Perceived Employment Openness for People of Color within Managerial Positions of Sport Organizations

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According to previously collected employment data, the sport management profession has not provided full equality to people of color. Lapchick (2005) found that only 10% of Division I athletic directors are people of color. In 2005, Lapchick provided separate assessments of employment diversity within Major League Baseball (MLB), the National Football League (NFL) and the National Basketball Association (NBA). Lapchick (2005a) indicated that 25% of the MLB senior executives are individuals of color, while Lapchick (2005b) found that 16% of executives within the NFL are people of color. Likewise, 16% of executives within the NBA are people of color (Lapchick, 2005c).

Since employment statistics indicate that representation is low for people of color, there must be an assessment of employment openness toward people of color within the managerial hierarchy of sport organizations. The purpose of this study is two-fold. First, to identify the dimensions of employment openness within sport organizations; and second, to assess the impact of the dimensions of employment openness on the representation of individuals of color within sport organizations.

A questionnaire was developed to collect data on employment openness toward human resource management (HRM) practices within sport organizations and sent to all Division I collegiate and professional sport organizations. Questionnaires were sent to the senior administrators or executives at the sampled organizations. A return rate of 39% was received. Although the 39% rate of return may be considered low, it is comparable with other studies addressing issues that are sensitive in nature (e.g., Konrad & Linnehan, 1995).

The survey instrument measured openness toward employment recruitment, training and development, compensation and performance assessment; and utilized a five-point Likert Scale with anchors of strongly agree; (5) to strongly disagree (1). Prior to administration, a pilot test was given to 14 professional and collegiate sport organizations. The pilot test yielded a Cronbach Alpha of .96; thus indicating that the instrument possessed a high degree of internal consistency.

An Exploratory Factor Analysis was performed in this study to identify three orientations to diversity openness with respect to employees of color. The identified dimensions of openness were top management openness, compensatory openness, and strategic openness. Top management openness represented a supportive philosophy toward employing persons of color among the top managers in the organization. Compensatory openness constituted the development of a set of policies designed to compensate for past inequities toward persons of color by tracking employment statistics and rewarding managers for meeting diversity goals. Strategic openness was comprised of HRM practices designed to increase the representation of persons of color in the organization, including hiring, training, succession planning, and workplace support.

Path analysis was used to determine the effect of organization pressures on the development of employment openness. Parenthetically, the organizational pressures examined were organizational size and the presence of a lawsuit for racial discrimination. Then this type of statistical analysis was used to assess the impact of employee openness dimensions on the representation of people of color.

The path analysis showed an acceptable level of fit to the data. The non-significant chi-square value of 21.80 (df=8, ns) indicated that the data did not depart significantly from the model. In addition, the goodness-of-fit index of 0.983, the Bentler-Bonnet normal-fit index of 0.942, and Bolten index of 0.963 were all within the acceptable range (Hair et al., 1995). Findings indicated significant paths between organizational size and compensatory climate (t=3.04, p<.05), top management climate and compensatory climate (t=10.18, p<.05), and top management climate and the percentage of managers of color (t=2.01, p<.05).

In conclusion, the implications for people of color within the management of sport are two-fold. First, this paper will examine ways to create climates more oriented toward employing individuals of color within the managerial area of sports. Second, it will examine the specific organizational climatic requisites for managing diversity within collegiate and professional sport organizations.