Career Needs of Women in Intercollegiate Athletic Administration: Authenticity, Balance and Challenge

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Within the sport industry, there are strong and multifaceted women who are dedicated to supporting intercollegiate athletes throughout the nation (Hartzell & Dixon, 2019). These women are complex individuals who bring their whole selves to work each day and take into consideration, whether consciously or unconsciously, life outside of work when making their career-related decisions (Hartzell & Dixon, 2019).

The proposed topic of study is mirrored and influenced by the work of Dabbs and Pastore (2017) who examine how Mainiero and Sullivan’s (2005) Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM) impacts the career needs of Division I coaches, specifically focusing on authenticity, balance and challenge. The purpose of this study will be to research career needs of women in intercollegiate athletic administration within their career journey; while focusing on Mainiero and Sullivan’s (2005) identified career needs of authenticity, balance and challenge. Concentrating upon women in intercollegiate athletic departments enables this research to transcend the level of career aspirations of women. This study will further provide insight into that which is driving the aspirations of these women, as well as what external or internal factors are aligning their professional decisions and next steps in their career paths. Additionally, it will afford the opportunity to assess gaps in the literature where the KCM has not been utilized to study the career journey of women in athletic administration (Dabbs & Pastore, 2017).

The theoretical framework guiding this study will be the Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM) created by Mainiero and Sullivan (2005). Additionally, this model clarifies that the decision by women to make a change is highly relational and has impactful effects upon themselves and others around them (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). Furthermore, these women making the career changes are consistently thinking of others and how their choice will impact them, as well (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). This model illustrates that other players within women’s lives impact their career decisions, as they give credence to their needs, wants and desires (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). Using the KCM as a guide, the study will be directed through the following research questions: 1) How do the three career needs (authenticity, balance and challenge) impact women in intercollegiate athletic administration? 2) How does the career parameter of authenticity vary for women at different stages in their career? 3) How does the career parameter of balance vary for women at different stages in their career? 4) How does the career parameter of challenge vary for women at different stages in their career?

Acknowledging for the gaps in the literature provided by Dabbs and Pastore (2017), the research methods to be utilized will be non-experimental, qualitative research through a phenomenological study. Phenomenologically, the researcher will focus upon the women’s career journeys to identify the participants’ experiences and perspectives (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Through this approach, the researcher will conduct interviews and assess for themes using the KCM as a theoretical framework.