

Critical Factors in the Attainment of Intercollegiate Coaching and Management Positions

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Despite the increased number of females participating in sport, there continues to be an underrepresentation of females in coaching and athletic management positions (Acosta & Carpenter, 1988, 1992; Hall, Cullen, & Slack, 1989; Lovett & Lowry, 1988; Macintosh & Beamish, 1988; True, 1986). Several studies have examined the reasons why females enter and exit from coaching and athletic administration (Felder & Wishnietsky, 1990; Hasbrook, Hart, Mathes, & True, 1990; Hart, Hasbrook, & Mathes, 1986; Pastore, 1991; Stangl & Kane, 1991). In other more recent research, the focus has been on strategies to retain females in these professions (Inglis, Danylchuk, & Pastore, 1995; Pastore, 1994). Still, in other studies measures that have been taken to increase female participation in coaching and athletic management have been investigated (Acosta & Carpenter, 1988; Pastore & Meacci, 1994; Schafer, 1987).

While these studies have focused on the declining number of females in coaching and athletic management within the job cycle (i.e., entry, retention, and exit), one area which is related to the entry aspect but has not received attention is job attainment, that is, factors considered important for securing a job in coaching and athletic admin-

istration. Several studies have investigated channels to job information (Granovetter, 1974; Kanter, 1977; Knoppers, Myers, Ewing, & Forrest, 1991; Murray, Rankin, & Magill, 1981; Pfeffer, 1981) whereas other studies have looked at background preparation for athletic administration and coaching, within the context of gender differences (Hackett, 1978; Hatfield, Wrenn, & Bretting, 1987; Williams & Miller, 1983).

Knowledge of job openings is related to job attainment. Granovetter (1974), Pfeffer (1981), and Figler (1988) have argued that informal or personal contacts tend to provide more accurate and in-depth information about a job compared to formal channels such as advertisements and job postings. It was even suggested by Granovetter (1974) that weak ties are more valuable than strong ones because such loose connections provide access to diversity in one's network. Knoppers et al. (1991) asserted that "those who are excluded from informal networks and who are in managerial and professional careers may be cut off from information that is significant for enhancing their career advancement and upward mobility" (p.3). Furthermore, these researchers suggested that access to informal channels for discovering job opportunities tends to be associated with high opportunity, and access to formal channels with low opportunity. Job information in academe, according to Murray, Rankin, and Magill (1981), tends to move through informal channels.

Campbell (1988) and Simeone (1987) have indicated that informal networks consist pri-

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marily of men thus excluding most women from information about job vacancies. Women may be less likely to search for and find jobs through their networks or to gain unsolicited information about job openings as a result of their more restricted networks (Campbell, 1988; Kaufman, 1978). Thus, in the male dominated professions of coaching and athletic management, women have less opportunity to learn about job openings. Finally, Kanter (1977) related the perceived opportunity for an individual's mobility and growth to work behaviors and attitudes. That is, an individual perceives opportunity if viable career and financial options exist, as well as access to a job information network, and informal on-the-job training. An individual will likely experience dissatisfaction, have lower vocational aspirations, and exit from the job if the perception of opportunity is small.

Williams and Miller (1983), as part of a study of the preparation patterns of intercollegiate athletic administrators, identified in-service/internship training in athletic administration, leadership experiences in professional organizations, and previous related work experience as an assistant athletic director as being quite beneficial in terms of background experience for intercollegiate athletic administration. Further, the athletic administrators indicated that previous coaching experience and background as a varsity athlete were also important preparation factors. They also found that female athletic directors ranked coaching female athletes and having been an assistant or associate director of a female athletic program as more beneficial than did male athletic directors, while male athletic directors ranked coaching male athletes and coaching a revenue producing sport higher than did female athletic directors.

Hatfield et al. (1987) compared job responsibilities of intercollegiate athletic administrators and professional general sport managers and found that previous athletic

participation and coaching experience contributed to their administrative effectiveness. In contrast, a study by Hackett (1978) in which the necessary qualifications for athletic directors to administer women's intercollegiate athletic programs were examined, showed that female athletic administrators ranked both competing and coaching at national and international levels as not beneficial.

None of these studies, however, have examined factors considered important to actual job attainment in the athletic administration and coaching fields. Instead, they have focused on either access to job information or on job competencies related to athletic administration and coaching. The identification of potential differences that may exist between men and women regarding factors deemed important to attaining coaching and athletic management positions are essential to further the understanding of the issue of female underrepresentation. Furthermore, an examination of these factors can assist young women in their quest for careers in athletic administration and coaching. Finally, understanding differences that may exist by gender, position, and country has implications for how human resource professionals develop strategies for recruiting and securing candidates.

Therefore, this study, as an extension of previous research, examined the ratings of female and male athletic administrators and coaches on the importance of a number of job attainment factors. In addition, the three most critical factors in attaining their present positions were also explored. The perceptions of athletic administrators and coaches were sought because both groups have different job responsibilities and expectations. A gender comparison was conducted to determine whether there were any differences in the factors considered important to job attainment regardless of their positions as administrators or coaches. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, other research has

examined the declining numbers of females in athletic administration and coaching in the context of entry, retention, and exit, but job attainment, which is part of the entry aspect of the job cycle, has not been investigated. Finally, a geographic comparison was included because the atmosphere surrounding intercollegiate athletics is much different in Canada than in the United States. Generally speaking, universities in Canada do not place as great an emphasis on intercollegiate athletics as the major American colleges and universities, and coaches' future employment does not rest primarily on their success records, as evidenced in Division I American schools in particular.

Method

Subjects

The subjects for this study were athletic administrators ($n = 77$) and coaches ($n = 760$) of both men's and women's intercollegiate athletic programs in Canada and the United States ($N = 837$). Specifically, the administrators and coaches represented three athletic conferences—the Ontario Women's Interuniversity Athletic Association (OWIAA), the Ontario Universities Athletic Association (OUAA) ($n = 44$ for administrators; $n = 282$ for coaches), and the Big Ten Athletic Conference ($n = 33$ for administrators; $n = 478$ for coaches).

A total of 359 subjects responded to the questionnaire for a response rate of 43%. Notwithstanding the lower than desired response rate, 43% is acceptable for this size of sample (Isaac & Michael, 1984). Follow-up letters were administered. However, follow-up with the non-responding athletic administrators and coaches was not done, and as such, caution should be exercised in interpreting the results as the perceptions of the non-respondents was not known.

Eleven respondents did not indicate their gender. The percentage of female respondents ($n = 107$; 30%) was much less than

the percentage of male respondents ($n = 231$; 70%) and reflects the percentages of females and males found in the intercollegiate athletic environment (Acosta & Carpenter, 1992). The number of administrators ($n = 105$; 29%) responding to the questionnaire was smaller than the number of coaches ($n = 254$; 71%) which is not surprising considering the higher number of coaches overall in the sample. Finally, the response rate from the Big Ten universities ($n = 196$; 38%) was smaller than the response rate from the Ontario universities ($n = 163$; 50%).

Additional demographic information indicated that 32.2% of the respondents were age 35 or younger, 37% were in the 35-44 age category, 19.3% were in the 45-54 age category, and the remaining 10.9% were age 55 or older. The administrators had experience of one to 33 years in their present positions with 75% having 10 or fewer years. Their overall administrative experience ranged from one to 39 years with 54% having 10 or fewer years. The coaches had experience in their present positions ranging from one to 35 years with 70% having 10 or fewer years. Their overall coaching experience ranged from one to 44 years with 72% having 20 or fewer years. Thirty-nine and a half percent of the coaches coached female teams, 39.8% coached male teams, and the remaining 20.7% coached combined teams. Of the possible 34 teams reported, the greatest number of coaches were from the sports of basketball (11.4%), swimming (10%), volleyball (9%), soccer (6.9%), football and golf (5.9%), and tennis and track and field (5.5%).

Instrumentation

Based on a comprehensive review of the literature, particularly the research which focused on channels to job information (Fidler, 1988; Granovetter, 1974; Kanter, 1977; Knoppers et al., 1991; Pfeffer, 1981) and job competencies in athletic management

(Hackett, 1978; Hatfield et al., 1987; Williams & Miller, 1983), several factors that might be perceived to be important for attaining one's job were formulated. Additional factors based on the researchers' experiences in coaching and athletic management were generated.

A panel of experts, comprised of kinesiology/physical education department/faculty members in the socio-cultural area of sport at four different universities, provided feedback on additions/deletions of items and comments on content validity. The revised factors were then distributed to a sample of students and faculty members at these same institutions for additional feedback relative to content validity.

The refined questions, as part of a larger survey, were then mailed to the sample. In the first question, respondents were asked to indicate on a 7-point Likert scale the importance of 17 factors in attaining their present positions. The factors are presented in their original form in Table 1. A category for "other" was included as item 18 and respondents could also answer non-applicable (NA) for any of the items. In the second question, the respondents were asked to list in order of priority the three most critical factors in obtaining their position. Respondents were also requested to provide demographic information concerning gender, position (i.e., athletic administrator or coach), and geographical location (i.e., Canada, United States). Those who had administrative and coaching responsibilities were asked to answer the questionnaire in terms of their administrative position. The majority of those individuals with dual roles were from the two Canadian athletic conferences. In Canada, the primary responsibility of those individuals with dual roles is administration.

Statistical Analyses

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the job attainment factors according to gen-

der, position, and country. Single-factor multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and subsequent univariate analyses of variance (ANOVA) were employed to test the differences between subject groups, as defined by gender, position, and country in their ratings of importance of the job attainment factors. In order to have all subjects included in the MANOVA analysis, the non-applicable and missing cases were given the mean value for each item, a procedure that was considered viable in this situation (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1983). Finally, frequency distributions were carried out on subjects' ratings of the three most critical factors.

Results

Descriptive

The means and standard deviations for the job attainment factors are presented in Table 1 according to gender, position, and country. On the seven-point Likert scale (1 = not important to 7 = very important), the means for the entire sample ranged from 2.33 (lack of other applicants for the position) to 5.82 (personal traits). The means for each subgroup also ranged from a low rating of importance for lack of other applicants for the position to a high rating of importance for personal traits, with the exception of the males and American subjects where previous work experience received the highest rating of importance.

Inferential

Effects of Gender. The multivariate effect of gender on the job attainment factors was significant, $F(17, 314) = 3.25, p < .001$. The univariate analyses showed that gender had a significant effect on four factors—my gender, $F(1,330) = 12.47, p < .001$; affirmative action initiative, $F(1,330) = 12.12, p < .001$; contact with a female administrator from my institution, $F(1,330) = 5.59, p < .05$; and contact with a male coach/colleague from my institution, $F(1,330) = 4.23, p < .05$. Fe-

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for Job Attainment Factors According to Gender, Position, and Country

Attainment Factor		Gender		Position		Country		Overall
		Females	Males	Admin.	Coaches	Canada	United States	
Educational qualifications	<u>M</u>	5.26	5.05	5.35	5.01	5.01	5.20	5.11
	<u>SD</u>	(1.58)	(1.57)	(1.38)	(1.64)	(1.66)	(1.50)	(1.57)
Opportunity to act in position prior to appointment	<u>M</u>	4.63	4.61	4.46	4.67	4.23	4.86	4.62
	<u>SD</u>	(2.10)	(1.98)	(1.80)	(2.04)	(1.96)	(1.95)	(2.01)
Appropriate training for this position	<u>M</u>	5.64	5.62	5.24	5.78	5.34	5.86	5.62
	<u>SD</u>	(1.25)	(1.50)	(1.54)	(1.32)	(1.53)	(1.25)	(1.42)
Personal traits	<u>M</u>	5.87	5.80	5.70	5.88	5.62	6.00	5.82
	<u>SD</u>	(1.05)	(1.13)	(1.08)	(1.11)	(1.21)	(0.98)	(1.11)
My gender	<u>M</u>	5.15	3.65	3.62	4.50	3.57	4.61	4.13
	<u>SD</u>	(1.91)	(2.33)	(2.17)	(2.23)	(2.27)	(2.22)	(2.31)
Previous work experience	<u>M</u>	5.55	5.86	5.59	5.84	5.33	6.12	5.76
	<u>SD</u>	(1.63)	(1.50)	(1.50)	(1.55)	(1.79)	(1.18)	(1.55)
Background as an athlete	<u>M</u>	5.61	4.68	4.57	5.18	4.69	5.26	4.97
	<u>SD</u>	(1.66)	(1.96)	(2.07)	(1.80)	(2.10)	(1.67)	(1.92)
Affirmative action initiative	<u>M</u>	4.00	2.71	3.08	3.20	2.97	3.31	3.14
	<u>SD</u>	(2.06)	(1.95)	(2.01)	(2.10)	(2.14)	(1.97)	(2.08)
Lack of other applicants for my position	<u>M</u>	2.19	2.40	2.18	2.34	2.82	1.99	2.33
	<u>SD</u>	(1.65)	(1.83)	(1.53)	(1.84)	(1.95)	(1.53)	(1.77)
Contact with female administrator from my institution	<u>M</u>	4.78	3.86	4.31	4.13	3.93	4.36	4.16
	<u>SD</u>	(2.04)	(2.36)	(2.27)	(2.24)	(2.34)	(2.15)	(2.29)
Contact with male administrator from my institution	<u>M</u>	3.84	4.37	4.54	4.10	4.10	4.34	4.23
	<u>SD</u>	(2.23)	(2.26)	(2.18)	(2.23)	(2.35)	(2.16)	(2.27)
Contact with female coach/colleague from my institution	<u>M</u>	4.60	3.34	3.46	4.04	3.05	4.51	3.76
	<u>SD</u>	(2.17)	(2.32)	(2.23)	(2.36)	(2.27)	(2.19)	(2.34)
Contact with male coach/colleague from my institution	<u>M</u>	3.89	4.59	3.96	4.61	3.78	4.93	4.41
	<u>SD</u>	(2.69)	(2.22)	(2.31)	(2.20)	(2.29)	(2.08)	(2.26)
Contact with female administrator outside my institution	<u>M</u>	3.88	3.19	3.41	3.49	2.89	3.93	3.39
	<u>SD</u>	(2.18)	(2.29)	(2.36)	(2.24)	(2.25)	(2.19)	(2.28)
Contact with male administrator outside my institution	<u>M</u>	3.65	3.90	3.82	3.92	3.42	4.30	3.84
	<u>SD</u>	(2.20)	(2.26)	(2.23)	(2.22)	(2.22)	(2.14)	(2.24)
Contact with female coach/colleague outside my institution	<u>M</u>	4.84	3.04	3.29	3.79	3.08	4.10	3.62
	<u>SD</u>	(1.91)	(2.19)	(2.21)	(2.25)	(2.24)	(2.15)	(2.26)
Contact with male coach/colleague outside my institution	<u>M</u>	3.72	4.22	3.65	4.35	3.41	4.72	4.10
	<u>SD</u>	(2.06)	(2.22)	(2.13)	(2.16)	(2.14)	(2.02)	(2.19)
Other	<u>M</u>	5.44	4.59	4.11	4.96	4.78	4.64	4.84
	<u>SD</u>	(1.51)	(2.61)	(2.42)	(2.42)	(2.53)	(2.34)	(2.35)

males perceived that gender ($M = 5.15$) and affirmative action initiative ($M = 4.00$) were more important job attainment factors than did females ($M = 3.65$ and 2.71 , respectively). Females also perceived that contact with a female administrator from one's present institution ($M = 4.78$) was a more important factor than did males ($M = 3.86$). In contrast, males felt that contact with a male coach/colleague from one's present institution ($M = 4.59$) was a more important factor than did females ($M = 3.89$).

Effects of Position. The multivariate effect of position on the job attainment factors was significant, $F(17,314) = 2.26, p < .01$. The univariate analyses of variance showed that position had an effect only on lack of other applicants for the position, $F(1,330) = 4.89, p < .05$. Coaches ($M = 2.34$) attached a higher degree of importance to this factor than did athletic administrators ($M = 2.18$).

Effects of Country. The multivariate effect of country on the job attainment factors was significant, $F(17, 314) = 2.31, p < .01$. The univariate analyses of variance indicated that country had a significant effect on previous work experience, $F(1,330) = 12.85, p < .001$; lack of other applicants for the position, $F(1,330) = 11.22, p < .001$; contact with a female administrator from outside my institution, $F(1,330) = 8.03, p < .01$; and contact with a male administrator from outside my institution, $F(1, 330) = 6.74, p < .01$. The American subjects ($M = 6.12$) perceived that previous work experience was a more important factor than did the Canadian subjects ($M = 5.33$). The American respondents also rated contacts with female ($M = 3.93$) and male ($M = 2.89$) administrators outside one's institution as more important than did the Canadian respondents ($M = 2.89$ and 3.42 , respectively). In contrast, the Canadian respondents ($M = 2.82$) placed a higher de-

gree of importance on lack of other applicants for the position than did the American respondents ($M = 1.99$). No interaction effects were significant.

Most Critical Job Attainment Factors

Respondents were asked to rank in order of priority the three most critical factors in job attainment. Overall, the most critical job attainment factor was previous work experience, followed by appropriate training for the position as the second most critical, and personal traits as the third most critical. Female and male respondents, as well as the coaches and American subjects were consistent in their rankings of these same factors. While the athletic administrators and Canadian respondents still ranked previous work experience as the most critical factor, there were exceptions in their rankings of the second and third most critical factors. The athletic administrators ranked both educational qualifications and personal traits as the second most critical, and personal traits as the third most critical. The Canadian respondents ranked personal traits as the second and third most critical factors.

Conclusions and Discussion

Three general conclusions were generated from this study. First, both the overall results and those related to the variables of gender, position, and country indicated that the most critical factor in the attainment of athletic management and coaching positions was previous work experience. This result is consistent with Williams and Miller (1983) who found that intercollegiate athletic administrators rated three factors as being quite beneficial in terms of background experience for administration—in-service/internship training in athletic administration, leadership experience in professional organizations, and previous related work experience as an assistant athletic director.

With the exception of the athletic administrators who also rated two other factors—educational qualifications and personal traits—and the Canadian subjects who rated personal traits, the second most critical factor was appropriate training for the position. This discrepancy in the administrators' ratings suggests that perhaps more educational qualifications are expected of them than of the coaches when attaining a job. Other factors deemed to be very critical were personal traits, background as an athlete, and opportunity to act in the position prior to appointment. The importance attached to background as an athlete is consistent with the research conducted by Hatfield et al. (1987) who also found that previous athletic participation contributed to the administrative effectiveness of intercollegiate athletic administrators and professional general sport managers.

Overall, the results of the three most critical factors suggest a high degree of agreement among the subgroups. It is interesting to note, however, that personal traits had the highest mean for the females, coaches, and Canadian respondents although it did not receive the highest ranking as the most critical factor.

Second, the relatively low importance ascribed to lack of other applicants for the position, affirmative action initiative, and contacts with administrators/coaches within and outside one's present institution are worthy of mention. For example, the low priority attached to affirmative action initiative may be due to limited initiatives in the areas of athletic administration and coaching, or it may be attributed to increased awareness and practice of good recruitment and selection processes that subscribe to affirmative action without actually naming it. As well, respondents might not have felt comfortable with admitting that they were hired as a result of an affirmative action initiative. The lack of importance of personal con-

tacts is surprising and does not support previous research which suggests that such contacts are important job information channels (e.g., Figler, 1988; Granovetter, 1974; Pfeffer, 1981). Perhaps with the increase in coaching and athletic management opportunities and greater mobility in the field, previous experience now overshadows personal contacts.

Third, a number of subgroup differences were found for the rating of importance of the job attainment factors. Females rated gender, affirmative action initiative, and contact with a female from within one's institution as significantly more important than did males. In contrast, males rated contact with a male coach/colleague as significantly more important than did females. Gender and affirmative action initiative appear to be somewhat related in that the hiring initiatives taken in recent years have been directed primarily toward females. The findings related to the contacts suggest that an informal contact with someone of the same sex is important and support a same sex role model theory.

Only one significant effect was found for position. That is, lack of applicants for the position was rated significantly more important by coaches than athletic administrators. However, both subgroups rated this factor the lowest on the degree of importance scale (2.34 and 2.18, respectively). Finally, the American subjects rated previous work experience and contacts with female and male administrators outside one's institution as significantly more important than their Canadian counterparts. These results suggest that the American subjects actually rely more on contacts than their Canadian counterparts as a job information channel. The Canadian subjects rated lack of other applicants for the position as significantly more important than the American respondents; however, the ratings of importance for both subgroups was the lowest of all the

job attainment factors (2.82 and 1.99, respectively).

Implications

Based on the results of this study, a number of implications related to planning careers in coaching and athletic management are offered. First, with previous work experience rated important by all subgroups, students should be encouraged to become involved in coaching and athletic management on a voluntary or paid basis in order to gain job experience that may assist them in their future work. In this regard, internships and assistant coaching positions can prove invaluable. As well, individuals involved in athletic administration and coaching should be encouraged to become active mentors and role models for students. Second, as evidenced by the high priority accorded to educational background by athletic administrators, students interested primarily in administration should pay particular attention to gaining an appropriate educational background which may include sport management and coaching related courses. Third, the importance of professionally recognized qualifications, such as coaching certification, should also be emphasized and encouraged. Finally, personal traits that contribute to one's interpersonal skills need to be emphasized as an important factor for individuals seeking careers in coaching and athletic management.

In this study information was collected from individuals currently involved in coaching and athletic administration. Further refinement of the current instrument is warranted in order to establish the test-retest reliability. As well, future study involving the same instrument with a sample of individuals not yet involved in coaching and athletic administration careers would provide a useful comparison of perceptions. A survey of these individuals may assist administrators with the recruitment of potential candidates for these positions. By know-

ing the critical factors pertaining to why an individual selects these positions, administrators may be able to develop programs (e.g., internships, field experiences) that will assist individuals with gaining valuable experience which in turn may encourage them to enter the coaching/athletic administration profession.

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