Socialization and Leadership in Adapted Physical Education/Activity: Perspectives of Female Faculty

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the issues, concerns, and patterns of female professors in adapted physical education/activity (APE/A). Methods used included a mail survey procedure, and direct and indirect interviews for qualitative analysis. Ten female APE/A professors voluntarily participated in this study. Results indicated that all study participants began their professional careers working with individuals with disabilities. These educators were further influenced via course work preparation in APE/A and their academic advisors. Moreover, findings revealed that their professional contributions to APE/A included publications, serving, grants, conference presentations, and service to their communities. However, there were a number of professional concerns among participants, such as: lacked availability of female mentors, lack of recognition of female professors, and family and career conflicts. The majority of female professors believe that it is time to establish an active network for women in APE/A. This network would enhance our communication and scholarly development.

In recent years, there have been a number of articles published dealing with female professors in higher education (Goc Karp & Williamson, 1993; Goc Karp, Williamson, & Shifflett, 1996). Scholars have noted that differences exist between male and female faculty members across several important variables, such as: employment opportunities, rank, tenure, publication, mentoring, and salary (Boice, 1991, 1993, Goc Karp & Williamson, 1993; Goc Karp et al., 1996; Reinharz, 1986; Thomer, 1991).

Flaningam and Taylor (1984) conducted a survey study among part-time full-time, and non-tenure track faculty members at a comprehensive (teaching-research) university. They found that three-fifths of the part-time faculty with bachelor's degrees were females. Further, they reported that females primary responsibility was teaching. Beyond teaching, females participants reported most often that their other responsibilities included committee work and service. In contrast, however, male professors reported most often their responsibilities to include research, creativity and graduate committee service. These findings supported Parson, Sands, and Duane's (1991) findings that women faculty faced heavy teaching load, committee work, and family responsibilities. They also noted that most women are at the assistant professor level longer than men and as the rank increases, the percentage of women decreases. The universities did not promote women in areas which could help them develop professional careers.

Similarly, McElrath (1992) investigated the differences of gender, career disruption, and academic rewards in higher education. McElrath randomly selected three hundred female faculty members as study participants. Several variables were identified: education level, committee service, contract length, and number of children. The author found that male faculty members achieved tenure in about eight months less time than females. Salary differences were $6,000 more per year for males. Female faculty members were at the assistant professor rank status longer than their

male counterpart (females =33%, males =16%), and less females achieved full professor rank (females =18%, males =42%). Only 5 percent of the males had departed from an academic position compared to 21 percent of the females. Women interrupted their career or changed academic jobs which affected their becoming tenured. This interruption might have increased the length of time to tenure because tenure and promotion committee members might have believed a previous work interruption implied a future interruption.

In physical education, Safrit (1984) investigated women researchers in physical education. She found that men had submitted over three and one-half times as many manuscripts as women, and five times as many men were accepted for publication as compared to female authors. Few women were represented on editorial boards of most of the journals reviewed in 1984. This trend is seen in other disciplines (e.g., education, business, physics, engineering), once in a tenure track position, women climbed the academic ladder more slowly than men and spent more years getting promoted and tenured. Furthermore, a number of women preferred teaching in smaller colleges and universities rather than at research institutions. Safrit (1984) also stressed the importance of mentoring faculty to prevent burnout before tenure.

Williamson (1990a, 1990b, 1993) has conducted a number of studies on the socialization of physical education professors and teachers. She found that younger faculty members seemed more prepared to fulfill institutional research expectations than senior faculty members. Moreover, the supervisory role received little or no institutional recognition or support. Participants of Williamson's study (1993) expressed a need for clear job performance criteria, collegial support, mentoring, regular evaluation, and feedback. Williamson (1993) suggested that institutions need to give assistance in terms of time and money to beginning faculty members in order for them to perform programmatic and institutional expectations. With additional time and money, female faculty members would have more support, and be able to manage stress and would be more likely to succeed in higher education.

Research in faculty development and female faculty issues has mostly been conducted regarding either the general faculty population (Flaningam & Taylor, 1984; McElrath, 1992; Parson, Sands, & Duane, 1991; Thomer, 1991) or in general physical education (Goc Karp at el., 1996; Safrit, 1984; Williamson, 1990a, 1993). However, there has been limited research related to cultural diversity in the adapted physical education (APE) field (Hodge & Stroot, 1997) and to our knowledge none exclusive to female. The purpose of this study is to investigate the issues, concerns, and patterns of female professors in APE. This study should provide insightful information about the experiences of female professors relative to career responsibilities, research, teaching, and family obligations. The following questions were asked:

What is the nature of female involvement in the adapted physical education field?
What are the past and current experiences of faculty with respect to culturally similar (gender) role models?
Who were the most influential persons with respect to female participant's career development?
What are the present contributions of these professors to the adapted physical education field?
What advice do they have for new female faculty members in APE?

Method

Participants

Ten female faculty members voluntarily participated in this study. As found on Table 1: work experience in higher education ranged from two to twenty years of service. Participants were either tenured or in a tenure-track position. They occupied the ranks of assis-

tant, associate, or full professor during the 1994-1995 academic year. All participants were current members of the National Consortium for Physical Education and Recreation for Individuals with Disabilities (NCPERID) and members of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD). All had at least one publication in a refereed journal. Additional geographic, demographic, and academic characteristics of all participants are described in Table 1.

Procedures

Qualitative research methodology was used in this study. A mailed survey procedure was used along with direct (face to face) and indirect (through e-mail, and follow up letter) interviews. Cross-case analysis (Patton, 1990) refers to grouping together answers from different respondents to common questions (e.g., open-ended problems) or analyzing different perspectives on central issue (e.g., promotion and tenure, salary). The survey questionnaire was developed by the investigators. This questionnaire was reviewed by five individuals who had expertise in adapted physical education and/or research methods. Many useful suggestions on the format, wording, and length of questions were made.

The questionnaire sections included demographic information, career development, contribution to the adapted physical education field, and advice for new faculty members in APE. The sections relevant to the results reported here are: (1) demographic and academic information: racial/ethnic, rank, tenure, working place (college/university, professional school), region; (2) concerns and barriers, and (3) working experience, research, mentoring, teaching, service, and advice for new faculty members.

Survey procedures followed Dillman's (1978) recommended method with some modifications. Participants were sent a packet including the questionnaire, a cover letter explaining the study, and a return envelope for the questionnaire by either mail or e-mail. The survey questions were open-ended questions. In accord with responses, a follow-up letter and another questionnaire (in a chart format) were sent out. Personal interviews were conducted at the NCPERID and the Midwest Adapted Physical Activity Conference. Each interview lasted approximately 35 minutes. The interviews were audiotape recorded with the participant's permission.

Data Analysis

Data were organized into five major categories: (1) extent of involvement in the APE, (2) scholastic female role model, (3) the most influential person who affected their career, (4) conflict and concerns, (5) present contributions to the field and advice for new faculty members. Data were analyzed by using qualitative research method (Patton, 1990) to describe and document the phenomenon of interests and explain the cause of the phenomenon in question.

Table 1 Geographic, Demographic, and Academic Characteristics of Participants (N=10)

		Frequency	%
Racial/Ethnic Group	African American	1	10%
	Caucasian	9	90%
Rank	Assistant Professor	2	20%
	Associate Professor	3	30%
	Full Professor	5	50%
Tenure Status	Tenured	8	80%
	Untenured	2	20%
College/University	College/University	10	100%
Terminal Degree	Doctoral	10	100%
Region	North	3	30%
	Midwest	3	30%
	Northeast	1	10%
	Southeast	2	20%
	West	1	10%

Results and Discussion

Participants in this study consisted of one African American and nine White American female professors. Two of these participants ranked at the assistant professor level, three associates, and five at the full professor level. Eight participants were tenured and two are in a tenure-track position. All participants have obtained terminal degrees either a Doctorate of Philosophy or Doctorate of Education. The participants were from five different regions

across the United States: three (30%) from the North, one (10%) from the Northeast, three (30%) from the Midwest, two (20%) from the Southwest, and one (10%) from the West. The range of geographic locations provided this study with a broad perspective of information on concerns, contributions, and future directions of female professors in adapted physical education.

Involvement in adapted physical education field

All (100%) participants stated that their involvement in APE initially began by their working experience with persons with disabilities, either in high school or in college undergraduate programs. Through their observation and working with individuals with disabilities, they discovered how physical activities and sports participation could enhance the life experience of individuals with disabilities with regard to health condition, self-esteem, self-confidence, social interaction, and motor and sport skill improvement. They were also inspired by such individuals in terms of their enthusiasm, commitment, and determination. These positive experiences prompted them to pursue their involvement at a higher level, such as a doctoral program and teaching in higher education.

Role models and mentoring

Nine (90%) participants had male advisors in their respective doctoral programs. Seven (70%) participants felt that there was no female role model or mentors in APE who they could look up to while in graduate school. Three (30%) recent graduates felt that this has changed in recent years. Currently, there are more female professors in APE and these women are more visible than before. As one participant stated: "I have known some female professors' name from textbooks and journal articles while in graduate school. Fortunately, I had a chance to work with a female professor on an adapted physical education project." However, these recent graduates viewed their advisors as mentors and still contact them frequently, seeking scholarly support. This phenomena might not only exist in APE but in higher education in general. Sands et al., (1991) found that most faculty members had mentors when they were graduate students and this relationship remained throughout their career. Most departments in universities do not assign mentors to junior faculty because they assume faculty members with a doctoral degree are capable of autonomous practice as a university professor. The current authors also noted that there are fewer senior women in higher education which placed women at a disadvantage in finding mentors.

Influential persons who affected the participants' career

With respect to the most influential person(s) in the participants' careers, eight (80%) participants indicated that their physical education teacher was the most influential person inspiring them to choose physical education as their professional career. Their APE career commitment developed further when they took an APE course in college. In this connection, the APE instructor (male or female) was the person who led them toward a career path as an APE specialist. This career selection path is very similar to women in other disciplines (Porter, 1994).

With regard to gender, all participants indicated that they had one female who was instrumental in their career choice. Most of them expressed that their mothers had the greatest influence in making their career decision. All participants' mothers instilled in them at a young age that they could become anything they wanted to be. In that context, gender should not be the barrier for their career development. However, five (50%) participants indicated that they had at least one male who played a major role in their career, either teacher, advisor or male sibling.

Conflict and Concerns of female faculty in APE

All (100%) participants addressed some struggles in their careers, such as equity, balance between the job and family, teaching and research, and networking. The biggest concern of all was the lack of networking among women faculty in APE. One possible reason may reflect traditional gender role expectations. All married participants expressed their role in family responsibility has been very demanding in terms of time. These participants spent about the same amount of time working on career related activities as their counterparts, but also played a major role in their homes, such as rearing children, caring for elderly parents, and spousal constraints. This expression was consistent with the findings of other studies (Boice, 1993; Olsen & Maple, 1991; Parson, et al., 1991) that women encountered the same career impediments as men and were concerned about spending more time with their families. Oftentimes, women feel the conflict between personal and professional responsibilities. As a result of this conflict, women feel less productive in doing research (Schoen & Winokur, 1988). Because of the lack of productivity, married women are substantially less likely to earn tenure than unmarried women who are still less likely to earn tenure than married men with children (Fabe & Wilker, 1979). This may, in part, explain why there are fewer senior female faculty members in higher education.

The lack of female senior professors in higher education really put women at a disadvantage in finding mentors as noted by Sands et al., in 1991. This situation is even more true in APE because not only are there fewer female senior faculty members but they are scattered all over the country. These professors continue to maintain their scholarly activity. Most of current study participants (7 of 10) were the only female faculty member in APE at their respective universities, and five of them were the only faculty member in APE on their campus. Therefore, it is very difficult to find a female mentor and even more difficult to find a mentor in the same field on campus.

Another concern was the recognition of female professors. Junior faculty members and graduate students often commented on the unfamiliarity of female professors and their work. One possible factor may be due to lack of publications. During our interview, one interviewee who has served as a journal reviewer commented that men submit manuscripts for publication 4-5 times more often than women in adapted physical education. Men are more persistent in submission following rejections. Women viewed the rejection as their big shortcoming and tended to do one-shot deals. This finding corresponded with other findings that women submitted fewer scholarly manuscripts than did their male counterparts (Boice, 1994; Schuiteman & Knopper, 1987). The average number of manuscripts submitted by men was almost twice that of those submitted by women in physical education journals (Safrit, 1984). Also, more men than women are both primary and secondary authors in the physical education and sport field journals (Schuiteman & Knoppers, 1987). Boice (1993) noted that women sometimes do not finish revisions on time which terminates their publication opportunity. In addition, women tended to be concerned about quality and viewed themselves as careful, deliberate scholars. Therefore, they write very slowly and very deliberately. Men, on the other hand, do not often admit to this attitude about writing.

Another factor might be due to career choice and value of teaching. Research has indicated that most women choose going into teaching in a teaching-oriented university/college, whereupon they would face less competition from men (Kreps, 1975). More important, women have made a strong commitment to teaching and tend to spend far more time on lecture preparation (22-25 hours per week). These factors leave less time to be productive as a scholar (Safrit, 1984). Participants of the current study had similar perceptions. All par-

ticipants experienced carrying a substantial teaching load and served on a variety of committees.

In the current study, six participants commented that their lack of colleagues in APE on campus, may have limited opportunities for engaging in collaborative research. Oftentimes, it is difficult to find someone from a different discipline to collaborate with. In contrast, Boice (1993) found that men were more likely to take advantage of differences in technique and perspective from faculty members representing different disciplines. Male faculty view such a connection as an opportunity which may lead to co-authorship on publications and/or grant applications.

Furthermore, two participants observed an interesting phenomena relative to professional behavior at conferences between males and females. They found that males usually stay around and make productive conversations frequently at professional conferences. Females seem to stay with their friends and chat on nonprofessional topics. Safrit (1984) received the same report from men who indicated that they make more new contacts by attending various conferences. This pattern may potentially affect networking and productivity for women.

Contributions and Advice

Participants in this study realized the problems mentioned above exist, and attempted to make positive changes. During the data collection time frame of this study, all participants had publication(s) either journal article(s) or book(s). One participant had one publication and no grant-writing experience within her status as a first year faculty member. In contrast, one participant had over 90 publications including articles, books, and more than fifteen grants received within her years of serving as a faculty member at a prominent university. The remaining eight participants averaged 14 publications, ranging from 3 to 29 within 3-15 years of service in higher education. These eight participants all have received grants ranging from 3 to 10 within 3-15 years of service in higher education. The grant success rate was 84 percent ranging from 70% to 100%. No doubt, these females have made great contributions in research, teaching, and service to the APE field, especially those who obtained tenure-track positions at major research universities, and maintain a high level of commitment to an academic career.

All participants demonstrated high levels of productivity regarding conference and convention presentations. More specifically, they averaged two or more presentations per year at national conferences (e.g., AAHPERD). Four participants have presented their papers at international conventions (e.g., International Federation of Adapted Physical Activity). The rates of productivity here were far higher than their rates of publications (3 to 10 within 3-15 years). This finding is in agreement with Boice's (1993) finding that women exhibited 2.3 convention papers per year compared to an average of 1.0 for men. This explanation may be related to different view points between gender. Women view: "That kind of communication (convention presentation) with my colleagues is far more rewarding than sending manuscript off for publication and not hearing anything for a year" (Boice, 1993, p. 308).

In addition, participants conducted a great deal of preservice workshops at local, state, and region levels. The average was 3 per year, however, some participants could not draw the numbers because they have conducted too many workshops during 10-15 years of service. Most of them are leaders at the university, region, and state levels. They are involved in other professional activities as well (e.g., Special Olympics, Wheelchair games, Senior Olympics, Camp activities).

In spite of their great contributions to APE field, all participants of this study felt that they still do most of their work separately. Sometimes they experienced feelings of frustration and no one to turn to professionally,

or personally. To counter such feelings of frustration and isolation, establishing a peer network is imperative. Formulate a mentorship network which will provide a strong support to female faculty members in various institutional settings and access to more resources. Women should develop their network system in both formal (annual meetings during conferences, home page to discuss issues and share ideas, e-mail network system) and informal (after conference dinners, manuscript review, share) formats. There is a great future for women in APE because we have more female graduates joining the network each year. However, women need to be productive in publishing which can be done by conducting cross-campus projects, collaborate writing, and cross-disciplinary projects. A few more suggestions may include: time management, find time to write, ask women professors to read manuscript or projects, and establish an active network for mentorship development among female professors in APE. Furthermore, to remain active by involving oneself in conferences (national and international) and other professional activities. Finally, be aware of other female professors and purposely communicate with them.

This study has provided insight information into the experiences of ten female professors in APE to increase a general understanding of their career socialization and leadership. The majority of female professors believe that it is time to establish an active network for female faculty in APE. This network will enhance our communication and scholarly development.

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