The Effects of Gender, Race, and Role Congruity on Perceptions of Quality of Job Applicant

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Introduction It is well documented that since the implementation of Title IX, the percentage of female head coaches has dropped dramatically (Acosta & Carpenter, 2008). In 2008, the percentage of female head coaches of collegiate women's sports was 42.8%, compared to over 90% in 1972. Thus, while participation opportunities for female athletes have increased substantially, the percentage of collegiate female head coaches is at an all-time low (Acosta & Carpenter, 2008). The percentages are much worse for African American women. For the 2006-07 season, taking all Division I sports into consideration and excluding historically Black colleges, only 3% of head coaches for women's sports were African American women. Furthermore, only 9% of head coaches of women's basketball teams in Division I were African American females even though the percentage of African American intercollegiate basketball players is approximately 45% (NCAA, 2008). Sport management researchers have identified the need to study the lack of diversity in college athletics, but little work has concentrated on African American females in leadership positions (Cunningham & Fink, 2006; Borland, 2007).

The above statistics suggest it is an area in crucial need of study. Role Congruity and Gender Role congruity theory predicts women will be less likely than men to emerge as leaders because often expectations for the leadership roles are incongruent with stereotypes regarding females (Ritter & Yoder, 2004). Eagly and Karau (2002) discovered prejudice toward female leaders stems from the believed incongruity between the stereotypical "communal" attributes that have characterized women through the ages (e.g. nurturing, affectionate, sympathetic,) and the "agentie" characteristics of successful managers that are attributed more often to men (e.g., ambitious, independent, strong). Additionally, if women do engage in stereotypically masculine or male-dominated behaviors such as those perceived as necessary in management and leadership positions, they are evaluated less favorably than men because they are violating their stereotypical gender roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This theory has been applied to the hiring of sport managers only sparingly thus far and results have indicated men have an advantage over women in competency evaluations and salary recommendations for entry-level management positions (Burton, et al., 2008; Grappendorf, Burton, & Henderson, 2007). Role Congruity and Race Much of the information using role congruity theory illustrates how gender and social role information can interact to produce social judgments. However, role congruity theory can also be applied to race. Research indicates that African Americans are evaluated differently depending upon the intersection of the racial category and a social role (i.e., African American businessman versus African American athlete) (Devine & Baker, 1991). Barden, Maddux, Petty and Brewer (2004) found the pattern of racial bias was consistent with Eagly and Karau's (2002) gender role congruity mechanism. That is, prejudice against a race was observed when the context implied a social role that was incongruent with the stereotype of that race (i.e., African American students and Asian basketball players). Further, Tomkiewicz, Brenner, & Adeyemi-Bello (1998) demonstrated White adults hold stereotypical beliefs about African Americans that are incompatible with characteristics of successful managers, and yet, hold stereotypical beliefs about Whites that are entirely consistent with successful managers. In a sport related experimental study, Sartore and Cunningham (2006) found White subjects rated male African American assistant coaches less qualified than male White assistant coaches even when the two candidates possessed the same qualifications.

Given the above background information relative to role congruity theory and the paucity of African American female intercollegiate coaches, the purpose of the current study was to test role congruity theory employing both race and gender. We anticipate race and gender will interact to influence Whites' perceptions of coaching candidate qualifications. That is, because successful leaders are often ascribed more stereotypical masculine qualities (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and stereotypical beliefs about Whites are more consistent with managers than are stereotypical beliefs about African Americans: H1: There will be an interaction between gender and race on perceptions of quality of applicant for a head women's basketball coach. African American female coaching candidates will be rated the lowest on qualification measures relative to White males, African American males, and White females. Method To test this hypothesis, a 2 (male, female) X 2 (White, African American) experiment will be conducted. Four "profiles" of the job applicants were created. All four profiles of applicants contained the exact same language relative to their expertise (e.g., 8 years of assistant head coaching experience at a large Division I school with a history of success in women's basketball, strong letters of recommendation from well known head coaches, previous intercollegiate basketball player, etc.). Only the picture of the candidates depicted the different treatments (White male, White female, African American male, African American female). Pictures will be pre-tested prior to the main study to assure no significant differences relative to attractiveness of the candidates emerge.
Participants will be upper level sport management students in management classes from universities in the northeast. Each class of participants will receive only one candidate profile. We will collect approximately 200 surveys (i.e., 50 for each treatment condition/candidate profile). Participants will be asked to read over the profile and imagine they are in a position to make a hire. They will then complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire is an adaptation of two previously designed hiring qualification scales (Heilman et al., 1993 and Rudman & Glick, 2001) and measures three dependent variables: likeability, competence, and hiring preference. Each dependent variable is measured with a 3 item semantic differential scale. The questionnaire also obtains respondents' demographic information (i.e., race, gender). A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) will be utilized to test the hypothesis with candidate race, gender, and the interaction of race and gender serving as the independent variables and likeability, competence, and hiring preference serving as the dependent variables.

Results will be discussed relative to appropriate theoretical underpinnings and current related literature in order to propose extensions to current theory. Further, practical implications relative to increasing the number of African American women intercollegiate head coaches derived from the results and imparted from relevant theory will be developed and forwarded. Suggestions for future research will also be discussed.