How do factors preventing the career advancement of women relate to the career advancement of women in NCAA Division III top-level athletic administration?

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Abstract
The underrepresentation of females is not exclusive to only one part of business, but rather, this idea has been seen throughout athletic administration for many years (Acosta & Carpenter 1998, 2004). To illustrate and attempt to explain women in business, previous research has explored the discipline of the vast psychological barriers and the stereotypes that have been prevalent in society. In addition, past research has been focused within Division I colleges under the NCAA. In this study, I will attempt to synthesize my participant’s responses in order to hone in on the athletic administration aspect of business and attempt to understand and report why women are underrepresented in these specific positions. In a survey conducted to 170 NCAA Division III college athletic administrators, I hope to gain knowledge of the similarities between past research findings and relate them to the conclusions drawn from my study to create a comprehensive picture and answer my research question.

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The underrepresentation of females is not exclusive to only one part of business, but rather, this idea has been seen throughout athletic administration for many years (Acosta & Carpenter 1998, 2004). To illustrate and attempt to explain women in business, previous research has explored the discipline of the vast psychological barriers and the stereotypes that have been prevalent in society. In addition, past research has been focused within Division I colleges under the NCAA. In this study, I will attempt to synthesize my participant's responses in order to hone in on the athletic administration aspect of business and attempt to understand and report why women are underrepresented in these specific positions. In a survey conducted to 170 NCAA Division III college athletic administrators, I hope to gain knowledge of the similarities between past research findings and relate them to the conclusions drawn from my study to create a comprehensive picture and answer my research question.
The under-representation of women within top-level athletic administration is not a new trend. Before the passage of Title IX, athletic departments under the NCAA had separate athletic departments for men and women (Grappendorf & Lough, 2006). This type of governing called for a woman athletic director in charge of women’s athletics and a man in charge of men’s athletics. After the passage of Title IX in 1972, athletic departments began to merge, most often eliminating the woman in charge of women’s athletics and replacing her with the male athletic director who now oversaw the entire merged department. This is the time at which it is argued that the beginning of the underrepresentation of female athletic directors started (Grappendorf & Lough, 2006). However, as of 2006, three universities within Division I under the NCAA still continue to have separate athletic departments for men and women, which include the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville, University of Tennessee, and the University of Texas-Austin (NCAA 2009-2010). Another factor that laid headway to the under-representation is not only the passage of Title IX but also, the takeover of the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women by the NCAA, both of which have been heavily researched (Acosta & Carpenter 1998, 2004; Cahn, 1994; Delpy, 1998; Diesenhouse, 1990; Fox, 1992; Patrick, 2001). Furthermore, this idea of underrepresentation is supported by Warren (2003) who stated, “In 1972 women managed 90% of the women’s programs. By 2002, the number of programs being managed by a woman
dropped under 20%”. The most recent NCAA report stated that the number of females in the positions of Director of Athletics, Associate Director of Athletics and Assistant Director of Athletics is 1,513 or 30.4 percent (NCAA 2009-2010). In addition, the initial proposal of my research was guided by the fact that although there is data of the percentage disproportion of male and female athletic directors, there is a lack of cumulative data concerning women in athletic administration (Massengale, 2009).

The goal of my research is to combine which specific frequently known factors that have been found within business relate to the under-representation of females in top-level positions in college athletic departments to establish a reasoning of why the continuation of the under-representation is still prevalent. From these conclusions, I hope to investigate and explain why the trend is not going to undergo any change in upcoming years due to the continuing factors. To support my research implementation, athletic administration will be examined more in depth and the barriers existing for women will be broken down into four categories. For the purpose of this research, top-level administration refers to women as Director of Athletics, Associate Director of Athletics and Assistant Director of Athletics within Division III athletic departments under the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) governing body. In this research I am expanding on previous knowledge and research formed that has been conducted investigating and explaining the stereotypes and biases that exist within business to explain the under-representation of females in top-level athletics administration to create a future
picture of females within top-level athletic administration in Division III. Specifically I am asking:

How do factors preventing the career advancement of women relate to the career advancement of women in NCAA Division III top-level athletic administration?

**Athletic Administration**

In establishing the grounds for my research, it is beneficial to decipher between the types of top-level administration within Division I, II and III under the NCAA through previous research and existing knowledge. The basic aim of sport administration is explained as “activities intended for carrying out target’s policy and decision concerning the sport field” (Caliskan, 2009). Within the same reference, successful sport managers need to have many occupational, personal qualities and features and to implement these qualities managers need to express direction and leadership skill, experience, diplomacy, flexibility, self-motivation and teamwork (Caliskan, 2009). A good sport director must have features like administrative attention, truthfulness, being regular of human and social relation, making decision ability, health and physical suitability for job, accepting voluntary responsibility, job comprehension, using management techniques and intellectual capacity (Caliskan, 2009). Parks, Quarterman and Thibault (2006) define an athletic director duties as overseeing the following, “...budget and finance, facilities, risk management, television contracts, compliance with laws and regulations of national and conference governing bodies, academic progress of college athletes,
communication with the media, scheduling, marketing games and other events, corporate sponsorships, ticket sales, community relations, alumni relations, campus relations, fund-raising, and personal management, including the hiring and firing of coaches”.

In addition to the demonstration of many necessary skills as athletic administrators, education is a standard that is pertinent to the athletics directors at all three division levels with the NCAA. As expressed by Schneider and Stier (2005), there is an ever-present importance of prospective athletics directors obtaining formal education through specific college and university courses in order to become knowledgeable as an athletics director. “Courses deemed most pertinent for the position of athletics director were athletic administration, legal liability, facilities and equipment, and communications” (pp. 2). From the research conducted by Schneider and Stier (2005), it was found that it is essential to the success of an athletics director to attain a baccalaureate degree and it is very important that they earn a master’s degree. Although a certificate beyond a master’s degree, a specialist (Ed.S.) degree, and a doctoral degree would be helpful, these three degrees are not considered essential or very important to the success of the athletics director.

**Psychology**

Many of the underlying theories that are used to explain the under-representation in top-level positions both inside and outside of athletic administration are rooted within psychology. The differences discovered by researchers in the psychological nature are then used as the basis of most gender
stereotypes that serve as barriers to women. According to Reardon, Bullock & Meyer (2007), it is suggested that throughout childhood, gender identity schemas shape and restrict occupational preferences, inducing conformity to careers perceived and as gender appropriate. It is extremely beneficial to understand that many of these differences start in childhood and are only made stronger with time. All of the influences are intended to form a person’s gender and actually have been proven to hinder chances for women in business and career advancement and are now a basis of research. As supported by Correll (2001), “sex segregation often emerges early in the path towards many careers...as cultural conceptions of gender serve to constrain the early career-relevant choices of men and women” (pp. 1700). Current research investigating these psychological barriers regarding gender exists mostly in regard to; leadership and job preferences, decision-making ability, work-family conflict, and job performance (Burton & Peachey, 2009; Claussen & Lehr, 2003; Ergeneli, Illsev & Karapinar, 2010; Parlea-Buzata, 2011; Robinson, Tedrick & Carpenter, 2001; Rozell, Gundersen & Terpstra 1998; Walker & Waiker, 2010; Whitmarsh & Wentworth, 2012).

Existing research has recognized the different leadership preferences that later lead to job preferences. Burton and Peachy (2009) most recently investigated the different leadership styles and suggested that women demonstrate more transformational leadership styles while men portray a more transactional leadership. This idea was first researched by Burns (1978), who expressed that transformational leaders provide a purpose that transcends short-term goals and recognizes the higher order needs of followers while transactional leaders view the
proper exchange of resources as most important. This concept was than later developed by Bass (1985) who assigned four distinct characteristics to each kind of leader. Transformational leaders have charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. In addition Bass (1990) continued to again study the characteristics and assigned contingent reward, active management by exception, passive management by exception and laissez-faire to transactional leaders. However, Choi et al. (2007) interestingly enough had coaches in five major NCAA conferences rate their athletic directors, and discovered that transformational leadership was linked to coaches’ job satisfaction, affective commitment, and altruistic behavior. In addition, Kent and Chelladurai (2001) found that transformational leadership led to greater organizational commitment, specifically to feelings of attachment, identification and involvement with the organization and as mentioned above, according to Burton and Peachy (2009), women typically demonstrate a transformational leadership style. Thus, this idea possibly illustrates a bigger issue of general stereotypes that may lead to the under-representation of women in athletic administration and will be explored further. However, it is seen that with the previous research there is a lack of connection between the two ideas. If athletic organizations and business in general prefer a certain leadership style to another, one will become under-represented with time, possibly the specific under-representation of females within Division III college athletic administration, which will also be explored later within my research.

In addition to leadership preferences and differing styles of men and women, research has shown that there are also differences within gender that influence
decision-making ability. In terms of stress and risk, Walker, Waiker and Davis (2010) found that women are less confident when making decisions under risk and their research supported Frautschi’s (1999) claim that men are unwilling to appear unknowing or vulnerable. Additional research conducted by Rozell, Gundersen and Terpstra (1998) found that women experience loss of control, failure, and punishment in many environments more than men do and this may be because of frequent exposure to unpleasant types of situations which leads later to more helplessness and depression than men. This difference in ability makes women seem not as attractive in the hiring of positions where major decisions will be made under stress, such as head athletic director (Frautschi, 1999).

General knowledge surrounding work-family conflict frequently focuses on the implications it has for women because of the history of the stay at home mom, or housewife title. Work-family conflict as defined by Ergeneli, Ilsev & Karapinar (2010) is “a form of inter-role conflict where the demands of work and family are incompatible” (pp. 579). This incompatibility is then often times carried into the workplace and plays a significant role in job performance among women. In response, it was suggested “companies should take necessary actions to reduce the conflict between the family and work responsibilities of working women, especially by providing facilities such as day care centres, flextime and job sharing” (pp. 692). In addition, Dixon and Bruening (2005) introduced a multilevel model of work-family conflict that looked into three different levels that interact with each other. These include, sociocultural, organizational/structural and individual dimensions.
They argued that higher-level work environments shape and constrict lower level behaviors, which ultimately influence the perception and consequences of work-family conflict. Within athletic administration the head athletic director is responsible for multiple job responsibilities and the work family conflict in addition may be too much for women forming a stereotype and than further adding to the under-representation and facilitating a need for psychological research to explore these issues.

Many components factor into job satisfaction in both men and women within business as well as athletic administration. Research suggests however, these factors differ between men and women. According to Cranny, Smith & Stone (1992), the concept of job satisfaction is defined as “the emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experience”. From the research conducted by Robinston, Tedrick & Capenter in 2001, it was found that in terms of Division III athletics under the NCAA, men and women showed differences about job satisfaction with athletic administration. “Men were satisfied with pay, while women had a neutral view in regards to pay”(pp. 30). It could not be determined if males in the same positions were being paid more than their female counterparts.

**Stereotypes**

Stereotypes are continually reinforced within our society concerning many different under-represented groups. Stereotypes are often a large exaggeration and oversimplified image of an idea that leads to discrimination that calls upon research conduction to spread knowledge. Although women now make up half of the U.S.
work force, they still occupy only a minority of leadership positions in the business world, particularly among the biggest corporations (Cabrera, Sauer & Thomas-Hunt, 2009). As of 2006, women held only 1.8% of the CEO positions in the Fortune 500, 16.4% of corporate officer positions, 6.4% of the highest paid positions, and 9.4% of executive vice president and above positions (Catalyst, 2006). These low numbers are a result of many different stereotypes and beliefs regarding women in business.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, in 1991 they defined the glass ceiling as “those artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into management-level positions” (pp.53). This glass ceiling is reinforced through what women identified as gender stereotyping in regard to leadership and what men identifies as the lack of professional experience (Robinson, 2005). In addition, Dixon and Bruening (2005) introduced a multilevel model of work–family conflict that looked into three different levels that interact with each other. These include, sociocultural, organizational/structural and individual dimensions. The researchers argued that higher-level environments shape and constrain lower level behaviors, which ultimately influence the perception and consequences of work–family conflict. This barrier is largely seen throughout the prevalence and entire behind the idea of the Senior Woman Administrator (SWA). The history of the SWA position started with the Primary Women Administrator (PWA), which was first developed to create a more equal representation of women after the merge of the male and female athletic departments (Claussen & Lehr, 2003). However, after the development of the PWA, questions arouse concerning the position. Following this
expressed discontent, the NCAA responded by changing the title to the SWA in 1990 (NCAA, 1996). Women today believe that reaching the SWA position is the highest position within college athletics that they can potentially reach and as a result, they never try to become the head or assistant athletic director, greatly increasing the under-representation (Hoffman, 2010).

Along with stereotypes, prejudices are still prevalent in society that hinder the chances of women in the workplace and often times these prejudices are a direct effect of stereotypes that people hold. From the research conducted by Burton, Grappendort & Henderson (2011), it was found that perceptions of masculinity were not reported differently by males and females however, the participants in the study indicated that the female candidate was less likely to be selected for the position of athletic director. The researches suggested that if this scenario occurs within the hiring process than men will continue to dominate the athletic director position.

**Method**

**Subjects**

For the purpose and effectiveness of my research I distributed a survey to all professionals of athletic administration at colleges and universities in the western and central New York region who are only within Division III athletics under the NCAA. These colleges include; University of Rochester, Rochester Institute of Technology, State University of New York at Brockport, St. John Fisher College, Nazareth College, Hobart & William Smith Colleges, Alfred University, Buffalo State
College, Hilbert College, State University of New York at Geneseo, State University of New York at Fredonia, Ithaca College and Utica College. An average of five to ten individuals were surveyed from each school for a total of 85 subjects and were reached by the email attached or affiliated with their respective college or university. These subjects were chosen because of the nature of their work. Each person, both male and female, work and function in the setting that my research question is exclusive to. In addition, as I will explain later within the type of my research, I was searching for beneficial emotions and feelings to help answer my research question that were evoked by my survey.

Theory

In order to interpret the results of my study, it is necessary to follow a theoretical framework that coincides with my research. Theories provide support for studies and relate relationships among variables (Gratton & Jones, 2004). Beginning in the discipline of psychology, as discussed within the review of previous research, many theories relate to the foundation of my research. Essentially, my research is being conducted to expand on already existing theories within the field of psychology and more specifically the underrepresentation of women in sport positions. Much of the preexisting literature starts to explore theories and ideas that are formed when a child is at a young age and is then developed over time, such as the gender identity schema theory that has been proven to restrict and shape job preferences from an early age (Reardon, Bullock & Meyer, 2007). This theory fits within my research because ultimately I am trying to discover if this theory can be
applied within the specific scopes of my research and how it may differ when applied to division III women college athletic administrators. Therefore, I hypothesize that evidence of the gender identity schema theory will be evident in the responses that I receive from my research participants. In order to get these results I will have to ask questions with regard to my participants learned behavior of men and women when they were children and attempt to draw conclusions that support the gender identity schema theory.

**Research Type**

Explanatory research is used to help explain why something happens and identifies relationships between the differing variables within that research and requires some form of theoretical framework (Gratton & Jones, 2004). I chose to follow this type of research because with my question I am attempting to use the data that I collected to explain the underrepresentation of women within college athletic administration. The research tradition that I chose followed a post-positivist tradition because the survey that I sent to my subjects gathered both qualitative and quantitative data and I was essentially testing a theory. In addition, my survey did evoke emotion and will call upon personal experience from my subjects.

**Data Collection**

The data that I will be conducting in my research is of a mixed-methods approach consisting of primary data with a post-positivist tradition. In collecting my data, as mentioned above, a survey was sent to approximately 85 subjects. This
survey was an electronic cross-sectional survey. Upon being asked to participate in my survey, each subject was sent an initial invitation asking for voluntary and confidential participation while the nature of my study was explained. Within the survey, questions consisted of a few opening demographic questions followed by both qualitative and quantitative questions regarding their particular views of the underrepresentation of women within college administration. (Refer to Appendix A for survey questions).

**Results**

**Findings**

The research that I conducted through an electronic survey yielded a 20 percent response rate for a total of 17 participants out of the initial 85 subjects. Within my total subjects 65 percent were male while 35 percent were female. Most of the participants, 48 percent, were between the ages of 20-40 and their experience within Division III athletic administration ranged from 1 year to 21 years. The two most prevalent reasons given for taking their current position lied within a passion and interest in sports and the most prevalent reason given by participants for the belief behind being hired initially was experience combined with qualifications. At the time of hire, a male hired 76 percent of participants while females hired 24 percent of participants. When asked about equality, 82 percent of participants felt that there was equality between males and females while 18 percent did not. Of this 18 percent who disagreed, 3 responses were given for their disagreement, which were; lack of turnover, lack of support because of few numbers and lack of comfort
between older males and women. If the participant was not already in the position of head athletic director, they were asked if reaching that position was their goal. 5 participants responded with a direct yes while the remaining answers were no or vague in nature in the sense that the participant was unsure at the time if they would like to advance within the department. These findings can be found in Appendix B.

Discussion

It is evident that the previous findings from earlier studies; Reardon, Bullock & Meyer (2007), Burton and Peachy (2009), Ergeneli, Ilsev & Karapinar (2010), Dixon and Bruening (2005), Choi, Sagas, Park & Cunningham, G.B. (2007), regarding the underrepresentation of women in business and athletic administration correlate with the findings of my study. When asked about the factors that contribute the most to the underrepresentation of females in athletic administration, 35 percent replied with work-family conflict, 23 percent replied with job preferences and 17 percent replied with the way in which society influences what is gender appropriate or gender identity schema. Although the prevalence of each answer was limited due to the low response rate of my survey, both male and female athletic administrators within NCAA Division III believe that the underrepresentation of females is in fact due to some of the same previously explored factors by researchers. However, there was a lack of response in terms of the glass ceiling and job satisfaction indicating that both of these ideas are not reasons for hindering women within Division III and are actually more exclusive to business and athletic administration at the Division I
and Division II level, as found by previous researchers. As a researcher, I drew the correlation between the amount of response when asked about equality with the lack of responses given for job satisfaction. It is likely that because 82 percent of respondents felt that there was indeed equality in their department that as a result, they did not feel that job satisfaction was a factor in the underrepresentation of females. The glass ceiling was the additional choice given on my survey that was not given by any respondents for the underrepresentation of females, directly following the previous research conducted by Robinson (2005). However, when looking at the data only five respondents felt that moving up within their department was a goal of theirs, which ultimately softly speaks to the glass ceiling. Unfortunately, as a researcher I failed to insert a question on my survey that would formulate actual correlation between these two ideas.

**Limitations**

Unfortunately with a strict given deadline to conduct my research and collect my data, I was limited due to time constraints. Had I been able to keep my survey open longer than the initial two weeks, I believe my response rate would have been higher than 20 percent. In similar terms, if a time constraint was not put into place I could have gathered more email addresses and increased my survey participant number, again trying to increase my response rate. Another limitation that affected my data responses is the lack of clarity in some of my survey questions. Because of this, as a researcher I was unable to understand and correlate multiple responses and look for themes due to the vague nature of some answers. Future researchers
should explore a more in depth approach to my research question and gather a higher response rate by increasing their participant’s number. In addition, my research is exclusive to the western and central New York region; therefore it cannot be applied across all Division III NCAA. Future research should be conducted using every Division III NCAA schools.
References


THE UNDERREPRESENTATION OF FEMALES


Appendix A

2. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female

3. What is your age?
   - 20-30
   - 31-40
   - 41-50
   - 51-60
   - 61-70

4. How long have you worked as a DIII administrator?

5. Why did you take your position initially?

6. What do you think is the main reason why you were hired for your current position?

7. At the time of your hire, who was in charge of making the final decision?
   - Male
   - Female

8. What are your primary responsibilities?

9. How many female administrators are in your immediate department?
   - Less than 5
   - 5-10
   - More than 10
10. Do you feel as if there is equality within your department between males and females?
   Yes
   No

11. If not, why?

12. If you are not already in the position of head athletic director, is reaching that position your goal? Why or why not?

13. Which factor do you think contributes the most to the underrepresentation of females in athletic administration?
Appendix B

What is your gender?

What is your age?
How long have you worked as a DIII administrator?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Text Response</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the time of your hire, who was in charge of making the final decision?
How many female administrators are in your immediate department?

Do you feel as if there is equality within your department between males and females?

Which factor do you think contributes the most to the underrepresentation of females in athletic administration?