A Critical Examination of Former Student Athletes Career Trajectory in Intercollegiate Athletics Administration

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Sport management and intercollegiate athletics in particular, has faced sharpened criticism for its perceived lack of diversity present within administrative and leadership roles. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the critical factors that influence the career trajectory of former student athletes who opt to pursue careers in intercollegiate athletics administration. Our study is guided by three research questions: (RQ 1): How does the intercollegiate athletic experience of student athletes effect their career trajectory in intercollegiate athletics administration? (RQ 2): What impact does leadership on the team or within their sport have on the career trajectory of former student-athletes working in intercollegiate athletics administration? (RQ 3): What effect does gender and sport played have on the career trajectory of former student-athletes working in intercollegiate athletics administration?

There have been numerous studies that have examined the role and impact of gender in sport (Burton et. al., 2009; Cooky et. al., 2010; & McDonald, 2016). Additionally, Sabo and Jansen concluded that “sport as hegemonic social institution, naturalizes men’s power and privilege over women. This is evident not only on the playing field, but also in the coaching and administrative areas of sport” (Sabo & Jansen, 1992). Furthermore, there have been numerous studies that have examined leadership as it pertains the to the student athlete, coach, and or administrator at all levels within sport (Arnold et. al., 2018; Burton et. al., 2017; & Wells et. al., 2014). This study employs a mixed method approach utilizing both interviews and questionnaires. The participants for this study include former student-athletes who now work as administrators within intercollegiate athletics. We define administrator as an individual with the words of director or administrator within their title (e.g., athletic director, assistant athletic director, director of marketing, and or senior woman administrator). Data collected from the questionnaires will be analyzed using the SPSS statistical software, and the interviews be analyzed using the collaborative qualitative data analysis method (Richards & Hemphill, 2018).

We anticipate that the underrepresentation of individuals with marginalized identities in intercollegiate athletic administration will lead to a decline among female and other student athletes with marginalized identities pursuing a career in intercollegiate athletic administration. Additionally, due to the opportunities and significant hegemonic masculinity present within intercollegiate athletics today, we anticipate that male student athletes are more likely to pursue a career in intercollegiate athletic coaching and administration. Also, given the direct correlation between transformational leadership and commitment (Kent & Chelladurai, 2001), a student athlete who commits to a formal leadership role on their team or within their sport are more likely to pursue a career in intercollegiate athletic administration. Finally, we anticipate that the more success (i.e. winning and personal accolades) a student athlete experiences, increases the chances that they pursue a career in intercollegiate athletic administration. Sport practitioners and researchers will find that our results offer insight into the challenges, barriers, opportunities, and decisional factors for a student athlete when opting to pursue a career in intercollegiate athletic administration. We will further discuss our findings and implications during our presentation.