Taking Advantage of the Opportunity: Negotiation Strategies for Women in Sport Management

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The American Association for University Women (AAUW) (2016) reported that women working full-time earn 80% of what men earn. Further, for Black and Hispanic or Latina women, the gap is greater. The consequences of the pay gap are significant because offered and starting salaries have a tremendous impact on one’s overall earnings (Bowles, Babcock, & McGinn, 2005; Gerhart, 1990). In attempts to explain the pay gap, researchers have examined the role of negotiation. Negotiation is a process in which individuals attempt to acquire and maximize resources (Stuhlmacher & Walters, 1999) and is a crucial component in finalizing job offers and determining salaries (Wade, 2001).

Moving away from the notion that ‘women don’t ask,’ researchers have examined a variety of systematic, structural, and societal factors related to women and negotiation. Kray (2011) and Kray, Thompson, and Galinsky (2001) contended that negotiation is impacted by traditional societal gender expectations where women are supposed to be accommodating and selfless while men are supposed to be decisive and assertive (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Karau, 1991). Further, Kray (2011) proposed stereotype threat would cause women to underperform in salary negotiations if they believed women were not as good at negotiating as men. Understanding these dynamics help explain why women have reported feeling a lack of confidence or comfort with the negotiation process (Azong, Bookman, Kelleher, 2017).

In addition to the understanding the overall negotiation process, one must acknowledge other elements that impact the process and salary offers. For example, it is important to note that even before beginning the negotiation process, women are offered lower initial salaries (Dishman, 2017). Gerhart and Rhynes (1991) found that even when women do negotiate, they were offered less of an increase then men. Further, when women do ask, they risk being judged for violating their traditional gender role, and still may receive a lower initial salary offer.

It has been noted that within sport, men hold more high-ranking positions and have higher overall salaries (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Parks, 1991; Whisenant, et. al, 2002). Further, Parks (1991) reported a significant difference in the salaries of women and men whom graduated from undergraduate sport management programs. Negotiation and the gender dynamics involved are areas that have received little attention from scholars in the field of sport management. Due to the tremendous impact on lifelong earnings, it is important for women entering sport management academia to understand the unique dynamics they may experience in the negotiation process. Additionally, it is essential for women who have gone through negotiations to advise, mentor, and share information to assist others in the process.

This session will address the gender related dynamics in the process of negotiation and suggestions for a positive experience. The session will go beyond holding women solely responsible in the negotiation process and will include discussion related to the structural, cultural and societal barriers that impact negotiation. Various female professors from different stages in their career will share insights from their own experiences while offering suggestions related to best practices in negotiation.