

## Hurdling Over Constraints and Onto Career Success

*Mikayla Brandhorst, Washington State University*

*Yong Chae Rhee (Advisor), Washington State University*

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Even though Title IX has been around for the last 40 years, there still is a gender inequality issue in collegiate sports at the Division I level in athletic administration. Since 1980, the percentage of female athletics directors has remained below 20% but then in 2012 at the Division I level there was a sharp decrease in female athletic directors dropping to 10.6% (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). This statistic shows females are struggling in promoting themselves to higher positions within the athletic department. Using social role theory and role congruity theory, this study researches the constraints that males and females feel while progressing through positions in athletic administration at the Division I intercollegiate level.

There is a great deal of literature that describes how women in intercollegiate athletics at the Division I level are being underrepresented and each article tries to explain a different piece of why this continues to happen even though federal law like Title IX are in place (e.g. Hoffman, 2010; Hoffman, 2011; Quaterman, 2006). A quantitative study by Burton, Grappendorf, and Henderson (2011) examined the role congruity theory and social role theory when looking at different upper level athletic administration positions that men and women can hold. This particular study explores the perceptions of employers in intercollegiate athletics on male and female applicants. They found that stereotypes were used when viewing women in certain positions. Females working in academic support would be viewed as more feminine and a female athletic director would be viewed as more masculine (Burton, et al., 2011). The social role theory (Eagly, 1987) and the role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) will help to develop how the research will be structured. The role congruity theory predicts that women will be less likely than men to emerge as leaders when expectations for the leader role are incongruent with gender stereotypes (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Social role theory is about individuals dealing with a certain set of roles placed on them by society (Eagly & Karau, 2002). When examining the social role theory it is important to note the two attributes of the theory, communal and agentic (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Communal attributes are described as the concern from other individuals and agentic attributes describe an assertive, controlling, and confident tendency (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Throughout the literature on women in athletic administration, there has been little focus on constraints women feel as they move from an entry level position to an administration position. The constraints that these women feel could potentially be a part of why there are not more women in athletic administration. Some potential constraints could be family life, encouragement, lack of mentors, following societal norms, etc. (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010). If a qualitative comparison study done on different constraints that males and females feel in athletic administration when it comes to progressing through positions in intercollegiate athletics could shed more light on the situation of the underrepresentation and gender inequality.

For this study semi structured interviews will be conducted to see the participants' beliefs on female underrepresentation. There will be a total of eight participants, four women and four men, in high levels of athletic administration will be recruited using purposeful sampling from a Division I university located in the Pacific Northwest. The participants have already been asked by the researcher to participate in the study. The requirement for participants to be a part of the qualitative research was that each participant had to have moved up to a higher career position twice. The reason for the stipulation is the participants need to be able to talk about constraints they felt as they moved to higher rolls.

The questions structured for this study will be shown to the participants during a short meeting a week before the interview is scheduled. Each set of questions will be tailored to fit the department in which the individual works. Example questions include, before becoming the (position that they currently hold) how did you get involved in college athletics and what does your career path look like? As you were developing into an athletic administrator did you ever feel like you were taken advantage of or misled? The interviews will take place once a week for eight weeks. During the semi structured interviews the sessions will be video recorded and transcribed while questions are being

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asked and the interviewee is responding. The researcher will make the decision to schedule additional interview if necessary with the participant to try to extract more information from them.

After one interview is conducted the researcher will sit down and dissect the data collected during the video recording session. To prove validity the video recording or transcriptions of the interview will be shown to the participants. The main themes the research would like to pull from the interview section and do an analysis on are any constraints that were discussed. The constraints will be brought forward in story form from the participant and the researcher will try to separate the constraints from the details of the story. Once all of the analyses are done the researcher will look back through the results and assess the findings.

Content analysis will be used with analyzing the data collected from the personal interviews. Content analysis is a research method used to determine the presence of certain units and categories within the text (Myles, 2005). In this study, categories were formed a priori based on Baumgartner & Schneider's (2010) research. The a priori coding will be organized into six main concepts: "old boys network", family sacrifices, mentors, "queen bee syndrome", effective leadership style, and simply not choosing upper management (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010). The research will look for the frequency and the extent in which subjects the discussed will impact the categories. The text will be coded manually to involve the investigator to reach theoretical saturation. Males and females responses then will be compared with the six categories listed above. The conclusions from the analysis will identify current trends and perceptions about limitations for women and men. This should provide insight into why there is not gender equality in intercollegiate athletic administration at the Division I level.