

The Typology of American WNBA Transnational Sport Labor Migrants

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Abstract

Within the area of sport labor migration, the motivations of women athletes as sport labor migrants has been limited (Maguire, 2004). According to Maguire and Bale (2013), “sport labour migration is not, then, a uniform experience. It has its own political economy” (p. 77). Therefore, only understanding the experiences and motivations of men as sport labor migrants may leave many with a skewed perspective on the motivations of a sport labor migrant. Within this paper you will find an expanded typology of sport labor migration, which was created based on collected data from Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) transnational sport labor migrants. According to the results of this study, WNBA sport labor migrants did not fit in with the already established typologies of sport labor migration research presented by Maguire (1996) and Magee and Sugden (2002). This paper provides comprehensive understanding of the influences and motivations of women athletes, specifically American WNBA players, who migrate overseas and play their sport professionally.

Introduction

The globalization of sport has afforded many athletes, coaches, managers, and administrators the opportunity to travel around the world. These sport professionals have often been referred to as sport labor migrants (McCree, 2014; Olin, 1984). Sport labor migration is not a new phenomenon and research within the discipline has grown since the Boseman ruling in 1995. The Boseman ruling was a European Union (E.U.) ruling that set a precedent in 1995, which allowed free-agent players to freely move to different sports teams throughout Europe and negotiate their salary. This ruling led to the increased sport labor migration of foreign nationals throughout the E.U. and enabled club teams in Europe to field players from various countries outside of their host country (Frick, 2009).

Within the area of sport labor migration, the experiences and motivations of women athletes as sport labor migrants has received limited attention and more research is needed (Maguire, 2004). According to Maguire and Bale (2013), “sport labour migration is not, then, a uniform experience. It has its own political economy” (p. 77). Women’s sport labor migration has received limited scholarly attention and the majority of data on sport labor migration, including existing typologies, is based on the experiences of male athletes (Magee & Sugden, 2002; Maguire, 1996; Lafranchi & Taylor, 2001; Stead & Maguire, 2000). Women athletes have yet to become significant research participants within the sport labor migration scholarly literature and according to Maguire (2011):

The movement of sport labour is predominantly, though not exclusively, the preserve of men. Men’s ability to move over time and across space is based on a patriarchal structure portrays women as the ones performing domestic labour, whether in the company of their traveling partners or waiting ‘at home.’ (p. 1000)

Studying women and sport labor migration is important because it allows us to understand how women as active athletes, validate their role within transnational sport migration. Specifically research on women's professional basketball and sport labor migration within peer-reviewed literature is non-existent. This is surprising, since basketball is a major international team sport for women and many current and former Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) players choose to play overseas in addition to playing in the U.S. For instance, when compared to their counterparts in the NBA, the additional workload has the potential for increased risk of injuries and burnout for women professional basketball players, yet many women still go overseas for work.

In addition, it can be argued that the top women's basketball league outside of the U.S. is FIBA Euroleague Women. FIBA Euroleague Women is the highest professional basketball league for women in Europe and there have been a significant number of WNBA players who have played in FIBA Euroleague Women during the WNBA off-season. The league was established in 1958 and players who have been a part of this league have played for one of fifteen European club teams. These teams have usually been the best team or teams in that respective country (Euroleague, 2015).

These Euroleague teams have had some of the best and highest paid WNBA players on their rosters. Women who have competed in FIBA Euroleague Women have also competed in various league competitions within their country (Bowman, 2014). For example, UMMC Ekaterinburg is a Russian basketball team that has a number of current and former American WNBA players on their roster including: Nolan Deanna, Candace Parker, Diana Turasi, and Kristi Toliver (Eurobasket.com, 2015). These players have been some of the best players in the WNBA and are currently on one of the best teams in Russia and in the Euroleague.

This paper discusses and focuses on an expanded typology of sport labor migration that was created based on collected data from WNBA transnational sport labor migrants. This research study has challenged the already existing sport labor migration typologies (Maguire, 1996; Magee & Sugden, 2002) by providing a more robust understanding of what has influenced and motivated international migration patterns for women athletes, specifically American WNBA players. Findings in this current study can be important for a number of stakeholders, including athletes who might consider playing overseas, sport administrators, athletic trainers, sport studies academics, and sport psychology consultants in women's basketball. Stakeholders can learn more about the motivations of this population, which will in turn help with recruitment and over-all well being of the athlete.

Typology of Sport Labor Migration

Maguire's (1996) Typology of Sport Labor Migration made its debut in a publication entitled, *Blade runners: Canadian migrants, ice hockey, and the global sport process*. The article was about the role of Canadian professional hockey players who migrated to Great Britain for professional hockey employment. The author explored topics of migrant identity, motivations, and experiences. Maguire touched on previous research that pertained to sport labor migration in the sports of soccer, golf, tennis, and basketball and he discovered how motivations of sport labor migrants differed according to sport. Through these differences in motivations for migration, Maguire created the Typology of Sport Labor Migration and stated, "I am aware that the categories identified are not rigid and that, in the lived experience of migrants, these dimensions overlap and shade together in different combinations" (Maguire, 1996, p. 337). Within the Typology of Sport Labor Migration, Maguire identified five types of sport labor

migrants, which included: Pioneers, Settlers, Mercenaries, Nomadic Cosmopolitans, and Returnees (Maguire, 1996). The patterns were theorized to be overlapping and fluid at any given time within any given sport, and yet, very much interconnected. According to Maguire, Pioneers were distinct because of their “passion and zeal” (Maguire, 2008, p. 448) in promoting their sport, such as those involved in the twentieth century YMCA movement (Maguire, 1996). Settlers were considered athletes who stayed and settled in the host country in which they performed their talent. Mercenaries were motivated by short-term gains and lucrative deals and Mercenaries moved to a country because of economic incentives and had little to no attachments to the host nation. Nomadic Cosmopolitans were defined as nomads motivated by the social engagement and interaction that came with sport migration (Maguire, 1996). The typology was proposed to help map out patterns in the migration of athletes in both individual and team sports, but has since been the prototype for how sport labor migration researchers have categorized the motivations of the athletes that they have studied within sport labor migration research (Love & Kim, 2011; Takhashi & Horne, 2006).

Adding on to Maguire’s 1996 typology, Lafranchi and Taylor’s (2001) *Moving with the Ball: The Migration of Professional Footballers* analyzed the migration patterns of professional soccer players. The focus of the publication was on three types of soccer migrants, which included: Itinerants (transient migrants), Mercenaries, and Settlers. The authors focused on the structural and institutional control that influenced the migration of elite soccer migration, and suggested that economics, not player agency had the greatest impact on the motivations of players to migrate transnationally.

A year later, Magee and Sugden (2002) developed a revised version of Maguire’s (1996) conceptual framework on the Typology of Sport Labor Migration using the sport of soccer as a basis. Magee and Sugden were critical of the typology employed by Maguire and took a different approach to Maguire’s typology. Magee and Sugden employed a grounded approach to their study and focused on a “single sport using primary data” (Magee & Sugden, 2002, p. 429). Magee and Sugden added the categories Exile, Ambitionist, and Expelled, to the list, and they attempted to use grounded information to explain motivations for sport labor migrants in English league football (soccer) (Magee & Sugden, 2002). According to Magee and Sugden, an Ambitionist was someone in English soccer who wanted to improve their career by moving to a better league. The Exile was someone who migrated because of personal or political reasons or because of political instability in their original home and the Expelled included players who were forced to migrate to play soccer (Magee & Sugden, 2002). It should be noted that Magee and Sugden came up with their typology conceptually and there were no English soccer players who fell into the category of Expelled.

Both Maguire’s (1996) typology and Magee and Sugden’s (2002) typology have been used throughout various sport labor migration studies. For example, Love & Kim (2011) and Takhashi & Horne (2006) used the previously mentioned typologies to characterize sport labor migration in different sports and in different cultural contexts. This influenced others to adopt and/or revise both Maguire and Magee and Sugden’s typologies in reference to sport labor migration. An example of adding to the typology would be Takahashi and Horne (2006). Takahashi and Horne identified the term Taster as a characteristic to describe a Japanese elite male soccer sport labor migrant who migrates in order to experience elite soccer with an established club team in a foreign country (Takahashi & Horne, 2006). In another example, Love and Kim (2011) used Magee and Sugden’s typology within their study on intercollegiate sport labor migrants. Both examples provided, show how both the typologies by Maguire (1996) and Magee and Sugden (2002) can be used in a variety of sport labor migration research. The existing typologies used

were diverse and overlapping and not mutually exclusive. However, these typologies were created from research on the male sport labor migrant experiences and motivations and they did not consider the experiences and motivations of women sport labor migrants.

Most recently, Agergaard, Bothelo and Tiesler (2014) have contributed to understanding the experiences of women sport labor migrants and how women sport labor migrants may fit into sport labor migrant typology frameworks. According to Agergaard, Bothelo and Tiesler (2014), “in the existing literature various typologies for sports migrants have been suggested based on empirical studies of men athletes migrating into Anglo-American societies” (p. 191). With that being the case, studies in sport labor migration research have not been inclusive of women, specifically women migrating away from Anglo-American societies. The work of Agergaard, Bothelo and Tiesler has added to the literature on women soccer elite athletes and migration patterns, yet, outside of soccer, there has hardly been research to help understand the motives and experiences of women athletes who migrate for sporting opportunities, or women athlete’s who are involved in the migration process. This research on American WNBA players migrating overseas has created an expanded typology framework by adding to pre-existing typologies of sport labor migration.

Up until this point, research has indicated that the motives and experiences of women sport labor migrants has differed from that of men and may not fit into the pre-existing typologies (Magee & Sugden, 2002; Maguire, 1996; Lafranchi & Taylor, 2001). Recent research had started to incorporate the experiences and motivations of women sport labor migrants (Agergaard, 2008) and according to the research conducted by Agergaard, Bothelo and Tiesler (2014), “sport labor migrants tend to start out as sojourners and then later on may become settlers or transnational mobile athletes” (p. 208). Meaning, for some women athletes, the motivation to migrate in their sport was fluid throughout their career and differed from the motivations of male sport labor migrants.

Gendered analysis of sport labor migration literature through a women's perspective

Gender is shaped by social and cultural influences to determine what is masculine and feminine as opposed to sex, which is typically seen as rooted in biology (Butler, 1999). According to Engh and Agergaard (2013), “athletic mobility is an on-going process, a commodity that must continuously be achieved...studies of sports labor migration have afforded little attention to analyses of how individual athletes relate to historical and macro-structural power relations and forces” (p. 1). This paper emphasizes power relations with this marginalized group at both the micro- and macro- levels within a range of cultural contexts. The focus in this current study was on how women experienced such power relations and what motivated these women to migrate.

According to Agergaard & Tiesler (2014), “studies on women and sport labor migration may be useful when understanding the crucial mechanisms in globalization and migration processes in sports...and may serve to point to new perspectives on women’s migration and migration of the highly skilled” (p. 4). Such research has helped to develop our understanding of the factors that have driven these women to “cross geographical and socio-cultural boundaries” (Agergaard & Tiesler, 2014, p. 4) in the name of sport. For the most part, labor migration studies that have referenced or researched the experiences of women and have focused on women as unskilled workers (Kofman, 2004). Women’s professional basketball players in this current study were considered skilled workers because of their elite athletic ability. In all cases, women were, in fact, recruited to play basketball abroad because of their athletic prowess. As stated by Kofman (2004), “skilled migration covers an enormous diversity of kinds of employment with distinctive

conditions of entry, access to work and working conditions and practices” (p. 52). Skilled workers are workers who are imported into a country because of a shortage of experience or expertise in the industry or area of study. Therefore, women’s professional basketball players, in this current study, fit Kofman’s definition since they were able to migrate to countries worldwide because of their unique skill-sets and talent in the sport of basketball.

Race and sport labor migration

Eighty percent of the participants in this current study identified as African-American with twenty percent identifying as Caucasian. Since the majority of WNBA players identify as African-American (Lapchick, 2013), it was not too much of a surprise that the majority of the participants that recruited, identified as African-American. Part of the semi-structured interview protocol in this current study included questions in which participants were asked about how their race affected them while playing abroad, whether it was on or off the court. Both African-American and Caucasian participants experienced issues with race while they played abroad. More specifically, African-American participants were more aware of their race while playing in both Europe and Asia, whereas Caucasian participants were more aware of their race while playing professional basketball in Asia.

Looking at international basketball through a gendered perspective by understanding the experiences and motives of women basketball players has helped with gaining insight into the (African-) Americanization of basketball abroad. Within this current study, the intersection with gender and race in professional basketball abroad has opened up the door about the experiences of both men and women and how gender and race have played a role in motivations and experiences.

Race is a concept that is used to signify different types of human bodies in which various cultures and regions attempt to organize groups of people based on similar skin color and physical appearance (Cole, 2014). People of varying races, ethnicities, and nationalities have more opportunities to intermix culture and customs in varying cultural contexts as migrants. This has led to greater understanding of differences and similarities at both the local, national, and international levels, by creating a space where many have been able to mix and mingle.

African-American women athletes have continuously tried to empower themselves within various patriarchal structures, while at the same time dealing with the privilege of being an athlete and the disadvantage of being a woman of color. According to Manalansan (2006), “the migrant body is the site where the racialized, ethnicized, and gendered disciplinary measures employed by various states and their agents come together and is also the venue for promoting as well as repressing sexualized images, desires, and stereotypes” (p. 235). If we looked at this through the lens of an African-American professional women’s basketball player, we might say that she combats stereotypes of African-American rootedness with her agency as a transnational athlete migrant, but is still stereotyped because of her physical and cultural identity. This research has helped to shed light on the intersectionality between gender, race, and privilege through understanding the motivations of African American women as transnational sport labor migrants.

Transnationalism

The theoretical framework of transnationalism guided this current study. Scholars have used an array of definitions when discussing the theory of transnationalism. Authors such as Dahinden

(2010) preferred to analyze mobility and locality as a combination of factors that have influenced migration, while Faist (2010) viewed transnationalism as traveling back and forth to one's country of origin and to other countries, because of multiple ties to cultures, communities, and social networks. Captured succinctly by Vertovec (1999), "transnationalism broadly refers to multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states" (p. 447). This framework has involved understanding the motivations and experiences that people have had when migrating to certain locales throughout their lifetime. Unlike the theory of globalization that has focused on social structures (Carter, 2014), the theory of transnationalism has focused on the experiences of the transient migrants as they have moved. According to Carter (2014), "the transnational perspective allows for greater understanding as it focuses upon the actual movements of people" (p. 161).

Using the transnationalism framework has allowed for the focal point to be on the person who has migrated as the unit of analysis, as opposed to the social structures that influenced the migrant's migration patterns and choices. Within the theory of transnationalism, structure refers to relatively stable patterns of behavior (Macionis, 2007). Such patterns have pressured people to conform to written and unwritten norms (Hanson, 2005), but structures cannot only constrain, but also enable actions. Gender and race are examples of social structures. Related to these structures, individuals have been able to have agency or "degree of free will exerted by the individual in social actions" (Hanson, 2005, p. 307).

Sport labor migration literature has historically focused on structural aspects of the phenomenon (e.g., race, gender, economics, leagues and federations) (Maguire, 2011). Researchers who have worked within the literature have also been able to examine sport labor migration through the frames of globalization theory, world systems theory, and dependency theory. These theories have focused on institutionally structured sport practices as opposed to the agency of the sport labor migrant and the role of the sport labor migrant in migration practices (Maguire, 2011). The theory of transnationalism is focused on agency rather than the structure of the social world that may have influenced, made available, or have limited the choices that the person may have had within the social sphere (Carter, 2014). This has been important to this study on sport labor migration and women because this study focused on the motivations of American women WNBA players who have migrated abroad for opportunities to play their sport professionally. The theory of transnationalism helped to produce a rich understanding of what the participant experiences during the migration process (Carter, 2014), by looking at the choices these American WNBA players made, to be transnational sport labor migrants.

Methodology

Within this qualitative research an exploratory case study methodology was employed. According to Yin (2009), criteria for choosing to do a case study involves focusing on a contemporary event that does not require control of behavioral events and when the research questions seek to answer a how and why question. Using the case study methodology was the most appropriate when answering the how and why questions in this study, while focusing on this contemporary phenomenon. Since the phenomenon of labor migration in women's basketball has not yet been explored within scholarly literature through either quantitative or qualitative inquiry, it was more appropriate to explore this phenomenon in-depth through qualitative research.

The goal was to establish a strong foundation for the motivations of American WNBA player sport labor migrants. Historically, exploratory case studies have been used to help to develop

further areas of study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Exploratory case studies are specific and differ in comparison to other forms of case studies. For instance, descriptive case studies focus on a detailed and comprehensive description of previous research and an explanatory case study explains an already explored phenomenon in-depth (Yin, 2009). The goal of using an exploratory case study was to “develop pertinent hypotheses and propositions for further inquiry” (Yin, 2009, Chapter 5, Section 7, para. 2). Since the topic researched was a previously unexplored phenomenon, it was appropriate to use an exploratory case study approach. The approach created a framework and foundation for understanding the experiences and motivations of these women. Now, because of this research, more research can be conducted on this population and future scholars can now develop and form their own hypotheses about the phenomenon of WNBA players and sport labor migration, based on the results of this current study.

Exploratory case study

A single holistic design within the exploratory case study framework (Yin, 2009) was used to answer the research question on why WNBA players chose to play in the WNBA and overseas. Research was conducted by working with a group of elite athletes who had “previously [been] inaccessible to social inquiry” (Yin, 2009, Chapter 2, Section 6, para. 4).

A total of 10 WNBA players were a part of this study and each one had played in the U.S. and overseas. 10 was the number in which saturation was completed, which means that answers from the participants started to become similar in many ways by the time 10 was reached (Morse, 1995). To be chosen for the study, participants had to meet certain criteria. Participants had to be over the age of 18 and had played in the WNBA and overseas consecutively for one year or more, meaning that participants played in the WNBA and overseas in the span of one single year. All participants in this current study held U.S. citizenship and were on the roster of both a women’s professional WNBA team and a women’s professional overseas team.

Participants in this current study played in a total of 14 countries including: China, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Poland, Spain, South Korea, Sweden, Russia, and Turkey. Overseas, the career length of participants ranged from one year to 12.5 years, with the average overseas career lasting 6.35 years. In the WNBA, the average career was one year to 15 years, with the average WNBA career being 6 years. All interviews were conducted via telephone, with interviews averaging approximately 33 minutes in length. The shortest interview lasted 21 minutes with the last interview lasting 53 minutes. As for physical characteristics, eight out of 10 participants identified as African American with two out of 10 participants identifying as Caucasian. The average height of the 10 participants was 6-feet-2-inches, with the shortest participant being 5-feet-10-inches and the tallest participant being close to 7-feet tall.

A semi-structured interview guide was used for the interviews in this study. This interview guide was based off of previously conducted interviews with U.S. professional men’s basketball players who played outside of the U.S. In addition, a former WNBA player was recruited for the initial pilot interview of this study. The pilot study participant had played in the WNBA for four years and had played overseas for five different teams in five different countries. She was able to give feedback on the pilot study interview questions, before the initial research study took place with the 10 participants.

Data analysis

All collected data were subject to open coding. Once codes were created from the raw data, then they were grouped together based on similarities of the data. Similar codes came together to create themes, after open coding. Categories were then created, that corresponded with the themes (Figure 1). The data was coded for similarities and uniqueness so as to give voice to the motivations of the participants. Once patterns and unique characteristics were established, categories were grouped according to the two research questions based on motivations and experiences.

Typologies of sport labor migration

Previous literature on the typology of sport labor migration and the motivating factors that influence an athlete's migration have mainly focused on the migration of men. This current study was unique in that it focused on the team sport of professional women's basketball. It only included American WNBA players who played in the WNBA and internationally. Therefore, these women athletes were not only the elite athletes in professional women's basketball, but also had the option to play in one or more leagues throughout the year, both domestically and internationally.

A key finding was that WNBA sport labor migrants' motivations did not fit in with the already established typologies of sport labor migration research presented by Maguire (1996) and Magee and Sugden (2002). Based on Maguire and Magee and Sugden, some motivations for migrating were similar, but transnational migration was dependent on where the athlete was within the span of her career. To represent the motivations for the participants in this current study, I created *The Typology of American WNBA Transnational Sport Labor Migrants* (Figure 2), to further illustrate the findings from this current study.

The Typology of American WNBA Transnational Sport Labor Migrants reflects the motivations for migration of participants in this current study. The illustration shows why the study participants chose to migrate internationally to play professional basketball overseas, even though they could play elite professional basketball in the U.S. Four factors contributed to the incentives that motivated these women to go abroad however, these incentives changed over time. In *the Typology of American WNBA Transnational Sport Labor Migrants*, any one motivating factor or all motivating factors could be present at any time, but motivations for migrating were always fluid, and overlapping. Although these were listed as distinct and initial motivations for participants to migrate transnationally, they were discussed as being fluid and overlapping throughout the participants' career as a sport labor migrant. For example, a participant may have been more inclined to migrate at the beginning stages of her career because she wanted to travel to see the world. Therefore, playing in the WNBA and overseas may have allowed her to stay in shape and see the world while making a living. However, by the end of the participant's career, her motivations would have changed because: (a) she was making twice her WNBA salary playing overseas; (b) she had already accomplished her personal goal of playing in the WNBA and because of this; and (c) her goals shifted as she progressed through her career. This was just one example of how motivations for transnational migration could be both overlapping and fluid, changing throughout the athlete's career. For example, participant World Traveler had comparable motivations for traveling overseas to pursue a professional playing career in basketball. World Traveler wanted to see the world and experience cultures outside of the U.S. For World Traveler, money was not the main or initial

motivating factor that influenced her to travel overseas to pursue a career playing professional basketball. However, as her career progressed, money did start to factor more into her decision to travel overseas.

World Traveler played over five seasons in the WNBA and close to ten seasons overseas and made double her WNBA salary playing overseas (in her last years playing). World Traveler would be considered a WNBA and overseas veteran because of her time spent in both leagues. She is now retired from playing the sport of basketball, but is still very much involved in athletics. World Traveler initially made about the same amount of money overseas as she did in the WNBA, however, as time progressed, she was able to gain more exposure and improve her performance on the basketball court. Therefore, she was offered more money throughout her years playing professionally. By the end of her career, World Traveler felt that it would have been more favorable to play overseas than to play in the WNBA. According to World Traveler:

Going back... if I could do it all over again I would have just played overseas. You know, it's really nice to be able to play in front of your friends and family... but as a professional decision... it makes more sense to just play overseas, make the money, and then rest your body in the summer. A lot of the girls played year round because you try to make as much money as you can, but then it ends up shortening your career because you don't end up giving your body the rest that it needs... so I would definitely just play overseas. (World Traveler, personal communication, February 12, 2015)

In retrospect, World Traveler felt that playing overseas in comparison to playing in the WNBA was a better career choice. The data from the current study indicates that a women's basketball player who chose to play solely overseas was able to make a great living and was also able to rest her body in the off-season. Ultimately this allows the athlete to have longevity in her career since taking time out can help to increase her chances of preserving the health and strength of her body. Although money did play a big factor in World Traveler's decision to go abroad, her initial reasoning for going overseas was not because of salary as much as it was for the cultural and traveling aspect. Hence the pseudonym she picked out for herself, World Traveler. In summation, all migratory factors were dependent on the agency of the participant and changing motivations was a common theme throughout the research study.

The Typology of American WNBA Transnational Sport Labor Migrants was created to be inclusive of findings from the data collected for this current study. Some of the typologies were consistent with previous research on sport labor migration including categories such as: Mercenary (Maguire, 1996), Nomadic Cosmopolitan (Maguire, 1996, Magee & Sugden, 2002), and Ambitionist (Magee & Sugden, 2002). However, there was another category added to the typology framework, Personal Aspirationalist. This expanded typology describes a participant who achieves personal satisfaction by maximizing all aspects of her professional career for self-satisfaction and personal attainment. This also expanded the definition of Ambitionist, which will be discussed in more detail under the heading of Ambitionist.

The Typology of American WNBA Transnational Sport Labor Migrants has overlapping definitions, and the theory is based on the typologies created by Maguire (1996) and Magee and Sugden (2002). To add on, within *The Typology of American WNBA Transnational Sport Labor Migrants*, the pre-existing typologies were expanded upon by incorporating the specific findings from this current study. These findings confirmed that several motivating factors were similar between sport labor migrants, but that some aspects of motivation were dependent upon the personal agency of the athlete. Please refer to the Thematic Table (figure 1), to understand the

keywords that helped guide this study. This will help in the understanding of how the themes that emerged from the collected data, either confirmed or expanded on some of the previous typologies of sport labor migration set forth by Maguire (1996) and Magee and Sugden (2002).

Settlers

Unlike in the work conducted by Maguire (1996) and Magee and Sugden (2002), the participants in the study did not have a desire to settle in the place that they performed their labor. They were constantly traveling between the U.S. and overseas to play professional basketball, but their motivations to migrate and their experiences abroad never influenced them to stay in the country of employment. All participants appreciated and enjoyed the opportunity to travel abroad and make a living, but all sought to eventually come back to the U.S. to live. In addition, participants were not expelled or exiled (Magee & Sugden, 2002) from their country of origin and did in fact have a choice to stay in the U.S. and play professional basketball, but initially chose to play professional basketball both in the WNBA and abroad.

Therefore, this study showed that American WNBA players are not transnational sport labor migrants that look to settle in the place where they perform their labor. Data collected show that all of the players did have a desire to return home after playing abroad. The eagerness to settle permanently in the U.S. may have been due to the fact that these women were constantly moving between the U.S. and overseas and were still able to maintain ties to the U.S., despite the constant traveling.

This finding was similar to Agergaard and Botelho (2010) and Botelho and Agergaard (2011) in that their results showed that women's professional soccer players who migrated to Scandinavia did not have a desire to stay and settle either. These findings show that the inclination to not settle abroad may be unique to women sport labor migrants. Though more research is needed, this current study has helped to add onto previous findings regarding transnational sport labor migrants and settlement, regarding women.

Eagerness to experience a different culture outside of the U.S (Nomadic Cosmopolitans)

Participants in this current study could be defined as Nomadic Cosmopolitans because they played one season overseas and another season in the WNBA. In some cases, participants chose to only play in the WNBA or only overseas, but this choice depended on athletic ability and where the player was in her career. According to the definition of Maguire (1996) and Magee and Sugden (2002), some participants in this current study were Nomadic Cosmopolitans. This was because at one point in their career, they were motivated to migrate by social engagement or by a desire to travel. Therefore, WNBA player transnational sport labor migrants showed similarities to other sport labor migrants in team sports. As in the case of women's soccer players who migrated to Scandinavia (Agergaard & Tiesler, 2014), Canadian men's hockey players who migrated to Europe (Maguire, 1996), and male soccer professional soccer players who migrated to Europe (Magee & Sugden, 2002).

Personal goals (Personal Aspirationist)

In this research, each study participant expressed a sense of autonomy when making the decision to migrate. The participants in this current study were the elite of the elite since they played in the WNBA and overseas. They had many choices, for instance: (a) to migrate to play in both the WNBA and overseas; (b) to play only in the WNBA; (c) to play only overseas; or (d)

to not play professional basketball at all and pursue a different career. Each participant had more options than most female and male transnational sport labor migrants have within team sports (Thorpe, 2014). Comparatively, NBA players do not have the option to play in the NBA and play overseas. They must choose to do one or the other, because of the length of the NBA season. Those who play in the NBA are usually the best men's basketball players in the world and those that go overseas are those that have not made the final cut for a NBA roster. There are opportunities to play professional basketball in the U.S. for men outside of the NBA, but the opportunities to do so are not as lucrative as playing overseas (Schlosser, 2014).

Some participants in this current study were motivated to play professionally because of personal goals for themselves. *Personal Aspirationists* were women athletes who wanted to play at the highest level and to see how far they could go professionally. These participants were motivated by personal goals and personal satisfaction. This was an important finding because it provided evidence that transnational sport labor migrants were not always motivated solely by structural forces, but were also influenced by agency. The participants in this current study continuously showed how intersecting motivating factors for pursuing a professional career transnationally, were influenced by the individual's personal life and personal aspirations. This is illustrated in Figure 2 and includes the category of Personal Aspirationist.

Please note that all of the women in this current study were college graduates who held a bachelor's degree or master's degree from an American University. Although this was not a prerequisite for the study, all participants in this current study had played intercollegiate basketball at a Division I university. All of the participants were college educated and had the ability to obtain some form of employment outside of playing basketball. They had the ability to live in the U.S. and enjoy a good quality of life, but chose to continue to play basketball at the highest level that was available to them. Participants were either drafted after their college basketball career or had hired an agent out of college, to help them pursue a professional basketball career. Participants were motivated to pursue a career playing domestically and internationally, and were not motivated by one single factor, but multiple, fluid, and overlapping factors. Priorities and motivations were different, depending on where the participant was in her career and in terms of her athletic ability.

Monetary compensation (Mercenaries)

Even though the typology of settler did not apply to the sport labor migrants in this current study, there were some typologies from previous research that confirmed that there were unique types of transnational sport labor migrants. Although all of the participants were ultimately motivated by mercenary means and monetary incentives to play professional basketball outside of the U.S., initially, the majority of the participants were in fact not motivated to migrate just because of monetary incentives, but were influenced by a number of other factors, including: (a) eagerness to experience a different culture outside of the U.S. (Nomadic Cosmopolitan); (b) personal goals (Personal Aspirationist); (c) gaining experience for future careers outside of playing basketball (Post-Career Ambitionist); (d) and staying in shape for WNBA basketball (Current-Career Ambitionist). However, at some point, money became a primary factor, which influenced all the participants to migrate. In one case, money was the only factor. In other cases, money played a significant role.

Overseas vs. WNBA salaries

Many media publications have alluded to the fact that professional women's basketball players make more money playing in professional women's basketball leagues abroad versus in the U.S. (Glass, 2015). Many articles from popular media outlets have focused on superstar WNBA players that have had successful careers in the WNBA and overseas. An example of a superstar would be the WNBA players that are the top performers in the WNBA, the players who one may expect to make the All-Star team almost every season, the players who receive lucrative endorsement and sponsorship deals, and the players that one would expect to be on the U.S. National Team roster for women's basketball. There are only a select few that reach this elite status such as Candace Parker, Brittany Griner, and Diana Turasi (to name a few). However, there are a limited number of women who may make 10-times their WNBA salary playing overseas. With that being said, the majority of the women who do play overseas do not make a million dollars during one overseas season.

Throughout the interviews, participants said that athletes who played in Russia, China, or South Korea could expect to make more money in comparison to those who played in European countries such as France, Spain, or Italy. Therefore, there are a number of misconceptions about how lucrative it is for women professional basketball players who play overseas, because the majority of articles spotlight the experiences of the select few superstar WNBA players. Some articles (Fagan, 2015; Steele, 2012) spotlight the women who make close to a million dollars or more playing overseas and not those that make the equivalent or a little more of their WNBA salary, playing overseas.

All participants in this current study were asked to answer questions presented in the form of a questionnaire to gather demographic information. In that questionnaire all participants were asked questions about their professional basketball salary in the WNBA versus overseas. Since asking questions about one's salary is very personal, each participant was asked to answer how their WNBA salary differed in comparison to their overseas salary (see Appendix E; table 3). The phrasing of this question resulted in a 100% response rate from the participants. All 10 participants in this current study answered the question accordingly with some participants elaborating more than others. The salaries recorded on the questionnaire show how each participant's WNBA salary differed from their overseas salary in their most recent or last year playing professional women's basketball (former and current players were interviewed). According to the participants, their salaries increased each season as they continued to play professional basketball. For example, a participant's salary in one season in the WNBA was "about the same" in comparison to their overseas salary in one season. However, in some cases, after about three or four years into the player's career, their salaries overseas doubled or tripled. Please note that only questions about salary were asked and not about endorsements or sponsorship deals, therefore the data collected does not reflect the total net income that the participant may have made in a year, a season, or in their career. The participants in this current study were all professional athletes and made a career out of playing basketball. These women made a living off of playing professional basketball and were able to support themselves financially. Yes, money did factor into their reasoning for playing basketball abroad, but for the majority, money was not the initial factor, main motivating factor, or the only factor that influenced their decision to go overseas to pursue playing professional basketball.

Gaining experience for a future career or staying in shape (Ambitionists)

As for Ambitionists, participants in my study did not fit cleanly into Magee and Sugden's (2002) definition of Ambitionist, as someone who wanted to improve their career by moving to a better league. This is because according to Magee and Sugden (2002), ambitionist was focused on

three factors: an athlete who had a strong desire to achieve a successful career anywhere in the world; migrating from team to team, because you prefer one place over the other; and someone who had a preference to move to another team to improve their career in a better quality league. Some participants were either drafted to the WNBA after college, or they played overseas first before being picked up by a WNBA team. However, all participants agreed that playing in the WNBA was the pinnacle of their career because the WNBA was an opportunity for them to play with the best talent that women's professional basketball had to offer.

Participants viewed playing basketball overseas as a way to: (a) stay in shape for the WNBA season (Current-Career Ambitionist); or (b) gain experience that would lead to future career opportunities (Post-Career Ambitionist). Participants wanted to improve their careers, but not necessarily by moving to a better league. They were motivated to stay in shape for the WNBA or sought to improve understanding of the game of basketball for a different career outside of playing. Playing overseas did not always result in the participants being up against the best talent, but it did result in them making money during the WNBA off-season and staying in shape for the WNBA season.

The result of the study findings have allowed for a reconfiguration of the definition of Ambitionist to now include two embedded sub-types: Current-Career Ambitionist and Post-Career Ambitionist. Dividing Ambitionists into two types provides nuance to the previous definition of Ambitionist by Magee and Sugden (2002). The more nuanced definition incorporates: (a) transnational sport labor migrants who desire to improve themselves, not so much to move to a better league, but to maintain athletic ability or (b) to improve their understanding of basketball on a global level for their lives after playing. Meaning that the main difference was personal satisfaction versus career related goals.

In addition, Agergaard (2008) studied the elite migration of athletes playing Danish women's handball and found, "sports ambitions are the primary motive for the foreign player, but other dimensions must also be mentioned" (Agergaard, 2008, p. 13). This study's findings were similar to those of Agergaard in that ambition was a primary motive for some of the women to migrate and ambition took complex forms (see Figure 2). The findings of this study may be only inclusive to WNBA players and/or other transnational sport labor migrants who play in two or more leagues per year. However, the findings do contribute sub-categories to the previous literature on sport labor migration and ambition, in addition women and sport labor migration in general.

Limitations

This study was conducted using an exploratory, single embedded case study methodology (Yin, 2009) in which American WNBA players were recruited to participate. For this study interview data was the only form of data that was collected. Therefore, the data was not triangulated with other forms of data such as observations or documents. Using only interview data for a qualitative research study is not unusual (Merriam, 2009), and this was determined to be the best method to use to answer the research question. Again, the purpose of this study was to learn about the motivations of the participants from their perspective. Therefore, it was important to focus on the motivations from the participants' point of view.

In the future, it would be beneficial to collect additional data, perhaps, maybe in the form of observations or documents and archives. This is because it would help to contextualize how these women experience life abroad by triangulating all of the data sources. Observing these

women in the WNBA and overseas would help to provide more of an outsider's perspective on how these women experience life as a sport labor migrant. This would help to provide a more robust understanding of what these women have to go through as international sport labor migrants on and off the court.

Discussion

The majority of women professional basketball players have made far less than men who play professional basketball. Lamonier (2018) documented that men's professional basketball players have been able to make millions of dollars playing in the NBA, whereas women's professional basketball players playing in the WNBA have made anywhere from \$35,000 to just under \$110,000 in one season. In regards to men, many men who have been unable to play in the NBA, in many cases, end up going abroad for employment opportunities because there has not been enough room for them to play professionally in the U.S. (Butler & Dzikus, 2014). Even though this is the case, the experiences of men and women basketball sport labor migrants have been different because of varying factors. Men who have gone abroad to play professional basketball have only had to worry about securing contracts with one team rather than two teams in a single year (unless they were cut from the team). In contrast, WNBA players have had the option to play in the WNBA or overseas, or in both leagues because of the league schedules. American women WNBA players who have chosen to go abroad not only have had to secure a WNBA contract, but have also had to secure a contract with an overseas team, with some playing professional basketball year-round (Steele, 2012). In addition, men's professional basketball players are also able to have downtime in between seasons, whereas women's professional basketball players are consistently training and competing year-round annually, which in turn can lead to the wear and tear of their body in addition to the delay in their personal life as far as starting a family. Motivations between genders and leagues are different for both male and female professional basketball players, and it is important to address similarities and differences within the sporting context and beyond.

Conclusion

This current study was the first of its kind to go in-depth to understand the motivations of WNBA transnational sport labor migrants. An expanded typology of sport labor migration exclusive to American WNBA players who play in the WNBA and overseas was able to be created, from the collected interview data. In addition, the use of the typologies put in place by Maguire (1996) and Magee and Sugden (2002) set the foundation to expand on the definition of Ambitionist, while at the same time and add the term Personal Aspirationalist.

Lastly, In order to understand sport labor migration in relation to WNBA sport labor migrants, it was important to have a theoretical framework in place to interpret and conceptualize the experiences and motivations of this particular group. The theory of transnationalism supported this approach in this current study (Carter, 2007). According to Carter (2013), more scholars need to adapt to the theory of transnationalism when understanding the motivations and experiences of international sport labor migrants. Much of the literature has put emphasis on using globalization theories and dependency theories, but it is important to examine how individuality places a role on a person's decision to migrate. As in this current study, the participants were heavily influenced by individual factors in their lives, which ultimately contributed to where they ended up migrating to.

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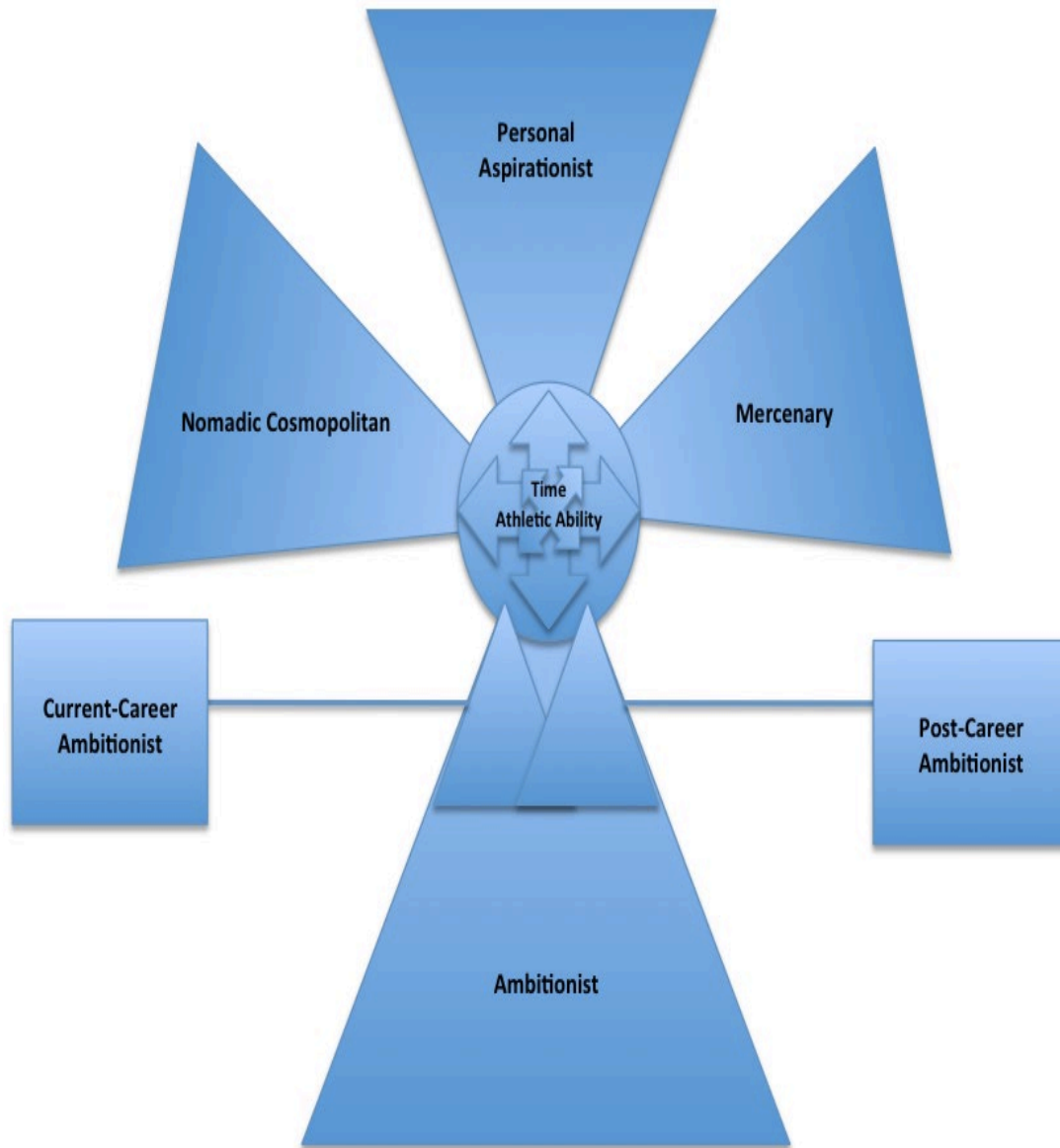
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Figure 1: Thematic Table for the Motivations of American WNBA Sport Labor Migrants

Major Categories and Themes	Descriptions
a) Eagerness to experience a different culture outside of the U.S.	I wanted to do more and explore the world; I always wanted to see the world; get out and see things; I love doing things; being able to go to different countries; going to places you read about; travel the world; travel; branch out; opportunity to travel and see new thing
b) Monetary Compensation	Money was a factor too, but it became a factor more down the line; format of the season; money first and foremost; make a living for myself; money not the main thing; money number two; it's a job; provide for our families; longer you play, more money becomes a factor; not an opportunity you can pass by from a money standpoint; money is so attractive overseas; not so much about the money;
c) Gaining experience for future careers outside of playing basketball	Overseas there are more opportunities; I wanted to be a professional; I knew I wanted to coach sophomore year of college; ultimately coaching is what I wanted to do; at the end of the day I want to coach basketball; gave me the platform to do what I am doing now; I always knew I wanted to coach; they gave me a generic coach answer
d) Staying in shape for WNBA basketball	I just went overseas to stay in shape; our WNBA season is just so short; our off-season is way more longer than our normal season; do something to stay in shape
e) Personal goals	Love and passion; I am in such good shape; my heart was still in it; I was in really good shape for playing; kind of kept me doing what I liked; I am in the best ability I can actually play; I wasn't aware of the different opportunities; I wanted to play at the highest level; dreams obtainable; finding somewhere comfortable I could play; play basketball; have a dream; I just wanted to keep playing

Figure 2. The Typology of American WNBA Transnational Sport Labor Migrants



Typology of American WNBA Transnational Sport Labor Migrants

Table 1: Participant Information

Pseudonym	Languages	Citizenship	Race	Education	WNBA	Overseas
LaShay	En	U.S	AA	Bach.	2	1
Mya	En	U.S	AA	Bach.	1	1
Leslee	En	U.S	AA	Bach.	1	2
World Traveler	En, Sp, It Fr	U.S.	AA	Mast.	7	10
Coach K	En & Sp	U.S.	AA	Bach.	8	10
Casey	En	U.S.	AA	Mast.	15	9
Kate	En, Sp, It	U.S.	AA	Bach.	3	12.5
Sabrina	En & Sp	U.S.	CA	Mast.	13	8
Aly	En	U.S. & IL	AA	Bach.	5	4
Lisa	En	U.S.	CA	Bach.	5	6

