

INVESTIGATING BASKETBALL TWITTER: A COMMUNITY EXAMINATION OF
SERIOUS LEISURE INFORMATION PRACTICES

By

JACOB SANCHEZ

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Investigating Basketball Twitter: A Community Examination of Serious Leisure

Information Practices

By JACOB SANCHEZ

Dissertation Director:
Ross Todd

Serious leisure studies in Library and Information Science have focused on the educational and work contexts to the detriment of leisure contexts (Stebbins, 2009). The metatheoretical position to support this view is based in social constructivism (Talja, Tuominen, & Savolainen, 2005). A synthesis of key claims in serious leisure research is used to create the base knowledge of the serious leisure community. By identifying gaps in the research at the theoretical, topic, contextual, and methodological levels, this following research seeks to address the following research problem: What can we learn about serious leisure in library and information science in the online community of basketball twitter? The proposed dissertation investigates: (1) the serious leisure practices of the basketball twitter community; (2) the positive and negative impacts of the serious leisure information practices in the community; and (3) how, if at all, do these information practices shape the power structure of different groups in the community. Findings are examined in relation to the fields of human information behavior and practices, serious leisure, sport, and social media.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to understand the serious leisure information practices within the online discussion culture around the sport of basketball. Serious leisure information practices are the information written, shared, and discussed as amateurs or hobbyists express their skills knowledge and experience in a substantial, interesting and fulfilling context (Stebbins, 1982). A virtual ethnography of one online major discussion environment, Twitter.com, is selected as the site for search. The participants include the subculture of twitter users whose primary focus of their twitter identity surrounds the sport of men's professional basketball in the United States.

1.2.1 Definition of Serious Leisure

“Serious leisure is the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity that people find so substantial, interesting, and fulfilling that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a (leisure) career centered on acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience” (Stebbins, 2007).

The Serious Leisure Perspective homepage run by Dr. Robert A. Stebbins, seriousleisure.net, includes the following domains: retirement, amateurs, arts, casual, deviance, digital library, ethnicity, gender, hobbyists, leisure education, library and information science, social capital, project-based leisure, sport, disabilities, tourism, volunteering, and work.

Research Problem

Serious Leisure research domains are explored in the next section under rationale for study. The problem this study addresses is the lack of focus on virtual environments in serious leisure studies in library and information science, particularly the intersection of sports and virtual environments.

1.3.1 Rationale for study

Prior research in Serious Leisure in online has focused on the following research sites and activities: seniors' online communities (Berdychevsky & Nimrod, 2015; Nimrod, 2014), online gaming (Holt & Kleiber, 2009), restaurant experience (Watson, Morgan, & Hemmington, 2008). They have all made the argument to include virtual hobbyist and amateur communities into the realm of Serious Leisure. There is much that is known in Serious Leisure and online communities, social media, and sports. This research proposal aims to combine the different domains and examine a research site that includes

hobbyist, amateur, and the public-amateur-private system in one specific online community.

The domains of study regarding LIS practices specifically focus on offline functions at their core, and, have to date, only used online web communities to augment the main experience. In food blogging (Andrew M. Cox & Blake, 2011) and quilting (Andrew M. Cox & Blake, 2011; Gainor, 2009), the activity is still a material activity that has a large offline component. Other common LIS practices and sites in Serious Leisure include backpacking (Chang, 2009), knitting in public libraries (Prigoda & McKenzie, 2007), and coin collecting (Case, 2009). For example, Case (2009) looked at the ontological differences between coin collectors and how librarians structured information about coin collecting. The majority of LIS research in the area follows the same pattern of comparing a leisure activity using library practices with library practices in a previous context. For example, in coin collection the previous context is how libraries catalogue books about coins and related information. The serious leisure perspective looked at how coin collectors create their own catalogues and taxonomies outside of the library system. These new contexts can include hobbyists, amateurs, and participants in virtual environments.

Sport is one such context where serious leisure is mainly focused on the participation in the event and not the virtual environments surrounding sporting events (Stebbins, 2009). The intersection of casual leisure activities such as watching sports and the serious leisure of writing, blogging, and discussing sports online are changing over time. Journalists of different age groups see micro-blogging, or twitter specifically differently as younger

journalists see the stand-alone value of the service while older journalists use it to mainly promote printed work in other platforms. (Schultz & Sheffer, 2010).

A virtual world that contains social worlds with different sub cultures of serious leisure has not been the focus of previous research. Virtual worlds that have been studied still focus on how they can improve existing information practices and library function, rather than studying them for their unique information practices with regard to the serious leisure involved (A.M. Cox, Clough, & Marlow, 2008; Urban, 2007). Serious Leisure, especially online, does not hew strictly to information practices found in digital libraries, or established ontological frameworks (Stebbins, 2009). Each virtual world, as understood as a socially constructed cultural location, has new information practices, norms, power structures, and communicative strategies that could have serious leisure in information science implications.

1.4.1 Research Questions

In the serious leisure context, specifically the continuing twitter-based discourse around basketball as a serious leisure information practice:

RQ1. What are the serious leisure information practices of the basketball twitter community?

RQ2. Which of the serious leisure information practices identified in RQ1, which practices promote a more involvement and engagement, and less involvement and engagement in the community?

RQ3. How, and to what extent, if at all, are these information practices shaped by the power structure of different group interactions in this community?

1.5.1 Significance of the study

This study is significant in that it covers gaps in the Serious Leisure Information Practice research in Library and Information Science specifically that of metatheory, topic, context and methodology. It is timely in the rise of social media, participatory culture, and interactive nature of online communities. The four main gaps that this study addresses are using practice theory and communities of practice in a LIS context, using sport as the topical context, using online communities as the place context, and using virtual ethnography as the methodology. A combination of all the areas is uniquely situated to uncover the serious leisure information practices of an online community.

1.6.1 Implications for research

The implications of this study impact all virtual environments where the information practices are culturally constructed and have power over the user base and

communication patterns. For example, the work that recognizes the affordances of Facebook and Twitter have sub-cultural and sub-contextual information practices rather than general statements about the platform. Fan studies, sports and social media research, as well as media studies research have interest in this area. In serious leisure, the focus on Library and Information Science, sport, and social media are all viewed as separate contexts and in the case of social media, twitter is viewed more as a casual or passive entertainment platform. This research helps to explain how much work and serious leisure value is possible in a social media environment.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1.1 Metatheoretical Positions in Library and Information Science

Information Science metatheories can be grouped into constructivism, collectivism, and constructionism (Taljia et al., 2005). The first metatheory constructivism or cognitive constructivism has an epistemological foundation on the individual as the basis of knowledge and their own mental models as influenced by history or experience. Key influencers in this arena are Jean Piaget in early childhood education (Piaget & Cook, 1952) and Nicholas Belkin in Library and Information Science (Belkin & Croft, 1992). Constructionism posits that knowledge is created only in discourses and cannot be separated from these discourses in order to be studied. Knowledge is inherently constructed in discourses and only through these discourses can knowledge be framed. The work of Foucault (Foucault, 1977) and in Information Science Taljia, Tuominen and Savolainen (Taljia et al., 2005) are key influencers in this area. The last metatheory is collectivism or social constructivism where knowledge is a product of social interactions. Multiple meanings are created and are a product of the individual and the socio-cultural environment. Social constructivism brings together the individual and the discourse into a multi-world view where meanings are socially constructed. Bruner (Bruner, 1984),

Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1980) and Hjørland (Hjørland & Albrechtsen, 1995) are key influencers in this philosophy. The main metatheoretical position of social constructivism is important in the theories of Everyday Life Information Seeking (Savolainen, 1995) and the methodological approaches in serious leisure research.

Social constructivism is directly related to how in this proposed virtual ethnography meaning is shaped by the online community. Through social media related discourse, the social interactions give rise to information practices that answers the related research questions. The meta-theoretical views of Collectivism seem suited to answering practice theory questions given the multi-world view and socially constructed meanings inherent in those meta-theories.

In Information Science, domain analysis falls under the metatheory of social constructivism. The concept of information (Capurro & Hjørland, 2003) describes the different definitions from different scientific domains, natural science, humanities, and social sciences. Information is then socially constructed within a certain context; in this context it is the scientific domain. The definitions and core concepts then come from a domain, even though the domain's definitions might change over time through language, history, and cultural influences. Domain analysis in leisure studies is exemplified in the metatheoretical positions from an ethnography of gourmet cooks in the home (Hartel, 2010). The home domain of gourmet cooks framed how she studied the problem and bounded her study both methodologically and theoretically. The meanings of information were contextual to the domain of information used in the home for gourmet cooking.

Domain analysis and virtual ethnography also seem apt tools for looking at a specific online community. Domain analysis and virtual ethnography both fit within social constructivist frameworks. They use similar ideas about truth, knowledge, and reality to create their frameworks and methods. Therefore, these theories were chosen and not theories that dealt more with individualistic or cognitive frameworks and use more quantitative methods.

2.1.2 Everyday Life Information Seeking

Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS) is the study of information seeking that emphasizes the everyday or non-work information needs and problems of people. Savolainen explains that non-work information seeking does not replace but rather complements task or work based information seeking (Savolainen, 1995). ELIS focuses on the ways that people use information in their daily lives to solve problems. While ELIS at this stage of research used empirical data to create classifications and types of users, Savolainen noted that a more holistic framework or longitudinal studies could be used. Participants in this 1995 study had a difficult time remembering the information channels they used to solve certain problems. Surveys and interviews that created ontologies were not suited to describing the phenomena. Case studies and ethnographies that would be carried out later would overcome some of these difficulties. It is important to note that ELIS has always been framed as non-work information seeking with the

assumption that information seeking exists and is worth studying in non-job performance contexts.

A different theory of information behavior that also fits under the ELIS umbrella is Brenda Dervin's Sense-making theory (Dervin, 1992, 1998) which moved from using knowledge as a map of frameworks to an action verb orientation. Sense-making considers the context and situation of the information process which overcomes gaps through use of a bridge toward an end goal or outcome. The process highlights the user and the context rather than information structure of noun concepts linked together in a web without a focus on the individual or the context. These theories are different ways of looking at information, both within the ELIS umbrella and within a social constructionism framework. Case studies and ethnographies that highlight the people in their communities can use ELIS frameworks as in the proposed study in a virtual community.

2.1.3 Methodologies used in Everyday Life Information Seeking

Group constructions of situated meanings are prevalent in ELIS research. A review of Human Information Behavior research noted the focus on professional groups rather than socially constructed groups (Julien & Duggan, 2000). The gulf is between "serious" research in professional or educational contexts and against the culturally constructed groups outside of work or school institutions. The same gulf is seen and argued against

by Serious Leisure scholars who argue that the information practices in socially or culturally constructed contexts are information rich and dynamic. Listed below are examples of the shift in methodologies in ELIS over time to include more context and user perspectives.

Critical incident technique in an ELIS framework, similar to Savolainen's 1995 study, used focus groups and micro-moment time line interviews in sense making (Davenport, 2012). There are tensions between realist and nominalist approaches in ELIS that is reflected in the different methods. Davenport critiques this movement for documents and artifacts as agents instead of constructed in discourse. There is a movement away from document centered agency towards institutional constraints by researchers in the ELIS domain. The specific account of ELIS in youths is shown as examples where critical indecent techniques help understand a particularly difficult context, the sense-making of youths and information.

Carey, McKechnie, and McKenzie (2001) echo this movement away from the cognitive model of human information behavior towards a cultural understanding. By investigating the information practices of groups such as pregnant women, self-help support groups, and preschool children, the access to these groups depends on the researchers, the group, and the cultural context of study (Carey, McKechnie, & McKenzie, 2001). These are socially constructed groups and the entry in them is dependent on factors that are contextual and difficult to study on an individual level.

Another shift in research is from the focus on the information systems themselves to how people use them (Courtright, 2008). The context of the information needs, seeking and use are then paramount in bounding the focus on the users. Courtright (2008) argues that when the context is defined, it can become static and there is assumed to be no change in the context when that is not present. The changing and evolving nature of the information contexts should be reflected in the theoretical models that study them.

Selwyn (2003) develops a systematic way of looking at non-use of technology and why some people would choose not to use technology in their lives. The argument is that most information and communication technology (ICT) research is on use and misrepresents those who ignore technology (Selwyn, 2003). The focus on creating an alternative framework fits into the social construction of the meanings around technology that is often ignored. ICT has certain socially constructed meanings, and some frameworks start with the assumption that technology is positive and helpful while in the community it has different meanings.

Openstreet map is an open source mapping wiki that was examined using questionnaires within the serious leisure framework (Budhathoki & Haythornthwaite, 2013). The results suggest that there are differences in motivation between serious mappers and casual mappers in the site. Serious mappers motivations run parallel to open source motivations with ideals about openness, but also include site specific motivations about geography and community involvement. The casual users' motivations were aligned to free availability of geographic data and nothing more.

Archive.org was studied using Chatman's small world theory and the theory of normative behavior (Burnett, 2009). In this study Grateful Dead music and concert recordings were limited in November 2005 and the resulting controversy was studied with three different small worlds, all in relation to the original controversy.

These previous examples from the ELIS research demonstrate that the focus has moved from a cognitive technical focus to a focus on many different theories including but not limited to small worlds, serious leisure, and previously ignored contexts outside of work and school. This proposed research continues in that shift in ELIS metatheory from focusing on a technology from a technical view to a holistic approach that includes context, cultural specificity, and alternate frameworks on how meaning is constructed in a community. Twitter itself is not the focus or even social media, but the cultural specificity that can engage with different communities through the same medium.

2.2 Serious Leisure Defined as a Concept

“Serious leisure is the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity that is highly substantial, interesting, and fulfilling and where, in the typical case, participants find a career in acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience” (Stebbins, 1992).

Serious leisure is distinguished by six characteristics: “1) need to persevere at the activity, 2) availability of a leisure career, 3) need to put in effort to gain skill and knowledge, 4) realization of various special benefits, 5) unique ethos and social world, and 6) an attractive personal and social identity,” (Stebbins, 1982).

In Library and Information Science, Serious Leisure as a concept offers the richest overlap between LIS and leisure studies with how people use and share information during their free time (Stebbins, 2009).

2.2.1 Hobbyist and Amateur community

Stebbins defines a hobby as “a specialized pursuit beyond one’s occupation, a pursuit one finds interesting and enjoys doing because of the durable benefits” (Stebbins, 1982). The intersection and application of some members of the community to include twitter use as part of the media’s occupation would include non-hobbyist roles into the community.

Professional writers, pundits, TV personalities and their amateur counterparts are part of the community as well. Stebbins defines amateur as, “part of the professional-amateur-public (P-A-P) system of functionally interdependent relationships, an institutional location that is both cause and effect of the serious, committed orientation toward the activity in question” (Stebbins, 1982). With relation to the P-A-P system, the internal amateur and the external hobbyist can still interact in the same system although their roles and drives are different. The conceptualization of the basketball community on twitter is directly linked to how hobbyists, amateurs and the P-A-P system play a role in defining the participants.

2.3 Synthesis of Key Claims in Serious Leisure Research

Thirteen knowledge claims can be made from the broad body of serious leisure research.

These claims are synthesized from eleven studies that have focused on information sharing in the serious leisure context. 1) Serious leisure participants develop their own ontologies to organize information; 2) They engage in the activities for social interactions; 3) Socioeconomic status can impact their level of participation in the activity; 4) They participate in a likeminded learning community; 5) They depend on each other for information; 6) They depend on online information channels; 7) Library and Information Science theories can be used to frame their activities; 8) Situated Learning describes how novices make sense of the community, 9) Social Learning describes how participants share information and practices; 10) Information needs describes participants need for learning, finding information, and socializing with others; 11) Information sharing describes the broad information practice that supports the needs of the groups involved; 12) Information use describes how participants need information at a designated stage of the activity to complete a task; 13) Information experience describes how participants contextualize information at different stages of the task.

2.3.1 Organization schemes

Serious leisure collectors and hobbyists develop their own organization schemes for organizing information. For example in coin collecting (Case, 2009) different methods

for organizing the information about coins such as their year, condition, country, etc. are organized using special collecting taxonomies that are different from library taxonomies. (Hartel, 2010) also found user created ways of documenting for gourmet cooking in the home that were socially constructed forms of information that included binders, websites, clippings, books, and areas of information. The organization scheme was personalized and the concept of the personal information binder with recipe and cooking information was created. This personalized way of organizing information in the sphere of the activity is reflected in the metatheoretical notion of multiple meanings of information sources that are constructed by the individual to create their own meaning.

2.3.2 Social dimensions

Serious leisure participants engage in the activities for the related social dimensions and social interactions with others. While casual leisure activities are performed individually such as reading a book, the activities that demand outside expertise have a natural dimension for sociability. Quilting (Gainor, 2009), knitting (Prigoda & McKenzie, 2007) and coin collecting (Case, 2009) were all bounded by the social network of the activity participants and did not focus on the individual information practices associated with the activity. For example, the location of the knitting at a library (Gainor, 2009) showed the social dimension for some serious leisure pursuits is central to continued participation in the group. The knitting group began as a teaching demonstration with a typical school

classroom schema, then transformed into a social gathering that combined social chatter with serious knitting information sharing practices.

2.3.3 Socio-economic status

Decisions to participate in serious leisure activities can be impacted by the socio-economic status of the participant and culture of the community. In many cases the activity under study, from backpacking (Chang, 2009) to rubber duck collecting (Lee & Trace, 2009) necessitated a financial outlay that created a barrier to entry. On the other hand, having low barriers, such as meeting in a community library, offered people from different socio-economic statuses the ability to interact. There is a dimension in any personally funded activity in how much to spend on the activity. What is also not discussed with socio-economic status and touched upon with respect to gender (Stalp & Conti, 2011) is the ability to participate in the activity with the financial security of a partner. Tensions can arise through culturally created discourses that see serious leisure activities as less authentic or respectful than “real” jobs (Gainor, 2009). The professional quilter is still seen as an amateur even with publications in quilting magazines and awards, in addition to the time and mastery to perform the activity (Gainor, 2009).

2.3.4 Groups of likeminded individuals

Serious leisure activities are not solitary and can occur in groups of likeminded individuals who share the interest in learning and performing the activity. Situated

learning describes how individuals learn to make sense of their environment and context over time (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The complexity of serious leisure tasks lends themselves to learning, mentoring, building information repositories and sharing information sources and expertise. These tasks are not present in casual activities such as reading or watching television but are present in communities of online quilting websites (Gainor, 2009) and coin-collecting (Case, 2009). These activities have beginners, experts and a community for the learning and mentoring around the activity. In online quilting there are aspects of the site that specifically address teaching including patterns, assembly of resources and information portals (Gainor, 2009).

2.3.5 Group information

Serious leisure participants in groups depend on others for information. Their groups exist in a web of professional, amateur, lay public, and collegial public spheres (Stebbins, 2009). The interactions between these groups depend on the type of hobbyist collector. For example in food blogging (Andrew M. Cox & Blake, 2011) the professional, amateur and public spheres framework to analyze food blogging was utilized. With any serious leisure activity that has a professional counterpart, the different spheres have different motivations and agendas to support and share information. The main difference between the blogger and professional food writer here was the interactions between the different spheres (Andrew M. Cox & Blake, 2011). The blogger focuses on their own personal writing and improving their content while professional food writers interact with other

professionals through the media, restaurants, and public relation companies (A.M. Cox et al., 2008). Online, as media consumers become media producers, there may be more content produced by amateurs but increased need for filters and gate keeping (Andrew M. Cox & Blake, 2011).

2.3.6 Internet support

The Internet changes access to information to support leisure activities, as well as allows for the geographic dispersal of practitioners. The Internet has allowed users to find information to support leisure activities without using their social circle or libraries (A.M. Cox et al., 2008). Backpackers who are travelling to a specific area use a triangulation method to research their trip, using past knowledge, knowledge from other travelers, and local knowledge to plan and share their trip (Chang, 2009). This is combined with information during the trip that occurs spontaneously. The ability of information to be shared over a great distance should not be discounted, especially in niche activities where the participants would find it difficult to meet in person to share information (Chang, 2009).

2.3.7 LIS theories

Library and Information Science theories are used in framing serious leisure activities. In project based leisure activities, the stages of backpacking map onto the Information Seeking Process framework (Kuhlthau, 1991). Kuhlthau's ISP framework detailed three

stages of backpack travelling, before, during, and after travel when backpackers used information to solve problems, make plans, and share knowledge (Chang, 2009). Each stage also contained different search tasks and contexts, such as what to do, where to go, when to do what, how to get there, how to use extra time, and how to budget for certain things. Task was an important concept and backpacking as a community of hobbyists used habitual information behaviors to learn more from each other online (Chang, 2009).

2.3.8 Situated learning

Situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) is present in Serious Leisure groups where new users are brought into the group, have conflicts that are resolved over time through a learning or mentorship process, and then become veteran users. Knitting groups, quilting sites, and genealogy (Fulton, 2009) all were studied with a focus on the group norms and how they were constructed. The knitting group that was originally a teaching group, changed over time as the teaching was too structured and conveyed the idea that the teacher knew more than any one group member (Prigoda & McKenzie, 2007). Instead a show and tell schema where each member would have time to show and explain their work with help and advice became the community norm. The change in community was seen as new users would enter who did not know the social norms and would make mistakes (Prigoda & McKenzie, 2007). Because the group emphasized the social aspect of the activity, members would share stories and personal information. Some members would hold back sensitive stories while others would share health or family related

information (Prigoda & McKenzie, 2007). The power relationships developed from strictly a teacher student power relationship to a level community of participants between new members and veterans.

2.3.9 Social learning

Social learning defined as learning through observation, imitation, and modeling (Bandura & McClelland, 1977) was also present in groups where behaviors, language, and interactions are all socially constructed over time, with each group or sub group creating their own meaningful constructions of behaviors, language, and interactions. The information practices in Irish Genealogy demonstrated that information sharing was reciprocal but there were different groups of sharers (Fulton, 2009). Many were looking for their own histories and would share information they came across. There were also super sharers who would remember other sharers' questions while they looked for information unrelated to their own family (Fulton, 2009). These users functioned as gatekeepers and moderators who helped with searching tips. The social norms around sharing were taken as embedded meanings and deviations from the agreed meaning of positive history sharing were discouraged (Fulton, 2009).

2.3.10 Information needs

Serious Leisure activities contain broad information practices such as information needs, sharing, use, and experience. The serious leisure needs include needs for learning,

finding information, information dependent on stage of task, level of expertise, and socializing with others. The needs to learn a new tool in the case of blogging (Andrew M. Cox & Blake, 2011) or learning a new skill in quilting (Gainor, 2009) are categorized within the concept of information needs. Information needs in serious leisure map onto the motivations and tasks involved with the activity.

2.3.11 Information sharing

Information sharing is an important broad information practice that supports the needs of the groups involved. With the professional, amateur, and public spheres, there is the need to share information, best practices, and social ties among the different spheres for different motivations. In food blogging (Andrew M. Cox & Blake, 2011) the information sharing between the spheres is related to the activities of the different spheres. Bloggers tend to share information with other bloggers and reference their own social circle and comment on pictures they posted themselves. This is in contrast to the professional food writer who shares information with a collegial public, restaurants, PR firms, their editor, and even chefs (A.M. Cox et al., 2008). The blogger's social world is smaller and they interact in the lay public sphere so their information sharing practices are based on if they should blur out their partner or children when posting pictures online, while the expectation for privacy and collaboration with a journalist are different (Andrew M. Cox & Blake, 2011).

2.3.12 Information use

Information use is another information practice that supports the information need. Broadly it is analogous to the information needed for the activity and the information used before the activity to plan, during the activity to complete tasks, and after the activity to document and display expertise to others. In the case of home gourmet chefs (Hartel, 2010) the information repositories were designed to support cooking, the activity that all the information use activities revolve around. Before cooking there are information browsing and culling techniques to organize books and magazines into a binder of useful articles and recipes (Hartel, 2010). Then during the activity, the binder can act as a reference with discreet steps, or general lists of ingredients, or if the method of cooking is difficult, tips for that cooking method (Hartel, 2010). Knowledge needed at a specific phase of information seeking is also present in the stages of backpacking (Chang, 2009). These studies map different phases of the information seeking process to the information used at the various phases.

2.3.13 Information experience

Information experience is the last broad information practice that is related to serious leisure. Information experience is an umbrella term to describe the activity and tasks that support the leisure practice. Experiences range from participating in the activity and developing expertise to creating a serious leisure community. Backpacking as an activity

contextualizes information tasks at different stages (Chang, 2009). In the planning stage the information experience was learning from others, learning from websites and books on travelling in the area, and learning local information. The experience during travel is all the learning that happens in the field (Chang, 2009). The experience is not planning any more but reacting to new situations and solving problems that may occur. The next experience would be reflection, on past events and how problems and situations were solved. Developing a community to support these experiences is always occurring as new members join the community and share their own travel experiences. Gourmet cooking can also be categorized as information experience in the sense that cooking in general describes all the information processes associated with the activity (Hartel, 2010). The cooking process, with discreet steps, has the information process of other information heavy activities and using serious leisure to study it makes sense (Hartel, 2010). The information experience contains how gourmet cooks share this information with other similar users to document practices for self-knowledge.

Chapter 2 has looked at metatheoretical positions from social constructivism, Everyday Life Information Seeking, Practice Theory, defined serious leisure, articulated research claims all to create a theoretical framework for the proposed study. This section began with the social construction of meaning, then following into Library and Information Science theories that share those definitions of truth and epistemology, and then following methods that work within that entire framework. Finally, the definitions of serious leisure and information practice are key concepts to define before any more particulars of the proposed study. A literature review of a selection of studies in serious

leisure then defines what is known about serious leisure as a reference point for new knowledge.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL GAPS

3.1 Theoretical gaps in literature introduction

This section describes four gaps, theoretical, topical, context, and methodological gaps that this research seeks to address. The four gaps that this study addresses are using practice theory and communities of practice in a LIS context, using sport as the topical context, using online communities as the place context, and using virtual ethnography as the methodology. The first gap using practice theory, communities of practice, and interaction theory in a LIS context is shown by the existing research metatheories and how specifically this research proposal uses Interaction Order, Practice Theory, Communities of Practice and Situated Learning as theories to draw on at the theoretical level while applying those concepts to serious leisure. The second gap uses the topical area of sport in serious leisure information practices to argue that sport has serious and not only casual leisure practices. The third gap is the online virtual community gap in serious leisure information practices that argues virtual communities are viable locations for serious leisure. The fourth gap is the methodological gap in using virtual or cyber ethnography in serious leisure information practices as the method most suited to study leisure practices in online environments.

3.2 Gap 1: Information practices and behaviors

The largest metatheoretical connection to be made is on the spectrum of information practices and behaviors. Information practices and behaviors are umbrella concepts that both deal with how people “do things” with information (Savolainen, 2007). The main conceptual difference Savolainen sees is the connotation with behavioral science with information behavior and a social constructivist approach with information practices. The difference then in the two concepts is how they are applied and how the behaviors or practices are triggered (Savolainen, 2007). Savolainen sees behaviors as caused by needs and motives while practices are shaped by habits over time with input from socio-cultural factors. This study uses a social constructivist approach so naturally the focus is on information practices and the socio-cultural factors that shape those practices. Information practices should also focus on less directed information practices in ELIS and not only on information that supports active information seeking (McKenzie, 2003). These neglected practices support the social concept over the cognitive approach to information that focuses only on the active cognitive tasks. Cognitive based information behavior approaches and socially based information practices can complement each other in a problem solving framework (Wilson, 1999). Wilson uses a nesting framework to show how information behavior research can be used to solve problems in information research using different theoretical frameworks (Wilson, 1999).

The metatheoretical connections to information practices are reflected in a social constructivist overall framework. The salient connections here are from information practice as an umbrella term and highly cited theories within ELIS and Serious Leisure such as Anthony Giddens’s theory of Structuration (Giddens, 1984). Lucy Suchman’s

situated work practice (Suchman, 2007), and Lave and Wenger's situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This umbrella term of information practices follows logically from the metatheory of social constructionism and fits the socially constructed nature of information and knowledge. The selection of the term information practices and practice theory share consistent world views with social constructivism.

3.2.1 Practice theory

Using a socially constructed metatheory and information practices naturally leads to practice theory. Schatzki defines practice as an array of human activities, including skills or underlying knowledge (Cetina, Schatzki, & von Savigny, 2005). The inclusion of non-humans such as machines and technology are debated amount the practice theory field. Another key concept outlined by Schatzki (Cetina et al., 2005) is the context where activities occur is the site of the practices.

Practices are defined to include subjects and objects, tacit knowledge and intelligibility (Cetina et al., 2005). These ideas are arrayed in the embodiment of a group, or culture in response to philosophies that would clearly demarcate human and non-human entities. Science can then be thought of, not as a simplification of human and non-human actions that act on each other but practices that are represented by activities (Cetina et al., 2005). The fields of practices are the place to study the subject matter in question, and practice analysis should focus on the activity, field, or group within the field (Cetina et al., 2005). Practice theorists consider embodiment to be a core tenet of practice theory (Cetina et al.,

2005). These practices contain an array of human activity and are constructed around a shared understanding and shared knowledge. Practice theory embraces the materialist or non-human entities and how they are influence human activity (Cetina et al., 2005). Language and actions are both activities that are embedded in mixes of individuals and non-human entities. Second Life is an example of embodied virtual practices and the interactions and activities present between the human user, the digital avatar, and the digital environment (Urban, 2007).

“Whereas philosophers and social investigators once cited mental entities such as beliefs, desires, emotions, and purposes, practice theorists instead highlight embodied capacities such as know-how, skills, tacit understanding, and dispositions.” (Cetina, et al., 2005)

Schatzki here is relating how previous work would seek to objectify the individual into commonly held ontologies that could be understood in stark binaries, practice theory centers theory on the practical knowledge that is embodied and shown through action and activities which can be arrayed and not set against each other (Cetina et al., 2005). For example (Urban, 2007) Second life uses the human user, the digital avatar, and the digital environment together to create activities and does not create frameworks to separate the human and avatar self. Practice theory also borrows from habitus, the practical understanding, in how humans self-organize around continuous activities (Bourdieu, 1977). These practices are embodied, unconscious and reproduce knowledge and social

power in the world. In Second Life, the continuous activities of all the users online at the same time create the community and culture of Second Life (Urban, 2007).

A recent application of practice theory created a rubric of questions and dimensions of inquiry for studying phenomena with practice theory (Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012). The questions include how the practices begin, change, and end, the elements that make up practices, how they draw in practitioners, and how the links between elements change over time.

3.2.2 Communities of practice

Another theoretical position that brings in concepts that can be applied in serious leisure is communities of practice. Communities of practice, unlike previous theories discussed uses professional contexts rather than amateur contexts to build information networks. Similar information practices can be applied to the serious leisure context where amateurs and professionals interact. Hara (2009) defines Communities of Practice as informal networks of collaboration that build knowledge around the practices of workers in their professional environment. Communities of Practice (Hara & Kling, 2002) have a group of professionals, develop shared meanings, have informal social networks, a supportive culture, and engage in knowledge building. Communities of Practice can also not be forced upon an organization but must develop organically for a purpose that supports the group's goals. Hara describes a learning community of engineers who support learning

practices outside of formal training with various methods such as storytelling, resource and tip sharing and ad hoc network support.

One example of Communities of practice in Information Literacy is the Lloyd study of firefighters and ambulance workers (Lloyd, 2004, 2007). She used Schatzki's Practice Theory to uncover the embodied practice of firefighters who use their bodies as information sources (Lloyd, 2004). Ambulance workers practices were more social and subjective in the field while in training the information was unchallenged and individualized (Lloyd, 2007). In serious leisure, a similar look at a knitting group in a public library found similar ideas of practices within a community even though the community was informal (Prigoda & McKenzie, 2007). This knitting community displayed an informal network of women interested in learning about knitting where there was no formal training. In fact, the community was started on teacher student model, but the community shifted toward a seminar model of student participation to create a community of equality, all of which fits under the framework of communities of practice (Prigoda & McKenzie, 2007).

Communities of Practice (Hara & Kling, 2002) define the informal network of collaboration, which can focus on technology knowledge, and technology practices in a workplace environment. This workplace environment can be translated into the leisure environment of reading and writing messages through the microblogging technology of twitter. The difference would include how amateur and hobbyists interact with the group of professional writers and other social media experts. Similar arrays of activities should be found but the power dynamics are important to note from the public, private, and

amateur spheres. Not only different groups of people but different spheres of technology intersect online. Non-human practices and artifacts are even more important to highlight online where technology, artifacts, objects, functionality, and affordances all interact with the social activities. While communities of practice focus on work place environments, under the framework of serious leisure, an amateur network can share many of the same skills and tactics.

Situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation define how people co-construct their own world through their activity and not in a one-way relationship from teacher to student (Lave & Wenger, 1991). They describe how newcomers are brought into an environment by experienced users who co-create the rules and norms for participation and knowledge. As the experienced users leave, then the environment adapts to the members that are left. The meaning of the situation, similar to the definition of an alcoholic, is culturally negotiated, and the structures of the environment, such as AA meetings, stories, and the 12 steps, are passed down through the participants in the environment (Bandura & McClelland, 1977). In the serious leisure online context, newcomers, rules, and norms are all present in the virtual environment. The collaboration and construction of the socially agreed upon rules and norms online can borrow strategies and tactics from offline contexts such as situated learning and peripheral participation.

3.2.3 Goffman interaction order and interaction ritual

One example of using the agreed upon rules in order to interact in an offline context is Goffman's framework for conceptualizing information interactions (Goffman, 1959). The theoretical inspiration for this current study is interactions in a virtual environment and thus draws on interaction research. Interactions here are described as social settings where an individual comes in contact with another person and attempts to influence their impression by altering their behavior (Goffman, 1959). Theatrical performances such as front stage and back stage contexts influence how open or closed a person's performance are interpreted. People act differently in different contexts and these actions are most apparent in face-to-face encounters. The idea of face, or the positive self-image all people hold, is not an inherent or permanent characteristic of the person and can change given then context. Once a positive image is projected, people feel the need to live up to that expectation or risk their status in society, thus they guard their face to ensure their higher status (Goffman, 2005). This framework is related the power dynamics faced online with the positive self-image that is in constant attack by outside forces, augments, and interactions in the virtual environment. Twitter can also be used to conceptualize the positive and negative as student-athletes use twitter to respond to critical information (Browning & Sanderson, 2012a)

The same can be said of online reputation and face with examples from other social media sites (boyd, Golder, & Lotan, 2010). Most social media users select a positive image of them or choose to share positive events and disassociate themselves with

negative images or decline to include negative events in their lives, often related to their mood or socio-economic status (Bollen, Mao, & Pepe, 2011). Goffman's front stage and backstage contexts are helpful in conceptualizing the cultural performance of self in an online environment (Goffman, 1959). In the serious leisure environment, everyone as well as groups of individuals use front stage, back stage, and positive self-image strategies and tactics to maintain or save face in the online community.

3.3 Gap 2: Topic of sport in serious leisure

3.3.1 Sport as a serious leisure site

The second major topical gap is in sport as a topic in serious leisure. Sport is an activity that is shared by people around the world either as a profession, participant, volunteer, viewer, or critique. Using Gallup poll data 85% of the US population is interested in at least one sport in 2013 (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/4735/sports.aspx>). The average basketball fan population from 2003 to 2013 is 12% of the population or roughly 38 million basketball fans in the United States. In the same poll football was roughly 3.5 times as popular as basketball within the same time frame. Sports fans are also not only consumers but active participants in the production of the sports culture (Crawford, 2004). This is directly relevant to the serious leisure framework that sees participants as

active creators of their leisure, in this case sport, and not only passive consumers of entertainment.

Serious leisure also defines amateur athletes as their own class of serious leisure participants in that they might have professional counterparts but their actions, work, and preparations fall under the serious leisure umbrella (Stebbins, 1982). Stebbins (1982) defines leisure as an uncoerced activity that affects people in personally satisfying ways. The actions are also on a continuum from simple to complex activities. Casual Leisure is comprised of more simple activities while serious leisure is made up of more complex activities. Serious leisure is distinguished by six characteristics: “1) need to persevere at the activity, 2) availability of a leisure career, 3) need to put in effort to gain skill and knowledge, 4) realization of various special benefits, 5) unique ethos and social world, and 6) an attractive personal and social identity,” (Stebbins, 1982).

Casual leisure would then focus on watching sport as entertainment, while participating in a hobby such as amateur sports would fit in the framework of serious leisure since it meets all the characteristics. Serious Leisure in sports and games has looked at hobbyist backpackers (Chang, 2009), amateur tri-athletes (Axelsen, 2009), amateur cyclists (Bull, 2006) and volunteer work at sporting events (Misener, Doherty, & Hamm-Kerwin, 2010).

3.4 Gap 3: Context of serious leisure information practices online

The third contextual gap in the literature is in the context of serious leisure practices online. This section describes what is already known about ELIS interactions on Twitter. The second section describes social media as a site for serious leisure research. The third section describes the overlap of sport and social media online and how those areas are expanded. The fourth section describes the overlap between the three topics of social media, sport, and virtual environments are triangulated. Finally, quantitative studies in sports in virtual environments lead into the next section on methodological gaps.

3.4.1 Human information behavior research on twitter

What is known about information practices on twitter can be summed up by the following research. Interactions have been counted, user groups have been made, and information practices have been categorized. Early research on twitter sought to describe the new platform and measure both user and information in direct causal relationships.

3.4.2 Early categorical examples of users and interactions on Twitter

Early quantitative and qualitative research on Twitter sought to describe the new microblogging platform (Java, Song, Finin, & Tseng, 2007). It is important to note

currently; many users of Twitter were early adopters and do not represent the actions or culture of present-day Twitter. The user intentions were categorized as routine status updates, primitive conversation, sharing information, and reporting news. Users on twitter were also broadly categorized as Information Sources, Information Seekers, and Friends. This was based on the quantity of messages shared. Information sources shared a large number to many followers, while information seekers would also be called lurkers or consumers of media. Friends seem to correlate to anyone who is followed by anyone else. When twitter was created and became more popular, the norms around adding users, creating friendships, and deleting relationships changed and became more nuanced (boyd et al., 2010).

3.4.3 Quantitative research on twitter interactions

Since twitter is publicly available, the links between users can be studied and generalized site wide. The finite amount of attention from users causes the amount of “real” interactions of users to be limited (Huberman, Romero, & Wu, 2008). The implication is that while the number of friends and followers is inflated and the real interaction, defined as two target messages to a user’s friend, is very small and thus interactions on Twitter are overstated. Again, with any large site wide generalization this completely ignores context in order to create a numerically driven identity of twitter users.

On Twitter, there are two broad groups of users, meformers and informers (Naaman, Boase, & Lai, 2010b). Meformers post personal status updates about their own lives

while informers post external information in the form of links. Information sharing individuals are more active in other areas of twitter such as conversation replies with more social contacts. Informed users are hypothesized as more interesting and engaging because of the interactions and thus the higher follower count (Naaman et al., 2010b). Social learning behaviors may also explain the link between informers and higher information sharing (Bandura & McClelland, 1977). Research has used the meformer and informer framework to study information credibility (Castillo, Mendoza, & Poblete, 2011), public mood and emotion (Bollen et al., 2011) and topical models on twitter (Ramage, Dumais, & Liebling, 2010).

3.4.5 Twitter as a communication network

Twitter is studied from a communication network framework in order to create categories of users and to define their relationship to each other. One such study used lists to define celebrities, bloggers, media outlets, organizations, and ordinary users and the types of information flow, with regard to quantifiable measures of links, and the lifespan of sharing links (Wu, Hofman, Mason, & Watts, 2011).

3.4.6 Twitter as imagined audience and self-presentation

Marwick (2011) uses Situationalist theory to describe how twitter affords identity presentation to the twitter public (Marwick, 2011). They found that strategic self-presentation actions mimic micro-celebrities regarding personal branding, target

audiences, authenticity, and concealing information. This worldview is also tied to Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* with how people shape their appearance similar to actors on a stage (Goffman, 1959). In social media, different actors have different strategies for communication related to their goals along with the rules and norms of their subculture. Celebrity and micro-celebrity on twitter is important to relate to power structures and information sharing patterns.

Twitter research in general can be combined to classify users from celebrities, to the public at large, or me-formers and in-formers. The categorization of behaviors and practices also range from status updates, sharing links and news, and maintaining relationships. Like any large aggregation of information behaviors or practices online, subcultures can exist with nuanced behaviors and practices. This general research on twitter simply describes the site and the possible affordances at the time of study.

3.5 Social media as a serious leisure site

3.5.1 Twitter and the serious leisure framework

While the last section dealt in generalities on twitter, this next section focuses on how specifically the serious leisure framework can be applied to social media's many affordances.

Social networking sites have exploded in popularity and scale in the past decade. Since 2003 social networking sites have become mainstream and continue to grow (Ellison, 2007). Social networking sites that have public private or mixed system to create profiles, a way to connect with other users on the network, and find other users through these connections, Twitter is one broad social network (Ellison, 2007) The visibility of these networks and how they are used to make private and or public connections is how they are distinguished from other websites. Large social networking sites are also the home of smaller virtual communities within these larger platforms (Boellstorff, Nardi, Pearce, & Taylor, 2012).

Social networking sites are distinct from virtual social worlds, virtual game worlds, blogs, content communities, and collaborative projects (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The ability to see profiles and make connections through friends and followers distinguished SNS from other online communities.

Twitter or microblogging users have these intentions when using the site: updates on daily routines, conversations through @replies, sharing URLs or links to other sites, and reporting or commenting on news (Java et al., 2007). Three broad categories of users on Twitter are information sources, friends, and information seekers. Information sources post links or news articles, while friends post and share daily status updates through conversation, while information seekers follow others as a casual news reader. Recent research on Arab Spring and Twitter focused on what they call ambient journalism (Hermida, Lewis, & Zamith, 2014). Twitter sources were then divided into 14 source types that ranged from types of activists, media outlets, organizations, politicians,

blogger, bots, celebrities, and the digirati (Hermida et al., 2014). The findings reinforced the gatekeeper role journalists play as well as the elite and non-elite status of certain sources around the uprising.

Amateurs, professionals, and celebrities use social media in their community for different purposes (Ploderer, Howard, & Thomas, 2010). Amateur body builders use a social networking site (SNS) as a support network, to share information with other passionate fans, and to express themselves as a boost to their own identity. Professionals do not use SNS as a tool to share information; they use the network to extend their professional network, while also furthering their client's interest (Ploderer et al., 2010). Celebrities have little presence online since they have a large offline network of professionals. Aspiring celebrities use online networks to help bolster their fame and gain fans.

Each function of twitter has its own nuanced meaning (boyd et al., 2010). Just looking at the function of retweeting (or copying a message from another person's status update and posting it to your own with or without alteration) numerous different meanings were found (boyd et al., 2010). Retweets have different meanings based on how they are formed, how they are altered, how they are attributed, why and how they were retweeted, as well as specific calls to action, or broadcasts aimed at specific followers (boyd et al., 2010). The nuance available in 140 characters is immense and the different meanings and level of expertise on display is a learned behavior for those users on twitter who use the retweet function.

Twitter has evolved from a simple social network with limited functions and norms to more nuanced information practices. The different categorization of users from me-former to informer to the 14 different categories used to describe Arab Spring, the understanding of twitter as a technology and cultural site is changing. The nuance of a single function such as retweet also shows the possibility of nuance in the rest of the site. From the broad social media use to specific sports contexts, the meanings and use of information change in the sports context.

3.5.2 Sports and Social Media

Whereas the last section focused on how social media includes nuanced meanings from the LIS and journalism arenas, the next section focuses on social media affordances in sport.

Content analysis on twitter using the sports topic of concussions found various themes on this one topic on sports (Sullivan et al., 2012). The most common themes were basic categories around news, sharing information, how to manage a concussion, and downplaying the severity. The themes that were found the least involved specific information needs such as seeking exact advice or clarifying personal information, reporting signs and symptoms as well as advertising an online publication. The content around this topic is interesting in that the themes found were broad themes that could be found on any sports topic, but looking at concussions, the information debate happening

included personal stories, news, online publications, and sharing of information all from different sources and with different users (Sullivan et al., 2012). What is interesting is the downplaying of a serious condition and the reasons they were given, logical fallacies. Since the focus of this study is sports and not journalism or library science, the categories found are basic stake holders in concussions from different groups. This research was not to create power dynamics but to describe the phenomena.

Focusing on a content analysis of athlete tweets from professional American leagues of football, baseball, hockey, soccer, and men's and women's basketball and golf, the following themes were found: interactions, diversions, sport specific information sharing, links to media, discussion of outside sports, and promotion (Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh, & Greenwell, 2010). The largest amount of tweets, 34% were interactional with fellow athletes and fans. Diversion accounted for 28% of tweets and was about the players personal non-sports lives. Only 15% of tweets were sports specific about their own team or sport. Content or links to pictures, videos, or articles were also found at 13% while promotions were found in 5% of tweets. The way that the codes were assigned from previous studies is flawed in that some content or diversion coded tweets could have overlap with sports related if they were to fall into both categories. There is an easy way to categorize tweets based on content but to also categorize their format (the inclusion of links, videos, photos, or replies) creates a new subset of categories. These last two examples of sports research show how viable the amount of athlete and fan interactions are studied in parallel research fields.

Athlete Self media on Instagram

Related to Goffman's presentation of self (Goffman, 1959) where identity expressed through verbal and non-verbal messages with a goal to display the most credible image to audiences. Individuals consider how to self-present; they balance both individual goals and the "self" that they perceive the audience desires, in this case on Twitter or Instagram. Frontstage performances (Goffman, 1959) are guarded presentations of the self while backstage performances are less scripted and less filtered. Smith and Saunderson (2015) looked at the presentation of self and gender on Instagram regarding athletes, their images, and the comments below their posts. Their categorization of types started by excluding scenery, food, or other objects. Categories included: passive/non-sport, athletes in non-revealing clothing, athletes in an upright or active pose, athlete casually touching either an object or another person, not taking instruction of any kind, and emphasizing the butt or chest area (Smith & Sanderson, 2015). Significant gender differences included, females whose photographs that somewhat emphasized their breasts, males had photographs less likely to be touching something, and females more likely to causally touch someone or another object (Smith & Sanderson, 2015). Themes from the captions in this study included: Humanitarian or charity work, Family Driven or shared look into the athletes live such as birthday parties or home life, Personality Traits and Interests including the athlete as a person with jokes, or showing a softer side, and Dedicated Athlete showing workout routines and practice (Smith & Sanderson, 2015).

Sexualization of female and male athletes

Female and male athletes are sexualized on social media in different ways. Women, while underrepresented in sport media in general are often represented to appeal towards their physical beauty and sex rather than their sport ability (Riebock & Bae, 2013).

Objectification of female athletes includes negative effects relating to eating disorders, body dissatisfaction, lowered self-esteem, and self-monitoring (Riebock & Bae, 2013).

Women and girls are normalized to view their body as an object, and equate normal with perfection and thus feel depressed or discouraged at not being able to attain bodily perfection (Riebock & Bae, 2013).

Daniels and Wartena (2011) created categories of images to illicit responses from boys aged 12-17 and used the following categories: performance athletes or athletic context, sexualized athletes or appearance and attractiveness, and sexualized models or again appearance and attractiveness. The themes in their open ended responses fell into nine categories: appearance, body shape, female ideal, sexy, physicality, play on the ball, gender marking, emotional reaction, and reaction to advertising (Daniels & Wartena, 2011). The boys studied were likely to label the sexualized athletes as the ideal standard for beauty while at the same time questioned their physical ability or athleticism (Daniels & Wartena, 2011).

Male hypersexuality in sport is created through sport media partnerships that presents a mythical form of hegemonic masculinity (Gee, 2009). The warrior hero in one particular

hockey advertising campaign called Inside the Warrior used what the creators of the campaign called the essence of sport as war (Gee, 2009). The advertising company, Conductor, said it would be a mistake for a man to appear vulnerable in today's media culture and thus showed men as invincible heroes (Gee, 2009). The warrior hero that is used in military and action movies is solitary, strong, stoic, able to easily attain women, and brave (Gee, 2009).

The black and gay male athlete are both minority subcultures that share similar characteristics. Anderson and McCormack (2010) compared the two cultures and found that they shared the marginal group vs dominant group experience, contestation through oppressed voices, cultural perceptions of equality, and the idea of a meritocracy. The marginalization where one or both groups are excluded from all sport together, contestation through political stances, perceived liberation lack of black GMs, coaches, and the idea of a meritocracy where gay boys join sport at the same rate as straight boys (Anderson & McCormack, 2010). Reflected in both cases with Michael Sam in the NFL and Bill Kennedy in the NBA where each faced and continue to face difficulty with their sport and their sexuality.

Female Sport fans

Female sport fans account for over 45% of the fan base for some major professional sport leagues (Conlin, McLemore, & Rush, 2014). Conlin et al. (2014) used frame building and

frame setting to create four frames for females as sport fans on Pinterest. The four frames overlapped with typical Pinterest use and included: purchasing, team, fan experience, and creative (Conlin et al., 2014). The purchasing frame was most likely to be at the top of a team's board and included ways to sell merchandise to a predominantly female audience (Conlin et al., 2014). The team and fan experience frame had less content but included images of the team and experiences of fans in the community (Conlin et al., 2014). The fourth frame was creative and included creators of craft content around their sports fandom (Conlin et al., 2014). Given the overall nature of Pinterest to pin or share content this was an uncommon finding, but a possible reason could be in the framing itself as a traditional versus a foreign framing device.

Specific sport on twitter

Athletes on twitter foster social and parasocial relationships, comment, give their opinion on races, interact with fans, and give insider knowledge on twitter (Kassing & Sanderson, 2010).

Student athletes on twitter use the social media service in three ways: contact, follower communication, and information access (Browning & Sanderson, 2012b). Student athletes have a wide range of strategies for dealing with negative messages and athletic departments must help in responding, especially to negative content (Browning & Sanderson, 2012b).

Sport media relations has changed since the adoption of Twitter in sport. An exploratory study of professional in sport media identified three categories to explain the change (Gibbs & Haynes, 2013). These three categories included the landscape of the media, the mechanics of the job, and sport media relations.

A model for how twitter displaces broadcast sport media was created by Hull and Lewis (2014) where they use specific functions of twitter and how they function in the sport media landscape. The model highlights issues related to Twitter's character limit, athlete interactions, parasocial interactions, building of community, group homophily, and presentation of self (Hull & Lewis, 2014). The model was created to see how these issues related to Twitter show how it compares to watching sport through traditional broadcasts.

3.5.3 Virtual worlds and online communities

In a broad sense, an online community is 'a group of people, who come together for a purpose online, and who are governed by norms and policies' (De Souza & Preece, 2004). This framework is broad and general enough to be used in different contexts and different situations online. The online contexts can then spread from one network to another if they are still aligned by their purpose and overall norms and policies.

Twitter is a news media or RSS substitute where users passively devour entertainment but since it is just a technology platform a social use can turn it into an online community and a virtual world. Worldness, persistence, multi-users, and embodiment are the characteristics of a virtual world as defined by (Boellstorff, et al., 2012). Facebook and MySpace are not virtual worlds but social networking sites may have virtual worlds within them.

The worldness is expressed both offline in terms of basketball games and media input but also in terms of topical online writing and commentary. Each person or account is embodied by their avatar or profile picture, there are multiple users and the world persists and the conversation continues while users are absent. This is the coming together of multiple previous lines of research. The presentation of self (Goffman, 1959), serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982), current cutting edge twitter affordances (Hermida et al., 2014), and virtual environments (Boellstorff et al., 2012) lead back to the design of this particular study. Each separate theory has been related back to serious leisure in basketball twitter. In the next section the research theories overlap serious leisure, social media, and virtual worlds.

3.5.4 Serious Leisure, social media, and virtual worlds

Only a few Serious Leisure studies look at social media or media in general. Social media use was how astronomers with specific technical knowledge were able to share

findings and work done by other astronomers using social media (Vasseur, 2011). This is an example of a niche community using social media to share a specific kind of knowledge.

Serious leisure qualities are also found in virtual worlds such as World of Warcraft (Holt, 2012). Using the framework of serious leisure, Holt looked at how a player and avatar work within the virtual world in order to continue their own personal adventure in the game. These two studies looked at serious leisure frameworks around two different activities, astronomy and playing an online game, but they have moved the discussion of serious leisure activities into online settings. Along with Cox who looked at Flickr and food blogging (Andrew M. Cox & Blake, 2011) these activities now have an online component to investigate.

This moved social media from merely a tool that supports an offline activity to the main site of cultural inquiry. Social media can be used in a passive sense of reading or consuming entertainment, but it can also be the site of a rich virtual world with all the cultural trappings of a serious leisure environment.

3.5.5 Quantitative studies on sports in virtual environments

The last component of the gap in serious leisure information practices online is a methodological transition. A segment of work on sports in virtual environments and

social media has come from a business or technical aspect. In communication theory, uses and gratification theory has been used over and over again to describe how or why fans and athletes interact (Browning & Sanderson, 2012a). In journalism, the focus on social media has been framed as a tool that the next generation of journalists must become familiar with in order to successfully report the news (Kwak, Lee, Park, & Moon, 2010; Sheffer & Schultz, 2010).

The technical aspect looks at how to create algorithms to identify tweets or spot games or trends that happen in the online sports media environment (Lanagan & Smeaton, 2011; Zhao, Zhong, Wickramasuriya, & Vasudevan, 2011). Business interests look at how media producers, teams, or sponsors should use social media for their own interests (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). From the fan perspective, fans and athletes are simplified as having a positive interactive relationship, as well as most of these relationships without addressing the cultural nuances in the site (Pegoraro, 2010). The same meaning of these tweets and messages with each group is situated culturally meaningful to those within the environment. Simply this group of research looks at how to increase measurable profits either through branding, advertising, or growth in the business of sport and relate it to measurable factors in social media use of fans, athletes, journalists, or business partners. For example a simple causal relationship between athletes and fans were measured over a 7 day period finding that twitter is a tool for athlete and fan interaction since athletes post status updates as well as answering fan questions (Pegoraro, 2010).

3.6 Gap 4: Methodological Gap in Virtual Ethnography

3.6.1 Ethnographic Theory

The fourth and last gap is the methodological gap that this research addresses using ethnography and specifically virtual ethnography. Ethnography as a research methodology comes from the qualitative research traditions of anthropology and sociology. Ethnographers in anthropology and sociology construct written cultural retellings from the different civilizations, past and present, which they would study. The use for ethnography in telling stories from civilizations hopes to preserve culture but also answer questions about cultural comparisons. The foundational concepts of ethnography include the scientific basis for the study, the research questions, how culture is defined, and methods of ethnography, observation, prolonged engagement, reflexivity, fieldwork, and the role of the ethnographer. This section addresses the definitions of culture from Geertz, strengths, weaknesses and limitations of ethnography. Finally, it addresses methodological gaps in research in HIB and virtual worlds.

Citation	Theoretical construct	Methodology and Rationale

<p>Case, D. O. (2009). Serial Collecting as Leisure, and Coin Collecting in Particular. <i>Library Trends</i>, 57(4), 729-752.</p> <p>(Case, 2009)</p>	<p>No mention of meta theory or theoretical framework</p>	<p>participant observation, seven action scenes, 6 in person, 1 online, not an insider in the community, observed the scenes but did not fully become a member, "moderate participation"</p>
<p>Elsweiler, D., Mandl, S., & Lunn, B. K. (2010). Understanding casual-leisure information needs: a diary study in the context of television viewing. Paper presented at the IiiX '10: Proceeding of the third symposium on Information interaction in context.</p> <p>(Elsweiler, Mandl, & Lunn, 2010)</p>	<p>No philosophy at all</p>	<p>Diary study, N=38, 7 days over Christmas from friends and families of colleagues in Germany</p> <p>381 responses</p> <p>4 coders used 50 random needs and reasons for Inter coder reliability</p> <p>Reminders on the diaries, motivation to finish and fill out</p>

		diaries could have been a problem, limitation
Fulton, C. (2009). Quid pro quo: Information sharing in leisure activities. <i>Library Trends</i> , 57(4), 753-768. (Fulton, 2009)	Framework of Hersberger, Rious and Druitt (2005) level of genealogy Small worlds, life worlds	semi-structured telephone interviews, responding to study advertisements, background information and 30-minute telephone interview
Cox, A. M., Clough, P. D., & Marlow, J. (2008). Flickr: a first look at user behaviour in the context of photography as serious leisure. <i>Information Research</i> , 13(1), 1-21. (A.M. Cox et al., 2008)	Used Sontag's On Photography to frame the discourse, philosophy behind photo sharing	11 30-40 min interviews, by telephone, limitations are this paper is theory building, not definitive account
Hartel, J. (2010). Managing documents at home for serious leisure: A	Information science metatheory domain analysis Hjørland and Albrechtsen	Ethnography in their homes where they cook, semi structured

<p>case study of the hobby of gourmet cooking. <i>Journal of Documentation</i>, 66(6), 847-874. (Hartel, 2010)</p>	<p>1995 Stebbins 2001 Socio-cognitivism or collectivism Jacob and Shaw 1998 and Taljia 2005 Hjorland 2002 study of HIB and documents people seek and use Social worlds, Strauss 1978</p>	<p>interviews, PI was also a gourmet cook for more than 10 years Domain analysis, ethnographic approach, 20 gourmet cooks in USA interviewed at home, culinary information collections were documented through a guided tour and photographic inventory, grounded theory</p>
<p>Chang, S.-J. L. (2009). Information Research in Leisure: Implications from an Empirical Study of Backpackers. <i>Library Trends</i>, 57(4), 711-728. (Chang, 2009)</p>	<p>ELIS perspective. Three stage information search process. Kluthau's framework for ISP. Task and Stage constructs.</p>	<p>Naturalistic inquiry approach and critical incident technique. Questionnaires and interviews guides created based on information need and</p>

		use studies and tourism. The researcher's personal experience in backpacking was used too.
Prigoda, E., & McKenzie, P. J. (2007). A collectivist study of human information behavior in a public library knitting group. <i>Journal of Documentation</i> , 63(1), 90-114. (Prigoda & McKenzie, 2007)	HIB, ELIS, A collectivist perspective from Talja 2005, Discourse communities	naturalistic participant observation study Assisted by audio recording and followed by semi-structured interviews. realities are multiple, constructed, and holistic; only time- and context-bound working hypotheses are possible; all entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is

		impossible to distinguish causes from effects; and inquiry is value-bound (Lincoln, 1985, pp. 36-8).
Lee, C. P., & Trace, C. B. (2009). The role of information in a community of hobbyist collectors. <i>Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology</i> , 60(3), 621-637.(Lee & Trace, 2009)	Stebbins framework on serious leisure, the professional-amateurs and publics framework from sociology	Interpretive paradigm, and a naturalistic research philosophy. How do individuals construct, interpret, sustain and make sense of the social world around them? Reflexive ethnography around one of the researchers experience as the largest collector of rubber ducks in the world.
Gainor, R. (2009). <i>Leisure information behaviours in hobby quilting sites</i> . Paper	ELIS, Domain Analysis, Serious Leisure	The three approaches of domain analysis used in

presented at the Canadian Association for Information Science Conference: Mapping the Twenty-first Century Information Landscape: Borders, Bridges, and Byways, Carlton University, Ottawa, Canada. (Gainor, 2009)		the study: bibliometric, epistemological, and discourse, informed the development of seventeen sampling criteria. the best way to understand information behavior is to observe what takes place within communities of discourse
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Table 3.1 Methods used in serious leisure research

These selected studies from Serious Leisure show the theoretical framework and the methodologies used in the studies that range from questionnaires, surveys, interviews, ethnographic approaches, case studies, domain analysis, and interpretations of texts.

Among the naturalistic inquiry frameworks, the time frame coincided with case studies of similar length, meaning less continued involvement as ethnography in general. The absence of ethnography could be the time it takes in one site.

Nine out of the eleven studies in table 3.1 used some form of structured or unstructured interviews. Ethnography would be time prohibitive in the cases where interviews and participant observation alone would suffice. These research papers are also selections of larger research agendas and might reflect shorter time tables. Ethnography is well suited in its ability to map out a new culture (Malinowski, 1922) as well as how the culture is embedded in the texts of the culture (Clifford & Marcus, 1986).

3.6.2 Geertz: Ethnography as cultural web of significance

Different metatheories and definitions of truth, ontology, and epistemology impact the different research methodologies. Geertz's definition of culture and the multiple meanings impacts interpretive and ethnographic research. He builds on Max Weber's web of significance to define culture as those webs, and the analysis of culture then is not discovery of new laws, but the explication of each meaning (Geertz, 1973). This idea that there is not one law, but multiple meanings allows different points of view and socially constructed meanings to be examined. Geertz also positions this as a concept more suited for social science than behaviorist domains.

Geertz summarizes ethnography as making guesses, analyzing these guesses, and then making better guesses (Geertz, 1973). This does not hope to create a Truth or Law but to create a more enlightened debate. Interpretive anthropology is not to answer our own questions but to make available for debate the answers from other cultures (Geertz,

1973). He defines the theory of this type of anthropology the writing down of cultures so that we are not just conversing with ourselves. The success of such research is not the exact mapping of an area, but how well can we understand or grasp this imperfect writing of culture, and can we use this cultural writing to debate and further ideas.

3.6.3 Strengths of virtual ethnography

The new possibilities of cyber ethnography are the proliferation of new virtual communities to enter and the methods used to understand these cultures. Anthropology recognized that the number of new places to visit would eventually dwindle and the field would react to that (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). With cyber ethnography used in sociology, anthropology and information science there are many popular sites with social constructions and information practices to study. With any online sustained community where there is enough time for the site to be created, used, entered, and experienced by the researcher, there is a place for cyber ethnographic methods.

The same lessons that Malinowski and Mead learned and evolved should be applied to virtual sites. Geertz would advise against going into a site to look at the tool or how this behavior is different than one's culture. The allure of describing the tools and the mastery of the tools can detract from the meanings behind the actions and focus too much on an interpretation of the action through the camera lens. Here is where the participation of Nardi on message boards and the subsequent interviews with participants is vital

(Nardi, 2010). Otherwise it is just a retelling of a story using a found text and would not qualify as ethnography.

The strengths of cyber ethnography include data collection methods, the low cost of entry, the ability to “travel” to online worlds quickly, and the ability to record vast amounts of data, and to record and analyze data at the same time (Boellstorff et al., 2012) in contrast to memorizing situations to later write in a journal (Venkatesh, 2008).

Strength of cyber ethnography is the ability to replay or revisit certain events that happened in the past. This is different than using interpretive methods to apply a framework to a text such as website comments. Semiotics could also be used on past images to help frame their meanings. Instead, cyber ethnography can record events that researchers and participants can use as reference points when they are interviewed about them later. Cyber ethnography also allows research to be conducted through the medium of the site, while the actors are still in the “virtual world”. It would be the difference in context of interviewing them at work versus during their leisure time when they mostly visit the virtual world.

Cyber ethnography allows for the creation of new stances and approaches to leisure activities online that are often dismissed and discounted. TL Taylor in *Play Between Worlds* argued that play can be dismissed as casual leisure when serious time and effort is made in play activities (Taylor, 2006). The notion that any activities that happen online must be play is echoed in institutions of work and school which ban online activities. They must physically be restricted to home leisure time.

Play is also counteracted against work in Communities of Play where Pearce shows virtual worlds as sites for creativity (Pearce & Artemesia, 2009). Instead of communities of practice there are communities of play which is best studied with cyber ethnography. Cyber ethnography is a method that fits with the online interactions and it works outside of the work and school framework to track a diaspora across games. By reframing the community as play, cyber ethnography is strong in laying out a virtual skeleton and filling the skeleton with virtual and real interactions.

3.6.4 Weaknesses of virtual ethnography

A weakness of cyber ethnography is the tendency to confuse cyber ethnography with an auto ethnography performed through online means. The Warcraft Civilization as told through personal encounters, themed in different topics is contrasted against other Warcraft ethnographies such as Nardi's encounter (Bainbridge, 2010). The meaning of religion, learning and play are not articulated with the community under study. The study focused on his experience, organized into codes and themes and then retold to speak for the Warcraft experience. The argument to look at themes in Warcraft and translate them into future actions of humanity is a stretch.

The problem of trust came up with posting questions to an online breast cancer message board by Shani Orgad (Hine, 2005). Some of the women did not trust she was an academic, she might have been selling or marketing products to women with breast

cancer, or she did not have breast cancer herself. The entry was different for such a personal interest site. Once she gained access as well, becoming part of the community, she had to learn and follow the norms. It was important to be prompt when answering emails and noting the day, if the person had a surgery or appointment that day, to be mindful of it. The informants who trusted the researcher were more likely to meet for interviews, even years later. Textual correspondence creates a textual view of their interactions, while face-to-face interviews can focus on the person rather than the technology. We should be cautious and reflective about using data and expanding its context beyond the context it was generated in. The discourse of offline culture and online culture is difficult but not impossible to disentangle.

3.6.5 Limitations of virtual ethnography

The media of the Internet where meaning and messages are difficult to separate from jokes and irony is difficult to distinguish. Also, the boundary of the site could balloon to such a large and diffuse social network where the users have no particular social interactions on the fringes of certain groups.

Interpretation of Cultures explains the wink vs. blink and how using detective work and looking at the history and individual interviews with the different points of view can distinguish the differences (Geertz, 1973). In the example Geertz uses a purposeful wink, a twitch, and then a parodist wink making fun of the first. The meaning of each of these

to the outside observer is like the cyber ethnographer only able to see the action and not the meaning behind it. It is then the researcher's job to uncover the meaning behind the action and verify the meaning with the actors. Is what someone says just part of their routine, is it a purposeful message with meaning, or is it parody and commentary on the original message.

The webs of meaning in this situation are also contextual. The boys winking at each other has certain significance in their social circle, but in the context of church, school, home, or in front of different groups of people, the same winks can be twice removed from their original meaning. Online the levels of removal of winks from their context can be infinite. The presence of irony, jokes, mean spirited behavior, trolls, purposeful messages, and automatic responses can make discovering the meaning of the message to the creator and reader difficult. In an online field site, interviews are key, but also the meaning of messages are negotiated, and the purpose can be interpreted through the meanings surrounding other messages from that person or from the group of people. Only after a long time of engagement can someone discern the meaningful wink from the twitch or blink.

The boundary of the site is also a potential pitfall and important guidelines should help from including the entire Internet. The community should be able to define and bind their site through their own meanings. In ethnographic sites that exist inside of a larger world, there are the communities with their own shared social knowledge and the community. If the focus stays on a manageable area where the users have a shared social

knowledge of each other, through knowledge and shared experiences then they are contributing the study and not diverting attention to a separate community.

3.6.6 Gaps in research in HIB and virtual worlds

The research gaps in serious leisure can be grouped into community studied and the method employed. Different Human Information Behavior (HIB) theories from ISP to domain analysis to ELIS have been applied to serious leisure in information science without a consensus for moving serious leisure forward. Many studies focus on the presence of information practices and information spheres of interactions. The research settings are a validation of serious work in leisure settings and then the findings are applied to a small area of LIS theory.

The sites with mixed offline and online use (Hartel, 2010) focused on the creation of physical documents. Online and social interactions are difficult to monitor or document without doing multiple rounds of interviews or participating in the online community. There are interactions that happen through email or comments that are difficult to review with face to face interviews. An important argument to develop rationale for your study, gaps in the literature

Visual methods such a photography is best for document heavy fields or when focusing on the document collection aspect of information behavior. Visual methods are not

helpful for documenting online interactions and should not be used if the online interactions are the main site of research. The Internet allows for new leisure activities that are only available or mostly available online. Virtual ethnography is best suited for leisure activities that are primarily online in nature.

The strengths of virtual ethnography such as the ability to travel to a location, inhabit the virtual environment, and use digital record keeping is important in a virtual environment such as Twitter. Online the ability to record, and reference past interactions helps informants reference their meanings after the interaction has passed. The limitations of nuanced meanings being lost in the online environment is overcome through triangulation of different sources on the same topic as well as interviews that clarify the meaning or joke meaning of tweets. The online environment is the site of study but offline interviews and clips from podcasts that expound on twitter relationships helps cover the weaknesses of only relying on online texts for the meanings of the community.

Chapter 3 has built on the metatheoretical framework in chapter 2 and used more specific theories, literature, gaps, specific methods to narrow the focus and scope of the proposed design. This chapter has looked at more specific theories in Information Science, Practice Theory, and Communities of Practice, specific relevant topics such as Social Media and Twitter, Serious Leisure, and Sport viewers as entertainment. The current literature of these topics is important to build since the proposed site touches on each of those spheres. Then the method of ethnography and particularly virtual ethnography is

defended with specific attention to serious leisure studies and the metatheoretical positions and research methods of a selection of studies. Virtual ethnography is shown to have strengths and weaknesses that are suited to such a study as this. The next chapter goes into more specifics of how such a virtual ethnography is carried out.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1.1 Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to understand the serious leisure information practices within the online discussion culture around the sport of basketball. Serious leisure information practices are the information written, shared, and discussed about the sport of basketball as amateurs or hobbyists to express their skills knowledge and experience in a substantial, interesting and fulfilling context (Stebbins, 1982). A virtual ethnography of one major online discussion environment, Twitter.com, is selected as the site for search. The participants include the subculture of twitter users whose primary focus of their twitter identity surrounds the sport of professional basketball in the United States.

4.1.2 Pros and cons of other qualitative methods

A case study, phenomenology, content/discourse analysis, auto-ethnography, and grounded theory are all qualitative methods that are not suited for this research design and with the stated focus on the interactive nature of the culture. A case study of a small section of the population or around one event within the community does not yield the array of information practices that are shared by the community, only those of that

subsection of participants. For example, a case study that focuses on one aspect of the basketball twitter community presupposes that other information practices are not present. Phenomenology presupposes the commonalities and seeks to discern the common themes by conceptualizing patterns over time. Again, in the basketball twitter community, the phenomenon would then focus on the textual aspect of the culture while ignoring the sociological interactions and power dynamics present.

Content and discourse analysis focus on the communication process and content over the cultural meanings of that content and discourse. Auto-ethnography of a lurker in this community does not yield meanings of the rest of the participants in the community. Finally, grounded theory focuses on highlighting patterns of activity and identifying their connection. In an online virtual environment, the interactive culture and especially the language and its meaning should be the focus of the study rather than highlighting simply the pattern of activity. In order to successfully understand what the information practices are, and relate them back to the serious leisure framework, Ethnography is best suited to find the structure of the community, the language used, and the cultural meanings and work hidden within that language.

4.2 Ethnographic Theory

4.2.1 Summary of key concepts in Ethnography

Key concepts in Ethnography are to be reflective of biases (Creswell, 2008), map out commonalities and not specific instances (Malinowski, 1922), focus on the language and webs of significance (Geertz, 1973), selection of a site and lower level informants first (Goffman, 1989), participation in the virtual environment that fits with the researcher's knowledge and ability (Nardi, 2010) and finally a balanced level of participation (DeWalt, DeWalt, & Wayland, 1998). Ethnography is best suited to look at the language used in this virtual environment through the prolonged, balanced, participant observation driven, research on the information practices in a serious leisure context.

4.2.2 Malinowski: Rules for entering a site

The sources of ethnography are not in artifacts but in the experiences and minds of people (Malinowski, 1922). This cycle of ethnography shows those early ideas as primary guesses, then the analysis of which is comparing these tales of travelers and missionaries with lived experiences, and then improving these methods (Malinowski, 1922). At this point in time Malinowski has improved on the guesses and preconceived notions by having real scientific aims, good working conditions, and following a method for data collection and analysis.

The first rule is to know the values and methods of previous ethnographers (Malinowski, 1922). The differences must exist in the second two rules. The second rule of living with natives and not with white men is that the ethnographer must live within the culture they are describing. Malinowski explains how white men who live near but not in the

community, have only a shallow knowledge of the culture in question, and cannot explain the nuance, or perform the job the ethnographer can, and observe “the imponderabilia of actual life” (Malinowski, 1922). The third rule of following a certain method is recording methods for future ethnographers to fold into their own practices (Malinowski, 1922).

Practices of noting the common or typical occurrences and not the odd occurrences should be followed.

The concept of a skeleton or the outline of relationships in the tribe, and then the day to day behavior fills in the skeleton (Malinowski, 1922). As a trained sociologist, Malinowski makes note to avoid asking how A feels about B in a sense but what they feel towards members of a community. This allows general motives and reasons for behavior to emerge over simply how A reacts to B. The motives must also be captured in native phrases because in translation, the meaning of the actor is replaced by the world view of the translator or researcher. This work structure, of creating the skeleton, outlining the activities and then giving the activities reason and meaning is different than obtaining documents or information and guessing at the reasons and meaning behind them.

4.2.3 Reflexivity and ethnography in writing culture

Ethnography is determined by its context, the writing conventions, research traditions, difference from non-fiction account, the power struggle of politics, and situation in history (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). Original power dynamics were inferred from artifacts

and that interpretation of cultures imbued the texts with the culture of the author. The power dynamics are important to determine between the researcher and the participant. The researcher must be reflective in how much power they must speak for an entire culture or population. The role of the researcher is to first be reflective of biases (Creswell, 2008). In that way they know the culture they bring into the site and the differences in the culture they are studying.

The text is seen as more objective than the writer who is subjectively making decisions such as which story to include, how to write it, choosing which accounts or failures to include. The translation of culture from the site to the readers is difficult and there are ways to misrepresent a text. Ethnography can add a small amount to the reader's knowledge but if it adds too much, there is no context to comprehend the culture.

4.2.4 The role of the researcher: Goffman on fieldwork

Goffman's notes from a lecture on fieldwork address how to get into a site, what to bring with you, and how to fit in with a population. He mentions police undercover work and how they might do it faster and better than ethnographers. Often you have to tell your own story about why you are in the site and what you hope to accomplish (Goffman, 1989). Going into a site with a spouse or a kid could be a problem with bringing in too many responsibilities and bring in your own culture. Instead he recommends cutting yourself down to the bone, only bringing a few paperback books along, and fully

immersing yourself in the new site. When doing cyber ethnography there is the time spent on the site, but since it is cyber ethnography there are still things to do such as be with your family, do chores, and write down notes. It is not the same as physically moving away from your own culture. Mentally it can be important to think that one is embarking on a journey, but group members can tell the difference between lurking and participation.

Goffman notes that the class of people you decide to contact first and how much to disguise yourself to fit in are two important decisions in fieldwork. There are analogous decisions to make online. Many cyber ethnographers such as Nardi try a group and if the group does not fit the researcher they leave (Nardi, 2010). There seems to not be a strategic plan to enter one group or another ahead of time. It seems to be assumed that one group would not take the researcher and it is up to the investigator to find a group with rich information and relationships that can be nurtured.

The role of the researcher for this proposed study includes precepts from both Malinowski and Goffman. Entering an online community where the researcher is already a participant aide the researcher makes sense of the meaning through expertise in watching basketball and discussing basketball online. Goffman's role on the researcher as a tool for inquiry is vital from the epistemological perspective since the culture is translated through the lens of the researcher for the audience. The more that is disclosed about fan loyalties, inherent biases towards positive or negative views on subjects and subject matter add to the credibility of accounts and discussion of culturally negotiated meanings.

4.2.5 Ethnographic Principles

When looking at the research questions pertaining to serious leisure in an online environment, clear identification of the practices can be best be accomplished through ethnography. Ethnography takes the time to clearly enunciate the practices through member meaning identify the array of practices instead of confirming a researcher's initial claims.

Ethnography is also not only anecdotal or tells a story from one or even a select few perspectives. Through prolonged engagement and extensive data collection from multiple sources the scientific consistency and validity of ethnography's findings are proven (Boellstorff et al., 2012). Ethnography is an empirical scientific method with rules and practices to guard against highlighting one unique case (triangulation) or expressing only the beliefs of the author (member check ins, triangulation, reflexivity).

Ethnography does not contaminate a field site and the insider outsider relationship is fluid and helpful to highlight cultural differences (Boellstorff et al., 2012). An example from Malinowski is that after a few days the natives did not see him as a threat to their culture, he was just classified as familiar presence and not an outsider. That does not mean he is part of the culture (gone native) but is accepted as his role as a researcher. In online ethnography the virtual field site is constructed the same way, if the ethnographer is open about their methods and what they are looking for, and if they do not pose a significant

immediate threat, then they are accepted into their role of participant research and the culture continues to operate. While one new participant in a community can make a change, especially in activist cultures, online the number of other participants and participation outweighs the amount of attention a careful researcher can attain. A successful ethnographer can judge how to balance their needs as a researcher with the needs of the community. In an online setting that usually means acting in a way that is accepted by the community and not in a disruptive, deceitful, or harmful manner. Here a familiarity with how to create and cultivate online relationships is helpful with the different aspects that impact those relationships such as trust, disclosure, privacy, transparency, and synchronous vs. asynchronous communication.

Ethnography should also not be confused with other ethnographical methods such as grounded theory or discourse analysis. Those are analytical tools while Ethnography is a fully formed research method that can incorporate a wide array of analytical tools. These tools can include surveys, case studies, pilot studies, interviews, focus groups, social network analysis, and any other tool that helps in the construction of socially created meanings.

For this virtual ethnography in serious leisure, the ethnographic principles of continued study, prolonged engagement with the community and triangulation of all available data is well suited to study basketball twitter participants. The activity is continuous; there are a large amount of games over roughly 8 months out of the year. The community is engaged with the activity of watching basketball but also discussing the sport through

various media, one of which is twitter. Ethical principles as well are applicable in not deceiving participants in this online medium.

4.3 Addressing the Four Main Research Gaps

4.3.1 Metatheoretical Gap

The four main research gaps again are information practices, topical gap in sport, online contextual gap, and methodological gaps in virtual ethnography. This proposal first addresses the metatheoretical gap in serious leisure in the LIS context by focusing on the practices or arrays of activities in serious leisure in a general overall sense. In the Summary of Serious Leisure research, many studies defined practices or activities of their participants, but their activities still focused on a need or motivation for these activities. Socio-cultural habitus as a framework for explaining these activities is still a gap and using a humanities lens to observe practices uncovers more cultural and social factors that impact information practices.

4.3.2 Topical Gap

The second gap of topicality is how serious leisure is broken down and defined. Usually sport is a passive activity and the focus of earlier studies is in how amateurs

focus on their own active participation in a sport. In serious leisure the sports context looks at amateur sports with their own small online or offline clubs. Professional sports do not fall under the serious leisure framework but the online communities around professional sports, populated with amateur and professional writers and fans is a new area to explore. Many virtual communities exist around an activity and the sports fan as amateur writer and sharer of social media is a new community to study.

4.3.3 Contextual Gap

The third gap can be bridged thanks to social media where there are new avenues for the amateur enthusiast to write and create a community of practice around sport. Since there are many sports fans, and many social media participants, the overlap exists for a rich cultural site. This proposal argues that the information practices are as rich in a virtual medium as in any offline group or amateur club organized around an activity. This activity just happens to be a virtual environment that can arise thanks to social media. Social media has also been lumped in with studies that focus on “big data” projects and the nuanced meaning of twitter has shown (boyd et al., 2010) that a small group can use 140 characters to create a rich site of socio-cultural expression.

4.3.4 Methodological gap

The fourth and last gap is the methodological gap of virtual ethnography. Since the cultural site here is located on a social media platform, virtual ethnography is well

suited as a research method. It follows the guidelines for what constitutes a virtual world in its community, presence of individual profiles, continuous participation, and a worldness (Boellstorff et al., 2012). Besides being a social media platform, which can contain an online community, social media in general is a gap in information practices in the serious leisure context. Social media is often the tool to share information gathered offline or in another context such as astronomy, virtual environments from games, or the act of gourmet cooking. This instance focuses more on the social media pairing that follows from watching basketball but also, since there are not basketball games 24 hours a day, there is social media that discusses basketball writing, ideas, videos, gifs, or activities that are not tied only to the act of watching professional basketball. This proposal is uniquely situated to address this link of information practices in a virtual environment, through the context of social media, on sport, with a focus of information practices.

4.4 Research design background

4.4.1 Research Questions

In the serious leisure context, specifically the continuing twitter-based discourse around basketball as a serious leisure information practice.

RQ1. What are the serious leisure information practices of the basketball twitter community?

RQ2. Which of the serious leisure information practices identified in RQ1, which practices promote a more involvement and engagement, and less involvement and engagement in the community?

RQ3. How, and to what extent, if at all, are these information practices shaped by the power structure of different group interactions in this community?

4.4.2 Significance of the study

This study is significant in that it covers gaps in the Serious Leisure Information Practice research in Library and Information Science. It is timely in the rise of social media, participatory culture, and interactive nature of online communities. The four main gaps that this study addresses are using practice theory and communities of practice in a LIS context, using sport as the topical context, using online communities as the place context, and using virtual ethnography as the methodology. A combination of all the areas is uniquely situated to uncover the serious leisure information practices of an online community.

4.4.3 Research setting

Twitter is a popular micro-blogging and social media platform with 241 million monthly active users, 500 million tweets sent per day with 76% of twitter active users on mobile

devices (about.twitter.com). Twitter's function is sending short blog posts or text messages of 140 characters or less and broadcasting them easily and sharing these messages with friends, fans, or followers. Twitter also supports including links to other websites, images, gifs, videos, and emoticons. Twitter allows users to respond or repost content from others even if they have not accepted your friendship. While it is possible to create a private account and send private messages, this study focuses on what is publicly available and discussed in public.

4.4.4 Background on basketball and twitter

The National Basketball Association is the most followed official account of a pro sports team with 9.76 Million followers, while the National Football League is at 6.22 million, 3.52 million for Major League Baseball. Is this specifically twitter? Many current and past NBA players (623 according to tweeting-athletes.com). Many media sports stories that deal with the NBA either broke using twitter or became a story from something someone in the NBA universe said on twitter.

According to Media Bistro and Twitter, 26.7 million tweets were sent throughout the 2013 NBA Finals over 7 games, with a peak during game 7 of 7.4 million tweets total at a peak of 150,000 tweets per minute (https://www.mediabistro.com/alltwitter/twitter-nba-finals_b45292).

A virtual ethnography of basketball discourse on twitter is centered around the site of twitter because of the prevalence of social media to cover sports and the availability of multiple groups from GM to Players, Media, and fans, that are not available in other online sites or media in general, twitter is unique in that respect. At least 30 participants overall from each of the groups that interact on basketball twitter, the length and depth of the different participants depends on the groups, GMs, players must rely on public statements, bloggers and fans are easier to interview. The offline contexts of this site are not that great. As an ethnographer and fan of basketball, watching basketball games and going to a few games are the activity that drives the discussion so participation in watching National TV games, League Pass to watch teams that are not on national TV, and visiting local games. Participating in twitter discussions involves responding to messages, re-sharing of messages, and the sharing of links, information, opinion, and commentary on twitter.

4.4.5 Current passive reading of selected twitter streams

Currently there are 182 self-selected twitter streams that average 6000 messages per day as a constitutive sample of NBA conversations on twitter. That is not a complete sample of every single person or message on twitter about basketball but as a starting point in a cultural ethnography this is the entry point.

The researcher's decision to follow or not follow a user was made using the following selection criteria: 1) Were they already following them as a die-hard basketball fan in another media, newspaper, TV, or podcast and did they have a presence on twitter? 2) Did they recommend someone to follow through their conversation online? 3) After following them did they continue to follow them? 4) The selection criteria to continue to follow someone on basketball twitter is someone engaging, who writes most of the time about basketball, where they find their information a positive, informative, entertaining or engaging discussion of basketball and topics related to basketball.

In this cycle new users can be followed while other can always be weeded out. It should be worth noting that each of the 30 teams has its local network of twitter users that follow this criterion, but the national network is the focus of this study. The researcher's use of twitter is also different from others who work in media and their viewpoint clarifies this culture from all viewpoints. They fully acknowledge their own personal reasons for who they follow and why, and with the initial coding and interviews, the focus moves toward the center of the discussion and away from their personal bias.

4.4.6 Research Scope

“Over time and with experience, we begin to get a feel for an adequate group size, which will arise from the themes and community or activity we wish to study. Ultimately there is no hard-and fast answer. Different projects will have different thresholds depending on

the overall size of the field, the scope of the project, and its research questions, and ultimately its claims,” (Boellstorff et al., 2012). Virtual ethnographies can range from twenty participants to over three hundred people. The level and depth of participation varies from site to site.

To start with the selection of 182 online basketball writers of the researcher’s personal network is the start point of inquiry. The number of final interviews should be in the range of 30 in order to be completed in a timely manner. The number of data points include those interviews, field notes, memos, and any and all related conversations on twitter until saturation is reached (Boellstorff et al., 2012). The possible range of dates for saturation can range from weeks to months to years. The target range for saturation is estimated at 6 to 8 months. Figure 4.1 below shows three rough stages of data collection and analysis and what would change in each of those stages.

	Timeline of Data	
Current Activity	Data Collection	Data Analysis
Reading average 1500 tweets per day	Turn the screen shots and favorites into storify posts	Coding
Average 30 favorites	Daily journaling and memos	Selecting Themes
Average 5 screen shots	15 x 30 min interviews	Memos

Watch 3 games average	15 x 45 min podcast transcript	Integrative Memos
45 minutes of podcast		

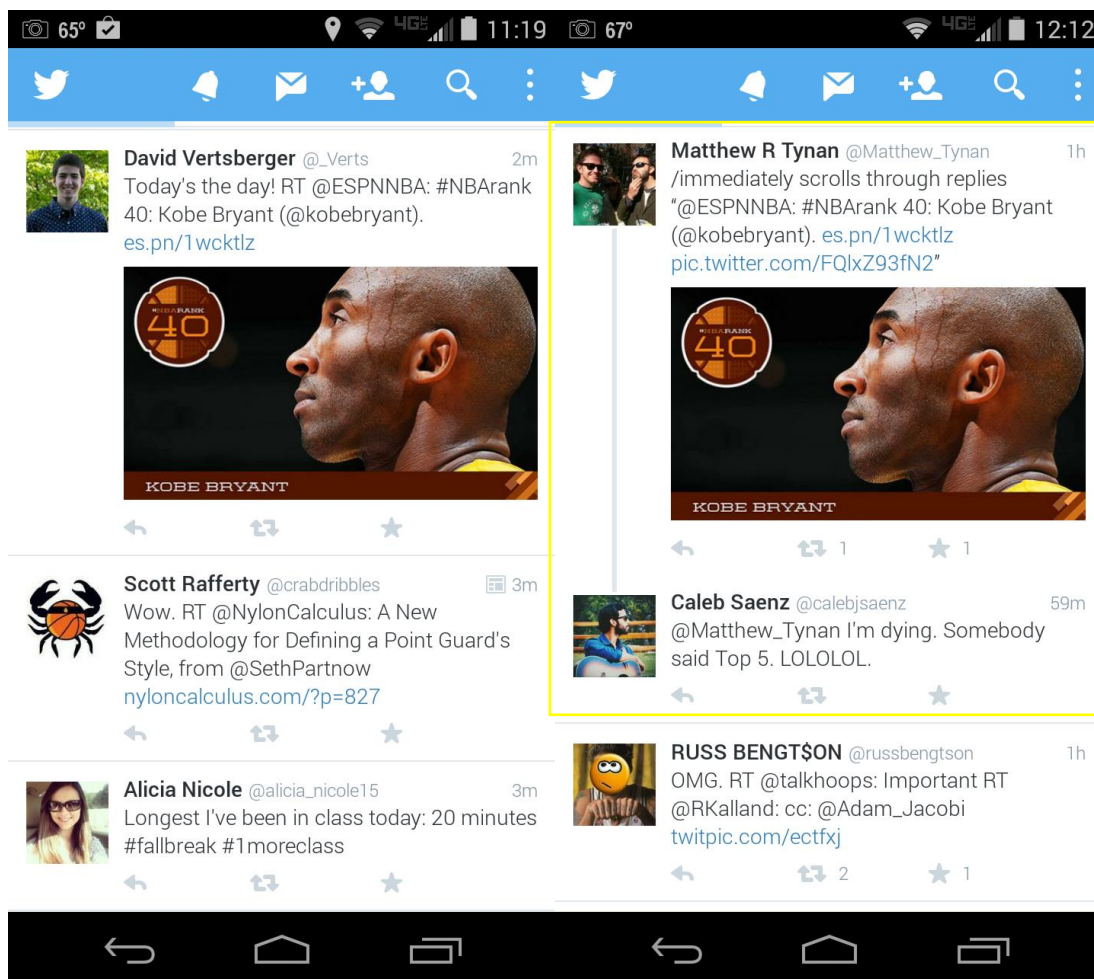
Figure 4.1 Timeline of data collection stages

4.5 Example of data collection

The following are screen shots with annotations that walk through the various digital platforms, with how data is collected, analyzed, and compiled. Conversations on twitter have different formatting depending if it is on the web, phone, or tablet. Applications display tweets in different customizable ways as well. Each user has his or her way of reading tweets. The first example is from a phone, then desktop browser, then iPad.

4.5.1 Phone Screen Shot

The following screen shot is how twitter is formatted for mobile phone.



The highlighted section shows a vertical line denoting that the second message is in direct reply to the first. Note the time, the second message was 59 minutes old when this screen shot was taken, replying to a message 1 hour old.

4.5.2 Twitter web formatting

This screen shot is of the same message formatted for the web. Here there is more detail, you can see my own avatar picture and background in the top left. Again, the reply link is highlighted. There is more information here with local trends, the number of tweets, followers, and following on my account.

The screenshot displays the Twitter web interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Home, Notifications, Messages, and Discover, along with a search bar and a 'Tweet' button. The main content area is titled 'Tweets' and shows a tweet from Matthew R Tynan (@Matthew_Tynan) posted 4 minutes ago. The tweet text is: '/immediately scrolls through replies " @ESPNNBA: #NBArank 40: Kobe Bryant (@kobebryant). es pn/twckltz "'. The tweet includes a large image of Kobe Bryant's profile with a '40' graphic. Below the tweet, there are interaction options: Expand, Reply, Retweet, Favorite, and More. A yellow box highlights the 'Reply' link. To the left of the tweet, there's a profile card for Jacob Sanchez (@jacobsanchez) with 1,407 tweets, 267 following, and 125 followers. Below the profile card, there's a 'Compose new Tweet...' button. To the right of the tweet, there's a 'Who to follow' section with a list of suggested accounts: Jeff Siegel (@jsiegel), Alex Rucker (@Alex_Rucker), and Bobby Karalla (@bobbykaralla). At the bottom right, there's a footer with copyright information and links for About, Help, Terms, Privacy, Cookies, Ads info, Brand, Blog, Status, Apps, Jobs, Advertise, Businesses, Media, and Developers.

4.5.3 iPad Screen Shot

Most of the screen shots are of this formatting. Here we are looking at a single tweet with all the replies below. We can see the exact time of this message as well as how many retweets and favorites it has 42 minutes later.



The highlighted comment shows how discussions that start or are mentioned on twitter can be discussed in long form through other web media such as blog posts, or newspaper articles but also on podcasts. Here the digital licensing that is discussed on twitter was also brought up on a podcast.

4.6 Research Questions with example tweets from the sample

4.6.1 Research question 1

RQ1. What are the serious leisure information practices of the community?

The first information practice in the basketball twitter community is sharing information with the basketball twitter community. In the first example, Zach Harper sums up the content of basketball twitter as 90% opinion and 10% jokes using animated images.



Another example is the creation of jokes using images. In the second example Bo Churney created a pie chart referencing the quote from Monta Ellis, “Monta Ellis have it all.” The joking reference was received and replied to by another member of the group.

Bo Churney @bochurney

A new world of analytics is upon us. RT
 @Patrick_Fenelon: Man...this new metric makes
 Monta look very impressive

THAT WHICH MONTA ELLIS HAVE



That which Monta Ellis Have:
100.0

■ That which Monta Ellis Have

meta-chart.com

11/5/14, 7:22 AM

4 RETWEETS 3 FAVORITES

Patrick Fenelon @Patrick_Fenelon 1h
 @bochurney A field of analytics dedicated to my stupid jokes in
 graph form. The future is bright

The third example of information practices in basketball twitter is questions to the community. These questions are crowd sourced information gathering and are usually tied to opinions as well. The replies are also joking with references to the past, other players, and other community members.



4.6.2 Research question 2

RQ2. Which serious leisure information practices and to what extent do these practices promote involvement and engagement of the community members?

The positive impacts and consequences to individuals in the community include meeting new fans with similar interests. In the example below, Rey-Rey introduces two fans, and suggests that the first woman follows the second. This is followed by heart and pizza images.



An example of negative consequences is trolling behaviors from outside groups. Again, Zach Harper is the basketball twitter community member and fans of Fifth Harmony, a female pop singing group, direct their hate towards his opinion in the replies to his messages. He states that the pop group used a death in the family to curry votes on the reality show they were on. The fans replied by blocking him to make sure they would not see his messages and calling him an ignorant cunt.


Steph
@harmonizersteph



Ok blocking this dude but I'm heated!


Zach Harper @talkhoops
29m
That Fifth Harmony group has come a long way since they were using that one member's grandma's death to curry favor with voters.


dyld0 @dyld0
21m
@talkhoops wth you don't joke about somebody's death like that that's so wrong


Zach Harper @talkhoops
It's not a joke. She really did that. RT @dyld0: @talkhoops wth you don't joke about somebody's death like that that's so wrong


Zach Harper @talkhoops
NBA writer for @CBSSports. AWolfAmongWolves.com. I live in your computer. Thoughts are strictly my own and no other company's. Get buckets. Miami, Internet cbssports.com/nba
1,072 FOLLOWING 44.6K FOLLOWERS
Tweets Photos Favorites


Zach Harper @talkhoops
16m
Unless you know someone who worked on that show... RT @dyld0: @talkhoops but the person actually died it wasn't used for sympathy


Zach Harper @talkhoops
17m
Oh no! Fifth Harmony's Twitter army is after me. Luckily I only have to wait for

11/12/14, 9:32 AM

24 RETWEETS 16 FAVORITES







Steph @harmonizersteph
1h
You have my permission to drag this ignorant man



Nicole @nick5H
1h
@harmonizersteph omg i can't with these people


@karlaquebello
1h
@harmonizersteph he's an ignorant cunt so he doesn't deserve my dragging


4.6.3 Research question 3

RQ3. How, and to what extent, if at all, are these information practices shaped by the power structure of different group interactions in this community?

In the following example, the power structure and dynamic are highlighted in the reaction to an event. The event in question is Gregg Popovich resting his high-profile veteran players on a nationally televised game. Matt Moore, or Hardwood Paroxysm, represents one media view, and pokes fun of the spurs just not playing at all. Zach Lowe does not see a problem with strategic rest and replies that way. Nate Jones who represents athletes and their digital marketing efforts replies that the spurs should have money taken away for their actions. Russ Bengtson, a writer for Complex Magazine, disagrees with that action and sides with Zach Lowe that this is not a problem. There is a back and forth disagreement from both sides and they use examples they think support their argument. Finally, Zach Lowe cites the interactions he has had with medical professionals around the sport of basketball and reiterates his stance and again sees no problem with strategic rest.


Hardwood Paroxysm @HPbasketball 2h





Look, guys, I have the solution to all this. The Spurs just won't play basketball. Not on national TV, or any time. They'll just be an idea



Zach Lowe @ZachLowe_NBA

@HPbasketball Does it need a solution? I think Spurs going full bore for 65-70 games, using strategic rest otherwise, is non-problem.

11/6/14, 3:37 PM

1 RETWEET 12 FAVORITES












Nate Jones @JonesOnTheNBA

How bout this, the league can just prorate the Spurs' share of the National TV pie every time they do this.


11/6/14, 1:54 PM

3 RETWEETS 7 FAVORITES








RUSS BENGTON @russbengtson 1h


@JonesOnTheNBA Why? They're still the Spurs. Should the Thunder get less because Russ and KD are hurt?


Nate Jones @JonesOnTheNBA 1h

@russbengtson Not the same thing at all.


RUSS BENGTON @russbengtson 1h

@JonesOnTheNBA Show me verbiage in any NBA bylaws that teams are required to play their stars every game.


Ben Schleuss @BenSchleuss 1h

@JonesOnTheNBA - Their called basketball 'games' and not 'shows' so Spurs can do what they want. Their goal is a title, not ratings.

**Zach Lowe**

@ZachLowe_NBA

Consensus among almost all medical professionals is NBA players play too many games. Gonna fault Spurs for listening and acting? I won't.

11/6/14, 3:34 PM

148 RETWEETS **144** FAVORITES

4.7 Research Design Details

4.7.1 Data Collection Saturation

Saturation is defined as, “When we start hearing the same reflections repeated in interviews, when we are no longer seeing new things or getting new insight while undertaking participant observation, when we have reached a point where we can anticipate answer, practices, and the general everyday unfolding of the field, we have likely reached the point of diminishing returns in our data collection and can consider that phase complete. (Boellstorff et al., 2012)”

4.7.2 Decision making process

The level of involvement, participant observation, how to technically collect and store data, there is no decision ahead of time for minimum or maximum participants or data points, it varies from study to study (Boellstorff et al., 2012). Emergent themes, interview directions, which meanings to follow up with, which theories best explain the data (grounded theory, communities of practice, etc.) are steps taken during the research process. The types of data include participant observations, field notes, memos, interviews, and artifacts.

4.7.3 Levels of involvement and the role of the researcher

Participant observations and levels of involvement have different types of limitations (DeWalt et al., 1998). No participation or passive participation limits the ability of the researcher to build rapport in the community. Moderate participation is a good balance of the insider and outsider roles to remain involved but also detached. Active participation where the researcher becomes a member is limited by the risk of going native where there is no objectivity. Complete participation is where the researcher is already a member of the target population and the limitation is losing all objectivity. For this proposal a moderate level of participation is best to balance the insider and outsider roles. Moderate participation in twitter involves reading, writing, and responding to tweets while not participating in the conversations to the extent of the group. Complete participation, which should be avoided, would include writing blog posts or articles on a regular basis and organizing tweets and data for regular presentation online.

The role of the researcher is to balance their participation, build rapport within the community, and create relationships with informants in order to address the research questions. The researcher in an online virtual environment must be open, transparent, and build rapport through their reading, writing, and interactions in conversations. The research should avoid complete participation which would include the professional work of a blogger or journalist on twitter.

Deciding on the class to join within a group can turn into group signals and back chatter. Goffman talks about testing your site with jokes to members and the ability to joke as a level of engagement with the community. He gives the advice to start with the lowest level of people first since the higher up people understand (Goffman, 1989) and that there are only ways to move up in a social system.

4.7.4 Ethics

The first ethical code of informants is to consider their wellbeing first, and everything that is designed for the privacy and clarity of purpose should serve the best outcomes for those informants (Spradley, 1979). Informant's rights and interests should be paramount to the ethnographer who builds trusts and guards against exploitation by the researcher. The informant should be given fair recompense for their time and work in a way that is agreed upon by the informant. Every kind of measure should be taken to communicate the research goals before and during interviews. Preliminary and results should also be communicated back to informants and every effort should be made to communicate the research findings. Findings should not be exploitative or damage the reputation, careers, or personal interests of the informants always.

The principles of care for a virtual ethnography include informed consent, institutional review, confidentiality, deception, recompense, leaving the site, and reconnecting with informants (Boellstorff et al., 2012). For a virtual ethnography anonymity and confidentiality extends not only to published information but also information shared within the cultural group. Digital artifacts that can also be used to uncover identities should also be considered when protecting confidentiality and anonymity. Regarding protecting confidentiality and anonymity of online bloggers who post public information and engage in public discussions those posts and messages remain public. Informant interviews are then coded with pseudonyms and integrated with the public information on those same informants through blog posts and their public twitter feed.

The identification of the researcher is another key ethical step in a virtual ethnography (Creswell, 2008). In a public forum such as twitter, the researcher's biographical statement should include links to the IRB form, Rutgers University, and links to any public posts about the research or background on the researcher on blogs or other public websites

4.7.5 Procedural Overview (9 steps)

There are 9 broad procedures in order to complete a virtual ethnography. Each type of data collection method along with the analysis is detailed below; this is just a summary overview of the steps with some example tweets, codes, and meanings.

The first step is to identify a virtual community as a site and context that has a rich possibility to answer the research questions within the theoretical framework given. In this case in order to answer the gaps in research in serious leisure a virtual ethnography of the basketball community on twitter is selected. The selection process begins with the 182 selected twitter streams as a representative sample from a basketball fan.

The second step is to answer the question what activities are present. This is done through a rough open coding in order to find super codes, or high-level codes that link to the activities present. Some examples could include, participants tweet while watching a basketball game and make play on words about certain players, they respond to breaking news, breaking articles written about games, compile statistics and argue over topics. These codes are not focused on research questions, but should form a basis of knowledge of the community

The third step is to map out a network of this community. In social media there are networks within networks, and it is important to map out who follows who as well as build a large network overall. Here it is not important to create a complete map of each possible sub group but as complete a map with at least one participant in each group. For example, a large network map would have a cluster of professional team accounts, national media members in TV, print, local media members, national and local podcasters, analytic or statistics participants, ex-coach and ex-player accounts, large and small NBA blogs and blog networks and various fans through online and offline participation on twitter about the subject of basketball. These large groups account for

most overlap in the community and their presence and validity are fleshed out in numerous rounds of interviews and member check-ins.

The fourth step is to describe the setting, network, and participants through field notes and memos. The analytic work here is to determine meaning and to use reflexivity in order to combat the researcher's point of view and to make the setting, network, and participants strange and translatable to the outside audience. Examples of field notes would describe the act of reading twitter, watching games, responding on twitter, and the media diet that goes along with that including reading articles and podcasts. Initial memos would create some initial topics present in the community where patterns through triangulation is found in later stages.

The fifth step is to start narrowing down informants with interactions on twitter, history of what they have written, and their availability to interviews. Finding quality informants is also discussed below. Once the informants have been identified, their input and knowledge about the topics and power relationships within the twitter network is a source of information that changes the focus of the meanings found so far. They support initial findings while also showing which area should be focused on next. For example, an interview with a local blogger might find that they do tweet about X topics but that might be an incomplete view of their larger role in the network. They might use traditional media, or unpublished chats, and emails to interact with participants on the network. They might also point out the different types of participants, grouped through a different lens. For example, they might see everyone as fans of a team first, and not broken down by job type.

The sixth step is to take this new data and user created ontologies and integrating them into a new code structure, network structure, with revised codes, and newly targeted informants. Analytic memos are also done at this time to make sense and integrate the new data and informant paradigm. At this stage research questions, outside theories of practice, and applicable theories can be brought in to make sense of the newly found topics. An example of an analytic memo at this stage could be a triangulation of data around the topic of work done on twitter; this could include watching games, reading twitter, the time and energy it takes, and what it can take away from the participant. This could lead into a possible code of the positive and negative effects of social media participation which is directly tied to a research question. The data used could be from field notes, coded tweets, and interviews, analytic pieces from articles, podcasts, conversations, and directly related media on twitter.

The seventh step is to repeat steps 4-6 while continuing to collect daily data. The daily collection and coding of tweets throughout this process includes daily reading and collection of the original tweets but also includes conversations, past and present from the interview subjects, and any new participants brought up during interviews. For example, in an interview a member might bring up someone or a whole group of accounts that are ignored and should be included. These new accounts are coded accordingly. The coding, interviewing, field note, and memo writing steps are completed and the steps cycled through until saturation, described above, where the author can anticipate future practices and understand the meanings in the environment and reaches a diminishing point of return in data collection.

The eighth step is to check in with members this ability of the author to understand and anticipate interactions, topics, and meanings of the community. If a member disagrees, or feels that a certain topic is misunderstood, a subgroup is not present, or an underlying meaning is misconstrued, the seventh step are repeated. Once those final rounds of member checks are complete the final step is to compile all the data.

The final stage is to finalize a list of codes, topics that answer the research questions fully, and which theories or theoretical frameworks work best to structure the final report. Once that structure, which has emerged as triangulated from all data points, is finalized the last step is to move from analytical memos that discuss and explain one point into integrative memos that link back to research questions, outside theories, and research gaps into the final integrated project.

4.7.6 Participant observation

Reading and keeping up with basketball twitter, both lists at different key times during the day, mostly during games but also during the day as news breaks, blog posts and media are discussed, and random trending topics are born organically. Screen Shots, saved tweets of course, saved interactions, the interactions are coded until they reach a saturation point and no new large unexplored themes emerge. An example of a daily observation could include selected tweets from the entire stream of 1500 daily tweets, from this list, a few select tweets could be favorited or coded as possibly important to

code. Every day that list is coded and compiled into codes or examples from a topic. For example, making jokes about players might come up some days and it is important to know the context, the author, and the meaning intended or unintended. These example tweets are identified and cataloged but the analytic side of participant observation is to write analytic memos to go along with the example code of player jokes. Those analytic memos could discuss the nuance, jokes that work and those that do not work. Examples for jokes or in the joke code is tagged until saturation, and once saturation is reached all joke tweets that do not add any meaning to the overall code are ignored.

As an ethnographer, you arrive at the new place and you take nothing with you (Malinowski, 1922). Your former level of participation only matters in that it helps you figure out the cultural meanings, but it hurts in that you already see and understand things and take them for granted. Reflexivity is important here to note the cultural biases you already bring in and to explain, the best you can, the meanings and how they came about, this is difficult and the process to make the familiar strange is thick description, knowing your audience, and detailed field notes and memos. Former participation in a culture affects how the researcher is reflexive but does not contaminate the site or affect the cultural meanings therein.

4.7.7 Writing field notes and memos

Thick description, or description that not only describes the actions but the context as well are used to write field notes and personal observations (Geertz, 1973). In the case of twitter, storify is used to put the individual messages into context where they can be understood by the audience. Participation in the events is key to understanding members meaning and the researcher's participation in online events occur concurrently with personal observations and field note writing. With virtual ethnography the availability to record events as they happen as well as make notations is possible.

After field notes using thick description the next step is to write analytic memos in order to pursue member's meanings (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). The most important point when writing up field notes from small jottings into fuller reports is to set the scene and the context such that an outsider can make sense of the actions and the meanings of the studied group. The next steps include preliminary open codes of the text, memos to analyze the themes and concepts in an iterative process. Then selection of key themes that address the research questions are decided upon and the text is recoded while more integrative memos are written. This process can be repeated until a final account including themes address the overall research questions (Emerson et al., 1995).

An example of analytic memos here is to create a theme out of data, for example jokes about certain players are numerous. They can be coded under jokes, but the meaning can be highlighted through analytic memos that focuses on jokes, looking through past field notes, and data already collected some preliminary meanings can be found that basketball jokes on twitter are information practices that support leisure in a certain way. These meanings are triangulated through multiple rounds of participant interviews.

4.7.8 Interviews

An informant should be found that meets the following 5 criteria: thorough enculturation, currently involved in the community, associated with an unfamiliar cultural scene, enough time to spend, and does not already have an analytical background (Spradley, 1979). The first two informant criteria are that they are currently in the culture and live in that culture thoroughly meaning that they have and use the same types of language and meanings as the rest of the culture, they are not a unique outlier. An informant that is different from the cultural background of the ethnographer helps to highlight the differences and draw out the meanings that would be taken for granted by a researcher who deeply identified with the culture. Informants should have enough time to spend with the researcher but also the power dynamic of dealing with professional, amateur and hobbyists comes into play with who has the time for interviews. An analytic background studying culture or doing meta-analysis of the group is detrimental since the informant focuses on theories and analysis from their own personal education to frame discussion.

Other researchers who do meta-analysis of discussion on twitter or of basketball must be carefully considered if they are to be informants. This proposal identifies writers from different levels of professional to amateur status and from different teams and perspectives until saturation occurs. With this interview selection protocol, writers, bloggers, students, and professionals, all within the basketball realm, must develop a

trusting relationship with the researcher in order to gain insights into the meanings within the group.

The analysis of interviews is to use them as a data source but also as an ontology or mental schema for thinking about the community. In the fifth step in the procedural overview this analysis contains a reworking of previous codes, networks, and meanings. The analysis step here is to use informants as another rich data source but also use their intelligence to shed light on question brought up by analytic memos, to test theories, and expand the cultural knowledge of the community.

4.7.9 Semi-structured interview questions

RQ1. What are the serious leisure information practices of the basketball twitter community?

1. Tell me about how you use twitter to discuss basketball?
2. What is the basketball community on twitter? Who do you follow on twitter for basketball and why?
3. How do other people on basketball twitter characterize themselves?
4. How do you decide who to follow and not follow?
5. How has your feed changed over time since you began using twitter?

RQ2. Which of the serious leisure information practices identified in RQ1, which practices promote a more involvement and engagement, and less involvement and engagement in the community?

6. Why do you post tweets about basketball? What do you gain from reading, writing or engaging in conversation on twitter about basketball?
7. What are some highlights of personal interest to you on your twitter interactions? How do you explain to outsiders why you keep reading and following basketball twitter?
8. What are the negative aspects/consequences or what do you hate the most about basketball twitter?
9. Is one of your goals to become a professional basketball writer?

RQ3. How, and to what extent, if at all, are these information practices shaped by the power structure of different group interactions in this community?

10. What are the different groups of people on basketball twitter? How do you interact with each group about basketball?
11. What is an example of a fight or argument that broke out on twitter, who was it and can you explain what was going on?

4.8 Data Analysis

Moving from raw data collected to a final written ethnography includes the steps of organization of data as it is collected, reading through and coding the data, developing themes and descriptions, relating it to the research questions and outside theories and finally interpreting the meaning in a final written report (Creswell, 2008). In ethnography the data analysis stage begins with the organization of data and stages can overlap, and are in a continuous loop of data collection, organization, and analysis. Through the procedural overview the 9 main steps are shown as well as in each step from participant observation, field notes, writing memos, and interviewing, each stage has its own analytic steps. Once each analytic step is completed it builds towards the next step. Once saturation is reached, then the final report is put together through a cycle of writing longer and longer analytic and integrative memos.

4.8.1 Timeline

Stage 1: Initial coding, initial interviews (1 month)

From this initial starting point the first coding phase should last one month at the beginning of the study. This should be enough time to complete coding of themes and

initial interviews with at least 5 participants as a beginning interview sample. These initial codes of basketball twitter activities do not cover the entirety of the culture but allow for a beginning level of cultural knowledge. After this stage the next stage would be to use what I have learned to expand into new cultural directions with help from inside informants.

Stage 2: Filtering and expansion process in new directions (5 months)

Through these codes and initial interviews two main keys should emerge including which codes to further explore their meanings and which other interviews to conduct with key members in the community. This is a common position to take as an ethnographer in a new community, instead of targeting leaders first, it is beneficial to organically start dialogues with informants, ask them about possible interview subjects based on their online conversations and grow the network that way. In that case the interview subjects have more reference to common subjects and topics within the network. This second wave of interview subjects should come to roughly 25 additional interviews within the 5 months following the initial coding procedure.

During this stage the codes are also aligned along theories that help explain which group of activities under practice theory, and particularly the serious leisure framework. The theoretical framework and literature review focus the inquiry towards addressing the research questions. It is important in this stage not to force a framework onto the data but use applicable theory to address the research questions.

This stage of collecting data should last 5 months in total in order to find and interview key informants multiple times. A second round of interviews is important in sharing preliminary findings of meanings and checking in with members as to how they have socially constructed their meanings within their group.

Stage 3: Saturation of codes to address research questions

The number of tweets, streams, and accounts to follow fluctuates during the study as saturation (defined above) is reached. For example, a common phenomenon is to create a pun using a player's name during a game, or simple game commentary. After noting examples of these codes, going forward, unless a new variation is found, each new example of this code should be excluded. In order to keep the total number of tweets that are read, copied, coded, and analyzed, a vast majority of similar messages must be coded, condensed, analyzed, and then future utterances can be ignored.

4.8.2 Replication

If you were to do this in another context the steps would be, identify a phenomenon within a cultural community, what research questions can this phenomena address, is ethnography the right tool, is there an easier way, yes and no, what's the next step, to me it's initial coding, and then you work on your informant relationships, you try to learn the culture and making notes while you do in order to translate it back again to an outside

audience. Reflexivity is paramount, knowing what references are taken for granted, what is meant by certain signals, and then member check in is why ethnography is useful at all, to learn the meanings and jokes that are meant. Once you know why all the jokes are funny and why and can predict future reactions then you are done.

4.9 Pilot Study

4.9.1 Problem Statement

Serious Leisure studies in LIS focus on offline and not online experiences. This pilot study focuses on identifying the meanings of serious leisure information practices in a user generated content site reddit.com.

4.9.2 Research Questions

1. What are the serious leisure information practices, specifically related to concepts such as organizing, sharing, using, and experiencing information on a subgroup of reddit?
2. How are these information practices learned through social interactions and group learning methods?

3. How are social norms reinforced through information practices?
4. How are conflicts resolved and meaning negotiated over time on the site?

4.9.3 Context

Reddit daily has 5,185 active communities or subreddits, made up of 2,535,383 logged in redditors, who cast 17,742,859 votes, monthly the total is 73,293,644 unique visitors (via reddit.com/about).

4.9.4 Methodology

A virtual ethnography was performed like the one proposed for twitter though collecting data on reddit.com posts, comments, and through email interviews with participants.

4.9.5 Findings

The first finding was in the Theory of Reddit community there existed a practice of sharing original research, asking research questions, and reporting outside research. This finding related heavily to the sub reddit topic of asking meta-practice questions about the

topic of reddit. The second was how learning this practice was forced by the moderation controls available to the participants. This finding is tied to the idea of affordances in the technology but also the social meanings of a small focused group. Lastly, the sense of community found in each subreddit could vary, each had their own culture. This sense of community in such a small focused subreddit is linked to online virtual communities forming around an array of activities, including a “navel-gazing” community that focused on meta-practice.

4.9.6 Implications for proposal

This pilot study successfully entered a virtual community for a short time and found interesting and unique insights into how serious leisure information practices are formed, as well as their relation to the technology in forms like moderation, and the community at large and each sub community. With different technologies available such as twitter, and different communities at large and sub communities within twitter, these findings and particularly the methodologies are show the success possible for a virtual ethnography to uncover information practices in a serious leisure context.

Reddit was abandoned as a primary site to study due to increased involvement in twitter. The time commitment for a virtual ethnography is great and the decision was made to select the virtual environment with the most sustained participation possible by the researcher. Because of that the site was moved to Twitter.com.

CHAPTER 5 INFORMATION PRACTICES

Each findings section is broken into different sections and subsections. The first is to restate the research question and then define terms used, then a discussion of each term with evidence to support the research claims. Bold terms are reference words that will be defined, and then discussed with supporting evidence.

RQ1. What are the serious leisure information practices of the basketball twitter community?

They are serious leisure information practices centered on these six information practice types by different communities and sub-communities in NBA twitter:

1. **Information sharing** and learning as reaction to live sport
2. **Information reaction** with humor
3. **Argumentation** types
4. **Identity** of culture
5. **Networking** among journalists and podcasters
6. **Psychological drivers** among fans

Definition of information practices

1. **Information practices**, including sharing, following, and learning practices that revolve around live sports reaction by the NBA including teams and players, media that cover the NBA, and NBA fans.
2. **Information reaction**, including specific reactionary practices also include reaction to events with jokes, memes, collective memory, and philosophical tangents.
3. **Argumentation types** such as serious leisure information practices that encompass arguments on basketball twitter. These arguments include serious versus nuanced arguments in a live, text, image, and video based medium, and the extraction of sound bites over the holistic context of the debate.
4. **Identity** of culture including information practices centered on identity of basketball twitter. These include the values, identity, norms, and beliefs of the participants including how basketball twitter views itself, and the culture overlap with other subcultures on twitter.
5. **Networking** among journalists and podcasters. There are specific information practices for the network of journalists and podcasters who use twitter to consume and disseminate news and opinion, and their level of analysis that differs from fan or player interactions.
6. **Psychological drivers** among fans. The last set of information practices focus on different fan types and their psychology that drives their participation in basketball twitter, from winning, losing teams, and group behaviors that influence fans.

Each finding section will start with the overall finding, then define terms or give a brief summary of each subgroup that will be discussed. Then each subheading will be described in greater detail.

5.1 Information practices

Information practices, including sharing, following, and learning practices that revolve around live sports reaction by the NBA including teams and players, media that cover the NBA, and NBA fans.

5.1.1 Information Sharing

The evidence of information sharing is the sheer number of tweets and content that share information from one group of NBA twitter to another. The evidence of learning, as will be discussed in depth in that section, is from the questions and answers shared among groups of NBA twitter. For example, common coaching parlance with respect to set basketball plays have been learned by those outside of coaching circles through intergroup learning. The evidence of live sports reaction is from three groups, all of which use twitter as the main live channel to share news on the NBA. Those groups include social media managers who use twitter as part of their job to keep abreast of all NBA news and trends from their own players and league wide. NBA writers use twitter for live reaction to news that they write themselves or to discuss other stories in real time. NBA fans also point out the live nature of twitter helps in live events such as the Super Bowl and NBA games and distinguish reading NBA news later or following the NBA as it is happening and reacting on twitter, live, without delay.

This information practice is the most basic practice on social media. On twitter, a tweet or single message can be interpreted as the sharing of a status, through an original

message, a reply, retweet, or a like. Specifically, in basketball circles there are types of information that is shared by different entities. This is tied directly to different types of fans, and different types of media.

Some examples of what fans share include instant reaction, memes, insults, sarcasm, news, analysis, and opinion. Media members, as well as athletes and owners, share similar information just with different levels of access. A media member can conduct athlete interviews in a group or individually. Athletes can also disintermediate the media institution and share their information directly to fans. Athletes can also use instant reaction, memes, insults, sarcasm, news, analysis, and opinion from their point of view. Some media members have journalistic standards to share or not share their opinion of athletes in articles or on twitter as their situation and personality warrant. Fans also share different kind of information at different times, from live reaction, to thoughtful suggestions.

The input shared can come from twitter directly or linked out to the wider web. The sharing can come from directly sharing from your own account, retweeting or sharing the same information without commentary, quote tweeting, sharing the same information with commentary, replies, likes, and commentary directed at but not including the intended target, sub tweeting, and direct messaging or private messages. These are all ways to share information, and create links between people and stories, in a public to private spectrum. There are also intensions of what will be more public or private for everyone.

5.1.2 Learning practices

Fans, media and the NBA learn how to interact on twitter over time. It is common to look at first tweets from an athlete to show the unsophisticated nature of early twitter. Most comments were benign and boring, either asking questions about twitter or sharing mundane events like going out to eat or practice. Over time, players, media, and fans have all adapted their strategies for twitter usage. Continued usage of twitter where more people are followed for various reasons and unfollowed, based on the users criteria for basketball and twitter. The types of tweets that cover question and answers types as well as practices that changed over time as the result of learning practices will be discussed.

There is another kind of learning that happens when different groups share so much information with each other publicly. The NBA learns what types of content are shared and what fans want, media understand the type of content, teams, players that generate the most traffic. And fans express in their own communication the types of opinions and feelings toward the NBA they want to express directly. Media learn from each other, conversations with players and front office executives, and directly from fans.

This has been mentioned on podcasts but also specifically in relation to bballbreakdown (Nick, 2018) and Dunc'd on (Duncan, 2018). In the case of bballbreakdown, who is a HS

coach in California, using video breakdown to show specific sets, shooting motion, and film breakdown for teams, players, and eras. These videos usually have a learning outcome such as learning the set Horns, shooting with The Hop, and breakdown of specific game outcomes such as the recent 2016 Finals. Coach Nick also teaches fundamentals of the Triangle Offense with his own boys HS team. Film breakdown is the most complex level of learning that happens on basketball twitter and is directly related to real film breakdown down by NBA teams. Just not to the level of sophistication or precision done by teams using official and classified internal data.

Also, all the behind the scenes media and training stuff that we know about now. When guys are unhappy or out of shape. Behind the scenes drama between players that leaks and then one of those players are gone. Brian telling about CAA and the power of sports agents. Learning how the media gets made, which journalists like which teams, or GMs, or have had players on their podcasts and what does their relationship appear like. Ethan Sherwood Strauss and Warriors friendly media. Related to this the amount of behind the scenes media, doing podcasts, using snap chat, Rachel Nicolls, other male reporters on Snapchat?

Learning how front offices think about trades, what goes on behind the scenes of the NBA, the scope of the players, front office, chemistry, coaching principles, unhappy locker rooms, etc. Also, the amount of information about private lives of players, public comments about wanting to be traded, or private comments that become public. Fifteen

years ago, the media and commentary around sports were still separated into the traditional media channels. With social media and particularly twitter and podcasts, this information spreads for better or worse, and the amount of information and news stories, commentary, reaction has spread to include a 24/7/365 amount of coverage.

5.1.3 Live Sports reaction

Live sport reaction makes up the bulk of content shared in basketball twitter. This section will define that practice from the point of view of social media managers who are paid to share NBA highlights, to NBA writers, and finally how fans consume content on basketball twitter.

What are live sports reactions?

Live sports reactions are the basic functions of basketball twitter. Instantly sharing news of a player being injured or traded, or fans following along with games is all done live. The basic design of basketball twitter is analogous to a virtual sports bar. There are TVs on the wall where each user can decide on games to watch, they can broadcast their opinions live, or have live conversations with fans, players, and journalists.

In this virtual bar environment, there are multiple live conversations happening simultaneously. And depending on the who follows whom, the conversations are hidden, or one sided. Live commentary forms the bulk of reaction on basketball twitter but there are other forms of imported information such as clips from games, TV sports shows, tweets from journalists, players, other fans, and writers who feed outside information into basketball twitter.

Social Media Managers on Twitter

Amara Baptist, social media manager with Fox Sports 1, now with the Memphis Grizzlies social media account on her typical day at work (Brumleve, 2016).

CAN YOU DESCRIBE A TYPICAL DAY AT THE OFFICE?

It definitely varies because sports are constantly moving, but I go in around 1:30pm and attend our ideas meeting where we discuss ideas and the rundown of the show that night. Then I go to my desk and keep an eye on breaking news or big events going on that day.

Once the games begin around 5, I start to live-tweet big plays or games if they're something special (i.e. football games, championship, playoffs, etc). Our show comes on at 8:00pm so I'll go down to the stage and take pictures or SnapChat our talent to make sure everyone knows we're on TV.

From there, I'll live-tweet our show, post full screens, clip off lead-ins or monologues, clip off our talent analyzing games etc. Obviously this varies day to day and can get a bit crazy, but that's pretty much a basic typical day at the office.

All of these activities happen behind the scenes of television and twitter. Social media managers are paid to stay on top of breaking news, or big events, then sharing plays or segments of games live to support the TV show, then after the show is finished sharing clips of that show again on Twitter.

Amara now works for the Memphis Grizzlies and the work she does has changed but the media have a schedule for how to live tweet, post videos, etc. Team social media managers have a schedule as well for when to tweet updates, videos, breaking news.

Players and the NBA have a schedule for when they release information. Fans who also watch the NBA usually tweet more during games but also will tweet throughout the day. I notice the time zones late at night and early in the morning. During the middle of the night only the philippines and australia are awake, late at night it's the west coast and early morning it's the east coast.

Writers on Twitter

Journalists and commentators use Twitter to share links to articles they write for online, print, and TV outlets. What is shared sometimes is one quote, or the headline, with only the most recent comment, and not the original story. Bethlehem Shoals @freedarko, “What if articles worked like Twitter where the first thing you saw was the most recent comment and the actual story got buried?” Freedarko here points out that articles are organized for a reason, for them to make sense, and not bury the lead or the important facts with an avalanche of comments. Other writers point out the positives and negatives with sharing information on twitter which will be discussed in depth in subsequent findings.

Fans on Twitter

The chronological nature of twitter, which they have tried to change with their algorithm, showing in case you missed it highlights, but the linear nature means people are reacting to what is going on right now, live reaction to sporting events. What makes the sporting event better, which under culture I will go into greater detail, is how this virtual sport bar enhances events with the sharing of live information, jokes, and commentary, that perfectly compliments the passive consumption of sport. Lindsay Mills @lindsaymills, “Twitter makes every sporting event 50x better. Especially the Super Bowl.” What

Lindsay describes is the critical mass of users following along the same event, multiplies the amount of content and enjoyment. During the regular season there might be twelve different games to watch, while during the finals, everyone's attention is watching one game, so everything you consume is all on the same topic.

A good definition of how fans use twitter is because of live sports, not sports news.

Caitlin @caitlinintexas, "Chronological order is the only reason I still enjoy twitter. I began using it exclusively because of sports. Live sports. Not sports news." What I think she means is live sports commentary, not as an RSS feed of articles about the mavs but as a place to react to what is going on right now. This is related to how fans used to have to consume sports news, from the radio, to print journalism, to TV sport highlight shows, to blog feeds, and now twitter to consume live sports. Sports news is still tangential to basketball twitter. Sports radio clips, headlines from the NY Times, articles from Real GM, or Sports Center style highlights are still shared but what Caitlin points out is those can be found at anytime or consumed in non-twitter surroundings. What makes twitter unique is the way, in real time, Caitlin, and others like her can share fan opinion and content with each other while the game is still ongoing. Similar to what Lindsey described, this enhanced the experience of watching live sports at least fifty times in some instances.

5.2 Information reaction with humor

Reaction to events with jokes

Information reaction, including specific reactionary practices also include reaction to events with jokes, memes, collective memory, and philosophical tangents.

Definition of Terms

Memes

Davison (2012) definition of meme: “An Internet meme is a piece of culture, typically a joke, which gains influence through online transmission.” These are basic pieces of culture that are usually transmitted through an image overlaid with text on top and bottom, the format reused with the same or similar image and different text.

Jokes

Are slightly different from memes in that they do not have a rigid format of image overlaid with text. Jokes are more general in that they are something said with the expectation of laughter or punchline (Dictionary, 2002). In basketball twitter these jokes have some level of assumed previous experience or knowledge. They are only funny if the basketball or social context is known.

Improvisation

Improvisation is defined as something created, a piece of music or drama, without preparation (Dictionary, 2002). Improvisation covers the reactions to jokes and memes with new permutations that are timely. One example will be someone starting a meme or joke, and then someone else combining those jokes and memes with current events, or in a unique way they have never been combined before. There are threads of starting with a joke type and creating many different permutations of that joke.

Reactions to events

More specific than the information practice of sharing, these reactions to events can almost be predicted ahead of time. During different points of the basketball season there are time when topics come up naturally. Or when certain events take place, the reactions by most people can be guessed.

Philosophical tangents

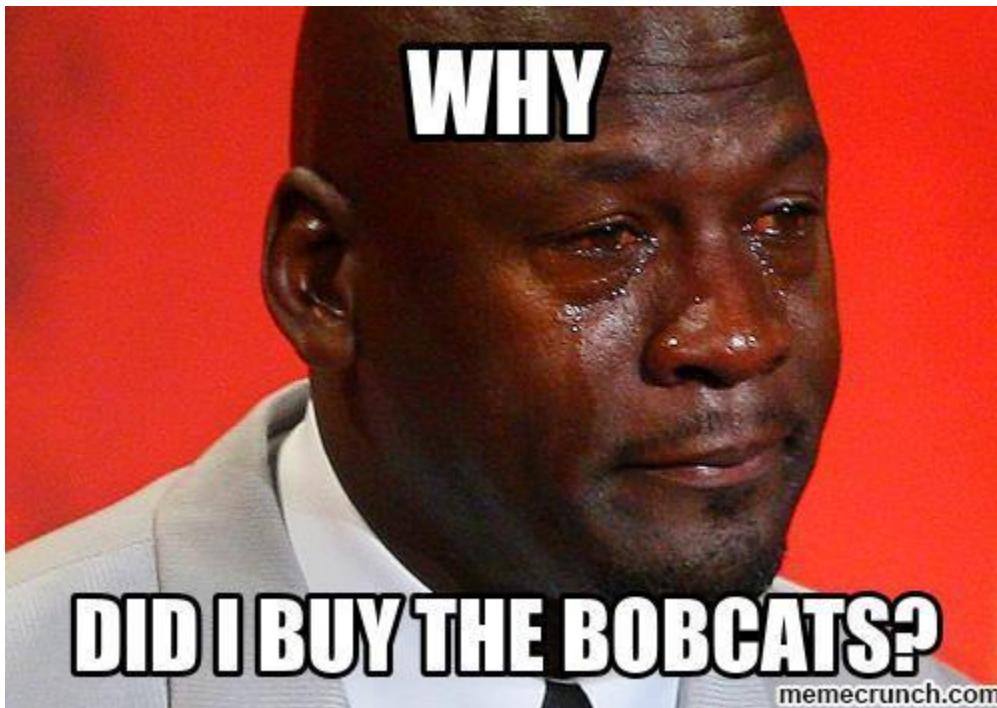
From time to time, basketball twitter is introspective or analytical towards itself, with debates on how certain statistics are used, whether they should be used at all, and meta critiques of different points of view from players, coaches, media, and fans.

5.2.1 Memes

The evidence of memes that are used within basketball twitter include jokes such as crying Jordan. The crying Jordan meme is discussed since it is one of the most popular.

Some users believe the meme is over represented while other users discuss the infinite possibilities with creativity and different combinations that are still possible. These as well as examples of the various crying Jordan meme are explored.

One of the most popular memes on basketball twitter is known as crying Jordan ("Crying Michael Jordan," 2018). The basic template of the meme is to place text on top of Michael Jordan's crying face. For example:



This is a common use of the meme. During the NCAA championship game there were many uses of this meme, with different permutations of photoshopping his face on different people.

One example photoshopped Jordan's face onto the North Carolina mascot with the title, "Whoever made this one wins." This is an example of one created in a timely manner since North Carolina was playing in the championship match.

Ashley Holcomb @ashleyxholcomb, "Imagine watching that game with people who aren't on Twitter and don't understand why you can't stop laughing because of a meme." These memes are understood better by those in basketball twitter who see them more often, understand their definition, see the creativitiy, and understand the joke.

5.2.2 Jokes

Jokes on basketball twitter can come from anyone, players, teams, comedians, media, and fans. There are certain accounts that are known for their sarcasm and humor similar to the Onion for political news, there are analogues in basketball twitter. Some jokes are obvious and have multiple accounts telling the same joke at the same time. One example is Trust the Process, the name the 76ers gave to their years long process of accumulation of high draft picks. This joke has multiple variations and often the same joke is used in the same situation.

Marc Stein @ESPNSteinLine, "ESPN sources say Sam Hinkie has stepped down from his posts in Philadelphia." When Sam Hinkie, the general manager of the 76ers stepped

down from his position, after creating the “Process”, multiple accounts joked about the process being over.

Nick Moyle @ NRMoyle, “Damn, even Hinkie didn’t trust his own ‘Process’.”

Robby Kalland @RKalland, “RIP the process.”

Whitney @its_whiteny, “So about that process.”

5.2.3 Improvisation

Basketball twitter borrows from comedy twitter in general, the template for creating an idea or premise and then having multiple people pitch their take on that idea. For example Jason Concepcion aka netw3rk created the premise of a trade machine with unexpected evil consequences, similar to a trade machine where fans can create possible trades of players between teams. Netw3rk @netw3rk, “monkey’s paw trade machine: a device powered by dark magic by which any player can be traded to any team but w unexpected evil consequences.”

The evidence of this topic is in how many different people “play the game” of taking the original premise or idea and improvising a new joke scenario.

Robert Silverman @BobSaietta, “This is my fave part of the NBA trade deadline: @netw3rk’s conversion to chaotic evil.”

Noah Schwartz @NoahSchwartzTX, “@netw3rk Trade: Chris Paul for Jason Terry. Consequence: Every Bayou in Houston floods, thousands of home unlivable for foreseeable future.”

Netw3rk @netw3rk, “‘floods happen all the time. Titles don’t.’ -morey.”

In this instance, Noah Schawarz joked that the Houston Rockets should trade those players but the unintended evil consequence is thousands of Houston homes are flooded. This joke was made before the most recent floods in 2017. Netw3rk responded to the improvisations with a joke answer from Houston General Manager Darry Morey.

5.2.4 Reactions to events

Depending on the time of year, there are different reactions to events such as during the summer when players change teams, during the early season, when fans and media make reactions to small samples of data, during the playoffs when more people are watch the NBA, and during specific NBA events such as the All-star game, usually held in mid-February. These reactions to certain events can be forecasted ahead of time that they will become main topics of conversation.

Chris Herring @HerringWSJ, “With the win, NY is back to .500, at 22-22.”

Zach Lowe @ZachLowe_NBA, “Nice win for the Knicks. Utah’s off-ball D really hurt them. Couldn’t help on Melo and recover to 3-point shooters w/ any coordination.”

Kevin McElroy @Knickerbacker, “Now that is a nice January win.”

Jim Cavan @JPCavan, “GREAT win.”

Hardwood Paroxysm @HPbasektball, “Great win for the Knicks.”

Here is one example of a game in January, which is during the middle of season. Usually games here are not as impactful in the playoff race as other game, and with struggling teams such as the Knicks, they have different expectations and reactions from the media than other teams. The selected media are mostly from New York with Hardwood

Paroxysm being located in Denver Colorado. Every year similar arguments can be made for the Knicks winning games or having good or bad months.

5.2.5 Philosophical Tangents

Between the different subgroups of basketball twitter, media, players, fans, coaches, there are arguments on how to win game, and how the statistics are representative or unrepresentative of winning and losing. Even among basketball statisticians there are arguments about small sample sizes and taking certain statistics out of context. The evidence of these philosophical tangents is how writers who talk about basketball so much, often run into specific tangents about basketball. These philosophical or meta arguments are often on statistics, different biases, or fan context.

Jim Peterson @JimPeteHoops asks, “When is this insanity going to stop? Can we get a standard for calculating advanced stats?”

BASKETBALL REFERENCE

Rk	Team	Age	PW	PL	MOV	SOS	SRS	ORtg	DRtg	Pace
1	Golden State Warriors	27.5	23	4	13.37	-1.59	11.78	115.0	101.7	99.7
2	Oklahoma City Thunder	26.0	21	7	7.86	-0.52	7.34	110.6	102.5	96.0
3	San Antonio Spurs	30.7	25	4	13.21	-1.48	11.73	108.8	94.7	93.9

NBA

Team	GP	MIN	ORtg	DRtg	NetRtg	AST/TO	ASTRatio	OREB%	DREB%	REB%	TmTOV%
Golden State Warriors	27	48.6	113.3	98.1	15.2	1.80	20.3	26.6%	75.7%	52.6%	15.7
Oklahoma City Thunder	28	48.5	108.1	99.2	8.8	1.34	16.0	29.7%	75.2%	54.3%	16.0
San Antonio Spurs	29	48.0	106.8	92.8	13.9	1.81	19.4	23.0%	80.7%	53.6%	14.6

STATS INC.

2015-16 Team Leaders (S

Team	Poss	ORtg	DRtg	NetRtg
1 Golden State Warriors	2735	114.5	101.3	13.2
2 Oklahoma City Thunder	2734	110.0	102.0	8.0
3 San Antonio Spurs	2746	107.9	94.2	13.7

In this case different websites calculate the same statistic, in this case Offensive Rating, in different ways. In this case the order is the same but the actual rating for each team is slightly different. On multiple analytical podcasts there are arguments for or against using different predictive or descriptive statistics to guess which teams will win and more specifically how they will win.

These arguments about philosophy are also not always statistics based. Sometimes fans disagree with coaching decisions. JoseRibeiro @JCR_Producer, “@SethPartnow there is

always a twitter dude that thinks he so much smarter about basketball than professional coaches.” Seth Parnow @SethPartnow responds, “That’s literally every dude on NBA Twitter, so that’s a strange shot to take.” Seth Partnow points out that most fans disagree with coaching decisions, they would have played this player more, traded for another player, ran this play more, or for players to just play better and for coaches to motivate them more. In football this is called Monday morning quarterbacking, while in basketball twitter the analogue is NBA 2K coaching, where any option available in a video game is available in real life coaching. Changes can happen dramatically and more importantly instantaneous.

5.3 Argumentation Types

Argumentation types such as serious leisure information practices that encompass arguments on basketball twitter. These arguments include serious versus nuanced arguments in a live, text, image, and video based medium, and the extraction of sound bites over the holistic context of the debate.

Definition of terms

Types of arguments

An argument is a heated exchange of opposite or diverging views (Dictionary, 2002). In basketball twitter a typical argument will come from two teams and their fans that are competing against each other. Fan is short for fanatic and the fanatics who argue about basketball online can become quite heated in the moment.

Tropes

A trope is defined as an overused theme or common literary device (Dictionary, 2002).

On basketball twitter, multiple tropes will be used and reused over time. Similar arguments for certain situations, teams, and players, will be used multiple times by different subgroups on twitter.

Sound bites and context

A sound bite is a extracted portion of a larger interview, chosen for its catchiness or replay ability (Dictionary, 2002). Sound bites are also how tropes become promulgated, in that they are shared repeatedly, gaining a sort of truth simply through repetition. For example, different shooting styles are seen repeatedly, and players can be compared by that one part of their overall game. Sound bites can also be taken out of context, changing their meaning, especially in journalism where the writer of the article has no control over what the editor will title the article.

5.3.1 Types of Arguments

In online discussion, different types of arguments are seen repeatedly. In basketball twitter for example some of the most common arguments are logical vs fanatical arguments, trope arguments, or common arguments that are never settled and reappear from time to time, and sound bites that are taken out of context and dissected. Each of these argument types are defined and explained in the next section.

Twitter's mission statement is a question on their site, "What's happening?" This is implied to drive content on what is going on in the world right now. The different subgroups of basketball twitter are all sharing what is happening right now, their own point of view and commentary on events.

Irrational fans think that their arguments will affect the results of games or how players viewed and valued in the present. Contraian Barbarian @basquiatball, “REMEMBER: tonight is your last chance to affect the results of the playoffs by arguing on the internet about what will happen.” Cheering for the team when they win, or excoriating the team when they lose are ways that fans show interest in their teams. Online there is more freedom for trolls to have negative feelings towards the team, individuals, and other fans. Some fans also take slights against the team as personal attacks, and arguments become more weighted since they affect an individuals emotions and self worth.

From Atlantic article the seven deadly social networks (Meyer, 2016):

“Wrath, according to Dante, was a twin sin to sullenness. He wrote that they both came from the same essential error: Wrath is rage expressed, sullenness is rage unexpressed. And he condemned both the sullen and the wrathful to the Fifth Circle—where, in a foul marsh, the wrathful attacked each other unendingly, without ever winning; while the sullen sat beneath the murk and stewed and scowled and acted aloof. Rarely has there been a better description of Twitter.”

The wrath expressed on twitter is outrage at anything that goes against your view of the team or player winning. Any excuse to dismiss or belittle other’s accomplishments and prop up your own team or player is expressed with anger at those that disagree. The messages with the most extreme outrage are shared more than mild messages that do not agree or disagree too strongly.

The sullen who sit beneath the murk and stew, and scowl and act aloof is a good description of those on twitter who lurk or read more than post their own views. In the virtual bar analogy, these sullen, listen to others yell and scream in a bar, but take no action, consuming the outrage as entertainment, and rarely step in in the case of bullying, racism, or sexism.

5.3.2 Tropes

The evidence or tropes or common literary devices show up in the kinds of questions asked and answered on basketball twitter. These tropes are often noted by users saying they are over used and create the same discussion and add now new data or point of view. Twitter's 140-character limit might cause tropes to be used, in order to fit into the character limit.

One common trope in basketball media is to ask a retired player the following questions: If you played today how would you perform, and if the players today played in your era how would they succeed? The answers are usually that the retired player would dominate, and that players today wouldn't be able to handle "old school rules". This is related to the idea that current players are soft.

Lindsay Mills @lindsaymills, "I wish we would stop asking old players their opinions on things. They hate everything." Lindsay sees that old players always hate on whatever they are asked about, for example analytics that did not exist or were not used when they played, rule changes, or how the game is officiated for fewer fights. Retired players make

up a growing segment of the media and it is often easy for their views to be shared on sports shows or online.

Got ‘Em Coach @GotEm_Coach, “NBA people on twitter discredit ex-players with the ‘get off my lawn’ argument and it’s so disrespectful and rude and arrogant. I hate that.” GotEm_Coach who is a fan in California disagrees with the move to discredit ex-players as just being old crochety men. It is disrespectful to what those players went through in a different era to what players go through now. Zach Lowe summed it up by saying stop asking ex-player if they would beat a current player or team, they’re going to say yes of course because they’re competitive. It does make for an easy angle on a story, veteran player X says this old team is better than the current NBA champion. This is also related to tropes of the era of big men like Shaq dominating and how that has changed over time with the rule changes but also the style of play over time changing.

5.3.3 Sound bites and context

The evidence of sound bites is related to the amount of characters available for quoting twitter. The practice of replying to information immediately also gives rise to reacting to a word or phrase without reading or listening to the context of the original question. Jokes and sarcasm from longer interviews can become incendiary on twitter by clipping out the most outrageous word or phrase. The following are examples of sound bites taken out of context, with their meanings radically altered.

Interviews and longer articles are often clipped for their juicy quotes that will stir more outrage online than a banal quote would. Often a quote in context is drier and more banal where someone will make a point but preface it with qualifiers, or say a joke, where the interviewer will laugh. When those quotes are taken out of context, it can lead to endless conversations such as are they joking or not, no one can believe this, and back and forth over what they really mean.

Jeff McDonald @JMcDonald_SAEN, “This is the transcript I just got from OKC practice. This has to be some kind of joke.

Hardwood Paroxysm @HPbasketball, “This is not in context, I’m pretty sure. I *THINK* he was talking about specific things in transition.”

Hardwood Paroxysm @HPbasketball, “@JMcDonald_SAEN I think that’s out of context.”

Jeff McDonald @JMcDonald_SAEN, “That’s the danger of working off of quote sheets.”

This is one example of a quote about defense, what was lost was the part of specific things in transition defense which is way different than defense in general or. Writers and people on twitter who are looking at the text of a quote sheet do not see or read the entire block of text to understand the context. What changed the context as well is video of the exchange. If a coach is happy and laughing before the game or curt after a loss, changes how quotes are seen.

Phil Jackson @PhilJackson11, “Never seen anything like Scurry? Remind you of Chris Jackson/Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf, who had a short but brilliant run in NBA?” This simple quote that Phil Jackson tweeted himself started a firestorm of disagreement in how to deconstruct this tweet. In the media, some read into the quote that this is disrespected to compare an MVP player to a minor NBA player of the past, or to compare one aspect of their games. This also strengthen some people’s views that Phil Jackson is an out of touch old man, or insane, or any mix of the two views.

5.4 Cultural Identity

Identity of culture including information practices centered on identity of basketball twitter. These include the values, identity, norms, and beliefs of the participants including how basketball twitter views itself, and the culture overlap with other subcultures on twitter.

Definition of terms

Culture

Culture is broadly defined as social norms and behavior, transmitted through social learning (Macionis & Gerber, 2011). These norms, behavior, and learning also include the values, beliefs, and identity of their participants. In basketball twitter the focus of identity and culture are how basketball twitter is formed, the entry into the culture, how the culture self-identifies, and how participants rank or organize each other within the culture.

Subtopics: How basketball twitter is formed, how basketball twitter is organized

5.4.1 How Basketball Twitter is Formed

The evidence of how the culture is formed is found in examples that explain the basketball twitter culture to outsiders. A good example is Ezekiel Kweku's definition

where he shows how basketball twitter is formed over time by different people who care about basketball. The common thread keeps the community together.

NBA twitter is a place where gamblers, statisticians, journalists, NBA offices, fans, players, heads of state, and cable news anchors gather to discuss basketball (Neely-Cohen, 2016).

“All it really takes to be part of [NBA Twitter] is to tweet about basketball and be followed by other people who are part of NBA Twitter. This seems obvious but that makes it less nebulous and more accessible than some other Twitter subcultures. During games, it’s like watching in a dive bar that’s got the funniest and most insightful fans available. The NBA has been an oasis for me both IRL [In real life] and on social media. I have a basketball list that I’ve curated to click over to... when the barrage of bad news on my main timeline gets to be too much,” (Neely-Cohen, 2016).

This is a good start to how to describe basketball twitter by explaining how to join the community. Ezekiel Kweku here explains how to become part of the community, but even those that have few followers are also part of basketball twitter, they simply consume more than produce content.

Maxwell Neely-Cohen defines some of the content and people involved in basketball discussions on twitter. What separates basketball twitter from other sports twitter or sub cultures is the wide range of types of content and types of people that follow the content.

In other sub cultures, for example daily fantasy baseball, or football, there other communities for each specific type of communication, fantasy apps for fantasy sports for example. In basketball the wide range of players, former US presidents, cable news anchors, general managers of teams, coaches, and fans having the ability to share messages with that group of individuals and overheard public comments between those individuals is what creates the basketball twitter culture.

With such a wide range of followers, the content that is shared is also wide ranging, from simple fan support, to journalistic reports, to film breakdown of games, to US presidents attending MIT Sloan Sports Analytics Conference, the basketball twitter ecosystem is diverse.

5.4.2 How Basketball Twitter Self-Identifies

Community members often address the community, their own membership in the community, or a comment about the community in general. All of these are exemplifying that members have their own definition of what basketball twitter is.

Self-identity

Kirk @KirkSeriousFace, “Twitter is the world’s best sports bar.” Basketball twitter as a sports bar is a great analogy since at a sports bar, there is drinking, talking, and watching sports, which is exactly what most of basketball twitter does from their homes, bars, and at basketball games themselves. There are examples of basketball twitter fans following

the game from across the world, including Japan, South America, Asia, and Europe to fans attending games, or bloggers covering games from across the country.

Travis Hale @LubbockElitist, “Attention basketball Twitter: Working on a reflection piece. Please tell me in a sentence or two what basketball means to you.”

Jay Bilas @JayBilas, “Everything. The best game ever invented where five players, connected, play offense and defense in a position-less contest.”

Josh Eberley @JoshEberly, “When my first girlfriend broke up with me I went to the court. When my dog died I went to the court. An outlet like no other.

Travis Hale @LubbockElitist,”@JoshEberly I played a lot as a kid when my parents were divorcing. Stayed out late every night.”

Basketball twitter often uses that phrase to self-identify the community, again anyone who tweets about basketball and is followed by others is a member of the community. Here writer Travis Hale was working on a piece and asked an open-ended question to the community, the responses are deeply personal responses about how basketball was an escape during particular hard time like a divorce and breakup. Jay Bilas, who might be the most famous college basketball analyst on ESPN, responded what his definition of basketball is, a position-less contest where everyone is connected.

What is sometimes overlooked in focusing on the media section of basketball twitter, is the actual underlying activities associated with basketball twitter. All the people who have ever played basketball at school, with their friends, on teams, or through video

games, all that activity is not always represented in tweets about NBA teams and players, but it creates knowledge and passion about basketball.

5.4.3 How Basketball Twitter is Organized

The evidence is included in meta commentary on the different actors in basketball twitter and their relation to each other. Common commentary is on who is the best or most well trusted reporter and who is often wrong or over reactionary to a story.

Got ‘Em Coach @GotEm_Coach, “I love Woj. He’s top of the food chain in basketball Twitter. Nobody moves the needle like Woj. But he’s sullyng what made him great. Woj isn’t Simmons. Woj is “The Insider.” Bill is “The Tastemaker.” Simmons is The President. Woj is the CIA and the FBI.”

GotEm_Coach here represents a majority of basketball twitter that places Adrian Wojnarowski at the top of the media food chain. Then he compares Woj to Bill Simmons, creator of the Ringer website for sports and culture comparing Bill to the president and Woj as the CIA and FBI. There are multiple parallels in the NBA media for who is the most followed, most trusted, most disliked, and liked based on their personality.

Basketball twitter fans will share, through who they follow, who they like the most based on their own individual characteristics. Most basketball fans will follow Bill Simmons and Adrian Wojnarowski but then the might only follow media members for their favorite team, they might follow only some of their team’s players. Like Ezekiel mentioned before, they might have separate lists for basketball and politics, or basketball and their real-life friends. Something he did not point out is that while there are wide

ranging participants in basketball twitter, the individual is able to customize their experience by selectively following certain fans, media members, and players. Later we will see how by following or not following certain fans, different problems such as racism and sexism come to light.

5.5 Journalists and Podcasters

Networking among journalists and podcasters. There are specific information practices for the network of journalists and podcasters who use twitter to consume and disseminate news and opinion, and their level of analysis that differs from fan or player interactions.

5.5.1 Journalists and Podcasters

Journalists and podcasters both point out the sheer amount of growth in data and analysis that is used to talk about sports. The evidence in their specific information practices are from the how they use twitter to disseminate and talk about their own work, and how they use back channels and behind the scenes access of the creation of media on twitter to discuss in-depth stories. These conversations might start on social media, on longer form articles, or on podcasts and are talked about on twitter after they are published. The long form of certain articles, podcasts, and the 24/7 nature of twitter give these meta-narratives on the nature of sports and social media a home.

The Lowe Post with Zach Lowe and Kevin Arnovitz (Lowe, 2016)

“As a collective community there is great stuff being explored on blogs, on our sites, on our friends sites, our colleagues sites, there is a golden age for basketball... analysis. So much of the analysis has been driven by probability, that has been the great movement, we now have access to expected FG% if an average player took that shot this would have happened.”

Kevin Arnovitz here is talking with Zach Lowe about the statistics available to NBA writers. Also the amount of basketball analysis has risen and there are so

many rabbit holes to chase about probability. He then points out that probability cannot account for one shot or one possession.

“By definition when the stakes of basketball are at their highest, all the chips are in, but nothing is going to happen because probability dictates it, right, it's too small a sample size. It's such an irony, every truism we derive from these numbers and what we totally know about Steph Curry when he's in the corner or this lineup when it's on the floor [or] lebron when he goes to the hole. You know what JR Smith could go 7-11 from three tomorrow.”

Even though probabilities over the course of the game favor this team over another team, there is still drama that anything can happen. Anything that has never before happened in NBA history might happen in the next game. These are the types of arguments back and forth from more quantitative or qualitative basketball analysis. There is the inherent human drama of winning and losing and the cold analytics of probability and basketball twitter encompasses both.

5.5.2 Behind the scenes media

Given the long form of certain media conversations, and the drama around sports, journalists share information on media specific practices such as how they started a story, how they got certain people to talk to them, rumors, and the facing the athlete after a story has been published. Each of these journalists also use twitter to tell or retell meta-narratives about journalism itself, the way it is going for them specifically or in general

trending terms. The evidence is in how much of these meta-narratives make their way and are discussed in public on twitter from different journalists in different types of media.

Basketball twitter shares news and opinion in real time but there are also long form pieces that the basketball community consumes regularly. Long form journalism from Zach Lowe or Lee Jenkins and semi-regular daily or weekly podcasts focused on basketball. Basketball podcasts are freeform in nature, they can cover the top stories, or a smaller story more in depth, or discuss behind the scenes conversations that journalists have with each other, about writing stories, how they began, the journey writing them, what the interviewees were like, places to eat in NBA cities and more. NBA twitter and basketball fans might not comment or share these stories, but it adds to the sense of community that fans know so much about the writers who are giving their opinions on players. Fans can gauge more nuance into their short messages when they have been able to explain their point of view over an hour-long podcast.

Three examples of behind the scenes of how basketball media gets made are from Zach Lowe, Bill Simmons and Jalen Rose some of whom worked together at Grantland and ESPN. Zach Lowe when interviewing other writers or journalists for his podcast will describe his own work process. He started as a court reporter before he moved over to sports and will ask other journalists their path or how they do their show. He was on a

show on ESPN where he had to learn about posture, the Basketball Hour on ESPN, and he talked about hair and makeup and all types of other behind the scenes.

Bill Simmons had one story with Tony Kornheiser, longtime co-host of Pardon the Interruption on ESPN, about behind the scenes of the transition from print journalism to TV. One thing from learning about how studio hosts come and go, why some shows seem to be better than others is simple chemistry between the hosts. Tony pointed out that he knew and bantered with his co-host Michael Wilbon for years and PTI could gain their footing over years. The Starters on NBATV, formerly the podcast The Basketball Jones had a similar chemistry development, starting as an audio only podcast for years, then a video podcast, then a professionally produced TV show in Canada before moving to the US and NBA TV. The Starters had years to develop their chemistry before making their US TV debut.

Jalen Rose mentioned this behind the scene story as his show Jalen and Jacoby was transferring from a Grantland show, to ESPN Radio, to ESPN television. He spoke about having just a few people running the show to having bosses tell them which stories to talk about throughout the year. He mentioned his bosses watching the TV show but not listening to him on podcasts. He pointed out while he was on a podcast, he would not like to talk about the NFL since the NFL season was over. Once they moved to TV and ESPN has partnerships with the NFL, they started bringing up NFL content even after the NFL season. These are just a few of the behind the scenes stories that impact fan narratives, and journalists have these conversations behind the scenes.

5.6 Psychological Drivers among Fans

The last set of information practices focus on different fan types and their psychology that drives their participation in basketball twitter, from winning, losing teams, and group behaviors that influence fans.

5.6.1 Fan Types

Users on twitter create their own types of fans through generalizations over time. Fans from one team will create a generalization of other fans that are vocal, or that they see the most. Journalists create these fan types as well when talking about a fan population in general. These are user generated fan types that are defined by different fan and journalist groups.

When users are on basketball twitter, they generalized over time and learn through repetitions while fans they enjoy following and which fans cause the most trouble for them. Here Lindsay Mills makes a generalization of one type of fan. Lindsay Mills @Lindsaymills, “I don’t trust people that have their sports teams listed in their bios anymore. Hashtagged team names are even more of a red flag.” Below is one example of the person she means, another female sports fan with hashtags for the teams she follows and roots for, the Spurs, Cowboys, and Dodgers.

There are certain disagreements or over generalizations from different types of accounts. Bomani Jones has pointed out with #dogavi where users who have a picture of a dog or their own dog as their profile picture are more likely to spout racist speech at him, likely



under the guise of anonymity. With twitter there are two ways to react to such speech to block/mute or unfollow that person. It is different with different numbers of followers, as a person on twitter's number of followers increase, so do the number of trolls or harassing accounts. Different users have developed different personal algorithms to decide when to block, unfollow, or make their account private.

5.6.2 Twitter Oversimplifications

Media who write about different fan groups, or the same fan group changing their mind on a topic use oversimplification to fit into twitter's character limit. Many writers relate this issue to reading headlines and not the full story that is shared. This is related to sound bites and taking quotes out of context.

This also touches on context vs nuance that was discussed earlier. In this case different subsets of fans can have radically different viewpoints on the same subject. Matt Moore who runs Hardwood Paroxysm noted that he would say fans of a certain team would say X, usually after he wrote an article about that team. He noticed sometimes they would only argue with the headline and not the content of story or oversimplify the story to fit their own narrative. Hardwood Paroxysm @HPbasketball, “Twitter: ‘We don’t appreciate these players as complex people.’ Twitter, later: ‘THAT OWNER IS A SCUMBAG CHEAPSKATE WHO SUCKS.’” The only way to have a nuanced take would be on a podcast where often he would be talked into or out of a position by having to defend it, which he would also point out in real time as he was talking.

5.6.3 Fan Psychology

Fan posts and certain tropes fall into different psychological behaviors. Different biases and psychological effects that are found in society in general are also found represented in basketball twitter specifically. Some such as small sample size, bandwagon effect, and cognitive dissonance are also brought up as tropes that are discussed as members label other member’s behavior. This is related to the argumentative nature of twitter and the back and forth replies that give rise to certain logical and illogical flaws in arguments.

The overall fan psychology of basketball twitter is self-indulgent in that you must believe at least a few other people are going to care about what you write about basketball. Few

users sustain tweeting for years without positive reinforcement. That could include number of likes, retweets, or being followed by other famous twitter accounts.

There is a certain psychology around losing teams which I have found in New York with the Knicks and in Sacramento with the Kings. There is a defense mechanism that focuses on some good while also acknowledging the bad. Greg Wissinger from the Sactown Royalty show was interviewed by a national reporter and said that Kings fan were most excited about their new arena, more than the current team that was losing. There are similar sentiments from other losing teams, to wait for next year, the draft, young players to develop, and the future to look forward to.

One article from Business Insider UK (Lebowitz & Lee, 2015) was shared on Twitter by Seth Partnow and many of the cognitive biases have direct parallels to NBA twitter. Dan Hatman @Dan_Hatman, "I always forget that Twitter loves cognitive dissonance. Take a look at the many biases that limit decision making." In response to Dan, Seth Partnow @SethParnow, "This might or might not be getting printed and taped to my desk."

Bandwagon effect might explain analytics group think, or the spread of ideas that someone is good or bad on defense, or who is the MVP. When more people agree on a narrative when data or a deeper dive into the data has a different point of view. Zach Lowe wrote an article on Marc Gasol as Defensive Player of the Year and since Zach is a thought leader Marc won after other voting journalists agreed with Zach's argument.

Confirmation bias this is an analytics argument but also an eye test and hardcore fan type of thing. There is still a confirmation bias around any player that scores a lot of points as

being a good player, and not the usual situation of having poor players surrounding that one player.

Information bias has exploded because we have so much at our fingertips, statistics departments often point out esoteric statistics such as a teams record on certain holidays, first games of the season, and other small sample sizes simply because they have access to that information. John Schuman of NBA.com has pointed out in his own information searches he does look for information that cannot be explained by the eye test and tries and find supporting information one view or the other to combat bias.

Overconfidence by experts, summed up by “we are light years ahead of any other team” by the owner of the warriors Joe Lacob. This is echoed by Kevin Arnovitz’s quote where statisticians claim with high probability to know the outcome of the game using predictive statistics but these statistics can often be wrong and are wrong game to game or possession to possession.

The last bias is in how certain players are discussed in the media. It is often mentioned that media uses certain code words for talking about black or white players. Danny Ferry was fired when audio of a phone call was made public after he described Luol Deng “has got some African in him” comparing how Africans with phony store fronts sell counterfeit products. Danny claimed he was reading from a scouting report gathered from multiple sources. Other common code words in the draft for white players include leader, high IQ, and gritty or tough while black players are described more with athletic, quick

jumper, or powerful. Players and front offices can have a hard time breaking racial stereotypes that have been around for decades.

CHAPTER 6 MORE INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

RQ2. Which of the serious leisure information practices identified in RQ1, which practices promote a more involvement and engagement, and less involvement and engagement in the community?

The practices that promote more involvement and engagement include:

1. Youth support of technology
2. Local community support of the team
3. Women's support against sexism

Definition of terms

1. **Youth support** of technology includes NBA's progressive nature in using and not restricting sharing of NBA content on social media, the overlap of NBA culture with youth culture in terms of stars, and technology to broadcast games that is also being tinkered with to incorporate new technology.
2. **Local community support** of the team which includes team PR that shows how the team helps and interacts with the local community through team sponsored events.

3. **Women's support** through proactive means such as creating lists of women in sports to follow, supporting women who are fans and, in the media, and speaking out about women's roles in sports to combat sexist views.

6.1 Youth Support

6.1.1 Youth Support of Technology

The NBA's embrace of technology promotes involvement and engagement with a growing base of young sports fans who use and adopt the NBA's open sharing of digital content. This includes free sharing of animated gifs and videos on twitter, involving technology and media outlets that reach a younger audience. NBA owners who come from technology company backgrounds are more open to experiment with different technologies on their younger fan base.

The evidence is in how different the NBA is to other leagues by not banning the sharing of content on social media. The NBA's stance is that consumers want to share the content, and it is free advertising for the sport. The examples of this are how teams help create sharable content, short videos and posts, and the league in general also creates content instead of blocking or disabling the content created by fans. The NBA has a synergistic relationship with technology in that it helps the league be discussed in the media and create content to fill media shows.

The NBA has certain advantages over other sports when it comes to supporting the activity with technology.

“Almost every consequential basketball play can be distilled into the sort of short embeddable video that thrives on Twitter. Dunks, shots, behind-the-back passes, crossovers, glances at celebrities sitting courtside, these can all be easily turned into an animated gif or a six second loop. In early December, the NBA celebrated its

billionth Vine loop, not just the first sports league, but the first organization of any sort to do so. Basketball stats are easily compressible into 140 characters, as is a photo of a player's new sneakers.” (Neely-Cohen, 2016).

These bite-sized pieces of content are easy to share and consume online while watching or not watching NBA basketball. What is lost with some technological utopian views is that NBA twitter represents around 1% of all NBA fans, these are a subset of the most impassioned fans who are the most vociferous. Their success of having more vine loops than any other organization is made up multiple technological as well as cultural settings that differentiate the NBA from other sports.

The main difference in legal terms on twitter is how game replays are censored by other leagues while shared freely on twitter.

“You probably know the move I’m talking about, even if you don’t follow the sport. You’ve seen it scrolling by in your Instagram or Twitter feed hash tagged #🏀, or you’ve seen a six-second Vine loop of it. Six seconds, by the way, also happens to be the perfect length to capture a breakaway dunk or a screen that frees a shooter for a long-range three-pointer. The high points of basketball are eminently shareable, and the NBA has allowed that sharing ecosystem to blossom—in contrast to other leagues. Last October, for instance, the NFL sent over a dozen takedown notices to Twitter, asking the service to remove GIFs and videos of game action posted by Deadspin, Gawker Media’s sports blog. Twitter responded by not

only removing the material but also suspending the account. Similarly, MLB issues takedown notices when game highlights are posted. While both leagues are within their legal rights, the question is whether that's smart business" (McClusky, 2016).

The current NBA Commissioner Adam Silver has remarked before that the free sharing of small clips drives more people to attend games, watch them live through TV broadcasts, or NBA League Pass. While other leagues might censor the sharing of highlight and clips, the NBA often encourages their fans and teams to share as much content as possible.

"Of course, the NBA has media partners paying many billions to broadcast games, and Silver is clear that he wants social media to supplement but not replace the live-watching experience. (The NBA also has a new partnership with Verizon in which clip-sharing can be done with high-grade video.) 'The games are the meals and the highlights are the snacks,' Silver said. 'And we encourage our fans to snack before meals. But the meals are pristine and the meals live behind a paywall'" (Gay, 2015).

The NBA itself uses social media to grow their fan base, but also to directly market their players to fans in ways that were impossible years ago.

"For me, it's brought the NBA closer. When I was a kid, significant tracts of the basketball landscape were unfamiliar to me. I could read about it, and occasionally see highlights, but some of the best NBA stars resembled distant celestial events—George Gervin in San Antonio, for example," (Gay, 2015).

This mirrors the larger change in how sports media has changed over time. In the past, the NBA finals were not broadcast on television at all, then only broadcast on tape delay. Many sports fans read newspapers for information on players and teams that they could not see live. Now through League Pass and basketball twitter, there is a way for people to see most highlights of games either live or the next day.

“The classification of markets as ‘big’ or ‘small’ seems like hoary thinking; an audience can find you anywhere,” (Gay, 2015). The point on “big” or “small” markets still affects player’s decisions on where to play, but less on how much money they can make in advertising in national campaigns. Russell Westbrook has a national spotlight in the “small” Oklahoma City market and continues to have national commercial endorsements.

Echoing Chuck Klosterman’s and Bill Simmons arguments about league relevance is how much NBA players are talked about. While NBA twitter represents a small section of NBA fans, national media programs that talk about multiple sports also follow the news, drama, personality of NBA players. Bill’s point might be that younger generations will know these players and the NBA, more than other players, and that might directly affect future media coverage and advertising deals.

6.1.2 Youth culture

The evidence of the NBA relating more to young people is to follow the change in age demographic over time. The NBA is replacing their older fans with new young fans over time. This is evidenced in how many young fans follow the sport, certain stars, and use social media to discuss this sport over other sports and entertainment.

Twitter and the NBA had cultural overlap years ago before the NBA's current level of professional involvement with social media.

“Kweku points out that there is an obvious initial reason for the NBA's Twitter success, that both ‘their core audiences are younger and blacker than the general population,’” (Neely-Cohen, 2016).

NBA players and fans, who are both younger and black than the general population, gravitated towards twitter to share opinion of players and teams in real-time.

The different cultures of the NBA, NFL, and MLB can be tied to the ages of their fans.

Fewer fans – and they're getting older

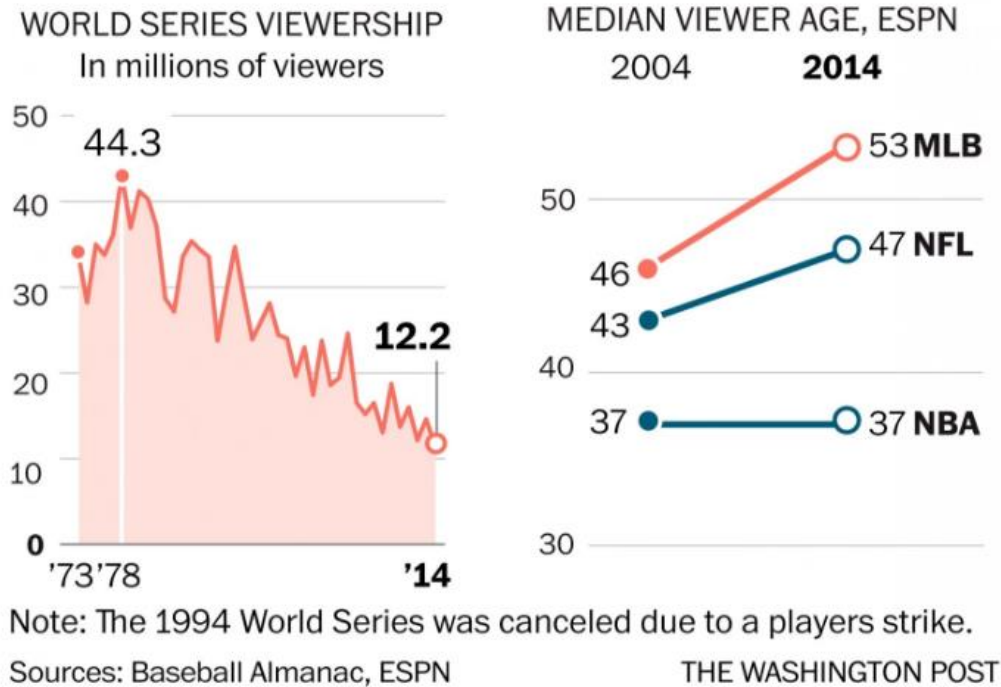


Chart from 'Baseball is struggling to hook kids — and risks losing fans to other sports' (Fisher, 2015).

Over a ten-year period, the MLB and NFL's fans ages have increased, meaning that MLB and NFL fans are getting older while not attracting young fans. The NBA in relation has attracted young fans at a similar rate that they lose older fans.

For specific reasons for these changes there are broad social issues around fans and different age groups. One story from a fan who follows multiple sports came from Lana Berry's podcast with Myles Brown (Berry, 2015). Lana Berry is known more for baseball and described physically going to baseball games as a great way to hang out with other people, eat and drink, pay a small amount of attention to the game. Myles Brown

responded that baseball is too slow, he doesn't know any of the players, and it seems better on TV than in person. For each fan of a sport, they have different ways to consume the sport, different venues, alone or in a group, for different amounts of time. And overall these different activities speak to different cultures and different age groups.

Bill Simmons Chuck Klosterman Podcast from 3-16-16

Bill Simmons and Chuck Klosterman were both in their early to mid-forties when they recorded this podcast. They were talking in general about baseball and basketball culture. What is important to note is how they are also generalizing about younger fans while also reporting their own viewing habits.

Bill Simmons podcast with Chuck Klosterman

“Bill Simmons: The baseball... when you look at basketball and how the guys kinda market themselves and just how fun the NBA has become from an internet standpoint. And let's face it, for people under 30, under 25, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat are a huge way of how everyone communicates in those two generations. [In baseball] they seem to frown upon expression.

Chuck Klosterman: But I feel like they have a loyal fan base. Do they have to be as big as football and as big as the NBA to succeed? I don't so. I mean, why can't they sort of occupy the space and the culture that they do? Why is that not enough? I don't get it.

Bill Simmons: The fundamental problem... is that you have all these under-25 people who are now going to eventually be the people who buy tickets and buy

League Pass and do all the things that baseball's gonna need to stay at the level it's at and I don't know if they're developing those fans. And like 15 years ago my dream in my life was to have Red Sox season tickets. I couldn't have imagined anything better. I would never want to go to 81 baseball games now. Would you want to go to 81 baseball games?

Chuck Klosterman: Well no, I wouldn't" (Simmons, 2016).

Media deals driving salaries, pace of games, also what is dominating the conversation. During march madness or the MLB playoffs casual fans are tuning into games for the drama.

Bill made a point about local TV deals and how that impacts salaries for MLB players, local TV deals can sell thousands of hours of programming with the number of games baseball plays.

Chuck made the point about size and relevance of each sport, does it really matter, if this sport becomes more or less popular, will they eventually become niche sports. Chuck brought up Nascar and bull riding as being inherently dangerous, people will often die, the audience is ok with that and keeps watching. Casual fans drawn into football are horrified at the concussions, the injuries, and are turned off. There is a dichotomy of casual fans drawn in with fantasy football betting, and then turned away by athlete protests, the pace of the game, and injuries.

In the future, laws on sports gambling, and future TV deals could impact which sports are more popular, but like Chuck says, there will still be a loyal fan base for some sports, they might just be smaller and more niche.

6.1.3 Technology and League Pass

The evidence of that NBA's progressive stance on technology is how much money is invested in new media ventures that use new technologies. The best example is league pass, a streaming service to watch games that are not televised on local or national channels. This technology allows fans over the world to keep up with not only their local team, but the whole league. This gives NBA fans even more live content to consume for entertainment.

Technology allows for fans to have multiple ways to consume and support different leagues, especially the NBA. Most leagues are on TV, have some streaming options, but the NBA more than other leagues uses twitter to support their fans, players, and media consumption and production of content. League pass allows fans of teams to watch games that might be blacked out in their area. This is most useful for fans that move cities but still want to keep up with their home team, or rabid NBA fans who want to watch not only their home team if they have a strong affiliation, but also teams and games that are not broadcast on national TV.



Here Amin points out that for league pass to be successful, people must want to watch a random game that is not on national television. In the above example there was a winning streak on the line and since this game was not nationally broadcast, the only way to consume this game was on league pass. In many ways, the way that the NBA negotiates

television deals directly impacts player salaries but also money for advertising, and fan prices to watch games. In a similar way Chuck and Bill were discussing leagues, the NBA itself would like to grow its fan bases, make more money for their players, and sell advertising to their sponsors. These are always in flux as deals expire, as more young fans are cutting their cable cord and selectively following sports leagues. And again, League Pass is for a small percentage of overall NBA viewers while on NBA twitter, the ability of following multiple games and switching back and forth is only available to League Pass subscribers. One possible future are fans that consume games primarily through twitter, and not through television, or only through a streaming option tied to a second screen experience, changing how sports are consumed.

“Both the nature of reporting and fandom have already been irrevocably changed by Twitter, as has the ability for an individual athlete to market themselves. Yet social media platforms can rise and fall with great speed and little warning. Several times this past year the future of Twitter was questioned by both tech journalists and investors. If technology changes or evolves into something not so inherently favorable to the NBA, it is reasonable to wonder whether the NBA will be able to adapt,” (Neely-Cohen, 2016).

Technology companies also come and go with the times. They will not all be here forever and like print journalism versus advertising supported blogs, they will evolve over time. If the underlying technologies fail for various reasons, other technologies should rise to take their place. This will be discussed more in the next section on how the NBA reacts to change and receives feedback from fans.

NBA owners from technology and financial companies bring a different kind of culture with them, one of more rapid development and experimentation. Steve Ballmer, former CEO of Microsoft, and others represent this change, and the appetite for the league, comprised of the 30 majority and minority ownership groups to experiment.

“Ballmer says the NBA has supported his drive to experiment. Another league, like the National Football League—the \$13 billion behemoth that dominates the American sports landscape—might not have. “There’s no local broadcast for the NFL, so how do you experiment?” Ballmer says. “They’re in very good shape, but because everything is national, they have to think about tests and experimentation differently. Baseball has many games and local TV, but most baseball viewers are over 55. That’s maybe not the crowd you want to experiment with” (McClusky, 2016).

Each league deals with their experimentations differently. Most have experiments with social media, to grow their fan base, serve different segments of fans, or serve the league or advertisers, all with varying levels of success. What mirrors Bill and Chuck’s conversation is how some leagues dominate the national or casual conversation, and how other leagues become popular, and within each fan group there are those that care about their overall national popularity, and those that care about their niche status in sports fandom.

6.2 Local Community and Team Support

6.2.1 Community Bond

Basketball twitter feels like a community since fans from different teams can consume and discuss their fandom in real time with fans from cities across the US and across the world. This community bond is evidenced in interviews with fans and social media managers who bring up the positive aspect of having a community of like-minded individuals, interested in basketball, that are watching along with others, creating less a solitary entertainment environment to a group entertainment environment.

Twitter is made up of disparate and occasionally overlapping subgroups and subcultures. For example, there are local political twitter, local city events, national political accounts, breaking news, and sports. Each of these communities can be strengthened by following others that have a similar interest. In the way Kweku (Neely-Cohen, 2016) described the entry to basketball twitter as following basketball, writing about it, and following others that share that interest, the community that might start around a sports team could spill over into local politics, community news, and fan activities outside of sports.

Amara Baptist on NBA Twitter, “NBA Twitter is THE BEST. It’s the greatest because they (we?) don’t miss a game. I can always count on NBA Twitter to bring me a Vine or video of a huge dunk by Russell Westbrook or a horrible sequence by the Sixers within SECONDS... it’s truly incredible. It’s also a community. We all know each other and we bond over our love for the sport. I can only see it getting better because the NBA is one of the only leagues that isn’t strict on vines or video

policies. That makes the content more accessible, easier to share, and more viral,” (Brumleve, 2016).

The community aspect of basketball twitter is that for the most part, each fan at least wants to talk about the same subject, of basketball. There might be negative comments from fans, but even these comments are for the most part from the fanatic point of view, from fans that care so much about their own team. The bond from this community is in the relationships formed from following and knowing the same people, year after year online.

“It definitely has become a community,” Milwaukee based fan @rachaelhoops told me, “It’s become near impossible [for me] to not tweet during games. There is something comforting and just plain fun about looking at my timeline and seeing every single person I follow freaking out about a play. It’s as if you aren’t watching the game alone—you’re watching with thousands of other people. And I think the reason it continues to grow in popularity is because reporters, beat writers, and the players themselves, respond and react to tweets. That has probably been the funniest part for me and the reason I stay: Interacting with the players,” (Neely-Cohen, 2016).

These relationships that have formed over years, are from reporters, fans, and players who follow and interact with each other in the community. Players also react with each other publicly through twitter, something that adds to the behind the scenes nature of social media. The fun and comfort from participating in basketball twitter is the focus of

the community. During a game, everyone is sharing the experience. It is what makes this a giant virtual sports bar, is that where there is excitement, an exciting play, or a close game, that experience is shared with thousands of other people, amplifying the tension and excitement. That might be a practice that keeps people coming back, is that shared excitement, and shared experience.

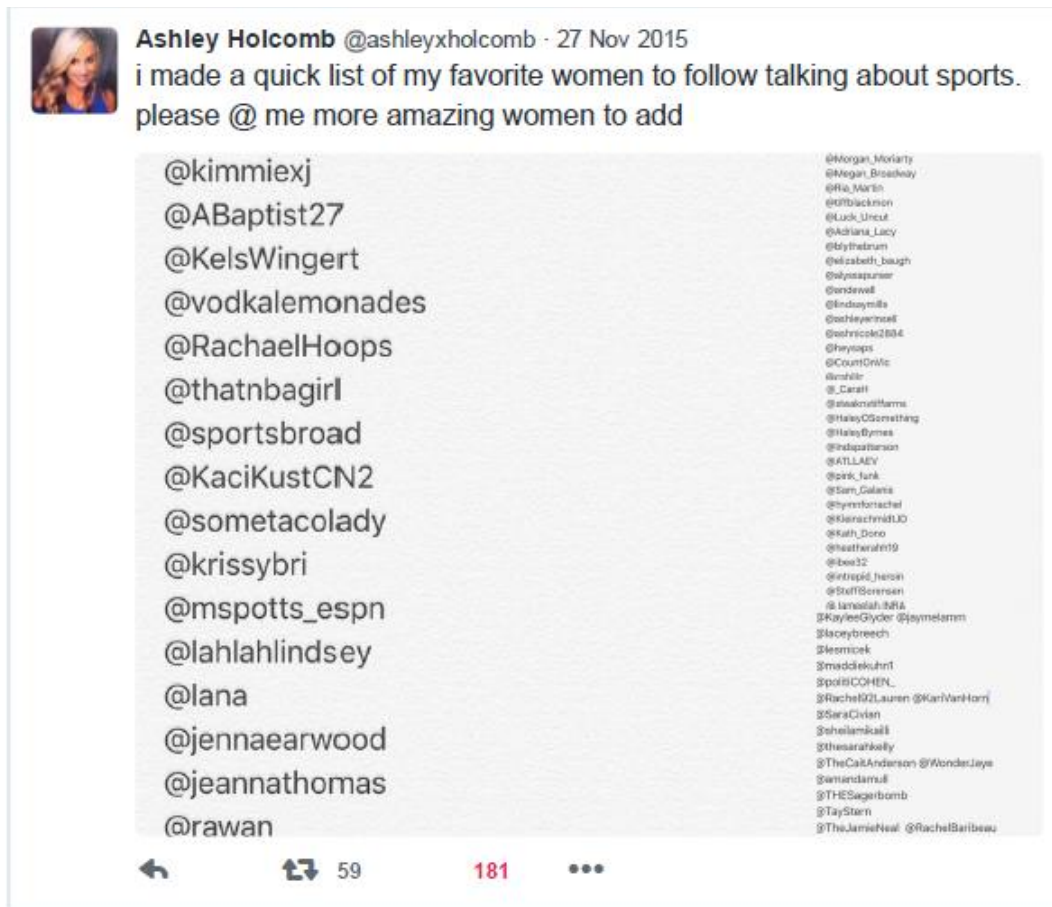
6.3 Women's Support

6.3.1 Women Supporting other Women

Women are in the minority of NBA fans on twitter and go out of their way to support each other to combat the negative sexist behaviors of men on twitter. These information practices include support of women in the media, sharing and linking to stories and sharing lists of other women to follow. Visibility of female fans and media members is important to growing female participation in sports media.

Positives for female fans includes finding other female fans online while it is more difficult to find them face to face. Support from other female fans might negate the trolling and bullying from the majority male audience of NBA fans. Growing the fan base and sharing more women that follow the NBA is one growth factor. Supporting each other when trolled or assaulted online as well. Marketing towards female fans from basketball 101 to ladies' night events to online groups. Also, just having female reporters and coaches, and role models for girl NBA fans.

The first step towards noticing and promoting minorities in a straight while male dominated environment is to notice minorities such as females and promote and follow as many as possible. The web of basketball twitter is such that people who are tweeting about the same things can follow each other. Many female basketball fans have pointed this out in how they met other fans in their communities.



Ashley and others have made lists of women in sports to follow who are fans, journalists, or bloggers in multiple sports. Other women will add to these lists and often promote each other's work and success. The only way to see conversations that women have with each other is to follow both parties originally. This can change the demographics of basketball twitter with more people following a more diverse population.

6.3.2 Women Speaking up about Sports

By first sharing women supporting other women, more men and sports fans in general will follow more women on twitter. This also creates a positive moment of having more female role models and more female points of view on sports issues. Having more women's voices helps make sexist how-to guides or similar marketing stand out in stark relief. These are a few examples of women speaking up on their role in sport media, and how to improve the situation for all women.

Amara Baptist on how the landscape for women in sports has changed, "I absolutely think things have changed for the better for women who love sports. There have been many strides in the past year including Jessica Mendoza being the 1st female announcer of a baseball game, Becky Hammon with the Spurs, Nancy Lieberman with the Kings, Stephanie Ready with the Hornets etc. Obviously there will be ignorant comments about going "back into the kitchen" (which is SO unoriginal BTW, like think of a new insult), but I think overall people are becoming more open to women taking a bigger role in sports. I think what needs to happen is for women to keep speaking up about sports and just enjoy themselves. I follow so many incredible women on Twitter who are much more knowledgeable than some men that I follow. Women in sports also need to continue to support one another. We're all in this together and the more we bring each other up the higher we all will rise," (Brumleve, 2016).

Amara points out the few women that work in the NBA as announcers and coaches for NBA teams and their affiliates. There are also the women that work as journalists and

side line reporters that are just as important in terms of representation. Women such as Amara also work as the social media managers, in charge of teams of people who manage an NBA's social media responsibilities.

She brings up harassment but also the possibility of women taking a larger role in sports. Finding and following others through lists like Ashley makes or organically by seeing a post that is shared by someone and following the original poster. The advice to support each other is important that not letting the negative attention with trolls force someone out of the community and instead support women speaking up and speaking out about sport.

Amara Baptist on growing the percentage of female fans, "I think there's a really fine line between appealing to women who might not like sports and being condescending. We don't need "how to's" or "guides" about different sports, but marketing certain things like Ladies Night before a game or something would encourage female fans to associate sports as another thing they can do with their female friends. But honestly if you don't like sports, you don't like sports! They're not for everyone (male or female) and that's ok," (Brumleve, 2016).

Amara points out to not to make condescending guides to sports in the way NFL teams in the past have had football 101 guides with the basics of the game and everything in pink. That might be condescending while a lady's night or an activity that includes both genders equally would encourage female fans to attend games and support each other. There are multiple instances of women meeting other fans through games, through

twitter, and supporting each other, even though moves from one city to the next. Kacy Sager, who works with Turner Broadcasting for the NCAA final four pointed out that most commercials for basketball fans show a male fan wanting to go to the game or watching the game, while his female partner shows no interest in sport. She points out that there is not one commercial where the genders are flipped, and the female is more a sport fan than the male. Small changes in gendered media representation in sport can go a long way in supporting female fans.

CHAPTER 7 LESS INVOLVMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

RQ2. Which of the serious leisure information practices identified in RQ1, which practices promote a more involvement and engagement, and less involvement and engagement in the community?

The practices that promote less involvement and engagement include:

Dominant culture practices against minorities

Homophobic or racist topics

Culture of anonymity in social media

Definition of terms

1. **Dominant culture** which target women and minorities from sexist or racist accounts, leading to women and minorities leaving basketball twitter. Female fans and media members try and block and mute accounts or ignore them altogether. Sexist behaviors and remarks include common insults, as well as threats of violence.
2. **Homophobic or racist topics** such as homophobic remarks, racist remarks, criticism from fans about teams and players that cross a line of acceptable behavior online. Homophobic slurs used during games, and online to discuss that incident. The private lives of celebrities and players talked about on social media.

Specific minorities and the insults about their race from fans. The media also reflects on how light skin and dark skin African American players are discussed.

3. **Culture of anonymity** that allows sexism in general from common insults, death threats, responses or non-responses to problems, comments from anonymous accounts, and harassment from other women through social media. There are often little to no responses from twitter or police officials from sexual harassment on social media. Sexist articles and points of view also are shared without thought towards harassment. Media reflect on how twitter in general talks about women as objects. Women point out how when they bring up instances of harassment, they are thought of as looking for attention. Female fans eventually leave due to harassment from anonymous sources online.

7.1 Dominant culture

Dominant culture which target women and minorities from sexist or racist accounts, leading to women and minorities leaving basketball twitter. Female fans and media members try and block and mute accounts or ignore them altogether. Sexist behaviors and remarks include common insults, as well as threats of violence.

7.1.1 Sexist Behaviors

The sexist behaviors that are most visible on basketball twitter come from men expressing a sexist viewpoint, receiving slight pushback, and then reinforcing their own negative and sexist viewpoint even more. The primary example is with Free Darko, a writer who suggest a woman should be beaten to death. Many fellow writers did not call him out on this suggestion, and women instead called him out and discussed among themselves how men did not call him out over this. From their point of view this is a common occurrence.

In general, the negative practices come with having some anonymity on twitter. It is not tied to your identity as much as Facebook but also not as little as 4chan or reddit. There a lot of egg, or dog avatar lurkers who only follow a few accounts or someone who made an account just to yell at someone. This is also related to the negative actions on twitter such as muting, deleting, blocking accounts or words, and the community policing available or unavailable to users.

This was a great example of most basketball twitter responding to someone in one way for most of their time on the site, and then a minority turning on them when they tweet

about a sensitive or underreported subject. Free Darko was and still is in some circles known in a positive light for his books and prints on the basketball jones.

Bethlehem Shoals @freedarko, “I don’t care how many children Pat Smith lost I would like to beat her to death.” This was in response to the Republican National Committee and Pat Smith the woman who lost her son in Benghazi. This was during the live RNC meeting and with major political events, basketball twitter turned its attention to live political news. His above tweet was scanned and passed over by many, except for a few who called out his literal attack on a woman. Then instead of immediately deleting that tweet, Free Darko defended his stance with subsequent tweets. Carter Rodriguez @Carter_Shade, “nothing like painting yourself in a corner and DOUBLING DOWN, BABY.”

The following is representative in how a minority, in this case women, discuss the majority view point on basketball twitter, in this case basketball writers.

Lindsay Mills “did people call him out? I’m super behind.”

Ashley Holcomb “a lot of women did like always”

Lindsay Mills “and men sat by silently not wanting to call out another writer, I assume?”

Ashley Holcomb



This will also be discussed later, but the point that men sat by silently is correct in that few men directly called him out, and none of his basketball writing male peers spoke out that that kind of threat is unwarranted.

Bethlehem Shoals @freedarko responded, “Guys I’m sorry if that was in poor taste of me but that Pat Smith speech made my blood boil and was frankly exploitative of tragedy.” He later issued a semi-apology stating that he should stop before he gets “Twitter arrested”. He was advised to delete that tweet before his account is suspended and he did delete only the original tweet. His account was protected or “locked” as you can see with the lock icon next to his user name. This is often done so that no one can share or retweet their content for a short while. The main takeaway of this incident is how minorities who

are offended by racist and sexist remarks are often ignored by many users who see no problem with hateful outbursts.

7.1.2 Blocking and Muting on Twitter

Blocking and muting users effectively blocks interactions from those accounts reaching the user that creates the block or mute. There are still organizational issues of using blocking and muting to silence trolls who can still create new accounts to troll. These are issues that Twitter in general deals with concerning trolls who spout racist or hateful speech. Twitter creates the onus on the victim to report and police abuse since there are not enough human monitors to flag sexist or violent speech. The mechanisms for reporting and blocking accounts is also cumbersome and does not always fix the issue.

Twitter is a majority public place where most users can follow anyone they want or even if they don't follow someone can reply or insert themselves into a conversation. Because of this, certain functionality exists to exclude or block certain users from being able to see other users. Muting is where one user can still follow a user but will not see their feeds. Blocking is where the offending user can no longer follow the user or see their tweets in their feed. There are different practices around muting and blocking users. On the Starters podcast, Leigh said he likes blocking them unblocking someone right away to get them to stop following you, but they don't notice that you're gone. When you are blocked you can tell in the account that you are blocked from viewing or interacting with that

individual. Muting is less direct; users do not know if they are being muted or simply ignored. Muting as a function was in direct response to some users having trouble blocking multiple accounts from troll or harassing accounts.

Jonathan @Jonatha66595563, “I hate the sound of your voice but you’re hot.” Which Kristen Ledlow @KristenLedlow responds, “...you can always mute your TV, as I’ve now muted your tweets.” Here Kristen Ledlow, after getting a sexist remark, says they have muted their tweets. It is also rare to publicly state if you are blocking or muting someone as giving attention to trolls is often what they want.

Bean @Heens4, “who care what @coachthorepe thinks? he has a flimsy (at best) hoops resume and is a joke in league circles.” Haralabos Voulgaris @haralabob responds, “#blocked.” Haralabos is blocking someone who is making a joke about a coach in basketball twitter. This is also present when women block men from sexual harassment comments, often the woman is called out for the blocking and muting behavior. Trolls can also create multiple accounts to send harassing messages to get around blocking and muting behavior.

7.2 Homophobic and Racist Topics

Homophobic and racist topics such as homophobic remarks, racist remarks, criticism from fans about teams and players that cross a line of acceptable behavior online.

7.2.1 Rajon Rondo and Bill Kennedy

Evidence of homophobia in Rajon Rondo and Bill Kennedy issue. Rondo was found guilty of saying a homophobic slur during a game where he called the referee Bill Kennedy a motherfucking faggot. The way media and twitter reacted and reported on it did not always censor the homophobic slur. Rondo was also defended in not knowing Bill Kennedy was gay and the issue was made seem like business as usual by certain accounts. The discussion over gay hate speech was debated on twitter at that time.

“ON DEC. 3, moments after the final horn in Mexico City, Kennedy wasn't half as annoyed at Rajon Rondo for calling him a "motherfucking faggot" in the third quarter as he was at the damn Wi-Fi in the referees' locker room at Arena Ciudad de Mexico.

After Kennedy had whistled Rondo's Kings teammate DeMarcus Cousins for a foul on Jae Crowder, Rondo had badgered Kennedy. "That's not a fucking foul," he'd barked at Kennedy twice. When Rondo persisted, Kennedy assessed him a second technical and an ejection, after which Rondo stalked Kennedy, yelling after him, "You're a motherfucking faggot. You're a faggot, Billy," according to the league's report.” (Arnovitz, 2016).

There was turmoil in the suspension of Rondo because it was not known publicly that Kennedy was gay and that should impact the suspension. A few days after Kennedy came out publicly on a statement on Yahoo Sports.

Amin Elhassan @AminESPN, “Not to be insensitive, but I didn’t know Billy Kennedy was in the closet to begin with.” Amin mentions this open secret as those that who work in basketball knew that Bill Kennedy was gay. Later, on twitter one subject came up, did Rondo know Bill was gay? And should that impact who he calls a gay slur?

How the incident was covered was also discussed as meta topic on basketball twitter.

Kevin Arnovitz in a previous section mentioned how as a gay man, when he sees homophobic language used on twitter, he just automatically ignores it and moves on. In some similar way women unfortunately get used to seeing harassment online, people are conditioned to take abusive language for granted. Greg Wissinger @gwiss, “Defending Rondo’s actions is defending homophobia. I’m not going to stand for it. Don’t bring it into my mentions.”



Greg Wissinger and Ashley Holcomb both pointed out that faggot was not censored in stories about the slur while motherfucker was censored. There is also the fine point of defending homophobia in relation to defending Rondo as player. Some fans “stan” or become super fans of players, often ignoring their faults and only seeing that player as perfect. Rondo stans would often bring up his assist numbers, or championship with Boston, in a way deflecting over his homophobic remarks. In a similar way to Kobe Bryant and rape allegations in Colorado are not brought up by Kobe stans to preserve Kobe only in a positive light.

7.2.2 Soap Opera Aspects of Swaggy and Iggy

Evidence of the soap opera aspects include how the issue of a team mate leaking a video where another team mate admits to cheating on his fiancé is leaked. The issue was covered, and sexist views exposed that blamed the woman, or ignored the cheating to focus on basketball issues only.

The next incident in question happened in late March 2016 as teammates Nick Young and D’Angelo Russell were resting in a hotel room during a road trip. D’Angelo asked Nick Young if he cheated on his then fiancé Iggy Azelea and Nick Young admitted that he did, unaware he was being filmed. The video leaked online, and Iggy Azelea later broke up with Nick Young, after posting a message on twitter acknowledging the incident. The topic was discussed for days on sports, news shows, and basketball twitter

included basketball related topics such as discord in the locker room and the future for Nick Young and D'Angelo Russell in relation to the Lakers, their team at the time.

Rachel G. @Rachel92Lauren, "Why does the NBA feel more like an E! reality show than s sports league lately? Rachel here points out that the NBA and basketball twitter's handling of the news can cross over into the reality TV realm. At this time Nick Young had already appeared on various reality TV shows. The way that the incident was covered in a 24/7 news cycle seemed to attract even more attention to this particular case.

Teammates on the Lakers were interviewed, players from other teams were asked what they thought about the incident, and pundits speculated on what would happen next for each of the players involved.

Frances Wang @ABC10Frances, "Kehlani cheats on Kyrie (EX as he said) & the Internet attacks her. Nick cheats on Iggy (FIANCE) & the Internet attacks D'Angelo Russell."

Frances Wang here mentions the double standard of ignoring or defending the person at fault, often the non-NBA player. This makes sense in that on NBA twitter, NBA players are often given the benefit of the doubt when it comes to cheating. Zach Lowe mentioned that cheating happens all the time, leaked confession videos do not, and that is what brought so much attention to the Nick and D'Angelo case. Basketball twitter made more jokes and attacks toward D'Angelo for snitching or exposing Nick's cheating, than Nick for cheating. This shows basketball twitter's allegiances towards excusing cheating and blaming women for these problems. The casual sexist remarks of what women wear, slut shaming, and excusing cheating are a few of the cultural traits of a mostly male basketball twitter environment.

7.2.3 Jeremy Lin

Evidence of Jeremy Lin and casual racism on NBA team pages. Not only from anonymous users and trolls but using racist terminology permeated NBA sanctioned publications on a team's page. The Hornets, Jeremy Lin's team included the phrase "oriental fan" a racist term to praise their new player. Oversights are common when different cultures do not see terms that are racist. The NBA is also the parent organization and looked to remedy such situations.

The quote on the Charlotte Hornets' page, "The Jeremy Lin impact was evident as a lot of oriental fans were present to support their Harvard Prodigy, giving a new feel to the Charlotte-Style Linsanity!" Alex @steven_lebron, "shouts to the NBA having an article on their site with the term 'oriental fans.'" Alex @steven_lebron, "anyways, just emailed someone at the league office. I guess this is the hill I've chosen to die on." Pro Hoops History @ProHoopsHistory replies, "A damn good hill. It's the equivalent of the NBA saying how excited it's 'negro' fans are."

This is a small example of casual racist language that is often overlooked from different NBA cities. The Charlotte Hornets are in North Carolina and are partly owned by Michael Jordan. New York and Houston, where Jeremy Lin has previously played have

large Asian American populations, unlike Charlotte. Alex pointed out that an article on the Hornets official NBA page should not include a racist slur of oriental fans. Curtis Harris who runs Pro Hoops History and is a history scholar, compared this to how the NBA would be excited about “negro” fans.

With this and other incidents, it usually takes someone who is from the minority, here Alex is Asian, to point out something that might be overlooked by the majority white writers for NBA teams. Each team is also a separate entity, while the NBA oversees each of them, they are run by their own general managers and have separate business and basketball operations, each of which are institutions with their own local culture.

7.2.4 Steph Curry and Skin Tone

Evidence of Steph Curry and skin tone is presented in discussions that journalists and media members have about NBA players and the different ways they are represented in the media. Media members with critical race backgrounds point out the difference in how front office members, basketball marketers, and other players reference light skin and dark skin African American players. Their examples are points of views that have heard from those in NBA circles about how different players with different skin colors are treated, marketed, and talked about.

Kevin Arnovitz and Pablo Torre podcast “What Steph Curry Means” (Arnovitz & Torre, 2016)

Kevin Arnovitz, “Is he safe?” Kevin asks this question about Steph Curry, comparing it to someone like Allen Iverson, who was covered in tattoos, who dressed differently.

Kevin also says the cultural overlap of Steph vs LeBron’s social media channels is stark in their differences. Steph and his wife, Ayesha Curry’s Instagram accounts and YouTube channels are rated G. They are having breakfast, since Ayesha is a professional cook, and they both are devout Christians, which makes it safe for everyone from mostly religious America to consume. LeBron’s culture overlaps with basketball fans who smoke weed, listen to rap music, and are non-religious.

Pablo also bring ups, “I was talking to a GM in this league who hypothesized one of the reasons that James Harden was not nearly as popular as Steph Curry was the darkness of both his skin tone and the activities that he seemed to be enjoying.” This means that skin color could be a direct impact on a star’s marketability to the wider rated G audience, than James Harden who has dated a Kardashian and been on TMZ in the past.

Kevin, “Steph is part of the God squad, he is very devoted to his faith, and I don’t know what religious bearings LeBron James has... in terms of lifestyle, a term I hate, this is where Steph lives and where LeBron doesn’t.” Looking at different cultures through what makes people different, even if they are both basketball superstars. Stephen Jackson often says that the NBA is not a fraternity where everyone gets along.

Kevin points out, “This idea that skin tone, in the HS cafeteria, skin tone governs alliances, I can neither prove nor disprove but it is something that has been suggested to me more than once.” This seems to be a basic idea in sociology of subgroups within a larger group. In no other workplace is it expected for everyone to be best friends or share the same homogenous culture. NBA players might have shared cultures because of the regions of the world they come from, the leagues they played in, the languages they speak, and the religions or politics they follow. It would be misguided to see them as a homogenous product and not as the culturally diverse spectrum they are.

7.3 Culture of Anonymity

Culture of anonymity that allows sexism in general from common insults, death threats, responses or non-responses to problems, comments from anonymous accounts, and harassment from other women through social media.

Feminism and feminist responses mean different things to different people. Some on basketball twitter take the cover my eyes and ignore it, hear no evil, see no evil, or this is a huge problem that is getting worse.

By following more women produced content is to see what kinds of sexist harassment occurs on basketball twitter and what some responses can be. Sharon Shy Brown, @sharonshybrown on twitter, pointed out how it's great for women to make their own media, including women working in the league, for female fans to combat sexism.

7.3.1 Insults and Responses

Evidence of insults and responses include threats of violence against women. The inability of twitter to do anything about unsolicited images of a penis being sent to women with no ramifications. The evidence of systemic issues in that this is a common occurrence for women and men have limited means to step in to stop harassment. The system itself of twitter reinforces sexism and makes it easy for attackers to harm women.

Negative messages that women get range from get back into the kitchen to I want to kill you, or you should be raped. Even Caitlin said a fan once told her he wanted to punch her

in the face. The amount of casually mentioned hate and violence and jokes about women or to women leads some women to never join in the first place, leave the community, or not bring up these incidents when they happen for fear of the backlash, or for messages saying they are looking for attention. A positive reaction to these negative messages includes following more women on twitter and supporting those that do post to create a more positive environment. The problem is that with more attention come more trolls and users that will harass anyone, especially the female minority on twitter.

Rachael @RachaelHoops, “only got told to kill myself twice today. Nice.” Rachael’s exchange is a common insult, and often comes with no consequences for the anonymous male user who posts the threat of physical violence. Rachael @RachaelHoops, “*girl posts something about basketball* twitter: kill yourself you fucking slut.”

This type of fan interactions finally caused Rachaelhoops to leave twitter and only use Instagram to share public information about her basketball fandom. In other social media sites, Bumble is attempting to correct for this problem in the dating world by only permitting women to start a chat with their male matches in heterosexual matches, while in same-sex matches, either party can message first. These ways of correcting abuse at the foundational aspect of the application is something that twitter has not tried.



This is a systemic, institutional, and cultural problem with twitter and other social media sites. There are some tweets that are reported to the police and taken seriously and those that twitter does not take seriously, and they fall along typical male female, majority minority lines.

Conrad Kaczmarek @ConradKaz, “We might not be able to eliminate every hateful, harassing comment that women face on the Internet or on the streets BUT we can do a

much better job supporting the women that we care about. Make sure that they know how much they're appreciated & respected." Conrad here points out something that most men on basketball twitter would agree with but still don't step in when harassing comments happen. Conrad argues that supporting women and letting them know how much they are appreciated and respected is a positive action that men can follow.

This is an argument supported by some of the "progressive" members of basketball twitter who support inviting more women on to basketball podcasts, and female reporters, and media members in their jobs.

7.3.2 Sexist Articles and POV

The evidence of articles written with sexist attitudes and points of view is in all the sexist articles written and only taken down when someone, usually a woman, points it out.

Women too reinforce the sexist point of view by agreeing with sexist views. For the harassers and attackers, twitter creates a system that helps and benefits them, while making it harder for the women who are attacked.

BlackSportsOnline @BSO, “LeBron Destroys Woman Who Thought She was Too Cute to Move (Video). Ladies don’t do this, you aren’t too pretty to get ran over. Lol.”

Rachael @RachaelHoops, “now this piece of shit is deleting his tweets.”

This article was brought to my attention by women on basketball twitter. The original article was from LeBron running into a woman sitting courtside who had to leave on a stretcher after being hit by LeBron as he was running out of bounds. The writer Black Sports Online rewrites the incident as a woman who thought she was too cute to move.

Aly @_brookealyss, “pay attention and move! Hope she’s alright ...also hope she learns her lesson. Man when I worked at NSU during football season... I was very careful on that sideline.”

Rachael @RachaelHoops responded, “‘learns her lesson’ lmao goodnight. I am done.”

Rachel points out that she expects this sort of behavior and commentary from men but also hears it from women saying she was trying to look cute. Aly here takes that stance that women who work on the sidelines of football games need to pay attention and move. That is a false analogy to a fan sitting courtside, and how football and basketball are two different sports where in football a fan cannot be runover by a player, while it does often happen in the NBA as fans sit right next to the court.

Khalassi @rawan, “women shouldn’t go to basketball games women shouldn’t smile women should breathe.”

Rawan points out the control that men and other women use as misogyny towards women in their comments of looking too cute or learning their lessons. This implies women are obsessed with their looks, are dumber than men, and shouldn’t attend NBA games or athletics at all. Or the implication that since she left on a stretcher, women are weaker than men.

Mavis beacon @vodka lemonades, “she left on a fucking stretcher but continue to be a misogynistic piece of shit.”

Mavis beacon @vodka lemonades, “Rachael retweeted me and now there’s a bunch of stupid men in my mentions.”

Rachael @RachaelHoops, “I DEAL WITH THIS EVERY DAY.”

Mavis here points out that BSO is a “misogynistic piece of shit” and more attention by being retweeted by another female, Rachael in this case, has caused more troll accounts from men to argue over this article. This shows how different women at different follower counts have different experiences with trolls and harassers. The general rule is the more followers the more trolls, even at a low percentage, trolls are often the most vociferous and voluminous tweeters.

7.3.3 How Basketball Twitter Talks about Women

Evidence of how basketball twitter talks about women is pointed out in this exchange between media members talking about how twitter talks about women as objects. It reflects a larger media dynamic that automatically puts women and minorities down while elevating men in positions of power. The evidence is in how often these issues arise and how some media members prefer not to bring up this issue and focus on basketball.

KA and Zach Lowe (Lowe, 2016)

Kevin Arnovitz and Zach Lowe were talking about if they were excited for the finals and anticipation for Game 7 but there was an incident with Ayesha Curry, Steph Curry’s wife, being made fun of on twitter.

Kevin Arnotivz, “There is this shaming HAHA mentality on twitter and it’s bullying. But I think there is also this second thing with Ayesha and it’s the way the male basketball twitter talks about women. And you see it in a Matt Barnes Derek Fisher incident you know, women are accessories or possessions, they are

very silly creatures. The next thing you know we are doing the compare and contrast with Savannah [Lebron James's wife]" (Lowe, 2016).

Kevin Arnovitz, "There is a very specific way that male twitter talks about women, male basketball twitter, and maybe I'm sensitized to it because I'm gay and when this happens I immediately get off at the next stop, like I just feel uncomfortable, like I feel my skin start to crawl. There is a collective male sports way men talk about women that makes me reflexivly feel uncomfortable. I'm not a political person, I don't have much politics really, I'm the furthest thing from a social justice warrior. Like you, I'm very excited for this game," (Lowe, 2016).

Kevin and Zach echo most of basketball twitter, especially journalists in their views on sexist practices. Kevin takes the point of view that it's a problem, it makes him uncomfortable, and as a gay man he might be more sensitive to it, but mostly is apolitical and wants to ignore it.

Zach Lowe, "Doesn't it annoy you a little bit? There's a basketball game that is going to happen. It's game 7," (Lowe, 2016). Zach is even less confrontational in his tone of sticking to the basketball and trying to ignore most of the off-court incidents, with all incidents, not just this Ayesha episode. The parallel to the Matt Barnes incident with the same woman as girlfriend and ex-wife is that the story is always about the men, the athletes, and not from the frame that identifies the woman or the power imbalance there.

Women are mentioned as accessories, possessions, or silly creatures like the woman who was too cute to move for LeBron James.

7.3.4 Looking for Attention

The evidence of looking for attention is in how often women are given the same few responses whenever they are attacked online. Boys will be boys, feeling insecure having their girlfriend around NBA players, or trying to marry an athlete for women working in the NBA are all tropes that are expressed by a section of men online towards all women working or participating in NBA twitter.

The topic of women looking for rich men to date has been discussed from both male and female points of view. From the male point of view Amin Elhassan brought up the case of Baller Alert, a forum online where women who are trying to date an NBA player can share information about the players likes and dislikes, where they are travelling, and how to message them. With Instagram direct messages and social media in general, the way NBA players interact and meet with women has also changed to more online than offline interactions.

Women who work in the industry must fight that stereotype that they want to be dating or married to an athlete. Amara Baptist said of her biggest pet peeve, “I think the biggest misconception about women working in sports is that they’re trying to ‘get wifed up by an athlete’. Sure this may be the case sometimes, but a generalization like that is so dumb and I wish people would stop thinking that,” (Brumleve, 2016).

Parappa Tha Trappa @GuyNamedTawanda, “Deep down most women I date are into the idea of a comedian but I’m pretty sure most of them just see it as a hobby.”

Megan Ann Wilson @shegotgame in response, “I somewhat know these feels. They love that I’m in sports but then get insecure about me being around athletes.”

Megan, who works as a stylist for NBA players, echoes Amara’s feeling that men are insecure of her spending time around athletes and feel that she is also a woman who wants to date or marry an NBA athlete.

7.3.5 Responses to Harassment

Evidence of specific responses of harassment include common responses to diminish calling out sexist or harassing message. The culture of casual sexual assault online creates the norm of harassment is natural, and anyone who points it out is looking for attention or part of the problem. The evidence that these issues for harassment are infrequently shared because of this stigma make the root problem even larger.

Infrequently women will publicly post some of the private or semi-private harassment messages they receive. Some women will engage in public debates about the harassment like Ashley does here.

Joe Cardoso @cright, “Men who have morals and respect need to pick the slackers up and show them what NOT to do. What if that was your kid.”

Ashley Holcomb @ashleyxholcomb in response, “what if it was your kid, sister, or mother... giving a shit about women shouldn’t involve this line of thinking.”

Her point is in response to a common male response of men should not harass because they have daughters, sisters, mothers, instead of caring for women should just be the default. Bill Simmons has been criticized of this view as well, saying that as a father of a daughter he is a feminist. What if he didn’t have a daughter, what about his wife, or the women that work for the Ringer, his website. Ashley is just pointing out that even with men who might have good intentions, they are not taking as hard and fast a rule as just treat all women with respect, regardless of your own line of thinking.

Jessica Luther @scATX, “I only very rarely anymore share examples of harassment [because] people generally blame you for acknowledging its existence.”

Ashley Holcomb @ashleyxholcomb, “I’ve been told I’m looking for attention in pointing it out.”

Jessica Luther looks at rape and domestic assault in college football and her podcast and book goes into detail about the whole process and the institutions that work for and against the victim. For instance, she will bring up the college police vs city police and their job regarding rape, the long process for women to come forward, how their story changes due to the trauma, and the difficulty in bringing these cases to court. From her point of view, there are larger systemic problems that create an environment for harassment online to exist and fester for a long time. She mentions that she rarely shares examples of harassment because people will blame her for acknowledging its existence. Ashley has been told she is looking for attention by pointing it out. This causes men to have the point of view that harassment does not exist since they only see a small fraction of the hateful content. Practices to shame those that share this content leads those women to share less, and for trolls to keep at their practices without repercussion. It also causes women to leave Twitter.

7.3.6 Fans Leaving after Harassment

Evidence of fans leaving includes multiple accounts from females who either leave twitter, delete their account, or create a new account after receiving too much harassment without addressing any of the issues. Women with many followers and women with few followers both suffer from these issues and twitter has not or is not able to address these issues for harassment of women.

There were two cases of women leaving basketball twitter. Here is an example from twitter losing a “high-profile power user” which means she had many followers and influence. This happens with medium and lower level female users; it is just not as widely reported.

BoobsRadly @BoobsRadley, “Bye for now. <3.”

Bruce Arthur @bruce_arthur, “Twitter loses a female, high-profile power user over not addressing harassment.”

RUSS BENGT\$ON @russbengtson, “Goddammit.”

In the case of Rachael and Caitlin, they simply stopped tweeting, deleted their account and have not been heard from on twitter since. Rachael still posts on Instagram at her personal account, similar content to her twitter content but is apparently more satisfied with Instagram’s privacy and community. Caitlin’s last few messages on twitter were about finding more friends to read books with on Goodreads and has not posted since. A few months after her last post a user did question where she went but with no response.

CHAPTER 8 GROUP POWER STRUCTURES

RQ3. How, and to what extent, if at all, are these information practices shaped by the power structure of different group interactions in this community?

The practices that are shaped by the power structure of different group interactions are:

1. **Insults and trolling** from fans, teams, and media
2. **Media relationships** from large to small media outlets, from local to national, and inter-media relationships
3. **Topics of power** such as race and analytics, casual vs hardcore fans, and statistics vs analysis
4. **Team power dynamics** which include power relationships between general managers, player created media, digital content brands, and social media managers.

Definition of terms

1. **Insults and trolling** from fans, teams, and media arise from power dynamics that exist between the different subgroups in basketball twitter. The specific groups and their power structures include media, fans, and teams.

The first group of information practices that show the power of groups are the insults and bullying behavior between fans, players, and media. Typical examples include insults for physical appearance, play style, writing, and access. These insults and trolling arise from the anonymous nature of twitter and the lack of anti-harassment features on twitter. Popularity of accounts also impacts the power dynamic and inequality between famous and non-famous accounts.

2. **Media relationships** from large to small media outlets, from local to national, and inter-media relationships include inter-media dynamics such as the relationship between local beat writers to national media, national media to other national media, and media with large followers stealing content from smaller media such as blogs.

Media relationships have power dynamics based on location, size of media outlet, number of followers, and different media cultures.

3. **Topics of power** such as race and analytics, casual vs hardcore fans, and statistics vs analysis. These are systematic problems that discuss two cultures with contrasting cultural prejudices. For example, in race and analytics, the idea of African Americans not interested in sports analytics is a systemic prejudice. These prejudices are debated on twitter by media and fans who disagree with the dominant culture.

The argument of racial power structures that exist within the basketball community are mixed in with arguments between advanced statistics and “old school” or “eye test” media and fans. Each sub culture of hardcore fans, fans of statistics, or fans of the “eye test” for players have their own values, beliefs, and norms and disagree on twitter. They use anecdotes, statistics, biases, and other rhetorical devices to argue for their own sub culture.

4. **Team power dynamics** which include power relationships between general managers, player created media, digital content brands, and social media managers. This power dynamic includes team representatives from the front office in general managers, players with how they circumvent traditional media, how brands approach the business side of basketball twitter, and how team social media managers run their brands.

Different groups in basketball twitter on the business side have different values and goals, such as getting their player the largest or best deal from a team or from a sponsor. These goals sometimes conflict with team goals or the culture of the team. These negotiations that used to happen behind the scenes are now reported on and discussed in public on twitter.

8.1 Insults, Trolls, and Bullying

Evidence of insults, trolls, and bullying include insults from player, fans, and media to each other group. The insults include topics such as appearance, talent, gender, sex, race, trolls, jokes, and traditional cyber bullying. There is also a spectrum of light-hearted jokes and banter, to personal attacks that some see as over the line. The agreed upon culture seems to be that any jokes are possible and if a joke is over the line it is up to the one being joked about to say something about it. Celebrities such as NBA athletes do not have to seek out or respond to trolls and insults, but they often do, making the situation worse.

Since twitter is public and athletes have direct interactions with fans without a public relations professional to intervene to only have positive messages online, athletes will interact and often make fun of fans who insult them. Here Evan Turner @thekidet was asked questions about who he idolized most in NBA history and he replied, “Evan turner.” He was then asked, “what do you do to be great every single day”, to which he replied, “read my tweets obviously.” Mattcooper3 @mattcooper3, “@thekidet how come you ruin the NBA for me?” Evan Turner replied, “how come you ruin twitter bios for me? You’re not leading Twitter in any statistical category?”

This is representative of the type of response an athlete will give to an insult. Players and some media will often reply that makes fun of something in the fan’s short biography or their avatar picture, or even their username. The power dynamic here is that famous athletes receive hundreds of insults far worse than this as @replies or direct messages.

They pick and choose which ones to reply to and sometimes reply only to delete their replies later.

Amin Elhassan works for ESPN and had a segment for EPSN known as #hatehard where he would hate on different topics. On podcasts he will often insult players and other media members with how they dress, their hair, appearance, or their style of play. On Inside the NBA, the regularly make fun of players for what they wear, or their hairline, or how hard they try on defense, these are common topics that are brought up.

Amin Elhassan @AminESPN, “Haha I just remembered the time Solomon Hill got salty in Twitter [because] I said he look like goes straight to the club in full uniform.” Amin remembered when Solomon Hill replied to his insult and then later deleted his responses. The meaning of the insult that “he goes straight to the club in full uniform” is that he is a more unknown or less famous athlete than his peers. He needs to prove that he is in the NBA, hence wearing his uniform to remind people about his job. There is even a power dynamic within the NBA with different types of players, superstars who might have a team of people that work on their social media accounts, players who have little to no online presence, and average players who get an average amount of attention who might seek out mentions of their name to respond to. This is the action of “googling your own name” on twitter and then responding to each mention with a positive or negative response.



The insult originated from Nick Young, a player for at that time the Los Angeles Lakers, who decided to insult a specific NBA writer Sean Highkin. The background was after the D'Angelo Russell video where Nick Young's cheating on his fiancé Iggy Azelea was published. Nick Young later tweeted something about being original and many people

replied that he should tell his ex-fiancé that. The interaction was an obvious response given the circumstances, leading many fans on twitter to reply to Nick with the same sentiment.

Maggaggie @88mugsy88, "and what brought this about?"

Demarcus Robinson @DOCisChief, "he tweeted something about being original & people told him to tell Iggy that.

Sean Highkin @highkin, "I wasn't the only one! I was just the one he went at! The blue check is a heavy cross to bear."

Currently, having a blue check mark means you are a verified account. Twitter has taken steps to verify your identity which they do for celebrities, athletes, and writers so that fans do not follow fake accounts instead of the real person. This verification also impacts

how replies are organized and sorted. If people are replying, in this case to Nick Young, the verified responses are seen first, they are a higher priority. In this case Nick Young took the time to google Sean Highkin, screenshot his face, and reply that he looks like a terrorist with his beard. With any kind of media and player interaction, there could be a previous relationship, or they could be total strangers. It is often up to the person with power, in this case the athlete, to pick and choose who they wish to insult online.

8.2 Media Relationships from large to small media outlets, from local to national, and inter-media relationships

8.2.1 Local to National Relationship

Evidence of the local to national relationship is apparent in the amount that national and local media read and interact with each other. They ask questions about players, teams, or respond to stories that each other have written and shared. The possible power imbalance comes from within each market the labeling of more credible or less credible media members.

The power that each group of writers has, and how that power is used for or against them on twitter. There are power dynamics that exist in each different media market. Some markets are known for their critical coverage of teams such as the Knicks in New York contrasted with smaller media markets in Oklahoma City or Orlando where the sheer lack of publicity is tied to the size and number of reporters that cover the team.

Hardwood Paroxysm @HPbasketball, “If I covered the Kings every day, I’d have a different view on that. I also think if I covered the Kings, I’d have excuses for the craziness.” Matt Moore here is talking about how one smaller market; the Sacramento Kings are covered in a national versus local way. The different views are that, as a national reporter, Matt follows the Kings “craziness” as a simple narrative, while local beat writers and bloggers have a more nuanced look. There might be some moves the Kings make that are positive, but the national storyline will stay negative.

Hardwood Paroxysm @HPbasketball, “But for me that’s always been a forest vs. the trees thing. People that don’t talk to players have different, and wrong perceptions. It’s true that if you don’t have to go and talk to a player every day, deal with them in person, etc. It changes what you say and how. I used to rely on number and thought that energy/heart/chemistry were all nonsense clichés. It changes when you start talking to guys. It’s one reason I’m so amused talking to credential newbie @Adam_Mares. He discounts all “effort/energy/heart” stuff in favor of strategy.”

He points out the difference in the job is usually tied to access as well as the difference in the job and how long the person has been on the job. He uses his own experience, starting with numbers and a more quantitative mindset but then after talking to players for years he buys into the clichés of lockerroom chemistry, energy and effort that players talk about.

He also explains that covering individuals changes how you talk about them, which makes sense on a basic psychological level. If a reporter is anonymous, they are free to criticize players harshly or view them less as people and more just as a list of statistics. When reporters “get to know” players through their interactions in the lockerroom, their relationship slightly changes. It affects how and what they might say about a player in print, since they might have to see that player the next day. There have been many encounters between players and media face-to-face about what goes into a story.

Hardwood Paroxysm @HPbasketball, “So when the blogger view is ‘THE KINGS ARE INSANE’ and the local view is ‘THIS IS ALL FALSE NARRATIVE’ there’s truth in the

gray area.” The gray area that Matt Moore points out is that these are just two groups with different perspectives on the same topic and group of people. This comes out into stark relief in long form articles and podcasts about the background of a topic. For the Sacramento Kings as example, podcasts and articles that explained the ownership transition to Vivek Ranadive, the local government ties to basketball, and the Kings culture around bringing ex-players into front office roles are all explained with both positive and negative aspects. This is usually after the fact, while immediate reactions online do echo Matt’s view of “THE KINGS ARE INSANE” by bloggers contrasted with “THIS IS ALL FALSE NARRATIVE” by local media. The dynamic between those with access, local beat writers, and those without access, online bloggers, is that both groups can be right and wrong in different ways. Jeff McDonald @JMcDonald_SAEN, “Interesting: People with no access think access doesn’t matter and the people with access think it’s all that matters. They’re all wrong.”

8.2.2 Inter Media Relationships

Evidence of inter media relationships is in how different media members in different jobs address each other as well as fans. Fans and players often group all media together, while media point out the different jobs of different media members who work for teams, the NBA, newspapers, and blogs.

How the media works is not always well known by each party in basketball twitter.

Players sometimes represent social media comments by fans as “the media” or group

headlines that editors make, as representative of how the author of the piece feels. Fans also do not see the distinction of different types of media.

Only_The_Best @MRJEODLL, “Do you think that @MichelleDBeadle @RachelSantschi’ve compromised their integrity voting Kawhi? I don’t. Two smart girls.”

Jeff McDonald @JMcDonald_SAEN, “Rachel works for the team. Michelle is an ESPN personality. They are allowed to be fans.”

Only_The_Best @MRJEODLL, “Since local reporters in Oakland RT for their players it doesn’t seem an action prohibited by the Bible of Reporters.”

Jeff McDonald @JMcDonald_SAEN, “You can write eloquently about why someone deserves a nod. You can present facts. Columnists may opine. Can’t vote.”

Here Jeff McDonald, a beat writer for the San Antonio Express-News, delineates “reporters” versus team employees and TV personalities. A fan might see all three of the groups talking about a player and then group them all into “the media.” The example of all start voting and the unwritten rule of not voting for them if you are paid by a newspaper to cover that team.

Jeff here is the reporter; he can write about why someone is deserving of an award but cannot vote directly for the player. It is a basic conflict of interest, as the “media” here should cover the team impartially, both positive and negative.

Rachel Santichi worked for Spurs Sport and Entertainment, which means she was a part of the Spurs team, which includes the announcers, and tv personalities who interview players after games, and who publish mainly positive stories about the Spurs.

Michelle Beadle is an ESPN personality, not a local reporter, and not a team employee, who can be a fan of the team. National writers and TV personalities have bias towards teams they used to play on, covered, or are longtime fans of. Michelle and Rachel can be fans of the Spurs in the same way it is widely known that Bill Simmons is a fan of Boston teams. Fans sometimes conflate everyone they see on TV, online, and in print, as one large media family, without delineating the difference in their job and who financially supports them. In this case, local newspapers, the NBA team in question, or national media cable subscribers and advertisers.

8.2.3 Stealing Content

Evidence of Stealing content comes from those who are caught reposting or stealing content from someone and calling it their own without attribution. This is common online with images and videos being stolen by aggregators. Often in basketball twitter writers will only quote a section and link to the original writer but sometimes outright theft is used. Thieves often deny that they stole anything or turn it around and use their place of power to justify their actions.

Greg Wissinger @gwiss, “Hey @AmicoHoops, this is our words on your site without credit. Is that not stealing? Apparently you read us.”

Sactown Royalty @sactownroyalty, “Oh hey... that’s our work. Surely you must have just forgotten to cite us. We’ll just let you know and it’ll be cool.”

AmicoHoops @AmicoHoops, “Lol. No one was stealing content. I was helping promote a garbage blog that no one otherwise reads.”

Sactown Royalty @sactownroyalty, “How @AmicoHoops responds when he’s called out for not crediting the original source of his aggregated content...”

Another power dynamic that exists online with different media outlets is the idea of “aggregators” linking to and copying content from other sites online. Journalistic standards are to quote with attribution, a set amount of content, usually a certain length of quote. Here Sam Amico who is a local radio host in Cleveland and works for the local Fox Sports affiliate is called out for stealing or copying the entirety of the source without credit.

Here a writer for Sactown Royalty, Greg Wissinger, where the content originated asked publicly if this copying is not also stealing while Sam responds, “Lol. No one was stealing content. I was helping promote a garbage blog that no one otherwise reads.” This happens often online where one site will copy and paste content from another without credit.

This happens to fan generated video as well, where sometimes Bleacher Report for instance will use a video that is shared and not cite the person who created the video. Usually with the way links and tweets are shared and retweeted, the “theft” could have taken place anywhere from when the video was first posted until the final blog aggregation. On some videos, efforts are made to find and credit the original owner, but this is not true of all videos taken or used online.

8.3 **Topics of power** such as race and analytics, casual vs hardcore fans, and statistics vs analysis

8.3.1 Race and Analytics

Evidence of race and analytics are the prolonged debate on both sides on the racist idea that African Americans like or dislike analytics or statistics. This issue is also conflated and confused with the professional media member vs. the casual blogger and those power dynamics. For race and analytics, the example of Michael Wilbon, his argument the African Americans dislike or dismiss analytics and statistics, and his article that cited other African Americans who might agree with him, set off a wave of debate. The debate brought in both sides of the argument on twitter.

The Wilbon Argument: Part I Bloggers

Michael Wilbon, host of Pardon the Interruption on ESPN and former sportswriter for the Washington post appeared on a podcast by Ryan Glasspiegel (Glasspiegel, 2015a) and later on a panel at the Riggs Alumni Center at the University of Maryland at the Shirley Povich Journalism Symposium, themed, “Sports writing Then & Now.”

Basketball twitter became enraged by the mother’s basement comment that Michael Wilbon made, “What bugs me now is that people sit in their mother’s basements and write this crap and they don’t have any knowledge of what is going on in that place, and it’s too easy to get it,” (Parnass, 2015).

The title of Sports writing Then and Now and the stories that Wilbon gave fell along lines that Wilbon has given over and over through his television show and interviews. Michael Wilbon has often argued the “old school” over the “new school” of sports writing. He usually tells stories about back in his day, meaning before sports center type highlight shows, of covering games through print journalism only. His argument is a quantity over quality argument in that bloggers can write whatever they want with limited or no access to talk to players. Wilbon uses words like emotion and impact to discuss how media should talk to players about things like intangibles. He argues that these are positive notions in sport while analytics creates a cold calculating tone that should not be found in sports coverage, (Wilbon, 2016).

Amin Vafa @AminNBA, “Dear out of touch sportswriters: blogging is not done in moms’ basements. It’s done at white collar desk jobs during extended lunch breaks. And frankly, this should be something older generation writers should resent more. Someone doing your job as a hobby is an economic threat.”

Amin Vafa’s reaction was common for many bloggers who cover NBA teams, they often have other day jobs and write about sports from their day jobs for free, mostly because they love basketball and might transition to covering sports full time. This threat of mostly free content versus paid subscription content is more a threat than bloggers who are writing for free.

“Learn how to talk to people face to face,” Wilbon said. “Stop texting for a minute, stop emailing. Learn how to have a conversation with people. Learn how to pick up

a phone and do it if you can't do it in person...let them see you. You see them. Personal interaction. This is a people business. And learn how to tell a narrative. And you don't need advanced analytics to do it. Learn how to tell a story...if you can't tell a story without relying wholly on statistical information, then that means you can't tell a damn story. The best storytellers in my life were people who weren't journalists. They were people, old folks, who could sit by the fireplace and just keep you riveted. They didn't have any stats." (Glasspiegel, 2015b).

Jeff McDonald @JMcDonald_SAEN, "People are distracted by Wilbon's 'mother's basement' comment, but here he's mostly right." Jeff McDonald, beat writer for the San Antonio Express-News, agrees with part of Michael Wilbon's comments that having people skills to have face to face interactions is an important skill, along with narrative journalism that keeps people interested in the story.

Current beat writers point out that knowing statistics, creating podcasts, video editing, social media, are all new parts of journalism that everyone will have to embrace. Jeff McDonald pointed out that he can understand the advanced statistic of rebounding percentage, and simply state that the Spurs were a better rebounding team with Tim Duncan on the floor.

Michael Wilbon often uses his own friends and coworkers sentiments as anti-statistics to encompass "Black World" (Wilbon, 2016) a place where advanced analytics are never discussed. He bolstered his statement with personal anecdotes about never using analytics

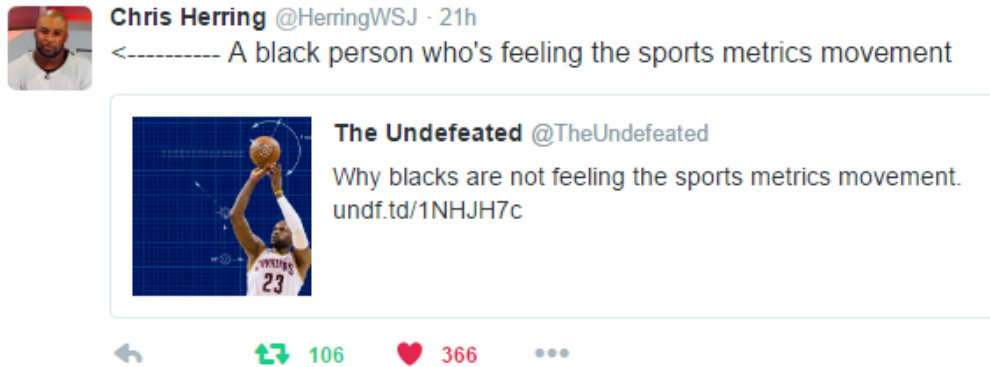
or statistics in his discussion with other black men or older white men. He brings up anecdotes from black barbershops and interviews with black players from the Golden State Warriors where they say how they play off feel and talk to each other more about how impactful certain players are, while also admitting they might use statistics in scouting reports.

In a video response to Wilbon's Mission Impossible article, (Adande, Spears, Wilbon, & Smith, 2016), Wilbon admits that his article stirred up a firestorm of responses and gave a forum for black sportswriters to react to these responses and support his arguments.

Stephen A Smith discussed how these means of exclusion have existed for years and for African Americans who want to work in the industry should know what teams are looking for. His basic idea is to tailor your skills to your employer's needs. J.A. Adande pointed out that Sam Presti, who is labeled a young analytics General Manager, who is white with glasses, builds his team around chemistry more than an analytic fit. Adande also pointed out the different languages spoken by players and coaches and front offices, will they be the language of mathematics or the language of the coaches and players.

The overall tone of Wilbon and Marc Spears is more dismissive of analytics, this player likes midrange shots so analytics is useless. JA Adande and Steven a Smith are looking to the future and how these problems can work themselves out in the future. In the NBA a winning strategy will be copied, pace and offense across the league has gone up the past few years. One thing JA briefly mentions is the front office or business side of the NBA, staffed with mainly white men, some from math backgrounds, how will that affect basketball decisions on and off the court?

Implication of Analytics and African Americans



The backlash from black people that were offended or surprised by the Wilbon article included younger black fans and writers who disagreed with Wilbon’s assumptions. Chris Herring on multiple podcasts goes into his writing process and his relationship with sports metrics. Chris eventually moved to 538, Nate Silver’s site to focus on statistically driven reporting on the NBA. Chris would say he would start with a novel or interesting statistic and attempt to explain it through interviews, his own experience, and eye test, mixing qualitative and quantitative analysis in his articles.

Trisity. @Tristiy_, “My thing with that undefeated piece: it ain’t just ‘black folk’ who don’t rock with adv. Stats. Majority sports fans don’t.”

A Devious Plot @play_on_verbs, “I didn’t like the implication that black people and numbers don’t mix. That offended me.”

Ian Dougherty @IanDougherty, “I did think Wilbon had a great point about the potential for analytics to be used as means for exclusion of minorities by NBA front offices.

Patrick Clayborn @PatrickClayborn replying to Ian, “Yup... and how would they use it as a means of exclusion? By using Wilbon’s logic that ‘we’ don’t like it.”

The exclusion of minorities in NBA front offices is exacerbated by this idea that analytics and African Americans do not mix. This kind of barbershop talk that creates an “Us vs Them” mentality would exclude African Americans to enter analytics using Wilbon’s logic. Amin Elhassan who worked for the Phoenix Suns in their front office said, “So many front offices are staffed by guys like me, who didn’t play the game, who didn’t come in through the coaching ranks ... Don’t tell me that there are no black people who are good at math. There are black people who expert at qualitative analysis,” Elhassan said. He is speaking to Wilbon, telling him that this is a new way into sports, beyond just being an ex-player who becomes a coach, but anyone who can become a scout, video coordinator, who have quantitative backgrounds can work in the NBA.

Larger Data Movement

“It was Detroit, the auto industry execs,” he said. “CRM ... customer relations marketing. They made the more targeted pitches. They had the experience of dealing with big data. Initially, it was largely about data gathering. Now, it’s, ‘How do we use it?’ ”, Amin Elhassan (Wilbon, 2016).

Amin Elhassan hints at the larger movement of big data and CRM, institutional tools that could be used to market to different ethnicities, so much data, how is this used, which industries will bring their culture into the NBA, financial, entrepreneurial, technology? The NBA is often called a copy-cat league, if one team uses analytics and is successful, all other teams try and mimic their success, thus taking away the competitive edge. It has been seen in training technology, medical staffs, and even diet. The technology and information itself might not be racist in nature but the socio-political institutions around the discussion and implementation of analytics might be. Vann Newkirk and others point out the nature of Sloan Analytics conference at MIT which is majority white. Bun Flowers @Rxbun, “Wilbon missed the point.. he shoulda gone to sloan and written about how it’s 99.99 white guy. That’s the issue.” Vann R Newkirk II @fivefifths in reply to Bun, “That’s a bingo.”

8.3.2 Casual vs Hardcore Fans

Evidence of casual vs hardcore fans is a common argument on basketball twitter. The essence of the argument is that some media is targeted towards one group or the other and each group of media has certain flaws inherent in their production. Each side promotes their own advantages or the illogical stances in the other side. There are also flaws in how each side promotes their own view point which is highlighted by users on twitter.

The reactions from fans, bloggers, and media members to the analytics argument that Wilbon makes range from jokes about how he went about reporting on his story, to the

larger picture that separates casual fans from the hardcore fans and writers who use advanced metrics to discuss basketball.

Drew Dinkmeyer @DrewDinkmeyer, “that piece felt like an op-ed posed as investigative.”

Tweetgood Mac @SnottieDrippen, “Exactly what it is. ‘Get off my lawn’ writer disguises his fear of numbers behind some BS.”

Pizza’s Intellect @NekiasNBA, “As smart as Mike Wilbon is, that piece wasn’t informative. He set out to prove his own ignorance of a subject that annoys him. Period.”

In their video interview Wilbon and Marc Spears both stuck the tone of dismissing analytics. SnottieDrippen explains that this idea of Wilbon’s is an old school vs new school argument where if Wilbon does not understand a certain statistic or why it is used so much, it must be dismissed as annoying, a conversation that he cannot participate in. He brings up why “everyone” (Wilbon, 2016) uses points per 100 possessions instead of per 48 minutes which is the length of a game. ESPN and most stats-based websites use per 100 to rank different teams because it controls for the pace of some teams who play faster or slower. It is a simple weighting system to discuss offensive and defensive ratings that most analytics fans understand and use.

What is also lost in this discussion is the nuance and distinction between publicly available simple statistics like plus minus, offensive rating, that are often calculated from box score statistics with simple math and sportVU proprietary data that only teams can

view with much more granularity and complex formulas. These are often grouped and discussed under the same umbrella of analytics.

8.4 Team Power Dynamics which include power relationships between general managers, player created media, digital content brands, and social media managers.

These power dynamics are shaped by the disintermediation of sports media in that each of these entities can interact with fans directly through their twitter accounts. For teams, and players, these are often in conjunction with public relations and marketing and each have their own reason for engaging on social media. All these groups want positive mentions of players and their brands, while players must navigate their public and private personas online.

8.4.1 General Managers

Evidence of the power dynamic of general managers is in the number of general managers who use and interact with others on twitter. They interact with fans publicly and share their view points on podcasts and in their own writing publicly posted to team websites or leaked to media and then posted. This uptick in general manager visibility gives rise to more discussion of them and their job performance on twitter.

The power dynamics of NBA front offices are echoed by Steven A. Smith on his Wilbon panel when he said that NBA executives hire people that are similar, that came through similar channels or that have people in the industry already that vouch for them. Sam Hinkie and other General Managers have the association of being analytics focused more than most GMs in the league. This back and forth between languages of math and

basketball is heightened in front offices where decisions on hiring coaches, drafting players, and signing players is made. More than Draymond Green's comments about playing off feel, his contract and value is often determined by analytics and front office decisions.

General Managers and Ownership groups are not often in the media for being average, the best GMs and the worst GMs are talked about in the media as exemplary cases, and cases for termination. The Philadelphia 76ers as a franchise, with ownership's blessing, made the decision to "tank" or underperform for multiple years, accumulate top draft picks and after many years of this compete for the playoffs. This was a marked change from most teams whose ownership groups cannot stomach losing for so many years in a row. Sam Hinkie resigned in April 2016 after publishing a 7,000-word resignation letter that cited authors from Warren Buffett, Abraham Lincoln, and Elon Musk.

Amin Vafa @AminNBA, "this wasn't a screed, either. It's a research paper w/an abstract, subheadings, and citations. Clearly written over a few days/wks." With this letter he was giving his own point of view on "The Process" as it was coined in Philadelphia, and his view that the draft could be gamed by purposeful losing over multiple years. Eventually the NBA stepped in with leadership changes to encourage competition. It would look bad for the league to encourage uncompetitive behavior.

Adrian Wojnarowski @WojVerticalNBA, "Sources: Ownership had not planned to fire Hinkie. They believed he would accept another high-level executive on a level plane with him.

Zach Lowe @ZachLowe_NBA, “Again, what I had heard consistently, for weeks, and why I asked the question on the podcast.”

Before he resigned, Sam Hinkie went on various basketball podcasts and radio shows to give interviews that General Managers rarely give. The change in power structures with twitter and social media is that in the past, these conversations would happen as face-to-face meetings between GMs and a few owners, mainly through family businesses. Now ownership groups involve dozens of groups that include hedge funds, entrepreneurs, and investors all with different input and communication styles. Sam Hinkie used twitter to explain his views directly to fans who would buy into the “tank” plan. When he resigned, he also used twitter to public give his reasons not only to 76er fans that he was leaving, but for other teams to let them know of his unique risk-taking style that might work if ownership has the risk tolerance.

Brian Windhorst on a Zach Lowe podcast will often bring up the power dynamics behind the scenes in the NBA where a player, coach, or agent will “leak” information to the media to test the waters for fan reaction or reaction from other teams. This also changes the power dynamics of the NBA where front office executives would have conversations about trades in private, where now potential trades or interest in players can be “leaked” online or through the media, and the backlash or support can be used in negotiations for leverage. In Sam Hinkie’s case, the NBA and 76ers ownership group forced him out, leaving Sam to defend his actions with his reasoning publicly.

8.4.2 Player Created Media

Evidence of player created media is in how often players bypass traditional media outlets in order to craft their own message using video, or text that is published on their own. All player social media is also technically player created media but, in this instance, long form essays are used as examples of players getting their message to fans and media at the same time.

Kevin Durant and the Players Tribune

Players have more power to directly sway fans and media through the creation of their own media brands through social media and long form articles. Multiple players have co-written stories for large decision such as LeBron to Cleveland in Sports Illustrated or Kevin Durant on the Players Tribune. They might collaborate with Lee Jenkins like LeBron did, or write an article on the players only site, The Players Tribune like Kevin Durant. This allows a player to directly address fans and the media with their point of view, their reasoning, and decision-making process for moving teams.

Anthony Slater @anthonyVslater, “Kevin Durant on the criticism of Kobe. ‘You guys treated one of our legends like sh** and I didn’t really like it.’”

Robert Silverman @BobSaitetta, “So we’re going to spend the day talking about media bashing, huh? Cool, cool.”

Players have to meet with the media before or after games and answer questions in media scrums or in one on one interviews. Players who are asked about other player situations normally side with the player against the media. Here Kevin disliked the media's criticism of Kobe Bryant.

Hardwood Paroxysm @HPbasketball, "I continue to be confused why Kevin Durant has enmity towards the media. If it's just on others' behalf, OK. But he hasn't gotten a raw deal." Matt Moore wonders why Kevin has enmity, or in Kevin's word hate, towards the media. In an unprompted interview (Horne, 2016) Kevin says, "I've seen over the last couple of years, actually, that I hate the media. I actually do love you guys. If I hated someone, I wouldn't talk to them. The main goal is to help the fans know the game a little bit more than they know today, so that's my goal and hopefully that's your goal instead of getting headlines and clicks."

This relationship between players and media is often mentioned on podcasts with different media members saying how much they like or dislike talking to players or coaches for quotes they can publish. The media has the power to take one quote out of context and that's all that fans see. Players can be frustrated at the attention or negative attention and attempt to clarify their point of view or even change their mind.

Sam Esfandiari @samesfandiari, "I feel like athletes read their Twitter mentions and consider that the media." Ethan Strauss @SherwoodStrauss replies, "Thing is, it IS the media. That's what social media's all about." Sam Esfandiari also points out the changing definition of media to include fan social media. If players are truncating media to include

social media by fans, troll accounts and beat writers are lumped into the same categories. Kevin Durant was later exposed as responding to troll accounts with a secondary account that he possessed. The gift and curse of social media is having athletes as open and honest as they wish while allowing athletes to see the best and worst of fan and media interactions.

8.4.3 Digital Content Brands

Evidence of digital content brands of certain athletes is expressed in the amount of content or meta-analysis comes from digital content partners. Most agents and basketball marketing personnel do not engage on twitter.com but those that do have a unique perspective that is not shared by media or even other players. They usually weigh issues in the business sense in that they wish for the most money to be made, preferably by their client.

Digital content brands and Nate Jones

Brands have invested heavily in athletes before social media, but now brands have people that work solely on digital content and campaigns for athletes and their brand sponsors. The power dynamic on most of basketball twitter is between fans and the media, where the bulk of interactions happen. Front office executives, scouts, and agents rarely tweet because the nature of their job is often competitive advantages which they might lose if they share too much information.

Nate Jones often brings the business side of sports marketing with opinions that fans of individual players and teams might disagree with but make sense for the money generated for athletes and the business that work with them.

Aristotle Sharp @Team_Sharp, “this would hurt the league. Durant will never go there anyways, he is too much of a brand himself. 2nd fiddle? No.” Nate Jones

@JonesOnTheNBA, “I don’t believe it makes business sense for him to be just another

guy with someone he competes with in marketing.” Nate Jones points out the business sense of Kevin Durant, joining a team with Underarmour and Anta ties, while being a Nike sponsored athlete. Kevin did join the Warriors and has since proven that there are other business opportunities outside of sports marketing such as technology, financial, and entertainment investment opportunities that are not competing with teammates.

Nate Jones @JonesOnTheNBA, “There’s a responsibility that comes when teams and brands invest in you. Don’t be the guy that gets the deals and then mails it in.” From the business side of basketball is the idea of player responsibility after signing a large deal and then not trying hard on the basketball court. This was read as a slight towards James Harden and his defense on the court tied to having just received a \$200 million shoe contract with Adidas, the same brand that Nate Jones works with Damian Lillard.

Danny Leroux on various podcasts has also pointed out regarding NBA agents, they often negotiate and work for deals that will pay them the most amount of money now, versus deals that might be better for the player in the long term. Agents that turn down medium size offers often leave athletes with minimum or low deals, often after the agent is fired.

8.4.4 Social Media Managers

Evidence of social media managers influence in basketball twitter is expressed through team accounts on multiple platforms that interact with fans, media, PR, team media, the NBA, and other teams in a myriad of inter connected ways. The values and beliefs of a team and an individual who works on an account vary from person to person and team to team. The power dynamic from each team to the various entities in basketball twitter can change with different relationships. Exemplary social media makes even losing teams fun for fans, while negative attention to social media can make the team a distraction.

Social media managers work for NBA teams and interact with fans through various digital means through social accounts, public relations, marketing, in game, and at home fan experiences. Amara was on the Social on the Sidelines podcast with Shabaz Khan (Khan & Baptist, 2018) talking about her previous work on Fox Sports 1 in Los Angeles. How she got the job with the Memphis Grizzlies and her day to day job running a team of social for the NBA.

She discussed the comments made by fans that she's an intern and not in charge of multiple people or comments that all she does is run the twitter account. She mentioned how storyline work flow interactions with fans online will start weeks in advance of a game, with the marketing and PR teams, in game events during time outs and halftime, and creative ways to promote the players, the mascot and the game.

She mentioned specifically how to keep fans engaged and excited through a 10 plus game losing streak. One of her latest tweets was with a final score around valentine's day with

a puppy from the halftime show. This made people react more to the puppy than the final score where the team might have lost by 20 or 30 points. The challenge of engaging fans for losing teams is the amount of negative comments that social media managers from all teams, but especially losing teams see. Shabaz and herself both mentioned it is healthy for social media managers to take time offline and not let the amount of negative comments negatively affect their happiness.

Chad Shanks Fired

Chad Shanks was the social media manager for the Houston Rockets who was fired after the Rocket's account sent out a tweet as the Rockets looked to close out their series against the Dallas Mavericks.



The implication of the tweet is the killing of a horse, which is the mascot of the Dallas Mavericks. The tweet was later deleted and Chad Shanks was fired the day after the tweet was published (Kalaf, 2015).

Chad Shanks @chadjshanks, “Sometimes you can go too far. I will no longer run @HoustonRockets but am grateful to the organization that let me develop an online voice. I did my best to make the account the best in the NBA by pushing the envelope, but pushed too far for some and for that I apologize. I hope there’s another organization out there in need of someone willing to take changes and create engaging social content. I hope.”

Chad explained in a longer statement from the Houston Chronicle (Kalaf, 2015) that he never wanted to offend anyone, pushed the limit with this edgy tweet, and was grateful for the opportunity to develop his online voice. He said in this instance he wished there had been an alternative to being fired but will look forward to the future and taking chances with a new organization.

This is the creative aspect that Amara talked about in her podcast (Khan & Baptist, 2018) where companies like the Grizzlies looked at Amara’s past social media profiles to see what kind of content and how she comports herself online. The problem with telling jokes, especially jokes on other teams can escalate as teams and fans take comments seriously. The league eventually stepped in with guideline on tone and positivity for inter-team tweets to curb events like this that arise from jokes and trash talking to other teams. Nate Jones defended Chad, saying he probably should not be fired for one mistake

but that is the current climate of social media managers to defend their own brand but devaluing another team's image is strictly forbidden.

CHAPTER 9 DISCUSSION

The discussion section is divided up into each research question and then subtopics.

9.1 Information Practices Discussion

RQ1. What are the serious leisure information practices of the basketball twitter community?

The Identity of basketball twitter in a general sense is anyone who primarily tweets about the subject of basketball. It includes paid media members who cover the NBA, the NBA and its employees and sponsors, and NBA fans. Basketball twitter is also self-identified and self-referenced as a community with members, topics, points of view, likes, dislikes, and traditional arguments. Basketball twitter media includes national and local media on TV, print or online, and podcasts on the NBA. The level of discourse on different media channels differs for each context and audience. NBA fans are also on a spectrum from hard core to casual fans who might enjoy multiple sports. These fans display most of the psychological defense mechanism traits in the content of their posts.

Identity

What is Basketball Twitter?

The simplest answer courtesy of Ezekial Kweku, “tweet about basketball and be followed by other people who are part of NBA twitter” and he describes it as “less nebulous and more accessible than some other Twitter subcultures.” There is also the best of the best as following the funniest and most insightful fans. The ability to pick and choose who to

follow on NBA twitter is also picking the best content over in person friends and relationships. This might be one of the main drivers of the community, is the strong bonds and relationships that are created through sharing these “dive bar” moments with “strangers”.

Basketball twitter is an ecosystem, but it also has an agreed upon hierarchy. There are some accounts that are followed by everyone at the top, the middle is full of popular local and national accounts from bloggers to print and TV journalists, and fans are the end users, who float around the periphery in smaller clusters around individual players and teams. Credibility but also popularity determine who is at the top of the food chain. Bill Simmons and Adrian Wojnarowski are followed by most NBA fans, they get attention from everyone, even other media members in the middle area of basketball twitter. There are also more credible and less credible outlets. Major papers, ESPN, yahoo, include the more credible outlets. Local papers, local blogs, radio personalities and fake accounts are less credible, especially when reporting on decisions outside of their locale.

Basketball twitter’s community is possible because of technology, social media, smart phones, ability to create podcasts, athletes and fans understanding how to use twitter and create content. The “dive bar” or virtual sports bar is tied to sports bar practices of drinking, watching sports, and maybe talking about the game with people around you. In the offline world, this includes your friends, acquaintances, and strangers at a bar, who may or may not support your team. Basketball twitter is the ability to meet and follow the people you would like to talk to at a bar about basketball, with the ability to just listen in on conversations, or actively participate in discussions.

Cultural overlap with different cultures

Basketball twitter includes users who tweet about basketball but there are other subcultures that these users also participate in. They might tweet about national games or the NBA in general, as well as their local team, also their personal lives, their families, their jobs, what they do when they are not watching basketball. Some other large subcultures on twitter include black twitter, a cultural subgroup of African American subculture online, rap and hip-hop twitter, political twitter, celebrity and pop culture twitter, other fandom beyond NBA, including geek or nerd fandom, TV show discussion, or general live event discussion, as well as meta discussion or discussion of twitter on twitter. Because of this cultural overlap, content, as well as information practices from one subculture can be transferred over to other subcultures, memes, running jokes, content, and news can be transferred to and from other subcultures.

Meta Media

Media members from national to local, paid to fan run sites all cover the NBA in different ways and have different relationships with each other which they share on twitter, in their own written work and on other channels such as podcasts. They might belong to media conglomerates like ESPN or individual newspapers, contributors online, or creators of large online media networks. Because of the variance in the media relationships, as well as the change in funding and breakup and reformation of networks, the relationships change as well. When ESPN gets rid of Grantland, or some contracts at

online publications are not picked up, or podcasts are started or closed, the relationships change, people move jobs, and locations, but the ties that are built stay and people still have twitter to keep in touch with others. In this way twitter represents the public face of these relationships. There are private channels such as Facebook, email, and group chats, where these relationships live as well. On twitter, like in a sport bar, the public discussion around a topic is shared. Media also commenting on other media usage of twitter shows what is acceptable and unacceptable practices, this also leads to more arguments on journalism from twitter users.

In different media channels, there are different technological and time restraints that change the overall context and possible level of analysis and discourse in each channel. For example, in the National media television program like Sports Center, the NBA may represent 15% of the content, including other sports, and advertisement, and opinion depending on the time of year. That might include 15 minutes to 2 hours depending on the day. On podcasts some writers and creators create 2 hours of content a day or write 1500-word pieces every few days and write as much in twitter content in 24 hours, including replies. In each of these channels there is different amounts of time to create the content, prepared content vs live unscripted, the amount of time to react new information, and the basketball IQ of hardcore and casual fans who might use insider jargon or technical analysis that might bore a casual fan. Podcasts also allow the media longer to discuss the intricacies and grey areas of NBA teams and players. They also allow the media to discuss behind the scenes conversation they have about how the media is made, behind the scene rumors of teams and players, or report on offline conversations media

members have with each other that hardcore and casual fans would like to know.

Different media types, from traditional print and local beat reporters to bloggers to fans, when they are in conversation with each other naturally the topic of how they follow the league, conversations they have with league officials, and fans temperature of news is brought up and discussed. The difference between SportsCenter and a Dunc'd on mock offseason podcast is vast.

Fan types and psychology

The community as defined as the Media, NBA, and Fans includes information practices, information sharing, following, learning, live sports reaction, creation of jokes and memes, generating topics, reacting to events, discussion of analytics philosophy, and arguments, including sound bites and material taken out of context.

The different fan types in basketball twitter are based on their level of participation, and their identity. Through their identity, their chosen screen name or handle that might include the team or teams they are a fan of, their bio, which also might list their fandom, and then the quantity and quality of the content on their timeline, which also speaks to their fandom, level of participation, and identity. Tweet about basketball is also a nebulous topic, tweet about a player, a team, a city, during a game, outside of a game, during the regular season, national TV games, as a blogger covering a game, beat writer, national journalist. There is also the level of participation for fans, stans, who might only tweet positive things about one player, barbershop talk, MVP debates or this player over this player. There is also the lurker level, where most fans will follow others on

basketball twitter, retweet or like certain tweets, but they are not a professional and might tweet more about their personal life or use twitter for basketball and something else. The sharing of private lives on twitter also makes it where you feel you know the people you follow. Celebrities point this out where fans who come up to them know so much about their family, the same is true of minor fan celebrities who have a small number of followers, those followers probably know some details of their personal lives and feel like they know them or can call them friends.

Psychology

The psychology of having followers and knowing they will react to your tweets and messages can act as a drug. Also, the different number of followers can create a too small, perfect for interaction, or too large and toxic community. With the number of followers, Matt Moore has pointed this out, the different sizes of a single users following, the quality of conversation can drastically change. Writers still use twitter, but writers and podcasters all notice as they get more followers the quality of their mentions usually goes down. There will just be more people who see their stuff who will disagree with them.

Defense mechanisms

On basketball twitter, those that are disagreed with, will find ways of coping with that disagreement in terms of pathological, immature, neurotic, and mature defense mechanisms.

For pathological, denial, distortion, and projection are all ways of dealing with an unpleasant situation. By denying its existence, changing the truth, or shifting the blame to someone else, fans can deal with their team losing or being bad for a long time.

Immature mechanisms, such as acting out, fantasy, idealization, passive aggression, and identification are all used by fans to act out with their emotions, to idealize players, and teams, and to identify with players and act similarly. Passive aggression includes when anger or frustration is directed to someone or something else, in basketball this is usually through blaming someone else, the coach, the team, different players, while not mentioning the player in question.

Neurotic mechanism includes mostly mental ways of shifting emotions, distancing one's self from the emotions in question, either by withdrawing, rationalizing, behaving in an opposite manner, regressing to a childlike state, or repressing negative thoughts. There is no positive or negative judgement associated with these mechanisms, they are just different ways that fans deal with their emotions from following their team, or favorite players.

Mature mechanisms are mostly about knowing yourself and looking beyond fandom to different and deeper relationships. Such as altruism, anticipation, humor, which fans can use to deal with losses. Introjection and sublimation or identifying with a person or object and becoming a part of that, with strong feels about being a fan, turning losses into positive emotions to work harder etc. And thought suppression, which players use to drown out negative noise and focus on the task.

Information practices

The main actors in basketball twitter include the media, the NBA, and fans and their subsequent actions and practices. On twitter these are shared as text messages, links, videos, and animated gifs. Specifically, on basketball twitter these practices include information sharing, following, learning, and live sports reaction. Information sharing includes instant reaction to events, memes, insults, sarcasm, news, analysis and opinion. Following and learning are practices of finding other people on basketball twitter whose content you enjoy and subscribing or unsubscribing to that content. Live sports reaction is the main information practice in that there are multiple other channels to passively consume sports media or share time delayed sports media. On twitter the live reaction function makes it possible to follow along a live event, while also reading live reaction on twitter. During basketball games, the live event on twitter sees the most interactions, with fans, media, NBA teams, and others talking about basketball as it happens.

Topics, memes, philosophy

Under practices, there also includes generating topics, reactions to events, using memes, creating jokes, and talking about analytics in a philosophical context. The generation of topics and reactions to events depends on the time of year and the time of day. In season vs off season topics are different, as well as during the season during a game vs the day after a game during the afternoon, the topics talked about on twitter sometimes mirror mainstream media topics and sometimes are created by the basketball twitter community

separate from the mainstream. On basketball twitter a common practice is to create joke topics or memes around players, teams, or situations. In a similar way of mental defense mechanisms, people watching sports as entertainment also like jokes during that entertainment and like telling or sharing jokes among their friends. The analytics philosophy discussion is another meta topic that is brought up by the community in how the community talks about basketball in a more quantitative or qualitative way. Since basketball statistics and advanced analytics are shared, there is also a concomitant discussion around the value and place for both types of information, including the qualitative chemistry issues, coaching, eye test, and character issues for players. From multiple perspectives these issues are under and over valued by each area of the basketball twitter population.

Arguments

Related to defense mechanisms and the fanatic, arguments strengthen a fans point of view and there are clashes among differing points of views from different fans, as well as among the media. Fans, media, and players will attack each other while lurkers watch to see more attacks and more drama unfold. The most common argument is using your own set of criteria to make a point, in any discussion on a player or team, you use a set of criteria that you value or the peers you respect value and then argue from that position. Some people can evolve or change their criteria but usually people stick with a position and argue from that position indefensibly. There are also arguments about different

criteria, using points per game, pace, plus minus, points created, point differential, conference imbalance, to discuss and argue for or against a past, current or future stance. Different types of arguments as well from each position with actual historians or different cultural stances on facts, opinion, and arguing over the difference.

Sound bites

Twitter lacks the nuance of long form articles or podcasts, but it does allow for small segments of a larger text, or text taken out of context to be shared and dissected. This is often done on podcasts, where a small quote will be dissected, taken apart a word at a time to find hidden meaning or make non-existent connections. These comments, out of context, can be discussed ad nauseum, and then eventually warrant clarification on the original comment, days after the fact. In long form interviews, small sound bites or juicy quotes will also be shared on social media, changing the context or cutting the interview to fit with a preexisting cultural stance. These sound bites are virally shared on social media but also on mainstream media. On twitter, the availability of instant reaction to quotes before the context is understood is often dangerous and leads to quotes being misrepresented.

9.2 More Involvement Discussion

RQ2. Which of the serious leisure information practices identified in RQ1, which practices promote a more involvement and engagement, and less involvement and engagement in the community?

More involvement and engagement

The NBA actively encourages engagement with fans, especially younger fans, through adoption of technology and programs and practices that take advantage of the changing technological climate. Since the NBA doesn't ban sharing of video on social media, fans can share plays and highlights of NBA action, they are talked about on social media.

NBA league pass, while expensive and technologically behind other sports such as MLB, fans still use league pass to watch NBA games outside of their market or internationally.

Twitter is also free, and most teams employ social media managers. NBA owners are also into experimenting with new technology such as VR or live game broadcasts on social media, as well as podcasters second screen experience, which is usually how basketball twitter is consumed. Of the major sports, basketball has maintained a younger overall audience. There are multiple reasons why youth are turning to basketball, playing the sport, supporting kid like stars in Steph Curry, seeing the NBA through social media, or preferring the sport over other sports such as Football and Baseball.

Culturally there are reasons why the NBA could have an advantage in star power or popularity. Encouraging younger viewers, being so close to the court during an NBA

game, also being able to see the face of the stars, having stars with such high popularity. The NBA also actively listens for feedback of the fans, for what they want in terms of social media, technology, player access, off the court instances, even listening to fans with regards to political climate and stances on non-sports issues. Players themselves are tech-savvy and use technological platforms for their brands and businesses. Sponsors as well for commercials and branding tie ins. Specifically Adidas sponsoring Damien Lillard and his digital efforts through Nate Jones.

Local Twitter and community

The community aspect of NBA twitter is a positive and a reason that people keep coming back to share in the love of the sport. KJ pointed out that he has met real friends through basketball twitter, Kirk mentioned how much he missed everyone when he came back from a vacation. And Amara pointed out how everyone knows everyone and those are powerful friendships. Even as large and diverse as NBA fans are, there are still semi-popular celebrities that NBA twitter all knows, or even in the local team twitter, that fans knows. The community is also positive towards each other, for the most part, there are negatives, but what creates more engagement and interaction is the shared experience and the shared activity. Rachel points out that you are not watching the game alone, you're watching with thousands of other people, who are all sharing in the same activity as you, and at different levels, are as into the NBA as you are. In that way it is a self-selecting group of fans who are already on twitter, but who are drawn to NBA content.

Female fan support

There are also ways of encouraging and supporting women in sports in all areas, from ownership to coaching, to fans and social media managers. One way for encouragement and support is for female fans to have support from other female fans. I think one thing for male fans is to also follow more female fans as well, then they see the arguments and points of view that they might miss only following male reporters or other male fans.

Women say that they need women to keep speaking up and supporting each other in sports, and for teams not to pander to women. Sports is also a selective audience, if you don't like sports, that's ok, they're not for everyone. Support of women in sport broadcasting as well with female announcers and the NBA's relationship with the WNBA.

9.3 Less Engagement and Involvement Discussion

Less engagement and involvement on basketball twitter can come from behaviors, topics, and acts of sexism and racism that is a reflection in some ways of society at large. There are different possible responses to these acts that discourage involvement that include changes to twitter functionality, anonymity online, and cultural changes between races and genders.

When members on basketball twitter are trolled or simply disagree with some other members, there are options to mute, block, and not engage with trolls. There is also the practice of deleting old tweets that might stir up arguments. Most of these are “hot button” issues and the discussion of these issues online already is extreme in some comment sections. What makes basketball twitter different in some sense is the attention towards basketball issues and blocking and muting people based off their basketball stances and not their political or gender stances. For example, Haralabos blocking someone who disagrees with his coaching take or Rachel muting commentary on television that she disagrees with. On basketball twitter and through the main stream media, there is always the ability to turn off, block, or mute various channels and sports personalities.

One instance of a large blowup involved Freedarko who made a political statement about beating a woman to death and then “tweeting through it” or defending his initial comment. This seems like a heat of the moment political stance, but what was most telling was the reaction on basketball twitter. Between women they pointed out how no men stood up or spoke up about this issue, they just sort of quietly accepted it, like race

arguments currently in the political climate. Men not calling out another writer and saying that is wrong, and don't say you'll beat anyone to death but also women. Zach Lowe's comment during the Finals is representative of a large sample of men on basketball twitter. They do want to stick to sports and talk about that and not have to take a stance on a political issue or must defend or detract anyone else. For most men on basketball twitter, that seems to be the status quo. There are subgroups though, which call attention to these underlying issues to some degree, Kevin Arnovitz, Curtis Harris, Ashley Holcomb are some that bring up these issues and are more politically inclined, as minority participants from the LGBT, LGBT and Race History, and female subcultures respectively.

Topics

The first topic of how LGBT people have been treated and covered in the NBA and major sports has changed over time. There are multiple instances of players using slurs towards refs, other players, and coaches. There are anti-LGBT players who have gone on record being against LGBT people in general, Tim Hardaway being a prominent one. The instance in question was from a game in Mexico City where Rajon Rondo called Bill Kennedy, a closeted gay referee, a motherfucking faggot. The NBA treated it as a workplace harassment incident, suspended Rondo, and Adam Silver delicately decided how to support Bill Kennedy through this and how to basically legislate something that had never happened before. A referee being outed, and a player being fined for using a gay slur specially at a gay referee. The feedback from straight men on twitter was defending against homophobia, and a slight stick to sports attitude where it was an open

secret where those within the NBA knew it so most of the players probably did too.

When Jason Collins came out as an openly gay NBA player there was also mainstream media attention for this in a similar way.

Race is dealt with in a similar way, those that want to stick to sports will never bring it up, but sometimes the issues is brought up occasionally regarding number of black head coaches, black GMs, black owners. Black Opinion Matters Monday on TrueHoop that had all black contributors plus a white producer brought up racial issues, cultural issues, and basketball topics and would talk about the intersection of race and basketball.

Curtis Harris of Pro Hoops History and guest on BOMM, also pointed out the history of race and slavery in America and is a knowledgeable voice in how race is discussed. Not just saying a slur about someone, but racist outcomes which is again tied to this idea of equal access but unequal set of contextual circumstances, both for women in technology, and African Americans in the NBA front offices.

Another out of bounds topic when speaking of sticking to sports, is using a spouse or children as something to attack online. For straight white men, this is something they do have to deal with, unlike race or gender issues of being in the minority. With the age range of twitter in general, there are older and younger men who have different morals or use of identity and anonymity online.

Sexism

Sexism in general on basketball twitter is difficult to find and difficult for most participants, mostly white men, to talk about. Without following more women, the issues

brought up might never have been uncovered, or the topics discussed only covered through responses by men.

In general, the sexist messages and threats of violence towards women included jokes about women dying, getting back in the kitchen, questioning their fandom, talking about their physical appearance, and threats of violence towards strangers. Specific examples included telling someone to kill themselves, no response to unsolicited dick pictures, dismissals based on gender, harassment because they are a woman who tweets about basketball and forcing women to use second accounts or pose as men to get less harassment.

Responses by Women

Responses by women to harassment vary, some ignore harassment, some retweet or share some of harassment they receive. Some women have been blamed for looking for attention by sharing the harassment they receive. Some women get tired of sharing every single piece of harassment and only share selected messages. Other women outside of basketball twitter, in one example a woman who worked for a football team, also made sexist comments in response to a sexist article about a woman too cute to get run over by LeBron James. In the comments a woman said it was the woman's fault for not looking around and following the action. Women on basketball twitter pointed out the ways that these are misogynistic points of view, including saying what women should or shouldn't do, or saying she was "too cute" to move. Also, the writer of the article ended up deleting several tweets from the backlash they received. Rachelhoops pointed out that by

mentioning other women on basketball twitter the woman mentioned, Vodkalemonades, received more negative attention than normal. Rachel responded that she deals with that amount of negative attention every day.

Responses by Men

Men have responded to some of these instances but usually it is not in the same supportive way of other women. During the D'Angelo Russell recording of Nicky Young's infidelity towards Iggy Azelia, men either defended cheating, talked mostly about the sports implications and not the infidelity. Similarly, in how the media "sticks to sports" when not discussing football players with domestic violence charges. Infidelity happens all the time, according to Zach Lowe, leaked recorded confessions don't. And treatment of women in sports is worth discussing but as news, Nick Young is not news worthy. The distinction between reporting, and then opinion in talking points is made, it is different for different media outlets and reports who want to focus on different aspects of the case. The questions that came up for this is how the video was leaked to the public, probably through a friend that D'Angelo shared it with who then shared it outside his network. And the on the court implications of this type of action impacting a team's performance.

Some men respond, like Conrad Kaczmarek, and ask what the non-shitty men can do, they can call out others when they say these things, and try to counteract, support women and make them know they appreciated and respected. This overall stance can be differentiated by the lurker in that a lurker will just read and not respond to harassment,

when men can do is call out other men who do make those comments, and support women and any positive messages to encourage they stay and participate in basketball twitter.

Culture around Sexism

The culture around sexism starts with how men and women are discussed on basketball twitter. The point of view from millionaire athletes and the mostly men that cover them, to the women who date and marry these athletes, the cheating on the road, etc., and how women are talked about as possessions or accessories. Like the way women in sports are associated with their more famous husbands, like the girlfriend of Jozy Altidore winning the US Open, Sloan Stevens is just one example among many of women who are simply discussed differently than men. Also, female points of view are rare in sport media and on basketball twitter.

Women involved in the business of basketball have a stigma that they are trying to marry an athlete, or their significant others are insecure about them spending time around athletes.

There is a locker room vibe to twitter where men feel comfortable to tell off color jokes or jokes, they would only be comfortable telling other straight men, and minorities, including women can be made uncomfortable reading those messages. There is also the point of view to never read the comments, to make your account private, and ignore the

harassment, or create systems that make it easier for the harasser than for the one who is harassed.

Actions by women leaving

By not addressing harassment, high-profile power female users can leave twitter as well as lesser known women by just not tweeting anymore. Rachel hoops left twitter briefly a few times, and then deleted her account, and now keeps an Instagram account to discuss basketball. These are a few high-profile actions but there are subtle actions too of women just not tweeting as much or often, changing to alternate accounts, or generally being dissuaded to contribute content to basketball twitter.

9.4 Group Power Structure Discussion

RQ3. How, and to what extent, if at all, are these information practices shaped by the power structure of different group interactions in this community?

Rich and powerful people such as NBA owners, players, and media elites on twitter have the same ability as someone who just signs up for twitter. There are practices and mechanisms that make them different, but fundamentally, they are similar accounts with real-time discussion and the power that they have in the abstract is all the same.

In practice different groups have conflicts and the power structure from majority to minority or from higher status to lower status or from troll to responder to troll vary from different types on basketball twitter. In general, the NBA polices their own, including players for behavior that includes how and when to tweet. Players are also subject to control from sponsors, their team, and social media people on their behalf. Writers are also subject to control from editors, and journalistic standards, to report their sources and not report on rumors. Fans have few checks and balances, within a small community, it can be known who trolls are and who are not, but there are few checks from twitter itself to police the hate, vitriol, or harassment that fans can post to all the above groups.

This section defines those intergroup struggles between power groups, what the different sides of the arguments are, and how they usually form along group identity lines.

The most common argument or intergroup conflict is the anonymous insult or bullying between known subjects. Anonymous insults usually involve egg avatars which are

accounts, usually not tied to a real identity, without a picture, and usually they follow a pattern. Not many followers, maybe only following a few accounts, might search out terms and reply to each one with the same amount of hate or prejudice. Age range might include both teens and adults, the only way to find out more would be to see the content they create, and who else they follow online.

The known groups that insult each other are all groups to all other groups. Players make fun of how the media look, different types of media make insults to players, Mr.

Unreliable, calling KD a cupcake, fans burning jerseys, Skip or Steven A. Smith insulting a player, media insulting those media members. Recently there was a poll for NBA twitter to rate NBA writers, on writing talent, and there were 130K votes cast in about 24 hours and the stratification was a mix of popularity, opinion of writing excellence, and likability. Zach Lowe was # 1, followed by Woj, Stein, a few other national guys.

<https://www.allourideas.org/NBAwriters/results?all=true>, Lee Jenkins, then the national podcast crowd, then it included regional beat writers including a few from SB nation blogs, or bleacher report, or beat writers. The low end of the scale included writers I had never heard of mixed with national tv personalities that are hated, including Chris Broussard, Stephen A smith, and last on the list Skip Bayless. Kaileigh Brandt and Jade Hoye were included as well as Kacy Sager, who does write for a few blogs, but Kaileigh and Jade are on podcasts, Jade as a producer. This discussion arose during the offseason when CJ McCollum addressed ranking the media when disagreeing with how the media ranked NBA players, which it does every year. So far, no players have released their own rankings.

Writer relationships

This also includes podcast personalities and inter-fan relationships as well. For the national and local media who cover basketball, these people have relationships online, they read each other, talk to each other on podcasts, watch each other on TV, email, text, and chat together online or in private. There are some rules for ESPN personalities appearing on non-ESPN shows but for the most part, bloggers are free to pick and choose those that they want to appear on their shows for interviews or cohosts. The big picture is that national media know each other, the beat writers know each other but also some of the national writers, bloggers are less well known, TV personalities, even if not well known, are listened to, clipped out, and their content is shared.

Writers talk about the process of writing, but also the long-standing debate or argument about old school journalism with new school blogging, and players adding their points of view about “media” that might include social media, or any mention of the player online. From an outsider perspective it seems that even though the media follow athletes and interview them that the two groups are even more separated now than before. Players create their own media platforms to tell their own stories. Writers can cover stories while bloggers can cover whatever aspect they want, create or change narratives, multiple narratives that change all the time.

Specifically, there were two instances of power dynamics directly related between groups. The first was the spurs blogger ban from asking questions by Spurs PR. This is where each team and their context of popularity and winning and losing differ. Ethan

pointed this out on a podcast where he said when he started as a fan blogger for the Warriors, he had great access because the team wasn't that good, there was no one else asking the players questions. Spurs PR which part of the team is and thus part of the NBA, can decide who gets credentialed, and who gets to ask questions. The way that writers interact during player interviews but also to coaches is interesting in what they talk about, their relationship, and all the behind the scenes interactions. Regarding Coach Popovich, the difference in his in-game interviews to his before game interviews, his post-game interviews, his job security, and his view of the media and the San Antonio media market are unique. That is different than Zach Lowe interviewing Fred Vogel about watching film or breaking down plays.

There was another example of Sam Amico from Cleveland who stole content and published it as his own from Sactown Royalty, a Sacramento kings blog. Sam Amico said he was not stealing content, but "helping promote a garbage blog that no one otherwise reads." This is something that Rachelhoops also points out when her videos are used without attribution or at least a link to the original source. Online different media outlets have different rules for attribution or outright theft of content. Again, different power levels create conflict on how to source or attribute content.

The Wilbon Argument

It seems that recently, but maybe this was always the case, that writers have become more a part of the story. In conversations about basketball there is more now known about writers, their lives, boring or fascinating details, that are written in books, talked

about on podcasts, written online than ever before. The media job has changed, the coverage of the coverage, the meta-coverage, like the podcast *On the Media*, has created more content about the creation of content than ever before. The largest debate on basketball twitter has been between the “media” and “bloggers”.

Michael Wilbon, in a piece for the *Undeclared*, brought up how the media job has changed over time, which echoes many older writers and their times as beat writers for different NFL and NBA teams. Then he included his own opinion on current issues such as race in the media and the movement towards analytics. He posits that there are people skills involved in the people business, but also that he speaks for “black world” and that they are not feeling this analytics movement, and that players as well dismiss analytics and play off feel. NBA beat writers agreed about his take on personal communication skills that are needed to interview and tell interesting and fascinating stories. He has conflated his own story of covering basketball while not understanding analytics while also acknowledging that this not understanding of analytics will hinder some African-Americans in NBA front offices. In short, he can be both right and wrong on these two complex and intertwined topics.

The media job, especially the blogger job has changed, it is disproportionately straight white male in their 30s. The culture of basketball coverage is from that point of view and the culture around basketball coverage, the discussions on basketball twitter, mainly reflect the writer’s cultural point of view. There are few minorities and women first as basketball writers, but also as contributors to basketball podcasts, and basketball coverage in general, including fans on twitter. Race and diversity are an issue in sports

radio, as well as NBA front offices, and the main issue seems to be channels for minorities and women to reach these jobs not just from front offices and media not finding qualified candidates.

Race and Analytics

The argument Wilbon makes about analytics is that black people and analytics rarely mix, citing his own friends and barbershop talk. He is lumping in athletes and older people into this idea that feel, and emotion are more important than cold calculating numbers. Beat writers including Jeff McDonald pointed out that white guys at super cuts are not talking about analytics either. Even writers who use and cite these statistics rarely talk to other people in public about them. It is such a small group of people that do, but most writers at least look at or cite different measurements and have different levels of conversation about analytics on podcasts.

Casual vs Hardcore, statistics vs analytics

Wilbon's arguments about black people not feeling analytics or players playing off feel is an oversimplification of a complex topic. What most basketball writers on twitter concluded was that black people online do care and talk about analytics, just like white people, also no one, regardless of race talks about analytics with anyone in public.

The conclusion basketball twitter came to be was there is a marked difference between casual and hardcore fans, and the use and discussion around basic statistics or counting stats and advanced analytics. The casual fan might discuss a who should be MVP or who is going to win it all this year, or why they like a specific player or team. The hardcore

fan might discuss advanced statistics such as DRPM, win shares, plus minus lineups in a small number of minutes and the argument behind such predictions and calculations. Jeff McDonald, “‘Analytics’ are just a tool to help us understand and quantify what we’re watching. Not sure why that scares people.”

Recently someone posted a poll of how you would score yourself as trusting the eye test, or analytics or a mix of the two. Some people responded they slightly favor analytics, and someone pointed out that it should be a mix of the two. If statistics point something out, maybe the numbers are skewed in some way, maybe they can be explained in another way, or they reinforce what coaches have been saying for a long time. A great example is rookies contributing to winning basketball, they usually don’t, coaches know that, so they don’t play rookies, teams that play a lot of rookies are usually bad, and even rookies that put up counting stats, hurt the team with things that don’t appear in the box score. This is a point where that was conventional wisdom and the stats support it. It is rare for a rookie to have a positive impact on his team, and even then, I suspect the veterans around him might have more to do with that.

Power relationships in NBA

Those that work on the business side of basketball have different power and relationship dynamics from fans or writers of the NBA. Teams include ownership, general managers, players, and relationships with brands and social media managers.

When Sam Hinkie resigned or was fired depending on interpretation, basketball twitter fans and writers chimed in on the process being over, and the process of the NBA and ownership making a change for optics and having a better product on the court. Sam Hinkie had a different point of view of almost gaming the system, and in his resignation letter he cited different thinkers outside of basketball, risk takers, and sent it to the 76ers ownership group. It read more like an application and he did end up in academia at Stanford for a brief period. The public knowledge of this whole saga was unique and does not happen regularly. Sam Hinkie appeared on podcasts, was active on twitter, was the face of the 76ers and had 76er fans who were fans of his. This contrasts with many teams where the owner and GM are either unknowns or exist in the background, they are not former players, just mainly white men who are only known by writers who they talk to and NBA super fans. Hinkie became almost the face of the franchise at a time when their star players were injured, and their team was by far the worst in the league. How General Managers exist in the power web of fan expectations, ownership demands, monetary constraints, locale, culture, everything is complex, and often it is simplified where when the team loses the coach and or GM is usually fired. General Managers also have different pressures and expectations to win now vs rebuild, the treadmill of mediocracy was invented by a GM whose position was that it was easy to get stuck in the middle and be an average team for a long time. Recently talks of draft reform and revenue sharing changes have sought to address parity, teams making or losing money, and support for the NBA and individual team.

Kevin Durant and the Media

Players now have more power than ever before, some would argue, in that star players taking less money, or teaming up with other star players is more their decision than ownership or general managers to draft or make trades. Kevin Durant proved this by leaving OKC and joining the Warriors. Recently Durant was also “exposed” as using a private “burner” account to defend his position of leaving OKC, which he accepted the blame, noted that it was childish to respond to and moved on.

Certain players are more public with their comments while others mostly speak in clichés or general comments about fans and being excited for the season. Kevin Durant penned a short players tribune article for the decision to leave OKC and join the Warriors and seems to be someone who reads and cares what people think of him online. Matt Moore recently wrote that it made KD seem more like an everyman who also thinks of what other people saying incorrect things or being mean online. We want athletes to open but also be these ideal people who they honestly can never be. Each player, especially superstars worry about different things, and during different times in their careers, as rookies trying to stay in the league, as veterans trying to win a championship, trying to get a next big contract, NBA lifestyle, and off the court priorities like children and families.

KD brought up a point to the media, unprompted, that they were treating Kobe “like shit” and that he didn’t like it. Writers pointed out the confusion of bringing this up out of nowhere, and how it seems to bash the “media” in general and not a specific outlet or

person. With Russell Westbrook or Demarcus Cousins singling out a certain writer and not talking to them or threatening them, usually player media relationships are professional, some players and coaches give better or worse interviews, and players and coaches are covered unfairly dependent on circumstances such as winning and losing, local culture, and writer personalities. Sam Esfandiari pointed out that players might think social media is “the media” and someone posting a made-up quote or meme might be the same as writing an article for the NY Times or FiveThirtyEight.

Brands and Nate Jones

Nate Jones and Amin as well about rest for other teams such as the spurs side with teams making the most money in the way that benefits their interests. Amin uses the analogy of paying for pizza when it’s a competition. If some team rests players and loses a lot of games, that GM and coach will be fired, there are consequences to that. What are the consequences for the Orlando Magic to win 30 games each year with no roadmap to be any better in the future or the Sixers for tanking for multiple years? The NBA owners, players, media partners all have different and sometimes competing interests and Adam Silvers job is often to negotiate solutions between these parties.

Nate also points out the interests of branding and sponsors for Adidas, Damian Lillard and league wide issues from a business perspective. He did not see KD joining the Warriors because it didn’t make business sense to join a team with players of a different brand. Other writers have noted that players can make more money outside of basketball sometimes, with James Harden’s shoe deal, or KD’s new venture to invest in technology

firms. There are always competing forces behind every small decision in the NBA and like Nate Duncan points out, often there is misinformation or not complete information and there are often time sensitive decisions that are not seen by the general public. While NBA transactions are discussed during a level playing field once most moves are made, behind the scenes, moves or trades are discussed, multiple plans are made, and those plans affect each other as deals fall apart and new deals are struck.

Horse Gun

Nate Jones points out from a sponsorship perspective, sometimes you don't have to respond to every single news story or event. Often large brands have done their preparation for tweets, weeks or months in advance. The approval process for large brands often takes hours or days for approval of a single tweet, to clear legal exposure, as well as solicit opinion from multiple people. NBA teams and players must make the same decisions on what to tweet and not tweet every day. Some NBA players get in trouble for tweeting something, usually a joke or something that looks bad, but the player or someone in their inner circle who manages their account will think is sensible or on brand to tweet.

The Houston Rockets ex-social media manager Chad Shanks, who was fired after tweeting a picture of a horse and a picture of a gun, referencing the Dallas Mavericks whose mascot is a horse, took to twitter to defend his position. He acknowledged that he went too far and pushed the envelope but was grateful for finding his own voice online and looked forward to working in social media in the future. Social media managers can

be fired for taking these risks and being on the wrong side of public opinion. Often, they are also held to analytics for their jobs, which Megan Julian pointed out, is sometimes more a reflection of the team, the media market the team plays in, their history, and the number of fans they have across the country and around the world.

CHAPTER 10 CONCLUSION

10.1 Links to Literature Review

Organization Schemes

User created ways of developing an organization scheme for gourmet cooking were social constructed and were made up of binders, websites, clippings, books, and information areas (Hartel, 2010). For twitter most information is stored either on phones, computers, some folders, but mostly in the memory of users and group memory. In this way not, everyone must remember every gif and the context to use it, but see it regularly, use it semi-regularly and have your own organization system that includes folders for expressions, players, and teams. Since twitter has introduced native gif search, it is easier to just look up a gif each time it is needed, and not have to organize gifs to the same extent as before. Some people also never use or search out their own gifs and that might be more of a generational usage of twitter.

How twitter is viewed as well is a personal organizational choice. Which app, on which platform, at what time of day, and how those change throughout the day, or from game time live to dual screen usage or checking twitter during any downtime. Also, the organization of friends and followers with lists, who is blocked, muted, who has notifications turned on to receive their tweets as urgent messages. All these settings and nuance are user controlled as part of their media and overall sport consumption.

Social dimensions

Serious leisure activities such as quilting (Gainor, 2009), knitting (Prigoda & McKenzie, 2007), and coin collecting (Case, 2009) were all bounded by the social network of the participants and not on any one individual. On twitter, the social networks of the participants are tailored to their interest, in news, politics, specific sports, local news, celebrities, music, etc. These sub networks also include mini-celebrities that are followed by the entire sub network as well as personal links to users with smaller numbers of fans and followers. In basketball twitter in general, there is a hierarchy with the most followed writers, NBA players, team accounts, but there is great variance in individual fans lists, teams, players, writers, and other fans they follow and interact with. Various times throughout the year, someone will compile a list of who are the best people to follow for the NBA, and for each team specifically, and there are always new additions as writers move jobs, new users enter the community, and users change the focus of their twitter account. There is my own personal example of being heavily invested in the technology news community when Twitter was in its infancy, following the news and commentary and using twitter only for that community. Then over time moving away from that community and checking in from time to time but not following the same number of users as before or to the same extent.

Socio-economic status

Backpacking (Chang, 2009) and rubber duck collecting (Lee & Trace, 2009) both have a financial barrier to entry that would prohibit lower socio-economic status people from

participation. Low barriers to entry might also encourage different socio-economic backgrounds from communication online where the barriers include access to a cell phone or internet device. For twitter in general it includes those users who accessed the service through text messaging primarily and now through mobile applications and on desktop or laptop computers. The second screen experience would necessitate a first screen as well as a cable subscription or subscription to league pass which run upwards of hundreds of dollars. There are also illegal ways of streaming games online and through out of market or international sources. In basketball twitter, fans or users can and sometimes do watch games at home, in groups, at bars, live at the game, or following along solely through the information and highlights shared on twitter. Adam Silver in his remarks on league pass still stressed he wanted fans to buy the whole game, and the NBA will be selling single game streaming packages this year, while allowing the sharing of highlights on social media for free.

Groups of likeminded individuals

In online quilting websites, users self-select and choose to participate in these topics only if they have sufficient interest in the activity and community of creating and sharing specific quilting information (Gainor, 2009). Basketball twitter members simply need to tweet and start following other people who mostly talk about basketball to join the community. In that way users represent who they are through their bios but also the content they write as their posts. They are then drawn to follow and interact with other

like-minded individuals, in this case, other users that mostly write about basketball. Since basketball twitter has many sub groups, everyone can tailor who they follow to include or exclude different types of fans, different types of writers, or even who areas of discussion, for example analytics.

Group information

Professional, amateur, and public spheres interact in food blogging, the blogger in this context focuses on their own writing while the professional interacts with other professionals online (Andrew M. Cox & Blake, 2011). In basketball twitter similar interactions were professional media members would interact with each other, other professionals in the field, but also with fans. Then semiprofessional bloggers would interact with fans, and with others at different levels of celebrity. The rule seemed to be that those with the greatest number of fans or followers were more selective about replying at all to comments made towards them. While those with few fans and followers would interact more, and this was all dependent on individual personalities and preferences. Ethan Sherwood Strauss's "Team Retweet all compliments" shows that there are disagreements on how to comment and reply to others and Matt Moore has noted that as followers go up, the overall quality of mentions and communication goes down.

Internet Support

The Internet allows these communications to take place at all since before twitter, sports conversations were one-way broadcasts through TV, print, and radio or intimate

conversations in person between fans. The Internet allows users in different public, private, or amateur spheres to communicate with each other (A.M. Cox et al., 2008).

Basketball twitter specifically includes users from all spheres and what makes it different from other sports is the embrace it has from athletes, front offices, each team, and fans from different socioeconomic status groups, and from around the world to communicate with likeminded fans or fight endlessly against fans for other players and teams.

Social Learning and Situated Learning

Social learning among fans was not a focus of this study, while situated learning through media member's reflection was reported by multiple sources. Social learning includes behaviors, language, and interactions that are learned and socially constructed through group interactions over time (Bandura & McClelland, 1977). In basketball twitter these learned interactions over time were not a focus of the study. Situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) where new users are brought into groups, have conflicts that are resolved over time, and become veteran users was brought up by users that chronicled their time, usually after leaving the community. Adam Reisinger and Rachelhoops both quit basketball twitter due to toxic comments and negative attention from trolls. They both documented in short or long form blog posts their entire time on twitter, how they started, and how they moved through different stages of twitter use, giving themselves rules for how to use twitter and still get some enjoyment out of it. The rules included not looking

at mentions, discussion non-basketball related topics, moving to Instagram, and writing and collaborating with blog and podcasters. Rey-Rey commented that his own personal story of interaction on basketball twitter is similar in that there was a period of multiple interactions followed by fewer interactions and less use of the ecosystem.

Information Sharing and Needs

Information sharing includes the need to share information, best practices, and social ties among the professional, amateur, and public spheres (Andrew M. Cox & Blake, 2011). In NBA circles there is still private information that teams, and their personnel keep secret and off twitter, such as proprietary team tracking health or performance data and evaluation of their players and other players around the league. Beyond this, the information mostly shared on twitter is public data or private player or front office data that has been leaked to media or the media has been able to access this data through a third party. Public information includes NBA news, breaking news about players, game news, and opinion from fans, media, and NBA front offices. The sharing tendencies was not a focus on whether bloggers or traditional media shared each other's work the most. There was sharing and argument in both directions and the bulk of NBA twitter members seem to be from blog or podcast networks, larger mainstream media members have other channels, namely television, for opinion, rather than Twitter.

Serious leisure and information need includes the need for learning, finding specific information, information that is related to a task, finding levels of expertise, and socializing with others (Gainor, 2009). The bulk of information needs on basketball twitter fits under socializing with others while watching a televised entertainment program. Finding specific information is mostly found with active fans and bloggers, asking questions that can be looked up, or asking questions that experts might know the answer to, or asking questions to their followers or the larger basketball twitter universe.

Information Experience and Use

Different information is contextualized at different stages of the event (Chang, 2009; Hartel, 2010). In basketball twitter terms, during different times of the season, but even different times of the day during the season, reaction changes from live reaction, to different topics that are brought up by others, including long form articles, quotes from NBA players, or podcast topics are debated. At different stages, different actors in the network have different roles, to create news and content, react and share that content, or aggregate and consume that content. The availability and categorization of information for different levels of media, with statistics, reaction gifs, video, and emojis are organized by user and context.

10.2 Gap 1: Information Practices and Behaviors

Practice theory in general looks at tacit skills, knowledge, and understanding over more philosophical concepts such as belief, desires, and emotions (Cetina et al., 2005). This study of basketball twitter has also sought to answer conceptual questions of exactly how the community deals with power, or how relationships start and change over time, or how all this free work is made by a community who all loves basketball sustains itself. Rather than focus on individual points of views, their beliefs about social media or their philosophical views of fandom and media, which people on twitter also express, it focuses on how this specific crisis evolved or how did these two sides come into conflict over gender, or orientation in basketball and the discussion around it on twitter.com.

Communities of practice

Communities of practice (Hara & Kling, 2002) include professionals who create shared meaning, through informal support networks, to engage in collaborative knowledge building. These communities are usually in the workplace environment but include hobbyist communities such as knitting (Prigoda & McKenzie, 2007). The model that basketball twitter follows is not teacher and student but where everyone is a media producer and a media consumer. Even mainstream media members and national media create and consume news and opinion, maybe not to the same extent, but in similar ways to local media, bloggers, fans, players, and front office executives. ‘To join basketball twitter, simply tweet about basketball’, this sentiment has created a media community that can be tailor made to an individual’s preference, to see what they want, how they want, and with the people they want. There are few rules to participation, twitter itself is

mostly hands off, to some detriment, but the overall culture is like a sports bar culture but one that is open at all hours mixed with a media platform that anyone with news, opinion, jokes, can perform their messages, curate messages, or simply consume information.

Goffman Interaction Order and Interaction Ritual

Interactions here are described as social settings where an individual comes in contact with another person and attempts to influence their impression by altering their behavior (Goffman, 1959). Adam Reisinger talked about this in his blog post, “Why I Quit Basketball Twitter (And Why I’m Back... Kind Of)” where he talked about the messages to kill himself when he ran the ESPN NBA twitter account. In general, on twitter, users promote themselves and their own interests but what is often not talked about is all the drama that goes on behind the scenes. Rey-Rey talked about this as well when he said why he left or interacted less about basketball on Twitter. There are people’s lives that are lived as well, people get sick, injured, go through trauma, their lives intervene. The attempt to influence the impression of others seems to be the driver of so much narcissism online and especially on twitter. There are popular media people who have audiences they broadcast to, lower level media people who want more people to read what they write, and there are people at the lowest level, who just want recognition. It might be that drug of getting a response or likes on a post and getting used to it that keeps people addicted to social media. In basketball twitter terms, there is always breaking news to keep up on, or new live games to watch and react to, but besides all that, there is learned behavior on twitter where people perform their identities, and most users don’t

critically think about the attempts of influence altering their behavior with what they tweet and don't tweet.

10.3 Gap 2 Topic of Sport in Serious Leisure

From the six characteristics of serious leisure, (Stebbins, 1982), basketball twitter represents each characteristic. The first, the need to persevere at the activity is shown by the length of time the participants had engaged on twitter, for most it had been multiple years. The second, the availability of a leisure career, the availability of social media managers as jobs, and the aspect of journalism that involves interactions on twitter. The effort to gain skill and knowledge is found not only in the learning experiences of hardcore members as they gain followers, over time the problems and solutions they find with other users, but the work, skill, and knowledge that is found in the online activity of participation in basketball twitter and the surrounding actions such as reading articles, listening to podcasts, and first of all watching games. The realization of special benefits includes the relationships that are made in this online community, which translates into offline relationships, stronger media relationships, writing opportunities, sales opportunities, and primarily entertainment value that exists alongside the entertainment from the NBA. The unique ethos and social world come from the identity of basketball twitter participants, their view on other sub cultures from other sports, politics, and news creates a unique identity. The attractive personal and social identity would contrast with negative attention of trolls and anonymous users online. The positive social identity is

tied to content, positive reinforcement of tweets, the sense of community and shared experience by watching and reacting to the same content at the same time.

10.4 Gap 3: Context of Serious Leisure Information Practices Online

Past twitter studies have looked to create broad conversation types, channels of communication, types of users, and how users differ in their use and sharing strategies (Naaman, Boase, & Lai, 2010a). Meformers and Informers are useful to think of broad psychological models of those who tweet more about themselves or about the broader information world. These studies can look at a slice of a user or timeline and categorize their use in these ways. Twitter is also a public performance and the strategies these meformers in particular share with celebrities include branding, target audience, interactions, authenticity (Marwick, 2011). What twitter studies could learn from long term ethnographies is how users start or how long-term users leave and exactly why they leave. There are a few specific examples such as Rachelhoops and Adam Reisinger who wrote about the harassment they received, and how their usage changed over time, causing them to leave, or quit and return under different circumstances. Tweets then have cumulative effects in how they cause a community to bond and come together, or slowly cause members discomfort to the point of leaving the community. Much is also made of specific features that Twitter can implement to address harassment by blocking, muting, and reporting tweets and users, but there are also the overall timeline constraints of those features not being enough for mostly minority users.

There are also the power dynamics of those with many users stealing content from those with few users. The example of Sam Amico stealing content from the fan blog Sactown Royalty shows how celebrity users can steal content without reprimand from anyone on twitter. There are no journalistic rules baked into twitter. Content can be stolen, and then the burden is on the end user to talk to the thief or media entity to take the content down. Rachelhoops also brought this up regarding Bleacher Report and other aggregators of online video clips of hers.

Sport and Social Media

Sport on social media has the broad information themes of debate over information, news, sharing of information, and sharing of personal stories (Sullivan et al., 2012). What is not discussed as much is the simplification of these complex topics into 140 characters. The example from concussion topics on twitter is how concussion news is shared, managing and downplaying the severity, which are more general topics. The themes that involved specific information needs were found less often, which makes sense, there are more fans than there are doctors who deal with multiple concussions on twitter. Because of the nature of twitter as a place to share the latest news and opinion, there is often not time to get into complex arguments with two or more sides to a debate.

This is seen in the intersection of sports and politics, including but not limited to, NBA protests of racial inequality, police brutality, the NFL and domestic violence, concussion protocols, and kneeling for the National Anthem. Specifically, for basketball twitter,

there are those in the community who bring in and share news from sites that discuss political statements, especially going forward how sports and politics intersect more and more. There are some users who embrace sports because it is not political, but those two spheres might overlap more and more in the future.

Athlete self-media on Instagram

Related to Goffman's presentation of self (Goffman, 1959) where athletes online can express their identity with how they view themselves is shown through a few examples including LeBron James, Kevin Durant, and Lamarcus Aldridge. LeBron James expressed himself during his first years in Miami as a villain, and he has since changed that point of view through his actions and demeanor on social media. Currently he "acts" like a dad to his kids, by being goofy or joking with his friends and family or "unbothered" by the drama that goes around his team, instead focusing on working out, drinking wine, and spending time with friends. Kevin Durant is a different example and is in a different stage of his life. He was found using alternate accounts to defend himself online, confessed to using them, and since then many people have joked at how thin skinned, he must be to want to defend himself online. That is another option that players have, to search out and read everything about them online, and have heated exchanges with fans and other players. Another strategy is Lamarcus Aldridge who tuned out or turned off comments from his Instagram page, probably because of the criticism he was getting from fans who disliked him and his performance. Then he turned them back on and seems to want to at

least let fans write comments. It is unknown the extent to which he reads each comment or message. Different players take on different identities of how they view themselves, and these identities are not static, the player can be traded, sign with a new team, age and start playing less or move up and down the rotation and all of this impacts their identity as athletes and their identity on social media.

Sexualization of female fans

Women are often represented in sport media for the physical beauty and sex rather than sport ability, objectification of female athletes includes body normalization where beauty and perfection are held as the standard of women (Riebock & Bae, 2013). In terms of female fans of basketball on twitter, the objectification of women includes, being harassed online, threats of physical violence, unsolicited pictures of male genitalia, and an overall sexist culture around men and women on sport that is shown in slight nuanced ways. The Free Darko example showed how underreported some of these actions are and how twitter and men in general turn a blind eye towards this type of behavior. Few female writers and fans speak up about the harassment they receive and some are shamed for wanting the attention. Some female fans leave the environment from too much harassment.

Black and gay male athletes

Black and gay male athletes are both minority subcultures that share some minority versus majority inequality (Anderson & McCormack, 2010). In similar ways that women

as the minority in sport fandom are harassed, black males in position of power in the NBA are in the minority, and gay players and referees are in the minority of people who work in the NBA. The coverage of Jason Collins as being an out gay athlete was like some predicted, a story for a while and then it went away. After he retired, he seems to be someone other gay athletes and NBA personnel turn to with LGBT issues. The story of Bill Kennedy and Rajon Rondo's anti-gay slurs were another tale of a majority and minority issue. And what could the league who has the power in this situation do? In this case it was a workplace harassment issue, and the league has since strengthened the power to fine and suspend players for using gay slurs, a way the institution of basketball is changing with the times, and in some ways reflecting more on the politics of their fan base. The NBA is good at recognizing where they have opportunities to grow, make the game better, and make the league better, and have done so with complex issues so far.

Virtual worlds of escape

Virtual worlds are defined as spaces with worldness, persistence, multiple users, and embodiment is characteristic of users (Boellstorff et al., 2012). What is often overlooked is the distinct separation between reality and fantasy in these worlds. Current events rarely affect virtual games since in game events are built around a whole other world. Twitter has changed, culturally, in that before, subcultures could be more insular. They could only share information from a skateboarding community for instance, without referencing or political news or current events. Twitter now has even more references

between current events and sports and people share their opinion and reaction to each of these spheres more and more together. Gwiss on twitter shared, “I just want the world to go back to where most of my energy can be towards basketball and movies and music without constant dread.” Many have pointed this out, and the feeling of sticking to sports also feels intertwined with pushing away from political and current events. Childhood nostalgia that is tied to teams and players might change as fans age, and with more shared on social media, the quantity of bad news, overreaction, and constant dread that comes from a 24/7 news cycle might drive some towards new areas of where energy can be directed to spheres of interest without dreadful news.

10.5 Gap 4: Gap in Virtual Ethnography

In terms of previous methods used by others in Serious Leisure studies, diary studies with multiple coders (Elsweiler et al., 2010), semi-structured interview questions over the telephone (Fulton, 2009), and ethnography in the home with around 20 subjects (Hartel, 2010), they all used different methods to look at user behavior in Library and Information Science. After conducting a study of basketball twitter, having in depth interviews of 20 subjects might not have caught the minority or female side of twitter without an equal number of interviews on each side, or multiple minority or female only check ins. What ended up finding richer results was a broad following, where then smaller under reported stories were found, then more people followed in those circles and more attention to a specific group, in this case minority and female fans and media. There were also numerous interview questions that were answered publicly through podcasts, interviews

online in text, and interview questions through podcasts that at least referenced the topics. The lack of minority and female voices in NBA podcasts and writing online is apparent, but also growing as more women and minorities use social media to enter the conversation. This will continue to be a growth area for the NBA with their fan base, having media that share the same background as fans could only be a positive.

Strengths

The strengths of virtual ethnography in this context includes lurking on other people's public but not quite public conversations. These are public in that they are posted online for any follower to see, but sometimes having few followers means that conversations are not highly read or followed. Also, conversations between users are only visible if they are both followed, and the reader has the correct settings to the these back and forth conversations. Saved and archived tweets before they are deleted are also a positive since they can be referenced, especially when users delete tweets, their whole account, or block and leave their tweets hidden or private.

Another strength is the time to find and make connections between relationships, and how they change over time. Each person's individual twitter is curated by them over time. They decided who to follow, who to interact with, and how to interact with what works and what doesn't work for them. The culture running though basketball twitter is what started with Daily Dime live, a precursor to live twitter sports reaction, a live chat with basketball bloggers around the NBA, sharing their live commentary on games. DDL has since been decommissioned but the spirit, the jokes, and for a large part the writers,

even though they have moved on to different publications, have maintained their relationships to other writers. Again, they are mostly straight white men in their 30s, now 40s.

Weaknesses and Limitations

The possible problems with this survey of basketball twitter is the surfeit of data. There was too much data collected, from too many people, on too many topics. There were subcultures that might have been glossed over, particularly the political undertones of certain users and the LGBT users and what kind of messages they may have received. Also, by not following every single person that talks about basketball on twitter, there is an underreporting of what casual sports fans who might tweet occasionally about basketball might post.

The limitations of lack of interviews to go over nuance, with such famous writers at ESPN and other outlets, that is understandable. What helped immensely was the found interviews online and through podcasts which asked many of the questions I would have asked and found or addressed minority view points through race, gender, and sexual orientation.

Future Study

A future study into basketball twitter would require interviews, hopefully small in person group interviews with different fan and writer mixes, to talk about their own personal experiences on twitter. With basketball twitter populated by so many writers, their self-reflective posts get at some of these issues, but like “stick to sports” culture, many writers

stick to their jobs as writers and post less about their family situation or meta-theory of how or why NBA fans and writers spend so much time with each other on basketball twitter.

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Appendix

Chapter 5

5.1 Information Sharing

Section 5.1.3




5.2 Information reaction

5.2.1 Memes






5.2.2 Jokes




Nick Moyle @NRMoyle · Apr 6
Damn, even Hinkie didn't trust his own "Process."




Marc Stein @ESPNSteinLine


ESPN sources say Sam Hinkie has stepped down from his posts in Philadelphial



1




Robby Kalland @RKalland · Apr 6
RIP the process






6
18





whitney @its_whitney · Apr 6
So about that process




Marc Stein @ESPNSteinLine

ESPN sources say Sam Hinkie has stepped down from his posts in Philadelphial




4
7




Marc Stein @ESPNSteinLine · Apr 6
ESPN sources say Sam Hinkie has stepped down from his posts in Philadelphial



1.5K
926





5.2.3 Improvisation

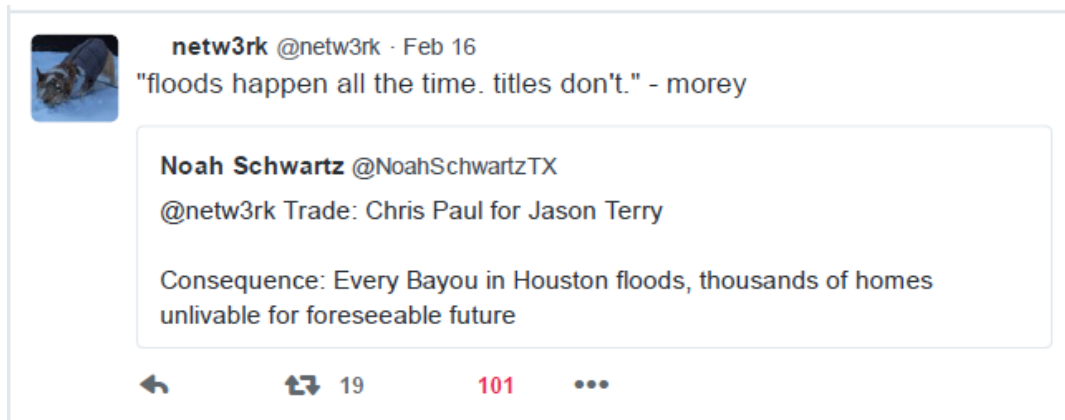


Robert Silverman @BobSaietta · Feb 16
This is my fave part of the NBA trade deadline: @netw3rk's conversion to chaotic evil.





























netw3rk @netw3rk

monkey's paw trade machine: a device powered by dark magic by which any player can be traded to any team but w unexpected evil consequences



3




5.2.4 Reactions to events

	Chris Herring @HerringWSJ · Jan 20 With the win, NY is back to .500, at 22-22.		 43	89	
	Zach Lowe @ZachLowe_NBA · Jan 20 Nice win for the Knicks. Utah's off-ball D really hurt them. Couldn't help on Melo and recover to 3-point shooters w/ any coordination		 38	151	
	David Vertsberger @_Verts · Jan 20 That was fun.			1	
	Chris Herring @HerringWSJ · Jan 20 Knicks come back from 13 down to beat Utah in OT. Melo finishes with 30, 7 rebs and 9 assists. Lopez had 22 and 12. Williams with 19 and 6.		 71	65	
	Kevin McElroy @knickerbacker · Jan 20 Now that is a nice January win.			1	
	Jim Cavan @JPCavan · Jan 20 GREAT win.		 1	2	
	Hardwood Paroxysm @HPbasketball · Jan 20 Great win for teh Knicks		 2	13	

5.2.5 Philosophical tangents



Jim Petersen @JimPeteHoops · 23 Dec 2015

When is this insanity going to stop? Can we get a standard for calculating advanced stats?

BASKETBALL REFERENCE

Rk	Team	Age	PW	PL	MOV	SOS	SRS	ORtg	DRtg	Pace
1	Golden State Warriors	27.5	23	4	13.37	-1.59	11.78	115.0	101.7	99.7
2	Oklahoma City Thunder	26.0	21	7	7.86	-0.52	7.34	110.6	102.5	96.0
3	San Antonio Spurs	30.7	25	4	13.21	-1.48	11.73	108.8	94.7	93.9

NBA

Team	GP	MIN	OffRtg	DefRtg	NetRtg	AST/TO	ASTRatio	OREB%	DREB%	REB%	TmTOV%
Golden State Warriors	27	48.6	113.3	98.1	15.2	1.80	20.3	26.6%	75.7%	52.6%	15.7
Oklahoma City Thunder	28	48.5	108.1	95.2	8.8	1.34	15.0	29.7%	75.2%	54.3%	16.0
San Antonio Spurs	29	48.0	106.8	92.8	13.9	1.81	19.4	23.0%	80.7%	53.6%	14.6

STATS INC.

2015-16 Team Leaders (S

Team	Poss	ORtg	DRtg	NetRtg
1 Golden State Warriors	2735	114.5	101.3	13.2
2 Oklahoma City Thunder	2734	110.0	102.0	8.0
3 San Antonio Spurs	2746	107.9	94.2	13.7



15

26



Seth Partnow @SethPartnow · Apr 20

That's literally every dude on NBA Twitter, so that's a strange shot to take.

JoseRibeiro @JCR_Producer

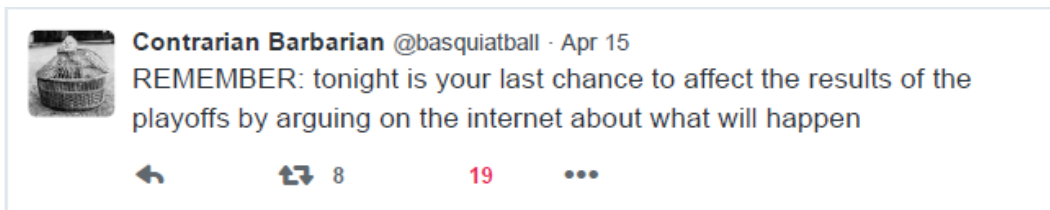
@SethPartnow there is always a twitter dude that thinks he so much smarter about basketball than professional coaches



13

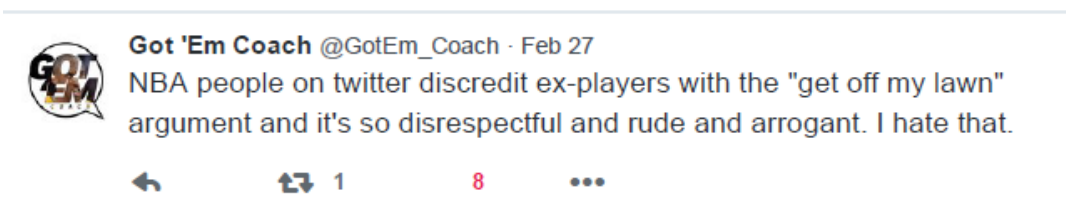
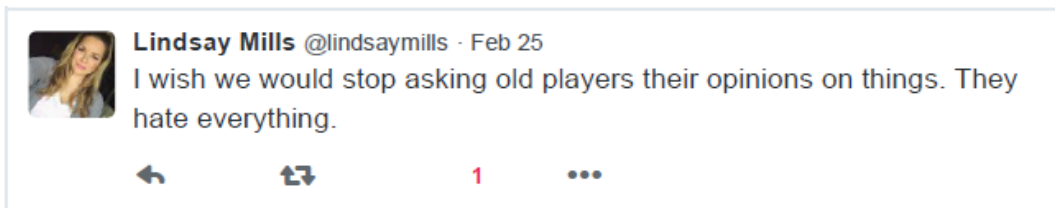
46





Wrath, according to Dante, was a twin sin to sullenness. He wrote that they both came from the same essential error: Wrath is rage expressed, sullenness is rage unexpressed. And he condemned both the sullen and the wrathful to the Fifth Circle—where, in a foul marsh, the wrathful attacked each other unendingly, without ever winning; while the sullen sat beneath the murk and stewed and scowled and acted aloof. Rarely has there been a better description of Twitter.

5.3.2 Tropes

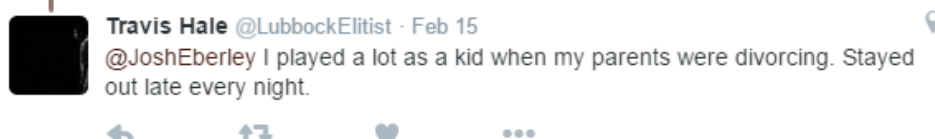
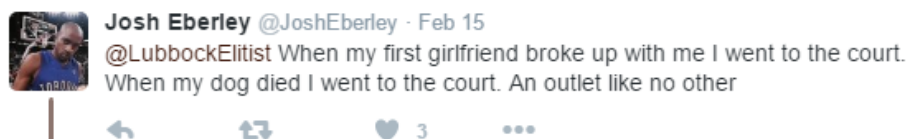
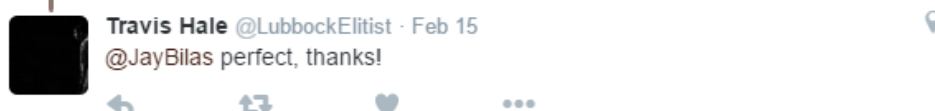
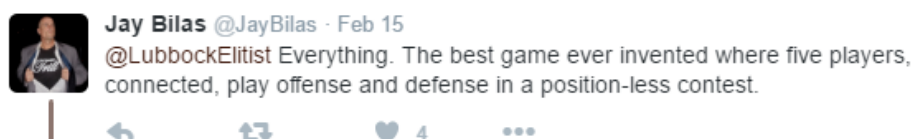


5.3.3 Sound bites and context

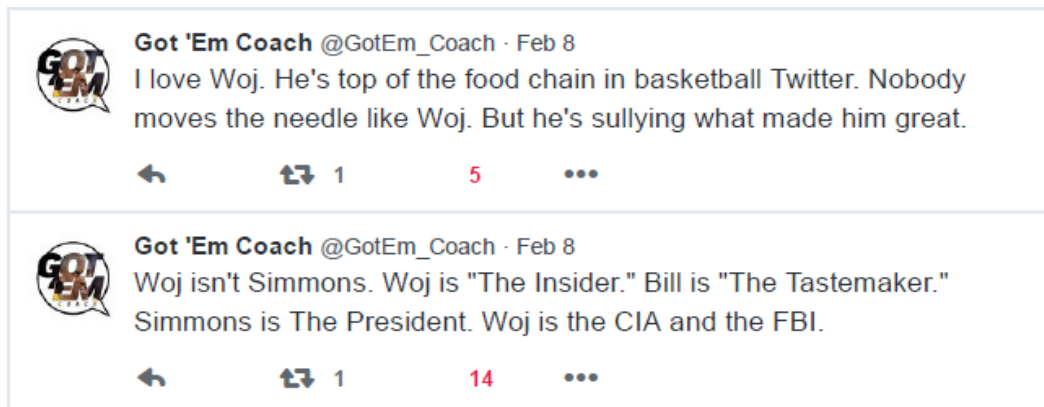


"All it really takes to be part of [NBA Twitter] is to tweet about basketball and be followed by other people who are part of NBA Twitter," said writer and prominent NBA Twitter voice [Ezekiel Kweku](#). "This seems obvious but that makes it less nebulous and more accessible than some other Twitter subcultures. During games, it's like watching in a dive bar that's got the funniest and most insightful fans available," said Keweku, who tweets at @theshrillest, "The NBA has been an oasis for me both IRL and on social media. I have a basketball list that I've curated to click over to... when the barrage of bad news on my main timeline gets to be too much."

5.4.2 How Basketball Twitter Self-Identifies



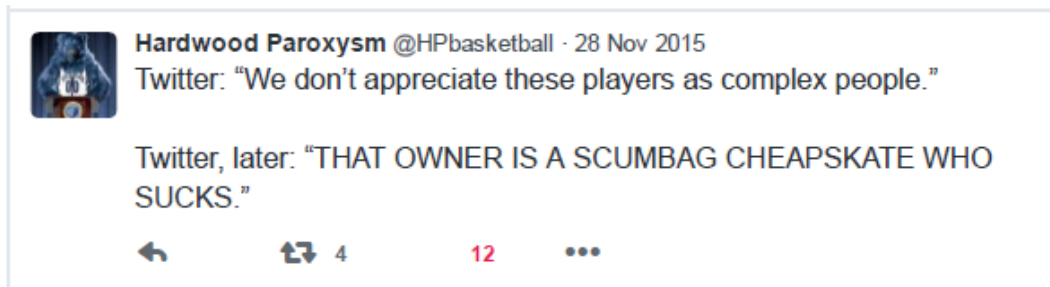
5.4.3 How Basketball twitter is organized



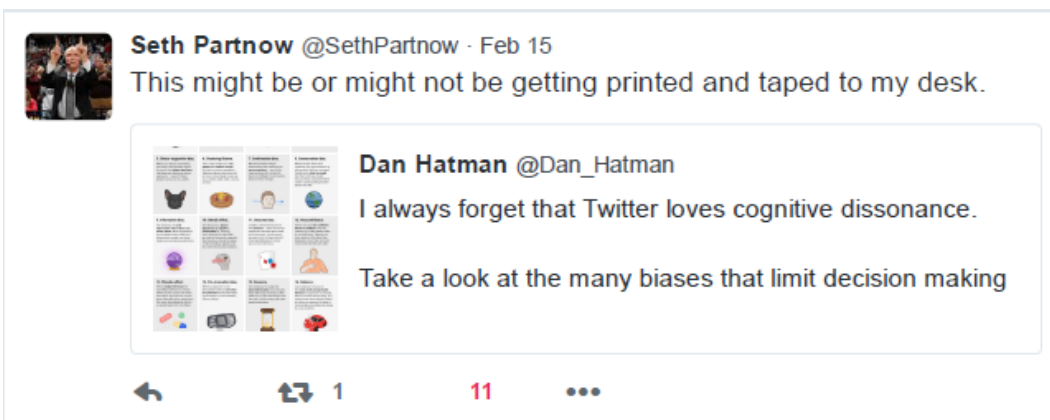
5.6.1 Fan types



5.6.2 Twitter Oversimplifications



5.6.3 Fan Psychology



Chapter 7

7.1 Dominant culture

**Bethlehem Shoals**

@freedarko

I don't care how many children Pat Smith lost I would like to beat her to death.

7:30 PM · 18 Jul 16

**Carter Rodriguez** @Carter_Shade · 13h

@ashleyxholcomb @lindsaymills @brownasthenight @francisadujr nothing like painting yourself into a corner and DOUBLING DOWN, BABY



1

**Bethlehem Shoals** @freedarko · 16h

Guys I'm sorry if that was in poor taste of me but that Pat Smith speech made my blood boil and was frankly exploitative of tragedy.




26



 **Kristen Ledlow** @KristenLedlow · Feb 6
...you can always mute your TV, as I've now muted your tweets.


Jonathan @Jonatha66595563
@KristenLedlow I hate the sound of your voice but you're hot

👤 22 142 ⋮


 **Haralabos Voulgaris** @haralabob · Apr 15
#blocked.

Bean @Heens4
@haralabob @ZachLowe_NBA who cares what @coachthorpe thinks ? he has a flimsy (at best) hoops resumé and is a joke in league circles.

👤 1 43 ⋮


 **Amin Elhassan** @AminESPN · 14 Dec 2015
Not to be insensitive, but I didn't know Billy Kennedy was in the closet to begin with.

👤 6 16 ⋮

 **Greg Wissinger** @gwiss · 14 Dec 2015
Defending Rondo's actions is defending homophobia. I'm not going to stand for it. Don't bring it into my mentions.

👤 4 23 ⋮

7.2.2 Soap Opera Aspects of Swaggy and Iggy

 **Rachel G.** @Rachel92Lauren · Mar 31
Why does the NBA feel more like an E! reality show than a sports league lately?

👤 2 ⋮



7.2.3 Jeremy Lin



7.3.1 Insults and Responses



rachael @RachaelHoops · 13 Nov 2015
 girl posts something about basketball
 twitter: kill yourself you fucking slut


 1
  8
 



rachael @RachaelHoops · 13 Nov 2015
 only got told to kill myself twice today. nice.



 4
 



Conrad Kaczmarek @ConradKaz · Apr 27
 But we can do a much better job supporting the women that we care about. Make sure that they know how much they're appreciated & respected.


 14
  30
 



Conrad Kaczmarek @ConradKaz · Apr 27
 We might not be able to eliminate every hateful, harassing comment that women face on the Internet or on the street BUT


 4
  17
 

7.3.2 Sexist Articles and POV



rachael @RachaelHoops · 17 Dec 2015

now this piece of shit is deleting his tweets



BlackSportsOnline
@BSO



BlackSportsOnline
@BSO

LeBron Destroys Woman Who
Thought She Was Too Cute to
Move (Video) bit.ly/1Pa24OP



_adies don't do this, you aren't
pretty to get ran over. lol

BlackSportsOnline @BSO



LeBron Destroys
Woman Who Thoug
She Was Too Cute



4

7



Khalassi @rawan · 17 Dec 2015

women shouldn't go to basketball games women shouldn't smile
women shouldn't breathe



rachael @RachaelHoops · 17 Dec 2015

"learns her lesson" lmao goodnight. i am done.

↩ in reply to @BigAlKnows



Aly @_brookealyss

53s

@BigAlKnows pay attention and move!



Aly @_brookealyss

4m

Hope she's alright ...also hope she learns her lesson



Aly @_brookealyss

5m

Man when I worked at NSU during football season... I was very careful on that sideline

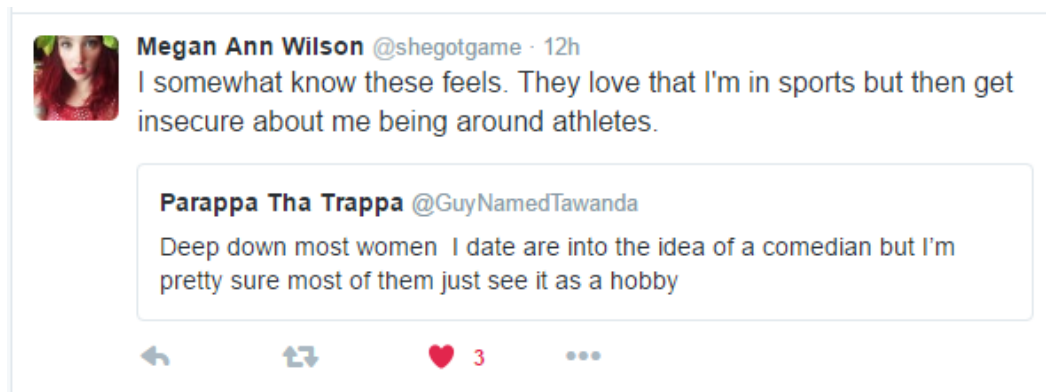


5









7.3.4 Looking for Attention








7.3.6 Fans Leaving after Harassment



RUSS BENGTON @russbengtson · Feb 24
 Goddammit

Bruce Arthur @bruce_arthur
 Twitter loses a female, high-profile power user over not addressing harassment RT @BoobsRadley: Bye for now. <3







 1
 


Bruce Arthur @bruce_arthur · Feb 24
 Twitter loses a female, high-profile power user over not addressing harassment RT @BoobsRadley: Bye for now. <3



 19
 
 15
 


Ashley Holcomb @ashleyxholcomb · Mar 2
 what if it was your kid, sister, or mother... giving a shit about women shouldn't involve this line of thinking

Joe cardoso @cright
 @scATX @ashleyxholcomb Men who have morals and respect need to pick the slackers up and show them what NOT to do. What if that was your kid?



 6
 
 13
 



Ashley Holcomb
@ashleyxholcomb



Following

I've been told I'm looking for attention in pointing it out.

Jessica Luther @scATX

.@ashleyxholcomb I only very rarely anymore share examples of harassment bc people generally blame you for acknowledging its existence

RETWEETS

3

LIKES

5



8:52 PM - 2 Mar 2016



Chapter 8

8.1 Insults, Trolls, and Bullying



mattcooper3 @mattcooper3

18m

@thekidet how come you ruin the nba for me?



evan turner ✓

@thekidet

@mattcooper3 how come you ruin Twitter bios for me? You're not leading Twitter in any statistical category

12/21/15, 11:34 PM



Amin Elhassan ✓

@AminESPN



Following

Haha I just remembered the time Solomon Hill got salty in Twitter bec I said he look like he goes straight to the club in full uniform

RETWEETS

8

LIKES

27



9:37 PM - 21 Dec 2015





8.2 Media Relationships





Hardwood Paroxysm @HPbasketball · 24 Nov 2015

I used to rely on numbers and thought that energy/heart/chemistry were all nonsense cliches. It changes when you start talking to guys.



8

15



Hardwood Paroxysm @HPbasketball · 24 Nov 2015

It's one reason I'm so amused talking to credential newbie @Adam_Mares. He discounts all "effort/energy/heart" stuff in favor of strategy



1

4



Hardwood Paroxysm @HPbasketball · 24 Nov 2015

So when the blogger view is "THE KINGS ARE INSANE" and the local view is "THIS IS ALL FALSE NARRATIVE" there's truth in the gray area.



3

4



Jeff McDonald @JMcDonald_SAEN · 24 Nov 2015

Interesting: People with no access think access doesn't matter and the people with access think it's all that matters. They're all wrong.



1

13



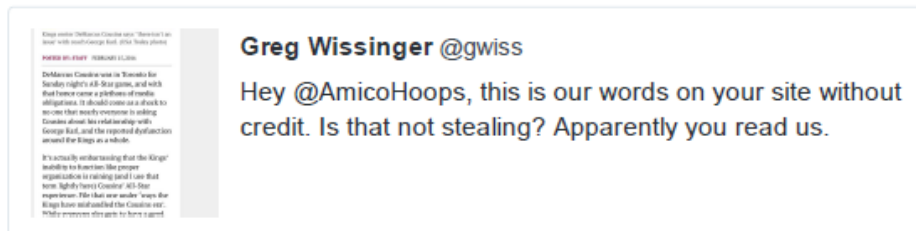


8.2.3 Stealing Content



Sactown Royalty @sactownroyalty · Feb 17

Oh hey... that's our work. Surely you must have just forgotten to cite us. We'll just let you know and it'll be cool...





Sactown Royalty @sactownroyalty · Feb 17

How @AmicoHoops responds when he's called out for not crediting the original source of his aggregated content...

@gwiss @brownasthenight Lol. No one was stealing content. I was helping promote a garbage blog that no one otherwise reads.

7:29 PM · 17 Feb 16

8.3.1 Race and Analytics



Amin Vafa @AminNBA · 24 Nov 2015

Dear out of touch sportswriters: blogging is not done in moms' basements. It's done at white collar desk jobs during extended lunch breaks.



31



87



Amin Vafa @AminNBA · 24 Nov 2015

And frankly, this should be something older generation writers should resent more. Someone doing your job as a hobby is an economic threat.



7



23





Jeff McDonald @JMcDonald_SAEN · 24 Nov 2015

People are distracted by Wilbon's "mother's basement" comment, but here he's mostly right: thebiglead.com/2015/11/24/mic...

"Learn how to talk to people face to face," Wilbon said. "Stop texting for a minute, stop emailing. Learn how to have a conversation with people. Learn how to pick up a phone and do it if you can't do it in person...let them see you. You see them. Personal interaction. This is a people business. And learn how to tell a narrative. And you don't need advanced analytics to do it. Learn how to tell a story...if you can't tell a story without relying wholly on statistical information, then that means you can't tell a damn story. The best storytellers in my life were people who weren't journalists. They were people, old folks, who could sit by the fireplace and just keep you riveted. They didn't have any stats."



5

13



A Devious Plot @play_on_verbs · 21h

i didnt like the implication that black people and numbers dont mix. that offended me

tricity. @Tricity_

My thing with that undefeated piece: it ain't just "black folk" who don't rock with adv. stats. Majority sports fans dont



1



2





Patrick Claybon @PatrickClaybon · 21h

Yup...and how would they use it as a means of exclusion?

by using Wilbon's logic that "we" don't like it.

Ian Dougherty @IanDougherty

I did think Wilbon had a great point about the potential for analytics to be used as means for exclusion of minorities by NBA front offices.

↩️ ↺️ 7 ❤️ 14 ⋮



Vann R. Newkirk II @fivefifths · 21h

That's a bingo

Bun Flowers @Rxbun

@fivefifths Wilbon missed the point.. he shoulda gone to sloan and written about how it's 99.99 white guy. That's the issue.

↩️ ↺️ 11 ❤️ 13 ⋮

8.3.2 Casual vs Hardcore Fans



Pizza's Intellect @NekiasNBA · 23h

As smart as Mike Wilbon is, that piece wasn't informative. He set out to prove his own ignorance of a subject that annoys him. Period.

↩️ ↺️ 8 ❤️ 14 ⋮



Tweetgood Mac @SnottieDrippen · 23h


Exactly what it is. "Get off my lawn" writer disguises his fear of numbers behind some BS


Drew Dinkmeyer @DrewDinkmeyer

@SnottieDrippen that piece felt like an op-ed posed as investigative




↩️ ↺️ 5 ❤️ 7 ⋮


8.4.1 General Managers

In reply to  netw3rk

 **Amin Vafa** @AminNBA · Apr 7

@netw3rk this wasn't a screed, either. It's a research paper w/an abstract, subheadings, and citations. Clearly written over a few days/wks





  3  [View conversation](#)

 **Zach Lowe** @ZachLowe_NBA · Apr 6

Again, what I had heard consistently, for weeks, and why I asked the question on the podcast.

Adrian Wojnarowski @WojVerticalNBA

Sources: Ownership had not planned to fire Hinkie. They believed he would accept another high-level executive on a level plane with him.

  40  158 

8.4.2 Player Created Media

 **Robert Silverman** @BobSaietta · 30 Nov 2015

So we're going to spend the day talking about media bashing, huh? Cool, cool.

statement last night. He's a guy you grow test thoughts when you heard this would lie Kobe Bryant. I studied him, wanted to be ill toward the end of his career with the Wizards. I've been disappointed this year because you go I have it about how bad he's playing, how bad he is one of our legends the site and I didn't really now that he decided to retire after this year. It's an amazing career, a guy who changed the game so much to the game of basketball. Sources brilliant, brilliant, intelligent man. Sad to see hi

Anthony Slater @anthonyVslater

Kevin Durant on the criticism of Kobe: "You guys treated one of our legends like sh** and I didn't really like it"

  1 



Ethan Strauss @SherwoodStrauss · 1 Dec 2015

Thing is, it IS the media. That's what social media's all about

sam esfandiari @samesfandiari

Sometimes I feel like athletes read their Twitter mentions and consider that the media



17



Hardwood Paroxysm @HPbasketball · 30 Nov 2015

I continue to be confused why Kevin Durant has enmity towards the media. If it's just on others' behalf, OK. But he hasn't gotten a raw deal



23



Nate Jones @JonesOnTheNBA · Feb 2

I don't believe it makes business sense for him to be just another guy with someone he competes with in marketing.

Aristotle Sharp @Team_Sharp

@JonesOnTheNBA this would hurt the league. Durant will never go there anyways, he is to much of a brand himself. 2nd fiddle? no.



7



Nate Jones

@JonesOnTheNBA



Following

There's a responsibility that comes when teams and brands invest in you. Don't be the guy that gets the deals and then mails it in.

RETWEETS

2

LIKES

7



9:27 PM - 8 Dec 2015



8.4.4 Social Media Managers

**Chad Shanks**

@chadjshanks

Follow

Sometimes you can go too far. I will no longer run @HoustonRockets but am grateful to the organization that let me develop an online voice.

2:24 PM - 29 Apr 2015

725 555

**Chad Shanks**

@chadjshanks

Follow

I did my best to make the account the best in the NBA by pushing the envelope, but pushed too far for some and for that I apologize.

2:26 PM - 29 Apr 2015

513 465

**Chad Shanks**

@chadjshanks

Follow

I hope there's another organization out there in need of someone willing to take chances and create engaging social content. I hope.

2:27 PM - 29 Apr 2015

441 617