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# Same Story; Different Day: Greatest Challenges of Women Working in Intercollegiate Athletic Administration

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**Abstract**

Women continue to be under-represented in administrative positions in intercollegiate athletics. Women in this study offered unique insights into challenges they face in the field. This study explored career profiles and challenges facing women working in intercollegiate athletic administration. The subjects were women working in intercollegiate athletic administration across National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) divisions I, II, III; National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA); National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA); Junior Colleges; and Canadian Colleges. The study, which utilized the Female Sport Manager Career Survey, posed two research questions: (a) what are the profiles of females working in athletic administration?, and (b) what are the gender specific greatest challenges that women working in intercollegiate athletic administration face? This study included all 1834 women working in intercollegiate athletic administration listed by the *National Directory of College Athletics* in 2012, of which 28.0% (N=514) provided usable responses. Frequencies were calculated for the demographics using SPSS 20.0 and the qualitative data were analyzed using HyperResearch 2.8. Several practical implications for women wanting to work in intercollegiate athletic administration originated from this study including developing networks, being prepared to balance work and family, being aware of stereotyping, and gaining as much experience as possible.

**Keywords**: leadership, stereotypes, athletic administration

## Same Story; Different Day: Greatest Challenges of Women Working in Intercollegiate Athletic Administration

### Introduction

The gender make-up of the managerial workforce in the United States is constantly changing. In the United States population, 58.6% of women are in the labor force (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Within the labor force, women are making strides across many different industries, including traditionally male-dominated fields. The traditionally male-dominated industry of particular interest to the researchers in this study was the sport industry. It was of particular interest due to the continued under-representation of women in intercollegiate athletic administration. In 1972, women held 90% of all women's intercollegiate athletic administrative positions. Today, that percentage is at 20.3% (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012).

The sport industry consists of a number of segments, including intercollegiate athletics, recreational sport, professional sport, health and fitness, facility management, sport for people with disabilities, and sport marketing (Masteralexis, Barr, & Hums, 2012; Peterson, Parks, Quarterman, & Thibault, 2011). Researchers have examined various facets of women's careers in intercollegiate coaching (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012), intercollegiate athletic administration (Grappendorf, Lough, & Griffin, 2004; Strawbridge, 2000; Wright, Eagleman, & Pederson, 2011), recreational sport (Bower, 2008; Bower & Coffee, 2007), professional sport (Hums & Sutton, 1999, 2000; Itoh, 2014; Lapchick, 2012; McDonogh, 2007), leadership of national sports organizations (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007; Titus, 2011), sport for people with disabilities (Hums & Moorman, 1999; Itoh, Hums, Bower, & Moorman, 2013) and minorities and women in sport management academic programs (Hancock & Hums, 2011; Hums, O'Bryant, & Tremble, 1996).

Specific to intercollegiate athletics, a number of researchers have examined women working in leadership positions within intercollegiate athletics (NCAA Divisions I-III) to determine why women hold significantly fewer positions 40 years since the passage of title IX in 1972 (Aicher & Sagas, 2010; Burton, Grappendorf, & Henderson, 2011; Knoppers, Meyer, Eing, Forrest, 1991; Whisenant & Pedersen, 2004). Reasons for underrepresentation and challenges for women that have been noted include gender stereotyping in leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Hoffman, 2010), lack of mentoring and

networks (support systems) (Kellerman & Rhodes, 2007), old boys network (Kellerman & Rhodes, 2007; Whisenant & Pederson, 2004), family to work-conflict (Inglis, Danylchuck, & Pastore, 1996; Schneider, Stier, Henry, & Wilding, 2010), equal pay/wage discrimination (Schneider, Stier, Henry, & Wilding, 2010; Wright, et al., 2011), lack of respect (Stangl & Kane, 1991), the glass ceiling (Clopton & Sagas, 2009; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Hoffman, 2010), and the Queen Bee Syndrome (Derks, VanLaar, Ellemer, & deGroot, 2011). According to Shaw and Hoeber (2003), "The potential reasons for women's under-representation and men's overrepresentation in influential positions in sport management can be described as overwhelming" (p. 348).

However, none of the aforementioned studies have included a comprehensive view from women working at all levels of athletic administration. It is important that researchers not only track the number of women in intercollegiate athletic administration (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012), but seek to garner further insight into the current situations and outlook to gain a better understanding of the lives of women currently holding administrative positions in athletics. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to provide a profile (e.g., division, position, age classification, race/ethnicity, income range, degree, participation in organized sport) and explore the insights of women working in intercollegiate athletic administration by examining their perceptions on the challenges they face. To provide a comprehensive vantage point, the subjects in this study were women working in intercollegiate athletic administration across National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) divisions I, II, III; National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA); National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA); Junior Colleges; and Canadian Colleges. The literature examining women's careers in intercollegiate athletics is heavily NCAA-based. The researchers decided to also query women working at institutions in other governing bodies and Canadian colleges to gather a wider perspective on women's experiences in intercollegiate athletics. Further, Canadian schools were included since there is a move to try and increase gender equity in sport there as well as in the US (Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity, 2013).

The underrepresentation of women in intercollegiate athletics has been well documented over the years (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). Further, the reasons for this underrepresentation have also been noted. It is important to continue to examine these reasons and gather information from the women in these positions to track if the challenges noted in past research are the challenges women still face today. These

gender specific challenges in intercollegiate athletic administration may provide a better understanding of why women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions that segment of the sport industry.

In order to understand the underrepresentation phenomenon, Cunningham (2010) suggested specific challenges may be separated into three basic categories - stereotypes, structural forces, and personal characteristics. For this study, the researchers focused on stereotypes and structural forces, which represented factors in the work environment, rather than personal characteristics which reside within the individual. Each of the categories which arose as greatest challenges have been previously identified in the literature as reasons for the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions within intercollegiate athletics.

### *Gender Stereotyping*

Stereotypes influence the advancement of women in leadership position within intercollegiate athletic administration (Aicher & Sagas, 2010; Cunningham, 2010; Cunningham & Sagas, 2008). Gender stereotypes refer to cognitive structures that influence the way an individual processes information regarding men and women (Hoyt, Simon, & Reid, 2009). Cunningham (2010) notes these stereotypes take the form of leadership characteristics or job type.

Regarding leadership characteristics, certain specific gender stereotypes directly relate to leadership and can bedescribed through social role theory. Social role theory posits there are traditional gender expectations in order for women and men to successfully fulfill their roles. Traditionally, being aggressive, self-confident and dominant are agentic traits associated with men, whereas stereotypically, women possess communal traits such as being helpful, nurturing, and gentle (Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000). Substantial research suggests that successful leaders are often described as having agentic attributes (Isaac, Kaatz, & Carnes, 2012; Schyns & Sczesny, 2010; Skelly & Johnson, 2011). Role congruity theory extends social role theory by suggesting prejudice exists against potential female leaders because leadership ability is more stereotypically attributed to men (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This perceived incongruity leads people to believe that women possessing more communal attributes and fewer agentic attributes will be perceived as less qualified for leadership positions, especially in sport (Schyns & Sczesny, 2010; Skelly & Johnson, 2011).

Regarding job type, gender stereotyping has been identified as a challenge within the sport industry (Aicher, & Sagas, 2010; Burton, Grappendort, & Henderson, 2011;

O'Conner, Grappendorf, Burton, Harmon, Henderson, & Peel, 2010; Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). Burton, et al., (2011) found female athletic administrator candidates were evaluated less seriously for athletic director positions compared to their male counterparts. O'Conner, et al., (2010) examined football players' comfort level between male and female head athletic trainers. Results indicated evidence to support role congruity theory. Sartore and Cunningham (2007) concluded that when gender roles are in the equation, certain jobs may be perceived as more appropriate for men or women. Specifically, a male dominated field such as intercollegiate athletic administration may be prejudiced toward women as leaders, based solely on their gender, and as explained by social role theory and role congruity theory.

In addition, women wanting to work in sport may also face additional battles for respect because of the perception these jobs are for men only. The lack of respect women experience may be due to tokenism. Tokenism was first introduced by Kanter in 1977. Kanter (1977) found that sex ratios (ratio of men to women or women to men) create an extraordinary amount of influence on group behavior in organizations. Kanter (1977) found that women had to continually prove themselves and their credibility as leaders, particularly when they were the "token" woman. Tokens are subject to more on-the-job pressure and scrutiny than dominants because they are highly visible to the rest of the group and the visibility increases performance pressures. In addition, female leaders often face "status leveling", resulting in being stereotyped and misidentified as having a lower rank, indicating a "lack of respect" from their male counterparts (Kanter, 1977). Stangl and Kane (1991) supported Kanter's theoretical model of tokenism amongst female coaches. Results of the study demonstrated how tokenism and marginalization served as mechanisms of social/institutional control that reproduced male dominance in sport (Stangl & Kane, 1991).

### Structural Forces

In addition to Cunningham's stereotyping forms of leadership and job type, structural forces are challenges that can constrain women from advancing to leadership positions within intercollegiate athletic administration. Structural forces may take the form of discrimination, social networks, or nature of the profession (Cunningham, 2010).

### Discrimination

Discrimination has been described as "a behavior that comes about only when we deny to individuals or groups of people equality of treatment which they may wish" (Allport, 1954, p. 51). According to Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormely (1990),

discrimination takes two forms - access discrimination and treatment discrimination. Access discrimination "denies one access to an organization, job, or profession based on membership in a social category" (Cunningham, 2010, p. 65). Access discrimination can take several forms. One form includes homosocial reproduction (Kanter, 1977) where men who occupy powerful positions choose other men, in their own image, to preserve the status quo, thus reinforcing a gender reproductive practice.

Another phenomena associated with access discrimination is known as the glass ceiling. The glass ceiling is a phenomenon that hinders the inclusion of, and promotions for, women in leadership positions (Clopton & Sagas, 2009; Grappendorf, Lough, & Griffin, 2004; Knoppers, Meyer, Ewing, & Forrest, 1991). The glass ceiling refers to the fact that women can see others in leadership positions but cannot seem to acquire those positions themselves.

Another access discrimination issue relates to power. Knoppers (1987) utilized Kanter's (1977) structural determinants of opportunity, power, and proportion to explain why men were often hired to coach women's sports and women were seldom hired to lead men's programs. The result was that men were given more opportunities to advance in sport organizations. Limiting these opportunities led to a reduction in power for women in sport organizations. By having so few women in positions within intercollegiate athletics, women have been treated differently than men, which may have led to occupational stereotyping (Whisenant, 2008).

Lastly, Staines, Travis, and Jayerante (1973) noted a phenomenon known as the Queen Bee syndrome. A Queen Bee is a senior female administrator in a male-dominated profession who has achieved success but is not willing to assist other women (Staines, Travis, & Jayerante, 1973). Staines, et. al (1973) first introduced the Queen Bee Syndrome to describe women who actively opposed any changes in traditional sex roles. Later, Abramson (1975) used Queen Bee to describe women in senior management who would not accept that other females who were capable of a management career were unable to progress due to discrimination. This structural phenomenon islikely to occur in organizations that created an environment where few women in are in leadership and those who were felt their positions were threatened. Derks, Van Laar, Ellemers, and de Groot (2011) described the behavior of the Queen Bees as the result of gender bias and social identity threat that produces gender disparities in career outcomes.

Besides access discrimination, Cunningham (2010) identified treatment discrimination as a structural reason for the underrepresentation of women in athletic administration. Treatment discrimination occurs when "members of a specific social category have less positive work experiences and receive fewer opportunities and rewards than they legitimately deserve based on job-related criteria" (Cunningham, 2010, p. 65).

One form of treatment discrimination is related to distributive justice. Distributive justice relates to "perceived fairness of outcomes, such as pay selection, promotion decisions, and the relationship of these justice perceptions to criterion variables, such as quality and quantity of work" (Andrew, Kim, Mahony, & Hums, 2009, p. 474). More specifically the focus of this particular "perceived fairness" is on equal pay among men and women within intercollegiate athletic administration.

The structural forces of discrimination that come into play for women working as athletic administrators occur at different points – as women try to break into their careers (access discrimination) and then as they move along during their careers (treatment discrimination). Other forces come into play as well, including the role of social networks.

### Social networks

Social networks are important to the success of women wanting to advance to leadership positions within sport as they serve many functions including a support system for upper mobility, mentoring, and access to important information (Hamilton & Murphy, 2011). Women who develop these social networks are likely to be more successful than those who do not (Cunningham, 2010). In addition, it has been notedthat people who have demographically similar networks are likely to be more successful than those with networks that are demographically dissimilar (Hamilton & Murphy, 2011). This may also be referred to as homologous reproduction which occurs when "the dominant group systematically reproduces itself in its own image" (Lovett & Lowery, 1994, p. 28). Moore and Konrad (2010) indicated that "sport is a domain of informal networks (commonly known as the old boys' network) to promote homologous reproduction in hiring practices" (p. 102). Homologous reproduction (Stangl &Kane, 1991) explains the relationship between the sex of the athletic directors and the proportion of female to male head coaches. For example, as men continue to hire more men like themselves, some women may be left without a support system. The lack of women serving as athletic administrators in intercollegiate sport suggests that women may not be able to develop social networks as easily as men (Whisenant & Pedersen, 2004).No support

system for women and lack of an "old girls club" combined with the success of the "old boys' club" has been identified as one of the greatest challenges confronting women working in intercollegiate athletics (Kanter, 1977; Lovett & Lowry, 1988; Moore & Konrad, 2010; Quarterman, Dupree, & Willis, 2006; Stangl & Kane, 1991; Young, 1990).

### *Nature of the profession*

Another structural force noted by Cunningham (2010) relates to the nature of the profession. The majority of the research conducted on work-family conflict in sport has been conducted in the areas of intercollegiate athletic coaching and administration (Dixon & Bruening, 2007; Dixon & Sagas, 2007; Sagas & Cunningham, 2005; Schneider, Stier, Henry, & Wilding, 2010). Dixon and Bruening (2007) examined female coaches and found that work-family conflict influenced outcomes within their personal and professional lives. Dixon and Sagas (2007) examined the relationship between organizational support, work-family conflict, and job/life satisfaction among coaches. Results indicated that work-family conflict mediated the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational support.

Sagas and Cunningham (2005) used a six dimensional model to assess the prevalence of work and family conflict amongst assistant coaches of women's teams. Results indicated three of the six dimensions of work-family conflict (strained-based family interference with work, behavior-based with interference with family, and behavior-based family interference with work) were significantly related to job satisfaction for female coaches but none for male coaches. Schneider, Stier, Henry, and Wilding (2010) found family commitments conflicting with job as the third discriminatory factor preventing the advancement of women to Senior Woman Administrator. Outside the sport industry, Feldman and Glenn (1979) developed the gender model to support reasons why balancing work and family creates challenges for women. The gender model revolves around gender socialization and indicates that women put a greater emphasis on their family roles than men, thus increasing stress at home or in the workplace (Feldman & Glenn, 1979). In addition, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) identified three potential types of work-family conflict present for female athletic administrators – time based, strain-based, and behavior-based.

Time based conflict occurs when a woman is unable to be present at multiple activities. If a woman has a sick child or is having relationship issues, the mental distraction affects her work performance (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Strain-based conflict occurs when a woman feels job-related stress or anxiety. The job role carries

over to her family role and creates issues (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Finally, behavior-based conflict occurs when a woman cannot shift from her role as a leader within intercollegiate athletic administration to her role as a mother. In other words she may become an authoritarian figure at home instead of a nurturing mother (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

The literature illustrates the challenges women face in their professional careers, and Cunningham (2010) provides a framework by which to examine those challenges and potential reasons for underrepresentation.

Therefore, based upon the literature, two research questions guided this study:

(a) What are the profiles of females working in athletic administration? What are the gender specific greatest challenges that women face within intercollegiate athletic administration?

## Methodology

### *Sample*

Emails were sent to 1834 women working as athletic administrators at NCAA Divisions I, II, III, as well as at NAIA schools, NCCAA schools, junior colleges, and Canadian colleges.

### *Questionnaire*

The Female Sport Manager Career Survey (Hums & Sutton, 1999) was selected for this study. The initial instrument was examined by a panel of experts to make sure the instrument had content validity and avoided biased items and terms. The instrument was then pilot tested. Initially developed by Hums and Sutton (1999) to gather career information on women working in the management of professional baseball, it has since been used in studies involving women working in the management in other sport industry segments, including professional basketball (Hums & Sutton, 2000), sport for people with disabilities (Hums & Moorman, 1999; Itoh, Hums, Bower, & Moorman, 2013) and campus recreation (Bower & Hums, 2003). The survey focuses on career paths and concerns of women working in sport management positions. When the survey was used in different industry segments, the researchers changed the language to fit the segment. For example, in the initial survey, respondents were asked "What are the two greatest challenges of being a woman working in the management of professional baseball?" In the study at hand, the researchers altered the language to say "What are the two greatest challenges of being a woman working in intercollegiate athletic administration?"

The researchers made appropriate modifications of the survey language to address women working in intercollegiate athletic administration.

Questions on demographic information were followed by open-ended questions about (a) the career paths of women working in intercollegiate athletic administration and (b) the greatest challenges they face in their careers. Demographic information included age, educational background, income, and race. Open-ended questions were ideal for this study, allowing the researchers to obtain a unique and in-depth perspective of the greatest challenges facing women working in intercollegiate athletic administration.

### Procedure

The emails were sent during the summer when teams were not in season. The emails directed participants to the survey which was set-up using Survey Monkey. The *National Directory of College Athletics* provided the email addresses of the female intercollegiate athletic administrators. After three weeks, a follow up email was sent to all non-respondents. Non-respondents had two more weeks to respond before the survey could no longer be accessed. A total of 514 surveys were returned for a response rate of 28.0 percent.

### Statistical analysis

For this descriptive study, frequencies were calculated for the demographic information using SPSS 20.0. The qualitative data were organized by using Wolcott's (1994) four-step approach which led to a content-analytic analysis. First, the researchers organized the data by utilizing HyperResearch 2.8. The organization of the data allowed the researchers to condense the data so it was more manageable. Second, the researchers read and re-read the qualitative responses from the open-ended questions. The repetitive nature of reading and re-reading the qualitative responses allowed the researchers to become immersed in and focus on the research questions at hand. Third, the researchers coded the data and performed a constant comparative analysis to review all applicable comments to the content area (e.g., greatest challenges) and categorized the group comments with similar meaning (Rallis, 2011). The unit of analysis for classification purposes was phrases rather than sentences because some sentences contained two or more divergent ideas. For example, the comments "Working with male and female coaches and administrators" were grouped under "working with people in athletic administration." Each phrase was assigned to a single category. The categories aligned into "working with people in athletic administration" to capture the meaning reflected in the group of comments (Weber, 1990).

The researchers completed a constant comparative analysis. The researchers were provided with themes and categories for each research question and then were asked to re-categorize each of the comments. Consensus was reached for those categories disagreed upon by moving comments to another category, creating a new grouping, or deleting the statement if it had already been mentioned.

Finally, the researchers narrowed down the total number of comments by deleting the stand-alone remarks made by single participants. The rationale to delete these comments from further analysis was made because the researchers were more interested in remarks in which multiple participants shared common experiences. The content analysis was completed through reading and re-reading the comments.

### *Trustworthiness of the Study*

Several strategies were used to gather data in order to strengthen the trustworthiness of the data. First, constant comparative analysis was used to strengthen credibility (internal validity) by establishing categories and placing participant comments from the open-ended questions into broad classifications which eventually cultivated into specific themes. Neuman (2010) describes this credibility as authenticity of giving a "fair, honest and balanced account of social life from the viewpoint of someone who lives it everyday" (p. 31). The "thick description" of comments provided supporting evidence and provided the information necessary to consider whether or not the findings could be generalized to a similar population. This strategy is referred to as transferability (external validity) (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Third, both researchers read and re-read the data to determine whether the data was dependable, which is often referred to as reliability in quantitative research. Finally, confirmability (objectivity) was based on the researchers' ability to limit bias and premature conclusions by using the constant comparative analysis, external auditing, and re-reading the data (Jensen, 2008).

### Results and Discussion

The purposes of this study were to examine the profiles and greatest challenges facing women working in intercollegiate athletics across all National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) divisions (I-III), National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA), National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), Junior Colleges, and Canadian Colleges. The information gathered in this study is presented according to Cunningham's (2010) categories of gender stereotyping and structural forces. Each

finding has a number at the end of the response stating how many times it was mentioned.

On average, the participants in this study were (a) Division I Associate Athletic Directors (37.5%), (b) 45-54 years of age (30.7%), (c) white (83.2%) (d) paid a salary between $40,000-$59,999 per year (30.2%), (e) were in their position for an average of 6.8 years, and (f) educated with 16 percent holding an undergraduate degree as their highest degree, 72.5 percent holding a master's degree, 5.6 percent holding a doctoral degree, and 3.7 percent holding a Juris Doctorate degree. Table 1 provides additional demographic information.

**Table 1.** Demographics.

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| Division | Responses | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Division I | 228 | 44.4 |
| Division II | 98 | 19.1 |
| Division III | 122 | 23.7 |
| NCCAA | 3 | .6 |
| NAIA | 19 | 3.7 |
| Junior College | 27 | 5.3 |
| Canadian College | 12 | 2.3 |
| Missing | 5 | 1.0 |

| Position | Responses | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Athletic Director | 97 | 18.9 |
| Associate Athletic Director | 191 | 37.2 |
| Assistant Athletic Director | 146 | 28.4 |
| Other | 76 | 14.8 |
| Missing | 4 | .8 |

| Age Classification | Responses | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| <25 | 2 | .4 |
| 25-30 | 42 | 8.2 |
| 31-34 | 66 | 12.8 |
| 35-44 | 151 | 29.4 |
| 45-54 | 158 | 30.7 |
| 55 or above | 92 | 17.9 |
| Missing | 3 | .6 |

| Race/Ethnicity | Responses | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Native American | 2 | .4 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 1 | .2 |
| African American | 44 | 8.6 |
| Hispanic | 4 | .8 |
| White | 452 | 87.9 |
| Other | 6 | 1.2 |

Table 1 (continued)

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| Race/Ethnicity | Responses | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Missing | 5 | 1.0 |

_____

| Income Range | Responses | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Less than $19,999 | 2 | .4 |
| $20,000-$39,999 | 32 | 6.2 |
| $40,000-$59,999 | 153 | 29.8 |
| $60,000-$79,999 | 124 | 24.1 |
| $80,000-$99,999 | 95 | 18.5 |
| $100,000-$119,999 | 43 | 8.4 |
| $120,000-$139,999 | 38 | 7.4 |
| $140,000-$159,999 | 4 | .8 |
| $160,000-$179,999 | 7 | 1.4 |
| $180,000-$199,999 | 4 | .8 |
| $200,000 or higher | 4 | .8 |
| Missing | 8 | 1.6 |

| Degree | Responses | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| High School Graduate | 2 | .4 |
| Some College (includes Associate) | 5 | 1.0 |
| College Graduate | 82 | 16.0 |
| Master's | 372 | 72.4 |
| Doctoral | 29 | 5.6 |
| JD | 19 | 3.7 |
| Other | 4 | .8 |
| Missing | 1 | .2 |

| Played Organized Sport | Responses | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Played | 455 | 88.5 |
| Did Not Play | 55 | 10.7 |
| Missing | 4 | .8 |

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Sixty-four point five percent of the participants had previous intercollegiate athletic experience, 11.3 percent had a full-time position during the last 10 years for a sport organization outside of intercollegiate athletics, and 16.0 percent worked full-time for a non-sport employer during the past 10 years. The majority of the participants received their first full-time job and current job in intercollegiate athletics by hearing about the position from others in the field (22.7%) and through job advertisements (24.1%). Only 5.7 percent of the participants had a family member working in intercollegiate athletic administration and the majority of those were spouses (55.2%). Finally, 89.2 percent of the participants played organized sport at the college/university level (76.0%).

### Gender Stereotyping

Gender stereotyping was most frequently mentioned challenge by the participants in this study (212). Gender stereotyping came in the form of job type (114) and leadership characteristics (98). Table 2 provides additional greatest challenges.

**Table 2.** Greatest Challenges.
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| Greatest Challenges | Responses |
|---|---|
| Gender Stereotype | 212 |
|    Leadership Characteristics | 98 |
|    Job Type | 114 |
| | |
| Structural Forces | 405 |
|    Discrimination | 140 |
|       Access | 13 |
|       Treatment | 127 |
| | |
|    Social Networks | 138 |
| | |
|    Nature of Coaching Profession | 127 |

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Women were stereotyped as nurturing or having communal attributes which are not perceived as successful qualities for people in leadership positions. Thus, the responses by the participants supported research on social role theory (Hoyt, Simon, & Reid, 2009). The perception of women having more communal attributes lends itself to a typical stereotype that leads to greater difficulties in attaining a leadership role and in being viewed as an effective leader (Eagly & Karau, 2002). For example, a participant described "being looked at as emotional because you are a woman (Athletic Director, NAIA, 31-34, White)." Another participant stated that she was "seen only as a mother (Assistant Athletic Director, Division I, 55 or above, White)." Another participant explained, "it is hard drawing the line between being a caring manager and not being their mother (Athletic Director, Division III, 55 or above, White)." Another stated:

> As a woman in athletics I believe you have to be a strong person and confident in yourself to make your way in a male dominated field. But with this comes the stereotype that you are "pushy" or "difficult to work with" which is truly how you have to be to make it (Athletic Director, NAIA, 45-54, White).

The incongruity between the female gender role and the leadership role leads people to believe women who possess more communal attributes and fewer agentic attributes will be perceived as less qualified for leadership positions, especially in sport (Schyns & Sczesny, 2010; Skelly & Johnson, 2011). It was evident participants

struggled with this as one noted: "Proving that as a young female administrator I know what I am doing and gaining respect from male co-workers that could be my father…Earning respect of head coaches in specific sports (football, men's basketball, baseball) (Other - SWA, Division II, 25-30, White)."

Women also described being viewed in a disrespectful way as a secretary as opposed to an administrator,

> To have the college administration understand just what I do and understand and respect my responsibilities. Because I am a woman, there is a tendency for the male college administration (NOT athletic) to view me as a glorified secretary (Athletic Director, Division II, 35-44, White)!

The lack of respect may be due to tokenism as one woman described,

> Trying to get a FORMALLY defined role. I do a little bit of everything. Almost like an ASSISTANT rather than an administrator. They are kind of passive with my position and don't really think it's important, like they are just fulfilling the NCAA requirement by having me there. So I have to make a conscious effort to really inject myself into the inner workings of the department, go to games, show up to practices, make really intelligent suggestions and comments, and just take it upon myself to define my role and my importance because they (the men) sure aren't going to do it (Other, Division I, 35-44, White).

Kanter (1977) found that sex ratios create an extraordinary amount of influence on group behavior in organizations and women had to continually prove themselves and their credibility as leaders, particularly when they were the "token" woman. These women also have more on-the-job pressure and scrutiny than dominants because they are highly visible to the rest of the group. One participant provided a good example of her experience as a token woman,

> I have two strikes against me – working in sport and being a woman. It is hard because I am working in intercollegiate athletics in combination with being a woman. It has made it difficult to gain respect among staff when I am the only woman. I feel like I have to prove myself which leads to a lot of pressure (Director, Junior College, 31-34, White).

These quotes provided strong examples of how women perceived gender stereotyping. The respondents also provided information which indicated how they perceived structural forces impacted their work experience.

### Structural Forces

Structural forces were indicated as challenges to women working within intercollegiate athletic administration (405). The structural forces included discrimination (140), social networks (138), and nature of the profession (127).

The majority of the women experienced treatment discrimination (90) as opposed to access discrimination (40). Treatment discrimination was most often mentioned in responses related to proving one's self (58) and equal pay/wage discrimination (32). Access discrimination was most often mentioned in the form of the glass ceiling (37) and the Queen Bee Syndrome (13).

Treatment discrimination occurs when "members of a specific social category have less positive work experiences and receive fewer opportunities and rewards than they legitimately deserve based on job-related criteria" (Cunningham, 2010, p. 65). The women in this study felt they had to continually prove themselves by working harder than their male counterparts but received the same or even fewer benefits. One woman mentioned, "By working in a traditionally male environment and having to work so much harder to prove myself to my boss and other men (Athletic Director, Division I, 35-44, African American)." Another woman commented,

> I have to prove myself to my supervisor every day by working harder, longer hours, and attaining more responsibility. Working my way up I feel like I had to work twice as hard as my male counterparts and learn my job from the ground up in order to get the opportunities I have (Associate Athletic Director, Division I, 31-34, White).

These responses may be related to the social psychological approach of the supervisor not including the woman with the "in-group" (Sartore, 2006). A woman has to continue proving herself and not getting the rewards for her work. Those rewards may come in the form of compensation as one woman explained,

> As a woman without a family, I am judged as someone that can be available at all times to work odd and weekend hours. I don't think my compensation has reflected the work I have done and I often times field the complaints of coaches that have families and feel they can't take care of them, in turn, asking for raises (Other, Division I, 35-44, Native American).

Access discrimination was most often mentioned in the form of the glass ceiling (37) and Queen Bee Syndrome (13). Access discrimination "denies one access to an organization, job, or profession based on membership in a social category"

(Cunningham, 2010, p. 65). Access discrimination often happens to women wanting to advance to leadership positions within intercollegiate athletics (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012; Grappendorf, et al., 2004; Strawbridge, 2000; Wright, et al., 2011), and is often referred to as the glass ceiling (Clopton & Sagas, 2009). The glass ceiling is a phenomenon that hinders inclusion and promotions for women in leadership positions (Clopton & Sagas, 2009; Grappendorf, et al., 2004; Knoppers, Meyer, Ewing, & Forrest, 1991). Many women mentioned the glass ceiling as an obstacle, "Pushing against the glass ceiling in athletics, especially in administration is something I experience because I am a woman in intercollegiate athletics. Men want to hire other men. They take care of themselves (Assistant Director, Division I, 35-44, White)".

Interesting responses came from women who have experienced the Queen Bee Syndrome. The Queen Bee Syndrome exists where a female senior administrator in a male-dominated profession has achieved success but is not willing to assist with the success of other women (Staines, Travis, & Jayerante, 1973). One participant said, "other women, especially those in superior positions, feel threatened by young women in the industry rather than try to mentor them and help them grow (Assistant Athletic Director, Division II, 35-44, White)." Another woman further supported the concept in relation to the glass ceiling by saying, "fighting other older women in our profession who see a 'glass ceiling' and think we can't have the highest success and should stay at the service level (Other – SWA, Division III, 31-34, White)."

The data collected from the women in this study supported the research on the existence of the old boys network and the challenges it creates for women working in intercollegiate athletics (Kanter, 1977; Lovett & Lowry, 1988; Moore & Konrad, 2010; Quarterman, et al., 2006; Stangl & Kane, 1991; Young, 1990). Remarks made by the women related to homologous reproduction where "the dominant group systematically reproduces itself in its own image" (Lovett & Lowery, 1994, p. 28). For example,

Just matriculating through collegiate athletics and trying to involve myself with all the coaches, many of whom (the men) are not terribly inviting and/or don't make any real efforts to involve me, introduce themselves, or make me feel as if I am part of the team. I don't get open invitations from the coaches to watch games, sit sideline on the field, etc. The individual athletes are the ones who ask me to support them, not the coaches, so I support them because I love them. But many of the coaches make no effort to involve me even though there aren't that many

administrators at my school. Just four actually, not including the faculty athletic rep (Assistant Athletic Director, Division I, 35-44, White).

The participants indicated that men continued to invite other men like themselves into their "club", leaving the women without a support system. Other remarks supporting homologous reproduction included,

> The old boys network is still intact and more men are being hired into open positions, breaking into the men's club. As a woman in athletics you must be welcomed into the men's club, you are not automatically accepted (Assistant Athletic Director, Division I, 35-44, White).

Another woman took a different perspective, focusing on being assertive and not waiting on an invitation, "I had to learn to be assertive and place myself in situations that were uncomfortable. For example, no one ever invited me to stand on the sidelines with the men. I just had to go place myself there (Athletic Director, NCCAA, 45-54, White)." A female AD said one of the challenges is "Trying to win over 'the good old boys' club mentality." Unfortunately when women cannot "win over" the good old boys' club they are left without a support system as there are not enough women to develop a good old girls' network. This may lead to being overlooked for a promotion opportunity. For example,

> Moving up the ladder (from say Compliance Officer to Associate AD). There is a lack of "social" opportunities to get to know one another (like athletic staff and their administrators playing basketball at Lunch time or even golfing together). These types of activities create boding and support for each other, so when it comes time to promote someone from within the athletic department, women have a disadvantage and can be overlooked. I know of a female coach that played golf with the male administrators and a few coaches and was so good that they stopped playing with her. When it came time to promote, needless to say, she was not in the mix, even though she had worked on many athletic committees within and without the campus and volunteered to assist during special events/projects run by the athletic department. This slight was obvious to all when she was not offered the job from an internal search (Associate Athletic Director, Division I, 45-54, White).

Family/work conflict was the second most frequently mentioned challenge for women working within the administration of intercollegiate athletics with 127 responses. Women in the study said it was hard to balance family and a career. For example, a

participant mentioned, "balancing family and career. Most of the men have wives who stay at home or work far less (Athletic Director, Junior College, 45-54, White)." Another participant said, "life balance – expectations to work full-time and be at many events, while I have family commitments (Athletic Director, Canadian College, 35-44, White)." This quote supported the research by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) indicating time based conflicts occur when a woman must be present at multiple events.

Another woman mentioned, "not treated the same as far as family issues (Athletic Director, NAIA, 35-44, White)." The results support the gender model of how balancing work and family plays a role in creating challenges for women. As a result of socialization, women may place greater emphasis on family roles which may increase stress at home or workplace (Feldman & Glenn, 1979).

*Implications*

The results of this study provide several practical implications that contribute to the body of literature related to the challenges female athletic administrators confront and offer suggestions as to how they can best navigate those challenges. The results indicated that female athletic administrators continue to face many of the same issues that have consistently been researched and documented. Despite a significant amount of research, strategies, and approaches taken towards addressing the challenges women face working in athletic administration, the same challenges continue. Thus, it is important to persevere in addressing key areas where women identify persistent challenges. Efforts must continue to be made, attempts renewed, and endeavors strengthened to alleviate the ongoing concerns plaguing women working in athletic administration.

It's clearly important for women to develop networks. Having an "old girls' club" is just as important to women as the "old boys' club" is to men. Females in intercollegiate athletic administration should try to develop relationships with other female administrators on campus as well as seek out involvement with organizations like the National Association of Women Athletic Administrators (NACWAA). Further, since there is a lack of women in intercollegiate athletic administration, it may be wise to develop relationships with men in the athletic department. Finding support in each other as well as supporting each other in career endeavors is important for women working in intercollegiate athletic administration.

Next, discussions need to continue about work/life balance and solutions to assist women working in intercollegiate athletics. Regardless of policies, child care, or a

commitment to helping women balance the unique needs of a female working in intercollegiate athletics is made, women continue to struggle. It is time to not only recognize but to act to assist women in finding work/life balance.

Finally, the dynamics around gender role stereotyping must be addressed. It is critical to examine the impact of gender role expectations on women's careers in sport as the assumptions and stereotypes regarding roles can perpetuate the notion that certain careers, specifically working in athletic administration, are reserved for men. Expectations for roles and behavior must be discussed among all employees of the athletic department.

### Limitations of the Study

The researchers identified two limitations for the study. First, the return rate was 28.0% (N = 514) which seems rather low. However, it is difficult to choose the best time to conduct a survey given an intercollegiate athletic administrator's year around workload. This survey was administered at the beginning of the basketball season which is a peak time in terms of responsibilities for intercollegiate athletic administrators. Though a second round of reminders went out after the initial survey, we would suggest another round or two may have generated more responses

One way to determine if respondents are representative of the population is to compare characteristics of the sample with the demographics of benchmarks in the literature (Olson, 2006). The demographics of the respondents in this study were similar to the literature. For example, Lapchick (2012) indicated that more than 80% of females working in intercollegiate athletic administration were white. Acosta and Carpenter's (2012) data indicated the majority of women working in intercollegiate athletics are at Division I institutions. The majority of female athletic administrators in Hancock (2012) had a master degree or higher. Finally, the study was limited to women who were administrators in intercollegiate athletics. This study did not ask similar questions of men working in intercollegiate athletics.

### Future Research

It will be important to continue to study the profiles and challenges of women working in intercollegiate athletic administration encounter. It is important to know who these women are, and what information they could provide to women who aspire to also work in intercollegiate athletic administration. Researchers should track if the same issues continue to plague women in intercollegiate athletic administration.

It is also important to try to continue to gain the most comprehensive view possible of who these women are and the gender challenges they face. It is evident from the results of this study that women in intercollegiate athletic administration are facing similar challenges regardless of their institutional setting.

Further, a similar study could be done with men working in intercollegiate athletics. From that work, a comparison paper looking at men's and women's responses would be of interest. Next, it would be interesting to see how/if these responses differ by where the respondents are in their careers. Finally, is there anything in the women's responses that indicate why women may or may not choose to move up the chain into the athletic director position?

## Conclusion

This study examined the profiles and challenges faced by women working in intercollegiate athletic administration. The results indicated women in intercollegiate athletic administration face many of the same challenges today that have been consistently noted in research over the years. One would hope that over 40 years since the passage of Title IX women would not still be facing issues like discrimination and battling stereotypes. The study does, however, provide helpful information to continue dialogue with those in administration as to how to approach the challenges as well as providing a platform to talk with those interested in pursuing a career a career in intercollegiate athletic administration.

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