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Senior Women Administrators' Perceptions of Factors Leading to Discrimination of Women in Intercollegiate Athletic Departments

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Perceptions regarding discrimination factors preventing the advancement of women in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) athletic departments were sought. A five point agree/disagree Likert-scale survey containing 20 discrimination factors was electronically mailed to all NCAA Senior Woman Administrators (SWAs) throughout the United States. The return of 406 of 841 surveys made for a 48.3% return rate. Significant differences with regards to Likert-scale items of agreement/disagreement were found between the following SWA demographics: marital status, reporting structure, education completed, years of experience, and NCAA Division. Overall, the top five discrimination factors were: the domination of the "old boys' club," inequitable salaries (wage discrimination), lack of women mentors, family commitments conflicting with job, and job burnout.

The professional advancement of women in intercollegiate athletic departments continues to be a challenge despite progress. Discrimination against women, in part, contributes to the prevention of advancement of women in athletic departments. The extent to which discrimination plays a role preventing the advancement of women in athletic departments is a subject of concern. Moving beyond the glass ceiling in athletic departments is a work in progress that requires constant attention.

Although women hold a wide range of positions in athletic departments, the creation and filling of what eventually became the Senior Woman Administrator (SWA) position was a major step forward in the professional advancement of women in athletic departments. The SWA is the highest ranking female in each NCAA athletic department or member conference (NCAA, 2010). According to the NCAA the role of the SWA consists of daily responsibilities, and departmental tasks that must include senior management team responsibilities (NCAA). Concerns remain, however, that women employed in athletic departments still face numerous discriminatory barriers to advancement. This national research study examined SWAs' perceptions of factors that lead to discrimination of women by others in their workplace. There have been few attempts to ascertain and study the extent to which selected factors are perceived to inhibit professional advancement of women employed in NCAA member institution athletic departments. The present study helps to fill this void by surveying SWAs of all NCAA colleges and universities in the United States.

Review of Related Literature

Although somewhat limited in scope, the literature did reveal discrimination against, and challenges faced by, women employed in athletic departments. Specific to NCAA member institutions, Dupréé, Willis, and Pettaway (2006) reinforced, through findings of a study, that female intercollegiate athletic directors and directors of women's intercollegiate athletic programs, in fact, are confronted with major professional challenges. The assortment of related literature specific to athletics addressed social and sport ideologies, institutional structures, stereotyping, the continued dominance of men, and the downgrading of women to support positions.

Discrimination and Challenges Faced by Women in Athletic Departments

The makings of discrimination are presented in several ways, some more subtle and less apparent than others. VanDerLinden (2004) acknowledged the presence of institutional structures in colleges that may act as barriers or impediments for the advancement of women. Social ideologies, and in particular sport ideologies, were identified by Sartore and Cunningham (2007) to limit the capacity of females within the sport context to view themselves as leaders and/or coaches. Subsequently this prevented them from acting as such. In a survey research study conducted by Dupréé, Willis, and Pettaway (2006), female athletic administrators at NCAA Division I institutions indicated that stereotyping was a major challenge confronting them.

Dominance of men in athletic departments, known as the *domination of the "old boys' club,"* has long been considered a factor preventing women from advancing in athletic departments. As a phenomenon, men gaining and maintaining control in athletic departments has

persisted over time (Whisenant, 2003; Whisenant, Pedersen, & Obenour, 2002). Regarding university athletics, Schneider (2009) pointed out that the tradition of gender discrimination against women in university athletic departments continues, in part, through the dominance of males in athletics and their placement of roadblocks to prevent the advancement of women. Specific to NCAA Division I and II female athletic administrators, Dupree, Willis, and Pettaway (2006) cited the good "old boys' club" as a challenge to overcome.

Downgrading women to support positions and, in effect, distancing them from the most important decisions related to the athletic department continues to be a concern. Tiell (2004) found that SWAs perceived their position to be just a title with no real responsibilities, and with little to no involvement with administrative duties of the athletic department. Tiell went on to report that SWA duties often do not reflect what is considered part of the senior management team but rather includes non departmental leadership tasks such as helping with intramurals when needed or helping lead the Student Athlete Advisory Committee. Similarly, women who do gain access to management positions within Division I programs tend to be relegated to support positions such as assistant or associate athletic directors within the areas of academic advising, compliance, marketing, life skills, and sports information (Whisenant, Pedersen, & Obenour, 2002).

Further Concerns Related to Advancement Opportunities for Women

Although opportunities for women have increased over the years, effectively maintaining and further increasing such opportunities is a concern. Elfman (2008) stated that a continued pursuit of further opportunities for women must be made, and acknowledged a recent increase in female athletic directors throughout the country. The potential elimination of opportunities for women is apparent when a female is the athletic director. By definition, a female athletic director can be considered the SWA, and athletic departments may choose not to designate a second woman as the SWA (Hosick, 2005a). Furthermore, there is a need to empower SWAs on campuses throughout the country as Hosick (2005a; 2005b) pointed out the lack of empowerment and opportunities for women.

General Factors Leading to the Discrimination of Women

Several factors can potentially be used by persons in leadership positions at the workplace to discriminate against women. Adding to the likelihood to discriminate against women is the lack of female representation among upper-management positions, which is an issue for women in a variety of professions pointed out by Arnold and Shiner (1997). Gleaned from the literature were the following specific factors included in our survey that have the potential to be used to discriminate against women: equal pay/wage discrimination, occupational stress, family to work-conflict, networking opportunities, support systems, and mentoring. These factors can prevent women from advancing which supports the findings of Doyle and Hind (2006) that revealed the presence of a glass ceiling that impedes the upper mobility of women.

The Equal Pay Act of 1963 requires that men and women in the same work place are provided equal pay for equal work (*U.S. Equal Employment*, n.d.). Although the Equal Pay Act was a step forward in closing the wage gap that historically has disfavored women, it has not eradicated wage discrimination. Literature indicates that gender wage gaps, and inequitable pay entitlements disfavoring women still exists (Alksnis, Desmarais & Curtis, 2008; Hogue, Yoder,

& Singleton, 2007; and *National committee*, 2007). Rajani and Sarads (2008) suggested that lower women's wages contributes to the perception that women's monetary contributions are relatively unaccounted for despite the fact that women have been working along men since beyond recollection.

In the area of occupational stress, Doyle and Hind (1998) surveyed 582 academic staff members working in an institution of higher education and found that women generally experience higher overall levels of stress in their jobs than males. Data obtained from multiple organizations spanning a period from 1996 to 2006, revealed that gender (being female) was modestly associated with greater family-to-work conflict and greater stress and burnout (Hill et al., 2006).

As women aspire to advance professionally, balancing the obligations of the home environment as well as those of the workplace can be problematic for many women (Arnold & Shinew, 1997). Further, Arnold and Shinew separated barriers to career advancement for women into two categories: (a) on the job, i.e., perceived as not being as committed as men, exclusion from informal communications networks, and absence of effective management training; and (b) home responsibilities. Specifically, networking according to Arnold and Shinew can lead to promotions and new job opportunities for women.

Casto, Caldwell, and Salazar (2005) pointed out the benefits women can derive from a well-conducted mentoring relationship. Women have the ability to help other women professionally, in distinctive ways. Bronznick and Goldenhar (2009) indicated that providing access to mentors, and dismantling the "old boys' club," are critical steps to the diversification of leadership.

For women, work-life policy is often the decisive factor in determining access to leadership opportunities (Bronznick & Goldenhar, 2009). In a study that examined the role of family for successful women entrepreneurs, Rajani and Sarads (2008) found that women entrepreneurs who receive support from family, relatives and other support systems could manage their own enterprises successfully. The challenge of balancing personal responsibilities with professional responsibilities continues to be greater on women than on men. Two-thirds of women were found to hold the primary care giver responsibilities in families (Bronznick & Goldenhar).

The purpose of this study was to discover to what extent, based on the perception of SWAs, selected factors of discrimination prevent women employees of NCAA athletic departments from advancing professionally. A secondary purpose is to make recommendations to help eradicate discriminatory practices based on the factors found to be discriminatory in preventing women from advancing in athletic departments.

Methods

Questionnaire

A five point Likert-scale questionnaire was developed that included statements regarding the extent to which SWAs agreed/disagreed that selected discrimination factors prevented women from advancing professionally. The range of responses from which to choose were: strongly agree-5, agree-4, neither agree nor disagree-3, disagree-2, and strongly disagree-1. The content of the questionnaire was determined based on the collaborative efforts of the three researchers, the existing current literature as it pertained to discrimination in athletic

departments, and two outside experts who provided two rounds of feedback specific to the content and formatting of the questionnaire. Following a process of validity that included grading questions for relevance and content, the expert reviewers deemed appropriate the questions on this questionnaire.

The Mailing Procedure

The questionnaire was e-mailed to each SWA with a valid e-mail address, along with a cover letter describing the process of self-administering the survey. The self-administration process included completing the questionnaire and sending it back to the principal investigator via original e-mail.

The SWAs' participation in this study was voluntary and was not restricted on the basis of race, age, or any other characteristics. All information provided was kept confidential and maintained in a secure location. Anonymity was preserved and no identifying characteristics of the subjects (i.e., name, address, or place of employment) were included on the returned surveys. For the purpose of tracking responses, the on-line survey program created an internal numeric code for each returned survey that was not linked to subjects' email addresses, thus preserving their anonymity as well as their institution's anonymity.

The questionnaire was anonymous as the built-in access control and tracking settings on the researchers' institution's local e-mail system was stripped away. The survey was sent out via a link to survey participants. When the SWAs submitted their survey response it was returned with a randomly coded alpha-numeric identification number. The number could not be tracked or correlated with any particular survey participant.

Return Rate

At the time of the mailing of the survey the total number of NCAA athletic departments, regardless of classification, was 1050. Electronic-mail addresses were available on athletic department websites for 841 of the 1050 NCAA athletic departments. Of the 841 SWAs who were e-mailed the link for the on-line survey procedure, 406 returned the survey for a 48.3% return rate, which well exceeds what is considered a typical response rate for e-mail surveys. Survey research response rates are typically very low, often around 48% for mailed surveys (Ransdell, 1996) and between 27-32% for email surveys (Marks, 2005).

Statistical Method

All variables were summarized through the calculation of frequencies and relative frequencies. Differences in the distribution of Likert-scale questions by demographic variables were statistically assessed using the Kruskal-Wallis rank test. A nominal significance level of 0.05 was used throughout and all analyses were performed using SAS version 9.1.3.

Results

Demographics of the SWAs

To gain an idea of a demographic profile of the SWAs, they were asked to select a specific demographic descriptor from several demographic categories. The demographic categories and respective descriptors were as follows: total years served as SWA (0-5, 6-10, >10); sex (female, male); race or ethnic background (Caucasian, Hispanic, African-American, Asian-American, other); marital status (single, married, partnered, divorced); have children (yes, no); NCAA classification (Division I, Division II, Division III); official title (write in); reporting structure/report to (president, athletic director, other); highest level of education completed: (4 year higher education degree, master's degree, doctoral degree, high school degree, 2 year higher education degree); and current income (various ranges included).

The highest rate of response to the SWA demographic questions revealed the following SWA profile. The SWAs are most likely female (99.74%), Caucasian (86.4%), married (46.06%), without children (58.63%), employed 1-5 years (54.96%), currently employed at a Division II institution (39.13%), reporting directly to the athletic director (92.11%), holding a master's degree (74.87%), and earning between \$45,000-\$55,000 per year (20.88%).

Overall

Table 1.0 displays the overall rates at which all SWAs (N=406) in the population surveyed agreed/disagreed that selected factors prevent the advancement of women in NCAA athletic departments. The number of subjects who responded to each question ranged from 381-390. When collapsing the strongly agreed and agreed categories, *the domination of the "old boys' club"* at 82% (34.8% strongly agreed) was the factor perceived by the highest number of SWAs to prevent women from advancing in their athletic department. *Wage discrimination* was the second most agreed upon factor (73.5%) believed to prevent women from advancing. And, at least half of the SWAs also agreed that the following factors prevented women from advancing: *lack of women mentors* (69.0%), *family commitments conflicting with job* (63.9%), *job burnout* (60.2%), *lack of opportunities for career advancement* (56.3%), *lack of support systems for women* (53.2%), and *prejudices against lesbians* (50.6%).

The following three factors stood out as *not* preventing women from advancing in athletic departments: *lack of necessary education/degrees* (79.5%), *lack of knowledge related to the position* (71.5%), and *lack of basic qualifications to perform effectively* (69.2%). The SWAs also disagreed at a rate of 51.8% that *lack of professional membership opportunities* is not a factor in preventing their advancement.

Over one-fourth of the SWAs assumed a neutral position relative to eight factors by selecting neither agree nor disagree as the Likert-scale response when asked if the factors prevented the advancement of women. The factor receiving the highest rate of neutral responses by the SWAs was *administrative circumvention of affirmative action* at 48.8%. Next was *the failure of the "old-girls' club"* (36.9%), *prejudices against lesbians* (32.7%), *homophobia against women* (32.6%), *selection and hiring biases against women* (31.7%), *negative attitudes*

against women (29.7%), lack of program support from the administration (26.6%), and lack of professional membership opportunities (26.5%).

Factor	R	SA	A	N	D	SD
the domination of the "old boys' club"	1	34.8	47.2	11.9	5.9	0.3
inequitable salaries (wage discrimination)	2	14.1	59.4	20.3	5.9	0.3
lack of women mentors	3	19.0	50.0	15.1	15.1	0.8
family commitments conflicting with job	4	13.1	50.8	20.9	13.1	2.1
job burnout	5	13.4	46.8	22.0	15.8	2.1
lack of opportunities for career advancement	6	6.2	50.1	22.0	20.7	1.0
the lack of support systems for women	7	9.3	43.9	23.8	22.0	1.0
prejudices against lesbians	8	7.7	42.9	32.7	15.7	1.0
negative attitudes against women	9	2.3	45.4	29.7	21.8	0.8
homophobia against women	10	5.6	39.2	32.6	20.8	1.8
lack of program support from the administration	11	4.6	39.2	26.6	26.8	2.8
selection and hiring biases against women	12	4.4	35.8	31.7	25.5	2.6
the failure of the "old-girls' club"	13	5.9	28.9	36.9	24.0	4.4
lack of political savvy	14	1.0	32.1	24.1	34.2	8.6
lack of requisite experience	15	2.1	27.6	23.2	38.8	8.3
administrative circumvention of affirmative action	16	4.4	16.5	48.8	27.4	2.8
lack of professional membership opportunities	17	2.1	13.4	26.5	51.9	6.2
lack of knowledge related to the position	18	0.3	14.6	13.8	52.5	19.0
lack basic qualifications to perform effectively	19	0.3	12.8	17.7	51.5	17.7
lack of necessary education/degrees	20	0.0	7.4	13.1	52.2	27.3

Note: SA=Strongly Agree; A=Agree; N=Neither Agree Nor Disagree; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly Disagree. R=Rank order of combined SA and A Likert responses.

Table 1 - Rates and Rank of SWA Perceptions of Factors Preventing Advancement of Women

Marital Status

Table 2.0 displays the SWAs by their marital status (single, married, partnered, and divorced) and the rate at which each marital status category agreed or disagreed that selected factors prevented the advancement of women. The responses revealed a significant association between marital status and the following factors perceived to prevent the advancement of women was found: *homophobia against women*, *prejudices against lesbians*, *inequitable salaries (wage discrimination)*, *lack of opportunities for career advancement*, *selection and hiring biases against women*, *lack of basic qualifications to perform effectively*, *lack of knowledge related to the position*, and *job burnout*.

When collapsing strongly agreed and agreed, a mix of factors were perceived by at least half of the SWAs in particular marital status categories to prevent the advancement of women. *Homophobia against women* was perceived as a factor preventing the advancement of SWAs by 80.0% of partnered women and by 52.0% of divorced women. The SWAs indicated that *prejudices against lesbians* was a factor preventing women from advancing by 82.9% of partnered women and 50.1% of married women. *Inequitable salaries* was perceived to be a factor preventing the advancement of women by SWAs who were single (85.8%), married (69.1%), partnered (80.0%), and divorced (81.0%). *Lack of opportunities for career*

advancement was perceived to be a factor preventing the advancement of women by SWAs who were single (55.8%), married (51.8%), partnered (82.9%), and divorced (55.0%). *Selection and hiring biases against women* was perceived to be a factor preventing the advancement of women by SWAs who were partnered (51.4%), and divorced (52.4%). Job burnout for career advancement was perceived to be a factor preventing the advancement SWAs who were single (66.7%), married (53.1%), partnered (70.6%), and divorced (57.9%).

Table 2 - Rates of SWA Perceptions of Factors Preventing Advancement of Women by SWA Marital Status

Factor	Marital Status	SA	A	N	D	SD
homophobia against women	Single	5.8	35.7	37.0	18.8	2.6
	Married	1.7	38.8	30.3	27.5	1.7
	Partnered	17.1	62.9	17.1	2.9	0.0
	Divorced	19.1	33.3	38.1	9.5	0.0
prejudices against lesbians (external)	Single	8.4	37.7	33.8	18.2	2.0
	Married	5.1	44.9	32.0	17.4	0.6
	Partnered	14.3	68.6	14.3	2.9	0.0
	Divorced	15.0	25.0	55.0	5.0	0.0
inequitable salaries (wage discrimination) (external)	Single	20.9	54.9	17.7	5.9	0.7
	Married	7.9	61.2	23.6	7.3	0.0
	Partnered	8.6	71.4	20.0	0.0	0.0
	Divorced	28.6	52.4	14.3	4.8	0.0
lack of opportunities for career advancement (external)	Single	7.1	48.7	23.4	20.1	0.6
	Married	4.6	47.2	24.4	23.3	0.6
	Partnered	8.6	74.3	3.6	8.6	0.0
	Divorced	10.0	45.0	10.0	25.0	10.0
selection and hiring biases against women (external)	Single	4.6	40.5	29.4	22.9	2.6
	Married	3.9	23.1	34.3	30.3	3.4
	Partnered	5.7	45.7	34.3	14.3	0.0
	Divorced	4.8	47.6	23.8	23.8	0.0
lack basic qualifications to perform effectively (internal)	Single	0.7	13.1	20.9	47.1	18.3
	Married	0.0	14.0	18.4	53.1	14.5
	Partnered	0.0	8.6	5.7	54.3	31.4
	Divorced	0.0	9.5	9.5	61.9	19.1
lack of knowledge related to the position (internal)	Single	0.7	13.4	16.1	50.3	19.5
	Married	0.0	16.9	15.2	51.7	16.3
	Partnered	0.0	8.6	5.7	51.4	34.3
	Divorced	0.0	14.3	0.0	71.4	14.3
job burnout	Single	19.6	47.1	19.0	12.4	2.0
	Married	8.4	44.7	25.1	19.6	2.2
	Partnered	14.7	55.9	17.7	11.8	0.0
	Divorced	10.5	47.4	21.1	15.8	5.3

Note: SA=Strongly Agree; A=Agree; N=Neither Agree Nor Disagree; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly Disagree. P<.05. Marital status of SWAs was 39.7% were single, 46.1% married, 8.9% partnered, and 5.3% divorced.

Nearly two-thirds of SWAs in all marital status categories either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the lack of basic qualifications to perform effectively and lack of knowledge related to the positions held by women in athletic departments prevented the advancement of women in athletic departments. Respondents disagreed that *lack of basic qualifications to perform effectively* was considered to prevent the advancement of women by SWAs at the following rates: single (65.4%), married (67.6%), partnered (85.7%), and divorced (81.0%). The SWAs also disagreed that lack of knowledge related to the position was perceived to prevent the advancement of women by SWAs who were single (69.8%), married (68.0%), partnered (85.7%), and divorced (85.7%).

Reporting Structure

Table 3.0 disaggregates the SWAs by reporting structure (president, athletic director, and “other”) and the rate at which each of the SWAs, when classified by their reporting structure, agreed or disagreed that selected factors prevented the advancement of women. A significant association between the demographic of reporting structure and the following factors preventing the advancement of women were found: *homophobia against women*, *lack of basic qualifications to perform effectively*, and *lack of requisite experience*.

When collapsing strongly agree and agree, 57.2% of the SWAs who reported to the president of the university, and 65.2% who reported to the general category of “other,” indicated that *homophobia against women* was a factor preventing advancement of women. Those who reported to the athletic director agreed at a rate of 39.4% that *homophobia against women* was a factor preventing advancement of women.

With respect to reporting structures, the SWAs either strongly disagreed or disagreed that *lacking basic qualifications to perform effectively* was a factor in preventing the advancement of women at the following rates: reporting to presidents (100%); reporting to athletic directors (67.8%) and reporting to “other” (79.2%). Given the high rate of SWAs across the reporting structure demographic, who strongly disagreed or disagreed that *lacking basic qualifications to perform effectively* was a factor in preventing the advancement of women, may seem that the disagreement had more to do with the factor itself than the reporting structures. Strong disagreement and disagreement that the *lack of requisite experience* was a factor preventing the advancement of women also existed across reporting structure categories: president (57.2%), athletic director (45.6%), and other (70.9%).

Highest Level of Education Completed

Table 4.0 displays the SWAs by their highest level of education completed (4 year higher education degree, master’s degree, doctoral degree, high school degree, and 2 year higher education degree) and the rate at which each of the SWAs agreed or disagreed that selected factors prevented the advancement of women. When focusing on the SWA demographic of education completed, significant differences were found between Likert-scale items for each of the following factors preventing the advancement of women: *homophobia against women*, *inequitable salaries (wage discrimination)*, *lack of program support from the administration*, *the domination of the “old boys’ club,”* *selection and hiring biases against women*, and *lack of necessary education/degrees*.

Table 3 - Rates of SWA Perceptions of Factors Preventing Advancement of Women by SWA Reporting Structure

Factor	Reporting Structure	SA	A	N	D	SD
homophobia against women	President	28.6	28.6	28.6	14.3	0.0
	Athletic Director	4.2	39.4	33.0	21.8	1.7
	Other	21.7	43.5	21.7	8.7	4.4
lack basic qualifications to perform effectively (internal)	President	0.0	0.0	0.0	42.9	57.1
	Athletic Director	0.3	13.7	18.2	50.7	17.1
	Other	0.0	4.2	16.7	62.5	16.7
lack of requisite experience (internal)	President	0.0	14.3	28.6	28.6	28.6
	Athletic Director	2.3	29.1	23.1	38.2	7.4
	Other	0.0	12.5	16.7	54.2	16.7

Note: SA=Strongly Agree; A=Agree; N=Neither Agree Nor Disagree; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly Disagree. P<.05. SWAs reported to: President, 1.8%; Athletic Director, 92.1%; and to "other," 6.1%.

Education held by the SWAs had an effect on their perception regarding inequitable salaries as a factor preventing the advancement of women. With high school education being the lone exception, SWAs strongly agreed or agreed that *inequitable salaries* prevented the advancement of women at the following rates: doctoral degree (86.2%), 4 year higher education degree (78.7%), master's degree (74.0%), and 2 year higher education degree (66.7%).

Data revealed that SWAs who completed degrees at the highest levels (doctoral, 58.6%, and master's, 47.2%) strongly agreed or agreed that *homophobia against women* prevented the advancement of women at higher rates than those SWAs who completed less formal education. Those SWAs with the least amount of education strongly disagreed or disagreed at the highest rates that *homophobia against women* prevented the advancement of women: high school degree (33.3%), 2 year higher education degree (33.3%), and 4 year higher education degree (31.3%).

The *domination of the "old boys' club"* was overwhelmingly viewed by the SWAs, irrespective of their education completed, as a factor that prevented the advancement of women. (This finding is consistent with the overall perceptions of all SWAs regardless of demographics.) Categorized by their education completed, the SWAs strongly agreed or agreed that the *domination of the "old boys' club"* prevented women from advancing at the following rates: doctoral degree (93.1%), master's degree (83.0%), 4 year higher education degree (75.0%), high school degree (66.7%), and 2 year higher education degree (66.6%).

There was little indication that the amount of education completed by SWAs made any difference relative to how they perceived the *lack of necessary education/degrees* as a factor preventing the advancement of women in athletic departments. However, although only 0.8% of the entire sample size of SWAs held a high school degree as their highest degree, they agreed at

a rate of 66.7% that the lack of necessary education (of women employed in athletic departments) was a factor in preventing women from advancing.

Years of Experience

Table 5.0 displays the SWAs by their years of experience (0-5, 6-10, and >10) and the rate at which each of the SWAs agreed or disagreed that selected factors prevented the advancement of women. A significant association between years of experience and the following factors preventing the advancement of women were found: *lack of program support from the administration*, and *lack of necessary education/degrees*.

The highest rate of SWAs who agreed that the *lack of program support from the administration* prevented the advancement of women were those with 6-10 years of experience (52.0%), and those with 0-5 years of experience (39.6%). On the other hand, overall, the lack of necessary education/degrees was not perceived to be a factor preventing the advancement of women. An overwhelming 89.7% of the SWA's who had greater than 10 years of experience strongly disagreed or disagreed that the *lack of necessary education/degrees* prevented women from advancing. Also strongly disagreeing or disagreeing were 81.0% of the SWAs who had 6-10 years of experience, and 76.0% of the SWAs who had 0-5 years experience. (This finding is consistent with the overall perceptions of all SWAs regardless of demographics.)

NCAA Division

Table 6.0 displays the SWAs by their NCAA Division (D-I, D-II, and D-III) and the rate at which each of the SWAs agreed or disagreed that the lack of professional membership opportunities prevented the advancement of women. The distribution of response to *lack of professional membership opportunities* was found to significantly depend on NCAA Division.

Division II SWAs expressed the highest rate of disagreement (56.6%) that the *lack of professional membership opportunities* prevented the advancement of women followed by Division I SWAs (48.7%), and Division III SWAs (48.8%). The rate at which the SWAs agreed that the *lack of professional membership opportunities* prevented the advancement of women were as follows: Division II (10.6%), Division I (18.0%), and Division III (19.6%).

Table 4 - Rates of SWA Perceptions of Factors Preventing Advancement of Women by SWA Education Completed

Factor	Education Completed	SA	A	N	D	SD
homophobia against women (external)	4 Year Higher Education Degree	3.1	26.6	39.1	29.7	1.6
	Master's Degree	5.5	41.7	30.3	20.3	2.1
	Doctoral Degree	13.8	44.8	37.9	3.5	0.0
	High School Degree	0.0	33.3	33.3	33.3	0.0
	2 Year Higher Education Degree	0.0	33.3	33.3	33.3	0.0
inequitable salaries (wage discrimination) (external)	4 Year Higher Education Degree	10.9	57.8	21.9	9.4	0.0
	Master's Degree	13.8	60.2	20.1	5.5	0.4
	Doctoral Degree	27.6	58.6	13.8	0.0	0.0
	High School Degree	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
	2 Year Higher Education Degree	0.0	66.7	0.0	33.3	0.0
lack of program support from the administration (external)	4 Year Higher Education Degree	3.1	23.1	28.2	34.4	6.3
	Master's Degree	4.9	41.0	26.4	25.4	2.4
	Doctoral Degree	6.9	51.7	27.6	13.8	0.0
	High School Degree	0.0	0.0	33.3	66.7	0.0
	2 Year Higher Education Degree	0.0	33.3	0.0	66.7	0.0
the domination of the "old boys' club" (external)	4 Year Higher Education Degree	21.9	53.1	18.8	6.3	0.0
	Master's Degree	36.5	46.5	10.8	6.3	0.0
	Doctoral Degree	51.7	41.4	3.5	3.5	0.0
	High School Degree	0.0	66.7	33.3	0.0	0.0
	2 Year Higher Education Degree	33.3	33.3	33.3	0.0	0.0
selection and hiring biases against women (external)	4 Year Higher Education Degree	4.8	28.6	34.9	28.6	3.2
	Master's Degree	4.2	35.3	31.8	26.3	2.4
	Doctoral Degree	6.9	62.1	24.1	6.9	0.0
	High School Degree	0.0	0.0	66.7	33.3	0.0
	2 Year Higher Education Degree	0.0	33.3	0.0	66.7	0.0
lack of necessary education/degrees (internal)	4 Year Higher Education Degree	0.0	6.6	32.8	45.9	14.8
	Master's Degree	0.0	5.9	8.4	55.9	29.7
	Doctoral Degree	0.0	14.8	14.8	37.0	33.3
	High School Degree	0.0	66.7	33.3	0.0	0.0
	2 Year Higher Education Degree	0.0	33.3	0.0	33.3	33.3

Note: SA=Strongly Agree; A=Agree; N=Neither Agree Nor Disagree; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly Disagree. P<.05. Highest Education Completed by SWAs was: 4 Year Higher Education Degree, 16.2%; Master's Degree, 74.9%; Doctoral Degree, 7.4%; High School Degree, 0.8%; 2 Year Higher Education Degree 0.8%.

Table 5 - Rates of SWA Perceptions of Factors Preventing Advancement of Women by SWA Years of Experience

Factor	Years of Experience	SA	A	N	D	SD
lack of program support from the administration (external)	0-5	4.5	39.6	22.9	29.0	4.1
	6-10	8.2	43.8	30.1	17.8	0.0
	>10	1.5	33.8	35.3	27.9	1.5
lack of necessary education/degrees (internal)	0-5	0.0	8.8	15.1	52.5	23.5
	6-10	0.0	6.8	12.2	43.2	37.8
	>10	0.0	2.9	7.4	60.3	29.4

Note: SA=Strongly Agree; A=Agree; N=Neither Agree Nor Disagree; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly Disagree. P<.05. SWAs Year's Experience was: Less than 1 Year, 8.7%; 1-5 Years, 55.0%; 6-10 Years, 19.1%; 11-15 Years, 12.0%; More than 20, 5.3%.

Table 6 - Rates of SWA Perceptions of Factors Preventing Advancement of Women by NCAA Division/Athletic Classification

Factor	NCAA Division	SA	A	N	D	SD
lack of professional membership opportunities (external)	D-I	1.8	16.2	27.9	48.7	5.4
	D-II	0.7	9.9	24.3	56.6	8.6
	D-III	4.1	15.5	27.6	48.8	4.1

Note: SA=Strongly Agree; A=Agree; N=Neither Agree Nor Disagree; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly Disagree. P<.05. SWA Athletic Classification was: Division I, 29.4%; Division II, 39.1%, Division III, 31.5%.

Discussion

The Domination of the "Old Boys' Club"

The deep seated history of *the domination of the "old boys' club"* clearly remains a factor preventing the advancement of women in athletic departments and is likely a contributing factor of discrimination preventing the advancement of women. Discrimination is based upon acts by people and *the domination of the "old boys' club"* and is the one factor in our study consisting of people who are decision makers and in positions to act.

The findings of our study do not support the strategy pointed out by Whisenant, Pedersen, and Obenour (2002) to seed women at lower levels for the purpose of enabling more female administrators to fill the pipeline of qualified candidates for future athletic department positions. Nor do our findings support the view by Whisenant (2003) to increase gender friendly networks to help increase female administrators.

Our findings indicate that the seeding of women to get them in the pipeline is unnecessary if done for educational purposes because *lacking qualifications* was not found to be a factor preventing the advancement of women. The seeding of women to get them in the pipeline would be done more for networking purposes rather than educational purposes. In a sense, networking in itself is discriminatory because there is an unspoken understanding that networking reinforces the adage of “it is not what you know but who you know.” The “who you know” is discriminatory when it supersedes the “what you know.” In fact, the number one perceived factor of discrimination in our study preventing women from advancing was the *domination of the “old boys’ club,”* which is a direct result of networking. Consideration should be given to focusing efforts to curb discrimination, discouraging strategies that perpetuate discrimination, instead of reinforcing strategies like gender specific networking, i.e., the “old boys’ or girls’ club” that contributes to discrimination. To help prevent discrimination, networking should not be gender specific; it should include females as well as males.

Whisenant, et al. (2002) stated that specific administrative positions might be earmarked for women to counter men’s control over intercollegiate athletics. This statement could also be considered discrimination in itself. If positions are earmarked for women, without regard for their qualifications, the case for discrimination gains strength. Instead of countering men’s control of athletics (*the domination of the “old boys’ club”*) with earmarks designated specifically for women, consideration might be given to enforcing an alternative structure that is void of discriminatory characteristics.

On the other hand, arguments could be made that because the *domination of the “old boys’ club”* continues to be a strong factor preventing the advancement of women, men in power, overall, have not assumed a discrimination free attitude against women. Women should be relied on to help support discrimination free athletic departments for women. VanDerLinden’s (2004) thinking that women in top leadership positions might be counted on to create inclusive environments for women administrators is one void of discrimination. Possibly providing an environment of inclusivity for women does not discriminate against men or women. It simply allows both women and men a fair chance based on their qualifications.

Wage discrimination also continues to be a major point of concern in the area of athletic department discrimination against women. Managing wages (and payroll in general) is an important function in athletic departments; however, it should not be accomplished at the expense of wage discrimination against women. Salary discrimination against women in the workplace has long been an issue and based on the results of our study still is an issue.

On the surface, it is somewhat surprising that the SWAs in our study viewed *job opportunities for career advancement for women* as a factor preventing advancement of women because formal job descriptions do not express a preference for male or female candidates. Reinforcing the notion that women are not gaining access to job opportunities because of lack of qualifications is the SWAs’ specific perception that women, in fact, are qualified, in the form of knowledge/degrees, and necessary education. The perception that women employed in athletic departments, are qualified strengthens the validity of the SWAs’ perception that discrimination, in fact, is preventing fair opportunities for women to secure job advances in athletic departments. The problem seems not to be in the lack of formal opportunities for women to advance in athletic departments, but rather in the discrimination against qualified women who attempt to secure those opportunities.

Beyond discrimination, the chances of SWAs advancing might be restricted simply because of the lack of positions available that are considered positions of advancement. Because

most SWAs are either associate or assistant ADs, the only position of advancement is that of AD. With only one AD position per institution the number of opportunities on an annual basis is limited.

Further reinforcing the notion that qualified women in athletic departments are being discriminated against, who report to their president, strongly indicated that they believed the advancement of women in athletic departments takes place for reasons other than lacking the basic qualifications. In fact, the SWAs across all reporting structures (not only those who reported to the presidents) believed the prevention of the advancement of women takes place for reasons other than lacking the basic qualifications, which supports the notion that discrimination is an underlying factor preventing women from advancing.

It does not come as a surprise that those with the least amount of education believed that the lack of necessary education/degrees prevented women from advancing. If the perceptions are based on their personal experiences it would seem that those with advanced degrees would not view the lack of education/degrees as preventing them from advancing because they, in fact, hold the highest degrees. On the other hand, it is quite possible that those who hold education credentials below that of a master's degree may have personally experienced professional setbacks as a result of not having attained a master's degree.

Division II upper administrators should recognize that the perception among Division II SWAs is that women have less professional membership opportunities than women employed in Division I and III athletic departments. Unless increased, the lack of professional membership opportunities may prevent women from advancing when employed at Division II institutions.

Insights to Help Prevent Discrimination against Women

Administrators of sport must continue to be proactive in their efforts to incorporate policies to ensure that wage increases are commensurate with performance and not simply based on the *domination of the "old boys' club."* Beyond policies, sport administrators must make a special effort to put conscious and subconscious gender biases aside and base employee wage increases on merit. Efforts to ensure salary equity in athletic departments should extend beyond the athletic administrators in the athletic department. Presidents of universities, the NCAA, and the United States government must continue to take measures to ensure that the basis for salary amounts and wage increases are based on empirical measurements of skill and productivity and not as a result of gender biases against women.

Steps must be taken to ensure that regardless of gender, all job applicants have an equal opportunity to be hired. The determining factors must be based on qualifications rather than gender. Equal opportunity hiring policies must be created, followed, and enforced. As part of an effort to provide equal opportunities, every attempt should be made to attract equal male and female applicant pools. A study by Heilman (1980) indicated that personnel decisions of both males and females were significantly more unfavorable when women represented 25% or less of the total pool. Athletic departments and their universities must follow affirmative action policies and organizations must ensure for the enforcement of the policies. When cases exist where it is found that inequitable hiring took place, punishments must be doled out to those engaged in discriminatory hiring practices.

Approaches to help curb discrimination against women can be implemented at (a) the intercollegiate athletic department level, and (b) the national level through the government. In addition past and present efforts considered helpful in decreasing discrimination should be continued. For example, Hosick (2005a) pointed out that efforts must continue to be made by NCAA officials and the Committee on Women's Athletics (CWA) to encourage institutions to

continue to provide opportunities for women. A conference wide decision was made in the fall of 2009 when the Division II Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletics Conference unanimously passed legislation requiring a league-member's senior woman administrator to be part of that school's senior management team (Brown, 2009).

The riddance of discrimination against women in athletic departments can begin by implementing and strictly enforcing procedures related to hiring, salary increases, and promotion that place an absolute emphasis on qualifications of the person. This will prevent discrimination against a woman because of her gender and/or sexual preference. Larger than the prejudice against lesbians in athletic departments, is the general gender discrimination against lesbians throughout the country that continues to be a 21st century challenge in the United States. If sensitivity to differences among people can be reached throughout the United States, this same sensitivity and fairness will carry over into athletic departments. It might very well be, however, that gender equity and homophobia are issues most effectively addressed locally, which includes intercollegiate athletic departments. If athletic department personnel, in the interest of respect for all persons, can put aside gender biases and homophobia, barriers preventing women from advancing will slowly subside.

Although job burnout, and family commitments conflicting with job are not direct forms of discrimination preventing the advancement of women, both can nevertheless indirectly reinforce discrimination. Regarding motherhood, Correll, Benard, and Paik (2007) conducted two studies related to discrimination and the employment of mothers. One showed that employers discriminate against mothers but not fathers and the other found that mothers were penalized on a host of measures, including perceived competence and recommended starting salary (Correll et al.).

The overall good of society is dependent on raising and maintaining high quality citizens which, when done effectively, is largely influenced by women's efforts (and men's) with children. If men's commitments to families are equal to those of women's, it is unlikely that unfairness exists. Thus, the factors of family commitments conflicting with job and job burnout as a result of assuming primary child rearing responsibilities in addition to job responsibilities cannot be considered factors of discrimination preventing the advancement of women. If, however, women (as opposed to men) hold the primary responsibility of raising children, then workload revisions might be considered as a means to prevent burnout of women employees in athletic departments.

Athletic directors should make efforts to promote work-life balance. Athletic department staff should be made aware of work-life balance policies that likely are in place at their institution's human resources office. If women employed in athletic departments are experiencing burnout because of their time intense commitments to family, flexible work schedules might be one option offered through work-life balance policies. However, to reiterate, the following two items must be proven prior to incorporating flexibility in athletic department workload to reduce burnout for women: (a) women (as opposed to men) must be assumed to hold the primary responsibility of raising children to be high quality citizens, and (b) the overall good of society is dependent on raising children to be high quality citizens who are productive contributors to society.

Lack of women mentors and lack of support systems for women are both factors that can be improved through programs within athletic departments. Whisenant (2003) reinforces the finding in our study that mentoring of prospective female administrators will help increase female administrators. Athletic administrators should take it upon themselves to incorporate

mentoring programs and support systems for the benefit of the female employees in the athletic department. Whereas the longstanding entrenchment of the “old boys’ club” serves as a form of mentoring and support system for men in athletic departments, based on the results of our study, efforts must be made by athletic administrators to provide networking opportunities for women that are not exclusively for women. Measures should also be taken to disallow gender specific networking to supersede qualifications when considering athletic department employees for advancement.

Efforts should be made by Division II athletic directors to place a special emphasis on the importance of becoming members of and being active in professional organizations that are open to both women and men. Directors of athletics should make employees aware of professional organizations, provide resources to become active, and consider rewarding employees who demonstrate their activity in end of year reports. Offering additional opportunities to become active in professional memberships will likely also increase opportunities for advancement.

Future Research Recommendation

As a final note, the results of our study support the need for future research targeting the population of SWAs who identified themselves as “partnered” under the marital status demographic. Partnered SWAs strongly agreed or agreed at an overwhelming rate of at least 80% that the following factors prevented women from advancing in athletic departments: *homophobia against women, prejudices against lesbians, inequitable salaries, lack of opportunities for career advancement, and job burnout*. Future research efforts should seek to determine whether other populations such as ADs and support staff also strongly agree that these same factors prevent SWAs from advancing. Additional studies might also seek to isolate each of the above factors to gain a more in depth understanding as to how these factors might be preventing the advancement of SWAs.

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