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***Contrasting Publicity Images of the
All American Red Heads and the
Harlem Globetrotters :***
Two Cases of Marginal Adaptation

The research compares publicity images of players from two different professional basketball teams: the All American Red Heads and the Harlem Globetrotters. The All American Red Heads, a women's professional basketball team, barnstormed throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico and the Philippines from 1936 to 1986. The team played exclusively against men's teams. The Harlem Globetrotters, an African American men's professional basketball team, barnstormed both in the United States and abroad from 1926 to the present playing against their own traveling team, the Generals.

A content analysis of programs from the early 1970s examines how owners of the two teams portrayed their players. Publicity images of the teams and players were carefully constructed, so that they did not challenge the status quo in white male professional basketball. Both teams' games were publicized as basketball *shows* rather than *games*. This placed the games outside of the realm of male professional basketball and into the realm of entertainment. Both the Red Heads and the Harlem Globetrotters billed their games as family entertainment. The shows combined highly skilled basketball play with basketball tricks and comedy routines. This paper examines the similarities and differences in the way the two teams were portrayed by focusing specifically on issues of gender and race. The public acceptance and financial success of both teams largely resulted from the teams' marginal adaptation to a white male hegemonic model of sport.