An Investigation of Intercollegiate Organizational Diversity as a Variable of Significance in Combating Destructive Organizational Outcomes

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Recent allegations of organizational corruption have shed additional light on the unethical operating aspects within intercollegiate sport. Instances of fraud, abuse, money laundering, and academic impropriety have plagued the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and prominent member institutions over the last decade. Most recently, the University of Louisville, the University of Arizona, Auburn University, Oklahoma State University, as well as the University of Southern California were all named within an Adidas Shoe Company bribery case in which assistant coaches, players, and players families were paid by Adidas as a method of ensuring prominent recruits would attend schools sponsored by the shoe company. Baylor University has experienced wide spread organizational corruption in the form of sexual abuse and inaction by members of athletic leadership. Additional instances of corruption recently erupted at the University of Florida as nine student-athletes were suspended on the heels of credit card fraud allegations. While these recent NCAA scandals have made headlines, sanctions that occur within member organizations do not always follow a similar path of exposure. Instead, there are many NCAA issued sanctions that fall below the radar of the mainstream media. In an attempt to challenge the consistency of these instances of corruption throughout NCAA competition, it may be important to consider the makeup of organizational leadership and the role that diversity may play in combating the state of corruption throughout collegiate sport. Said differently, sport as an institution is a highly masculine industry segment, and the majority of organizational leaders tend to be White males (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014).

This lack of diversity at the top levels of organizational leadership, such as within the roles of athletic director and head coach, may lend itself to undesirable organizational outcomes more frequently. For example, research has suggested that organizational diversity may not only improve objective measures of organizational performance, such as returns on investment and market performance (Cunningham, 2009; Erhardt, Werbel, & Shrader, 2003; Richard, 2000), but greater diversity among leadership may improve ethical and honest decision making practices (Pew Research Center, 2014). Further, recent research has gone so far as to measure brain activity in male and female participants indicating that women have greater blood flow to the prefrontal cortex, which may explain why women maintain a stronger aptitude for attributes such as empathy, emotional intelligence, intuition, and self-control (Hutt, 2017). In a study of roughly 16,000 male and female leaders, it was also determined that women were considered to have displayed higher levels of honesty and integrity at a more consistent rate than their male counterparts (Sherwin, 2014). These findings, while outside the scope of athletic administration, do suggest strongly that diversity within organizations may decrease instances of corruption and subsequent NCAA sanctions.

Given that the current state of NCAA leadership is predominantly White (87.5%) and male (77.7%) at the athletic director role, and predominately White (87.1) and male (98.0%) as head coaches for men's programs, along with the dominance of White (89.0%) male's (57%) as head coaches for women's programs, it is important to consider the differences, if any, between those NCAA organizations maintaining homogeneous organizational makeup, with those that maintain a higher level of leadership and organizational diversity (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Lapchick, 2015). Therefore, the aim of the current study is to utilize NCAA sanction datasets and compare these infractions with the organizational makeup and leadership demographics to answer the research question: does greater organizational diversity lead to improved outcomes (less sanctions) in Division 1 (FBS) schools?

In order to accomplish this task, demographics data will be obtained from various publicly available NCAA databases (e.g. EADA dataset, the NCAA demographic database, NCAA Sport Sponsorship and Participation database), other notable NCAA research databases (e.g. NCAA RGRC and the Tucker Centre for research on Girls...
and Women in Sport) as well as manual coding to cover any gaps in data. Sanctions data were collected from the NCAA Sanctions database. The demographic and sanction data for Division 1 FBS schools from the 2007 - 2017 time period data will used to examine potential differences in diversity between administration, coaching, college conference, and sanctions leveled. For this particular analysis, the sample has been limited to colleges and universities falling under the ranking of a D1 FBS school. The rationale for this selection is that schools within this particular ranking have the highest scholarship-granting power of the other ranks, and thus have the greatest amount to lose when it comes to sanctions. The date range of the sample will include the past 10 years for analysis.

The unit of analysis will be the individual institution; the data will be coded for statistical analysis (e.g. Man =0, Woman = 1). The following items will be coded: conference (e.g. ACC, SEC, B1G), position type (e.g. administration or coaching), position (e.g., athletic director, head coach), race of position (e.g. White, Black, Asian), number of male sports, number of female sports, number of sanctions, number of sanctions given to male sports, years and sports of male sanctions, number of sanctions given to female sports, years and sports of female sanctions. To answer the research question, we will employ a discrete hazard model where the dependent variable is whether or not an athletic program faced a significant scandal. The list of independent variables will include the following: demographic (gender & racial) composition of leadership team, revenues earned by program, and size of the student body. Essentially, our model will be designed to see if a program, once we control for revenue earned and size of a school, sees differences in scandals when the gender composition of the school is different.

This analysis will serve as the first within the sport management literature to objectively examine organizational diversity as a variable of interest in relation to organizational corruption. Therefore, the practical implications of such an investigation will serve to better inform institutional leadership and stakeholders as they conduct hiring processes in the future. While organizational diversity has been featured as a beneficial practice in terms of monetary outcomes, constructing an administration that may alleviate sanction totals would also be in the best interest of an institution.