Racial Identity, Gender, and Hiring Recommendations in Athletic Administration Positions

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Poster  
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The athletic director position is the central role of any athletic program. They guide the athletic department towards fulfilling the school’s mission, strategically lead the department, and hold hiring and firing power. Interestingly, however, women and racial minorities are under-represented in these key roles. Data from the NCAA (2008) illustrate this point. When excluding Historically Black Colleges and Universities, (75.8%) of all athletic directors are White men, 175 (17.1%) are White women, 35 (3.4%) are Black men, and 6 (.5 %) are Black women. Further examination of the data show that Whites are over-represented as athletic directors relative to their proportion in society (64.7%; www.census.gov) and the proportion of Whites participating in intercollegiate sports (76%; NCAA, 2008).

Recent research suggest that societal, organizational and personal factors all contribute to this trend (for a review of this literature, see Cunningham, 2010). The purpose of this study is to examine this trend further by examining the role that gender and racial identity. Specifically, in drawing from multiple theoretical frameworks to suggest that, in the hiring process, Black women and Blacks with strong racial identities will be viewed more negatively than their counterparts.

Prejudice-distribution theory (Kaiser & Pratt-Hyatt, 2009) suggests that Whites are likely to view negatively Blacks who have a strong racial identity. These negative reactions stems from the assumption that such persons do not conform with the prevalent status hierarchy and thus reject status-legitimizing worldviews. We suspect a similar trend in the current study such that strongly-identified Black administrators will be rated more negatively for a potential position than will weakly-identified Blacks (Hypothesis 1).

We also suspected that Black women would be rated more negatively than Black men. Support for this contention stems from Black feminist theory (Bruening, 2005; Collins, 2000), which suggest that Black women are subjugated based on multiple identities, including their race, gender, and social class. Thus, Black women face sexism, racism, and classism, all of which restrict their advancement in organizations (see also McDowell & Cunningham, 2009). Thus, we hypothesized that Black women will be rated more negatively for a potential position than will Black men (Hypothesis 2).

These hypotheses will be tested through a 2 (gender: female, male) × 2 (racial identity: high, low) randomized experimental study. Participants will be White undergraduate students who are currently enrolled in the Sport Management programs. We will limit the analysis to Whites because they are most likely to be the ones engaged in the hiring (NCAA, 2008). Participants will review an application for an athletic director position at a mid-sized university. The packet will contain the background information, including education and work experience—all of which are standardized across conditions. The packets will vary based on (a) the demographics of the applicant (Black female or Black male), as depicted by the applicant’s name and picture; and (b) the racial identity of the applicant, as depicted by the activities in which the applicant is engaged (see also Kaiser & Pratt-Hyatt, 2009). After reviewing the application package, participants will rate the applicant’s qualifications, the applicant’s fit with the athletic department, and provide a hiring recommendation. The questionnaire items have all been used in past personnel evaluation research (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007).

Means and standard deviations will be computed for all variables. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) will be computed to test the study hypotheses.

Findings from the study have the promise to make several contributions. First, the study will effectively combine two theoretical frameworks (prejudice-distribution theory and Black feminist theory) to examine personnel decisions. Second, results will potentially facilitate the forward movement in the NCAA increasing the representation of the minorities within leadership. The information will also serve as a guide to prospective applicants in presenting materials in such a manner to make them more competitive.