followed.

At TopFlight, we DID “demos”. The demos were supposed to be about teaching. But they weren’t – they were about training, and competing, and trash-talking and out-performing the other staff coaches. Demos sometimes took up half the sessions. I ruled the demos. I was a phenomenon in personality and in goal. In my life, I was very rarely the “cool kid”; I was royalty at TopFlight, or at least it felt like it. I felt like “the chosen one”. The first camp I attended in my junior year in high school put me “on the radar” for the National Team. That summer of my sophomore in college put me into the fold.
The summer between my sophomore and junior years, I was ten feet tall, or as I used to refer to my height: 6’3” with gloves on. I was so proud, so confident and optimistic about who I was and could be as a goalkeeper. That summer, I won the extension dive demo, which was unthinkable. The ball I won on was bent into the top corner: I took off at a run, launched off my left foot, and time stalled. I didn’t hold it, but I deflected it around the juncture of the crossbar and post. The next week, in the next city, the Head Coach of the camp had had it with less-skilled staff coaches muddying up the demos. What he meant was the women. What he said was that “if you aren’t good enough to be able to make the play, don’t jump into the demo”. Coach didn’t like that the demo quality was being dragged down by the women, though the women played at very high-level programs.

Coach’s message was: “If you can’t get up, don’t get in. Nathan (D1), David (D1), Hugo (former pro), Meredith (me), kind of, can get up”. Get up, in this case, meant fly. I had won the demo contest yet my ability was qualified with a “kind of” when compared to the male staff, and the message itself about keeping out of demos if you couldn’t win was new: demos were open for all staff because they operated as our summer training. I wasn’t insulted, but I was heartbroken that Coach, who I had known from my first camp as a junior in high school, who was in my corner, had qualified my ability. His message folded into a tension I held myself about my positioning around the other women. While I was ashamed and embarrassed that Coach had diminished me in the staff meeting, he had aligned me categorically with the men, as distinguished from the *other women* in that conversation. Privately, I was pleased with being categorized with the men because it meant that I was better than the women – I liked that I had been differentiated.
Another TopFlight tradition was the set of common phrases, coaching points, or activities that were carried week to week, year to year, that were embedded in the trash talk and banter. When we would call out “you’re in” to exchange in the demo, the response was: “DON’T CALL ME AN EXCRETION!”; when a female staff member would execute a dive or other movement that resulted in open legs, a male staff coach might audibly mumble “TUNA” (interview); when the coaching point “stay off your knees” was used tongue in cheek, it was to draw the response: “lesson in goalkeeping – lesson in life”. One of the activities in the first session each week, in the warm-up, was to have all of the campers straighten their arms above their heads and jump up and down. That was so the men on staff could watch the high school girls’ breasts bounce. I didn’t learn that until later. I don’t know how many other grossly sexist sayings or gestures I had simply not noticed because I didn’t know to, and consequently, don’t remember (interview). I also don’t remember how many times I laughed at or espoused blatant sexism in front of young people. I did know that, even when I was uncomfortable about what was said or done, it didn’t apply to me, and it wasn’t my place to confront it; the jokes and sayings and behaviors were simply part of the camp that I had to get on board with or just ignore (interview).

The conflict between the sexism, much of which I didn’t see, and the space being an exact fit for me, where I shined, is still difficult to negotiate. The gross jokes, the inappropriate gestures, the inappropriate relationships, and the disrespect and disregard for the *other women* slid right by me as part of it being what it was. I was the one who was the “chosen one” and in my mind, the *other women* were simply not as good as I was, and the jokes weren’t a slight or anything to be offended about – they were just how we talked at camp.

Coming out of that camp, heading into my junior year, I was exactly where I should be. I was flying. I was again, pre-season all-conference and was one of the best goalkeepers in the
country. Or at least I had the potential to be. I was fit, I was prepared, I was confident, and I was working on being the leader my State coaches wanted me to be. I made a deal with my number two that pre-season: I would help her through the sprint series for our fitness test and I asked her to help me with the long run.

In our third game of the season, I shattered my middle finger on my right hand. I was fortunate that we were only in the third game, because I hadn’t played more than 25% of my season so was granted a medical redshirt. I had a total reconstruction on my middle finger in my right hand. I hadn’t wanted surgery, I wanted them to cut it off; I’m glad now that they didn’t take that seriously, because I was serious.

The surgery was delicate, and I had to see a hand specialist for it. I was wrapped up for about 2 months – meaning I couldn’t do anything. When I was cleared to start fitness and lifting (I wasn’t cleared to catch for several months), I went to my strength coach, Johnson, and asked him to make me stronger. As was the case with all of our strength coaches, Johnson’s primary role was with football, and he was as also assigned to women’s soccer as his *other* team. That fall, once I was cleared, I hit the weight room with Johnson so I could be stronger and get beat up less (I was a small goalkeeper). I got very strong: I set the leg press record for female athletes late in the fall. What I also got was slow.

That winter I was invited into my first National Team camp. I hadn’t played or trained in the fall season, but I was invited on what I had showed in my sophomore year and at TopFlight camps. Even my college coach was surprised – she thought I had been invited into the U20 camp, because I was still 19, but I had been invited into the full team camp. My roommate was Brandi Chastain.
I was a deer in headlights at that camp. I hadn’t had any experience with youth Regional or youth National Team camps because I never made my State ODP team. This was brand new to me and was the biggest stage. I was strong, but I had weight-trained out of what made me good. I was slow, and I couldn’t jump. I was not even close to the goalkeeper who won the extension dive contest 6 months before. My evaluation my first National Team camp was that I needed to work on my explosion. My explosion had been what made me the best. I didn’t get my legs back until my fifth year.

Figure 5-12. National Team soccer picture. Photo courtesy of author.

The following spring, I was invited back into the National Team for the post-Olympic friendly tour. I was rostered and on the bench for two games with them. I was still a strong candidate to be the “next” goalkeeper after Brianna Scurry retired; I was one of three who were “next” candidates. My play in the training sessions was average – I didn’t not belong, but I wasn’t special. I didn’t get brought back into a National Team camp for two years.

That spring, at home (at State), I trained. I trained to get my legs back; I trained to get my head back; I trained to be ready for my fall season after having missed the prior year. In my redshirt junior year, I had expected to step into my starting role as the leader and among the best,
if not the best, player on the team – I was the only one with full National Team experience. I still wasn’t the goalkeeper I had been the year before, but I was working on it, and there wasn’t any competition from my number two, who had played in my absence the season before. I was demonstrably better.

That season didn’t go as planned and would be my last at State. My number two and I started out the season splitting time; I played the hard games, and she played the easy ones. I didn’t like it, but I understood it. The issue became that my coaches weren’t direct or up front about the situation or what their plan was. As we moved into the conference schedule, I was still playing most of the hard games, but my coaches were giving the number two some games that were too close, in my opinion – games that I believed that, as the number one, I should have been on the field for.

Mid-season, I went to Coach and asked her what I needed to do to be the clear starter and to get the games I thought the number one should get. I believed that, at this level – the premier conference in the country – the best player would play. I also believed I was the best player. When I asked her why I wasn’t getting some of the conference games, she told me that my number two “deserves to play”. What I heard was that my coaches were supporting her at my expense. This was my season to play myself into the National Team roster, and I was only playing a portion of the minutes.

It didn’t make sense to me. I was hurt and I was angry. There was no other full National Team player who was sharing playing time because of their coaches’ feelings of debt or gratitude to the back up. I got stuck on: “what can I do, then, to make myself the clear number one and get the games?”
The conversations were circular. I kept going in to meet with my coaches to ask what I could do, or what I needed to improve, or what soccer-based skill deficit I had to rectify to be the clear number one in their eyes. I wanted a soccer explanation for why I was splitting time and I wanted feedback on what I needed to do in-play to get the time a number one would get. Their answer never changed: that the number two “deserves to play”. That answer didn’t make me better, it made me lose faith in them. They were obviously willing to stand by her but weren’t willing to stand by me. I have said on many occasions that I left because I had outgrown my coaches, but in reality, I didn’t trust them or believe in them anymore, and they didn’t believe in me.

The tensions with Coach boiled up at the conference tournament at the end of my second junior season, and she and I got into a (private) shouting match before a game over playing time. I was benched. After we got home, I met with Coach at her office. The bite of anger had passed and we both were in tears, again – we both wanted to work it out. I cried that I wanted to stay, and that the next year I would be everything we both hoped for. She cried that she didn’t want me to leave and that the next year I would be rewarded for my patience and leadership this year. We hugged it out.

Then she called a secret team meeting that I wasn’t invited to discuss my discipline issues. She asked my teammates what they thought about my behavior and she asked them to put forward ideas for “punishment” for me. What was decided in that meeting, which I was not aware of nor invited to, was that I would be suspended for the first round of the NCAA tournament. That ended it for me.
I graduated, took the GRE, and was accepted to the Counseling program at University. I was going to play my fifth year at University – if the coach would have me. She wasn’t sure at first.

The first time I met the coach at University, I walked in like a gladiator. I was a first team all-Conference, National Team goalkeeper and I thought she would fold at my feet in hopes of getting me on her team. She didn’t. She told me that there was “another discipline case” on the team and that IF that player decided not to return the next year that she would “allow me to walk on to her team”. She knew I was coming; she had heard the details from my coaches at State. I walked into her office barely being able to fit my ego through the door, I walked out having had

Figure 5-13. College soccer newspaper article. Image of Gainesville Sun article captured from personal effects.
my knees cut out from under me. I hadn’t met her before, and I respected her immediately. I played my fifth year at University.

I was a married 5th year senior when I showed up to pre-season camp (I got married that summer, as I was changing programs). I wasn’t the best player at University, but I was top few – we were very good; six of us turned out to be pros, of those six, four of us spent time with the National Team, with one of those being an exceptional player for the US for an era. The players at University were MUCH TOUGHER than the players at State had been; I was in good company and I was a personality among them (interview). In pre-season training camp, one of the star incoming freshmen took issue with a rough tackle in practice and had a go one of our seniors who had been a walk-on until that year. That wasn’t going to fly with one our captains, who sternly reprimanded the freshman, explaining to her that “that was how we trained”. That senior captain was about business and leadership and standards and care; that senior walk-on was about effort and passion and a LOT of talking... and they went to war for each other (interview).

We had a lot of personalities on that team but that was never the part that mattered. What mattered was that, there, on that field, we would take everyone as they came, and we would fight arm in arm to win (interview).

I like to tell the story of that year as: Coach only had one rule for me: that I couldn’t wear a shower cap on the field (interview). I wasn’t a discipline case on that team because she didn’t make me one; she didn’t try to make me fit into what she thought I should be, she just dealt with what I was and hoped that I could help her win. Her one rule was imposed on me on a trip we took mid-season. It was raining and would be for warm-ups, and likely the game, so I had pulled the shower cap from my hotel room and wore it on the bus ride to the field. It was a joke and I
was ridiculous, but my teammates egged me on about wearing it to play in, and I thought that was a great idea. I’m not sure if the shower cap was just a little too far for Coach, or if she chose the smallest, most inconsequential power struggle to engage me in, but she did not let me wear that shower cap off the bus.

Figure 5-14. College soccer picture. Photo courtesy of author.

Coach’s favorite story about me was, not surprisingly NOT the shower cap story, but came from our national semifinal game. As she tells it, because I’ve heard it from her many times, she was watching one of the few plays we had on the attack in that game when she came face to face with me at our bench around midfield. She explains that most of play was in our end throughout the game, but on one play in the first half when we had a sustained attack, she looked up from where she was standing in the bench area to come face to face with me, who was playing as her goalkeeper at that moment. I didn’t play the position in a traditional or conservative style, and was regularly entirely too far off my line and out of position – I often played the position out of position. Being at midfield was not new or uncomfortable for me when we were on the attack. However, I wasn’t at midfield in that national semifinal because it was part of the play, I was at the bench at midfield because I had been kicked in the head and wanted
to tell them – to be looked at. It had happened on the previous play in a scrum for the ball where I had ended up on the ground (which was my job). I had a decent bump on my head, but there weren’t significant concerns about head injuries at the time, and this definitely wasn’t my first one. In all reality, I was fine – I had a welt on my head, but nothing was going to change that or my job in the game.

As Coach tells it, she looked up from watching our attack and saw me standing in front of the bench and yelled at me “GET BACK THERE!”, pointing to my goal box. I retreated yelling into the ether “THEY KICKED ME IN THE HEAD AND NOBODY CARES!” We were both right. I’m not sure if that was her favorite story because it was so outrageous and unexpected that she should find me at midfield at that moment in that game or if it’s her favorite story because of the outrageous and comical exchange we had as she sent me back to my lair, but I do know we both tell the story from a place of mutual respect and fondness for one another. That year we won the NCAA National Championship and I was named NCAA Tournament Defensive MVP.

**Post-College Play and Transition into Coaching**

After I finished playing at University, Coach hired me into my first college coaching job, as her volunteer assistant. Coaching there is what launched me into the player-to-coach pipeline. Unless I was playing full-time for the National Team, there was nowhere for a college graduate to play, at least not in my area. I knew the first women’s pro league was being formed, so coaching was how I could stay close with the game and make a living while I was still intending to play.

After coaching at University for a season, I was hired as an assistant coach at College. I took that job at College under the agreement that I would be an assistant coach there and play in the WUSA, which was the pro league on the horizon. The 99 World Cup final was the game
Flaherty dreams up huge win

Greensboro, N.C.

Her mind raced back and forth between nirvana and nausea. Meredith Flaherty was supposed to be sleeping, resting up for the biggest Friday of her soccer career, but thoughts drifted in and out of her busy mind.

“What if we win?”
Toss.
“What if we lose?”
Turn.

Those thoughts inevitably turned to the goalkeeper on the other side, , who came into the NCAA women’s soccer semifinal with a 16-match shutout streak, something that is akin to throwing a half-dozen consecutive no-hitters.

“How could she do that?”
Toss.
“I can’t make a mistake.”
Turn.

“it fluctuated back and forth all night,” Flaherty said. “I couldn’t sleep at all.”

The story coming into match against was and her goals-against average of 0.11. The story coming out was Flaherty, who stonewalled the Broncos in an intense, physical battle. won 1-0, ending streak and extending the shocking season. Flaherty wasn’t the only reason for the Gators’ victory, but she was a big one.

“I felt like I had to show up,” Flaherty said, “because of the company. It’s intimidating, the number of shutouts she had. I can understand the magnitude of what she’s done, but I could never even imagine it. I’ve never accomplished anything like that.”

But Flaherty will be in goal in the national championship game Sunday with one mistake, will not.

To call Flaherty unique is to understated her personality. Goalkeepers are supposed to be cool, calm and reserved.

But Flaherty bounces around in goal, screaming at her teammates. In the locker room before the game, she is the one who will fire up the team.

coach remembers when she heard that a goalkeeper from was transferring to attend graduate school.

“We knew absolutely nothing about her,” said. “We’re thinking, ‘if she gets in, we’ll have her on the team.’ We had no idea how good she was.”

What and received was a combination of talent and emotion, a goalkeeper with as much fire as skill. Rather than reel some of that passion in, let it spill all over her team.

“If you try to reel it in, you lose a lot of what she brings,” “It’s never a negative. But I never know what she’s going to do.”

An example: While the waited for injured midfielder to be taken from the field with a huge gash over her right eye, stood near the goal with a concerned look on her face. Suddenly, Flaherty grabbed and shook her around.

“I tend to get too emotional,” Flaherty said. “So emotional. That’s a weakness I have.”

Flaherty said she needed an Advil after the game for a nasty bump rising on her forehead resulting from a tangle at the goal on one of her seven saves.

But it was that has the headache. After stunned the with the first goal against in 1,438 minutes this season, spent the rest of the match trying for a clinching goal but knowing that a more likely path to victory was a shutout by Flaherty.

Time after time, talented forwards had opportunities, only to come away frustrated.

“We had our chances,” forward said. “But their keeper came up big time.”

The best save came when Flaherty lined up on the near post. Flaherty simply turned and threw her body across the goal mouth and tipped it away.

Later in the match, with pressing, shot from 20 yards out toward Flaherty’s upper right corner. The ball seemed to go in slow motion, but Flaherty skied to make the save.

It was a team shutout because with Flaherty playing aggressively, three times players had to make kick saves at the goal line.

“It was definitely a total team effort,” said. “But sometimes an individual steps up to the plate.”

On Friday, that was Flaherty, who said the start of the game felt “surreal.”

Her performance was real. And worthy of a good night’s sleep.

This article has been reprinted from The Gainesville Sun from 12/5/98.
attended by 90,000 in the Rose Bowl, and was to be the game that put women’s soccer on the map. From that World Cup performance, the leadership in women’s soccer (which was mostly players) was able to secure investors to launch the Women’s United Soccer Association (WUSA), the first US pro league for women’s soccer.

Because I was in the National Team pool at the time, I was one of the 50 original signees who committed to playing in the WUSA – our signing demonstrated to the investors and those thinking about entering the draft that the league was legitimate. I wasn’t one of the allocated National Team players – each franchise was allocated 3 full-team players to generate excitement and ensure parity in the league – but I was one of the top-rated players who would comprise the league; I signed to enter the draft for the first season of professional women’s soccer.

There were several circumstances that dictated that I never entered that draft. The primary reason that I pulled my name last-minute that spring was because my husband did not want me to enter the draft – he didn’t see how I would be able to play and maintain my coaching job, which was our only income. The secondary reason was that my job coaching at College was not at all what I had expected, and I had to take on far more of the program than I had anticipated. I didn’t play in the inaugural year of the WUSA, and I was fired from College eight months later.

The Head Coach at College, had hired me from the University program. My job responsibilities on the staff centered on the on-field operations, such as training, and recruiting; my counter-part’s responsibilities were mostly logistics and administration, such as scheduling and travel. While these duties were typical divisions of labor, and were expected, the amount of work and time on task that resulted from unforeseen circumstances were not expected.
Only a month or so into working at College, the Head Coach was sanctioned for NCAA violations at his previous (D2) program and forced to hand over the reins of recruiting and on-field delivery altogether; he had major restrictions on interacting with student athletes and recruits. I was essentially running the whole soccer side of a major D1 program in the first months of my first paid coaching job, other than coaching at summer camps. At the end of my spring season (we had been hired in the winter), the Senior Women’s Administrator (SWA) called me into her office. She asked me if I would be willing to take over as head coach if they fired the coach who had hired me.

Years later, I found out that what had transpired in that meeting, between the SWA and me, was what had gotten me fired a few months later: because I didn’t “have his back”. He thought I had been disloyal to him with the athletic department administration.

I arrived at College in January and didn’t even make it to a regular season. I was fired before we started training camp in August. At the time, the only reason I could think of that might explain why I was fired was the conflict he and I had over players and scholarship money that he had unilaterally decided to cut after having not been involved in training, and minimally involved in the limited spring season play. That wasn’t the only conflict he and I had over how the team should be run, but it was the most heated. I was certain that he had fired me because I spoke up about the ethics of cutting former scholarship players outright from the roster, or cutting scholarship amounts for some of the players, without any type of warning to the players, and without a legitimate explanation.

A couple of days after the contentious meeting where I was notified that I was being let go, I scheduled a meeting with the Head AD. I had called for the meeting based on the string of events that had occurred at College: promises unfulfilled, unexpected program sanctions, being
asked to take the program over, then being fired without cause, all within eight months. The Head AD agreed to give me 10k for moving expenses, which had been equal to half of my salary there, to get out of College Town. I took it.

I had no job and no income. With my tail between my legs, and my husband in tow I landed where my family could help us get on my feet. Things moved fast there. In the next three years, I would build a career in child welfare during the day, coach for a youth club at night and on weekends, and piece together a place to play.

The youth club I coached for was a local competitive youth soccer organization. I was a celebrity find for the club admin when I arrived because they didn’t have coaches with my playing resume or college-level coaching experience that I had – the coaches were mostly parents. The club board gave me a couple of the club’s older teams (as the Head Coach), I trained some of the younger teams, and I trained the club’s goalkeepers. The club was my introduction to working in a privatized youth sport organization, which I would end up doing until I left coaching two decades later.

Moving home put me close enough to a United Soccer League (USL) team to be able to train and play. The USL was the top men’s and women’s league in the country in the absence of a national pro league – the USL could be considered professional, semi-professional, or a developmental league for the MLS and was the pro-league for women when the three attempted pro leagues failed before our current NWSL. The team close to me was comprised of mostly former college players, some currently playing, who were within a few hours radius; we trained three times/week and had games on weekends in the summer. I wasn’t able to make all of the team obligations, due to work, but I was able to keep playing that year.
That winter, I told my husband that I was entering the WUSA draft that I had opted out of the year before. It was the second year of the league and I was not going to miss out on playing for another season. It did end my marriage in the end.

I was drafted into the WUSA 7th overall, the first goalkeeper selected in the draft with the first pick of the second round. The draft was the culmination of a combine. I had been to the senior bowl in Mobile, Alabama after my National championship and MVP year at University as a fifth-year graduate transfer, but that was before a pro league even existed. This event, the combine, was similar. We were assigned to teams, which were assigned a coach from the league, and we played for three days. I wasn’t great at the combine, but I was good enough. I wasn’t drafted on how I performed in the combine, I was drafted on how I played in college, and that I was in the National Team pool the year before. But I wasn’t in the pool anymore – I was never invited back into camp after a new Head Coach was named. The new Head Coach of the National Team was zero degrees of separation from the State coaches, in a tightly knit network. I was not welcome in that network.

I was drafted the New York Power, stationed on Long Island. The players new to the club lived in a hotel for preseason, and most of the other players lived out their season with “host families”, because player salaries weren’t commensurate with the cost of living; there was no way that anyone without resources would be able to afford housing in Long Island.

The salaries for the players at the top of a WUSA roster, or those of the two to three allocated National Team players, were around $80k to $120k range; so... high for a female pro athlete, and enough to live on in most places. But the low-end salary… that was about $25k if you made the full roster, or was a $16,000 stipend if you were a reserve player. To boot, the
league limit for roster spots was 16 active players with a handful of inactive players and reserves; opportunities to play were limited.

I earned the starting spot in camp with the Power, over an allocated goalkeeper, but during a pre-season tournament-like trip for final tune ups before league play kicked off, I broke my hip; it was an evulsion fracture. I had kicked the ground (accidentally) warming up for a match and popped a chip off my pelvis. When we went back to New York, the x-rays showed the fracture; the timing meant I wouldn’t make the 16. The Head Coach offered me a reserve spot, but that wasn’t feasible for me at $16k. I retreated home again. I did end up being called back to the Power at the end of that year, and sat on the bench as the back-up.

It took months for that fracture to heal. That summer, I decided several things: 1. That I was no longer going to be married; and 2. That I was no longer going to try to play my way into the WUSA or the National Team; those ships had sailed. When I returned home, I returned to coaching for the local club. Serendipitously, my family’s hometown held a major US Soccer training facility/site, and the U17 boy’s National Team was in long-term residency at the time. That was how I met Archie Hollinger, the Head Coach of the U17 boy’s National Team at the time, and Frank Stans, his assistant.

I was the Head Coach of the U14 girls’ team, and my assistant was Hollinger; his daughter was on that team and he would coach it when he was around, but that wasn’t very often, so I was the Head Coach. I also worked with Hollinger’s younger daughter’s team, the U11s. I think I won Hollinger over when I jumped in front of a cannon of a shot in a training session one evening, and took it right off the bum muscle. I was definitely going to have a welt, but I remember flexing and screaming something about how much I loved the pain. The players didn’t
know how to react, but Archie almost fell over laughing. Hollinger was an excellent coach and a fan/mentor of mine through the final years of my coaching career.

Hollinger thought highly of me, and he was very high ranking in US Soccer, on the youth boy’s side and in coaching education. US Soccer has the most developed coaching education programs of any major sport; the NGB of soccer, US Soccer, is closely linked with every level of soccer in the US. Archie put me into the US Soccer coaching education system.

My first licensing course was the USSF (US Soccer Federation, or US Soccer) B license. The coaching education system in soccer has levels that a coach must progress through to earn the opportunity to move onto the next level. The licensing courses operated as a camp, and candidates were split into four groups of about 20, depending on the size of the course. As one camp, we watched the course instructors run example training sessions on specific topics. In our team groups, we ran practice training sessions – meaning we practiced delivering sessions that we wrote. In both types of sessions – the training segments run by course instructors and the training segment run by the other candidates in our group break-outs, required players. US Soccer uses youth or organized teams for playing sessions now (interview), but at the time, the coaches attending the licensing courses served as the players. The coaches who were good always wanted to play, and the sessions got competitive; the players who weren’t confident in their play didn’t step into the fray. I played in nearly every session.

There were several former pros and high-level players in my B, but of the about 80 candidates, only maybe four were women. I don’t remember the exact number… women were severely underrepresented as candidates in the courses. The other women, one who had been a college player in the ACC, were essentially equally as able players as the men in the camp, but there was a misogynistic feel to playing in the sessions to where: when a woman did play, they
were either treated with kid gloves or they played on the periphery of the activity as less involved. That feel about the role women would play in the sessions was implicit – usually, women tended to not step in to play in the first place (interview) because of self-doubt or fear of failure or criticism, but when a woman did play, accommodations were made by the other players based on their expectations of what she could do, or not do.

I could see it, and we (myself and the other women) talked about it, but I felt insulated from the implicit narrative that I didn’t belong on the field or in the middle of play, partly because I was a goalkeeper. The men wanted me in the sessions because I was better in goal than the other men, of whom few (if any) were accomplished goalkeepers. I never felt any implicit conflict about playing in the sessions at my B, though I would at other courses down the line; the conflict I encountered was more about my commanding style of play than about my ability – I didn’t have to fight to belong on the field with the mishmash/scrappy cadre of men, but that didn’t mean that all the men appreciated my style.

My ability didn’t protect me from the men who didn’t think I should play the way I did – some did not like my style of directing and organizing from in behind my line of defenders. While I was not an experienced or particularly knowledgeable coach yet, I understood how to move defensive players to thwart opponents’ attacks – I knew how to organize a defense and I was not shy about it. While I was able to subvert the barriers to getting on the field in that B course, I needed some support to face down the men who took issue with how I communicated the direction I gave in the run of play.

In one of the early sessions that week, we were in a camp demo session on a defending topic, which put me in behind a back four. As the goalkeeper, it was my job to organize and move my defenders around. In fact, one of the primary lessons of the demo session was about
how to communicate and organize the backs – it was literally a component designed into the session. Part way through the activity, during a stoppage to ask and answer questions, my center back asked our instructor, who was running the session, if he “wanted his goalkeeper yelling over his center back in organizing”. The candidate’s tone in asking the question and the frustration layered into his voice made clear what he meant: he wanted me silenced; he wanted our instructor to tell me to back off and give way to him as the center back and lead on organizing.

Our group instructor, Frank Stans (Archie Hollinger’s National Team assistant) shut him down. I remember feeling so awkward standing there, in front of the three goals I had been flying around to protect (it was the activity), and on display for the candidates to evaluate if my organization was a problem that Stans needed to solve – if I was a problem. I was standing there, for that brief moment before Stans replied to my center back, embarrassed about what I had done to make this man call me out, in front of the whole camp, for being a problem – for being too loud, too much.

Stans responded by turning to the camp and asking them: “what are the three parts of effective communication? Clear, concise, and correct. Was she clear?” They all nodded their heads in assent. “Was she concise?” And they all nodded again. “Was she correct?” They all agreed yes. Then Stans turned to the center back and asked him “so what exactly do you have a problem with?” In that moment, my network had insulated me from being the one who was seen as the problem.

Later that week, the very intensity and immersion in play that could have been shut down by my instructor caught the attention of one of the candidates in the C camp, and one of the C camp instructors. The camps sometimes joined for larger demo training sessions that were
relevant to both sets of candidates in the courses that ran concurrently. Had I been shut down earlier in the week, I might not have felt the same freedom to step in and play in the joint session, or maybe I would have checked my voice to make sure that I wasn’t being too loud or too much, but because Stans had gone to bat for me, I felt free to play as me.

The candidate from the C course, Mike Davis, who had noticed me from the stands during the B/C session, was part of a new mega youth club start up that had also bought a USL team there. Mike explained to me, during a meal in the cafeteria between sessions in our respective licensing courses, that the Arsenal was an experiment that was being launched as a franchise of the highly successful Philadelphia Arsenal youth club. The Arsenal was a premier name in the elite youth soccer landscape, and they were trying to fashion a club in Center City after the one in Philly by combining a set of smaller youth clubs in the area – youth clubs that looked much like my small club in my family’s hometown did.

Mike explained that, if they were able to pull it off and create a viable mega club out of the local organizations, they would need coaches. Mike was going to be a “Director of Coaching” for the CC Arsenal (if it was able to launch); he was one of what would ideally be a set of coaching directors assigned to manage age groups in the club, such as U10 to U12 boys. I wasn’t familiar with the organization of the mega clubs, but what Mike explained to me as the job was quite close to what I had been doing as a Head Coach of some teams and trainer of others, as well as the goalkeepers, for the youth club where my family lived.

The CC Arsenal was also going to field the CC Fire – the Central City W-League team that was funded (unlike my previous USL team) and played in a competitive USL division. There was a lot of disparity in the USL, with some teams and divisions competing at a lower, more local level, and other teams and divisions that were highly competitive (for the most part).
The WUSA was the pro league at the time, but was in its last year (before folding) when I played for the Fire. In conjunction with the uncertainty of the WUSA’s sustainability, the inability to earn a living wage was a barrier to play for those who didn’t have resources – we played in the USL W-League.

When I had thrown in the towel on playing after I recovered from my hip fracture, I didn’t actually stop playing. That summer I played in holding midfield for the lower division USL team. I had agreed to return to the team under the condition that I would play on the field – I wanted to play to just play … to have fun without true effort or expectations that were associated with playing in goal … to play to enjoy it, as opposed to using it to further develop me or position me to get to a higher level.

On April Fool’s Day, the spring following my B course, I packed everything important into my Honda Civic and moved to Central City to take a leap of faith. I ended up running training sessions for the not-yet-created Arsenal that night. The plan was to launch the mega club after a spring season of providing “professional training” to the small clubs being courted to join under the Arsenal banner. That June, we had thousands of youth players file into rosters that would comprise over 100 Arsenal teams – it was our biggest year in terms of club membership. A DOC job had materialized out of my leap of faith. So had the USL team.

I hadn’t been recruited to CC because of my coaching skills; they saw me as a novice coach who had the personality and playing resume necessary to justify offering me a DOC position. I had been recruited to play for their USL team, the CC Fire.

The Fire was coached by two other men who had also been hired as DOCs – two much older coaches who had experience in the local youth game, which could be characterized as
recreational. While I was the men’s colleague in the office and on the youth field, I was their goalkeeper on the playing field.

Figure 5-16. USL soccer picture. Photo courtesy of author.

We (the Fire) were very good. We had two internationals, one who could score at will and another who managed the midfield. We had some high-level ex-college and ex-WUSA players who had been playing at a hyper competitive level for years, and a handful of elite current college players who were hand selected and brought in from all over the country. That season, I was the W-League Goalkeeper and Defensive Player of the Year and World Champion with the Central City Fire (the league hosted teams from Canada). THAT was the last time I played. I coached for the Fire the next year.

Coaching Era

My first DOC role with the Arsenal was with the high school girls’ age group team set, which was U15-U18 brackets, each with 2-3 teams. As a DOC, I was responsible for
administration, coaching support, and weekly training of each of my teams. I was the final voice on rosters, I helped the head coaches of my teams with strategy, and I traveled to games and events as a DOC or as the Head Coach of whatever team was specifically mine.

The soccer side of the club was organized around age groups, with five age group DOCs, a head DOC, and a Technical Director. The Technical Director was the lead sent from Philly to oversee club operations, and the head DOC was a lead in USSF Coaching Education and a former long-time National Team assistant who oversaw myself and the other age group DOCs. Those two coaches became centering points in my coaching career.

The Technical Director, Alan, was a fiery and eclectic man who was far and away the best coach I ever worked with. The head DOC, George McCarthy, scared the shit out of me at first, because I had believed that he had never been a fan of my style of play or personality antics as a player (interview). However, over the years of working with him, I came to believe that everything I thought he disliked about my personality in play were the very characteristics that he loved about my coaching personality. Those two coaches taught me how to coach without stripping “the me” out of it.

I would be with the Arsenal for 12 years across two different franchises. I believed in that group of coaches and in the mission of the organization. What had made us different in the youth soccer landscape, and weirdly marginalized as a club, was that we found every player who wanted to play a place to play. Our competition in the area, Club Stars, used these ideas against us: marketing that we weren’t competitive because we didn’t cut players. That logic never made sense to me. I believed in our organization because I thought we were on the right side of serving kids. I also believed in our organization because it was so easy to follow Alan and George.
Working at the Arsenal was like a variant on an exercise in training – the intensity, level of demands, and time on task in my education process mimicked playing. Training flipped from hitting the ground to analyzing movements and situations through a coach’s perspective. When I first started coaching, I had a tough time reading the game from the sideline. I had only ever watched it from behind the line of defenders so my coaching lens was narrow – I could really only begin to make out how to direct my team defense from my new positioning. My personality, however, was not narrow. I was loud, and I was intense, and I coached every play. I coached like I had organized when I was playing, but in coaching, that was non-stop. So was the work.

I worked 90-hour weeks for years, going months at a time without a true “day off”. My learning curve was exponential. Everything I did was under a microscope, and everything my head coaches (of teams in my age groups) did was supposed be under my microscope. As a DOC staff, we wrote manuals on topics to standardize training sessions across all the Arsenal clubs that were in the planning stages, we sat in staff meetings to pour over roster, team, and player development ideas, and we were expected to be able to explain our training and game plans, decisions, and delivery. I had to explain why I was sitting or standing on the bench at a particular moment in a game, why I made a substitution decision in terms of what it meant as a match up space against the opponent, or why I implemented a rule variation in a training exercise on the fly. The demands for intentionality in every movement and decision had me immersed in learning “the craft”.
It was easy to follow Alan and George because they made the job about being unequivocally exceptional in understanding the game, and unwaveringly dedicated to serving the players. I started out as an assistant to George with the high school girls and was moved into DOC of Youth Girls (U10-U12) in my next year. A couple of years later, after I was moved to DOC of Goalkeeping and the ECNL program, I realized that the DOC of Youth Girls position in the Arsenal was the dumping spot for the female DOC (interview). When I was named DOC of Goalkeeping and the ECNL, I was the only woman DOC across the Arsenal organization domestically who was NOT the DOC of Youth Girls. Most clubs, though not all, did have one, but never more than one, female DOC, but none were in a role other than running U10-U12 girls’ age groups.

I didn’t feel constrained in my club because Alan and George insulated me from feeling that way by assigning me to cover training sessions with boys’ teams or to be on the sidelines for boys’ games in support of the team head coach. I felt as though I was treated by my management as one of their DOCs, not as the female DOC, for the most part. Several years into my tenure with Arsenal, I asked Alan if I could get a boys’ team – each DOC was Head Coach of one or
two teams that were outside of their age-group domain. He told me that he had no problem doing that, that I would be an excellent coach for boys, but that he wouldn’t assign me to a boys’ team because I better served the players and the club working with girls’ teams.

I was never named Head Coach of a boys’ team, but I was moved to DOC of Goalkeepers, which put me on the bench for USSDA games, as the only woman at any one game or event. I was the only female coach working with players in the USSDA that I ever saw or heard about. And the other coaches in my club, with some exceptions, never questioned if I belonged running training for their team or serving as the DOC on their sideline. At least as far as I ever heard.

The only major conflict I had over the years with Arsenal was a constant feud with Austin Charles, a counterpart DOC, whose sexual advances I rebuffed on our first trip together to Seattle in our first season. Austin and I had been off to an excellent start through the leap-of-faith “professional training” sessions designed to gather local clubs under the Arsenal umbrella when, at our first event, Austin put his hand on my knee and rubbed it suggestively while he was driving us back to the hotel in our rental van. His advance didn’t faze me much... I had been in coaching long enough to be comfortable with the sex and sexual innuendo that came with men and women being in coaching spaces together.

It was actually something I both prided myself on and I thought set me apart from other women in how I handled what could be best described as the “coach’s locker room”. I prided myself on not being fazed by sexual advancements or harassment, like it was a patch on my Girl Scout sash – I could survive, compete, and excel in those spaces, in ways that I thought put me above other women, who didn’t survive. I could talk their language – the men’s language – and I could usually turn something in the scenario around into a joke that made me “one of the guys”.

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That was how I felt with my other DOCs – that I was just one of them. Of course, I can’t say for certain that they thought of me as “one of the guys”, but they didn’t seem to hold back in their “locker room talk” when I was around.

After I rejected Austin at the first event of the first season we had as a club, he became an enemy and rival across my tenure with the Arsenal. Over the next years, we would argue about who got to be Head Coach of which team, which players should be placed where, or what the focus in training should be. Generally, we faked a cordial relationship, and we had an unspoken agreement that we would try to keep our conflict away from the players; working together on the girls’ side meant we were on the field together a lot, so there was an expectation that we could be professional when on display.

Alan and George mostly stayed out of the “rivalry” between Austin and me unless it escalated to affect a player or a team, but I never told them why he disliked me so much. I didn’t tell anyone else that Austin had hit on me and I rejected him, ruining our working relationship. None of the other guys ever knew why we didn’t get along.

The Arsenal was my safe-haven because, despite what was dismissed as typical office drama, it provided me with a space, support network, and the leadership that platformed me to learn and grow into a coach. I reveled in the cognitive and behavioral exercises that exposed the nuance of coaching, and I felt valued and protected by the other coaches around me – they were my people. The support of my Arsenal crew extended beyond the club and club activities because so much of elite youth sport, and coaching elite youth sport, plays out across subsets of contexts. Camps, state and league administration, ODP, and coaching education, for example, were environments outside of our club’s office or fields that brought other colleagues into our fold, or put us into theirs.
ODP and USSF Coaching Education were the two primary spaces that I spent time working with my Arsenal family outside of our office. In those spaces, my Arsenal people operated as a protective network. Each of those programs had an organizational power hierarchy that my Arsenal family spanned: at any one time, we were the rookie coaches, experienced coaches, program directors, or head administrators. With few exceptions, in nearly every space I found myself for nearly a decade working with those men, they were there.

**USSF Coaching Education**

At USSF Coaching Education, George was a big-timer. He was a “grandfather” of coaching and coaching education in the US. He ran my A license course in the spring of my first year at the Arsenal. George hadn’t been at my B course the year before because he was running an A course, which was the highest level of licensing in the USSF at the time. At the B, I had been protected by my ability and my network; the A was much of the same story, but with less outward need. The candidates at the A knew that I worked with George and that gave me a privileged status. I didn’t feel privileged at the time, because I was entirely too worried about being the best candidate there so that I could impress him, but I did feel uniquely positioned to confront one of the male candidates who was harassing another woman in the course.

Like it had been in my B course, there were only maybe four women of about 80 candidates. The A ran exactly as the B had: whole camp demo training sessions, break out group training sessions, practice coaching sessions, and testing sessions. The harasser (I’m not sure I ever knew his name) was new to “our camp”, meaning he hadn’t been in the B with us. He took an interest in Rose right away… sitting with her at meals, walking to and from sessions with her, asking her for help with the course material or planning his sessions. After two days, Rose told us that she was starting to get uncomfortable with his attention but was unsure how to handle his advances. Over the next couple of days, she continued to be friendly toward him, and he
continued to escalate his advances; she gave him her phone number because he asked her for it
and she didn’t know how to say no. I was part of this; we (the small group of women in the
course) were part of this because Rose didn’t know how to, or wasn’t willing to shut it down.
She told us, every day, how uncomfortable she was with him, around him, but didn’t want us to
say anything because she didn’t want to be or make a problem. Toward the end of the camp, he
started to put his hands on her – sometimes as casual/brief/familiar touches, sometimes as casual
hugs. Finally, Rose asked us (our women crew) for help.

I’m not sure if I felt a privilege to stand up to the harasser, or if I had simply been
comfortable in confronting him because of the times that I had found myself in a similar situation
– the unease that came with unwanted advances, part of which is the fear of retaliation. I
confronted him after a session, on the field, as he approached us – Rose tried to hurry away so he
didn’t follow. I intercepted him – standing toe-to-toe, looking in his eyes, I told him to turn
around, and walk away, and not come near her again. I said: “you don’t talk to her, you don’t
touch her, you don’t even think about her again, or I will make sure you are kicked out of this
course.” I didn’t have any such power, of course, to kick him out, but it felt right in confronting
him to outwardly show power and force as part of the intervention. He did end up leaving her
alone for the final two days of the camp.

A few weeks passed after the A course when George called me into his office. I hadn’t
told George or any of the other instructors at the course about what had happened between Rose,
her harasser, and my confrontation with him – in my eyes, I had handled it. George’s voice, by
nature, was gruff – not deep, not angry… but growly, and commanding. George rarely stepped
on toes or asserted a particular agenda, but when he did, his voice carried weight. I hadn’t seen it
coming at me when I heard my named called out into the open area of our office where my desk
was. “Flaher”, my nickname with the Arsenal family, “get in here”. I didn’t know until I walked in, but George had gotten notice about the harassment scenario – I was summoned to his office to explain. I gave him the whole story, start to finish, including what I had told the harasser. He simply wanted to know why I didn’t tell him; that’s all he wanted to know. I told him that Rose hadn’t wanted anyone else to know, because she didn’t want to be a problem or make a problem out of what could be passed off as an inconsequential series of events. I told him that I had handled it by shutting the harasser down, and that we hadn’t needed to tell anyone, which was naïve and short sighted I came to see.

I don’t know if George thought that I was irresponsible in confronting the harasser but not telling the instructors, or if he thought I was brave for taking care of it without going to a higher authority; he never said anything about it again. I liked to think that I took care of the problem. Now I realize that the problem was much larger than telling off one harasser in one course. USSF licensing had an awful reputation for how women were treated in their coaching education course series. The lower-level courses (D, E, F) were fairly well attended by women, if one considers 10-15 of 80 well attended; but the higher-level courses (C, B, A) continued to be stacked nearly exclusively, and in some cases, exclusively with men candidates. The lack of women in the system was explained away to me as women’s low desire to participate in coaching and coaching education.

More than a decade later, in my final A audit (the required educational refresher that came around every four years), there were 50 candidates, four lead instructors, and five expert guest speakers. I was the only woman. The candidates were a scattering of elite youth club coaches and college coaches who mostly worked on the boys’/men’s side. I didn’t know any of the candidates at the beginning of the week, but the lead instructors included George and
Hollinger, and one of the expert speakers was an old TopFlight crew member. My network was present, running the course; I didn’t have any members of my network taking it. The two course instructors who led the combined group I was assigned to weren’t in my coaching network, though I had worked with one at a previous licensing course.

I had a strange air of calm confidence in that audit after having released any real investment in what I was there for or what I was going to get out of it. (Though I was still coaching at the time of the audit, I had already begun my Ph.D. course work and didn’t need the audit for professional purposes any longer.) At the all-camp introduction meeting/lecture on the first day I walked into the room from a back door and scanned the back of the 50 candidate’s heads to see what I was getting into. I knew I was likely the only woman because we had been emailed a list of who was to be in the audit course when the details of our pre-course analysis materials and assignment were sent out. I took a seat in the back row of tables that was closest to the instructor’s table at the very back of the lecture room. That was my plan: to stay in the back, to stay quiet, to jump through the hoops necessary to recertify my A, but to know that I belonged there, and that I was a fit coach to compete in that pool.

We were assigned partners at the intro meeting. Our partner was who we would work with on analyses and training plan projects throughout the week, as overseen by the lead instructor to whom we were assigned. When we heard our partner’s name called by our instructors in the first meeting, Wayne, my new partner, looked my way in exasperated disbelief and defeat – his face showing deep concern and apprehension about working with me. Wayne was angry that he had been paired with me for the coursework; I know Wayne felt that way because he told me, on the last day of camp. That admission came after an easy week of working very well together in the end, in the form of an apology for having felt that way: Wayne
apologized to me after camp, in front of a slew of the other guys, and explained how lucky he felt to have had me as a partner, and thanked me for carrying him in the work through the week.

Wayne and I were assigned to James, the only lead instructor I hadn’t known, though I had worked with people who had worked with him – James had a reputation for being demanding and meticulous in licensing courses and for being brilliant in his game analysis. Prior to the audit, candidates had been required to develop and submit a PowerPoint Presentation around a guided match analysis; James evaluated my pre-course submission as fundamentally flawed. The feedback I received from James prior to the course was that I had read the shape of the team wrong and thus much of the rest of my report was off; his feedback was that my “eye”, or analysis skills were poor, at least in this case.

The major project of the week was to design an attacking session or a defending session (as assigned) that involved big-group team attack or team defending; Wayne and I had been assigned to write an attacking session. James opened the meeting in which we were supposed to determine which pairs would run their session with an announcement that one pair had already volunteered and been selected to run their attacking session, so we only needed to decide on a pair to run their defending session. The pair James pre-selected before the rest of us presented included a coach from a major Division I program, who was a former pro; Alex was one of the candidates who held the most referent power among the others, and had the respect of the instructors because of the level at which he had played and now coached.

At the end of the classroom session, after we had all presented our sessions and a defending session had been selected, James walked directly to me from the front of the room and said (to me, not to Wayne, but to me): “You should have volunteered; your’s was the best session.” It was a backhanded compliment he intended to deliver with an approving smile on his
face while still criticizing me for not speaking up. I was seated in the back row, so when James addressed me directly, everyone in the room had turned around to see why he had walked over. I was shocked because I had written an attacking session (Wayne and I, but by this time in the camp everyone knew it had been my session); James had started the meeting by telling us that he had already selected the attacking session. And that’s what I said in response: “Why would I have volunteered? You said you only needed the defending session, and ours was an attacking session.” I don’t know if I wish that the faces hadn’t been turned at me right then, because watching the guys’ facial expressions told me how confrontational my response was, and how surprised they were that I had said it. James simply responded with a “Well, you still should have volunteered” and left the room.

The attacking session that James had pre-selected went well on-field, though Alex was uncertain and skittish in his delivery, as though he lacked confidence in running the session. When he walked off the field to where we were gathered for the post-session summary, evaluation, and discussion, Alex explained: “I’ve never coached girls before. I didn’t know how I was going to do.” The team used in the session had been an older girls’ team. A flash of understanding fell across the expressions of the receiving crowd of candidates – Alex had been nervous because he was worried about being able to coach girls as girls are supposed to be coached, in a different way somehow from how boys are coached (in a demo session at a licensing course). All I could think was: “What if I walked off the field, after having conducted a session with the U18 boys’ USSDA team, and vented to my fellow auditors that I had been so nervous – which showed in my delivery – because I hadn’t coached boys before?” I was disgusted because I knew that the sentiment among the guys was in support of Alex as over-
qualified to coach the girls, but in the exact same scenario, I knew I would be perceived as underqualified to coach the boys.

Toward the end of the week, we observed a training session with the boys’ team that was used in the pre-course work. In the session, the team Head Coach explained to all of us why he played with a box in midfield, which I had identified in my pre-course work analysis, but was evaluated as wrong and criticized harshly for my lack of insight; the instructor who “graded” my work and targeted me all week hadn’t even confirmed with the team coach that he was right about the game analysis. I was walking off the field with some of the other guys when James approached me after the session. I remember I was wearing a white Nike puffer vest and my aviator sunglasses. I remember that because I had expected to hear James say: “They play with a box in midfield; you were right”. Instead, when he came into step next to me on our walk back to the building, he said “Well, you definitely win best dressed out here.”

**ODP**

The ODP space shared some common dimensions with USSF Coaching Education, and was a space that I occupied concurrently with coaching for Arsenal and completing and sustaining my licensure across my coaching career. The ODP system I coached in was the same system I was never able to gain a foothold in as a youth player.

Where I started my coaching career, officially, with Arsenal, ODP was an established and powerful program that was an arm of the State Youth Soccer Association. The Arsenal had a close-knit relationship with the State staff and admin. My network was heavily involved in District and State level ODP.

I coached in several capacities at varying levels of ODP: at the District, State, and Regional levels where districts comprised states and states comprised regions. I started in each program level at about the same time, and entered each level as an assistant or as a goalkeeper.
coach. I paid my dues in entry-level positions and was promoted across the program to varying degrees of middle management.

My paths in District, State, and Regional level ODP followed similar trajectories as I gained more experience in each program. At the Regional level, I was fast-tracked by the leadership only to be forced into the margins due to being “out of bounds”. In my District and State programs, Oscar, the Technical Director and DOC of my state, kept me close. Oscar intended to mentor me in how a team and staff should be managed; he assigned me to several different positions under his eye across my tenure in his programs.

Oscar was the man – he was powerful, hard spoken, respected by the other coaches, and he was really intimidating; plus, he was tightly knit with my staff at Arsenal. I learned a lot from Oscar; he was explicit in all conditions of on-field and program detail. When Oscar brought me on as his State team age group assistant, he was explicit about where I sat in orientation to him on the bench, when I should speak to which players and why, in regard to what he wanted out of the game, and what type of information or analysis I should provide to him and how he wanted me to deliver it. When Oscar hired me as his Program Director of the girls’ side in my local district, he was explicit about why he was hiring me and what he expected.

On my first day as Program Director, the first day of District tryouts, Oscar walked me out to field 8 at the complex to have a talk about what he expected of me. He made sure I knew that he had my back, telling me that I might meet some resistance from the coaches from the rival club, but that it was my program, and I could manage the staff in any way I saw fit. Oscar followed up his proclamations of support by telling me that he expected me to step up for this job – that HE was giving me a chance to prove myself as a coach. That was his message: that he, Oscar, was giving me an opportunity to prove to him and the local coaching community that I
was a capable coach and Program Director and not just a pretty face. His words to me before the all-staff meeting were: “You are a very attractive woman, but you can’t get by on that. I am giving you a chance here – I’m giving you a chance to prove that you can coach. You aren’t going to be able to get by on your looks or your smile – you have to earn your opportunities through your coaching ability. You are going to have to step up and lead this program.” As I write out that interaction, it sounds awful, but in the moment, I was bursting with pride. I was so thankful that Oscar was giving me a chance, and I was ready to take on the program – ready to prove to him and all the other coaches that I was a good coach and capable director. His comments about my appearance and “getting by on my smile” didn’t land as sexist – I didn’t know to hear them in that way; those were truths for me at the time.

Where Oscar was explicit about all manner of on-field conditions, the sets of rules and truths around downtime or social gatherings among coaches were less clear. For Oscar, there were various rules about “professionalism” that applied to any and all of his staff’s conduct that might reflect on him. However, many of those rules or truths about social time (drinking, specifically, as our only common downtime activity as coaching staffs) were applied differentially across contexts.

In one instance, I was reprimanded for staying out too long at the hotel bar with the other coaches; that’s how I learned that when Oscar left the bar, everyone else had to leave too; it was the “head-man” rule: “when the head man leaves, you leave”. That lesson was delivered by Alan from Arsenal, who interpreted it for me because, though Oscar was explicit about where I should sit on his bench, navigating his implicit rules was a field of land mines that I couldn’t see.

I was never able to get a solid feel for the implicit rules because they seemed to be applied to different people in different ways at different times. Where I was reprimanded for not
leaving the bar when Oscar had that night, the other coaches weren’t. That same night, in fact, one of Oscar’s guys had gone banging on players’ doors at two o’clock AM to “pump them up for their games”, then passed out and missed the first few minutes of his morning game, arriving by cab because his ride had left him. That same night, coaches from all across Region 1 were “out” in the hotel bar until they shut us down. That same night, I sat with my Arsenal crew, who weren’t reprimanded. I found out through interview that the coach who had missed muster was the one who had pulled my thong underwear up from my jean’s waist-line toward the end of that night; though I didn’t remember who specifically had done it, I remembered that it had been an incident. Per the interview, Oscar and his assistant State DOC knew it had happened and dealt with the coach. What I realized through interview, was that Oscar and his assistant dealt with my end of the harassment by reprimanding me for being out in an inappropriate way.

It was a similar scenario around rules or truths about downtime that sealed my fate with Regional ODP, and consequently State and District ODP because of the cascading power structure. At Regional ODP, I was fast-tracked as a goalkeeper coach. From my start, the senior goalkeeper staff loved what I offered in the training camps and had me run training sessions for the camp or lead segments of the goalkeeper programming (planning for groups or integrating goalkeepers into teams). My playing resume also seemed to be held in esteem with the Regional senior staff, which it hadn’t been with Oscar, because he wanted me to “earn it” on coaching ability.

For the first time, I found myself in a fully established power hierarchy of women. Where I was the only woman DOC at my club, and one of very few women coaches in State ODP, the Regional ODP Head Coach was a woman, her Regional Head Goalkeeper Coach was a woman, and much of the goalkeeper staff were women. Though the field staff often had more men than
women, there was an entire structure of women that I found myself assimilating into, professionally, for the first time.

It wasn’t an easy group to break into, and I remained on the outskirts of it even if I was part of the common social scene every night. A few of the senior staff went out of their way to start a mentoring-like relationship with me – they seemed to genuinely like me and what I did for the players and the program. A few of the senior staff were not fans of mine, on or off the field. I just rubbed some of the women the wrong way; I felt as though a subset of the women rejected me as “out of bounds” or “too much” to be around. It was in the Regional staff that I started to get a coalesced picture of “the right kind of woman”, or the mold of what many of the men and women I worked alongside thought a “real” coach looked like: professional and stoic, or not me. I was judged as “too campy” by a senior staffer, translation “unprofessional”, in an evaluation coaching session in my second year.

I am unsure if any tendencies toward rejecting me or offering me mentorship were because I so clearly didn’t understand the gender dynamics, grounded in the organization of power among the women on staff; I didn’t know how to navigate that power structure. At the time, I thought they might have seen me as out of bounds because I accentuated my femininity among that group, particularly in how I dressed, in order to demarcate my sexuality; many of the women coaches were gay and I wanted to actively demonstrate that I was not. I had learned from my Arsenal and local ODP crew that I needed to show my heterosexuality because the women who presented as gay were mocked in those circles. Where I felt rejected at Regional ODP for being straight, I heightened my displays of femininity; where I felt rejected for being too much, I amped up; where I felt I was being silenced, I got louder. I once drew the censure of the Sport Psychologist on staff, when I sat at the end of the bench and explained to a team of U17 girls that
I preferred women referees because they were easier to manipulate than men: I explained to the players that I liked to have female referees BECAUSE they were weaker and easier to manipulate.

I hold that moment now as one of my worst moments in coaching; if the Sport Psychologist hadn’t been there to pull me aside and tell me that I absolutely cannot say things like that, I don’t know if I ever would have known why it was so awful. At the time, I remember silently rebuking her in my mind, thinking: “it’s true, they are weaker, why would Dr. Maniendle lie to the girls about that? They should know it so they can take advantage of it.” I thought Dr. Maniendle was naïve and sheltering the players from reality. I’m not sure I would have ever remembered that I said those things to the players had she not reprimanded me, because I saw nothing wrong with my insights on women referees. I would not have been chastised for saying it in any of the other environments I occupied because those were conversations we had, I would likely have been appreciated for my sagacity. I didn’t process the depth of sexism in my comment until I saw it appear in the literature I was studying 15 years later.

The end of my tenure with the cascading ODP levels came after a trip to Ireland, when I served as the goalkeeper coach with the U16 Regional team for a set of international friendlies. I had nearly a decade of coaching experience by then, including five of those years in the same District, State, and Regional ODP system. About a month after I returned from the trip to Ireland, I got a call from Oscar. I didn’t see it coming; I had no idea what he wanted to meet about. At the time, he was 10 feet tall to me; he was a mentor to my respected and beloved boss (George), he was a high-ranking coach in US Soccer, and he was the head of my State Association. At the time, I didn’t see his treatment of me (as one of his staff coaches) as sexist or hurtful, I saw it as
challenging me, as having high expectations of me, as indicative of his belief in the potential I had.

I didn’t see it coming. Oscar was the conduit for the message that had been passed down from the man who financed and oversaw, from a Foundation CEO-like perspective, all of Regional ODP (as an independent business entity). The message was that I was egregiously out of bounds on the Ireland trip, specifically in my down time. The CEO and his wife had been on the trip with us, and he reported back to the Head Coach of the Region – who reported to our State Association President (who was housed as the lead administrator in my Arsenal office) – who reported to the State DOC, Oscar, that I had been a problem on the trip. All of the characterizations of my problems on the trip revolved around downtime, but the one that put me over the edge was, ironically, one that I was proud of, and had been excited to tell Oscar about the next time I saw him.

Oscar was forced to be the one who delivered a reprimand for having been caught leaving the hotel bar with a man.

Our resort in Ireland had been incredible. It was a high-end golf resort in the Irish countryside with all sorts of amenities. That’s why the CEO had picked it – whenever he traveled with a team, they always stayed in the best places. That’s also why the Irish National Team picked it. On our fourth day, they moved in for a three or four day training series and a match in the area.

I had just bought an Ireland jersey for my nephew when I was in Dublin; with the men’s National Team in the hotel, I wanted to get it signed. I also wanted the chance to meet the coaches and have a conversation with them about their youth structures. Oscar had taught me to do that; Oscar was big on the conversations and coaching community that could be built around
sharing a drink. Oscar had taught me where to go to strike up such a conversation – I knew the coaches would be at the bar. As I tell it now, it reads even to me as naïve or just dull that I would think I could post up at a bar as a soccer coach and get a conversation going with a National Team staff, but at the time, I remember thinking how proud Oscar would have been that I was pursuing a chat with elite coaches in my presence, from whom I could learn. I look back now and should see why that was never going to work, but I couldn’t see past telling Oscar the story I saw about to play out, seeking his approval for trying to learn something from the Ireland National Team staff. That’s even how I organized my entry into the conversation I was planning with the coaches: that I was here with US Youth elite teams based on our structures and I wanted to ask them how they design their youth structures. I also wanted my nephew’s jersey signed.

I never had a conversation with a coach. After an hour of hoping to get an in with the coaches, and another hour of superficial conversation with a few of the equipment staff guys, I gave up and asked them if we could arrange to get my jersey signed. I didn’t get the conversation I had been hoping for, but at least the equipment guy who had been hitting on me for an hour was willing to help with the jersey. It was in that moment, when I left that bar, that east coast ODP unraveled for me.

I paid for my two beers and said my “good night’s” and my “thank you’s” for the plan to get the National Team players to sign the jersey, and I got up to leave. And so did the man who had been hitting on me. I wasn’t uncomfortable with him hitting on me until that moment – I was alone in a bar and it turned out as I should have expected: nowhere near a soccer conversation and a suitor. I was uncomfortable when he stood up as I did and told the small group of his colleagues that he was leaving too; I headed to the bathroom. I sat in that bathroom for several minutes to make sure he left. He hadn’t. He waited for me, and when I left the bathroom, he was
there to ask if he could walk me to my room. I declined politely, trying not to screw up the plan for having my jersey signed, and he accepted my rejection, saying that at least we could walk across the lobby together in the direction of the rooms. We walked across the lobby to the hallway and said another goodnight as we headed in different directions. CEO’s wife never saw that part.

I flew home after that trip to Ireland with a signed jersey and a picture in my head of the CEO and the other coaching staff telling the Head Coach of the Region what a good job I did. I never saw it coming. Oscar had called me to the McDonald’s to excoriate me. We sat at a mini-table for two as he breathed fire at me: “If you have a drinking problem, clean it up! If you can’t keep men out of your room, clean it up!”; his face fanned his disgust at me, quietly though, so he didn’t attract the attention of other McDonald’s costumers.

He never asked me what happened; he wasn’t going to hear anything I had to say. He started out by telling me he heard from the ranks that the CEO wanted me fired from all ODP at the Regional, State, and District levels because I had set a bad example for “his girls” on the trip to Ireland. The CEO didn’t travel with boys’ teams, only girls; he called them “his girls” and regularly explained to anyone who would listen why he called them “his girls”.

My conversation with Oscar at McDonald’s lasted only maybe 10 minutes; I learned very quickly that it was not a conversation that I was to take part in, but that it was a conversation in which I would listen. When he laid on me that the CEO was insisting I be fired from all programs, I objected with shock – I hadn’t seen it coming. My face likely showed shock, I know my words would have, had I been allowed to say anything or explain what happened. But he just barked over me, I never got any sentences in. After trying two or three times to interject, I started just repeating: “Yes, sir. I understand, sir”.

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A few days later I called Oscar and resigned from his ODP programs. I also put together an explanation for the Head Coach of the Region that addressed each of the items I had been reprimanded for; it likely read as a response to reviewers. I even included a statement from the athletic trainer who had been with me during one of the identified “out of bounds” episodes. I continued to serve on the Region A staff for one more year before I moved out west, and out of Region A, to an Arsenal franchise in Spring City, in Region B.

**Region B**

The move to a new Arsenal franchise carried the same ancillary contexts, including ODP and licensing, which ran throughout my coaching era, and added a US Soccer grass-roots identification program in the US Market Training Centers. The ODP system in my new state was less intensive because there was no district programming, only tryouts, and no true state training season – my new State ODP program only put on a set of friendlies against programs from adjacent states to prepare the players for regional camp.

When I joined the new ODP program, none of the cascading power from Region A affected my placement or treatment. Right away, the Head Coach of the girls’ program in my new state gave me a State team. I also joined the Region B staff, where I was hired on as entry-level goalkeeper staff but promoted to Head Goalkeeper Coach of an age group after working only a couple of weeks in my first summer of camps.

The staff in the ODP system did not overlap with my new Arsenal staff because the SC Arsenal Technical Director did not hold the time on task for ODP as valuable for coaching development, as it had been considered in CC. My role at the SC Arsenal was different than my role had been at the CC Arsenal. I had a team for which I was the Head Coach, and I was immediately folded into training sessions for youth girls when I arrived from CC, but I didn’t
hold an official DOC title for the club until I was moved into the goalkeeping DOC position after a year.

The organizational structure of the SC Arsenal was similar to what the organizational structure was in CC: 1. a technical director who answered to the board in terms of boundaries, 2. a DOC assigned to run programs, such as the competitive program, the recreational program, or the USSDA (boys only), and 3. age group DOCs within those programs. However, the personalities between the two clubs were different. The leader of the club in SC was only invested in the teams that played in the USSDA, and acted as more of an administrative decision-maker when he was involved with the other programs. The leader of the competitive program was hands off with individual teams, but very hands on with what his DOCs were doing with their teams in terms of leagues, events, and rosters. The age group DOCs were all men, as the woman DOC for the club had just left to take another job, and of them, most were imported through a program that brought Brits over to coach soccer in the US.

The girls’ side at SC Arsenal was used to fund the boys’ side of the club, as I was told by a board member. Our numbers on the girls’ side were very strong, and they all paid to play. The numbers on the boys’ side were parallel, but for the more elite teams, there was a substantial amount of scholarship money awarded to the players, specifically in the boys’ USSDA program. The demographics and investment in the two sides of the club were very different. Spring City was a wealthy suburb, and most of the girls were pulled from the immediate area; a large proportion of the boys were pulled from closer to the city, were largely Hispanic, and commonly had fewer resources to pay for play.

After a year of training and coaching teams with the club, I was moved into the Goalkeeper DOC position. I ran the goalkeeper program much in the same way I had in CC –
boys and girls trained together, grouped on like ability levels, though I didn’t have the USSDA goalkeeper in SC. From my experiences in CC, particularly with the USSDA boys (16-18 year-olds), I had learned that the girls folded into training a bit timidly when they were with boys who they considered to be “better” than they were, but always took to my word right away; in contrast, the boys were not timid with the girls in training, but tended to take a few sessions to feel me out, as their goalkeeper coach. For nearly every boy I coached in CC and in SC, I was their first female coach – and the boys tended to come into training wary of me. U13 was about the age threshold for the boys’ wariness: boys younger than U13 only spent about 5 minutes thinking about having a female coach, boys older than U13 varied much more widely in their adjustment interval.

Figure 5-18. Coaching soccer picture. Photo courtesy of author.
In CC, when I was first installed as the goalkeeper coach for the USSDA program, it took about two weeks for the starting goalkeepers for the U16 and U18 programs to buy into me as their new coach. It took a small amount of posturing on my part, some intense demands for training, and a few instances of coaching corrections to earn their eyes and ears, but once they were comfortable with what I could offer them in training, there was no girl/boy/female coach dynamic. It was just training.

Not being hired into a full-time position right away when I got to Texas, then accepting the Goalkeeper DOC job as a part-time gig left my days free, which was never going to last for me. Within a few months of coming to the SC club, I started reaching out to the local college coaches to ask about attending their training sessions, and perhaps helping out with their goalkeepers. I was wide open to finding a college job and getting away from the club game. The Eastern coach, who had been a TopFlight man, though I had never worked with him, responded to me. Coach asked me to be his volunteer assistant and we worked out a deal for me to help out at training two or three times per week in the afternoons.

I developed a good relationship with Coach and his full-time assistant, who was an authentic and likable man, but had been a gymnast and was not a soccer mind. Coach very much liked what I offered, if not in coaching his team, he liked having a woman around to be a model for “his girls”, meaning his adult woman players. Coach was a consummate professional – he was very rigid in his coaching delivery, robot-like… until it came game-time. Coach designed and ran his training sessions as though they played out on paper. Everything he did was about efficiency in the activity and demanding engagement and performance from his players. However, training did not play out on paper, and Coach lacked the awareness or capacity to add care or personality to training. The assistant coach at Eastern was the opposite; he was energetic
and personable, and he had been able to develop authentic relationships with the players in a way that Coach was not able to. The assistant didn’t coach though, because Coach didn’t want his voice or input.

After a series of events that could be characterized as fatal errors for the assistant, Coach offered me the full-time position. I had developed a good relationship with the assistant and he made sure to let me know that he didn’t blame me for his firing, though he told me his wife did; her explanation for why I was hired to replace him was that “Coach was thinking with his dick”. I’m not sure why he told me that on his way out, but it certainly caught me off guard.

I wasn’t comfortable with “stealing” the assistant’s job, but I justified it to myself that he was getting fired because of his own actions, not because of me, and that Coach was going to hire someone to replace him; personally, this was the right place and right time for me to take the opportunity to get into the college game, which was where I wanted to go.

I knew going into it that part of my job at Eastern would be to deal with the players, that was no surprise. I had hoped to be able to be involved in the delivery on the field much more than I was, though. Coach respected my voice and my coaching, but he didn’t often give me a chance to deliver any coaching, other than the goalkeeper segments of training. In many of my experiences, I had been praised for my “ability to relate to the players” – told that it was a strength of mine in coaching and a valuable asset to a staff or program. That ability was a reason for hiring a woman. Coach wasn’t the first to explicitly identify that “relating to the players” was a critical part of my job, and he wasn’t shy about admitting that it was not something he was good at. To be a woman working with women was something I had been taught had inherent value based on nothing more than commonality in gender.
During my time at Eastern, I shuffled between days in the office, afternoons with the team, then nights and weekends with the Arsenal, coupled with ODP events off and on, and the US Soccer Market Training Center program I was involved in. It was in that time frame that I started to seriously think about leaving coaching. I had taken the job at Eastern with the intent of moving into the college game, thinking the degree of toxicity would be lower than in the youth game, and that I could focus on just one environment. After I realized that my stay at Eastern was untenable, I started looking for a step up into a higher quality college program, thinking that I could find a right fit. Part of me though, as I applied and interviewed at a few different colleges, wasn’t sure that I wanted to keep chasing the next something more in coaching when there was so much day to day destruction and compromises that had me exhausted, uncertain, and in tears on my drive from Eastern training to Spring City for my three Arsenal sessions each night, going through the motions to just survive my training schedule.

Transition out of Coaching

I had started playing with the idea of going to graduate school for my Ph.D. – back to my plans from my freshman year in college, before I was on-boarded into the player to coach super-highway, to become a “college professor”. I had told the coach at University that going back to school was on my radar, and she asked – if it worked out for me to do a Ph.D. there – would I consider being her volunteer assistant, her goalkeeper coach, again; the goalkeeper assistant position was often the lowest tier of power, and sacrificed if there wasn’t funding or the right person for the job.

I ended up accepting Coach’s offer to join her University program. The biggest hurdle was how to pay my bills. The only reason I could make University happen was because the local youth club, Power FC (PFC), agreed to hire me to coach in some capacity. I coached for University during the two years that I did my coursework for my masters, but quit coaching for
the program when I began my Ph.D. work; I stayed with PFC through my master’s and the first half of my Ph.D.

My role in the University staff was very narrow, and I wasn’t used to that. I was coming in from Eastern as the first assistant, where I had been the lead in recruiting and enmeshed in team operations; even if the Coach at Eastern had been the heavy lead, I had *some* voice on the field with him. At University, my voice was only for the goalkeepers or for relating to the players. The goalkeeper coach position was very limited in terms of what is expected – that is the case in many programs. Because the position is highly specialized, the position coach is both necessary and often siloed from team coaching. I had been a goalkeeper coach in multiple contexts where I didn’t have a voice with the team, such as with the boy goalkeepers at Arsenal, in ODP, and in US soccer programs. I hadn’t expected to be limited to goalkeepers at University, though – I had expected to be more free to coach.

![Coaching college soccer picture. Photo courtesy of author.](image)

The University staff was a well-oiled machine of the Head Coach and her two assistants (the ones that mattered). Goalkeeper coaches flitted in and out after a season of service, typically. The volunteer coaches who moved through the goalkeeper position at University were typically
low on experience, using the job as a resume builder. The position also wasn’t always filled by a woman – in fact, many of the volunteer assistants that Coach had hired across her tenure as the Head Coach of the program had been men. When I came in, Coach was explicit that part of what she wanted from me, a big part of my value to her, was that I could help relieve some of her burden of “relating to the players”.

By the time I quit coaching for University, I was miserable. The travel schedule was overwhelming, the training schedule between my two coaching contexts ran me ragged, and I was treated like I didn’t have any value as a coach beyond my hands and my estrogen. I had to just sit there on the bench during games and shut my mouth because what I saw going on in midfield didn’t hold value, but, when a player was upset, that’s when my job description kicked in – that’s when I mattered. I couldn’t quit fast enough. I trained my male replacement for the program, who had played goalkeeper in high school, but had no other significant coaching experience.

Though I had quit coaching as the volunteer for University, coaching for PFC still paid my bills. PFC was a small club that was professionalized in terms of its organization, such as the paid DOC and coaching positions, but very unprofessional in delivery, embodied by the good ‘ol boy network embedded in hiring. I was initially hired by the long-time DOC to work in the youth academy (pre-competitive program) and to run goalkeeper sessions. After a partial season with the little kids on weeknights and a slew of goalkeeper sessions, in conjunction with a series of discussions to reaffirm that I would continue on with the club, or not leave like the past University assistants had, I was given a girls’ team and a full DOC schedule where I was training with multiple teams.
The leaders of the club were the board president and vice president, the club DOC, and a local icon who could be characterized as the grandfather of local soccer. The DOC had grown up in the club, playing with the club president under the grandfather’s guidance. The DOC loved that club, and he loved the players he had seen pass through it for a generation; however, the locker room style delivery, such as tricking other men to accidentally look at his genitals (a favorite reminiscent story of his) had run its course with the newly seated president, who came to power at the time that I came into the club. I was offered a major promotion into a DOC role managing the on-field soccer operations of the club – but first, we had to move the long-time DOC out; the club elders staged a coup of the long-time DOC, and I was right in the middle of their plan.

I had declined the position in the beginning of the coup. I was not a fan of how the DOC ran the club, which he had done for years – the previous board was like a silent partner who rarely involved themselves in the program deliverables. Even though I wasn’t a fan of the DOC, we had built a good on-field relationship; we worked well together. One of the coaches embedded in the organization, who ended up being my co-DOC after the coup, made a joke to me that I might even be someone the DOC latched onto in the time that he was grieving over his mother’s sudden death. As Nick put it, the DOC (who was exactly my age) was projecting his need for his mother’s love onto me; Nick told me he thought that DOC was going to try to “suckle at my nipples” to ease the pain of his grief over his dead mother. Nick was a local as well, who had grown up in the club; they were like caricatures of the good ‘ol boys.

I didn’t want any part of the coup, but with the president’s offer to be the new DOC (or part of the role), I could choose to be there to serve the players (and pay my bills) or I could choose to quit over firing a guy who was woefully underqualified and incapable of successfully
running a youth soccer club, which I had known since I met him. I wasn’t going to hang my hat on that guy.

The plan was for me to take over the on-field operations as part of a three-dimensional DOC job description, where the grandfather both oversaw the dimensions and was one of them. My new role was to be at training, schedule times to train teams, to develop a parent and coaching education program, and to be around at games on weekends. It was similar to my DOC role at the Arsenal in the end, but without taking a team. As one of the heads in “three-headed dragon”, as the president put it, I was the only one with DOC experience.

The grandfather was my problem from the outset. I told the president and vice president (VP), whose daughters I coached, that I didn’t trust granddad, but that I could easily work with him, of course; this wasn’t my first rodeo – I had worked under similar conditions before. With granddad on quiet overwatch, I was at training every night, and on the fields on weekends to sit on our teams’ benches.

As soon as I came into power, I started to de-centralize the club. I was able to get into the boys’ teams for the first time, and brought coaching education sessions, functional group training sessions, and team training and game oversight to the club; I ran it like I would have run the Arsenal if I were in charge. I combined sessions, putting multiple coaches together on a field at one time, and I moved the staff around to work with different groups on different nights. I had team coaches cover other coaches who had to miss their sessions or games, and I brought several of the University players into the fold as intern-like assistant coaches with boys’ teams who would show up and play circles around the kids. Boys’ coaches were training girls’ teams and girls’ coaches covered boys’ games, and vice-versa.
All of the mixing was intentional. I wanted to grow a club where any player or coach walking into the training facility on a night would feel as though they were part of a much grander organization than the island of “their team”. I also wanted to break down the division between the girls’ side and the boys’ side, and I saw that as happening through shared training sessions and shared coaches.

I didn’t have issues with parents or coaches when I was the DOC for PFC, at least not beyond the snapshot conversations about team structuring or coaching concerns that would inherently surface when dealing with a youth club. When I was on the field as the DOC, I felt like I was making a difference not just in broadening the perspectives of the players, coaches, parents, but that I was in a place where I was supported in doing that. I felt like I was building a program – that I was in the edge of producing a PYSO that delivered as close to an approximation of how youth sport should ideally be delivered. I had the pieces in place and the freedom to move them about.

The most unique element of running the club, and what I believe was the catalyst for the elders to move me out of PFC, was that I was also an expert in youth sport organizations by this time, with what might be argued as a concentration on gender in sport. Ultimately, my downfall, and what solidified my exit from soccer altogether, was that what I delivered as DOC, and my intentions for how to run the club, were not in line with what the elders wanted for their club. In the end, I was told that they were never sure if what I brought was sustainable because I was going to leave, eventually.

My graduate school education absolutely affected my end-stage coaching. I was watching gender barriers play out in a PYSO, which I ran as an overqualified token for a good ol’ boy’s
As the on-field DOC, I dealt with any issues that arose during training or at game sites on weekends. One night in the late spring, in what would be my last season coaching, a dad approached me from the parking lot well after training had concluded and the fields were emptied. It was immediately clear by his demeanor that the dad was fuming and was looking for a confrontation. I was under the picnic covering, where coaches and players gathered before and after training, with some coaches who were still breaking down their gear.

The dad walked up and barked his question: “Who is in charge out here?” I stepped forward to tell him that I was the DOC and asked if I could help him with anything. I wasn’t uncomfortable dealing with club dads, as I had had my share of run-ins over the years, but I was calculated and intentional in my language with this particular dad because he was outwardly threatening.

The dad erupted over a coach putting their hands on his son and he wanted to talk to the coach immediately. The dad was a fight waiting to happen; he wanted at my coach. I told him that the coaches had already left and asked him to sit down with me to explain what had happened between his son and the coach. The dad was angry as hell – he seethed at me “Who is in charge out here?” for a second time, as though he hadn’t accepted that I was in charge the first time I told him. I then explained, again, that I was in charge, and added that I was the DOC for the club and was responsible for my coaches and their behavior. The dad looked around the picnic area, seemingly searching for someone else he could address to try to get at the coach who he wanted to confront. I again asked him to sit with me to explain what had happened, but he refused. After not finding anyone else to turn to, he came back to me and told me that wanted the
name of the coach and the chance to confront him another time. I told him that first we needed to
get the whole story of what had occurred; I asked him to come back to the field on another day,
with his son, and sit down with me, to go through the incident, and to work out how to resolve
the conflict. He refused and told me that the only person he would talk to was the coach who had
put hands on his son. I explained to him again that I was not going to allow that meeting to
happen and that dealing with me was his only option. Still red, he left.

In the end, the dad and his son came to the field two days later to sit down with me. In the
meeting, I directed the conversations to the player, who told me his account of the issue in
training – he had slid into a goalkeeper in a training game against a girls’ team and the coach of
the girls’ team had pulled the boy around by the shoulder after the play was over, to yell at him
for sliding into the goalkeeper. The coach was out of line entirely. Fortunately, the night the
incident occurred I had spoken in depth with the coach, who took full responsibility and felt
awful. The next day, the coach apologized to the player before training. When I met with the dad
and son, the apology and the lack of platform in our conflict resolution meeting (I didn’t direct
my conversation to dad; I asked the son what had happened and what he wanted to see happen to
resolve the issue) had taken the wind out of the dad. The issue passed without any more heat.

I had been in similar circumstances before with irate parents, sometimes slightly
threatening. I knew how to form my language to be direct but open, and I knew how to go about
unpacking the issue and coming to a resolution. I knew that this dad had no interest in talking to
a woman about his son’s soccer – he just wanted me out of his way. But with no other options,
his hand was forced. In addition, I had worked with that particular boys’ team quite a bit and was
very familiar with the player, though not the dad. The big-picture incident that might have been
the last straw of my coaching career came out of that on-field incident – through the discussion
between myself and the president and VP on the night it happened, about our plan to address the conflict.

The night the incident occurred I was in management mode for hours. The first call went to the coach, of course, so I could find out what had happened. After I got the story, I notified the board that we had a problem. I wrote up, for documentation, what had transpired between myself and the dad under the picnic shelter as well as a description, from the coach’s perspective, what had occurred between he and the player in training. I was very careful to leave out the details about the dad’s behavior toward me while I was de-escalating the conflict; I didn’t include in my documentation that the dad was looking for a man to handle his concerns that night. I didn’t document that he had asked twice who was in charge, or that he was entirely dismissive of me because I did not want to be the complaining woman crying victim of sexism.

Instead, I wrote a separate email that night, directly to the president and VP, containing those details. In my email to the two men I was closest to in the club, the two guys who had brought me into the DOC position and relied on me for club management, I explained how the dad had acted toward me. In the email that went to only them, I asked explicitly if they would let me be the face of the resolution with the dad – I asked them not to step in over the top of me, but instead, to let me be the one who sees the resolution through so that the dad didn’t get to undermine me. The response I got from the VP, through a series of emails that night between the three of us, was that “everything isn’t sexism” and that “just because he asked to speak with someone up the chain doesn’t mean that it was because you are a woman”. The president explained to me that night that the dad was an old friend of his, and that the dad didn’t mean to offend me – it was “…just how he is”; “he is an old red neck”.

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About a month later, I walked off the fields for the last time. The elders were reducing my responsibilities for the next fall, reorganizing more around where granddad saw the club heading. I agreed that my time on the field for them needed to end, but I did offer to stay on with the club in a management capacity. They declined my offer.
CHAPTER 6
GENEALOGY: MAPPING THE PROCESS

This chapter is the genealogy of the data. In the chapter, the sensemaking and structures described in the last chapter (the archaeology of the data) are patterned with the supra level logics that organized the process of being trained to be sexist across time and spaces. The micro, meso, or macro level barriers in sport introduced in chapter two are applied to the data described in chapter one as the manifestation of top-down logics that emerged as gendered treatment and gender production through delivery that co-constructed sexism in my story.

The access points extracted from the data are presented as situated at the intersection of a multitude of variables that were foundational to shaping my experiences. The purpose of identifying access points from my story was to locate spaces where gendered discourse can be disrupted, as theoretically proposed by Shaw and Frisby (2006). A key focal point of this project is Shaw and Frisby’s (2006) fourth frame of gender equity in which they provide for disrupting the strategies that have been historically implemented as incomplete and narrow; their critique of gender equity in practice is that defining characteristics (as demographic variables) are homogenized, silenced, or ignored. Shaw and Frisby (2006) argue that a critical feature of reconceptualizing gender equity, specifically in organizations, is that the current strategies are positioned on the axis of white, heterosexual, able-bodied, middle-class woman and do not accommodate the stories and experiences of the Black, queer, or disabled women who experience gendered barriers in different configurations.

The presence or emergence of access points developed in the genealogy were inextricably linked to the characteristics that positioned me. While I broadly address “sexism in sport” in this project, it is important to note that my experiences with the process of being trained to be sexist were principally affected (or bound) by variables that extend beyond singularly being a female in
sport: my whiteness, ability, heterosexuality, SES, and the zip codes in which my story took place inherently shaped the access points extracted from the archeology of my data. In other words, the genealogy produced from the data (e.g., the process) would look different if produced from another woman’s data, specifically if the story was that of a Black or queer woman (or non-gender conforming athlete and leader).

For example, where *networks* was identified as an access point, how those networks carried outcomes (facilitative or deleterious), or how they performed in my story is specific to the variables in my story that positioned me in or outside of those networks. While the outcomes of networks as they operate differently for men than for women is ubiquitous in the literature (Lavoi, 2016), the differences in how they perform among women is central to Shaw and Frisby’s (2006) vision for the value of extending gender equity in their fourth frame. Networks have demonstrated to operate differently for BIPOC girls and women than they do for white women (Combs, 2003). Combs (2003) found that Black women, specifically, have less access to influential networks and that their networks tend to be more narrow. Thus, the access points for disrupting the discourse that are identified here are presented as constrained by my positioning and the discussion of the access points operates under the assumption that they would certainly vary in weight and saliency in other women’s stories, if they surfaced at all.

The chapter is divided into two segments: playing and coaching, where many of the sexist logics that underpinned the evolution of my training process became embedded in my entry into sport as a participant. Logics that constrained my treatment as a player and meso-level interactions across spaces that defined or oriented myself around gendered discourse were activated with different nuance and outcomes as a coach. The genealogy of the data positions my story in greater societal and historical context to map the co-construction of discourse and expose
nodes, or access points into disrupting how the delivery of logics and their triangulation across time and space.

The four supra ordinate logics that I inductively extracted from the archaeology as salient to my training process were: (a) “less than”, as the primary overarching logic which affected the delivery of the other dominant logics in my story, (b) “protect girls”, which was prominent in my playing era, (c) “conform socially”, and (c) “vision of value”, or projections of potential (see table 1). Those four logics did not operate orthogonally, but are the macro level logics that were operationalized and delivered in context as treatment and barriers. Where the “less than” logic could not be decoupled from the delivery of the other three supra ordinate logics across all spaces, the “vision of value” logic operated around the “protect girls” and “conform socially” more so in my playing era than in coaching, in which the “vision of value” logic was manifested in the tension between mentorship and sponsorship. The “protect girls” logic centered on displays or expectations that girls and women needed to be shielded from shows of competitiveness or aggression, and later in my story from rigors or pitfalls of coaching (formal and informal). The “conform socially” logic was imposed by both peers and authority figures and incorporated into my own sensemaking as a mechanism for demarcating what behaviors were in or out of bounds.

The data genealogy mapped how the supra ordinate logics were operationalized across time and spaces, exposing patterns that emerged as possible access points for disrupting the co-construction of gendered discourse. The structural level access points into disrupting the discourse that emerged from the data genealogy were: (a) a tension between sponsorship and mentorship, (b) the networks associated with mentorship/sponsorship, (c) the horizontal organization of power, and (d) the organizational design.
Playing Era

In early childhood, I understood from social cues that boys were different from girls and that my energetic and aggressive personality was misplaced. The social messages about what exactly it was to be a girl were unclear, but the picture of what it was to be a boy matched who I felt I was. Ideas around what it meant to be a girl weren’t imposed on me in my early childhood home. It was my mom, my two sisters, and my brother at home, but I was four years younger than my next oldest sibling, so they didn’t have much to do with me. My mom was a working single mother, who often held down more than one job at a time. I didn’t remember, but my mom had brought me around to my brother’s football games, which my sister’s cheer squad was associated with, where I was “like a mascot” (interview). I was too young at the time to participate in the organized activities, and I didn’t remember that I had been in tow to Pop Warner games in my early childhood, watching my sister cheer for my brother’s team. The cheer and football context must have left an impression on me, if not the one that most girls would have taken, because I chose football when I was old enough to engage in organized activities.

Being distant in age from my siblings and an ADHD handful for my single mother, “how to girl” was minimally imposed on me, without rigid boundaries for behavior. The physical expression that I found to be innate aligned with the behaviors that I saw of boys, and so my conclusion was that I was more like a boy than a girl. Though I wasn’t clear on what it was to be a girl, I did know boys and girls were different, and I knew that I acted like a boy. Not having a set of gendered behaviors imposed on me, I was not trained that traditionally masculine qualities were out of bounds for girls to demonstrate. That core, innate energy and aggression I felt, coupled with the lack of understanding (or lack of caring) about girls’ boundaries positioned me, or enabled me to maintain the central identity I had as a runner when I transitioned into school and organized sport.
Even in childhood play, the sets of logics imposed within my local neighborhood and the boys at school in free play presented a different set of parameters for me as the only girl running with the boys. I didn’t understand the reason behind the differences that I sensed around differences in approval or acceptance for what were gendered behaviors. At a young age, I internalized the tension between cultural ideas about the divergence between “athlete” and “feminine”, if not in those exact terms.

When I transitioned into organized sport, new sets of rules were imposed. Rules around skill development worked for me, but social rules or gendered truths did not, particularly when they were inconsistent across contexts. As I came to recognize what it meant to “be a girl”, I could see those traits in other girls, but not in myself – I both actively rejected and projected onto others what I understood as soft, weak, and girly. My first lesson in the contrast between boy athletes and girl athletes was when I was moved from baseball, where I believed myself to be a bad player, into softball, where I was an all-star from my first day – predicated on the same fundamental skill set.

Being cut to softball by the youth baseball coaches shaped my outlook on what girl and boy athletes looked like: the move demonstrated for me that the differences between girls and boys held value assessments – where girls are “less than”: weaker and not as competitive. My athleticism and boy-oriented behavior didn’t protect me in a boy’s space at baseball (as it did later in football and in coaching) – the baseball coaches cut me because of their ideas about gender, evidenced through by my advanced skill set in softball and superior athleticism in football. The “less than” logic that manifests as segregated spaces in sport was delivered through the baseball coaches’ beliefs that girls can’t compete with boys, not that I couldn’t compete.
Messner (2011) argues that gender segregation before puberty is grounded in sexist logics, and that an antecedent and outcome of segregation is differential treatment. Where I was excluded from baseball based on my sex, I was not excluded in football, and I thrived. The transition to softball, though, taught me that girls were less as athletes physically, and the delivery of softball across my career in that sport was that girls were also less competitive and more concerned with feelings — I learned in softball that I needed to orient my outputs around how the other players felt about them. The move from baseball to softball because of segregated spaces (in that sport particularly) carried the “less than” logic, but the socialization into softball introduced the overarching logics that I needed to conform socially (micro) and that girls need to be “protected” (meso). In softball, those logics overlapped as local truths about proper and appropriate behavior that I, as a girl, should exhibit in order to protect the girls around me from “the me”. “The me” is a characterization of what my personality traits (e.g., loud, aggressive, high-energy) amalgamated to that put me out of bounds in spaces.

I had a very difficult time learning to constrain myself in softball, and I exploded in self-destruction regularly; the constraints in softball were so narrow that I didn’t know how to express myself. In football, a context that I occupied simultaneously, I didn’t have any meltdowns or behavioral issues that were out of bounds. In softball, my shows of competitiveness or aggression, through language or through physicality in play, were “unsportsmanlike”. I learned early in softball that being on the field meant being aware of my responsibility to tone down my language and heat, or to protect others around me from myself — to protect their feelings. In football, I didn’t have any constraints about how I should tone down the way I speak or carry myself with my teammates. I didn’t need to measure my communication or competitiveness in football.
I learned the ability to control my behavior better as I got older, but feelings and circumstances that caused meltdowns in softball, through high school, were suffocating. As I aged in the sport system, I was able to develop cognitive strategies that helped me navigate the feelings that evoked my meltdowns, and I experienced those feelings less frequently across time. When I began soccer, the constraints on shows of competitiveness were less, but I was also somewhat older and playing at higher levels across my sports. My entry into soccer was immediately into elite play (among top in southern California) that carried variants on sets logics about the nature of competing.

In contexts where the constraints were tight, as to what was imposed on me, I was a discipline case throughout my youth era and into college sport. The gendered expectations of my value or potential in contexts where an authority had a vision of what they could produce out of my ability tended to be those contexts in which the imposed constraints were elevated. High school field hockey was the first context in which I can place being a discipline case as an outcome of my coach’s vision of what she could mold me into.

The pattern of having a coach recognize and pour over my potential as something to shape into their vision continued into coaching, though was delivered differently. The behavioral boundaries around fitting in (social conformity) and walking the line (protect girls) as a player were stable as contextual messages from childhood sport through college, but the vision of projected potential arose as I entered higher levels of competition during adolescence, where coaches had their own agendas for how they could use my ability.

My high school years were when opportunity in women’s sport in college was burgeoning. Title IX enforcement was just kicking off and college programs and opportunities were expanding dramatically. Ideas about girls and women as participants in sport were being
normalized if not accepted (evolved marginally from when I had entered sport as a baseball player a decade before). I entered elite play in a cultural era that supported sport for girls and women as a more serious enterprise that included external rewards, such as college scholarships, which translated to visions of how my potential could be harnessed; some of my coaches saw my potential as extending beyond their immediate context into higher levels of play, which lent to their ideas about how to shape me into their version of me.

The logic around the vision for potential takes on a different dimension than the other three overarching logics because the visions, specifically, weren’t gendered – the visions of what I could produce or become centered on excelling as an athlete, which was developing in the US culture as a general logic, but was still on the edge of out of bounds. Where the “less than”, “conform socially”, and “protect girls” logics dictated delivery in the first degree (each of those gendered logics were imposed directly on me), the vision a coach held for my potential operated in a second degree, defying gendered logics. The overarching logic that I could be shaped into an elite athlete, or coach later in my story, carried a paternalistic dynamic that demanded compliance and acquiescence to the path laid out for me, but the “projections of potential” logic did not on its own, or in the first degree, carry sexism – the lens through which the vision was constructed and delivered, or the conditions for execution of the vision carried sexism. The lens through which the vision was constructed was gendered as though the authority could shape me into the “right way” of being an elite female athlete, specifically female; it wasn’t that I was expected to act in a gendered way, it’s that the decisions about what was the right way to act was gendered. They didn’t impose gender roles to make me more female, they imposed gender roles because the frame for what was appropriate behavior or not was gendered. My high school softball coach insisted I choose his sport because I was a phenom on his diamond, but, as he told
me, I was nothing more than “an average goalkeeper” on the soccer field; Coach’s vision for me in softball was beyond gender boundaries to any real degree, so in that case, he delivered sexism through how he constructed his argument for why I should choose his sport: that I couldn’t possibly also be an elite soccer player.

Counterintuitively, though men in positions of power of girls or women who took on a patriarchal sense of ownership was a consistent pattern across my playing and coaching careers, the “projections of potential” logic that carried patriarchal dispositions were not specific to male authorities. I had few women coaches in my youth, then chose two women Head Coaches to play for in college: there was not a discernible pattern that showed any reprieve from gendered expectations if the coach was a woman. In fact, my two college environments operated on opposite ends of a constraints continuum where I was a projection then a discipline case in one context, and a chance then an MVP in the next.

My first set of college coaches expected a raw athlete they hoped they could mold into their vision of a goalkeeper. While I ended up exceeding expectations in playing, the four years I spent at State were riddled with the tensions between my coaches’ vision of the type of personality and leader they wanted me to be and who I was, or “the me”. The vision my State coaches had for me as a goalkeeper (in physical play) were not constrained; the vision they had for me as a team member and leader mirrored the constraints in softball that were grounded in the “conform socially” and “protect girls” logics.

Messner (2011) explains that an outcome of socialization into sport is the normalization of constraints imposed on girls and women about what they should look and act like. While the tension between “female” and “athlete” is nearly exclusively regarded as a micro-level issue, the messages that engender the tension are delivered as sets of rules and truths that vary by context,
where socialization is delivered (Messner, 2011; Coakley, 2017). In the case of delivery through a coaches’ vision of potential, their “projections of potential” and the related boundaries were imposed from a top-down a posteriori perspective: grounded only in their experiences or their interpretations of macro-level ideologies about female athletes or coaches.

Where my first college coach at State had very narrow ideas about what female players and leaders should look and sound like, and imposed those ideas on her vision of my potential, the University coach didn’t try to put her players in a box. At University, “the me” was accepted, if not appreciated – I was not a discipline case in my second college program because Coach didn’t engage with me as one. My teammate identified in interview that I changed the team’s mentality when I arrived based on my fire and competitiveness, and that my addition was a reason we won.

A posteriori ideas about how to mentor and shape a young female athlete or coach, which were based on gendered conceptions of how a female leader should look, put me out of bounds in many cases. When top-down boundaries muted my voice, oriented my behavior around the fragility of other girls or women in my space, or discouraged individual achievement, the boundaries only served to demonstrate for me the ways in which I was different from the other girls or women around me. At State, the coaches’ vision for leadership was one who sacrificed her successes, individuality, and her voice in the name of team cohesion; the “conform socially” and “protect girls” logics intersected in how they constructed their gendered vision of what a female leader looked like. Those boundaries reinforced that I was not only different than my teammates and Coach, but because the parameters were designed to reduce displays of competitiveness and to disempower individual success, being different also carried that the women around me were less than me – less equipped for the rigors of elite sport.
Across my playing career, I tried and failed to assimilate into boundary conditions for behavior in contexts that were oriented around how I affected others, sometimes devolving into a discipline case. In contrast, I was much better prepared and successful at assimilating into playing contexts that explicitly rejected demonstrating traditionally feminine qualities such as the structures in football or at TopFlight camps – in those spaces I thrived. While one might expect the distinction between those contexts in which competitiveness, aggression, and individuality were stifled or celebrated would hinge on the gender of the group or the authority, my experiences at my second college program at University refute that assumption. At University, I was surrounded by women who fought to compete in a traditionally masculine manner, and I was not expected or asked to lead my teammates in any particular vision.

The freedom from expectations or conditions by which I should present myself underpin the differentiation between the implications of top-down mentorship and bottom-up sponsorship from authorities; the distinction between mentorship and sponsorship emerged as I entered elite levels of play and evolved as I transitioned out of playing and into coaching. Where mentorship imposed a posteriori boundaries, which served to train me on the weaknesses of the women around me, sponsorship empowered me to demonstrate “the me”, operating most critically as a provider of permission to have a platform, voice, or personality. Those sets of co-constructed logics: the weakness of women around me and what “the me” carried in terms of my uniqueness, varied locally, but patterned across time and contexts how I would negotiate my positioning against *other women* and their positioning. Where I had developed a strong sense of how “the me” made me out of bounds in many cases, but ultimately different from *other women* in playing, in coaching, what made me different was my ability to use “the me” on the field and to assimilate into the coaches’ office space that mimicked a locker room.
Coaching Era

In spaces that didn’t carry the intersection of “conform socially” or “protect girls” logics, the in-context constraints on behavior were less gendered; where boundaries for my behavior in contexts in which social conformity was a condition for assimilation, sexism was recognizable as explicit. Contexts in which gendered expectations for my behavior were not sourced or were implicitly sourced at the authority level (i.e., a design element and not a micro-process through imparting a vision) exposed how sexism can be delivered contextually through peers’ or co-workers’ expectations, or through the context design, which was more salient to the process of being trained to be sexist in the coaching era than in the playing era. In other words, gender boundaries directed at me and communicated directly through the organization of power, such as through an authority’s vision, masked or superseded other carriers of sexism that emerged in the absence of boundaries imposed top-down through relationships, such as the office locker room dynamic between co-workers or the design of hiring patterns or my formal job description.

Assimilating into the metaphorical locker room was a condition for survival across several coaching contexts (interview), and I had been trained for it. In the office locker room, sexist language or behaviors were omnipresent, and often crossed the threshold of offensive, but I survived, and in many instances competed because of two truths I held: 1. I was special because I could survive it, like a badge of honor, and the jokes weren’t about or didn’t diminish me – the jokes applied to *other women* who couldn’t survive (too soft or weak to deal with it), and 2. I knew to leave the jokes and behaviors – to ignore them and stay silent even if they did cross the threshold into “offensive” because the sexism wasn’t wrong, it was just a natural part of how things were. In other words, there wasn’t reason to speak up, and if I did, I would have been a problem, and I wasn’t the problem – *other women* were; I rejected the implications of sexism.
as my issue. My status was important to me in my coaching contexts, particularly with the men and the men in charge, and I fit in, so taking offense would have jeopardized my status.

The sexist jokes in the office locker room at TopFlight or at Arsenal (in my entry to coaching) were easy to identify as simple banter that didn’t have any real consequences, as I had been trained to believe, but the transmission of sexist narratives were more difficult to recognize, disguised as truths that were informally carried through inter-colleague dynamics or organizational design. As I transitioned from a player’s locker room to a coach’s locker room, narratives about girls in sport or women in coaching became refined, distinct. Where the logics “protect girls” and “conform socially” were dominant logics in my playing career, as I transitioned into coaching, the “less than” logic and the mentorship/sponsorship tension (vision of value) delivered through my network became the primary logics; as a coach, the “vision of value” logic was delivered through constraints on the authority’s conceptions of “professionalism” as a woman, in contrast to what had been authority’s conception of a female leader imposed on me in playing.

The “less than” logic pervaded organizational designs and access and treatment across my coaching contexts through local truths, like that female athletes are less competitive and less skilled, or that women left coaching to have a family, and thus made bad hires. The local instantiations of narratives around the “less than” logic showed in lack of support and funding in the delivery of girls’ and women’s sport across youth, college, and professional levels. For example, in the case of US Soccer, the delivery of the “less than” logic had direct outcomes for individuals across a multitude of spaces (e.g., licensing, national teams, youth programming and oversight); in the youth game, where US Soccer only supported and funded a boy’s USSDA, the
girls’ game remained unregulated and membership funded – the outcome was less opportunity for development and exposure based on their resources and/or sex.

Though US Soccer didn’t directly affect my youth career, it dramatically affected my opportunities for playing post-college as a pro, because US Soccer didn’t fund the women’s league, but actively fought against it from the inside. The fledgling WUSA, the first women’s pro league, was privately funded, under-promoted, and died after its third season. The few teams, eight I think, were limited to 16 roster spots and a handful of designated reserve spots, few of which paid a living wage. Without the support of US Soccer, the league barely launched before it ran out of money. In contrast, the US Soccer-backed MLS lost money for decades and was still propped up by US Soccer and sponsors (Coakley, 2017).

US Soccer has a long history of gender inequality. The funding disparities and US Soccer’s ideological positions on the value of their women’s side have not improved much from that time. The USSDA elite program that defined US Youth Soccer for more than a decade was started for the boys in 2007, and not expanded to include girls until 2017, before it was scrapped two years later. Elite girls’ youth coaches were burdened for over a decade with designing and implementing an elite national league to mirror what was funded, endorsed, and governed by US Soccer for boys only. More recently, US Soccer argued, and were ruled in favor of by a federal bench, that female athletes are worth less than male athletes based on the physical load of sport, and thus deserved to be paid less at the professional level (Cater, 2020).

The narrative in my office locker room space at the time the WUSA folded was that the allocated players – the National Team elders who started the league – were “too greedy”, that they expected too much and took salaries that were too high. However, the league hadn’t been picked up by any broadcast networks and played in expensive, under-filled stadiums or cheap
local facilities that weren’t more than high school fields (disrupting legitimacy). At the time, Nike had sponsored US Soccer and was pouring money into soccer, but only into men’s soccer, even internationally: “when the Women’s United Soccer Association (WUSA) and its 180 professional athletes needed $20 million in 2003 to survive another year, Nike could have reduced the $450-million deal they made with Manchester United, a men’s soccer team in England, so it could support WUSA, but it didn’t because corporations are about profits, and women’s soccer didn’t fit into their business plans” (Coakley, 2017, p. 360).

The “less than” logic directly impacted the sustainability of the WUSA, and consequently my transition from playing to coaching, through two manifestations: 1. the lack of support for the league reflected the circular pattern of argument around interest in women’s sport as the antecedent to sponsorship and coverage, as opposed to as an outcome of sponsorship and coverage (Cunningham, 2003), and 2. the blame placed on the women who drove the league’s start-up, and not the abstain from US Soccer or Nike (for example) reflected the logic that women succeed or fail based on their own volition (Cunningham & Sagas, 2007), as though the league could have survived if the women starting it had stayed in bounds.

That office in which I came to know that the WUSA failed because of the greed of the women who kickstarted it is the same office that took over management of the last team I played for. As the WUSA entered its final year, I re-entered the pipeline into full-time coaching: funded by my opportunity to play for the Arsenal’s USL team. I was hired as a full-time Director of Coaching into Arsenal’s cadre of newly assembled of professional coaches on the back of my playing resume, but was allocated two male coaches (who were considered only fit to work with the minimally competitive programs for the club) as the staff for my USL team. The two men
were installed as coaches because the W-League franchise was not a serious undertaking for club management, and not something they intended to fully invest in.

The pattern that men who were underqualified and over-served in coaching women’s sport coalesced as I entered new coaching environments. As a player, I hadn’t known to see that underqualified men are commonly installed as coaches or leaders in women’s sport, where “underqualified” equates here to having less experience or skill in coaching than would be required of coaching a parallel boys’ or men’s team. As a professional coach, I occupied multiple spaces simultaneously, and where those spaces designed their resource allocation around the “less than” logic, it patterned what staff was assigned to which facet of the organization, or who was hired to run which program.

The “less than” logic was most frequently operationalized as organizational design elements in my contexts as: (a) better quality coaching, or an organization’s strongest coaches were assigned to boys’ programs, (b) hiring patterns were barriers to entry into coaching, where women were hired less often and those who were hired commonly had better quality playing experiences or coaching qualifications than the men hired to coach girls or women, and (c) boys’ programs were on the front edge of funding allocations and program development initiatives (e.g., US Soccer’s USSDA for boys).

For my first full-time coaching job, which only lasted short of eight months before I was fired, I had an exceptional playing resume and a network from playing that positioned me to be hired by a man who was arguably underqualified to run a major D1 program. Despite being given an opportunity based on my network, my network did not protect or support me past entry: instead, I was fired before making it to a fall season because of the tension between implicit gendered ideas of appropriate behavior and “the me”. Based on what I had learned as a player,
and in the absence of any direct explanation from the Head Coach, I concluded that I had been fired for my big mouth – that I had asserted my agenda beyond my boundaries. My only other coaching experience at the time had been at TopFlight camps (which hadn’t translated to program management) where I had been valued for my personality in training and coaching – “the me”, which was a known goalkeeper trait, was celebrated in a den of goalkeepers at TopFlight but was out of bounds on my first full-time college staff.

The “vision of value” and “conform socially” logics were elemental to my first foray into full-time coaching and ultimately my firing. I was fired before making it to a fall season because I was too much for the Head Coach, who was in my network; he didn’t get what he had expected in me – an elite player with a personality he could throw in front of recruits and players but who he could manage as a young coach on his staff. He hired me because he intended to use me without giving me a voice, and had anticipated that I would follow blindly. He did not expect “the me”, even though he knew me.

The “vision of value” logic as a carrier of sexism played out in coaching as a function my network, and specifically through the mentorship/sponsorship distinction. As a player, the “vision of value” was to mold a leadership personality around my physical talent; in coaching, the vision of value was to use “the me” on the field, but varied across contexts as to how “the me” was to be constrained in my interactions with the structure. In other words, my personality was often a tool for authorities to extract value from me in delivering coaching without considering that my voice would come with the personality. In coaching, “the me” wasn’t something to be reduced, but something to be used in interacting with players, but in that space only – the “quiet down” and “be professional” boundaries were for interacting with the organization of power though the fire and passion fit right into the delivery of coaching.
The transition into coaching layered a web of power structures into my training process: I was embedded in multiple contexts at any one time, which uniquely delivered sexist logics and folded into a network of expectations around discursives. My networks were foundationally related to the “vision of value” logic that stretched from my elite playing career and into coaching. Though my network established at University platformed me for my first job (eight months) and my last job as I transitioned out of coaching altogether (nearly two decades apart), I had burned a rich and powerful network when I left State. My Head Coach at State was ingrained in the US Soccer coaching tree, and when I transferred out of her program, I burned a network that affected my opportunities for playing for the National Team and professionally, and in coaching in with US Soccer youth programs; the network that I was excommunicated from when I left State was the spine of the women’s side of US Soccer. The consequences of crossing my coach in college carried through my coaching career as a barrier to entry into coaching for US Soccer.

Fortunately, in other spaces, my network was beneficial and supportive. In the US Soccer Federation (USSF) Coaching Education licensing program, which spanned my coaching career, the leaders predominantly came from the men’s side, so I hadn’t burned bridges in coaching education networks. It was the USSF Coaching Education leaders in my network who best embodied the sponsorship dimension of network support: where they platformed me to have a voice in many instances and directly insulated me from gendered treatment in others (though not all). In contrast, several of my network relationships in my first primary coaching system, which consisted of Arsenal and the cascading ODP program in Region A, reflected a mentorship dimension of support, in which structural boundaries were imposed to shape my voice or train me how to “be a pro”. In that system, licensing was related to but not part of the vertical
organization of power even though the spaces played out for me in the same era and included some common actors.

Many of the ideas about women coaches that I took from my club and local ODP staffs were similarly carried in the licensing courses, which was outside of the integration of power that ODP held, but significantly engaged the coaching network from my primary contexts. Through my tenure in licensing, I was close with several of the lead men in USSF Coaching Education who explained to me that the reasons for the low numbers of women in licensing all centered on women (reiterated in interview): they weren’t interested, they don’t want the hours, or because they went to the rival (but smaller) licensing program because it was “easier and more touchy-feely” (but of significantly less rigor in licensing by reputation) because weaker coaches (i.e., women) didn’t like the elevated demands in USSF Coaching Education. The gendered logics that carried in licensing were embedded in the design of the structure, but passed off as a “women’s issue” (Shaw & Frisby, 2006). The substantial sexism that pervaded coaching education presented in a variety of ways:

- barriers to entry into coaching in the first place
- resource barriers; only those who were funded by an organization or college could realistically participate
- scarce role models, or women in positions of authority
- barriers to pass courses because the playing bias was heavy (which has changed since my time; interview)
- barriers to get onto the field to play because of the men
- barriers to pass the course because the testing sessions were overseen and evaluated by men, and composed of men as players (who could and did disparately support the testing coach when playing in the evaluation session)
- down-time harassment and sexual advances
• or differential treatment by instructors in both directions: easier, “because she is a woman”, or harder, “because she has to be able to hang.”

I was prepared to enter the room as the only woman at my final A license audit (recertification), after I had begun my Ph.D. research: I knew what to expect at that audit because I was a veteran by the time my last one rolled around. I knew that it was one of the most sexist climates I had occupied. For my final audit, I prepped intentionally to never care and to never back down; that was what I had learned was necessary to survive: enter on top, like a wrecking ball. Though my network was running the audit, and I felt a sense of insulation through associating so closely with them, the presence of my network across the leadership of the audit did not insulate me from the out of network instructor who led my group, who treated me in accordance with the local logic: be harder on her because she has to hang.

Across the web of coaching contexts that composed my first primary coaching system, the tension between mentorship and sponsorship reflected an agency/structure tension in how support was delivered: top-down or wide open; where mentorship corresponded to a vision of potential or professionalism, and sponsorship corresponded to a platform. My web of network coaches was critical in both delivering gendered discourse and in disrupting it.

In my first USSF licensing course, I was insulated by an in-network authority who held me in esteem; when he defended my voice, the language and set of expectations among the other candidates in my group changed. The disruption of gendered treatment in that snapshot didn’t make the field a friendlier place for women in licensing in general, but in that snapshot, the expectations for what was out of bounds in men’s language and treatment was affected. In subsequent licensing courses, I felt confident and empowered to have a voice because of the presence and support of my network, even if I was also confident that the climate would be threatening. Across my relationships with sponsors, where authority recognized gendered
treatment or barriers, and shut it down, the “discourse” changed. When the organization of power in the context backed down, ignored, misplaced, or simply didn’t see differential treatment or barriers, those authorities tended to perpetuate the gendered ideologies about value of and boundaries for a female coach.

Networks positioned in different levels of power across contexts insulated me (licensing) and helped me earn opportunity (ODP); however, in power structures that were vertically integrated, networks also carried punishment or consequences across contextual boundaries. The vertical or horizontal organization of power in a system affected delivery of gendered logics, specifically when I disrupted logics in social settings or down time. If power or delivery logics were constrained by a vertical organization of power, as oriented around me, gendered ideologies and consequences for out of bounds behavior in one context had the potential to be carried linearly, up or down the organization of power, to another context. In contrast, where logics were interpreted across a system that held a horizontal organization of power, the gendered ideologies or consequences for being out of bounds were contained to a single context.

The sets of local logics that were co-constructed through the spaces that accounted for my first and most consequential coaching system were delivered differently in what would be the second system because the structures in the first system carried power vertically across organizations. My club and local ODP (District and State), which were the primary components of my first coaching system, were run by men who were from the same network and who held similar views on how programs should be delivered; they were also prominent actors in licensing. The logics around what should be delivered on the field and how, or what coaches look like, were very similar across those contexts. The club and local ODP were my primary contexts and comprised most of my coaching network, which was present throughout licensing.
Regional ODP was a different organization altogether, largely run by women, but operating in the same vertical system as my primary contexts.

In my first coaching system, the contexts were related through network (structural organization of power) as well as through overarching design elements (structural design) that would be considered functions of isomorphism where both relational and design elements delivered gendered ideologies. In other words, the macro-level logics precipitated common design elements across the institutional field, such as segregation or incommensurate funding, but locally, which macro level logics were weighted in relational boundaries or design elements, such as treatment through job descriptions or mentorship, varied.

Where on-field logics about professionalism and what quality coaching looked like were common across my primary contexts, logics around off the field behavior were inconsistent. With my Arsenal staff, which embodied the office locker room, I had no real problems fitting in and wasn’t subject to strict gendered boundaries for off the field behavior. In contexts that were calendar-based, or organized around camp sessions or events, the off the field behavior boundaries manifested as constraints around social time, or going out with other coaches, which was a common practice that occurred across all contexts.

For the most part, the way I delivered raw coaching was as I had played, so I fit right into the male-oriented version of coaching in a way that had been stifled in some playing contexts. I was in an environment that taught me how to coach intentionally and those coaching lessons were grounded in a male-student and male-delivery proxy, so my lens and delivery were celebrated. In other words, the sexism was embedded in the male proxy for my delivery on the field, not about what and how I should appropriately deliver coaching as a woman. Gendered
constraints on behavior generally shifted to off the field when I moved out of playing contexts and into coaching.

In the bubble of my Arsenal club, if the power structure is considered exclusive from its overlap with my concurrent contexts or greater systems, Alan and George delivered my job supervision in the frame of sponsorship. Though there were many gendered design elements embedded in the club organization, the leadership in my bubble assigned me roles that were exclusively held by men in elite youth soccer, beyond what other women across the country were doing at the time. The sponsorship that elevated me in male dominant spaces fed my understanding about what separated me from *other women*. Simultaneously, my relationship with Oscar in local ODP operated in more of a mentorship frame, where the opportunity and guidance from him was severely constrained along gender lines and was explicitly sexist in some instances. The contrasting supervisory styles I was immersed in complemented one another in my training around the expected orientations for on-field delivery and program management behaviors.

The delineation between sponsorship and mentorship was between the degree to which opportunity and expectations were gendered; mentorship in local ODP operated as a direct down-stream translation of gender ideologies, where, in the club, I was given some non-conforming roles and was generally free from gendered expectations of behavior. In other words, mentorship was narrow and one-directional (down) in contrast to sponsorship, which was operationalized in the club as opportunities in male-only spaces, with little more than an open door (which signified trust). The men at the club trusted that I could survive and deliver in spaces in which I was the only woman – that was a narrative I learned from them: I was different from *other women* who couldn’t survive.
I fit in at the club and was rewarded as an important member of our working team. The mold of coaching delivered by the leadership was a challenge to serve players in a specific way, or to organize my team or age groups in a specific way, not about how my behavior or language needed to be softer or more collaborative. I was challenged to understand the messages I was sending onto the field through an analytical lens about steering a soccer process – to set my discursives around players and winning, not around feelings, aside from player or staff development.

In the club, the delivery of sexism shifted from on-field boundaries to the design of program delivery or externalities around down time; in the same way that the operationalizations of the “less than” logic I had encountered as a player taught me that I was above other girls, my treatment in the club confirmed that I was different from other women, and that those differences armed me with the skills to survive in the locker room office. In the club, I didn’t feel constrained – it was the design of the space that delivered sexist logics.

I was the only woman hired as a full-time DOC to launch the club. A few other women I had played with on the Arsenal-backed USL team also had some coaching experience and were candidates for a job with us, but didn’t survive the vetting processes; several other women had tried to negotiate a contract, but had asked for compensation that was deemed out of bounds (interview).

Hiring practices were an instantiation of how the “less than” logic was delivered, and specifically by my club, through organizational design. Across my contexts, hiring practices acted as a multiplier of the “less than” logic where women were constrained to coaching women’s teams, which garnered lower pay than coaching men’s teams, and consequentially compounded the inequity through paying higher wages to men for coaching girls’ or women’s
teams. In other words, the “less than” logic that women deserve less pay coupled with hiring in a space that garners lower wages in the segregated system is a compounding consequence in programs that deliver both boys’ and girls’ sport. Additionally, women are less likely to successfully negotiate contracts because they internalize barriers to entry and don’t want to make waves (LaVoi, 2016). The bottom-up logic of “not making waves” permeates the complicity of sexism, often based on the idea that it is women’s responsibility to survive in male spaces, as I did (Shaw & Frisby, 2006).

I agreed to my low-paying contract without any negotiation and stayed with the club, as the only woman on staff, making less than $30k for nearly a decade. The Arsenal was an international privatized youth sport organization (PYSO) by the time I left it; across the club domestically, the DOC of Youth Girls position was the role that women were allowed to occupy, though gender boundaries did evolve to include goalkeeping (interview). The franchises across the country were run by men, and without exclusion included one woman on the staff. In interview, it was noted by a former colleague that having a woman on staff was “like checking a box” – that the Arsenal had to have one woman on staff as a DOC, and once she was hired and placed with the youth girls, they could go on with operations and hire men into any other positions. Across my tenure with the Arsenal in Region A there was turnover among the DOCs three times and two positions were added, but no woman was ever hired into the club structure.

The logics that dictated hiring practices (an element of organizational design) were that a woman on staff was needed, but that the woman must be “the right woman”, or one who fits in and can survive. I was told by my mentors and sponsors in so many ways, explicitly and implicitly, that I fit that bill – I was told that was an indicator of my specialness. I thrived on being told that I belonged where other women didn’t, and when I wasn’t expected to behave on
the field or in the office in a way that represented my femininity, the sexism embedded in the design became natural and unquestioned. It was my job in those spaces to deal with any of it, including the consequences.

Though Alan and George operated as sponsors within the walls of my club office, or didn’t impose gendered boundaries for behavior or opportunity, how they designed the programming folded into common field-level logics (in terms of institutions, not playing fields) about the “right way” to deliver elite youth sport. The design elements that carried sexism in my club were disguised as natural features of sport delivery and were taught to me as such, and were common in other contexts. I wasn’t given boys’ teams, but I was assured that it wasn’t because I wasn’t capable of coaching a boy’s team, it was an organizational programming decision that maximized value for the female players. When I was granted the opportunity to work with the boys’ USSDA teams, the appointment was far beyond what women were given, so I saw the chance as a reward for my uniqueness, recognition that I could work with the boys, even if I was never positioned with power in any sustained way, like as a head coach or DOC on the boys’ side.

I didn’t see so many of the conditions as sexist because I was provided arguments for why I was not like *other women*, and why other women couldn’t survive coaching. In my office, it was known that women didn’t want to put the hours in and that they tended to leave coaching to have children or for other jobs, because they couldn’t manage the rigor of the coaching lifestyle. Those were complicit narratives used as justification for organizational hiring practices because those truths supported why women weren’t worth the time to invest in as coaches. The inverse logic was also a truth: the “she only got the job because she is a woman” criticism was deployed to explain why a program would hire a woman when it was clear that a
man would be a better hire for the job (interview); the narrative that “she only got the job because she is a woman” was most commonly associated with hires into prominent college programs or positions of leadership in US Soccer or a similar structure.

The manner in which these ideas were delivered in my contexts didn’t reflect sexism to me, they distinguished me from the crowd. I was not like *those women*, as I was told. I was “Flaher”, different from other women to be able to be the winner who got the job on merit.

Assumptions about women as coaches were that they don’t want or can’t handle the work or the time on task; those were explicit in my office. Women’s assumed aversiveness to time on task was tangential to work-life balance issues, which was identified as a reason we had such a difficult time finding quality women coaches to hire, besides me. From interview, a colleague who was in that coaching system explained that she left the profession because she got married and pregnant, and didn’t know that she could have a family and coach. My colleague said she wished that there were women ahead of her, role models, to show her that she could have continued coaching after she had kids, and that she wished our leadership had supported her in that. They dismissed her.

When the ideologies around women as “less than”, needing to be protected (or excused from the job because of their female interest in family), and too weak or soft to handle the rigors of coaching, the operationalization of treatment discrimination cascades into applicant pools, hiring decisions, and job descriptions as complicit elements of organizational design. Where the supra logics of less than, protect girls, conform socially, or visions of value pervaded each structure across time and space, the power in context affected how and if those logics were configured for delivery. The logics that propped up barriers to hiring and treatment that affected
*other women’s* careers, and that I came to see in time affected my career, were renderings of access and treatment discrimination that was operationalized at the contextual level.

- Though I gained access to coaching in a space in which other women were denied, I was still paid less than my male counterparts (create equal opportunity frame; Shaw & Frisby, 2006).

- Where female role models were scarce and narratives about how women hold less value as coaches because of their career decisions were truths, I was trained to discount the value that female coaches and leaders held (fix the women frame; Shaw & Frisby, 2006).

- Though I was propped up as special because of my male-oriented delivery, my job description was (overwhelmingly) constrained to programs and responsibilities that women should hold, or would be successful in because of their assumed female qualities (value the feminine frame; Shaw & Frisby, 2006).

- Though I was propped up as special because of my male-oriented delivery on the field, the constraints around social or down time were a focal point for differential treatment and punishment.

My network and the organization of power significantly overlapped between my club and local ODP, and while many design elements that carried access or treatment discrimination were common between the two contexts, Oscar’s mentorship in local ODP delivered an escalation of gendered logics and gendered boundaries for behavior. ODP was a cascading program in which players folded into State teams from District pools and into Regional teams from State pools, but the program for coaches was disjointed – coaches did not follow the same path. Many of the Regional ODP staff were not involved in lower levels of ODP, but in my local network, it was designed that coaches needed to “pay their dues” to ascend into positions with higher status – or included several levels of gatekeeping that weren’t applied universally. The vertical structure of ODP meant that rules and truths in one environment affected treatment, or consequences, in another – those were linked based on the organization of power. Local logics at Arsenal, like that I was special because of my locker room ability, did not carry in higher level Regional ODP,
where my primary network was principally absent (despite operating in a common, vertical structure overall).

In local ODP, the organization of power started with Oscar, who was in my coaching network through my club leaders as a proxy: Oscar represented mentorship as a function of gendered constraints in both mediating gendered logics (implicit) and in direct sexist discursives (explicit sexism). I hung on Oscar’s word – I was told to. All of the rules and truths he passed down to me I took as being the word of experience that I should heed: that he was supporting me, helping me to make sure I knew how to navigate coaching structures, and to be a student of the craft, as he was teaching me to do. The things he said about women and women coaches, and how I needed to present were coming from my mentor, who was a powerful coach in my network. I was provided the map of “how not to be like other women”, as I was simultaneously learning in my Arsenal office. The map was for how to ascend in coaching.

My relationship with Oscar was an exemplar of a window into the process of being trained to be sexist. I had learned from Oscar how to coach *despite* being a woman, but was punished for rules around how a woman should act off the field, which Oscar differentially applied to the men and women who worked in his programs. I followed Oscar because I was one of his; I was excited to prove to him that I didn’t need to climb the coaching ladder on the back of my smile or my looks – I was excited for the chance to prove what I offered as a coach. I was fully invested in performing for Oscar in the exact way he wanted me to, but I was never able to work out the full set of rules before I broke them, particularly those rules for downtime.

At Arsenal and through local ODP, where the organization of power overlapped, downtime (or social hours typically spent drinking together as a set of coaches) was presented as an important extension of the field to build coaching relationships and to share coaching
knowledge. However, where a male proxy for rules and truths for behavior around on-field delivery were consistent enough to negotiate, the rules and truths around downtime didn’t hold the same proxy; the behaviors that I had been taught were important for coaching development were what ended my tenure with local and Regional ODP in Region A, because of the vertical integration of power in structure.

At the Regional ODP level, which operated at the top of the vertical power structure, the survival and promotion skills I learned at Arsenal and in local ODP were not effective; my ideas about how to survive in the locker room did not help my assimilation into a power structure of women. In that space, I carried Arsenal’s lens on women and sexuality as I was trying to find my place in the structure, consequentially alienating some women along the way. I felt rejected by some of the women on staff at Regional ODP, particularly the leadership, for what I read as their ideas about “the right kind of woman”, which was the mold of the contained, stoic, power-oriented woman who mimicked the “professionalism” of Shaw and Frisby’s (2006) heroic individual, who is imagined as a male-oriented ideal type. The mold for women at higher level ODP, which was situated in a female-oriented power structure, was in conflict with the mold for women that I had been taught in my primary contexts: the women leading Regional ODP were exactly who I had been trained to believe were who “only got the job because they were women”, or whose sexuality painted them as the closest approximation to a male leader, which I was also trained to reject. I hadn’t had to negotiate power or sexuality with other women in my workplace; I didn’t know how to assimilate into a female power structure. I felt rejected for not fitting their mold as much as I rejected them.

The integration of power structures in my primary contexts into the cascading structure of Regional ODP amplified boundaries around downtime, and ultimately converged to cascading
consequences. The vertical integration of power in the overlapping contexts in Region A dictated that punishment for behavior that was deemed out of bounds, based on differential gender expectations, carried across spaces. Because the spaces shared actors positioned with power, gendered boundaries for behavior in ODP were imposed in local contexts and punishments were levied beyond the scope of any one structure.

The lesson from Oscar: that coaches should socialize together, held sets of rules and truths around socializing that played out differently for me, as a woman. The conception of the value of downtime that I had been taught by Alan, George, and Oscar: that it was a space for coaching development and networking, did not factor in the additional, implicit rules and parameters that women were expected to negotiate. Though I had been taught that downtime was important, I hadn’t anticipated that the rules for women (to maintain very narrow boundaries when out) would be different from the rules for men, who demonstrated extreme behaviors, such as harboring prostitutes (interview), that were excused as a natural course of action in downtime. Eventually, one of the things that drove me out of coaching, was that I felt as though I couldn’t win; it didn’t matter if I followed my network’s rules for downtime – those rules about the opportunity social time provided weren’t meant for me, or for women.

The vertical organization of power in my system compounded the consequences for what was indiscriminately labeled as out of bounds behavior, despite that I had done exactly what I was trained to do to gain access to the Irish Men’s National Team (to get my jersey signed); across contexts, the rules for behavior were differentially interpreted and applied, but consequences could be carried across the organization of power. My relationship with Oscar ended with the lesson that, when the out of bounds behavior was so only because of my sex, the only acceptable response when being reprimanded was: “yes, sir. I understand, sir.”
The career move to the Arsenal club in Region B put me into a horizontal structural arrangement between the different contexts I occupied, where power actors only occupied one space. The organizations that comprised my coaching spaces in Region B were separate from my club (primary role): no rules or boundaries would manifest across contexts. Because the power in Region A was capped to that region, despite operating in a common umbrella structure, it didn’t hold in the next vertical level (National Teams that bled from USYS to US Soccer). The organization of power didn’t support carrying the perceived history of my out of bounds behavior and associated consequences from Region A ODP to Region B ODP, horizontally.

The move to Region B folded into two primary contexts: the Arsenal and what evolved into a full-time position at Eastern. The disparity in resources and staffing between the girls’ and boys’ side at my new Arsenal club was much more pronounced than it had been at my prior Arsenal club. I wasn’t brought on right away on to the staff, despite the departure of the token woman that had occupied the DOC of Youth Girls position, into which a man had been hired. Though I would be called into the DOC staff as the DOC of Goalkeeping, I was never full-time with the Arsenal club in Region B, and I never engaged with the organization in the way I had with the Arsenal club in Region A.

It was as I reduced my time at Arsenal and moved into the full-time assistant coach role at Eastern that the fully-trained sexist that I was began to clash over competing sets of logics around sexism, which I recognized as an element of the toxic climate without full awareness of the degree to which it was about sexism. I recognized that I was a highly experienced coach with a professional playing background taking over for a man who had been woefully underqualified to be an NCAA Division 1 coach; and concurrently I mocked the former pro (who had been my roommate in camp in the same WUSA draft class) hired to run the Elite Clubs National League –
a position for which I applied but was not interviewed. Alan explained to me that I hadn’t been interviewed because the board of the ECNL hadn’t wanted a woman with a voice, they had only wanted a pretty face. So, while I was criticized as only getting the job because I was a woman when I replaced a man on a women’s college staff, I perceived myself different from other women still, such as who was hired to be a pretty face as the commissioner of the ECNL.

I was a fully trained sexist by the time I took my second college coaching job, 12 years after I had been fired from my first. The views I held on *other women* and why and how they ascended the coaching ladder distinguished me from them in my eyes, and I couldn’t place some of the barriers I was facing within gendered boundaries: I didn’t see that sexism might have contributed to why I was never hired on full-time in my new Arsenal club, or why my main role at Eastern was to “relate to the players”. As I began my transition out of coaching, I was starting to notice how girls were treated differentially, both in terms of on-field control/abuse and in disparity in funding and resources; I was beginning to question how the sport system was organized, specifically through elite youth and college soccer. I was defeated from sitting next to abusive youth coaches every weekend, from watching poorly equipped and underqualified men claim domain over elite players or college women as “my girls”, and I was defeated by the lack of opportunity to move into coaching National Teams, which was what I had aspired to do, but didn’t have a path in (in-part) because I had burned bridges with networks or had personality conflicts with the senior US Soccer staff.

When I left Region B to enter graduate school, and was exposed to the literature on gendered boundaries in sport, I was uniquely positioned to watch the sexism embedded in design and delivery of sport be carried through the rules and truths reflected in my own story and in the structures I entered. I traded Arsenal and Eastern in Region B for stopgap coaching jobs that
enabled my entry into academia, and was suddenly nested in sport contexts that were literal operationalizations of the logics that substantiated access and treatment barriers for women in sport. As I read about treatment discrimination, I was valued by my Head Coach for my ability to help her “relate to the players”, which I had known to be a truth about what women bring to a staff since I had been declined boys’ teams in my first coaching system. As I read about how sexism is presented as a women’s issue (Shaw & Frisby, 2006), I was told by my club official that a parent asking for “someone up the chain of command” during an on-field crisis wasn’t sexist, which reflected my training to ignore assumptions about my ability to handle conflict and to confront combativeness without any show of weakness. I had been trained to manage and accept sexism as part of the natural order of sport; I had been trained to know that sexism was only a problem when women make it a problem.
CHAPTER 7
DISCUSSION: TOOLS FOR DISRUPTING THE DISCOURSE

Sport spaces are highly masculinized and one’s indoctrination into sport will be a function of how and what narratives about gender in sport are delivered as rules and truths that evolve across time and spaces (Messner, 2011). My indoctrination into gendered treatment in sport was initiated in my first sport experience through which I was taught that girls are “less than” as athletes and needed to be protected from competition and aggression. As I aged in the sport system, those logics were often coupled with gendered pressures to conform to a social fabric or a vision of what my discursively should embody. Across time and contexts, the primary supra ordinate logics that I interacted with were delivered differently to co-construct what I believed about myself as a female athlete and coach, and what I believed about the “right” and natural way for other girls and women to act, and how they should be treated. I was indoctrinated into a system where rules about gender segregation, even in coaching, and truths about why and how girls’ sport is delivered differently from boys’ sport, even in organizational design, taught me that girls and women are inherently different as athletes and leaders and that those differences justified disparity in access and treatment.

As I progressed to elite sport and into coaching, rewards and consequences for demonstrating traditionally masculine characteristics were applied disparately: on-field, my voice and intensity were generally discursively to be celebrated; off-field, what was survival in one context was out of bounds in another, and social boundaries were engaged directly along gendered boundaries. The gendered rules and truths I was taught across my sport career, though delivered differently in different contexts, trained me to assimilate into a power structure that operated on a male proxy for behavior and naturalized for me how and why *other women* should look or be treated. The consequences of the process of being trained to be sexist were the
complicit perpetuation of sexism that I, in turn, delivered to young female AND MALE coaches and players.

The objective of this project was to expose and translate sexism as it was delivered through sport contexts and to map that translation of implicit, explicit, and complicit narratives and structural designs that co-constructed sexism across time and space. The data collected to answer the research questions and the corresponding results of an FDA on those data were used to develop propositions in a logics-based model of discourse that supported identifying access points that could be exploited to disrupt the co-construction of sexism in sport. Data analysis was framed in post-structural feminism, in accordance with Shaw and Frisby’s (2006) proposed fourth frame of gender equity in sport, as adapted from Ely and Meyerson’s (2000) call for the disruption of systemic sexism through intentional discourse.

An analytic autoethnographic methodology was used to tell the story of the process of being trained to be sexist through my personal narrative as the primary data source, augmented by interview and media data. The autoethnography was written in a post structural feminist lens that is complementary to a critical realist lens, which was the lens through which the personal narrative was written (Parr, 2015; Poutanen, 2007). Both lenses support the deconstruction of institutional logics as information flows between agent and structure, where the agent is a member of a marginalized group, positioned as a voice in the structure, and data analysis and reporting are framed as disruptive to the status quo (Anderson, 2006; Clough, 1998; Giddens, 1984). The FDA extractions were designed to (a) describe the structures that dictated sensemaking in the snapshot, and (b) how those structures connected to grander ideologies, culture, and history to pattern discourses (Liao & Markula, 2009). The FDA generated the
archaeology and genealogy of the story, as those dimensions of an FDA corresponded directly to the research questions:

1. In what ways is sexism implicitly or explicitly layered into language and discursive practices in local interactions in sport contexts, and what are the contextual micro outcomes?

2. How do sensemaking, discourse, and macro-level ideologies intersect across time and space to co-construct and deliver sexism through sport?

The purpose of an FDA is to explain the cycle of the co-construction of discourse as a tool of and for knowledge and power, and operates in a systems lens as supra ordinate to the context in which discourse is produced (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). An FDA provided a frame for analyzing the collection of contexts in this story as data points (co-constructed by the organization of power and delivery of sexist logics) that would theoretically pattern to “discourse”.

The data were analyzed through a post structural lens that sources discourse at a contextual level where structure is granted primacy over agency and so holds that access points to disrupt discourse would most effectively be manifested at the structural level. Where the archaeology of the data described the sensemaking and organization of power in each data point (i.e., context or anecdote), the genealogy of the data demonstrated how the data points patterned across time, fixed in their historical context, to compose the discourse that precipitated my process of being trained to be sexist.

**Archaeology**

The first research question asked if my story could be used to identify and translate the delivery of sexism around the sensemaking and structures that co-construct gender into sport. The personal narrative was the primary data source for the archaeology dimension of the FDA, where interview and media data were intended to triangulate or provide depth to an element of an anecdote. The conditions under which the data were generated were constrained by my working
knowledge of issues around gender in sport (and the defining literature) at the time that I wrote the narrative and conducted the interviews (Hook, 2007).

The archaeology of the data corresponded directly to the first research question as a description of the sensemaking, rules and truths in context (structure), and the organization of power that were depicted in anecdotes that comprised the narrative. The logics that were extracted from the archaeology were: the (a) “less than”, (b) “protect girls”, (c) “conform socially”, and (d) “vision of value” (or potential) logics (see Table 1); the four logics operated as the supra ordinate (grand) logics that constrained sport delivery in a gendered way and gave form to the delivery of sexism in context.

Table 7.1. Operationalization of dominant logics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Logic</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Operationalization Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than</td>
<td>Girls and women are considered as lower caliber athletes or leaders, physically and psychologically</td>
<td>Assignment of less experienced or weaker coaches to girls’/women’s teams at Arsenal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect girls</td>
<td>Girls and women are shielded from competitiveness or harmful physical contact</td>
<td>Expectations for softer language and reduced aggression in youth softball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conform socially</td>
<td>Girls and women are to demonstrate behaviors that reflect social arrangements and do not elevate or promote individuality</td>
<td>Constraints on accepting or celebrating individual successes or rewards at State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision of value</td>
<td>The potential of girls and women is manifested via the authority’s lens</td>
<td>Hired as a personality to coach at College (then fired)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The narrative was an autobiographical account that textualized (retrospectively) my experiences with sexism or gender boundaries in sport. The archaeology was produced through editing and reducing the narrative to describe the (a) sensemaking, (b) rules and truths that composed structure in context, and (c) the organization of power as those composed the archaeology of the data, or the agent-structure interactions that were specific to context.

In the playing era, I introduced the logics that underpinned much of the process of being trained to be sexist as they played out in participation, then I operationalized the logics by
layering in how the logics were delivered and shaped across contexts as a player and refined or drilled down through patterning instantiations in the coaching era. For example, the “less than” logic is a supra ordinate logic that I was introduced to in my first sport experiences, and that was carried by a variety of different manifestations across my story, but was refined (developed/matured) in the coaching era by delivery logics such as the provision of funding and resources to girls’ and women’s sport.

In my story, the “less than” logic was operationalized through being cut from baseball in conjunction with the “protect girls” logic operationalized simultaneously in softball through the behavioral constraints coaches and peers constructed around displays of competitive behaviors. I loved softball – the people around me didn’t love how I played softball.

Where the baseball structure and the softball structure are considered data points that carried the respective logics through the local delivery of structure, the logics each played out again in other contexts, operationalized in slightly different ways, such as the inequity in funding between a girls’ side of a club and a boys’ side that operationalized the “less than” logic.

Similarly, the gendered boundaries for my behavior as a player that defined a set of playing contexts also surfaced in coaching in a common pattern in terms of where and how those boundaries applied; where the personality that had been out of bounds as a player was generally a positive characteristic in delivering coaching, the boundaries for behavior as a coach took on a different dimension: less trying to tone me down on the field, more trying to tone me down off the field – to train me to “be a pro”. The archaeology showed that the same logics that were constructed in the playing era grounded the rules, truths, and the organization of power in individual contexts in coaching; however, the “less than”, “protect girls”, “conform socially”,
and “vision of value” (or potential) logics came to be delivered in more complex ways as my systems became more defined.

**Genealogy**

The second research question asked if the co-construction of the process of being trained to be sexist could be mapped across time and space through my story. The operationalized logics played out across time to reveal patterns in common carriers. The genealogy provided a contrast of gendered practices across time and space that constitute data points in a theoretical distribution of how logics are delivered so that central tendencies could pattern access points for where to disrupt the co-construction of sexist narratives.

The spaces that emerged from the data genealogy as critical carriers of sexism were: (a) mentorship/sponsorship relationships; (b) networks; (c) the vertical or horizontal organization of power in a system; and (d) the organizational design and associated isomorphic logics (see Table 2). The identified carriers of sexism were pivot points in the process as sites that patterned variance in associated outcomes based on how logics were delivered; in other words, the four identified sites were recurring spaces for delivery of sexist logics that produced different outcomes based on delivery. The identified sites of sexism are proposed as structural level access points into disrupting the discourse that constitutes the process of being trained to be sexist.

The genealogy of the data was the patterns of delivery or compounding lessons that configured to my process. The eras across my training process can be characterized as systems that held multiple contexts simultaneously. In the playing era, few of the contexts or actors in contexts overlapped. In that era, boundaries and consequences were predominantly contained to single spaces. For example, boundaries in softball didn’t translate to football. As I progressed through the sport structure, the systems became more narrow, and the organization of power
folded into a more vertical pattern where networks and power overlapped and boundaries and outcomes cascaded.

Table 7-2. Access points proposed as spaces for disrupting the gendered co-construction of discourse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access Point</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorship</td>
<td>Operates to platform development free from constraints on outcomes or demonstrations imposed through the sponsor’s lens or position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networks</td>
<td>The associates in a system’s organization of power that provided or denied support or opportunity for development or advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal organization of power</td>
<td>The arrangement of power in a system that diffused (horizontal) or carried (vertical) logics, constraints, and consequences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational design</td>
<td>Practices (formal and informal) of local contexts that codify logics into delivery principles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The genealogy, or the patterns of delivery of the logics began to take shape in the playing era and were refined over time through different modes of delivery through and across the coaching era. The “protect girls” and “conform socially” logics were elemental to how mentorship played out as a “vision of value” in player/coach relationships, but were introduced as different sets of boundaries across contexts in coaching, such as gendered boundaries around downtime behavior. Networks and organizational design carriers were present in the playing era, but much more pronounced in their effect during the coaching era, when people and power started to overlap as I transitioned to coaching from playing.

**Access Point: Mentorship/Sponsorship**

The “vision of value” logic played out differently across the playing era than the coaching era. As a player, the “vision of value” was nearly exclusively delivered as coaching; only football was a space in which the boundaries for behavior were unconstrained (though macro logics pervaded the hyper-masculine space). In the playing era, coaching was frequently delivered in a mentorship frame when I had been identified as having potential, and in coaching,
mentorship was associated with top-down boundaries or conditions that weren’t imposed in a relationship that was oriented around sponsorship.

Sponsorship differed from mentorship in that mentorship corresponded to a vision of potential or professionalism where sponsorship corresponded to a platform. The concepts carried sexism through their delivery distinctly, where sponsorship tended to be free of gendered boundaries or expectations in a relationship, mentorship tended to impose top-down boundaries for behavior that were pulled from dominant gender logics, even when the vision itself might have been in conflict with those logics, or out of gender bounds. The mentorship/sponsorship tension that emerged was a space that was nested in my network, where the network operated as supra ordinate to the tension, where variance in the delivery of mentorship or sponsorship was associated with the “vision of value” logic. The “vision of value” logic was an extrapolation from a mentorship/sponsorship tension where the concepts were differentiated by delivery.

Mentorship, particularly in playing, carried the “conform socially” and “protect girls” logics through top-down imposed parameters. The delivery of mentorship held a unique complexity in that many of the boundaries imposed were not, themselves inherently gendered or sexist, but the mentorship frame of the “vision of value” carried a gendered expectation of how the mentorship would play out. In other words, coaches and mentors across my story often saw my potential as something that made me different from the other female athletes or coaches – and that was something that defined my potential; however, the top-down parameters through which the mentor or coach envisioned shaping me were, in fact, gendered.

In multiple spaces, the issues around a mentorship frame weren’t that the boundaries for behavior were gendered, it was that the manner in which the vision was imposed was constructed through a gendered lens – intending to produce a gendered version of a vision, such as the strong
woman leader they envisioned as stoic, or to use the success story or personality as a prop, only to not have factored in “the me”. I long said I made a career off of potential because in many spaces I was viewed as a tremendous talent that could be harnessed or harvested in the vision of the leader only to never “arrive”; their visions rarely accounted for “the me” that made me special in the first place and ultimately set me up to fail, or never achieve their expectations before I blew up their guardrails.

The mentorship/sponsorship distinction emerged as a site for disrupting discourse because of my tendency to blow up visions that didn’t accommodate “the me”. The “vision of value” tended to implode when my coach or mentor had an expectation about what they might mold me into (or what they could get from me) that was bound by their own frame for possibilities for delivery. In other words, the potential was bound by their lens, and when I delivered in a way they never saw coming, I was out of bounds. It was a pattern across my experiences: an authority would have a base vision of my potential but my process for expressing my potential was nowhere near within the boundaries of their expectations – in those mentor-oriented relationships, the response tended to be to clamp down on “the me”, as if to reign me back in.

Not all relationships in my networks operated on a “vision of value” logic. In sponsor-oriented relationships, the expectations were theoretically unbound or broad to begin with, so the sponsor’s impact on fostering my potential was simply to see what happened. In sponsorship relationships, corrections or boundaries tended to operate outside dominant logics and could accommodate “the me”; the “vision of value” was less constrained by grand logics when operationalized through sponsorship.
The mentorship/sponsorship variance was a function of the organization of power as oriented around me: as being *allowed* to be unique, and being *allowed* to have a voice. As such, sponsorship is identified as an access point to disrupt the discourse through what it showed as a space for platforming alternative boundaries.

The distinction between mentorship and sponsorship is relatively new to the sport management literature (Wells & Hancock, 2017) and does not have a developed presence in how the concepts might differently carry sexism or operate as access points for disrupting the co-construction of sexist discourse. But, the sponsorship/mentorship carrier might be an ideal space to engage Ely and Meyerson’s (2000) position that men should be involved in changing complicit gendered narratives. As sport leadership is overwhelmingly comprised by men, intentional awareness of what boundaries are imposed, why, and how, could shift dominant logics.

**Access Point: Networks**

The mentorship/sponsorship access point was nested in my networks, as an in-network carrier variant. In the playing era, networks were not critical as pivot points to disrupt logics beyond how the micro instantiations demonstrated the distinction between mentorship and sponsorship in player/coach relationships. Networks emerged as an access point to disrupt discourse as I transitioned from playing to coaching.

My TopFlight experiences as a player positioned me to be recruited to my first college program through the National Team staff network, but I wasn’t able to activate the network (beyond the few playing opportunities I had with the National Team) because it was burned when I devolved into a discipline case for the State coaches. The tension that developed between myself and the State coaches, which led to my transfer, effectively excommunicated me from the USNT coaching network.
The literature on networks demonstrates that quality networks can operate as insulation, provide opportunities for development or advancement, and possibly mediate negative outcomes, (Wells & Hancock, 2017). However, as Sagas and Cunningham (2004a) identify, networks operate differently for men than they do for women, where women tend to receive fewer social rewards from their networks than men do, and women’s networks tend to be more narrow, or contain fewer power actors, which might translate to more barriers or stages between activation (distance from power; Burton, 2015).

The functional element of networks, and why and how they varied in carrying boundaries grounded in sexist logics, was that actors with power tended to be embedded in multiple contexts in my coaching systems. Where my State coach was embedded in the USNT coaching network, consequences from unmet expectations while playing for her carried across contextual and temporal parameters to extend out into effects on my coaching career. In contrast, in my second coaching system, which I entered a decade later in Region B, the siloing of actors and spaces from my club, local ODP, Regional ODP, and at Eastern prevented any context-specific boundaries or consequences from being carried across the spaces.

**Access Point: Vertical or Horizontal Arrangement of Power**

When contexts or power actors in my system overlapped, rules or truths in one context parlayed into consequences in another. The vertical or horizontal arrangement of power across contexts as an access point to disrupt discourse emerged through the analysis of the organization of power that elucidated how narrow the arrangement of power was in my first coaching system (in Region A). In that system, I had several in-network power actors who were decision-makers across multiple contexts that were arranged vertically, and thus carried sets of boundaries, rules, and truths through the system.
Networks as a pivot point for disrupting discourse were heavily impacted by how they were embedded in the vertical or horizontal arrangement of power. As I aged in the sport system, power evolved to be more centralized, or the people and contexts converged into a narrow, increasingly homogeneous system. In those systems, contexts that overlapped in a vertical arrangement evidenced to amplify gender constraints. In contrast, in a horizontal arrangement of power where contexts were siloed from one another, local boundaries evidenced more variance around gender specificity and, in some cases, helped mitigate the effects of boundaries or punishments by localizing them to one space. In contexts that were arranged horizontally in the system, even where those contexts carried sexist logics through their common design elements locally, boundaries were contained, or didn’t translate as iterations across contextual parameters.

The vertical or horizontal arrangement of power is a field-level variant that reflects institutional theory and the process of institutionalization through sets of logics around isomorphism and legitimacy (Davies & Quirke, 2007; Kikulis et al., 1989; Skinner, Stewart, & Edwards, 1999). Isomorphic logics in the field would be operationalized as gender segregation or the escalating conditions around cost and competition in PYSOs, for example. Legitimacy logics are arrangements that improve the positioning of an entity in the field, such as joining an elite league or associating with the cascading power of an NGB (Skirstad & Chelladurai, 2011). In my story, legitimacy logics were heavily associated with a vertical arrangement of power where power actors and elite organizations that were well positioned in the field tended to compose a very narrow system at the highest end of competition.

**Access Point: Organizational Design**

Isomorphic and legitimacy logics were locally carried through elements of organizational design, or the formal and informal delivery tenets of an organization (Skinner, Stewart, & Edwards 1999; Skirstad & Chelladurai, 2011; Pugh et al., 1968). The most widely researched
and heavily conceptualized carriers that emerged from the genealogy were access and treatment discrimination, both of which are functions of organizational design and are productions of isomorphic logics. Organizational design is the final space that emerged from the FDA as an access point for disrupting the co-construction of sexist discourse.

Dimensions of organizational design carried variance in delivery as data points that, when organized into a common distribution, would pattern to central tendencies of isomorphic delivery logics in the field (Skinner, Stewart, & Edwards 1999). Throughout my story, I saw the “less than” logic delivered uniquely across contexts and dimensions of organizational design, such as disparate funding or lower pay for women. The central tendencies across the field for delivering the “less than” logic patterned to access and treatment discrimination along gender boundaries.

Though organizational design is not a framework that has been used specifically to support emancipatory research in the sport management literature, it did evidence as an access point that holds massive potential for disrupting the co-construction of discourse when positioned as the manifestation of delivery logics. Access and treatment discrimination are identified in the sport management literature as meso level barriers instantiated through hiring practices, job descriptions, and informal practices, for example (Cunningham & Sagas, 2007). My colleague’s account of access discrimination, based on role models and tropes about work-life balance being a women’s issue and reason for exclusionary hiring, were delivered explicitly by leadership and the organization of power in our system.

Access discrimination played out for me as early as being cut from baseball and was common across my coaching career through examples like being denied a boys’ team. Boundaries presented as barriers around “value the feminine” dictated that I could be hired as a
token, but locked into limited career opportunity as only suitable for leading girls. However, because I was told I was different from *other women*, those barriers were naturalized as an element of organizational design – I was trained to believe that my exclusion from boys’ teams wasn’t about me as a woman, but that it was about organizational need.

Being denied boys’ teams or constrained to working on the girls’ side also reflects treatment discrimination, where responsibilities are based on logics complicity associated with external traits, such as gender (Darvin & Sagas, 2017; Sagas & Cunningham, 2004b). Disparity in job responsibilities that are predicated on external characteristics, such as that “the women on staff handle the relationships” is substantiated in previous research as a ubiquitous and complicit carrier of sexism in sport (Burton, 2015). The “value the feminine” strategy (Shaw & Frisby, 2006) that pairs the “protect girls” logic with a “conform socially” logic substantiated many of the treatment barriers across my story. As a player, treatment discrimination was associated with narrow constraints in competitiveness or intensity that I was pressured to tone down in those contexts in which the “protect girls” logic was dominant. As a coach, treatment discrimination defined my career.

Being constrained to working with girls or having my value on a staff be primarily derived from my ability to relate to the players are complicit dimensions of organizational design in sport delivery and are not novel findings about treatment discrimination. Likewise, disparity in boundaries for behavior in downtime or social spaces, where expectations and consequences for women are highly gendered and more severe, also has been identified in the literature (Shaw & Frisby, 2006). However, unique to my experience was that those barriers were operationalized in the same context that held opposing sets of boundaries under different circumstances, or two different sets of logics were simultaneously delivered by the same people. In my primary
coaching system, treatment discrimination along gender lines operated on a male proxy on the field and in the office locker room, but imposed highly gendered boundaries around downtime, which were associated with punishments. In other words, “value the feminine” was only a logic for social boundaries for behavior outside of where the context was controlled (coaching and office).

The boundaries around downtime would be categorized as an informal practice in organizations, which Shaw and Frisby (2006) identify as a critical space for carrying inequity. Where treatment discrimination carried through formal organizational design practices, such as hiring, can be dismissed as isomorphic logics, informal practices, such as language in the office locker room, evidenced to vary much more by context.

Examples of truths that were carried through informal practices in the office that housed my most salient coaching context (Central City Arsenal) included:

- women who wore khakis and a polo to coach were trying to approximate a man, and leggings were inappropriately sexual
- women didn’t want to put in the hours required for high-level coaching jobs
- women left coaching when it came time for them to have a family (marriage, kids)
- leads should reduce expectations of women coaches or treat them with kid gloves “because she is a woman” and needs support; or leads should have elevated or simply different expectations of women in coaching “because she has to be able to hang” and so needs to prove that she can
- men coached girls/women for one of two reasons: 1. they preferred working with females (mostly power/sex relations termed as “they didn’t want to deal with the ‘bullshit’ of boys or men”, i.e., toxic masculinity); or 2. They couldn’t get a job coaching boys or men because they weren’t good enough as coaches
- women get hired into high-level jobs only because the hiring entity needed to hire a woman

Ironically, the narrative that “she only got the job because she is a woman” that was iterated when a women hire was made, particularly in high esteem jobs like a college program, was a
truth that was juxtaposed with the narrative about why men coach girls (among a set of men who worked with girls).

Informal treatment discrimination plays out as a function of organizational culture (Burton, 2015; Shaw & Frisby, 2006). In my systems, treatment discrimination through informal language was the delivery of sexism through relationships: relationships that I held very close and that propped up my coaching career. Fitting into the office locker room and buying into coaching as my career path carried gendered conditions for entry: I was trained across my contexts what it meant to be “the right kind of woman”. I was trained to be sexist.
CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSION: THEORETICAL MODEL OF DISCOURSE

As Shaw and Frisby (2006) argue, many of the strategies for disrupting the delivery of sexism in sport organizations have been constrained by the frames in which the strategies were generated; strategies for addressing inequity have commonly failed to affect macro level ideologies because they fail to disrupt the co-construction of the organization of power in society that dictates macro level logics in the first place. The over-arching premise of this project was to apply and extend the conceptual map that Shaw and Frisby (2006) provided for disrupting complicit discourses in sport. According to Shaw and Frisby (2006), exposing and disrupting existing discourse occurs in three phases: (a) identify social practices, (b) change the narratives that construct social practices, and (c) experiment with ways to disrupt social practices.

Shaw and Frisby’s (2006) map for disrupting discourse framed the analysis of the co-construction of sexism in sport through corresponding dimensions that were illustrated as story: (a) identify complicit language and behaviors (discursive practices) that grounded the process of being trained to be sexist, (b) translate and interpret the co-construction of sexism in sport (as it is constrained by agency/structure relationships) through accounts of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extrapersonal interactions (i.e., micro, meso, and macro), and (c) experiment with affecting localized narratives through a theoretical model to stratify the discourse that constrains strategies for equity. The model of discourse that is developed in this project was proposed as a method to experiment with affecting complicit narratives, the final dimension of disrupting discourse (see Figure 20).

Proposed Theoretical Model of Discourse: Method for Disruption

Clough (1998) proposed that the emancipatory potential of analyses of discourse is grounded in the stratification between the semiotic and material elements, specifically in critical
and feminist research, which subscribe to discursive power relations in the disruption of discourse; power is manifested in affecting discourse. Stratifying discourse into local logics and delivery components (i.e., material and semiotic strands; Clough, 1998; Fairclough, 2005) was proposed here as an extension of the third phase of Shaw and Frisby’s (2006) map for disrupting the discourse through positioning discourse as a function of a corporeal space to disrupt.

Figure 7-1. Proposed theoretical model of discourse.

**Dominant, Non-Dominant, and Interventionist Logics**

The proposed model of discourse is oriented around the theoretical assumption that discourse can be stratified into material and semiotic, or manifest and latent strands, but that those strands cannot be decoupled. Where discourse is ‘structure’, or the composition of it (according to a post structural conception), and discourse is the ‘product’ of the agent-structure interaction in the aggregate, the logics that constrain and enable structure and its composition subsume both local logics and their delivery, as delivery is constrained by field level logics (e.g., isomorphism). The meso level is proposed as the aggregate of how any macro logic is delivered,

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as each data point in the distribution of delivery element would represent a local context that is co-constructed by the agent/structure interaction. The central premise of the proposed model of discourse operates on the stratification of its components, as discourse can then be located in delivery, or the operationalization of the local logic that constrains and enables delivery.

As institutional logics cannot be decoupled from their delivery in the constitution of structure nor agency, that coupling substantiates post structuralism as an epistemological lens for analyzing logics as supra ordinate tools for disrupting the discourse, where dominant, non-dominant, and interventionist logics are the mechanisms that dictate delivery (Thornton et al., 2012; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999). Where the logics that constrain delivery are pulled from a constellation of logics (Goodrick & Reay, 2011), using logics as a method allows for introducing new logics into a meta distribution to (theoretically) affect central tendencies of how those logics are delivered (Skinner, Stewart, & Edwards 1999; Skirstad & Chelladurai, 2011). Injecting new logics to disrupt dominant logics, or using positioning in a field to move non-dominant logics into primacy (such as Montaño and her story as part of a NYT expose that changed Nike’s maternity leave policy, which, in accordance with isomorphic logics, could induce change in other major sponsorship companies in the field), might be a tool for changing macro-level ideologies co-constructed on the back of how logics are delivered locally (Skinner, Stewart, & Edwards 1999; Skirstad & Chelladurai, 2011).

Individuals are constrained by local manifestations of a logic that is abstract at the macro level, but pervasive throughout its diffusion from ideology to personal schema development. The aggregate of agents’ and entities’ sensemaking have been represented in institutional theory research as archetypes, ideal types, and in typologies; in those frames that illustrate common discursive practices as sets of central tendencies, institutional logics are operationalized as the
informational inputs and outputs that ground the snapshot depiction of ideal and archetypes as temporally constrained agent or structure (Lammers, 2011; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Thornton et al. (2012) propose that positioning institutional logics as both supra ordinate in social systems (theory) and as the foundations of micro processing (method) contributes a novel lens for patterning social practices as they become institutionalized, and thus as an ideal lens for disrupting institutionalization. The spaces identified in the genealogy of the data are proposed as sites that carry variation in the delivery of sexism and thus are where the theoretical movement of dominant, non-dominant, and interventionist logics can compete for primacy, based on their instability evidenced in the FDA.

The proposed model of discourse positions macro level logics, such as the “less than” logic, as supra ordinate to local logics that constrain and reconstitute delivery in context. In other words, the “less than” logic is omnipresent, but is delivered differently in different contexts, and is embedded in different dimensions of the contexts, such as how “visions of value” or potential are delivered, or how job descriptions are written as an element of organizational design. In these examples, the “less than” logic operates as the supra ordinate latent dimension of the co-construction of discourse that constrains the local delivery of the logic. Recursively, it is the sets of local logics and associated manifest delivery elements, such as job descriptions, that operate as data points that comprise the distribution of logics and their delivery that characterize the field level, or comprise the latent and manifest strands of ‘discourse’ in the proposed model.

The model holds that sensemaking and agency dictate individual discursive practices that aggregate around any topic to pattern the ‘micro level’ as a theoretical abstraction that reflects ‘micro’ logics and the associated discursive practices; those discursive practices that pattern the central tendencies of how logics are delivered by individuals represents the micro level. In a
parallel vein, the model holds that the meso level is composed of contexts, formal or informal, whose patterns of delivery are field specific and subject to both institutional factors, such as isomorphism, and micro factors, as individual contexts are affected by agentive positioning and agendas. The discursive practices of organizations or contexts that pattern the central tendencies of how logics are delivered by entities are proposed as the composition the meso level. The meso level is locked in an exchange between the discursive practices of individuals or entities, where formal or informal contexts (entities) operate on local sets of rules and truths and the macro level logics that constrain them via delivery. Discourse is proposed as the latent and manifest strands that pattern the theoretical meso level through which local agent-structure instantiations that compose a context operationalize it (discourse); in turn, local instantiations operate as a data point in the distribution of logics and delivery that characterizes the meso level. In other words, instantiations of logics and their delivery are proposed as data points that represent the two strands of discourse which, as the aggregate of the data points, demonstrate patterns of logics and delivery, or the central tendencies that characterize the meso level.

**Model Operationalization**

The autoethnography entered the process of the co-construction of sexist discourse at the most micro level to describe sensemaking as it intersected within structures (archaeology) across time and space to pattern the process of being trained to be sexist. The micro level lens through which access points to disrupt the discourse were identified are grounded in the theoretical assumptions of the recursive relationship between agency and structure as the local operations of the production of discourse. The data produced around sensemaking and the reflexivity that co-constructed local logics and their delivery were written and analyzed as an entry point into the model of discourse that positioned contexts as data points.
The research questions were framed to produce data that could translate and map the complicit nature of the co-construction of sexism in sport so that data could subsequently be used to identify spaces, or nodes in the process that could operate as access points to disrupt the discourse. Though sexism could easily be identified in any given context as a micro level process delivered by an individual agent, the model of discourse that framed the project propositions holds the meso level, or the population of single contexts, as the interface between macro level logics and individual agents, positioning the meso level as the supra ordinate space through which sexist discourse can be disrupted.

The genealogy was designed to support an extrapolation from my process that could ground the proposed model of discourse associated with research question number two. The genealogy of the data produced from the FDA demonstrated the efficacy of exploiting the meso level, or contextually specific ‘structure’, as the optimal site for disrupting the discourse; it is the meso level that operates as the mediator of macro and micro level operations in the co-construction of the discourses. As Skinner, Stewart, and Edwards (1999) phrased it in their research on the interaction between field level logics and organizational change in sport organizations: “Just as values and ideas can be institutionalized, they can also be deinstitutionalized” (p. 174).

The propositions associated with their respective research question were intended to support the application of the data to a proposed model of discourse that positions logics as supra ordinate constraints on local variants (latent) and how those are uniquely delivered (manifest) in contexts that compose an institutional field. The proposed model places discourse as an output of the aggregation of corporeal spaces (local logics and delivery) to interrupt (Anderson, 2006; Skinner, Stewart, & Edwards 1999; Skirstad & Chelladurai, 2011) and thus to potentially take
equity in treatment and access out of the hands of a positioned individual and move it (the onus of improving equity) from a micro process to a structural feature, the space where logics are mediated.

The discourse analysis of the data was presented as evidence that substantiated the proposed model of discourse in which macro logics, such as “less than”, filter into different contexts differently, through direct and explicit carriers, like visions of potential, and through indirect and implicit or complicit carriers, such as organizational design of staffing age groups, where complicit elements, such as knowing female coaches can be more impactful for girl athletes because they can be role models, reflect field level isomorphism. The data from the project were used as operationalizations of grand logics that constrain local logics and their delivery, and how that pairing aggregates across the field to compose a discourse: specifically here, the process of being trained to be sexist through sport. In the case of the complicit knowledge (macro level logic) of conditions for women to be folded into leadership in sport organizations, the tendency for men of lower qualifications to be installed as women’s coaches or for women to need a higher caliber playing resume for entry carry the “less than” grand level logic, meso level logics about leadership prototypes (Sagas & Cunningham, 2004a), and field level logics about the seriousness of women’s sport. These meso-level barriers that are either theoretical in nature or appear in empirical research were seen in my story as local examples of the carriers of the logics. In other words, the grand logics that constrained delivery across my spaces were operationalized through the meso level, which is commensurate with theory and research that positioned gender issues in sport at a structural level (Burton, 2015; Shaw & Frisby, 2006).
Although the grand logics were what emerged in my story, they were delivered differently across contexts, and in different combinations, which amounted to variance across delivery that exposed patterns in operationalization. Each of the logics would explain a unique degree of variance in each delivery element through which the element is operationalized. Where the “less than” logic would explain most of the variance in funding disparities, the “conform socially” or “value of vision” logics might explain more variance in hiring patterns. For example, the finding that the organizational design could dictate how gendered behavior was out of bounds in some ways and spaces and part of survival skills in others demonstrated variance in what logics were operative in constraining delivery in a particular context, or data point.

**Boundaries and Contribution**

The most critical boundary of the study is my positioning, which operated as a boundary across multiple dimensions. The personal boundary conditions that constrained study design, data generation, data analysis, and conclusions reflect my whiteness, ability, heterosexuality, SES, and the zip codes in which my story took place; the intersection of personal and demographic characteristics is presented here as bound within the frame of Shaw and Frisby’s (2006) position on gender equity strategies in a post-structural feminist lens that should consider intersectionality.

Analytically, a boundary of my positioning was the conditions under which the data were generated as constrained by my working knowledge of issues around gender in sport and the defining literature when I wrote the narrative and conducted the interviews. This poses a theoretical threat to the validity of conducting and FDA on the data, specifically the archaeological analysis. Foucault designed the archaeological tenet of his variety of discourse analysis as a description of the conditions under which the document was produced (Liao & Markula, 2009). In the case of the autoethnography, the document being analyzed (as the
primary data source) was created in the now, so the conditions of the now, or the conditions around the creation of the document, could be argued as what should be reported in the archaeology. Thus, characterizing the conditions around the story depicted in that narrative (the description of sensemaking and structures) as the archaeology could be considered as an inappropriate application of Foucault’s conception of the archaeology of the document. In other words, an argument could be made that using an FDA to analyze a document that was written this year would produce a description of the conditions under which it was constructed: pandemic conditions that were coupled with social justice uprisings and as an element of fulfillment of requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. I reported the power structures that constrained the anecdote in the story as the archaeology, not the power structures that constrained the production of the document.

In order to identify and seek to remedy issues around the argument that the FDA archaeology should reflect the conditions under which the narrative was written (in my house), I explicitly iterate in the methods section, the archaeology section, and in the conclusion (as well as here) that, though the document was produced in the now, the story was written to provide a rich account of what is extracted as the archaeology: the sensemaking and structures in a context that engaged me in the process of being trained to be sexist, or in a Foucauldian lens, how discourse is configured as power (Hook, 2007). The methods section also has a subheading on the construction of the data in which I described the cognitive or emotional constraints that affected producing the narrate document.

Despite any conflict around what power structures can or should be extracted as the archaeology, the FDA lens aligned directly with the design for the study, specifically the propositions for developing the model of discourse. The FDA provided a rich and enlightening
lens through which I viewed the data, and the frame of describing the structures then amalgamating the patterns in them positioned me to (relatively) bracket my own story from data analysis and interpretation. Without the lens of an FDA, the pivot points that emerged inductively, and honestly quite surprisingly, would certainly have looked different. Though how I applied the archaeology lens to the story is a possible limitation of the project, the lens of an FDA was critical to developing the data and conclusions.

A potential limitation of study is that the proposed model of discourse was designed a priori and is not written here as emergent from the data. The data used to support model development through this project (or used to propose operationalizations of model components, features, or pathways) were fitted to the model after they were generated. As such, there is a possibility that my objective to use the project to develop the model might have influenced the data I wrote or my interpretations. Where there is no qualitative equivalent to measures of fit in quantitative models, there are no assurances that the data and the model are actually commensurate, because the data and model are both constructions of mine. In other words, there are no measures to support the trustworthiness of how I fit the data to model.

The contributions of the dissertation are proposed as: (a) a contribution to the reader, (b) a contribution to the sport management literature in which institutional logics do not hold a developed presence, and (c) a contribution to the literature on “doing autoethnography” (Muncey, 2005) and the utility of FDA as a viable data analysis mechanism in revealing process.

The purpose of the project was to generate an accessible account of the process of being trained to be sexist. The contribution to the reader mirrors the design of the project: to see sexism where it hides. The autoethnography was written to expose and translate ways sexism is reproduced through common practices (e.g., language or organizational design) and to map those
reproductions into a process for the reader to locate the reproduction of sexism in snapshots in their story, then to employ their awareness in disrupting the reproductions they engage in or see.

The gender in sport literature is a body of knowledge that is developed at the macro level (as cultural patterns), at the organizational level as structural barriers, and at the micro level in aggregated reports of patterns of micro-level experiences or behaviors that interact with organizational barriers (Burton, 2015; Lavoi, 2016). While the experiences that constituted my process of being trained to be sexist is not novel nor typical, using autoethnography to explore the totality of the process, and expressly fitting the micro-level operations as nested in and across various structures, provided a window for the reader to experience with me how and where gendered barriers shaped my story (Ellis et al., 2011). The accounts of my sensemaking around the organization of each context and the evolution of sensemaking across contexts that composed the process of being trained to be sexist were written to demonstrate and expose implicit and complicit language and structural design elements that carried gendered logics that the reader could recognize in their own experiences or extrapolate to their own contexts; the hope is that the reader is an informed and aware actor in the rest of their story.

The second proposed contribution of the dissertation is incorporating institutional logics into the sport management literature. Institutional logics are a relatively new lens for analyzing the co-construction of culture, structure, and process that primarily appear as a theoretical frame in organizational studies grounded in institutional theory (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012). As an emergent development out of institutional theory, logics are nearly exclusively situated in the extant literature, across disciplines, as a theoretical tool for analyzing their outcomes as manifestations.
Though logics are proposed by Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury (2012) as meta theory and as method, little of the research situates them as a method. When institutional logics are used as a meta theory, they are often framed as taken-for-granted elements of a structure that occur apriori, such as classic versus nouvelle cuisine (Rao, Monin, & Durand, 2003), editorial versus market logics in higher education (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999), and the influence of social organization on art genre classification (DiMaggio, 1987), which represent seminal works in institutional logics. In the sport management literature, logics are positioned as meta theory nearly exclusively, where they are employed as a general tool to explain an organizational position (e.g., O’Brien & Slack, 1999) or as a broad category that dictates organizational design (e.g., Gammelsæter, 2010). When logics are situated in research as theory, they operate as assumptions embedded in the context or as fixed starting points that evolve, or reflect processes of institutionalization, across time.

As a method, Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury (2012) purport that logics are the unit of analysis in examinations of field-level practices, compiling patterns of organizational design elements as indicators of logics. These sets of logics, or the competing dominant, non-dominant, and interventionist logics are organized into ideal types and archetypes in typology theory building (Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1992). Employing logics as a method in type-building, or framing logics as a micro-variant or design element (i.e., bottom-up), however, does not hold an established methodological presence in the sport management literature, and specifically logics as micro-initiated (i.e., sensemaking and discursives) are absent. Where logics are employed in the sport management literature nearly exclusively as theoretical, their analytical value as method is a research tool that holds latent potential for the field.
In their book, Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury (2012) developed a comprehensive first iteration of institutional logics that conceptualizes logics from their emergence out of the institutional theory literature, framing logics historically as an outcrop of Weber’s ideal types (Eliaeson, 2000) and Friedland & Alford’s (1991) early proposal of institutional logics as a method. The progression that Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury (2012) follow reduce logics to their proposed model of micro foundations in which they situate logics as produced and reproduced at the micro level, in contrast to most of the theorizing on logics, which situates them as produced and reproduced at the structural level. The model of micro foundations incorporates sensemaking, activation (or resource configuration), and agency as mediator of logics:

Overall, our model allows for a variety of processes and outcomes that have not been previously integrated, including institutional reproduction, individual differences in embeddedness, differentiation and complexity in institutional logics, exogenous and endogenous change, top down and bottom up attention, the role of language linking micro cognition to culture and institutional logics, and micro interactions in macro structures. (p. 98)

The model of the co-construction of discourse that I propose in this project aligns directly with the model of micro foundations that Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury (2012) present, where I develop Gidden’s (1984) conceptualizations of allocative and authoritative resources as the mechanisms for what they characterize as mobilization, and stratified their “the role of language linking micro cognition to culture and institutional logics” (p. 98) into the strands of discourse where logics constituted the semiotic or latent strand.

In this project, the theoretical model of the co-construction of discourse in which logics are embedded (e.g., logics as theory) was used as the apriori frame, where logics were used a
method to extract dominant logics. The interactions between sensemaking and structure that I described in the project results (archaeology) operated as the most micro level entry into the process (genealogy); incorporating sensemaking with the description of the structure in contexts was designed to operationalized the theoretical recursive agency/structure relationship. Using institutional logics as the semiotic strand of discourse that constitutes the agency/structure relationship in a post structural lens, and threading logics into contexts through sensemaking descriptions offers a potential vein for logics to be incorporated as an analytical lens that supports the deconstruction of process, which is the aim of many qualitative phenomenologies or ethnographies.

A third proposed contribution of the dissertation is to the literature on research the autoethnographic method, and recursively on analysis, is the pairing of FDA with an analytic autoethnographic method. While the idea that data reporting should conform to more positivist forms of inquiry in providing detailed accounts of data generation and analysis might be rejected in many corners of the debate around ‘what autoethnography is’, the FDA method cleanly pairs with many tenets of an analytic autoethnography – such as the primacy given to the construction and organization of power as a tool, which is commensurate with emancipatory work that is highly associated with autoethnography, or as a tool for analyzing a cultural process without necessarily describing or interpreting “meaning” in the snapshot, which is generally collected as retrospective data anyway. The insider’s perspective of an auto ethnography provides a novel transparency into the archaeology of the data, where the trained researcher can recognize the organization of power or process in the contexts that comprise their story’s archaeology. In fact, the extractions from an FDA: the power structures as outcomes from discourse, align neatly with what a researcher’s perspective would be bound by when generating the autoethnographic data.
If the assumption that the conditions under which the story was generated (not the textualization of it) constitute the archaeology of a narrative and triangulating data in an autoethnography is tenable, an FDA might be valuable analytic lens for deconstructing process through an autoethnography that uses retrospective personal narrative as a primary data source. Where the FDA aligns with a description of the organization of power in a context (i.e., the archaeology), as analysis of a retrospective personal narrative, the autoethnographer has unique insights into the micro-level processes that are constrained by the organization of power in a context and they will be positioned (through their formal research training) to describe the dynamics of a structure through the lens of extant literature and theory in their genealogy.

Finally, I do not intend to present that I was not the problem – I present that I was the problem because, to at least some degree, “the me” never fit the right gender rules in the right space and time. I present that differential interpretations of rules and truths in contexts follow the same supra logics, but that their delivery across time and space creates feedback loops that reconstitute the sexist logics. Disruption of those is rooted in the structural level: where leaders platform a marginalized voice or organizational design extends gendered boundaries for opportunities. I do not intend to present that I was not part of the problem – that is exactly what I am trying to present: that I was trained through explicit, implicit, and complicit design elements of structure to be a conduit for delivering sexism as part of the natural order of sport delivery.
LIST OF REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Meredith Flaherty was an athlete on the super-highway to coaching during the Title IX era. After coaching for nearly two decades, she reached her threshold for patience around the toxicity of sport, as it was produced and reproduced before her eyes at every level, and she didn’t want to be a part of it. Her exit strategy landed her in a Ph.D. program where she stumbled into the literature on youth sport, gender in sport, and the social issues in sport that, retrospectively, wove together her story. In the literature, she found a space where she could affect the sport system beyond her players, teams, or local organizations – through research as the production of knowledge. In the literature she found a space where she could affect the next generation of sport coaches and leaders as her students, at the least, and affect policy and the delivery of sport at most.