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Female Athletic Directors in California: Attaining and Retaining the Position of Athletic

Director

A Dissertation by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor in Organizational Leadership

March 2018

Committee in charge:

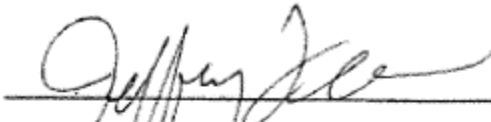
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The process of completing a dissertation is not done in isolation. A tremendous amount of support, guidance, and reassurance was essential to the successful completion of this work. First and foremost, I would like to dedicate this work to my parents, Richard and Terri Levensailor. Some of my earliest memories are of them telling me how important it is to be educated and that I would be educated because not everyone is lucky enough to have the opportunities afforded to me. Unfortunately, very early in the process of starting my doctoral program, my father became terminally ill and passed away. It was his wish that I finish my doctorate “no matter what.” Well Dad, you have yourself a doctor now!

Of equal importance to me is the unconditional love and support of my wife Alyssa and our two boys, Andrew and Levi. Thank you for allowing me to accomplish a lifelong goal, for being willing to take the backseat at times, and for keeping our lives as normal as possible. I love you to the moon and back!

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women in this research will have their voices heard and the overall understanding of the experiences of women in athletic administration will be improved.

ABSTRACT

Female Athletic Directors in California: Attaining and Retaining the Position of Athletic

Director

by Katherine Levensailor

Purpose: The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological inquiry study was to examine and describe how female athletic directors in California face and overcome barriers in attaining and retaining their positions.

Methodology: This was a qualitative phenomenological research study, incorporating an interview research design. The participants in this study were current female athletic directors within in the Southern and San Diego Sections of the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF). The researcher conducted 15 semistructured interviews and collected artifacts that were coded for themes to develop a conceptual framework with which to understand the phenomena that females experience in attaining and retaining their positions (Creswell, 2007).

Findings: Several findings were identified as a result of analyzing the data for themes. First, it was discovered that female athletic directors are rare and face barriers related to gender. Second, time and travel demand negatively impact female athletic director's ability to participate in family events. Third, successful female athletic directors build positive relationships with individuals in key positions. Fourth, effective female athletic directors stand up for themselves. Lastly, ongoing intentional mentoring from administration and other athletic directors fosters growth for female athletic directors.

Conclusions: Based on the findings, this study supported six conclusions: (a) There needs to be more support for women in athletic administration; (b) female athletic

directors need opportunities to find balance with work and family; (c) a school culture that supports ongoing development of staff relationships helps female athletic directors be successful; (d) personal and professional development opportunities are essential for female athletic directors; (e) in order to retain highly qualified female athletic directors, school districts need to cultivate opportunities for mentorship; and (f) the athletic community needs to develop and facilitate a community network for female athletic directors that includes mentoring by other athletic directors.

Recommendations: Further research is recommended to better explain the unique dynamics of females and athletic administration. This includes but is not limited to reasons why female athletic directors leave the position, identifying barriers or factors influencing decisions to leave athletic administration, and conducting research into the experiences of administrators and coaches who work with female athletic directors.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Rosie the Riveter broke gender stereotypes during WWII and finally allowed women into the workforce. Since the time of Rosie the Riveter, women have continued to struggle with full acceptance in occupations; women in athletics and athletic administration are no exception. Prior to 1970, women in athletics were taboo; it was not until 1973 when women in sports began getting attention from well-known sources. A series of articles was published by *Sports Illustrated*, highlighting “the gross inequity in expenditure and quality of women’s versus men’s programs” (Rubin & Lough, 2015, p. 112). These articles disproved the popular belief that women should not participate in sports because it was too risky and nonessential to their well-being. In fact, the final article argued that athletics for girls was tantamount to keeping women from becoming underachievers later in life.

Ironically, Title IX was enacted in 1972 and became the impetus for dramatic changes for women and athletics. Since this time the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has acknowledged athletics as an essential part of education for both males and females (Epstein, 2016). As a result of both the importance of athletics in higher education and the enactment of Title IX, extensive research regarding the distribution of resources and opportunities for athletics at the intercollegiate level has been done (Mahony & Pastore, 1998). To best understand how Title IX has impacted the distribution of resources and opportunities for women in sports, one must examine the regulations established by the legislation.

The first major piece of legislation addressing allocation of resources in athletics was Title IX of the Education Amendments. This comprehensive federal law “removed

barriers that once prevented people, on the basis of sex, from participating in educational opportunities and careers of their choice” (Bower & Hums, 2013, p. 2). As a result of Title IX, any institution that receives federal funding cannot discriminate based on sex without facing a loss of funding. This means that all educational institutions must provide equal opportunity and resources for male and female athletes. One measurable outcome of Title IX was an increase in both the number of female teams and athletes at the collegiate level (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012).

One might expect that with the implementation of Title IX there would be fewer discrepancies in the number of male and female athletic directors at the NCAA level. This is not the case. In fact, since the enactment of Title IX there are fewer females in athletic leadership roles, both as coaches and athletic directors (Rubin & Lough, 2015). Similar experiences are mirrored for female coaches and athletic directors at the high school level (Whisenant, 2003). Research indicates that this is the result of gender discrimination (Ray, 2010; M. D. Smith, 2005). One example of this can be found in the preemployment job requirements for athletic directors. In order to even apply for an athletic director position, that person must have served as a head football coach (Whisenant, Miller, & Pedersen, 2005). Head football coach is not a position held by women, therefore limiting women’s access to an athletic leadership position right out of the gate.

Women in athletic careers face gender discrimination and continue to have limited exposure to necessary experiences for employment in athletic leadership positions. Barriers, both social and organizational, for females who desire a career in athletic administration must be brought to light. As noted by Whisenant (2003), there are

two primary reasons why equal access to the athletic director position is important: “First, the law requires equal access under Title VII, second, it is the right thing to do based upon the fundamental principles of integrity, fairness, and other maxims often used to validate the existence of school-sponsored athletics” (p. 181).

Regardless of the law, inequities continue to persist. In order to understand this phenomenon, one must understand the historical trends of women in athletics and athletic leadership roles, the barriers faced by females in athletic leadership positions, the social and organizational structures that play a role in gender discrimination, and the current research related to female athletic leadership.

Background

Developments within athletics, in particular the experiences of females, has been monitored for over 40 years. To understand the connection between these developments and current experiences for females in athletics, the researcher reviewed the historical movements of women in athletic leadership positions. This was framed within the context of the barriers women face in athletic leadership roles. Further, the impacts of these barriers were reviewed within a framework of social and organizational structures that perpetuate gender discrimination. Finally, current research related to female athletic leadership was examined to identify areas of significant further research.

Historical Trends of Women in Athletics and Athletic Leadership

To better understand the current conditions of women in athletic leadership, one must first examine the historical trends of women in athletic leadership. The journey for change began in the manner in which women in athletics were treated following the 1972 implementation of Title IX. Initially, the original Title IX legislation did not include

women in sports (Edwards, 2010). It was not until 1974 that Congress implemented the Jarvis Amendment, incorporating intercollegiate athletics into program equity requirements for men and women (Rubin & Lough, 2015). Since that time, numerous studies have been conducted by Acosta and Carpenter (2014) and other researchers examining the progression of women in intercollegiate athletics as both athletes and athletic administrators. Their research has affirmed that the implementation of Title IX brought on a dramatic increase in the number of female athletes and teams per school: “In 1970, prior to the 1972 enactment of Title IX, there were only 2.5 women’s teams per school and only about 16,000 total female intercollegiate athletes” (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012, p. 1). Institutions are now reporting 8.73 women’s teams per school with the prevailing body of literature strongly suggesting this increase is directly related to the implementation of Title IX (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012).

Along with an increase among female intercollegiate athletes, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of females playing sports at the high school level. Rubin and Lough (2015) reported that in 1971, 300,000 girls played high school sports. By 2012, this number increased to 3.2 million girls. While there may be many reasons that contributed to this rise in participation, Massengale and Lough (2010) suggested that the increase in opportunities for females at the college level resulted in increased opportunities for girls’ participation at the high school level. Although there is a significant increase in females participating in athletics, women continue to be underrepresented in athletic leadership (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012; Radlinski, 2003; Ray, 2010).

While historically female programs were funded less and had fewer athletes than male programs, they were still run by women. Prior to Title IX, females managed female athletic programs with over 90% of coaches being female (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). It was the implementation of Title IX that gave legitimacy to female athletic programs and increased financial opportunities for coaches and administrators of these programs. Yet studies indicate that this ultimately drove males to become more interested in leading female programs, driving female leadership out of the programs (Blinde, 1989; Hattery, Smith, & Staurowsky, 2007; Hult, 1980). Inadvertently, Title IX created an inequity in the number of females and males given the incentive for males to pursue positions that would allow them to grow within athletic leadership. As reported in Acosta and Carpenter's 2012 study, only 36% of administrative roles in athletics and 20% of athletic director positions in the NCAA are currently held by women. These data led to an abundance of research to address the discrepancy between the number of females and males holding athletic leadership positions. As such, much of the recent research focuses on the barriers females face in attaining athletic leadership roles.

Barriers Faced by Females in Athletic Leadership Roles

For over 35 years, scholars have studied the role of women in athletics at the NCAA level. A key area of examination has been the personal and social factors that impact the role of athletic administrators. The evidence points to seven universal barriers faced by women who seek careers in athletic administration. These barriers include the impact of the *old boys' network*, being female in athletic administration, impact of marital status, impact of having children, impact of sexual discrimination, time demands of the job, and travel demands of the job (Acosta & Carpenter, 1985, 2002, 2012, 2014;

Coakley, 2001; National Collegiate Athletic Association [NCAA], 2011; M. D. Smith, 2005).

The body of literature on females in athletic administration strongly indicates that these seven barriers are rooted in gender discrimination (Emerson, 2002; Hasbrook, Hart, Mathes, & True, 1990; Knoppers, 1989; Stangl & Kane, 1991; Wilkinson & Schneider, 1991). In fact, gender discrimination has been studied extensively since the 1960s within the context of social and organizational frameworks (Almquist & Angrist, 1975; Bartholomew & Schnorr, 1994; Blalock, 1962; Kanter, 1977; Krane, 2001; Reskin & Hartmann, 1986; Sage, 1998; Tallerico, 2000). Examples of these frameworks include hegemony, homologous reproduction, and sex segregation. While experts have varying opinions on the direct causes of gender discrimination, the best of these studies suggest that the underrepresentation of females in male-dominated occupations has to do with opportunity, power, and proportion (Kanter, 1977). Women are not provided the opportunities to gain power in the same proportion as men due to social and organizational constructs. While there is overwhelming evidence of this type of gender discrimination at the NCAA level in athletic leadership, there is limited research on the impacts of gender discrimination at the high school level (Ray, 2010; Welch, 2012). A significant gap exists in the understanding of these constructs and their impact on athletic leadership roles at the high school level. To begin to understand the role of gender discrimination in athletic leadership roles, it is essential to view such discrimination via the context of social and organizational structures that foster gender discrimination.

Social and Organizational Structures That Play a Role in Gender Discrimination

As evidenced by the work of Herber (2002), men and women tend to behave based on the perceptions and expectations that society prescribes. Historically, attributes of effective leadership have been credited to males and circuitously imply that females are less effective as leaders (Herber, 2002). This assumption has prompted several studies that examine the differences between male and female leadership practices (Bjork, 2000; Hutton & Gougeon, 1993; Irby & Brown, 1995; Penney & Evans, 2002). Results of these studies have led to the firm conclusion that men and women approach leadership and leadership roles differently but are equally effective. Key findings were summarized in Ray's (2010) literature review on gender and leadership:

- Men and women approach educational leadership differently, but that both can be effective (Bjork, 2000);
- Men and women educational leaders view and exert power differently, and women do not necessarily need to employ the traditional male definitions and uses of power in order to work in educational administration (Hutton & Gougeon, 1993);
- Men and women hold differing perceptions regarding the leadership skills of authority, expectations of supervision, successful leadership skills and attitudes, and the influences of personal leadership style (Irby & Brown, 1995). (p. 41)

The inconsistent approaches to leadership between males and females are directly correlated to the way in which men and women acquire satisfactory gender characteristics in our society. Research on societal gender norms is centered on three major themes:

historical, sociological, and biological factors (Bjork, 2000; Herber, 2002; Penney & Evans, 2002). Consequently, to better understand the gender discrepancies in athletic leadership, it is necessary to focus on four social and organizational structures that play a role in establishing gender norms: hegemony, homologous reproduction, gatekeeping theory, and sex segregation.

Hegemony. Women continue to face barriers in sports due to the masculinist hegemony over the institution of sports (Schell & Rodriguez, 2000). The term *hegemony* has no formal definition (Krane, 2001; Sage, 1998) but “refers to a dominant group in society establishing their own ethical, political, and cultural values as the norm” (Ray, 2010, p. 46). Building on Schell and Rodriguez’s (2000) construct, Krane (2001) argued that people interpret their world based on traditional gender roles of masculinity and femininity and that they expect women to “demonstrate hegemonic femininity and expect men to demonstrate hegemonic masculinity” (p. 118). The researcher reasoned that society decides which sports are acceptable for males and females, and then females make the conscious decision to appear feminine in sports. That is to say they display femininity, consistently reinforcing and perpetuating hegemonic femininity in sports in an effort to avoid being seen as abnormal and scrutinized (Krane, 2001). Hegemony helps explain why there are so few female athletic directors, a role not traditional for females (Krane, 2001).

Homologous reproduction. Women are rarely given the opportunity to become athletic leaders due to homologous reproduction. This theory states that through opportunity, power, and proportion dominant groups will *reproduce* themselves (Kanter, 1977), lending to the premise that if the majority of athletic directors are male, they are in

power and will continue to reproduce the same opportunities for males. Evidence of this is provided in a seminal study conducted by Lovett and Lowry (1994) that investigated the impact of Title IX in the decrease of female coaches via the lens of homologous reproduction. The authors concluded that there are administrative structures that play a role in who is hired, and that both the “good old girls” network and the “good old boys” network are effective (Lovett & Lowry, 1994, p. 27). Additionally, the importance of opportunity was noted, specifically the opportunity of coaching, as it plays a role in earning a position in athletic administration (Lovett & Lowry, 1994). As a result, if a woman is not given the opportunity to coach, the likelihood of her gaining an opportunity to be an athletic administrator is even less likely. The overwhelming negative impact of homologous reproduction on women in sports administration has been further supported by the research of Stangl and Kane (1991), Knoppers (1989), and Acosta and Carpenter (1992). Through this research, it can be concluded that homologous reproduction plays a significant role in gender discrimination among those seeking a career in athletic administration.

Gatekeeping theory. Although not viewed in the context of sports, Tollerico (2000) examined the gatekeeping theory in relation to female career progression in the education arena, specifically superintendents. Lewin (1951) and Shoemaker (1991) postulated that there are key individuals who play a role in the career advancements of others and are therefore titled *gatekeepers*. Tollerico (2000) found a series of unwritten selection criteria for choosing superintendents that include (a) defining quality in terms of hierarchies of particular job titles, (b) stereotyping by gender, (c) complacency about acting affirmatively, and (d) hypervaluing feelings of comfort and interpersonal

chemistry with the successful candidate. Although there is limited research on the unwritten rules for the selection process of athletic directors, it is plausible to argue that gatekeeping theory plays a role in those chosen to fulfill the athletic director position (Ray, 2010). The complexity of unwritten recruitment and hiring practices is an area of future research that is key to understanding the disproportionate number of males in the athletic director position.

Sex segregation. As explained by Reskin and Hartmann (1986), sex segregation is “the concentration of women and men in different jobs that are predominantly of a single sex” (p. 1). For example, several studies have demonstrated that athletics have historically been a male-dominated career path (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012; Grappendorf, Lough, & Griffin, 2004; Strawbridge, 2000; Wright, Eagleman, & Pedersen, 2011). Understanding sex segregation and the role it plays in female career paths is essential to understanding the barriers women face in athletic administration.

The implications and impacts of social and organizational structures on female athletic leadership shape the current research on females in athletic leadership.

Current Research Related to Female Athletic Leadership

The current research as it relates to females in athletic leadership roles focuses on the discrepancies between the numbers of males and females in the positions of coach, athletic manager, and athletic director. Acosta and Carpenter (2012) conducted a longitudinal study spanning over 35 years, using a national survey regarding the status of women in intercollegiate athletics. To gather data, they mailed surveys to senior female administrators at every NCAA school with a woman’s athletic program. The following data were taken from findings of Acosta and Carpenter’s 2012 study, *Women in*

Intercollegiate Sport: A Longitudinal, National Study—Thirty-Five Year Update, 1977-2012. As of 2012, the highest number ever of females were employed as professionals within the intercollegiate athletics system. A total of 215 females were employed as athletic directors in 2012, making up only 20.3% of all athletic directors at the NCAA level. In terms of divisions, Division I had 36 female athletic directors, and Division III had 133. Important to note is that 9.2% of athletic departments have no females present anywhere in their administration. An examination of coaching positions, an essential component to reaching an administrative position, revealed that one in five head coaches for all NCAA teams is a woman (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). The evidence from this extensive longitudinal study overwhelmingly supports the conclusion that there is a significant discrepancy in the number of male and female athletic leaders at the NCAA level.

Another significant finding of Acosta and Carpenter's (2012) research was that the overall participation of women in sports has dramatically increased since the implementation of Title IX, growing from 5.61 varsity sports per school in 1977 to 8.73 in 2012. A similar growth pattern can be seen at the high school level, with a ratio of 1 female athlete to 1.4 male athletes. Although the patterns of participation of females in high school athletics has been reported, there is little research tracing the patterns of female high school athletic directors.

Whisenant (2003) examined the gender composition of high school athletic directors. The data were collected from members of state-level high school athletic director associations otherwise known as National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA). Whisenant's research indicated that there are significantly fewer

females in the position of athletic director in comparison to males, with only 13% of positions being held by females. The findings also suggested that there are differences both on a state and regional level for the number of females holding the position of athletic director. However, at all levels males outnumber females significantly in the athletic director position at the high school level (Whisenant, 2003).

Current recruitment and selection practices of high school athletic directors were studied by Whisenant et al. (2005). The purpose of their study was to examine potential gender bias in the job description used by school districts to hire interscholastic athletic directors. Whisenant et al. found that 17% of job descriptions (in the state of Texas) listed as a qualification that the athletic director also serves as the head football coach (HFC). This finding supports the conclusion that hegemonic masculinity and homologous reproduction present a significant barrier for women at the interscholastic level with a desire to pursue a career in athletic administration. Despite gender discrimination, females are just as successful as their male counterparts when given the opportunity to serve in athletic administration positions and when measured as the rate of advancement (Pedersen & Whisenant, 2005).

As demonstrated by the prior discussion of social and organizational structures that play a role in gender discrimination, there is a significant amount of research related to the variables that play a role in gender bias in the workforce for women in leadership positions (Bjork, 2000; Blount, 1998; Herber, 2002; Hutton & Gougeon, 1993; Irby & Brown, 1995; Penney & Evans, 2002). Further, Bower, Hums, and Grappendorf (2015) supported this conclusion by stating that a significant amount of research has been conducted to examine “women working in leadership positions within intercollegiate

athletics (NCAA Divisions III)” with a goal of determining “why women hold significantly fewer positions 40 years since the passage of Title IX in 1972” (p. 14). The result of all this research is a list of overwhelming reasons for the continued lack of women in athletic leadership. However, these studies examined barriers and implications at the collegiate level. The pathway to collegiate athletics begins in high school; however, there are few studies examining the barriers for women at this level (Whisenant, 2003). The present study contributes to the body of knowledge by identifying the reasons why women are not equally represented in athletic leadership roles at the high school level.

Statement of the Research Problem

For over 40 years, researchers have examined the impact of Title IX on females in athletics (Bower & Hums, 2013). It is widely accepted that there are more female athletes than ever before due to the passage of Title IX (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). One might suspect that with an increase in female athletes, there would be a similar increase in the number females in athletic leadership roles. However, the opposite is true. With the implementation of Title IX, there has actually been a decrease in female head coaches and athletic directors at both the intercollegiate and interscholastic levels. Scholars have purported that this is due in large part to gender discrimination (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014).

Studies on discrimination for females with a desire to pursue a career in athletic administration, and current trends for females in athletic leadership from the collegiate level are highlighted in the works of Acosta and Carpenter (2014). Discrimination against females is further evidenced by Blalock (1962), Almquist and Angrist (1975),

Bartholomew and Schnorr (1994), Sage (1998), Krane (2001), Kanter (1977), Tallerico (2000), and Reskin and Hartmann (1986), who have showcased the notion that women are not equally represented in athletic leadership roles and that discrimination remains prevalent and ongoing. There is universal agreement that the discrepancy is the result of complicated and obstructing social and organizational structures. While some literature has emerged around high school athletics, most published works on female athletic administrators is at the collegiate level (Bjork, 2000; Herber, 2002; Hutton & Gougeon, 1993; Irby & Brown, 1995; Penney & Evans, 2002).

Female high school athletic directors face many barriers in attaining and retaining their positions (Moore, Gilmour, & Kinsella, 2005). The problem the current study addressed was how gender discrimination and social and organizational structures contributed to this occurrence (Ray, 2010; Welch, 2012; Whisenant, 2003; Whisenant et al., 2005). It is clear that the impact of this phenomenon has implications well beyond that of gender discrimination for females as they select a career path. Yet, there is limited research in this area. Further, while research has shown a growing interest in identify contributing barriers to the unequal representation of females in the high school athletic director position, there is little known about how high school athletic directors face and overcome barriers (Whisenant, 2003) and how these barriers impact attainment and retention of the athletic director position (Welch, 2012) at the interscholastic level.

The goal of this study was to broaden the understanding of why such a discrepancy exists between males and females at the interscholastic level in terms of leadership roles, to identify best practices used to select high school athletic directors, and to explore the critical influences female athletic directors have on schools. Findings

from this study will contribute to the limited body of knowledge in the area of interscholastic female athletic directors.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine and describe how female athletic directors in California face and overcome barriers in attaining and retaining their positions.

Research Questions

The central research question was, How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome barriers in attaining and retaining their positions? Seven research subquestions were designed using the barriers identified by Acosta and Carpenter (2014), Coakley (2001), and M. D. Smith (2005): (a) the impact of the old boys' network, (b) the impact of marital status, (c) the impact of having children, (d) being female in athletic administration, (e) the impact of sexual discrimination, (f) time demands of the job, and (g) travel demands of the job.

1. How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of the old boys' network in attaining and retaining their positions?
2. How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of marital status in attaining and retaining their positions?
3. How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of having children in attaining and retaining their positions?
4. How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of the being female in athletic administration in attaining and retaining their positions?

5. How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of sexual discrimination in attaining and retaining their positions?
6. How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome time demands of the job in attaining and retaining their positions?
7. How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of the travel demands of the job in attaining and retaining their positions?

Significance of the Problem

Historically, the position of athletic director has been male dominated, in part due to gender discrimination, or the notion that athletic leadership is “men’s work.” The body of research that has examined issues surrounding women working in male dominated fields has found that job hierarchy mirrors societal gender hierarchy (Emerson, 2002; Ray, 2010; Tallerico & Blount, 2004). The position of athletic director is no exception to this societal standard. Since the development of the position, the role of athletic director has traditionally been defined and institutionalized as a male job and therefore presents a barrier to female attainment (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). This study sought to bring a deeper understanding of barriers faced by female athletic directors. The findings of this study are significant in bringing to light this discrimination to those who are seeking to recruit and retain more females in the role of leadership in high school athletics. Not only are women who seek this position held back, but the consequences on both male and female young adults is also noteworthy.

The fact that women are disproportionately represented in athletic leadership roles as a result of social and organizational structures is well demonstrated at the collegiate level (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). However, there is limited research in this area at the

interscholastic level (Whisenant et al., 2005). There is a significant need to understand females in the athletic director role at the interscholastic level. Scholars have pointed to the need for current research that is guided by female athletic directors' perspectives, including documentation about how female athletic directors perceive the importance and significance of their career preparations, progressions and experiences of high school female athletic directors, and practices used to select high school athletic directors.

There are five unique needs this study attempted to address. First, all high school athletes, especially females, need to see women in athletic leadership roles. Second, gender bias and discrimination in athletic leadership roles is detrimental to both male and female athletes. Third, athletic directors serve as role models to student athletes, demonstrating decision making, mentoring, and leadership skills (Emerson, 2002). Fourth, women who make significant contributions to the athletic arena in any leadership position are important to the full development of females and males (Acosta & Carpenter, 1985; Bartholomew & Schnorr, 1994; Pratt & Eitzen, 1989). Finally, it is important for young women to realize the potential opportunities that exist for women in leadership roles. These possibilities are actualized when young women see women in leadership roles, such as athletic directors.

Title IX appears to be a success when looking at the number of female participants, with 41.5% of interscholastic athletes being girls (Whisenant, 2003). While the number of female high school athletes has increased significantly, the same trend does not occur for female athletic directors. Over a 15-year period, the number of female athletic directors in one state dropped by over half (Heishman, Bunker, & Tutwiler, 1990). Other data indicate a 68% decrease in females in interscholastic athletic director

roles since the enactment of Title IX (Whisenant, 2003). This statistic is staggering given the importance of females in these leadership roles.

Barriers, both social and organizational, for females who desire a career in athletic administration must be brought to light. In addition, stereotyping and gender discrimination continue to be problematic in athletics. It remains typical for men to continue to control athletics and not share their power with women (Sage, 1990). Acosta and Carpenter (1992) and Lovett and Lowry (1994) further evidenced this gender stereotype, and even evidenced that the systematic stereotyping is institutionally supported by the current structure and organization of athletics. Awareness is essential in making progress toward equality in athletics administration (Whisenant, 2003). Lastly, this research will benefit young male and female athletes, those who seek to attain the position of athletic director at the interscholastic level, and contribute to the body of knowledge for females in athletic leadership roles.

Definitions

This section includes definitions, both theoretical and operational, to provide a clearer understanding of the terms used within the study as well as to eliminate ambiguity. Theoretical definitions are provided in the areas of athletics, leadership, and gender discrimination based on the work of prior scholars. Operational definitions are used to explain how these terms are measured in athletics and, therefore, the scope of this study.

Theoretical Definitions

Gatekeeping theory. Developed by Lewin (1951) and Shoemaker (1991), gatekeeping theory was developed in the context of communication. The theory surmises

that there are decision makers (gatekeepers) who use their power to determine the criteria for what information is shared or not. This theory has since been applied to occupational control, meaning there are gatekeepers who determine who is hired or not based on a set of criteria (Tallerico, 2000). It is important to note that gatekeepers are not just defined as individuals but organizations and institutions as well.

Hegemony. As stated by Ray (2010), based on the work of Antonio Gramsci, “Hegemony refers to a dominant group in society establishing their own ethical, political, and cultural values as the norm” (p. 46). This is done with the dominant group’s access to economic and political influence and/or other institutions of major influence on society.

Homologous reproduction. Homologous reproduction theory states that a dominant group systematically reproduces itself in its own image, and this is based on the three structural determinants of opportunity, power, and proportion (Lovett & Lowry, 1994).

Sex segregation. The theory of sex segregation is based on the concept that “labor is divided into men and women’s work” (Ray, 2010, p. 52).

Operational Definitions

Athletic leadership. Leadership in athletics, as outlined by Acosta and Carpenter (2014), includes a position such as a coach, assistant coach, athletic trainer, sports information director, or athletic director. The highest of these positions is athletic director. For the purposes of this study, the terms *athletic leadership*, *athletic administrator*, and *athletic director* are used interchangeably.

Athletic director (AD). An administrative or quasi-administrative position of which the person is in charge of athletic department oversight, including student-athletes, athletic staff, department communications, marketing and fundraising, fiscal and facilities management, and community relationships (NCAA, 2013).

California Interscholastic Federation (CIF). CIF (2017) governs interscholastic athletics in California, promoting equity, quality, character and academic development. CIF is also a service organization to over 1,580 member schools, providing awards, honor programs, and distributing information on health and safety issues. CIF is organized under the California Department of Education and is governed by a Federated Council made up of 10 geographical sections in the state (CIF, 2017).

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). “The National Collegiate Athletic Association is a member-led organization dedicated to the well-being and lifelong success of college athletes” (NCAA, n.d., n.p.). Members of the NCAA include 1,123 colleges and universities, 98 athletic conferences, and three divisions (NCAA, 2017).

Title IX. Federal law that states, “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (Title IX, 1972, § 1681[a]). Title IX requires the equal treatment of female and male student-athletes in the provisions of (a) opportunities to participate in sports; (b) athletics scholarship dollars proportional to their participation; (c) equipment and supplies; (d) scheduling of games and practice times; (e) travel and daily allowance/per diem; (f) access to tutoring; (g) coaching; (h) locker rooms, practice and competitive

facilities; (i) medical and training facilities and services; (j) housing and dining facilities and services; (k) publicity and promotions; (l) support services; and (m) recruitment of student-athletes (NCAA, 2017).

Delimitations

Delimitations represent decisions made by a researcher that are worthy of mention. Specifically, delimitations arise from limitations in the scope or boundaries of a study and are the result of specific choices made by the researchers (Simone & Goes, 2013). Delimitations might include identification of the problem statement, the theoretical framework used to examine the topic, the type of research questions posed, selection of participants, and/or methodology. This study was delimited to female athletic directors working in San Diego and Orange County who may have faced barriers in attaining their position. It was not intended to focus on the implications or effects of Title IX outside the realm of female leaders in the role of athletic director or similar positions. While other factors may serve as barriers to women's ascension to the high school athletic director position, this study examined only the seven barriers noted in the works of Acosta and Carpenter (2014), Coakley (2001), and M. D. Smith (2005) in their research on women in athletic leadership positions.

Organization of the study

This study is organized into five chapters, starting with an introduction in Chapter I. This section included background information, statement of the problem, significance of the problem, definitions of terms, and study delimitations. Chapter II, Review of the Literature, examines four major areas related to the current study: historical trends of women in athletics and athletic leadership, barriers faced by females in athletic leadership

roles, social and organizational structures that play a role in gender discrimination, and research on female athletic directors in their leadership roles. This is followed by Chapter III, Methodology, which includes a description of the qualitative methodology, population, sample, and data collection process. A detailed analysis of the data and findings are outlined in Chapter IV. Finally, Chapter V provides conclusions, recommendations and implications of the findings, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

As noted in Chapter I, developments within athletics have been monitored for over 40 years. This chapter outlines these developments to position the qualitative phenomenological inquiry study the researcher conducted. The purpose of this research was to examine and describe how female athletic directors in California face and overcome barriers in attaining and retaining their positions. To directly understand the connection between developments in athletics and current experiences for females in athletic leadership, the researcher reviewed the literature surrounding women in athletic leadership roles. As a foundation for the literature review, a synthesis matrix was developed (Appendix A).

Overview

Chapter II begins with a historical overview, tracing the trends of women in athletics and athletic leadership. This sets the stage to better understand the culture surrounding the development of women in athletics. The influence of Title IX on increased career opportunities for women is discussed, followed by an examination of the ongoing trends of underrepresentation of females in leadership roles across all career paths, and then specifically athletic administration. In addition to a discussion on the historical perspectives of athletic leadership, this review of the literature also examines the barriers faced by females in athletic leadership roles.

Equally important to this literature review is the examination of numerous theories associated with the social and organizational structure that play a role in gender discrimination. Analysis of hegemony (Krane, 2001), homologous reproduction (Kanter, 1977), gatekeeping theory (Shoemaker, 1991), and sex segregation theory (Reskin &

Hartmann, 1986) is outlined in this literature review to provide a conceptual framework of the theories currently used to frame gender discrimination in the workplace. In line with these theories, this review of the literature identifies and surveys current research related to female athletic leadership at both the collegiate and interscholastic levels. Further, this literature review assesses the current recruitment and selection practices of high school athletic directors to estimate the overall effectiveness of these practices. Lastly, this review of the literature outlines research-identified needs in the field along with implications for future research.

Historical Trends of Women in Athletics and Athletic Leadership

In the early 1970s, the name Billie Jean King began getting attention on the tennis courts. By the end of King's athletic career, she had won 39 Grand Slam tennis titles. While her strengths as a tennis player got her some notoriety, it was her passion for equal rights for women in athletics that made her famous (King, n.d.). She was among the first female athletes who fought against the inequities among male and female athletes. Just 2 years after her initial protests against athletic inequities, Title IX was passed.

Implementation of Title IX

The initial implementation of Title IX in 1972 did not focus on women in sports; in fact, the original legislation did not include sports at all (Edwards, 2010). The Education Amendment simply stated, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance" (Title IX, 1972, § 1681[a]). It was not until 1974 that Congress implemented the Jarvis Amendment, incorporating intercollegiate athletics in the equity of program requirements

for men and women (Rubin & Lough, 2015). The developments within athletics since the implementation of Title IX have been the focus of many studies that center on the consequences for women in sports.

Women's Participation in Athletics With the Implementation of Title IX

Since the implementation of the Jarvis Amendment, numerous studies have been conducted by Acosta and Carpenter (2012) examining the progression of women in intercollegiate athletics as both athletes and athletic administrators. Their research has affirmed that with the implementation of Title IX, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of female athletes and teams per school. The authors found, "In 1970, prior to the 1972 enactment of Title IX, there were only 2.5 women's teams per school and only about 16,000 total female intercollegiate athletes" (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012, p. 1). Institutions are now reporting 8.73 women's teams per school (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012), and the body of literature on this strongly indicates that this increase is directly related to the implementation of Title IX.

Along with an increase among female intercollegiate athletes, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of females playing sports at the high school level. In 1971, 300,000 girls played high school sports, and by 2012, this number increased to 3.2 million girls (Rubin & Lough, 2015). The research of Massengale and Lough (2010) suggested that the increase in opportunities for females at the college level parlayed into increased opportunities for girls' participation at the high school level. With an increased opportunity for women to participate in sports, one might expect an increase of opportunities in female athletic leadership roles. However, the evidence from all major studies overwhelmingly supports the conclusion that there is an underrepresentation of

females in athletic leadership roles (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012; Radlinski, 2003; Ray, 2010). It is important to note that the limited presence of women in athletic leadership roles is not unique to athletics. To better frame this phenomenon, a discussion of women in leadership roles across professional sectors is the focus of the next section. This is followed by an in-depth discussion on the trends of women in leadership in athletics.

Underrepresentation of Females in Leadership Roles

It is well documented in the research that women are less likely to be promoted to the top levels of leadership in professional sectors such as business and higher education disciplines (Chisholm-Burns, Spivey, Hagemann, & Josephson, 2017). The term most widely used to describe this phenomenon is the *glass ceiling*. Statistically speaking, women in the United States face significant inequity in attaining leadership positions such as CEO, board member, or dean. To frame this disparity in numbers, Chisholm-Burns et al. (2017) demonstrated in their work that women make up approximately 50% of the U.S. population and workforce. Women are the primary source of income for 40% of families and control most of the consumer spending in households. Further, the researchers showed that of those individuals earning bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, 50% are women. One might suspect that with all of this preparation, the number of women in leadership positions would be equal to that of males. However, research has shown that this is clearly not the case.

Despite all of the statistics demonstrating women's preparation for leadership roles, only 5% of CEOs are women, and less than 25% are in executive leadership positions (Egan, 2015; Lennon, 2013; Warner, 2015). These findings have been highlighted by popular media outlets such as CNN and *The Wall Street Journal*, giving

attention to the concerns surrounding the lack of potential opportunities for women in professional sectors. McKinsey & Company (2016) found that women are 30% less likely to be promoted to managerial positions in the business sector, limiting the pipeline for development of future female business leaders. This trend continues when examining women in leadership roles in higher education. Perhaps the most staggering statistic is the overabundance of women in the role of instructor or assistant professor and underrepresentation as professor or dean at higher education institutes (Lennon, 2013). These disparities are not exclusive to business and higher education but span into the athletic sector as well. The following section covers the research findings focused on the limited number of women in athletic leadership positions.

Underrepresentation of Females in Athletic Administration

Prior to Title IX, females managed female athletic programs with over 90% of coaches being female (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). While the research of Acosta and Carpenter (2014) showed increased opportunities for females in athletics, there is significant research demonstrating that an unintended consequence of Title IX was the limitation of coaching and leadership positions for females. The implementation of Title IX gave legitimacy to female athletic programs and increased financial opportunities for coaches and administrators of these programs. Several studies have indicated that this ultimately drove males to become more interested in leading female programs, driving female leadership out of the programs (Blinde, 1989; Hattery et al., 2007; Hult, 1980). Scholars have posited that the implementation of Title IX may have put females at a disadvantage when seeking athletic leadership opportunities. For example, data collected in a longitudinal study by Acosta and Carpenter (2012) illustrated that only 36% of

administrative roles in athletics and 20% of athletic director positions in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) are currently held by women. A significant finding in the research is that movement into athletic administration is accompanied by experience as an athlete, followed by coaching and head coach experience (Fitzgerald, 1990; Grappendorf, 2001). With an increase in males taking over head coaching positions of female programs, opportunities for women to progress in the athletic leadership position have become limited.

Athletic leadership positions consist of coaching, administration, and athletic training, with the position of athletic director being the highest position within the athletic department. As of 2012, 13,792 female professionals were employed within intercollegiate athletics (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). Breaking this number down into categories, 3,974 were employed as coaches, 7,024 females were employed as assistant coaches, and 215 females were employed as athletic directors within intercollegiate athletics (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). It is important to compare these numbers to those of males in order to understand the incongruity in positions. Based on the findings of Acosta and Carpenter (2012), 57.1% of women's teams are coached by males while 2% to 3% of men's teams are coached by females. Athletic directors are 79.7% male at the collegiate level, with Division 1 having the fewest female athletic directors (36), and Division 3 having the most female athletic directors (133). Further, 9.2% of athletics departments have no females anywhere on their administrative team. Putting this into perspective, over 50% of collegiate campuses are female, with only approximately 36% of athletic administrative staff being female and only 20% acting as athletic directors (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). Based on this evidence, it is clear that there are major

inconsistencies in the opportunities for females in athletics and those attaining the highest positions, coach and athletic director. To better understand the administrative position of athletic director and the role it plays in attaining the position, the next section of this literature review discusses the responsibilities of an athletic director.

Women and the Position of Athletic Director

The NCAA is a member-led organization that decides on rules and policies that govern college sports. It defines athletic directors as individuals who oversee athletic staff and guide policy decisions per school site (NCAA, n.d.). In 2013, the NCAA published a booklet titled *So You Want to Be an Athletic Director?* outlining the responsibilities of a Division II athletic director. The job of athletic director is organized into several categories including institutional control, athletics department oversight, student-athlete well-being, personnel management and sports oversight, communication (internal and external), marketing and fundraising, fiscal management, facilities management, and community relations. Studies on the success of women fulfilling these responsibilities have indicated that women can be and are more successful than their male counterparts, specifically at the lower divisions of the NCAA (Whisenant, Pedersen, & Obenour, 2002). Recognizing that women are able to successfully carry out their athletic administrative responsibilities further supports the need to understand why there is such stark difference in the number of male and female athletic directors.

Another area of research that has been investigated as a potential factor in this disparity is the number of athletic director positions and their frequency of availability. While the work of Acosta and Carpenter (2012) showed there are thousands of athletic administrative positions in the United States at the collegiate level, it did not address the

average length of tenure. J. Smith (2015) noted that at the NCAA level, athletic directors have an average tenure of 6.8 years. With such a short tenure, there are positions open each year for new candidates to move into. It is therefore reasonable to expect that males and females would have equal opportunities to fill the position. However, several studies have revealed that this is not the case due to social and organizational barriers placed on women. The next section of this literature review examines the barriers females face in attaining athletic leadership roles.

Barriers Faced by Females in Athletic Leadership Roles

Acosta and Carpenter (2014) have studied the role of women in athletics at the NCAA level for a period spanning over 35 years. One area of their research has focused on the impact of personal and social factors that influence the role of athletic administrators. According to scholars, there is overwhelming evidence that there are seven possible barriers to women who seek careers in athletic administration (Acosta & Carpenter, 1985, 2002, 2012; Coakley, 2001; NCAA, 2011; M. D. Smith, 2005). These seven barriers include the old boys' network (Acosta & Carpenter, 1985), being female in athletic administration (Coakley, 2001), marital status, having children, sexual discrimination, time demands of the job, and travel demands of the job (M. D. Smith, 2005). It is necessary to understand the potential impact of such barriers when examining the unequal proportionality of male and female athletic directors.

Old Boys' Network

Prior to the 1970s, a woman's place was seen in the home, and many workplaces consisted of White males. This led to a workplace culture and mindset that was defined by those who dominated it. This predominant culture has been coined *the old boys'*

network, referring to a group of individuals who determine who is successful and promoted and who is not based on a series of unwritten rules (Nelson, 2017). The *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* defines the “Old Boy Network” (n.d.) as “an informal system in which wealthy men with the same social and educational background help each other” (para. 1). This term is often referred to in hiring practices, and as stated by Nelson in her 2017 article, it is used as a means of providing favors for other men within organizations. Women have been historically excluded from the old boys’ network, leading to a perception that this exclusion extends to athletic leadership roles at the intercollegiate level (Acosta & Carpenter, 1988). More recently, Lovett and Lowry (1994) examined this and concluded that not only does the “Good Old Boys Club” affect the hiring practices of females, but the ineffectiveness of the “Good Old Girls Club” exacerbates the disparity (p. 27). According to a 2008 NCAA report on gender equity, women also perceive this network as a real barrier to their career advancement (Bracken, 2009). While there is limited research in this specific area, the research that has been conducted strongly supports the negative impact of the old boys’ network on females in athletic administration. It is important to note that the bulk of this research is done under the theory of homologous reproduction, which is discussed in detail later in this literature review.

The Culture of Being Female in Athletic Administration

In 2008, the NCAA conducted a survey of female athletic administrators to investigate their lack of representation in athletic administration. Findings from the report revealed the top five reasons for the lack of female athletic directors to include (a) time requirements, (b) job availability, (c) amount of travel, (d) burnout, and

(e) unfavorable stereotyping of women in athletics (Bracken, 2009). Time requirements, amount travel, and unfavorable stereotyping have been supported throughout the literature as barriers that play a role in limiting females' career ascension in athletics. These barriers are discussed in the following sections of the literature review, beginning with the unfavorable stereotyping of women in athletic administration.

Unfavorable stereotyping of women in athletic administration. There is significant evidence that being a woman in athletics comes with negative connotations and can have a direct impact on career decisions for women (Hargreaves, 2002; Kolnes, 1995; Krane, 2001). As the work of Krane (2001) illustrated, society views femininity and athletics as contradictory. As a result, women in athletics have to prove their femininity to be accepted socially. This is further compounded by heterosexist discrimination of women who are not seen as feminine (Kolnes, 1995). To avoid such discrimination, women will bypass athletics and athletic careers. In terms of athletic careers, this is a unique cultural phenomenon to women since men do not experience the same level of heterosexist discrimination. Athletics is traditionally viewed as masculine in nature, therefore creating a cultural barrier specific to females (Krane, 2001). Simply being a woman in athletics presents a barrier to career progression in athletic administration.

In addition to the concept that femininity and athletics are contradictory, women also face perceptions that they do not possess the attributes of good leadership. Females are often not seen as leaders based on their strong interpersonal skills and interest in concurrence. A significant body of research can be found highlighting the notion that strong leadership skills align with masculine traits and attribute to the misconception that

males make for better leaders than females (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006; Powell, 1999; Schein, 1973, 1975, 2001). Both the negative connotation of females in athletics and the perceived lack of leadership skills by females are further discussed in the context of hegemony and sex segregation theories.

Time and travel demands of the job. Athletics and athletic administration is a time and travel demanding occupation. It is common for athletic administrators to work long hours and travel to opposing team campuses for athletic events. The work of M. D. Smith (2005) highlighted the impact that these two demands have on career paths of female administrators and directors of intercollegiate athletics. Bracken's (2009) work further supported these findings, stating that 91% of the female administrators felt that time requirements are an important influence that prohibits women from entering athletics administration. Such demands create conflict for women in their work, family, and life (Bruening & Dixon, 2007). Consequently, these findings are intertwined with the implications that the time and travel demands have on family. The impact of family work conflict for female athletic directors is the focus of the next section of this literature review.

Marital status and having children. Women who seek to be leaders in professional career paths face a unique barrier to their career ascension. As illustrated in the research of Loder (2005) and Tharenou (2008), women manage family barriers such as having children and accommodating their partner's career path when advancing in their careers. Research on family work-balance in athletics also supports the notion that women face more difficulties than men in this arena (Bruening & Dixon, 2007; Sagas & Cunningham, 2005). Family commitments have been described as the second most

common factor identified as a reason why women were not entering athletic administration (Bracken, 2009). As Bracken (2009) highlighted,

In fact, 73 percent of the female administrators indicated agreement with the statement careers in athletics conflict with family duties. When respondents were asked the most common reason why women who enter careers in athletics administration decide to leave the career, 37 percent indicated family commitments was the main reason. (p. 19)

Women are less likely to pursue a path in athletic administration when they perceive the barriers associated with family conflict (Machida-Kosuga, Schaubroeck, & Feltz, 2016). This then plays a significant role in the disparity in the balance with male and female athletic administrators.

Sexual discrimination. In 1988, a lawsuit was filed against Columbus Municipal Separate School District by a female who tried to apply for the position of athletic director but was not considered for the job because she had not been a head football coach (Whisenant et al., 2005). The courts ruled in the plaintiff's favor, stating the school district had discriminated against her based on gender. This type of sexual discrimination against women continues today. Most recently, 17% of schools in the state of Texas maintained that the athletic director position must be accompanied by a head football position (Whisenant et al., 2005). Sexual discrimination against women in athletics and athletic administrators was cited by female athletic administrators in the NCAA report on *Gender Equity in College Coaching and Administration* (Bracken, 2009). In fact, 80% of female athletic administrators stated they felt that there are men in

athletics administration who only hire men (Bracken, 2009). This barrier is examined further in the social constructs of homologous reproduction and gatekeeping theories.

The body of literature on females in athletic administration strongly indicates that the previously outlined seven barriers are rooted in gender discrimination (Emerson, 2002; Hasbrook et al., 1990; Knoppers, 1989; Stangl & Kane, 1991; Wilkinson & Schneider, 1991). Reasons for gender discrimination in the context of social and organizational frameworks have been studied extensively since the 1960s (Almquist & Angrist, 1975; Bartholomew & Schnorr, 1994; Blalock, 1962; Kanter, 1977; Krane, 2001; Reskin & Hartmann, 1986; Sage, 1998; Tallerico, 2000). While there are varying opinions on the direct causes of gender discrimination, the best of these studies have suggested that the reason for underrepresentation of females in male-dominated occupations has to do with opportunity, power, and proportion (Kanter, 1977). These results are strongly supported by research findings on athletic administration at the NCAA level (Acosta & Carpenter, 1992, 1998, 2012; Grappendorf, 2001; Radlinski, 2003). However, there is limited research on the impacts of gender discrimination on athletic leadership at the high school level (Ray, 2010; Welch, 2012). Understanding the social and organizational context for gender discrimination is essential to understanding the role of gender discrimination in high school leadership roles.

Social and Organizational Structures That Play a Role in Gender Discrimination

The body of literature on females in athletic leadership positions emphasizes the role of social and organizational structures that impact gender discrimination (Burney, 2010; Emerson, 2002; Krane, 2001; Ray, 2010; M. D. Smith, 2005; Whisenant, 2008). It is necessary to understand these structures when examining the barriers women face

when aspiring to athletic leadership roles. As evidenced by the work of Herber (2002), men and women tend to behave based on the perceptions and expectations that society prescribes. Historically, attributes of effective leadership have been ascribed to males and circuitously imply that females are less effective as leaders (Herber, 2002). This notion has prompted several studies that examine the differences in male and female leaders (Bjork, 2000; Hutton & Gougeon, 1993; Irby & Brown, 1995; Penney & Evans, 2002). The results of this extensive research have led to the firm conclusion that men and women approach leadership and leadership roles differently. These key findings were summarized in Ray's (2010) literature review on gender and leadership:

- Men and women approach educational leadership differently, but that both can be effective (Bjork, 2000);
 - Men and women educational leaders view and exert power differently, and women do not necessarily need to employ the traditional male definitions and uses of power in order to work in educational administration (Hutton & Gougeon, 1993);
 - Men and women hold differing perceptions regarding the leadership skills of authority, expectations of supervision, successful leadership skills and attitudes, and the influences of personal leadership style (Irby & Brown, 1995).
- (p. 41)

Leadership differences are related to the way both men and women learn acceptable gender roles in society. Research on societal gender norms is centered on three major themes: historical, sociological, and biological factors (Bjork, 2000; Herber, 2002; Penney & Evans, 2002). This next section of the literature review focuses on four of the

dominant social and organizational structures that establish gender norms: hegemony, homologous reproduction, gatekeeping theory, and sex segregation.

Hegemony

The term *hegemony* has no formal definition (Krane, 2001; Sage, 1998) but “refers to a dominant group in society establishing their own ethical, political, and cultural values as the norm” (Ray, 2010, p. 46). To understand this in the context of sports, Schell and Rodriguez (2000) explained that women continue to face barriers in sports due to the masculinist hegemony over the institution of sports. Building on this construct, Krane (2001) argued that people interpret their world based on traditional gender roles of masculinity and femininity and that people expect women to “demonstrate hegemonic femininity and expect men to demonstrate hegemonic masculinity” (p. 118). The author reasoned that society decides which sports are acceptable for males and females and that females make the conscious decision to appear feminine in sports. That is to say they perform femininity, consistently reinforcing and perpetuating hegemonic femininity in sport in an effort to avoid being seen as abnormal and scrutinized. Hegemony helps explain why there are so few female athletic directors, a role not traditional for females. Further, it provides support for the unique barrier that females experience in their career ascension in athletics (Krane, 2001).

Homologous Reproduction

The theory of homologous reproduction states that through opportunity, power, and proportion, dominant groups will reproduce themselves (Kanter, 1977). In 1994, Lovett and Lowry conducted a seminal study that investigated the role of Title IX in the decrease of female coaches through the lens of homologous reproduction. They

concluded that administrative structures play a significant role in who is hired, and that the “good old boys” network is effective (Lovett & Lowry, 1994, p. 27). Additionally, the researchers pointed out the importance of opportunity, specifically the opportunity of coaching. Without coaching, it is next to impossible to attain a position in athletic administration. The overwhelming negative impact of homologous reproduction on women in sports administration has been further supported by the research of Stangl and Kane (1991), Knoppers (1989), and Acosta and Carpenter (1992). Through this research, it can be concluded that homologous reproduction does play a significant role in gender discrimination among those seeking a career in athletic administration.

Gatekeeping Theory

Although not presented in the context of sports, Tollerico (2000) studied how gatekeeping theory affects female career progression in the educational arena, specifically superintendents. Lewin (1951) and Shoemaker (1991) developed the gatekeeping theory, in which key individuals play a role in the career advancements of others and therefore are titled *gatekeepers*. Tollerico (2000) found that there is a series of unwritten selection criteria for choosing superintendents, and they include “(a) defining quality in terms of hierarchies of particular job titles, (b) stereotyping by gender, (c) complacency about acting affirmatively, and (d) hypervaluing feelings of comfort and interpersonal chemistry with the successful candidate” (p. 37). Although there is limited research on the unwritten rules for the selection process of athletic directors, it is plausible to argue that the gatekeeping theory plays a role in those chosen to fulfill the athletic director position (Ray, 2010). The complexity of unwritten recruitment and

hiring practices is an area of future research that is key to understanding the disproportionate number of males in the athletic director position.

Sex Segregation

As explained by Reskin and Hartmann (1986), sex segregation is “the concentration of women and men in different jobs that are predominantly of a single sex” (p. 1). As demonstrated by several studies (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012; Grappendorf et al., 2004; Strawbridge, 2000; Wright et al., 2011), historically athletics has been a male-dominated career path. Understanding sex segregation and the role it plays in female career paths is essential to understanding the barriers women face in athletic administration.

As demonstrated by the prior discussion of research related to social and organizational structures that play a role in gender discrimination and the work of Acosta and Carpenter (2014), there is a significant amount of research related to the variables that play a role in gender bias in the workforce for women in leadership positions (Bjork, 2000; Blount, 1998; Herber, 2002; Hutton & Gougeon, 1993; Irby & Brown, 1995; Penney & Evans, 2002). Further, Bower et al. (2015) supported this conclusion by stating that a significant amount of research has been conducted to examine “women working in leadership positions within intercollegiate athletics (NCAA Divisions III)” with a goal of determining “why women hold significantly fewer positions 40 years since the passage of Title IX in 1972” (p. 14). The result of all this research is a list of overwhelming reasons for the continued lack of women in athletic leadership. Moreover, the majority of studies on women in athletics have continued to examine barriers and the implications at the collegiate level (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). The next section of this

literature review examines the implications and impacts of the previously discussed social and organizational structures within the context of current research on female athletic leadership, highlighting the experience of both collegiate and interscholastic female athletic directors.

Females in Athletic Director Roles

The current research as it relates to females in athletic leadership roles focuses on the discrepancies between the numbers of males and females in the positions of coach, athletic manager, and athletic director. Primarily, the collegiate level has been the center for this research, with less research done at the interscholastic level (high school).

Female Athletic Directors at the Collegiate Level

Acosta and Carpenter (2014) have conducted a longitudinal study using a national survey for over 37 years regarding the status of women in intercollegiate athletics. To gather data, they mailed surveys to senior female administrators at every NCAA school with a woman's athletic program. The following data were taken from findings of Acosta and Carpenter's 2014 study, *Women in Intercollegiate Sport*. As of 2014, the highest number ever of females was employed as professionals within the intercollegiate athletics system. There were 13,963 female professionals, including coaches, assistant coaches, sports information directors, athletic trainers, athletics administrators, and strength and conditioning coaches, employed within intercollegiate athletics. Although the work of Acosta and Carpenter showed an increase of women in the professional athletic arena, there is still a stark difference in the numbers of males and females in these positions (see Table 1).

Table 1

Percentage of Athletic Administrative Jobs Held by Females at the NCAA

Year	Number of administrative jobs	Percentage of administrative jobs held by females
2014	4,535	36.2
2012	4,203	35.8
2010	3,946	34.9
2008	3,941	48.6
2006	3,547	35.2
2004	3,350	41.0
2002	3,210	31.2
2000	2,928	34.1
1998	2,510	37.9
1996	2,433	35.5
1992	2,286	30.8
1990	1,874	32.0
1988	1,827	28.9

Note. Adapted from *Women in Intercollegiate Sport: A Longitudinal, National Study—Thirty-Seven Year Update, 1977-2014* (p. 40), by R. V. Acosta and L. J. Carpenter, 2014 (<http://www.acostacarpenter.org/2014%20Status%20of%20Women%20in%20Intercollegiate%20Sport%20-37%20Year%20Update%20-%201977-2014%20.pdf>).

A total of 239 females were employed as athletic directors in 2014, making up only 22.3% of all athletic directors at the NCAA level. In terms of divisions, Division I had 37 female athletic directors, and Division III had 133. Important to note is that as of 2014, 11.3% of athletic departments had no females present anywhere in their administration (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014).

Since 2012, there has been an increase in the number of athletic administration jobs at the NCAA level. The number females in these jobs has increased by less than 1%. To better frame this, Acosta and Carpenter (2014) described this trend over the last 10 years. That is to say, there are 1,185 more athletic administration positions than there were 10 years ago, and of these new jobs, men hold 918. This strongly supports the

evidence that there are fewer females able to attain a position of athletic administrator than men. There are regional impacts on the position of women in athletic administration in the United States. For instance, the highest percentage of female athletic directors is found in the northeast while the south has the lowest percentages for female athletic directors. In terms of females at various levels of athletic administration, the western region of the United States has the highest numbers (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). This has implications on the barriers that women face when seeking a position in athletic administration.

Female head coaches at the collegiate level. An essential component to reaching an administrative position is to serve in a coaching position. Yet only one in five NCAA head coaching positions is held by a woman (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). This has strong consequences on the access of female role models for women looking at athletics as a career path (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). Important to this finding is the link between female athletic directors and the percentage of female coaches on a campus. If there is a female athletic director, there is an increase in the number of female coaches. Conversely, if there is a male athletic director, there are fewer female coaches on a campus (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). A study by Kamphoff and Gill (2008) found that female collegiate athletes perceive a difference in the treatment of male and female coaches, perpetuating the idea that sexual discrimination exists among athletic leadership positions (Staurowsky et al., 2015). These findings provide further evidence of the barriers women face when seeking leadership positions in athletics.

Link between college and high school. The path to collegiate sports has been linked to high school athletics. As such, it is important to examine the patterns for

women at the interscholastic level. A significant finding of interscholastic athletic research is that the overall participation of women in high school sports has dramatically increased since the implementation of Title IX, with a growth ratio of 1 girl to 1.4 boys participating in high school athletics (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). However, there are limited spots on women's college teams for those who wish to pursue collegiate sports. While not every capable female high school athlete will follow a collegiate athletic career, there are still fewer opportunities to reach a collegiate athletic position for women than men (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). Although there is research tracing the patterns of participation of females in high school athletics, there is little research tracing the patterns of female high school athletic directors. Therefore, the circumstances for women in high school athletic leadership is an area for continued research (Kelley, 2002; Whisenant et al., 2005).

Evidence from Acosta and Carpenter's (2014) extensive longitudinal study overwhelmingly supports the conclusion that significant discrepancies exist in the number of male and female athletic leaders at the NCAA level. This study pointed to the continued examination of the role of gender in athletics and the continued incongruity in equality for women in athletic administration. The following section of this literature review examines the circumstances for women athletic directors at the interscholastic level.

Female Athletic Directors at the Interscholastic Level

The situation for female athletic directors at the interscholastic level is similar to that of women in the NCAA. While there has been a dramatic increase in opportunities for girls in athletics at the high school level, this has not translated to an increase in

women in athletic leadership at the interscholastic level (Pedersen, Whisenant, & Schneider, 2003). The results of all major studies, both at the state and national level, reveal that there is a scarcity in the number of women in interscholastic athletic administration roles (Heishman et al., 1990; Oliphant, 1995; Sisley & Steigelman, 1994; Whisenant, 2003; Whisenant & Pedersen, 2004). Whisenant (2003) examined the gender composition of high school athletic directors nationally. The data were collected from members of state-level high school athletic director associations, otherwise known as National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA). Whisenant's research indicated that there are significantly fewer females in the position of athletic director in comparison to males, with only 13% of positions being held by females. The findings also suggested that there are differences both on a state and regional level for the number of females holding the position of athletic director. However, at all levels males outnumber females significantly in the athletic director position at the high school level (Whisenant, 2003). These findings are similar to the findings of Acosta and Carpenter (2014) at the collegiate level. While this is a substantial finding, there is limited research on why this gap exists between males and females at the interscholastic level in terms of leadership roles. Some research has focused on the impact of the job announcement and description, and current recruitment practices.

Current Recruitment and Selection Practices

Historically, the position of athletic director has been associated with a football coaching position (Miller, Whisenant, & Pedersen, 2007). The reasoning behind this was twofold: First, football was the primary sport at high schools creating the largest contact with the community. Second, due to the extensive contact with the community, there was

an increased opportunity to raise funds for the athletic programs in general (Miller et al., 2007). While this is a violation of the Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the practice continues today regionally and nationally (Miller et al., 2007). In their research on current recruitment and selection practices of high school athletic directors in 2005, Whisenant et al. found that 17% of job descriptions (in the state of Texas) listed as a qualification that the athletic directors also serve as the head football coach. Their findings showed that job announcements and descriptions linked to positions typically held by males eliminate women from the candidate pool, thereby limiting women's attainment of athletic administrative positions. Further, these findings provide support for the conclusion that hegemonic masculinity and homologous reproduction present a significant barrier for women at the interscholastic level with a desire to pursue a career in athletic administration (Whisenant et al., 2005). Despite gender discrimination, females are just as successful as their male counterparts when given the opportunity to serve in athletic administration positions and when measured as the rate of advancement (Pedersen & Whisenant, 2005). The next section of this literature review examines beyond structural and operational barriers that women face as high school athletic directors.

Barriers for Female High School Athletic Directors

Limited research has been done directly related to the barriers females face as high school athletic directors. The work of Moore et al. (2005) provided a comprehensive study looking at barriers women face when attaining and retaining a position as athletic director. Their research indicated that there are eight barriers to becoming an athletic director as reported by female high school athletic directors. These

barriers include the old boys' network, stereotypes of women in athletics, needed male trust and acceptance, males not accepting female authority, the idea that it is a male profession, not being treated equally with males, needing to convince the community, and being overlooked by less experienced males. This is significant as it is similar to the findings of the work of researchers examining barriers at the collegiate level (Acosta & Carpenter, 1985, 2002, 2012; Coakley, 2001; NCAA, 2011; M. D. Smith, 2005). Taking this one step further, Moore et al. (2005) examined the perceptions of female athletic directors about the similarities and differences in barriers experienced by men. The findings suggested that women perceive that male athletic directors do not have to prove themselves and that more is expected of women. Although there are both perceived and identified barriers that exist for women when seeking the position of athletic director, some women are successful in attaining and retaining the position.

How Female High School Athletic Directors Overcome Barriers

Women who are successful at overcoming barriers in attaining the positions of athletic director at the high school level reported nine factors that were essential in their efforts to attain the position (see Table 2). The following section discusses these factors in terms of mentoring, networking, leadership and management skills, and personal sacrifices.

Mentoring. Mentoring, as defined by Weaver and Chelladurai (1999), is “a process in which a more experienced person (i.e., the mentor) serves as a role model, provides guidance and support to a developing novice (i.e., the protégé), and sponsors that individual’s career progress” (p. 25). In terms of athletics, research has shown that mentoring is key to the development of both athletes and coaches (Bloom, Durand-Bush,

Table 2

Attaining an Athletic Director Position: Response Percentages by Factors

Factor	Percentage of females
Circumstances/opportunity	44.7
Contacts within system	39.5
Educational qualifications	23.7
Personal skills	21.1
Teaching/coaching experience	15.8
Contacts outside system	13.2
Teacher/coach in system	10.5
Lack of qualified applicants	5.3
Ambition/personal goals	2.6

Note. Because participants could indicate more than one factor, percentages do not sum to 100%. Adapted from “Women in Athletic Leadership,” by S. L. Moore, S. L. Gilmour, and M. P. Kinsella, 2005, *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*, 3(3), pp. 161-174.

Schinke, & Salmela, 1998). However, little research has been done in the area of athletic administration and mentoring (Frawley, 2016). The research that has been done indicated that mentoring is a major factor in athletic leadership development and attainment of leadership positions (Frawley, 2016; Moore et al., 2005). In the study conducted by Moore et al. (2005), 80% of female athletic directors indicated they had a mentor and that these mentors were either former or current athletic directors. As evidenced in the research, mentoring is essential for women who wish to pursue a career in athletic leadership.

Networking. There are two primary forms of networking: informal and formal. According to Young (1990), “Informal networking is a casual process and occurs at random such as providing advice to a colleague over lunch or in a telephone conversation while completing a business transaction” (p. 75). However, as Young explained, there is more structure to formal networking, with the organization or conference providing the

foundation for networking. Several studies have highlighted the importance of networking when pursuing career advancement (Moore et al., 2005; Whisenant & Pedersen, 2004; Young, 1990). Further, as evidenced by the research of Moore et al. (2005), networking plays an essential role in attaining the position of athletic director at the high school level. Both the work of Young (1990) and Moore et al. (2005) suggested that women need to increase both the effectiveness of networks for women and to look for opportunities to be brought into other networks by their male peers.

Leadership and management skills. Effective leadership allows for an organization to perform at high levels and motivates staff and members to achieve an organization's goals (Bass, 1985). Necessary leadership skills for effective interpersonal relationships specific to athletics have been highlighted in the work of Branch (1990), Moore et al. (2005), and Northington (2016). The leadership skills identified in the research indicate that all athletic directors need to display high ethical standards, develop trust and respect from members of the organization, encourage creativity, and provide mentoring of coaches and staff (Northington, 2016). Specific to females, and as identified by female athletic directors, the top three necessary leadership skills are interpersonal and communication skills, organizational skills, and team building (Moore et al., 2005). Development of these skills is linked to mentoring (Northington, 2016), a previously identified feature for overcoming barriers to athletic leadership positions.

Personal sacrifices. Similar to findings at the collegiate level (Bruening & Dixon, 2007; Sagas & Cunningham, 2005), female high school athletic directors report that time and long hours require significant personal sacrifice (Moore et al., 2005). In comparison to men, women athletic directors identified this factor more often. Being an

athletic director requires a significant sacrifice on personal time and family life (Moore et al., 2005) and therefore plays a role in the retention of the position of athletic director.

Female High School Athletic Directors' Retention of the Position

Once a woman has the position of athletic director, retaining that position is impacted by several factors similar to those outlined as barriers to the position. Women reported having to earn the respect of males, that more is expected of women, and the domination of the old boys' network are barriers to sustaining and retaining their position as athletic director (Moore et al., 2005). Also important to note is that almost 30% of those surveyed in the Moore et al. (2005) study indicated that there were no barriers to maintaining the position of athletic director. Research done to investigate retention factors in athletic director positions has further illustrated the importance of work balance and conditions, recognition and collegial support, and inclusivity (Inglis, Danylchuk, & Pastore, 1996).

The Male Perspective

The men surveyed in the Moore et al. (2005) study were asked what skills women need to strengthen their potential in attaining and retaining the position of athletic director, and two common themes appeared: (a) women should not be so defensive and need to get over the gender gap idea, and (b) women need to work on their communication and networking skills. However, most of them also reported never having mentored a female athletic director. These findings support the importance of mentoring and networking in the athletic profession.

Understanding Barriers Women Face in High School Athletic Leadership

The topic of females in athletic leadership roles was covered in this literature review in the context of four main categories: the historical trends in female athletics, the barriers faced by females in athletic leadership, social and organizational structures that play a role in gender discrimination for females with a desire to pursue a career in athletic administration, and current trends for females in athletic leadership both at the collegiate and interscholastic levels. The extensive body of literature on females in athletic leadership primarily focuses on the previously outlined topics from the collegiate level (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). The pathway to collegiate athletics begins in high school, but there are few studies examining the barriers for women at this level (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Pedersen & Whisenant, 2005; Whisenant, 2003). With barriers for women in athletic leadership not fully discussed, the next natural step would be to study and identify the reasons why women are not equally represented in athletic leadership roles at the high school level (Moore et al., 2005).

Research has shown that women are not equally represented in leadership roles (Almquist & Angrist, 1975; Bartholomew & Schnorr, 1994; Blalock, 1962; Kanter, 1977; Krane, 2001; Reskin & Hartmann, 1986; Sage, 1998; Tallerico, 2000) and that this is the result of social and organizational structures (Bjork, 2000; Herber, 2002; Hutton & Gougeon, 1993; Irby & Brown, 1995; Penney & Evans, 2002), which is well demonstrated at the collegiate level (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012), and pointed to a need for research with respect to these topics at the interscholastic level. Further, Whisenant et al.'s (2005) research pointed to a need to understand females in the athletic director role at the interscholastic level that is guided by female athletic director perspectives,

including documentation about how female athletic directors perceive the importance and significance of their career preparations, progressions and experiences of high school female athletic directors, and practices used to select high school athletic directors. This was further supported by the recommendation of Kelley (2002), as his study directly called for future research to provide an explanation for the small number of females working as interscholastic athletic directors. Additionally, there are significant implications for this research, as Moore et al. (2005) stated,

Further study of this issue is warranted if we are to fully understand the difficulties that women face in accessing athletic directorships. Identifying systematic barriers that impair women's access to these positions has implications for administrators responsible for recruiting, hiring, and retaining qualified athletic directors. (p. 18)

Moreover, both collegiate and interscholastic research has pointed to significant regional implications for barriers and the implications on barriers for women in athletic leadership career progression (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Heishman et al., 1990; Oliphant, 1995; Sisley & Steigelman, 1994; Whisenant, 2003; Whisenant & Pedersen, 2004); of such research, none has been conducted at the interscholastic level in the state of California.

As highlighted in the research, all high school athletes, especially females, need to see women in athletic leadership roles (Coakley, 2001). The number of female high school athletes has increased significantly, while the same trend does not occur for female athletic directors (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Whisenant, 2003). This is the result of stereotyping and gender discrimination, which need to be continually addressed in athletics (Coakley, 2001). Awareness is essential in making progression toward equality

in athletics administration (Pedersen & Whisenant, 2005). Barriers, both social and organizational, for females who desire a career in athletic administration must be brought to light (Pedersen & Whisenant, 2005). While researchers have called for research at the interscholastic level, there is limited research identifying contributing barriers to the unequal representation of females in the high school athletic director position (Moore et al., 2005). There is a complete absence of such research in the state of California.

Summary

This literature review has provided a historical outline of women in athletic leadership, identified common barriers women face in athletic leadership roles, discussed the social and organizational constructs for these barriers, and examined the current body of research on females in athletic leadership. Research needs identified in the literature were discussed and were used to frame the significance of the current study.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

Chapter III presents the methodology of this phenomenological research. The purpose of this study was to examine and describe how female athletic directors in California face and overcome barriers in attaining and retaining their positions using a qualitative methodology. This chapter explains the research design, population, sample, instrumentation, and validity and reliability of this study. Included is an explanation of the data collection process, coding methodology, and data analysis. Lastly, limitations of this research are discussed along with strategies used to eliminate researcher bias.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological inquiry study was to examine and describe how female athletic directors in California face and overcome barriers in attaining and retaining their positions.

Research Questions

The central research question was, How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome barriers in attaining and retaining their positions? Seven research subquestions were designed using the barriers identified by Acosta and Carpenter (2014), Coakley (2001), and M. D. Smith (2005): (a) the impact of the old boys' network, (b) the impact of marital status, (c) the impact of having children, (d) being female in athletic administration, (e) the impact of sexual discrimination, (f) time demands of the job, and (g) travel demands of the job.

1. How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of the old boys' network in attaining and retaining their positions?

2. How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of marital status in attaining and retaining their positions?
3. How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of having children in attaining and retaining their positions?
4. How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of the being female in athletic administration in attaining and retaining their positions?
5. How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of sexual discrimination in attaining and retaining their positions?
6. How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome time demands of the job in attaining and retaining their positions?
7. How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of the travel demands of the job in attaining and retaining their positions?

Research Design

Qualitative Methodology

The primary focus of this research was to examine and describe how female athletic directors face and overcome barriers in attaining and retaining their positions in California. In order to thoroughly examine and describe the impacts of these variables, a qualitative inquiry methodology was used. This is an appropriate methodology for this research as it is used to understand situations from a participant's perspective, producing a detailed description of the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). The advantage of a qualitative approach is the depth of detail the data provides the researcher. To understand how an individual's story is interpreted to illuminate the life and culture that created it, the researcher used a phenomenological methodology (Patton, 2015).

Phenomenological Research

A phenomenological study describes an experienced phenomenon or *common experience* of several individuals via their lived circumstances (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The work of phenomenologists is to describe these lived experiences in terms of what all participants have in common as they experience the phenomenon. The current study sought to understand the shared experiences of female athletic directors in California as they related to the potential barriers faced during their careers. As illustrated by Creswell (2007), in constructing their life stories, female athletic directors explain and justify their present self. At the same time the researcher reorganized these experiences into a conceptual framework to provide a clearer understanding of the cultural and social meanings of each individual's experience and therefore used a phenomenological study appropriate for this research. Patton (2015) noted, "Each narrative adds to the others, creating a patchwork of information on the whole situation from which similarities and differences are identifiable" (p. 129). This was done to understand the barriers influencing the career trajectory of female athletic directors in California.

Types of Data

Three types of data were gathered for this study. The researcher (a) conducted semistructured interviews, (b) conducted observations, and (c) gathered appropriate artifacts for examination. The phenomenological methodology focuses on the stories of individuals most effectively captured in the form of interviews. These interviews are then transcribed and analyzed for themes that provide information about the society and culture that formed the individual's experience (Patton, 2015).

Interviews. Semistructured interviews focus on the experiences of several individuals, which are then used to describe common meaning of their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These experiences are gleaned through interviews, which are then transcribed and analyzed for themes and patterns. It is these themes and patterns that help the researcher understand not only the individual's experience but the culture and society that helped shape the experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The goal of this study was to understand how female athletic directors in California have faced and overcome barriers in attaining and retaining their positions. As illustrated by Creswell (2007), in constructing their life stories, female athletic directors explain and justify their present self. Interviews were collected from 15 female athletic directors at the high school level in California. The data were in the form of a first-person narrative, explaining what has happened to the athletic director throughout her career path. The questions asked of participants focused on each of the seven previously outlined barriers to identify which, if any, barriers to advancement to the position of athletic director were experienced by the participant. If a barrier was identified by a participant, a follow-up question was asked to address how she overcame the barrier to advance to the athletic director position. Participants were also asked to describe personal characteristics that were determining factors in becoming an athletic director.

Observations. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that observations are significant when collecting qualitative data. Observations allow the researcher to gather information on the physical setting, participants, and participant interactions. The researcher in this study conducted direct observations of athletic director meetings and conferences to collect evidence of the experiences of female athletic directors. This was done via the

use of both descriptive and reflective notes. While these were not used as primary sources of data, they were used to deepen an understanding of what it feels like to be a part of this experience for female athletic directors, providing a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon (Patton, 2015).

Artifacts. In addition to interviews, artifacts in the form of resumes were gathered to collect demographic information on each athletic director. The researcher examined the resumes for information on (a) tenure in the position, (b) tenure as an athletic director, (c) school affiliation (d) level of education, (e) athletic experience, (f) coaching experience, and (g) academic responsibilities (Burney, 2010). The researcher also collected information on the participant's age and ethnicity. Finally, interviewed participants were asked to provide any artifacts that addressed the research questions.

Population

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a population is a group of individuals who meet specific criteria; and therefore, the results can be generalized to them. The population for this study represented female high school athletic directors working in California. All participants in this study operated under the rules and governance structure of the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF).

The CIF is responsible for administering high school athletic programs in California and is divided into 10 sections. As of the 2015-2016 school year, there were approximately 1,580 schools that participated as members of the CIF, each of which had a minimum of one athletic director (CIF, 2017). As of 2016, CIF does not keep a record of the gender of the athletic directors who participate as members (R. Wigod, personal communication, August 8, 2017). However, the National Interscholastic Athletic

Administrators Association (NIAAA), a national professional organization administered by and for athletic administrators, keeps records of the gender of the members who voluntarily report this information (J. Sitz, personal communication, August 9, 2017). Based on data collected by the NIAAA, approximately 26% of athletic directors in California are female, which results in an estimated 410 female athletic directors out of 1,580 total athletic directors in California (N. Crocker, personal communication, August 10, 2017). Selection of female high school athletic directors in California was purposeful as there were little to no data representing how these administrators attain and retain their positions.

Target Population

As defined by McMillian and Schumacher (2010), a target population is defined as “a group . . . that conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalize the results of research” (p. 129). Schools in the CIF are grouped into sections based on geographical regions; California is divided into 10 sections. The southernmost sections of the CIF are the Southern Section and San Diego Section. Female athletic directors in these two sections make up the target population for this study. This was done effort to find an adequate amount of participants for the study within the same geographic area. This was also an attempt to limit regional influences on the role of the athletic director. As noted in Ray’s (2010) research, there are significant differences in expectations among regions within athletic administration. The Southern Section represents 82 leagues and 579 secondary schools (CIF, 2015), making it the largest section. The San Diego Section has eight conferences made up of 100 high schools (CIF, 2017). There are

approximately 66 female athletic directors out of the 679 total athletic directors in these two sections (CIF, 2017).

Sample

As pointed out by McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a “general rule for research is to obtain as many subjects as needed or possible to obtain a credible result” (p. 141). There are obvious constraints on sample size with any study based on availability of participants. A reasonable concern with this study is the limited number of female athletic directors in CIF, specifically within these two sections. Less than 10% of athletic directors in the CIF Southern and San Diego Sections are female. In the case of phenomenological studies, in which the primary goal is to recognize the core of experienced phenomena, a minimum of six participants is recommended (Morse, 1994). This study used the data collected from 15 individual interviews of female athletic directors from two sections of the CIF to ensure saturation of information (Patton, 2015). While this is a small sample of the overall population, the data produced were rich with detailed information about the experiences of these individuals, which is consistent with phenomenological research (Patton, 2015). Ultimately, this produces a depth of understanding but limits the generalizability of the findings.

Due to the nature of this qualitative inquiry study, purposive snowball sampling was used to identify and gather participants. This is an appropriate methodology when working with “traditionally underserved or vulnerable populations” (Sadler, Lee, Seung-Hwan, & Fullerton, 2010, p. 369). Female athletic directors transcend dominant gender codes and therefore risk discrimination making them a vulnerable population (Browne, 2013). Snowball sampling increases participation via the use of interpersonal

relationships and connections between people within vulnerable populations (Browne, 2013). Further, this style of sampling allows the researcher to identify information-rich cases and creates a chain of participants who would be important sources of information based on the focus of the study (Patton, 2015). A key sponsor (i.e., CIF Commissioner) within each of the two CIF sections was identified and used to initially recognize potential participants. Identified participants were contacted via e-mail and sent an invitation to participate (Appendix B). The researcher e-mailed and made phone calls to verify participants' employment status as athletic directors within the two identified CIF sections. Once employment criteria were verified, participants were e-mailed letters of consent, verifying their interest and agreed-upon participation in the study. At the time of the interview, participants were asked to identify other female athletic directors who may be good sources for the current study until a total of 15 participants were identified (Patton, 2015).

Instrumentation

In qualitative research, the researcher plays a key role in the instrumentation of data collection. The researcher in this study set up, recorded, and interpreted the data collected, therefore acting as the instrument. Interview questions (Appendix C) were established based on the seven barriers outlined in the seminal works of Acosta and Carpenter (2012), Coakley (2001), and M. D. Smith (2005).

Researcher as the Instrument of the Study

Operative qualitative research demands that researchers develop themselves effectively as an instrument in order to collect and interpret data from interviews in a valid manner (Xu & Storr, 2012). As outlined in McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the

researcher as the instrument is a threat to internal validity and can impact the data collected. While it is appropriate in this study that the researcher is the instrument used to collect data via interviews, it should be noted that there is potential for bias. The researcher in this study is a female athletic director within the CIF, potentially bringing bias to the study. To address this bias, bracketing, or the process by which the researcher sets aside her experiences allowing for a new perception to be the focus of the phenomenon, was used. (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Interview Questions

Seven interview questions were designed and incorporated into the interview protocol (Appendix F) based on the consistent findings of several researchers as outlined in the synthesis matrix (Appendix A). The framework for these questions was centered on the works of seminal authors, Acosta and Carpenter (2014), Coakley (2001), and M. D. Smith (2005) focusing on the barriers female athletic directors face.

Reliability

Reliability of an instrument looks at the consistency with which that instrument produces reliable data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The importance of this was illustrated by Leung (2015) who stated that in qualitative research reliability is challenging because of the variety of paradigms used. Leung then stated that “the essence of reliability for qualitative research lies with consistency” (p. 326). When developing a new instrument, it is necessary to evaluate and assess the quality of an instrument for consistency.

Internal Reliability of Data

Internal reliability is assessed by the results of multiple researchers coming to the same conclusions about the data. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested using triangulation or multiple and different sources to provide substantiating evidence from the study. This study used both interview and artifact data to triangulate the findings, providing evidence of internal reliability.

Triangulation of Data

Two primary forms of triangulation were used to ensure the strength of the research study: member checking and analysis of artifacts. First, all interviews were recorded, transcribed, and sent to participants for member checking. As Wengraf (2001) stated, member checking confirms that the transcript is accurate and complete. Participants were allowed to make edits to the transcripts to validate the accuracy of the emerging patterns or themes. Second, resumes and other artifacts that surfaced upon site visits were used to ensure that more than one form of information was collected. Patton (2015) stated, “Documents prove valuable not only because of what can be learned directly from them but also as a stimulus for paths of inquiry that can be pursued through direct observation and interviewing” (p. 377).

External Reliability of Data

External reliability looks at the generalizability of the research. Qualitative studies are not meant to be generalizable but look to purposefully use small samples in which profound understanding of a phenomenon can be examined in depth (Patton, 2015). The focus of qualitative research is depth of understanding, and therefore the researcher examined the experiences of a limited number of individuals (Patton, 2015),

eliminating the generalizability of the work. As a result of a purposefully chosen small sample size, this study had limited generalizability. Therefore, external reliability was not a concern for this study.

Intercoder Reliability

Intercoder reliability is the widely used term for the extent to which independent coders evaluate a characteristic of a message or artifact and reach the same conclusion (Tinsley & Weiss, 2000). Procedures for intercoder reliability in this study were based on the suggestions of Creswell and Poth (2018) and Lombard, Snyder-Duch, and Bracken (2010). The following steps were used to ensure intercoder reliability:

1. NVivo software was used to establish a list of primary codes.
2. Codes that were developed were shared and consisted of main codes and subcodes.
3. Double coding of three transcripts, or 20% of the data, was done via an expert researcher. The qualifications of an expert researcher included three of the five criteria: (a) had a doctoral degree, (b) had conducted and published research, (c) had written an IRB application, (d) had conducted interviews, and (e) had coded data. Double coding was done independent of each other.
4. Intercoder agreement among both the expert researcher and the primary researcher was compared and assessed, with a goal of 80% agreement, to ensure reliability of the primary researcher's interpretation of the data.

Validity

The validity of an instrument is measured in how precisely it achieves the functions it is supposed to perform (Patton, 2012). Most recently, Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that the process of validating the instrument involves a combination of

strategies, including corroborating evidence through triangulation of multiple data sources, member checking, and enabling external audits. The researcher designed the interview questions, and therefore validity needed to be established. To address the limitations of the researcher as the instrument, an expert panel and pilot interview were completed.

Expert Panel

Interview questions were given to experts in the field of athletics administration to validate the questions, making sure the right questions were asked. The experts consisted of individuals who met three of the following five criteria: (a) current athletic administrator, (b) member of the California State Athletic Director's Association (CSADA), (c) presenter at an athletic director conference, (d) member of the NIAAA, and/or (e) had published research in the area of athletics. As Baumgartner and Strong (1994) indicated, the experts should find the questions clear, thorough in addressing the content, and well-constructed. The experts provided feedback in terms of clarity and effectiveness of the interview questions. Based on expert feedback, necessary changes were made to the questions (Grappendorf, 2001) to strengthen the validity of the questions. After changes were made, the survey was given to a pilot group for field testing.

Pilot Interview

To determine how well questions and instructions are understood, field tests are given to pilot groups (Baumgartner & Strong, 1994). Pilot interviews strengthen the validity of the researcher as an instrument of the study. A field test was done both via Skype and in person, as interviews were conducted using both methods. The pilot group

consisted of two expert researchers. Expert researchers were defined as individuals who met three of the five following criteria: (a) had a doctoral degree, (b) had conducted and published research, (c) had written an IRB application, (d) had conducted interviews, and (e) had coded data. During the pilot tests, one expert researcher acted as an interviewee and provided participant feedback. The other expert researcher observed the interview and provided observer feedback. Specifically the pilot group was asked to comment on “meaning, task difficulty, respondent interest and attention, order of questions, flow of the sections, skip patterns, and timing” (Grappendorf, 2001, p. 44). Experienced researchers validated the researcher’s interview skills by giving feedback on participant engagement, pacing, and follow-up questions. Based on the responses of the pilot participants, changes were made to the interview and delivery of the interview questions, ensuring the validity of the interview process.

Data Collection

Two primary methods of data collection were done in this study to examine and describe how female athletic directors in California face and overcome barriers in attaining and retaining their positions. The researcher conducted 15 semistructured interviews and collected artifacts to triangulate the findings of the themes determined through the coding process. Prior to any data collection, an application for research involving human or animal participants was submitted to the Brandman University Institutional Review Board (BUIRB) for review, recommendations, and approval. The BUIRB approval is found in Appendix D. This approval was provided to the participants after initial contact and agreement to participate in the study.

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews. As stated by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), “An interview is where knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee” (p. 4). Interviews are critical in that they attempt to help the researcher understand the point of view of a participant in an effort to guide meaning of her experiences and relate them to the lived world (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interviewing is done as a series of steps in a protocol, following a logical sequence. The data for this study were collected via semistructured, one-on-one individual interviews following the stages of an interview inquiry established by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) and outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018). In an effort to provide repeatability of the protocol, the steps used to collect data are outlined in detail below:

1. Open-ended research questions (Appendix C) were determined following the framework established by Acosta and Carpenter (2012), Coakley (2001), and M. D. Smith (2005) to examine the seven barriers women face in athletic administration.
2. Interviewees were determined using snowball sampling procedures, a technique used when identifying and gathering participants from a marginalized population (Browne, 2013). Key sponsors initially identified possible participants. Potential participants were identified based on employment criteria including gender, job responsibilities, and region in CIF. Participants selected were female athletic directors in the CIF Southern and San Diego Sections. Participants were secured as study subjects once all requirements were met. Prior to the individual interviews, employment verification was conducted by contacting the participant and the participant’s employer.

Participants were given a consent to participate form (Appendix E) that explained how their confidentiality would be maintained.

3. Interview mode was determined based on participant location. One-on-one interviews were conducted face-to-face, with both the researcher and participant in the same room, as well as via Skype or phone call. Interviews were conducted in a distraction-free environment agreed upon by the interviewee. This was done to ensure that the participants were able to focus and give a detailed description of their experience.
4. All interviews were documented using two recording devices to guarantee that the interviews were recorded.
5. An interview guide sheet (Appendix F) was used by the interviewer to ensure that the seven open-ended questions were asked accurately as well as to provide a space for the interviewer to record additional comments about the interview.
6. Each interview began with obtaining the interviewee's consent to participate, and reviewing the purpose of the study, the amount of time needed, the participant's right to withdraw from the study, and the plan for use of the results.
7. Interviews took place between September and November of 2017. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, beginning with the established seven questions and any follow-up questions that were needed. Keeping the interviews within the 30 to 45 minute timeframe minimized participant fatigue and maximized the richness of the participants' explanations of their experiences.
8. At the conclusion of the interview, participants were thanked and given an explanation for the next steps involving transcription and member checking.
9. The researcher then sent audio files to a transcription service.

10. Transcripts were sent to the interviewees who were given the opportunity to check the transcript for accuracy. Interviewees were invited to make corrections and provide clarification and/or feedback as needed.

Observations. When appropriate, the researcher attended athletic director meetings and conferences to observe the interaction of female athletic directors with both their staff and peers. The following steps were taken when conducting observations:

1. Communication via e-mail was sent to confirm the date, time, location, and appropriateness of researcher observations in a public setting.
2. The researcher was a nonparticipant observer, in full view of all involved in the meetings. The researcher was deliberate in nonparticipation to ensure a distraction-free observation.
3. Both descriptive and reflective notes were taken during each observation, recording the physical setting, participants, and participant interactions.
4. These notes were used to better understand the circumstances described by the female athletic director participants and were not used as primary data.

Artifacts. Prior to meeting with the interviewee for the interview process, the researcher asked each participant to provide a resume. The following items were collected from each resume: (a) tenure in position, (b) tenure as an athletic director, (c) school affiliation, (d) level of education, (e) athletic experience, (f) coaching experience, and (g) academic responsibilities (Burney, 2010). Additional artifacts were collected from LinkedIn profiles, California Athletic Director Association Conference presentations, and other items that emerged during the interview process. The collected artifacts were coded and scanned for themes relevant to the study. All personal and

identifiable information was blacked out and not included in the data analysis to ensure participant confidentiality.

Data Protection and Control

The following steps were taken to provide protection for both the participant and the data collected.

1. All recordings were done with the explicit permission of each participant.
2. All recordings, interview notes, and artifacts were kept in a locked cabinet at all times, except when in use by the researcher.
3. Each participant was assigned a letter code that only the researcher had access to, which was transcribed onto the collected data. This was done to provide participants' anonymity throughout the process.
4. All personal and identifiable information was only accessible to the researcher and was destroyed after the conclusion of the study to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

Data Analysis

In the book, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, Creswell and Poth (2018) described a three-step analysis process employed by qualitative research analysts. For this study, the researcher modeled this approach, first preparing and organizing the data, then coding the data for themes, and finally presenting the data in both written and visual forms.

Preparing the Data

All 15 interview recordings were sent to an outside transcription service. Upon receiving the transcripts from the transcription service, each recording was sent to the

respective interviewee. Participants were given the opportunity to review, correct, and clarify information found in the transcripts. All data (interviews and artifacts) were then organized and the researcher spent several days with each transcript, reading and recording emergent ideas.

Coding the Data

Each interview and artifact was uploaded into NVIVO for qualitative data analysis. This software allows the researcher to first look for codes, identify themes, and then count frequencies. Coding is the process by which data are aggregated into categories of information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Both interviews and artifacts were initially scanned to create a list of codes. These codes were used to identify themes in the interviews and artifacts. For example, codes that could be identified as a theme might be access to a mentor or frequent networking experiences.

All data were scanned multiple times to be sure that all themes were identified. This information was then translated into a frequency, meaning the number of times these meaningful phrases appeared within the data. The themes were then analyzed in an attempt to answer the overall research question of how female athletic directors in California face and overcome barriers in attaining and retaining their positions. For example, if nine of the 15 participants cited being mentored by another athletic director, this indicated a theme that mentoring is an essential component of overcoming barriers to attaining the position of athletic director for women in California. Connections between the finding of the current study could then be linked to information found in prior studies and provide significance for women who seek the position of athletic director in the state of California.

Analysis Procedures

Analysis of phenomenological research involves developing a list of significant themes from the data, generating a textural description of the data or the “what happened,” followed by a structural (“how”) description of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher then formed a composite statement that “explains what the participants experienced with the phenomenon and how they experienced it” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 201). In this descriptive design, themes generated by the female athletic directors described their perception of gender and potential job barriers in their careers.

Limitations

Limitations of a study can minimize the generalizability and application of the findings to current lived experiences. The researcher in this study recognized that there are several limitations to the research design, including sample size and researcher as the instrument.

Sample and Sample Methodology

This study was delimited to female athletic directors at high schools in two sections of the CIF. Further, participants were chosen using a purposive sampling method, limiting the potential application of the findings to those that met the identified criteria. In addition, snowball sampling was used to identify potential participants for this study. A recognized limitation of snowball sampling is the potential for bias or overrepresentation of individuals who share similar experiences (Sadler et al., n.d.). Not represented in this study were those individuals who did not overcome barriers to attain and/or retain the position of athletic director and those who left the position due to the barriers they faced. Therefore the findings of this study should not be used in describing

the experience of those individuals. It is also important to note that data analysis and interpretation of phenomenological studies were limited by the honesty, willingness to share, and memory of the participants (Burney, 2010).

Researcher as Instrument

While the researcher in this study acknowledged the limitations of the researcher as the instrument of measurement, many steps were taken to minimize the impact on the study. The researcher used an expert panel when analyzing the questions used for interviews, conducted a pilot test of the interview, and used member checking of the transcribed data. The researcher in this study was a female athletic director in the Southern Section of the CIF, presenting a unique limitation to the study. As termed by Kenneth Pike (1967), this type of research is called emic, or from a perspective inside the system. To address this limitation and ensure that researcher bias was eliminated, bracketing was used, which is a process by which the researcher sets aside her experiences. In addition, IRB approval was given to the researcher before any research was conducted.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to address the overall design and methodology of this research study. The purpose of this study was to examine and describe how female athletic directors in California face and overcome barriers in attaining and retaining their positions by investigating the barriers for female athletic directors as defined by these seven categories: (a) the impact of the old boys' network, (b) the impact of marital status, (c) the impact of having children, (d) being female in athletic administration, (e) the

impact of sexual discrimination, (f) time demands of the job, and (g) travel demands of the job.

This was a qualitative phenomenological research study, incorporating an interview research design. The participants in this study were current female athletic directors within in the Southern and San Diego Sections of CIF. The targeted population was female athletic directors currently serving in California. Selected participants were interviewed using questions following the framework established by Acosta and Carpenter (2012), Coakley (2001), and M. D. Smith (2005) to examine the seven barriers women face in athletic administration. Outcomes of the interviews were coded and measured for frequency of themes. This study had a limited sample, a function of the specific criteria used and the number of individuals who met that criteria. This limited the generalizability of this study to female high school athletic directors in California, specifically in the CIF Southern Region. Chapter IV provided an analysis of the findings and illustrates the findings of the researcher based on the gathered data.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

This qualitative phenomenological inquiry study examined and described how female athletic directors in California face and overcome barriers in attaining and retaining their positions. Specifically the seven categories of barriers previously identified in the works of Acosta and Carpenter (2014), Coakley (2001), and M. D. Smith (2005) were examined. These barriers were (a) the impact of the old boys' network, (b) the impact of marital status, (c) the impact of having children, (d) being female in athletic administration, (e) the impact of sexual discrimination, (f) time demands of the job, and (g) travel demands of the job. Additionally this research described the most common ways in which these barriers were experienced by female athletic directors in California. The primary source of data for this study was 15 semistructured interviews with female athletic directors at the high school level in California. These qualitative data are presented in a narrative format supported with direct quotes from the interviews. This chapter begins with a review of the purpose statement, research questions, population, sample, and methodology. The conclusion of this chapter includes a presentation of the data in the form of tables and a summary of the findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological inquiry study was to examine and describe how female athletic directors in California face and overcome barriers in attaining and retaining their positions.

Research Questions

The central research question was, How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome barriers in attaining and retaining their positions? Seven research

subquestions were designed using the barriers identified by Acosta and Carpenter (2014), Coakley (2001), and M. D. Smith (2005): (a) the impact of the old boys' network, (b) the impact of marital status, (c) the impact of having children, (d) being female in athletic administration, (e) the impact of sexual discrimination, (f) time demands of the job, and (g) travel demands of the job.

1. How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of the old boys' network in attaining and retaining their positions?
2. How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of marital status in attaining and retaining their positions?
3. How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of having children in attaining and retaining their positions?
4. How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of the being female in athletic administration in attaining and retaining their positions?
5. How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of sexual discrimination in attaining and retaining their positions?
6. How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome time demands of the job in attaining and retaining their positions?
7. How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of the travel demands of the job in attaining and retaining their positions?

Methodology

This study used a qualitative phenomenological methodology to provide a detailed understanding of each participant's perspective of facing and overcoming barriers in attaining and retaining the position of athletic director. Data were obtained

using semistructured interviews and the collection of artifacts in the form of resumes, presentations, and news articles provided by the participants. Each participant provided a narrative that was used to identify similarities and differences in experiences. This was used to develop a conceptual framework with which to understand the phenomenon that females experience in attaining and retaining their positions (Creswell, 2007).

The researcher acted as the instrument in this study, collecting and interpreting data obtained via interviews. Seven interview questions were designed and used in the interview protocol (Appendix F) based on the works of Acosta and Carpenter (2014), Coakley (2001), and M. D. Smith (2005). The focus of these questions was the barriers that female athletic directors face when attaining and retaining their position. Prior to conducting the interviews, an expert panel reviewed the questions, and pilot interviews were conducted to ensure the validity of the interview process (Grappendorf, 2001). After the semistructured interviews were conducted, participants were asked to provide their resume and documents providing information related to the research question.

Interview and Survey Data Collection

The researcher conducted 15 one-on-one individual interviews with female athletic directors in both the San Diego and Southern Sections of the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) during the months of November and December 2017. All participants received an invitation to participate e-mail (Appendix B), informed consent form, and Brandman Bill of Rights (Appendix E) prior to the interview process. Postinterview, all data were coded to remove any possible identifiable information. All recordings, artifacts, and signed informed consent forms were kept on the researcher's password-protected computer. To maintain a similar interview experience for all

participants, interview questions were read verbatim using the established interview protocol (Appendix F). All interviews were recorded using two digital audio recording devices. The audio recordings were transcribed by the researcher and coded using NVivo 11 software.

Intercoder Reliability

Intercoder reliability refers to the use of multiple independent coders evaluating the characteristics of qualitative data (Tinsley & Weiss, 2000). Double coding of three transcripts was done with at least 80% agreement among codes to ensure the reliability of the researcher's analysis of the data.

Population

A population is a group of individuals who meet a specific set of criteria allowing results to be generalized to individuals in this group (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The female athletic director participants in this study represented the population of high school female athletic directors working in California. All participants in this study operated under the governing body of the CIF. It was necessary to refine this population to a target population, a set of individuals chosen from the general population, which provided the data to make generalizations for the overall population (Creswell, 2007). The target population for this study was made up of female athletic directors from the Southern Section and San Diego Section of CIF. At the time of this study, there were 1,580 athletic directors in the state of California; of those, approximately 26% were female. In the San Diego and Southern Sections, approximately 10% of the athletic director population was female, identifying the group as a vulnerable population in which extra efforts were made to find participants.

Sample

With the limited number of women in this position and the sensitivity of this population to potential discrimination, snowball sampling was used to identify 15 female athletic directors within the two sections. Both San Diego and Southern Section CIF commissioners acted as sponsors for the study, providing a letter of support for potential participants. This letter was sent to all potential participants, enabling the researcher to secure 15 participants who met the criteria of being a current female athletic director within the San Diego or Southern Sections. These individuals provided information-rich narratives needed to develop an understanding of the circumstances in which females in California attained and retained their position as athletic director.

Demographic Data

As shown in Table 3, participants in this study consisted of current female athletic directors in either the San Diego (eight participants) or Southern (seven participants) Sections of the CIF. The average in the position for this sample of female athletic directors was just over 9 years. The shortest tenure for these women was 4 years, with the veteran having served 24 years in the position. Five of the participants had held the position of athletic director for 5 years or less. Participants' marital status and number of children were collected as demographic data because of their direct relevance to Research Subquestions 2 and 3. The most common status for the participants was married, with a total of 11 participants being currently married or with a long-term committed partner. Two of the participants were married but at the time of this study were separated or divorced from their spouse and another two had never been married. Of the 15 participants, eight had children ranging from as few as one to as many as four. It was

also important to note that in addition to athletic director, seven participants reported that they were concurrently teaching, and three were teacher coaches of one or more female sports. The provided demographic data set the stages for the themes and anecdotal data that are referenced in the analysis of the data.

Table 3

Participant Demographic Data

Participant	CIF section	Years in position
A	Southern	5
B	San Diego	16
C	San Diego	4
D	San Diego	5
E	San Diego	6
F	San Diego	8
G	Southern	16
H	Southern	10
I	Southern	13
J	Southern	11
K	San Diego	4
L	San Diego	4
M	San Diego	10
N	Southern	24
O	Southern	10

Presentation and Analysis of the Data

The focus of this research was to describe how female athletic directors in California face and overcome barriers in attaining and retaining their positions. The context within which these barriers were examined was the seven barriers previously outlined by the works of Acosta and Carpenter (2014), Coakley (2001), and M. D. Smith (2005). The data were transcribed and coded for themes within these seven subcategories: (a) the impact of the old boys' network, (b) the impact of marital status,

(c) the impact of having children, (d) being female in athletic administration, (e) the impact of sexual discrimination, (f) time demands of the job, and (g) travel demands of the job (see Table 4). Themes for each of these seven subcategories are described

Table 4

Themed Experiences With Each Barrier

Theme	Frequency	Source
Old boys' network		
Male coaches in the The Big 3	21	10
Lack of administrative support	14	8
Being seen as incompetent	13	6
Do not experience the "old boys' network"	5	5
Marital status		
Time away from partner	10	8
No concern for partner	6	6
Additional demands on partner	4	4
Having children		
Time away from children	11	10
Kids pay a price for the parent being AD	7	6
Being female		
Assume it is a male in the position	11	7
Male coaches are disrespectful	11	7
She doesn't know because she's a woman	8	5
"Old boys' network"	5	5
Easily dismissed	4	4
Sexual discrimination		
Male staff in male-dominated careers	14	10
No discrimination experienced	12	11
Breaking chain of command	5	5
Administration is unsupportive	4	4
Time demands		
Extremely long days	16	14
No stipend or pay for extra work	11	10
Travel demands		
Attend events long distance away	8	8
Time in traffic and miles on the car	6	5

individually first by the experiences faced with each barrier, followed by the strategies used to overcome each barrier. Lastly, all themes were cross-referenced for overlapping trends across barriers, soliciting similarities between barriers.

Impact of the Old Boys' Network

Research Subquestion 1 stated, “How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of the old boys’ network in attaining and retaining their positions?” Female athletic directors face a variety of challenges that are unique. One of the main challenges that they face is the old boys’ network, which has been defined as an informal system in which men with the same social and educational background help each other. For this study, female athletic directors identified three types of experiences they have had with the old boys’ network. These experiences focus on male coaches, specifically *The Big 3*, lack of administrative support, and being seen as incompetent in the position.

Male coaches in the The Big 3. The most cited experience with the old boys’ network by participants in this study, with a frequency of 21, was with male coaches. Of particular importance is male coaches from *The Big 3*, which consists of football, basketball, and baseball. As noted by Participant K, these three sports in particular have a unique set of expectations because they are the moneymakers for the athletic program. In addition, they have the most coaches on their staffs; these coaches tend to stay in their positions for a long time, and they have history with the school community.

When asked to describe their experiences with male coaches, participants cited several examples in which male coaches exhibit the old boys’ network. Commonly mentioned examples included male coaches not following the rules, excluding the athletic

director from decision making, and going above the athletic director with regard to following protocol and policy. For example, Participant C described a regular occurrence during football season in which the football coaches met in the men's locker room to discuss basic rundown of games, athletes, and scheduling decisions. She described the frustration of not being included in these conversations and the negative impact it had on the athletes and parents of athletes, as she was not privy to the conversations held within male facilities. Similar to a fraternity, as cited by one participant, football coaches often exclude female athletic directors from conversations at CIF meetings as well. During these conversations, Participant C noted that she takes a "mental timeout" since she is not included in the decision-making processes. In another example, a participant cited the unwillingness of male coaches to follow the rules and protocols enforced by CIF, especially when taking over her position from a male athletic director. She stated,

I took over from a coach/athletic director who was one of the good old boys and the rules didn't apply to him. He played whoever he wanted, whenever he wanted. I found out through the grapevine of all these backdoor deals he made with other coaches, other schools, and other vendors.

When this participant came into the position, the male coaches were used to getting whatever they wanted. As she enacted the rules and policies from CIF, there was serious resistance from these male coaches. Another participant described a similar experience in which male coaches told her, "Well we used to do it this way and this is how it was done when so and so was the AD."

The lack of willingness to follow the rules was frequently accompanied by coaches bypassing the athletic director and going to administration. This type of

occurrence was more common when the athletic director or administration was new in the position. Participant I explained that over her time in the position, this has happened less except in the case of football coaches. She stated, “Football [coaches] will still go over my head every single time if I don’t give them the answer they want. And then if they don’t believe me they go to my administration.” This was directly related to the second most commonly reported themed experience, lack of administrative support for female athletic directors.

Lack of administrative support. The old boys’ network was said to be in effect in both the coaching and administrative realms by the female participants in this study. It is important to note that athletic directors hold a quasi-administrative role and therefore, athletic directors as well as assistant principals and principals play an administrative role in athletics. A lack of support by administration with regard to the old boys’ network was cited by participants in this study 14 times, with seven participants citing specific experiences with their administration. For example, when one female athletic director asked a coach to follow protocol, he went straight to administration and was told not worry about following the rules. This administrator then went to the athletic director and told her to “calm down.” This directly translated to a lack of support for the female athletic director by her administration.

Another example pertains to facilities and scheduling, which is a standard responsibility for all athletic directors. Participants reported difficulty getting equal access to facilities, games, and officials. Participant E explained, “Sometimes you feel like you can’t get games within the good old boys network because you’re not part of that.” Participants cited barriers with the old boys’ network at the district level. “Then

there is facilities at the district, which that's a whole other part of the old boys' club up there. Facilities are primarily run by men," noted Participant L. Lastly, the lack of support from male athletic directors was also reported as a barrier for women in this position. Participant G shared a story in which she attended an athletic director meeting. When she sat down, the males at the table would literally get up and move away from her. She further reported not being able to get opponents for games and getting "bottom of the barrel" officials because she was a woman.

Being seen as incompetent. Female athletic directors experiencing situations in which they felt the old boys' network viewed them as incompetent in the position was cited 13 times within this study. Participant J reported feeling that male coaches looked at her and thought to themselves, "Oh, she doesn't know what she's doing. She was never the head football coach or the head basketball coach, she couldn't possibly know what she's doing." Four participants reported experiences in which they were laughed at during meetings for sharing their ideas. In one instance, an athletic director made an administrative error with paperwork that she reported to CIF. This caused one of her teams to forfeit a football game. In response, other athletic directors made the comment, "I wouldn't even turn that in. I wouldn't even do anything, I wouldn't even report it. It's not even worth it." The women who reported these experience stated that they felt humiliated by their peers. As a result, several participants reported feeling the need to prove themselves when dealing with the old boys' network. As Participant F stated, "Sometimes as females we have to do the job plus a little bit more because we are female." She shared an example of having to provide coaches' documentation directly

from CIF when giving them instructions about following protocols. The participant noted that her male counterparts were not held to this same standard.

The old boys' network is still a very real thing and acts as a barrier for women in this career. Ten out of 15 female athletic directors named the old boys' network as a barrier to their career and/or career ascension in this study (see Table 4). Anecdotally, the data demonstrate that most of these experiences occurred early on in the career of these women. As noted by Participant P, in the beginning of her career it was tough, as she had taken over the athletic director position from a former head football coach who had been the athletic director for 34 years. Coaches from her own school that she had taught with for years, told her that they did not want to coach anymore and quit coaching. She was later told by colleagues it was because she was a woman. Several other participants noted that it was in their fourth year in the position that they noticed fewer issues from the old boys' network.

No experience with the old boys' network. Not all of the participants immediately recognized experiences with the old boys' network during their career in their interviews. Three of the five who stated they did not experience the old boys' network as a barrier in their career went on to cite examples of experiences with the old boys' network (see Table 4). In total, 87% of the interviewed female athletic directors in the Southern and San Diego Sections of CIF have experienced the old boys' network at some point in their career.

Strategies to Overcome the Impact of the Old Boys' Network

While the old boys' network is a current reality, many female athletic directors have overcome these obstacles. For this study, female athletic directors shared three

unique ways they have overcome these obstacles. They are building relationships with others in key positions, standing up for themselves, and receiving mentoring by administration (see Table 5).

Table 5

Strategies for Facing and Overcoming the Impacts of the “Old Boys’ Network”

Theme	Frequency	Source
Build relationships with others in key positions	26	13
Stand up for themselves	5	5
Receive mentoring by administration	4	4

Build relationships with others in key positions. Participant K noted, “Relationships are very much key in this position and having the right network of people to support [you].” Three relationship-building examples were cited by female athletic directors in this study. Most frequently, participants described building relationships with individuals in key positions, such as coaches, athletic directors, and administration, when overcoming the old boys’ network. In addition, being respected as a coach prior to accepting the position of athletic director, and lastly, becoming involved with CIF were also cited as key relationships to build. Forty-seven percent of participants described the importance of building relationships with their coaches when overcoming the barrier of the old boys’ network. Participant N noted that prior to taking the position, she had established relationships with males, specifically on the coaching staff, for a smoother transition into the athletic director position. Other participants cited having built strong relationships among athletic directors in their league and with their principals prior to moving into the role. Second to developing relationships with coaches and other key

personnel, having been a coach in the same community in which they become athletic director also played a key role in managing the old boys' network for these participants. This was addressed by six participants in their interviews. As evidenced by Participant B, "Well I think I have an advantage in that before I stepped into this position I was a really well-established coach." In addition to having relationships locally, four participants cited involvement with CIF on committees or at the state level. Participant G noted that the first few years in the position were particularly difficult, but by becoming active with the Women in Sports Conference and other CIF committees, she built a reputation in the athletic director community making the old boys' network easier to navigate.

Stand up for themselves. Several of the female athletic directors in this study described standing up for themselves when facing the old boys' network. For example, coaches will often challenge the implementation of a new protocol or policy. Participant E stated that on several occasions she has had to stand up to coaches when they argued with her, "Overall, my reaction is one that I'm strong willed, I'm determined. I think that if I set it up right, I will be respected with how I present issues. I don't just take somebody talking down to me or negatively." She described that she will not tolerate negative comments and is even willing to go to "battle" over it. This was echoed by Participant L when she recounted an incident with a male coach who simply was not following protocol. She described how she brought him in and said, "This is enough, you need to make sure that you're on top of it." As a result of the conversation, the coach went to administration and Participant L had to follow up with evidence from CIF. With the written support from CIF, her administration supported her original request of the

coach, straining the relationship with all parties. This situation provides further evidence of the previously cited lack of administrative support and issues with male coaches outlined by participants in this study.

Receive mentoring by administration. Two types of mentoring were referred to by the female athletic directors in this study, one by principals or assistant principals and another by prior athletic directors. All four participants felt mentoring, described as training and encouraging the participants to apply for the position, was essential in combating issues with the old boys' network. For example Participant B explained how her prior athletic director got her ready for the position of athletic director.

He got me started taking NIAAA classes. He got me attending the NIAAA and CSADA workshops. He gave me opportunities to assist in some of the nuts and bolts operations of running a football game and part of that was because he was a football coach. . . . So I kind of felt like I had that that mentorship there.

In addition to support from her previous athletic director, she was encouraged to apply for the position by her principal, who cited her passion for athletics and leadership skills as qualifications for the position. Other participants referenced the groundwork laid by their prior athletic director as essential in supporting women in athletics. These previous athletic directors established a positive culture for women in athletics, reducing the incidences of issues with the old boys' network. Participant O directly stated evidence of this in her interview,

The woman who preceded me in my position was a very strong advocate for female athletics. So I've got to say she laid some good groundwork and ever

since I took over the position, I feel like there haven't been any issues of this with my working colleagues.

Part of mentoring these female athletic directors was encouraging them to take additional courses for preparation in the position.

Athletic administration requires knowledge of CIF regulations and protocol. One method to gain this knowledge is to take training courses provide by CIF, NIAAA, and CSADA. Three participants in this study made reference to taking additional courses as a strategy when dealing with the old boys' network. Participant L was very passionate about taking the NIAAA courses and using the information provided in them to give her support and legal backing when she addressed coaches who were resistant to implementing protocols. In addition, she made reference to male athletic directors not needing this type of proof in order for coaches to follow protocol, further adding to the impact of the old boys' network.

Impact of Marital Status

Research Subquestion 2 stated, "How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of marital status in attaining and retaining their positions?" Women who sought to be leaders in their profession reported considering the impact of their career and career ascension on their partner. Being married does not inhibit women from getting the position of athletic director as evidenced by the 11 married or long-term partnerships of participants in this study. In fact, of the married participants, six stated they did not even consider the impact of their career on their partner during their career ascension into the position of athletic director (see Table 4). However, two themes

emerged as concerns when accepting the position and being married: the amount of time away their partner and additional demands on their partner.

Time away from their partner. Eight participants reported considering time away from their partner during their career ascension into the position of athletic director. All participants in this study had prior experience as coaches before becoming athletic directors, a career they cited as having high time demands. However, they also acknowledged the significant increase in time requirements as an athletic director and therefore were worried about the impact on their partner. Participant J stated that she was concerned with “the time commitment of this particular job and how that would take away from [her] relationship.” Participant N reported speaking about it with her husband a lot before taking the position because by her becoming athletic director, they were going to be working opposite hours. Despite concerns, she took the position and feels she is “away from home more than [her husband] would like.”

No concern for the impact on their partner. Six of the 11 married participants explained that they did not have any concerns for how their career might impact their partner. In particular, Participant I shared her personal philosophy prior to marriage, with regard to having a partner in this career. When asked if she considered her partner when taking the position she emphatically stated,

I didn't actually. Because when I started teaching and coaching I was really young. I started my teaching career when I was 23 and at 23 the only thing I ever cared about was my career. . . . I wanted to be an athletic director and I wanted to teach. I wanted to coach and I wanted to travel. And if somebody wanted to

come into my life that wanted to do those things, then I was all for it. But if they didn't, then I really couldn't care less.

Additional demands on their partner. Being on call around the clock, as described by Participant C, adds additional responsibilities and demands on the spouse of an athletic director. An excellent example of this was described by Participant L. She stated that her position as athletic director “was putting a lot of pressure on him,” meaning her husband, and that when she took the position, most household responsibilities were shifted to him. This was echoed by Participant A,

He would have more responsibilities. He would have more pickups, more time with our own children and moving them around. . . . That was our biggest concern, that he would have a lot more to do than he was used to.

Strategies for Overcoming the Impact of Marital Status

While there were two major concerns for their partners when accepting the position, the female athletic directors in this study identified several individually unique strategies used when overcoming time away from their partners. Only one appeared as a theme, having a partner who understands their passion for athletics. This was identified in eight interviews with a frequency of 11.

Table 6

Strategies for Facing and Overcoming the Impact of Marital Status

Theme	Frequency	Source
Partner understands passion for athletics	11	8

Partner understands passion for athletics. The driving force for many female athletic directors is their passion for athletics. Understanding this passion translates to

their partners and was described by eight participants as important when facing time away and extra demands on their partners. Participant E said her husband “knows my passion for athletics and I think my ability to lead” and therefore he is her “biggest supporter.” Similarly Participant F stated that her spouse is very supportive and “sees that I really love what I’m doing.” One of the more telling descriptions came from Participant L.

You have to have a supportive partner who is proud of the fact that you want to improve a program and you want to help kids. And sometimes if you’re not married to someone that’s a teacher it’s really difficult for them to understand [that].

Having a partner in education or coaching makes it easier for the spouse to understand the athletic director’s passion. Participant D shared that her husband is a former athletic director and coach, and stated, “So we’re in it together.”

In addition, spouses showed their support for their partner’s passion by attending athletic events. Three participants cited specific examples in which their partner would attend athletic events as either a spectator or volunteer. For example, “He’ll come by and catch the end of the volleyball match or football game and then we have our dinner” (Participant F). Having a supportive partner was a strategy cited by participants as important when facing the impact of being married and an athletic director.

Impact of Having Children

Research Subquestion 3 stated, “How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of having children in attaining and retaining their positions?” Similarly related to the concerns of marriage in a profession field, women

also reported considering the impact of their career and career ascension on their children and family life. Eight of the participants in this study reported having children, with four children being the highest number reported. On average, those with children have 2.5 children. The two women with four children were seen as outliers among their peers. Anecdotally, the majority of these women had children either in high school or college and waited until their children were grown to take the position. One participant stated that she would leave the position if she were to have children, and among those who did not have children, five stated they did not believe they could do both parenting and athletic director at the same time adequately. This sentiment was shared by Participant D, who has four grown children, "I often tell my husband, I don't feel anybody can do this job correctly and still be a mom of small kids at home." One of the nonparent participants stated that she no longer would consider having children because she felt she could not do the work she needed to do and be a solid parent. In addition, two of the seven participants without children stated not having children was in no way related to issues or concerns with taking on the position of athletic director.

Two themes appeared in the data when the participants were asked if they considered the impact their career may have on their children when accepting the position. With a frequency of 11, from eight interviews and two artifacts, female athletic director participants cited that their primary concern was time away from their children (see Table 4). The second theme that appeared was the concern that kids pay the price for their parent being in the position of athletic director. This theme was found seven times in six different interviews.

Time away from children. The number one concern by the participants when taking the position with reference to their children was the time they would spend away from them. For instance, several participants highlighted concerns about missing their own children's games due to being an athletic director. In fact, Participant F left the position of assistant athletic director, during her pursuit of the position of athletic director, when her son became a freshman in high school. She stated,

And so I stepped away because I wanted to watch all of his games because of the way the athletic administration works here, you have to cover home games. And I didn't want to miss any of his away games.

It was not until this participant's son graduated from high school that she then again applied for and attained the position of athletic director. This impact was further supported by Participant G,

My daughter was a senior and my youngest was starting high school. I wanted to see their sports and I knew that if I was doing this job and working all these nights I was going to miss their sports.

This directly links to another concern that was addressed by the participants, working nights.

Beyond missing events for their children, participants described their worries with regard to being gone from home at night. Most varsity games go well into the evening requiring athletic directors to be out at these events late at night. As described by Participant D, when referencing raising children while in this position, "It's so time consuming. You know you're out at night and it's late . . . I don't know how other athletic directors are doing it." Similarly, two other participants shared their concern

with not being home in the evening to help with homework, to eat dinner as a family, and missing doctor's appointments. Participant L expressed her deep concerns: "My biggest thing was I was so involved in their life. I've always worked since they were little but I've always been involved in their life. I've always been a part of after school and picking them up." Having to miss out on these things was a major concern when accepting the position.

Kids pay a price for the parent being athletic director. Six of the eight women with children referenced the idea that their children pay a price for them being in the position of athletic director. When asked for examples of "paying a price," Participant O described an incident in which her daughter had to miss her tennis lesson because she was going to be out of town traveling for a playoff game. While Participant A described how on occasion she will hear from her children, "I want help with my homework, or why weren't you here?" She then said, "We've had some late nights and early mornings to get the homework done, where that is just atypical for a lot of their friend's families." While Participant D's children are grown, she commented on this during her interview, fervently saying, "I could not have done this job with kids at home, with the demands of the last 5 years. I work between 70 and 80 hours a week probably." She then said if she did do it "someone would have to pay the price for that, either the mom or the kids, I feel, honestly." A similar sentiment was given by Participant C, who does not have children, when asked if she would stay in the position if she ever had children. She strongly said, "No, I could not." When asked why, she stated, "Because I think I would get to the point where I realize that I'm putting more effort into other people's kids than my own,"

suggesting that her children would pay a price for her being in the position of athletic director.

Strategies for Overcoming the Impact of Having Children

When addressing strategies for overcoming these concerns, two additional themes appeared. Participants described how their children attend athletic events with them to mitigate the time away from them with a frequency of 10 in six interviews (see Table 7). In addition, three participants, during their interviews referenced having a supportive family who is willing to take on additional roles. This was again highlighted in a news article about female athletic directors in Southern California. These two strategies were described as positive measures taken to lower the impact of their career on their children.

Table 7

Strategies for Facing and Overcoming the Impacts of Having Children

Theme	Frequency	Source
Children attend athletic events	10	6
Supportive family and friends who take on additional tasks	4	4

Children attend athletic events. The most commonly referenced solution for overcoming and facing time away from their children was having their children attend athletic events with them. Six of those athletic directors with children stated that they brought their children with them to athletic events. One participant proudly described her school's culture of encouraging staff to bring their children to events.

My kids love coming to events, I mean they are a part of it. Really our campus culture is about that. So at Friday night football games there's an entire section of staff kids running around and families that are down the field. It's amazing and

welcoming. My admin team here, there are four administrators, that includes the principal, and three of them all have children that are under 10. They all bring their kids places too. I'm truly thankful for administration that notices that's important, that balance is important.

Participant O explained a similar culture and acceptance with her administrative team, acknowledging their support of her bringing her young daughter to games. Parents of athletes even stepped in to help watch her child when necessary at games.

I remember when she was still fairly an infant, probably 9 months old to maybe 16 months old. I would bring her to volleyball games, basketball games, soccer games and several of the moms would watch her for me because essentially I'm there to supervise the game. I'm kind of spectating the game and I only need to step in when needed. And so I had several moms just say, "Hey you know I'm happy to hold your baby if you need to step in and handle an injury, or to handle any issue that comes up."

As described by Participant K, the culture of children attending work with their athletic director parents starts during their coaching career. Several participants mentioned that they brought their children to athletic events, such as track meets, during their coaching career. As the children got older they were incorporated into the events, even volunteering to help with scorekeeping and timing. When explaining this phenomenon, Participant K described how her relationships with other coaches made it easy for her to bring her sons and find jobs for them to do. Three participants stated that their children "love" to attend the events with their athletic director parent. Two participants passionately explained that by having their children at athletics events, they believed they

were having a positive influence on their child. “I have always believed that being around athletic facilities and being around sports is just a great influence” (Participant O).

Supportive family and friends who take on additional tasks. During three interviews, participants mentioned the role of a supportive family taking on additional tasks as a way to overcome the challenges of being a mother in this role. Additional tasks taken on by family include picking up children from school, cooking and cleaning in the household, and even letting go of work. In one instance, a participant described that she would lean on colleagues who had children in the same age bracket to help take care of her child. Another participant explained that her husband made sacrifices at work to make sure their daughter was taken care of: “My husband, he used to do an after school program, he stopped doing that so he could be home with her” (Participant G). Lastly, a participant explained that her extended family, in-laws specifically, took on the responsibility of drop off and pick up from school. Having a supportive family network was highlighted as a measure with which to offset the demands of children on their athletic director parent.

Impact of Being Female

Research Subquestion 4 stated, “How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of being female in athletic administration in attaining and retaining their positions?” Being female in the position of athletic director is not common. Therefore, being a woman in the role comes with experiences that are exclusive to women. When asked to describe their experiences as a woman athletic director, five themes appeared in the data. These five themed experiences were (a) people assume it is a male in the position, (b) male coaches are disrespectful, (c) “she

doesn't know because she's a woman," (d) the old boys' network, and (e) easily dismissed.

Assume it is a male in the position. Historically the position of athletic director has been held by men, who also hold the title of head football coach. Eleven occurrences in which people assumed the athletic director was a male were cited in the data for this study. One of the strongest examples of this was described by Participant L:

We had a guy walk in[to] my office, that walked in angry, looked around and said, "I was looking for the athletic director." And I'm like, "Well that would be me." And he goes, really straight faced, "Girls are athletic directors?" And I look at him and I go, "Yeah we have kids and everything." And I'm like, "What can I not help you with today?"

She was emphatic that as much as people say "the world has changed about females in those types of positions" that they "still have the same persona that they did before, that the athletic director is a male." Further, she described how society automatically assumes the athletic director is a male and they are totally surprised when they find out otherwise. Participant E highlighted the line of questioning she gets when people find out she is the athletic director. "Really? Do you just oversee the girls' sports?" Or as Participant C stated, "Well I bet the dads love you or how are those boys treating you?" Instead of immediately being able to discuss her programs, she has to first talk about being a woman in the role.

This phenomenon also occurs when dealing with sales people or those outside of the immediate school community. For example, one participant cited her experiences with a salesman who immediately asked for Mr. ----- . She stated, "So the expectation

is it's going to be a man.” The feeling described by these participants is that this expectation is simply a side effect of working in a male-dominated career.

Male coaches are disrespectful. Another unique circumstance cited by the female athletic directors in this study is that male coaches are disrespectful to them. Instances of disrespectful behavior from male coaches were referenced 11 times over six interviews, as well as in one artifact. Participant A stated, “In my career as athletic director, I have had some issues with a few coaches with the way they talk to me.” When asked to explain this in more detail, she stated,

It was early in my career. It was blasting me with really harsh language, throwing me under the bus, and accusing me of working with another coach. So things that I was being judged on, basically being worthless in my position. There was nothing there for them to be making those types of remarks, but yet it was being spread.

Participant D expressed her feelings about this singularity by saying, “I think sometimes it is more difficult for [male coaches] to take leadership from a woman because they are used to being the leaders.” Others reported instances of male coaches not from their own school site being disrespectful. All of those who described experiences of disrespect by male coaches felt that the same behaviors would not have occurred with a male athletic director. Participant N described a story in which a male coach called and was very rude to her after a difficult conversation between her, the coach, and a male athletic director at a meeting. She stated, “And that coach ended up calling me and you know getting in my face about the thing, he never did that with the male AD.”

She doesn't know because she's a woman. Often the women described the feeling of being treated or seen as incompetent in their role as athletic director. The way they termed this was the expression, "She doesn't know because she's a woman." Examples of this include feeling like they have to prove their knowledge of sports, the rules, and resistance when assigning discipline to athletes. This sentiment comes from various groups including athletic staff, administration, parents, and officials. Twenty-seven percent of the participants referenced this experience and this theme also appeared in one artifact. One participant stated, "I kind of constantly feel like I have that to prove myself, like my knowledge of the sport or my knowledge of sports in general," when speaking about meeting with coaches. In addition, Participant I stated,

I feel like the credibility isn't there simply because I'm a woman. I feel like I have to work even harder and if something slips through the cracks it's not, "Oh they made a mistake as an athletic director," it's, "Oh she made a mistake because she's a woman." I really truly feel like a lot of people look at it that way.

As a result of this feeling, many participants do additional preparation when attending meetings or conferences. Participant A went so far as to say,

Being a female I have to have the right answer. Otherwise it's like, "Well, hey you know she's a female, she doesn't know." You know I'm careful to make sure that I do my homework and my research and usually I'm the one that's right. I also make sure they don't have something to come back at me.

Credibility is challenged simply based on gender for female athletic directors as stated by the women in this study.

Old boys' network. Described as an experience that is unique to female athletic directors, the old boys' network appeared in four interviews and one artifact with a frequency of 5. The instances with the old boys' network included questioning authority and equal access to facilities or officials. A telling story of this experience came from Participant F while at an athletic director meeting with the official's assignor. The job of the assignor is to determine placement of officials on game day. During the meeting, the assignor asked the athletic directors to rank the officials. The coding on the sheets, as she described it, "was confusing," in when asking for clarification, the assignor stated, "Well the ones in yellow are varsity level and the other ones do girls games and lower level boys." In total astonishment, Participant F replied, "You cannot make that statement. That is a Title IX violation that you have only the good referees do the boys' varsity games." It took two male athletic directors, who stepped in, to get the assignor to recognize the inappropriateness of his comment. Frustrated, she stated that she was not sure that the male athletic directors would have said anything about his comment had she not been there and stood up for girls in athletics. Another example came from Participant A, when requesting that stadium lights be replaced. She believed that the facilities people worked faster when a male athletic director was involved: "I think they just move on quicker, whereas it's kind of what you said before, you know that old boys' network mentality a little bit. It was an easier road for him than it is for me." This directly links to the next theme of female athletic directors feeling that because they are women, they are easily dismissed.

Easy to dismiss. Women in this study referenced being easy to dismiss simply because they are women in the position. Participant J stated she wished that she would

be taken seriously, just as she would be if she were a male in the position. She told the story of a male coach who was always late in getting his roster and transportation requests in. She described how frustrated she was because she would have to ask repeatedly for his paperwork. He told her to her face that she was “just a paper pusher.” She said that if she were a male, he would never have spoken to her that way and the paperwork would not have been an issue. This was supported by Participant I’s experience at area athletic director meeting. She described her feelings of being dismissed when male sports were discussed.

When it happens to be about sports specific things like football and baseball, and I would say it’s more those two sports than anything, if I have an opinion about anything, those ADs that are those coaches, they don’t like to listen. They like to make it seem like I have no idea what I’m talking about. They want to make sure that they’re questioning me and my credibility and my opinion simply because I didn’t play football or baseball. (Participant I)

By being female, her opinion regarding male sports was not validated by her male colleagues and was easily dismissed. This also ties to previously themed experiences about credibility and coaches being disrespectful simply because they are female athletic directors.

Strategies for Overcoming the Impact of Being Female in Athletic Administration

While many female athletic directors face being treated with disrespect and have their credibility questioned, they have developed strategies to overcome these challenges. Four strategies were identified by the participants in this study. These strategies are

building relationships with people, developing rapport with staff, use of leadership skills, and having administrative support (see Table 8).

Table 8

Strategies for Facing and Overcoming the Impacts Being Female in Athletic Administration

Theme	Frequency	Source
Relationships with people	23	12
Rapport with staff	11	8
Leadership skills	11	6
Supportive administration	6	5

Relationships with people. The mostly commonly reported mechanism used to combat the previously outlined challenges of being a woman in athletic administration is building relationships with people. This theme had a frequency of 23 and was cited in both interviews and artifacts. Examples of building relationships with people, as defined by participants, included working relationships with other females in athletics, people in the community, and with CIF. Participants reported that they “hang together” because there are so few female athletic directors at meetings and conferences or even in their league. One participant cited three female athletic directors in her area as great resources and friends. Participant D spoke to attending conferences as a venue for learning and building relationships: “Mentoring is going to California State Athletic Director conferences. I go to all those. I’ve learned a lot from listening to other athletic administrators who are way ahead of me.” Having these relationships with other women in athletics facilitates mentoring and acting as a role model for female athletes as well. Participant O stated, “I have some great relationships with my female athletes and even

the parents. And you know I'm a people person and I think you've got to be a people person to be in this job. And I believe that my goal is to be a role model."

In addition to relationships with females in athletics, participants referenced relationships with the community as essential in this role as a woman as well. When asked to highlight her career as a woman, Participant K explained that she taught and coached in the community for 20 years. Having been in the community so long, she was able to establish relationships with other coaches, teachers from all over the district, and parents. She stated, "Oh, relationships are very much key in this position and having the right network of people to support you is also in this position." This network of relationships transcends to higher levels of athletics as well, including CIF. Participants reported building relationships with others by joining committees and representing females in the Women in Sports Conference. As Participant H stated, "I've had great opportunities to be part of the Women in Sports Committee and that's because I already know people on the committee." Having a network of relationships establishes credibility for these women in their positions as athletic directors. As Participant B said about having established credibility, "Again, I go back to the fact that I've been around a long time and my reputation and my name has been out there for a long time."

Rapport with staff. Related to building relationships is the rapport with staff that participants referenced as a way to overcome being seen as a women first and not simply as the athletic director. As highlighted by Participant D,

In fact I feel in my conference I have a lot of respect from all of them because I worked really hard to help them. And I make myself available to help them and

they really like me for that and they don't look at my gender. They just go,
"Wow, she is really helping us."

Participant E described how once she had established rapport with coaches and staff she was able to feel valued in her opinions. She described with emphasis how she had worked to build these relationships, which led to being able to "talk shop or talk game philosophy or about substitutions and how to handle certain situations with parents" with her male coaches. As a result she felt that they valued her opinions: "That's all I can ask for in this role, is that you know, you feel valued regardless of gender." Another participant stated that due to her rapport with her staff, she has even had them stand up for her in situations in which she was being challenged in her role. They have gone as far as to comfort her saying, "You know don't worry about what he said to you" (Participant A).

Leadership skills. In addition to relationships and support, female athletic directors in this study cited the use of leadership skills when mitigating the challenges of being a woman in this position. Honesty and open communication were referenced by one participant. In describing how she faces conflict she stated,

If they say something or I feel there is push back, or they are defensive, I will just say, "Hey, this bothers me. Help me understand why this was your response." I don't face that a lot, but when I do, I call them on it because they many not even be aware that they're coming across that way in the communication.

Participant F shared that her planning, organization, and thoughtfulness have made her a leader among the athletic directors in her area. For instance, if there is a big conference or meeting with top-level athletic administrators, the mostly male league of athletic

directors asks her to run the meeting. She hinted at being offended at this because she was not sure if it was a compliment or just another way of saying “you are a woman ‘who is used to running a family and a marriage,’ so you can do this too.” One participant explained how she “continuously chips away” at the challenges of being a female in the position by giving presentations on this topic at conferences and universities, further demonstrating her leadership skills.

I try to do those things just so simply I have enough of a reputation that I can maybe chip away and hopefully gain the respect and trust of other athletic directors, so that the number of the old boys’ club is less and less. And maybe they’ll jump on board with the fact that I just want them to realize I know what I’m talking about. (Participant I)

Administration is supportive of female athletic directors. Referenced six times throughout five individual interviews was the theme of supportive administration. Many of the women who pointed to having administrative support of female athletic directors cited a long history of this culture in their school or school district. Participant O proudly described the long history of support for women in athletics at her high school. Her high school has a tradition of successful female sports and she believes that they are viewed equally by administration and the student body. The reason for this treatment of excellence she credits to her female predecessor in the position. This then directly translates to support for her as a female athletic director. Other participants stated that their administration, both male and female, act as mentors giving these women the support they need while in the position. For example, in one scenario, an athletic director reported being talked to inappropriately by a male coach to her assistant principal. He

responded with, “Okay I completely understand, let’s go talk to him.” Another example of support came when a parent ignored the chain of command and asked for an assistant principal when dealing with athletic discipline. Participant B’s assistant principal responded to the parents request with, “Miss----- has much more experience along this line than I do and I think you know what she’s saying is correct.” Not only are these administrators supportive of their female athletic directors, but they mentor them and give them credibility, providing further evidence of the importance of these strategies for women in athletic administration.

Impact of Sexual Discrimination

Research Subquestion 5 stated, “How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of sexual discrimination in attaining and retaining their positions?” Sexual discrimination is defined as being treated inequitably based on gender. Women in athletic administration reported sexual discrimination throughout their career and career ascension. In this study, 11 participants stated that they had no experience with sexual discrimination throughout their career. However, when asked probing questions regarding experiences with male staff, administration, or parents, participants cited several examples of sexual discrimination. The majority of the women in this study did not immediately recognize that they had experienced sexual discrimination. However, four participants readily identified examples of sexual discrimination. Highlighted experiences were dealing with male staff in male-dominated careers, breaking chain of command, and unsupportive administration (see Table 4).

Male staff in male-dominated careers. When discussing sexual discrimination with female athletic directors, the most commonly cited issues occurred with male staff in

male-dominated positions with a frequency of 14. Typically, athletics is dominated by males, as is administration, and facilities and maintenance departments. All participants displayed frustration and extreme discomfort with the experiences they described with sexual discrimination. One of the strongest examples of this was shared by Participant I when she was applying for the position. Angrily she described how, when the position of athletic director opened, she was held to a different standard than her male counterparts. She had worked as a teacher coach on campus and had trained with the current male athletic director. Following is her description of the incident:

I was coaching three sports at the time and the administration said that I would have to quit coaching altogether if I wanted to become the athletic director. And so I left that feeling a little defeated because I really wanted to still coach. And then I found out that there was another coach on campus, who also coaches three sports, who had applied for the position. I asked him if they told him he had to stop coaching. He said absolutely not. (Participant I)

This double standard is evident anecdotally in the data as well. Male athletic directors are typically also coaches; most often it is football but it could be even a female sport like softball. Of the female athletic directors in this study, only three are coaches and only of female sports. Participant C also dealt with a double standard in her first year as athletic director. She was told by the administration that they had given an extra prep period to the previous athletic director as well as one to the current football coach to act as assistants to her.

[The assistant principal] paid them to work less, to teach less every day, so that they could make sure that poor ----- could handle this big job on her own. And

those guys did absolutely nothing. They just used their extra hours off to go golf or go to lunch or to shoot the shit, or go watch football or whatever they did. I never saw them once during those prep periods. (Participant C)

Another example of experienced sexual discrimination had to do with the facilities and maintenance departments. These departments were typically run by and made up of males. When asking for access to facilities and/or to have their facilities set up, several participants cited having to ask multiple times or being given a hard time. One participant shared an example in which she had to go back and forth with a custodian to have her bleachers pulled out, another described asking for her fields to be lined, only to be ignored. However, when the male baseball coach asked for the same services, it was done immediately. Lastly, one participant explained how she was required to enter all facility requests on the district calendar while her male counterparts in the same district did not have to follow this protocol.

One of the most direct examples of sexual discrimination shared by participants in this study came from Participant G. Her experience was related to a male coach who felt like she did not belong in the position and quit coaching when she became athletic director. He told her she did not know enough about baseball and he did not want to have to deal with her. She also had to deal with a new assistant principal who told her she was not the right person for the job because she did not “know enough about the major sports, football, basketball, and baseball” (Participant G).

Breaking the chain of command. In athletics, the chain of command for the complaint process is as follows: coach, athletic director, assistant principal, principal, district office. Thirty-three percent of participants referenced incidences in which

athletes, parents, or coaches completely jumped over them as athletic directors and went directly from the coach to the assistant principal when dealing with athletic issues. One stated, “That frustrates me because it’s like I could have handled that. I wasn’t given the opportunity to handle it” (Participant K). Another example involved a parent who wanted a football coach to be dismissed. This parent went directly to the district office, even accusing the athletic director of a personal relationship with the coach. This participant said this never would have happened with a male athletic director.

Participant H experienced sexual discrimination in the form of breaking the chain of command when applying for an athletic director position. This position was newly developed as the prior job had been split between two athletic directors, one for male and the other for female sports. During the vetting process, a male connected with the new high school contacted male coaches at her current school “to ask what male coaches thought of a woman and their ability to lead them. For instance, would I get along or how would I handle a football coach?”

Administration is unsupportive. An athletic director reports directly to administration, meaning an assistant or head principal. These are the people who hire for the position. In education, administration moves from school to school inheriting the staff onsite. This can result in a principal who is unsupportive of having a female in the role. One participant cited two principals over several years who told her “she wasn’t the right person for the position because she hadn’t played football and therefore couldn’t get a feel for the game” (Participant G). A total of four participants felt they had experienced sexual discrimination by someone on their administrative team. An example of this is during the interview process. One participant shared,

I think it's still a lot of times you're getting the old boys' club at the principal level. And so when you have your principals who are on the panel and they hear that the people have kids, I think that regardless in their brain they want someone that can be completely committed and all in and they don't feel like females can do that. (Participant L)

Anecdotally, Participant H stated she was worried about women being weeded out of the athletic director position in general because of their lack of experience with football and opportunities or experiences that males have in athletics.

Strategies for Overcoming the Impacts of Sexual Discrimination

While the women this study reported having had experiences with sexual discrimination, they did not readily recognize it and therefore did not formally report it. However, they did highlight moderating this barrier with two strategies: their relationships with people and standing their ground. In a total of eight interviews, with a frequency of 12, the most commonly referenced strategy for overcoming sexual discrimination focused on relationships with people. The second theme, standing your ground, was referenced in four interviews (see Table 9).

Table 9

Strategies for Facing and Overcoming the Impacts of Sexual Discrimination

Theme	Frequency	Source
Relationships with people	12	8
Stand your ground	4	4

Relationships with people. The importance of relationships with people has been referenced for multiple barriers in this study. Again this theme appears when dealing

with sexual discrimination. These relationships include administration, athletic staff, support staff, and the community. In total opposition to the principals described above, Participant D detailed how her administration handpicked her and was very supportive of her in the position: “It all goes back to leadership above you, because if the leadership above you is very embracing of women, is very supportive of athletics in general, then they will really help you.” Participant B said she goes out of her way to nominate her staff for classified employee of the year and recognizes people in staff meetings as a way to build relationships. She said that if the athletic director does not do those things, “You’re only hurting yourself.” Participant M discussed how she had combated any experiences with sexual discrimination because of her ability to cultivate relationships: “I’ve cultivated these relationships with our school board, with our parents, with the superintendent, with the principals that I’ve had and worked under, so that they pretty much respect me.” The majority of participants who cited positive relationships as a way to curb sexual discrimination also stated they felt “lucky” because they recognized that this is not the case for many other women in the field of athletic administration.

Stand your ground. Four participants in this study stated that they stand their ground when dealing with experiences of sexual discrimination. Examples of standing their ground, as defined by the participants, are being very direct with their expectations, holding firm to what is ethical, and not backing down when lines are crossed. Participant K explained that this is not always easy to do: “Sometimes dealing with a male coach that has a very strong personality can be intimidating. It’s more about I just need to stand my ground.”

Time Demands of the Job

Research Subquestion 6 stated, “How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome time demands of the job in attaining and retaining their positions?” Athletic directors reported that the position requires hours outside of the school day and school year. This is due to the fact that athletic directors must attend athletic events in the evenings and weekends as well as prepare for upcoming seasons. Two themes appeared in the data when participants were asked to describe the time demands of their position. Almost every athletic director stated that the biggest barrier or challenge for them is working extremely long days. In addition to the length of the days, athletic directors reported working without pay for the additional evening, weekend, and summer hours. This was referenced by 10 of the participants in this study.

Extremely long days. A typical day for athletic directors starts a half hour before the school bell rings and does not end until the varsity game of the season is over. This can range from 10- to 12-hour days, adding up to 70 or 80 hours a week. When asked to describe why the hours are so long, Participant C stated, “It is just a complete never ending to do list and it just grows.” This list consists of clearing athletes and coaches, making schedules, ordering transportation, securing facilities, and attending athletic events. Participant H said that the demands in the position are so high that “it’s brutal.” She gets up to do work before work, she gets to work early to answer e-mails, and then she attends every home game. In addition to that, she works with her coaches and administrators when they reach out for help. As she put it, “There is a lot of work involved” (Participant H). One phenomenon that almost every athletic director in this study mentioned was the demands during football season. On Friday nights, when there

is a varsity football game, athletic directors do not leave work until after 10:00 p.m. “Fall Friday night football games are probably the most demanding days of the job in terms of showing up to work at 6:45 a.m. and you know walking out of work at 10:30 at night and being on all day” (Participant E).

In addition to being athletic directors, seven of the participants also teach. Many of these women teach two to three periods of a class and then move onto their administrative duties as an athletic director. With a split contract and the extra demands required of them as athletic directors, many of the participants do not leave at the end of the school day even if there are no games. They feel the need to stay and work because if they do not, they will fall behind and it will jeopardize their programs. As Participant I stated,

I mean it impacts my life tremendously, it impacts the hours that I need in order to get the stuff done, because it’s not like any regular 9-5 job where you can just set off or put it off till tomorrow. You have to have it done. There are deadlines and if you mess up then you’re forfeiting games, somebody’s getting hurt, and you’re getting sued, the districts getting sued. So there’s a lot of responsibility and liability put on your shoulders that a lot of people are not aware of.

Those participants who do not teach commented on the demands of teaching and being athletic director. Participant D stated, “I feel like they are constantly drowning and constantly trying to get their head above water.”

Overall, the sentiment is that being an athletic director means she works around the clock, around the year. As Participant J put it, even with four release periods and

teaching only one class, “It’s still not a September 1st to June 16th job. It’s 12 months and really every day of the week.”

No stipend or pay for extra work. In addition to long days, athletic directors work weekends, holidays, and vacations without extra pay. There is no rhyme or reason to how athletic directors in these two sections are compensated for their work. Some have teacher contracts paid at a teacher’s salary and some have full athletic director contracts paid on a teacher’s salary scale. All participants referenced receiving a stipend in addition to their salary for being athletic director; this varied widely in each district. Most athletic directors in this study were not paid for weekend or summer work, although the position required it. Those who did receive stipends for summer work cited being paid 20 to 40 hours for the entire summer. Every participant, regardless of the pay allotted to them, stated that the amount of hours they worked was not covered by their stipend. One participant explained her experience every summer trying to prepare for the upcoming fall season:

School starts August 28 and I’m a TOSA in my district, a teacher on special assignment, so I don’t go back until the teachers go back. Football starts August 1st, so they try to pay me like 20 hours a summer which is literally like a tenth of what I work.

While most of the participants just accepted this as their reality, there were times when they pushed back against the expectation. For example Participant J said she stood up to the district office when they tried to call a summer meeting in which they were not going to pay the athletic directors. She refused to go unless she was paid, citing that some

athletic directors would have to get child care at their own cost to be present in the meeting.

Strategies for Overcoming the Impact of the Time Demands

Athletic directors in this study identified four strategies for overcoming the time demands of this position. These themes were use of time management skills, flexible schedules, focusing on the kids, and simply liking what they do for a living (see Table 10).

Table 10

Strategies for Facing and Overcoming the Impact of the Time Demands

Theme	Frequency	Source
Time management skills	8	8
Flexible schedule	7	6
Focus on the kids	5	5
Like what they do for a living	5	4

Time management skills. Time management skills were referenced by eight participants in this study as an effective strategy when mitigating time demands of the jobs. When asked what time management looks like, participants described identifying what was really important and had to be done or prioritizing tasks. As Participant C explained, “You have to prioritize, know you? Are you going to answer e-mails, are you going to check grades, are you going to make sure the officials are showing up, or are you actually going to a sporting event?” A few participants described the struggle with wanting to attend games and practices to show support to athletes and staff, knowing that not much work would be done during those hours. As Participant B stated, “It’s [being in the position] helped me develop some really good time management skills and some

prioritizing skills of what absolutely has to be done and what can be done further down the road.”

Flexible schedule. Related to time management skills is the theme of having a flexible schedule. While almost every participant referenced the high time demands of the position, half of them countered the concern with their ability to have a flexible schedule:

I really don't mind the hours because we are considered flex time in our district. As long as we put in 40 hours a week, as we know is very easy to do, they don't care what 40 hours. So if I need to sleep in until noon and then come in at one that day and stay until 10 for football, there's never been an issue with that.

(Participant G)

In addition to coming in late on long game days, some administrators approved their athletic directors to take time off to attend family events without having to “claim” it. This was explained by Participant O, “If I want to go spend time in my daughter's classroom one hour a week from 9 to 10 a.m. and I don't have classes to teach, I'm free to do that or if I need to go on an errand.” So while the hours are brutal, as one participant put it, having the ability to offset their hours is a bonus that makes working the long hours easier.

Focus on the kids. When asked how they justify working such long hours without compensation, five participants stated that they focus on the kids (athletes). Participant E stated that she loves watching the kids grow and flourish. Others echoed this sentiment with statements like, “I love athletics. I love the kids. I love watching them win” and “I had some very influential coaches in my life; that is kind of what I try

to bring to our department.” One participant even stated that it was the athletes who made her better and was a way to justify the time demands of the position:

There’s something that makes you better being around athletes, whether its high school or college, the ups and downs, I truly feel like it’s just a platform to success. And there’s so much that can be learned and gained from that.

(Participant E)

The idea that as athletic directors they get to work with kids, watch them grow, act as mentors, and better the lives of others made the long hours worth it to 33% of participants in this study.

Like what they do. In addition to their focus on kids, five participants cited that the time was not a factor for them in the position because they like what they do. As Participant J put it, “I would say the time demands have definitely caused a lot of stress. However, they have never made me feel like I would quit the job. I love what I do. I’ll retire doing this job.” All of these women had been a coach at some point in their career and acknowledged the importance of athletics in their lives. Loving athletics has translated to loving their jobs, as explained by Participant E. “You know I love athletics. It’s in my blood . . . I just love it. I thrive off the student athletes here at the school. It’s an amazing place to be.”

Impact of Travel Demands

Research Subquestion 7 stated, “How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome the impact of the travel demands of the job in attaining and retaining their positions?”

Travel demands of athletic directors include traveling to and from athletic events, meetings, and conferences. When asked to highlight the travel demands of the position, athletic directors in this study identified traveling long distances, amount of time in traffic, and miles on their cars. Although eight of the 15 participants acknowledged travel demands in the position, none of them felt that the travel demands would be enough for them to consider leaving the position.

Attend events long distances away. With a frequency of eight, attending events long distances away was named as a travel demand experienced by women in this study. They cited having to travel to away games, playoff games, and meetings for both the league and CIF as examples of situations in which they have to travel long distances. Playoff games in particular were cited, as these typically require teams to travel out of the county and several miles from their school. For example, one athletic director was preparing to travel to Fresno, a 6-hour drive, for a state-level volleyball match that would last 2 hours. In addition to games, many participants referenced attending meetings, including those hosted by CIF. As Participant N explained, “There’s a lot of meetings and I happened to be involved in a lot of committees with CIF and with our local athletic directors, as well as the state. So I do a lot of traveling.” Similar to how athletic directors were compensated for hours worked, there was no consistent way in which districts managed reimbursement for travel expenses. Some athletic directors received a travel expense stipend while others were expected to pay out of pocket for their travel expenses.

Time in traffic and miles on the car. In addition to the long distances traveled, athletic directors in this study cited the amount of time in traffic and miles on their car as

a challenge to being in the position with a frequency of four. One participant explained time in traffic as an “anxiety builder,” and that long term, it has taken a toll on her desire to stay in the position. She added, “It is taking a lot of time in evenings to go to games and not seeing a monetary reward, even though you do get a lot of intrinsic reward being around kids. Something’s got to give eventually.”

Strategies for Overcoming the Impact of Travel Demands

Travel demands alone were not recognized as a reason any one participant would leave the position of athletic director. With little to no compensation for travel, hours spent in stressful traffic, and the addition of miles on their car, why do participants not see it as a major concern? The only theme that appeared, with a frequency of four, was that these participants enjoy some aspect of travel for work (see Table 11).

Table 11

Strategies for Facing and Overcoming the Impact of Travel Demands

Theme	Frequency	Source
Enjoy aspects of traveling	4	4

Enjoy aspects of traveling. When participants were asked how they managed the travel demands of the position, four identified enjoying some aspect of traveling.

Aspects they enjoyed included networking with other athletic directors, seeing friends, watching kids play, and educational opportunities. Participant B described how she enjoyed traveling to Sacramento for state meetings because it provided “opportunities to broaden your scope, to broaden your knowledge, and to network with additional people.” Participant I enjoyed traveling to her friends’ schools, facilitating the opportunity to “hang out,” which might not happen otherwise because of the demands of the position.

Ultimately, travel demands were not a major concern for athletic directors in this study because they saw the benefits outweighing the costs.

Summary

Chapter IV began with a summary of the study starting with the purpose statement, research questions, and methodology. This qualitative phenomenological inquiry study examined and described how female athletic directors in California faced and overcame barriers in attaining and retaining their positions. The researcher collected data by interviewing 15 female athletic directors in the Southern and San Diego Sections of CIF. In addition, artifacts, such as resumes, news articles, and conference presentations, were collected by the researcher. A total of 39 themes emerged in an analysis of the data with regard to answering the central research question and seven subresearch questions. Chapter V further develops the findings of the study by providing conclusions and implications for action.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological inquiry study was to examine and describe how female athletic directors in California face and overcome barriers in attaining and retaining their positions. To facilitate the purpose of this study, the following central research question was asked: “How do female athletic directors in California face and overcome barriers in attaining and retaining their positions?” Seven research subquestions were designed using the barriers identified by Acosta and Carpenter (2014), Coakley (2001), and M. D. Smith (2005): (a) the impact of the old boys’ network, (b) the impact of marital status, (c) the impact of having children, (d) being female in athletic administration, (e) the impact of sexual discrimination, (f) time demands of the job, and (g) travel demands of the job.

The population for this study represented female high school athletic directors working in California. All participants in this study operated under the rules and governance structure of the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF). Therefore, as defined by the boundaries established by CIF, the target population for this study consisted of female athletic directors working in the San Diego and Southern Sections. Data indicated that in these two sections, less than 10% of athletic directors were female or roughly 66 individuals. Of this 10%, 15 female athletic directors from the previously identified sections were selected to make up the sample for this study.

Data were obtained using semistructured interviews and the collection of artifacts in the form of resumes, presentations, and news articles provided by the participants. Each participant provided a narrative that was used to identify similarities and differences in experiences. This was used to develop a conceptual framework with which to

understand the phenomenon that females experience in attaining and retaining their positions (Creswell, 2007).

Major Findings

Upon completion of data collection and analysis for themes within the context of the conceptual framework of the seven categories of barriers that exist for female athletic directors, the data revealed six major findings. The first two findings are related to the identified barriers female athletic directors face. The last four findings are connected to the identified strategies for overcoming these barriers.

Finding 1

Female athletic directors are rare and face barriers related to gender.

Being female in athletic administration continues to be rare and comes with extra challenges, including sexual discrimination, the old boys' network, and exclusion from decision making due to physical structures. Female athletic directors reported that the old boys' network is still a very present barrier to their position. The major contributors to this barrier are male coaches, specifically from football, basketball, and baseball, who resist being told what to do by a woman. Due to the small number of females in the position, female athletic directors continue to face unique circumstances including a general assumption that the position is held by a male, difficulty with male staff taking direction from a woman, and being viewed as incompetent. Sexual discrimination does occur for female athletic directors, although it is not readily recognized. Instances of sexual discrimination are attributed to dealing with males in male-dominated career paths. For example, it is common to have male coaches break the chain of command and ignore protocols when the athletic director is a woman. In addition to the social and

organizational barriers described, male-only structures act as a physical barrier for female athletic directors as well. Such physical barriers include meetings being held in male locker rooms and coaching rooms accessible to males only, resulting in exclusion of female athletic directors from decision-making activities.

Finding 2

Time and travel demands negatively impact female athletic directors' ability to participate in family events.

Athletic directors spend a tremendous amount of time supporting the extracurricular activities of other peoples' children, which takes them away from their own families and partners. Athletic directors work long days, weekends, and are unpaid for summer work. While these are accepted duties of the position of athletic director, they do come with a price. For example, married female athletic directors expressed additional concerns about time away from their families and partner as well as extra demands their job places on their partner. As reported by participants in this study, female athletic directors need a partner who understands their passion for athletics due to these additional demands.

In addition, having children, in combination with being a female athletic director, requires further demands on family life. Female athletic directors face challenges with time away from their children. The children of female athletic directors are faced with compromising personal aspects of their own lives, such as not having help with schoolwork, missing their own school or athletic events, and time away from their mother at night. As reported by the female athletic directors in this study, this challenge can be

overcome by having their children attend athletic events with them and by developing a network of support via family and friends.

Finding 3

Successful female athletic directors build positive relationships with individuals in key positions at school sites, the district office, and CIF.

Female athletic directors need to build relationships with others in key positions. This was the most commonly reported mechanism for combating barriers related to gender, sexual discrimination, and the old boys' network. Specifically, when overcoming the barrier of the old boys' network, participants in this study cited their ability to build relationships with coaches, athletic directors, and administration. In addition, participants cited key relationships beyond their immediate school site, including working relationships with other females in athletics, people in the community, and with the CIF.

Finding 4

Effective female athletic directors stand up for themselves by not tolerating negative comments, holding staff accountable, and requesting additional support.

As determined by the women in this study, female athletic directors must stand up for themselves. This was of significance to female athletic directors when facing issues of sexual discrimination and the old boys' network. Participants in this study reported that standing up for themselves includes not tolerating negative comments, holding staff accountable for their actions or lack thereof, and requesting support from officials outside of the school site (CIF or district-level administration).

Finding 5

Intentional mentoring from administration fosters growth for female athletic directors.

Female athletic directors need to receive mentoring by administration. As referenced by the women in this study, mentoring from administration is essential for female athletic directors. Administration was most often cited as those administrators who encouraged participants to apply for the position of athletic director and therefore supported their growth and development. When facing barriers and challenges, having a solid relationship and a mentor in the principal or assistant principal was key for the women in this study. These mentors helped female athletic directors develop in their leadership skills and acted as a resource.

Finding 6

Intentional mentoring by other athletic directors is key to success for female athletic directors.

Female athletic directors need to receive mentoring by other athletic directors. Unless someone has served in the position of athletic director, it is not easy to understand the demands and requirements of the position. Essential to the development of these women into successful female athletic directors is the mentoring they received by other athletic directors, both male and female. Several participants cited being groomed by their predecessor, helping them to develop both key relationships and understanding of duties of the position. In addition, other athletic directors can help female athletic directors build networking opportunities and elicit support.

Unexpected Findings

There were three unexpected findings in this study, the first related to the significance of male coaches acting as a barrier for women in the position. Second was the lack of immediate recognition of sexual discrimination experienced by participants in this study, and last was the general acceptance of time and travel demands without compensation.

Unexpected Finding 1

Male coaches, specifically “The Big 3,” act as a barrier for female athletic directors.

Appearing in three of the seven research questions as a major theme was the barrier and challenge that male coaches present to female athletic directors, specifically the football, basketball, and baseball coaches. These coaches were termed “The Big 3” in this study because they are the sports that bring in the most revenue for an athletic department and were reported to cause the most issues for female athletic directors. The Big 3 were recognized as active members of the old boys’ network, key players in instance of sexual discrimination, and a driving force of disrespect and exclusion of women from decision-making opportunities. There is an underlying issue here that needs further examination.

Unexpected Finding 2

Female athletic directors do not readily recognize instances of sexual discrimination.

More often than not, the women in this study did not readily recognize instances of sexual discrimination. When asked if they experienced sexual discrimination, most

denied having experienced it at all until the researcher asked probing questions regarding interactions with administration, support staff, and male coaches. Even when identifying examples of sexual discrimination, participants were reluctant to call it sexual discrimination and offered other reasons for the behavior of male coaches, staff, and administration.

Unexpected Finding 3

Time and travel without pay is an accepted demand of the position of athletic director.

Almost every participant in this study readily accepted the expectation that they would work well over 40 hours a week, work weekends and summers without pay, and travel at their own expense. While this expectation is well-known in the athletic director community, it was unexpected that it had little to no impact on how long participants anticipated staying in their career. Travel expectations had limited negative impacts on participants; in fact, participants reported enjoying several aspects of the travel demands. Such factors included seeing their friends and peers while traveling, networking, professional development, and watching athletes compete.

Conclusions

This study identified the barriers that female athletic directors face when attaining and retaining the position of athletic director in California. Findings were identified in both the experiences and strategies used when they face and attempt to overcome the seven previously outlined barriers. In congruence with the body of literature on females in athletic administration, this study also concluded that many of the identified barriers for women in athletic administration are rooted in gender discrimination (Emerson, 2002;

Hasbrook et al., 1990; Knoppers, 1989; Stangl & Kane, 1991; Wilkinson & Schneider, 1991). Similarly stated in the historical work of Kanter (1977), this study concluded that the underrepresentation of females in California's athletic administration was directly related to the concept of male-dominated occupations limiting women's opportunity, power, and proportions. As a result of the previously outlined findings, the research concludes the following:

Conclusion 1

More support for women in athletic administration is needed as a result of the social, organizational, and physical structures that act as a barrier for female athletic directors during their career ascension.

The female athletic directors in this study acknowledged both the lack of female representation throughout CIF and the desperate need for greater support for women interested in becoming athletic administrators. This was attributed to the finding that women have unique experiences in athletic administration that can be linked to gender. This was supported in the literature and was identified by social and organizational structures that act as barriers for women in atypical career paths, such as athletic administration (Herber, 2002; Krane, 2001; Lovett & Lowry, 1994). In particular, the women in this study highlighted the role that male coaches and administration play, as well the perception that women are incompetent as leaders in athletics, as barriers to their career ascension. Based on the finding that being female in athletic administration continues to be rare because of social, organizational, and physical barriers women face when attaining and retaining the position, it can be concluded that there needs to be more support for women in athletic administration by both school districts and the athletic

community. Forms of support need to address the specifics of negative stereotyping, opportunities for access to positions that help women earn the position of athletic director, intentional inclusion of women in athletic administration, and gender neutral meeting facilities. It is not enough to recognize that these barriers exist, but also that an active support system must be put in place to combat and refute the barriers that are placed in front of women when trying to attain the position of athletic director.

Conclusion 2

Female athletic directors need opportunities to find balance with work and family.

As highlighted in the work of Bracken (2009), time and travel demands are barriers for women in athletic administration. The women in this study provide further evidence of this finding. While some participants have created strategies that compensate for this demand, it was found that being a female athletic director comes at a high price for the partners and families of these women. This supports a similar finding by Moore et al. (2005), in which female high school athletic directors report that time and long hours require significant personal sacrifice. Based on the finding that athletic directors spend a tremendous amount of time at work or traveling, it can be concluded that school districts need to foster a focus on balance with family and work life for athletic administrators.

Conclusion 3

A school culture that supports ongoing development of staff relationships helps female athletic directors be successful.

Based on the finding that female athletic directors need to build relationships with others in key positions, it can be concluded that school sites need to focus on building a school culture that supports the ongoing development of relationships among staff. Necessary leadership skills for effective interpersonal relationships specific to athletics were previously highlighted in the works of Branch (1990), Moore et al. (2005), and Northington (2016). Specific to females, and as identified by female athletic directors, the top three necessary leadership skills are interpersonal and communication skills, organizational skills, and team building (Moore et al., 2005). The current study echoes this sentiment and provides further evidence of the importance of providing opportunities for women to develop positive relationships with staff while in a leadership role.

Conclusion 4

Personal development opportunities provided by the athletic community are essential for female athletic directors.

Based on the finding that female athletic directors must stand up for themselves, it can be concluded that the athletic community needs to facilitate personal development opportunities for women in athletic leadership roles. The literature shows that women lead differently than men (Bjork, 2000; Hutton & Gougeon, 1993; Irby & Brown, 1995; Penney & Evans, 2002). Women need the opportunities to hone and develop their unique and effective style of leadership.

Conclusion 5

In order to retain highly qualified female athletic directors, school districts need to cultivate opportunities for mentorship among athletic administration and school site administrators.

In terms of athletics, research has shown that mentoring is key to the development of both athletes and coaches (Bloom et al., 1998). However, little research has been done in the area of athletic administration and mentoring (Frawley, 2016). Based on the finding that female athletic directors need to receive mentoring by administration, it can be concluded that school districts need to cultivate opportunities for mentoring among athletic administration and principals or assistant principals, in order to retain highly qualified female athletic directors.

Conclusion 6

The athletic community needs to develop and facilitate a community network for female athletic directors that includes mentoring by other athletic directors.

Similar to the findings of Moore et al. (2005), this study also provided evidence that networking plays an essential role in attaining the position of athletic director at the high school level. Both the work of Young (1990) and Moore et al. (2005) suggested that women need to increase both the effectiveness of networks for women and to look for opportunities to be brought into other networks by their male peers. Based on the finding that female athletic directors need to receive mentoring by other athletic directors, it can be concluded that the athletic community needs to develop and facilitate a community network for female athletic directors.

Implications for Action

The findings and conclusions of this study provide evidence for the continued barriers that females in athletic administration face when attaining and retaining the position of athletic director. Based on the findings that women face unique barriers related to gender and gender discrimination and the conclusion that the athletic

community and school sites need to provide more opportunities for these women, the researcher identified seven implications for action.

Implication for Action 1

School districts and school sites must exhibit active recruitment efforts to include more female athletic directors.

Based on the conclusion that there needs to be more support for women in athletic administration, it is recommended that school districts and school sites allocate funds for the intentional recruitment of women in athletics. School districts must actively recruit female applicants for the position of athletic director; this includes the use of human resource search committees and recruitment tools to identify female candidates. School sites should facilitate internship programs in which potential female athletic directors intern with current successful female athletic administrators. When girls see women in this role, they are more likely to see themselves in the position of athletic director.

Implication for Action 2

School districts must consider a flexible schedule, including release time to provide athletic directors the freedom to attend family events.

Based on the conclusion that school districts need to foster a focus on balance with family and work life for athletic administrators, it is recommended that school districts develop a unique flexible schedule. This must include release hours or dollars to provide athletic directors the support needed to provide balance in their work and family life. In addition to the assigned stipend or salary, release time must be allocated to allow athletic directors the freedom to attend their own families' extracurricular events (i.e., school plays, athletic events, or children's school trips). For example, if her child is

performing in a school play during the school day, the athletic director should be able to leave to attend that event without having to claim time against her paid salary or stipend. In essence, there is an exchange for hours worked outside of her contracted hours as athletic director and attending family events during the school day. Release time dollars must be allocated into a school site budget for substitutes who may be needed as a result of the athletic director leaving during the school day. This is similar to what is done if an athletic director needs a substitute while attending a school or district meeting. In doing so, the school district or site will demonstrate its value for balance and focus on the family.

Implication for Action 3

School districts and school site must sponsor “A Day in My Shoes” program to improve understanding of what administrative, support staff, and athletic jobs really look like.

Based on the conclusion that school sites need to develop a school culture that supports the development of relationships among staff, it is recommended that school sites provide an A Day in My Shoes program. This program must provide a mirrored experience for all participants to help ensure an understanding of what one another’s jobs really look like, therefore, providing a foundation to build relationships. For example, the athletic director should sign up to work alongside the facilities manager for an entire day. The athletic director should attempt to fulfill the duties of the facilities manager, as appropriate, to gain insight into the true job demands of a facilities manager. In addition, the facilities manager should then sign up to work alongside the athletic director for an

entire day. At the end of this mirrored experience, the two parties should collaborate on ways to improve communication and action between the two departments.

Other staff relationship programs could include coaches' coffee, athletic advisory council, and staff trips to playoff or regional games. Coaches' coffee would be an informal meeting in which all coaches are invited to sit with each other and the athletic administrator over coffee to discuss current concerns, needs, and strategies for the athletic department. An athletic advisory council could be formed, consisting of head coaches, support staff, athletes, and the athletic director. This council would act as an advisor to the athletic director and communicate the needs of the school site's athletic department. Team-building trips to playoff or regional competitions should be supported by the school site, allowing for the informal development of relationships between athletic staff. The overarching goal of these programs would be to build relationships between athletic staff and the athletic director. More specifically, coaches and support staff would be provided leadership opportunities and a way to voice their opinions. Such strategies have been shown to be successful when building relationships with leaders and their staff (White, Harvey, & Fox, 2016) and are in congruence with female leadership styles (Bjork, 2000).

Implication for Action 4

CIF conferences, including regional and annual events, must host a spotlight on female athletic directors.

Based on the conclusion that the athletic community needs to facilitate personal development opportunities for women in athletic leadership roles, it is recommended that CIF spotlight female athletic directors at the California State Athletic Directors

Conferences and annual events like the Women in Sports Conference in order to heighten the importance of females in athletic leadership positions. Breakout sessions must focus on being assertive, development of leadership strategies, and setting boundaries.

Implication for Action 5

CIF, in partnership with school districts, must design and implement a versatile induction program that includes mentors, peer support, and continued collaboration for all athletic directors.

Based on the conclusion that school districts need to cultivate opportunities for mentoring among athletic and school site administrators, it is recommended that school districts institute an athletic director induction program. The program would be designed and implemented under the guidance of CIF and include mentors, peer support, and opportunities for continued collaboration. This program would assign administrative mentors to newly assigned athletic directors, male or female. These mentors would be selected and assigned based on their experience in administration and desire to help develop athletic directors in their role. Similar to a new teacher induction program, new athletic directors would have a veteran administrative mentor work alongside them as they develop the administrative skills and knowledge needed to be successful as an administrator. Those within the induction program would also be connected to provide peer support and opportunities to collaborate across districts, counties, and regions.

Implication for Action 6

Female athletic directors must implement a community network that includes access to mentors, a system of contacts, and opportunities for personal and professional development.

Based on the conclusion that the athletic community needs to develop and facilitate a community network for female athletic directors, it is recommended that female athletic directors institute a public network via social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. This network should provide opportunities for direct mentoring from retired or current athletic directors. This should be named the California Interscholastic Federation Female Athletic Directors Association (CIFFADA). Membership in this network would provide female athletic directors access to a multitude of mentors, network of contacts, and opportunities for personal and professional development. Additionally, members of this organization should act as advisors to CIF providing guidance when addressing issues relevant to women in athletics or athletic administration.

Implication for Action 7

School districts and school sites must enforce policies and procedures that prohibit social, organizational, and physical barriers for female athletic directors.

Based on the finding that female athletic directors face unique barriers related to gender and the conclusion that more support is needed for women when facing and overcoming these barriers, school districts and school sites must enforce policies that eliminate these barriers. Similar to the findings of Chisholm-Burns et al. (2017), this study concluded that institutions and employers are responsible for addressing barriers of inequity for women in leadership positions and must hold those in violation of the policies accountable. For example, women in this study identified being excluded from decision-making processes by male coaches who were conducting meetings in male-only facilities. This issue should be addressed by the school site's administration and result in

enforcement of policy that ensures all meetings regarding athletic program decision making be made in a gender-neutral setting.

In addition, diverse and inclusive committees at the school district and site level must be instituted to identify, eliminate, and train staff on the conscious and unconscious bias for women in athletic leadership positions. The goal of this committee is to develop a better understanding of the biases that women face in athletics and eliminate these biases in an effort to deliberately address social, organizational, and physical barriers for female athletic directors.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the researcher recommends further research in areas that better explain the unique dynamics of females and athletic administration. These areas include the following:

- Expanding the research to include the other eight sections of the CIF. This study was limited to females in the two most southern sections of CIF. Future research should examine the experiences of female athletic directors in these other sections and include a survey of regional differences within the state of California.
- This study examined how current female athletic directors overcame and faced barriers in attaining and retaining their position. It was suggested by several participants in the study that the researcher speak with former female athletic directors who did not stay in the position. Future research should focus on the reasons why female athletic directors leave the position, identifying any barriers or factors influencing their decision to leave athletic administration.

- During the interviews, it was mentioned by a few participants that they had applied and were denied athletic director positions prior to their current employment as athletic director. Future research should explore the experiences of women who applied and were not able to attain the position of athletic director, identifying factors that acted as barriers to their employment. This would give insight to women who were seeking to attain the position of athletic director.
- There were a variety of years of experience for the participants in this study. A study to compare the experiences of veteran and novice athletic directors to identify similarities and differences with the barriers they have faced would advance the understanding of how these experiences have changed over time.
- An important voice not examined in this research was the male coaches who work for female athletic directors. With the prevalence of concerns described by female athletic directors in this study, it would be of great value to understand the experiences and perceptions of the male coaches who work for female athletic directors. There is potential in this research to identify more specifically what the real issues are for these coaches, specifically football, basketball, and baseball.
- In this study, athletes' parents were identified as participants in perpetuating the stereotypes and biases that female athletic directors face, highlighting the need for parent awareness. Future studies should examine the role of athletes' parents as a barrier for female athletic directors.
- Administrators are the decision makers when it comes to the hiring and firing of athletic directors. Research from the perspective of an administrator who has worked

with a female athletic director would be of importance in terms of understanding the expectations and mentoring process of these women.

- It is clear that mentoring plays a key role in the success of women in athletic administration. This is highlighted both in this study and previous research. However, little research into mechanisms or strategies in the area of athletic administration and mentoring has been done. It would be of benefit to future female athletic directors to research the framework of mentoring and the related success for women athletic directors.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

The success of every woman should be the inspiration to another. We should raise each other up. Make sure you're very courageous: be strong, be extremely kind, and above all be humble.

—Serena Williams

As previously mentioned in this study, I am a female athletic director in the state of California. I recently attended an awards ceremony for athletes of character, in which all schools in Orange County were asked to nominate one male and one female athlete to represent their school. The focus of this honor has nothing to do athletic performance but more simply an individual's ability to lead her/his peers, to do the right thing when no one is looking, and to demonstrate empathy. Each athletic director was asked to stand and speak about his or her athlete to a room of 600 athletes, parents, coaches, and school administrators. With this research heavy on my mind, I decided to count the number of female athletic directors who took the stage that evening. There were over 60 schools represented, of which only five had female athletic directors. In that moment, it was

never clearer to me how important this research is for women. Over 120 athletes, male and female, saw only five women acting as leaders in athletics. What impressed me most was the 60 female athletes who had been selected as leaders of character. I couldn't help but think, were they overwhelmed by the lack of women leaders in the room? What message were they subconsciously receiving? I can only hope that it was the opposite, that they saw the five women athletic directors and said of themselves, "If she can do, it I can do it."

The dissertation process is a long road, at times completely daunting and overwhelming. As I come to the end of the road on this research and reflect, I am impressed by my continued passion for helping women in the arena of athletic administration. It was said over and over to me in the interviews that most of the participants never even thought of becoming an athletic director. Culturally and socially women are not seen in the role of athletic director. It is my hope that this research helps to change that perception and that women begin to see themselves in the position of athletic administrator. I encourage any woman with a passion for athletic administration to continue down that path and to act as an inspiration for others. There is a significant amount of work that still needs to be done in this area. It is my intention to continue to help women grow in leadership positions in athletics by acting as a mentor and continuing research.

Lastly, I am empowered by the findings of this work. The details of this research provide necessary insight for women who wish to pursue a career in athletic administration. Further, I am hopeful that the previously outlined survival strategies for women in athletic administration will transcend to women in other male-dominated

careers. It is my expectation that as a society we will continue to seek justice and equality for woman in atypical career paths. I am also optimistic that the circumstances by which women achieve the position of athletic director will dramatically improve. My plan is to play an active role in this movement as both a mentor for other women and a facilitator of implementing a network for female athletic directors in the state of California.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Synthesis Matrix

← Sources →

Common Themes ↓	Acosta and Carpenter (2012)	Radlinski (2003)	Ray (2010)	Hattery, Smith, and Staurowsky (2007)
Historical Trends of Women in Athletics and Athletic Leadership	Prior to Title IX, females managed female athletic programs with over 90% of coaches being female.	The lack of representation of women in the NJCAA as directors indicates a lower participation of female decision makers in sports programs at that level and a lack of role models for women who participate in sports in the NJCAA (p. V).	In addition to providing further evidence of the disproportionate number of male and female high school athletic directors, this study documents the role of AD and provides evidence that female ADs are viewed as having a lack of presence, but not a lack of power (p. i).	The implementation of Title IX gave legitimacy to female athletic programs and increased financial opportunities for coaches and administrators of these programs. This drove males to become more interested in leading female programs, driving female leadership out of the programs.
	Acosta and Carpenter (2002)	M. D. Smith (2005)	Emerson (2002)	Grappendorf (2001)
Barriers Faced by Females in Athletic Leadership Roles	Impact of personal and social factors that influence the role of athletic administrators. Most of the new coaching jobs in women's athletics since 2000 have been filled by males. Women hold just over half of the paid assistant coaching jobs within the women's NCAA intercollegiate programs and just under half of the unpaid positions. Nearly 18 percent of women's programs are	Seven possible barriers to women who seek careers in athletic administration: (1) the impact of the old boys' network; (2) the impact of marital status, (3) the impact of having children; (4) being female in athletic administration; (5) the impact of sexual discrimination; (6) time demands of the job; and (7) travel demands of the job (p. 84).	The themes that emerged were time, pressure, discrimination, job opportunities, support, and priorities. When looking for the themes the data needed to appear frequently in one category'; coach, athletic director, or principal. Every theme except the theme of support appeared in all three categories (p. 51)	The data revealed 64.7 % (n = 11) of the female athletic directors felt gender bias/discrimination were barriers in becoming an NCAA Division I athletic director. A theme that came through very strongly was that of gender stereotyping. There seems to be a reluctance to hire and promote women into the upper ranks of intercollegiate athletic administration. It appears even with the accomplishments

	directed by females, and nearly 19 percent have no females anywhere in the athletic administrative structure (abstract).			and successes of women since Title IX, gender bias/discrimination still exists in college athletics. The perception that women do not belong and are incapable of leading a Division I caliber athletic program, appears to still be a common stereotype across colleges and universities (p. 96)
	Herber (2002)	Bjork (2000)	Hutton and Gougeon (1993)	Irby and Brown (1995)
Social and Organizational Structures That Play a Role in Gender Discrimination	Men and women tend to behave based on the perceptions and expectations that society prescribes.	Men and women approach educational leadership differently, but that both can be effective.	Men and women educational leaders view and exert power differently, and women do not necessarily need to employ the traditional male definitions and uses of power in order to work in educational administration.	Men and women hold differing perceptions regarding the leadership skills of authority, expectations of supervision, successful leadership skills and attitudes, and the influences of personal leadership style.
	Sage (1998)	Krane (2001)	Ray (2010)	Schell and Rodriguez (2000)
Hegemony	The dominant power interests influence sport and its role in society.	“Demonstrate hegemonic femininity and expect men to demonstrate hegemonic masculinity” (p. 118).	“Refers to a dominant group in society establishing their own ethical, political, and cultural values as the norm” (p. 46).	Women continue to face barriers in sports due to the masculinist hegemony over the institution of sports.
	Kanter (1977)	Lovett and Lowry (1994)	Stangl and Kane (1991)	Knoppers (1989)
Homologous Reproduction	Through opportunity, power, and proportion dominant groups will “reproduce” themselves.	There are administrative structures that play a role in who is hired, and that both the “good old girls” network and the “good old boys” networks are effective. Importance of opportunity,	Analysis of variance procedures indicated significant main effects for sex of athletic director and Title IX timeframe: Significantly more women were hired under female	Even though gender ratios may rise within an occupation, jobs within are often still segregated by gender (p. 38).

		specifically the opportunity of coaching, as it plays a role in earning a position in athletic administration.	versus male athletic directors.	
	Lewin (1951)	Shoemaker (1991)	Tallerico (2000)	Ray (2010)
Gatekeeping Theory	<p>Theory of channels and “gate keepers” to accessing the superintendency means viewing superintendent selection as a flow process involving the passage of applicants through a variety of “channels,” most of which are composed of multiple subdivisions or “sections” (p. 146)</p> <p>Important keys to Lewin’s (1951) gatekeeping theory are that each section of channels reflects “in” or “out” decision points in a process (that is, gates). These gates are controlled either by “a set of impartial rules” or by persons with differing degrees of power who are variably constrained or facilitated by multiple forces (p. 186).</p>	<p>Key individuals play a role in the career advancements of others and therefore are titled “Gatekeepers”. Distinguishes between gatekeepers acting as individual decision makers and their reflecting and reinforcing their profession or institution. She emphasizes that “organizations hire the gatekeepers and make the rules” (p. 53).</p>	<p>There is a series of unwritten selection criteria for choosing superintendents: “(a) defining quality in terms of hierarchies of particular job titles, (b) stereotyping by gender, (c) complacency about acting affirmatively, and (d) hypervaluing feelings of comfort and interpersonal chemistry with the successful candidate” (p. 37).</p>	<p>Argues that the gatekeeping theory plays a role in those chosen to fulfill the athletic director position.</p>

	Reskin and Hartmann (1986)	Grappendorf, Lough, and Griffin (2004)	Strawbridge (2000)	Wright, Eagleman, & Pedersen (2011)
Sex segregation	Sex segregation is “the concentration of women and men in different jobs that are predominantly of a single sex” (p.1).	Having an “old girls’ club” is just as important to women as the “old boys’ club” is to men. Females in intercollegiate athletic administration should try to develop relationships with other female administrators on campus as well as seek out involvement with organizations like the National Association of Women Athletic Administrators (NACWAA). Further, since there is a lack of women in intercollegiate athletic administration, it may be wise to develop relationships with men in the athletic department. Finding support in each other as well as supporting each other in career endeavors is important for women working in intercollegiate athletic administration” (p. 31)	Mentoring, ability to speak and write, a strong business sense and strong motivation should be part of a professional preparation model for preparing women who aspire to this rigorous profession.	“The results suggest that men are rewarded at a greater rate with employment and promotion for their human capital personal investments than women and minorities” (p. 46)

	Acosta and Carpenter (2014)	Whisenant (2003)	Whisenant, Miller, and Pedersen (2005)	Bower, Hums, and Grappendorf (2015)
Current Research Related to Female Athletic Leadership	A total of 215 females were employed as athletic directors in 2012, making up only 20.3% of all athletic directors at the NCAA level. 1 of 5 head coaches for all NCAA teams is a woman. Significant discrepancy in the number of male and female athletic leaders at the NCAA level.	There are significantly fewer females in the position of athletic director in comparison to males, with only 13% of positions being held by females.	Seventeen percent of job descriptions (in the state of Texas) listed as a qualification that the AD also serve as the head football coach (HFC). Hegemonic masculinity and homologous reproduction present a significant barrier for women at the interscholastic level with a desire to pursue a career in athletic administration.	Examine “women working in leadership positions within intercollegiate athletics (NCAA Divisions III)” with a goal of determining “why women hold significantly fewer positions 40 years since the passage of Title IX in 1972” (p. 14).

APPENDIX B

Invitation to Participate E-mail

Hello,

My name is Katie Levensailor and I am a doctoral candidate at Brandman University. I am conducting research for my dissertation on females in high school athletic director positions. I would like the opportunity to interview you, as you meet the criteria of my study.

My research question is: how do female athletic directors in California face and overcome barriers in attaining and retaining their positions?

During the interview I will ask questions related to:

(1) the impact of the “old boy’s network”; (2) the impact of marital status, (3) the impact of having children; (4) being female in athletic administration; (5) the impact of sexual discrimination; (6) time demands of the job; and (7) travel demands of the job.

Of course your name and any personal identification of you will be kept confidential.

As an athletic director myself, I know how precious your time is! Your input on this study would be invaluable and directly impact the future of women in athletic leadership.

I would really appreciate your help with this! Please let me know if you are willing and interested in helping.

Sincerely,

Katie Levensailor
Science Teacher
Athletic Director

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions for Female Athletic Directors

“Old Boy’s Network”

Females in professional fields such as athletic administration describe an informal system in which men with the same social and educational background help each other, also known as the “Old Boy’s Network”. In your position as athletic director have you experienced the “Old Boy’s Network”? If so, what happened? What have you done to face and/or overcome the “Old Boy’s Network” during your career?

Potential Follow-up Questions:

When did it happen? Who was involved? Why do you think it occurred? How has it impacted your career?

Impact of Marital Status

Women who seek to be leaders in professional career paths report considering the impact of their career and career ascension on their partner. Do you have a partner and/or are you married? If so, during your career ascension into the position of athletic director did you consider the impact your career may have on your partner? If so, what impacts were you concerned with? What have you done to face and/or overcome these concerns?

Potential Follow-up Questions:

Why were you concerned with the impact your career may have had on your partner? At what point in your career ascension did you become concerned about this?

Impact of Having Children

In line with the previous question, women also report considering the impact of their career and career ascension on their children and family life. Do you have children

and/or a family? If so, when accepting the position of athletic director did you consider the impact your career may have on your children? What have you done to face and/or overcome these concerns?

Potential Follow-up Questions:

What impacts were you concerned with? Why were you concerned with the impact your career may have had on your family? At what point in your career ascension did you become concerned about this?

Impact of being female

Being a female in athletic administration is not common. What experiences have you had that might explain the impacts of being female in athletic administration? How have you faced and/or overcome being female in a male dominated career?

Potential Follow-up Questions:

Who was involved in your experiences? What did they do? When did this or these experiences occur? Where did these experiences occur?

Impact of Sexual Discrimination

In a recent report by the NCAA, female athletic directors cite sexual discrimination as a barrier to career ascension in athletics for women. Have you experienced sexual discrimination in your career? If so, please explain how you faced and/or overcame the discrimination.

Potential Follow-up Questions:

Who was involved in your experiences? What did they do? When did this or these experiences occur? Where did these experiences occur?

Impact of Time Demands of the Job

Athletic directors report that the job of athletic director requires work outside of the typical school day and school year. Do you agree with this statement? If so, how has the time demands of the position of athletic director impacted your career? What impact, if any, has this had on your decision to stay in the position of athletic director?

Potential Follow-up Questions:

Who has the time demands had an impact on? Why do you believe these time demands have impacted your career?

Impact of Travel Demands of the Job

Athletic directors have a variety of responsibilities including traveling to and from athletic events. Have you experienced travel demands in your career as athletic director? If so, how has the travel demands of the position of athletic director impacted your career? What impact, if any, has this had on your decision to stay in the position of athletic director?

Potential Follow-up Questions:

What do the travel demands of the position look like (please describe them)? Who has the travel demands had an impact on? Why do you believe these travel demands have impacted your career?

APPENDIX D

BUIRB Approval

BUIRB Application Approved As Submitted: Katherine Levensailor



Institutional Review Board <my@brandman.edu>

Fri 10/6/2017, 4:21 PM

klevensa@mail.brandman.edu; jlee1@brandman.edu; buirb@brandman.edu; ddevore@brandman.edu

Reply | v

Brandman

You forwarded this message on 10/9/2017 9:41 AM

Dear Katherine Levensailor,

Congratulations, your IRB application to conduct research has been approved by the Brandman University Institutional Review Board. This approval grants permission for you to proceed with data collection for your research. Please keep this email for your records, as it will need to be included in your research appendix.

If any issues should arise that are pertinent to your IRB approval, please contact the IRB immediately at BUIRB@brandman.edu. If you need to modify your BUIRB application for any reason, please fill out the "Application Modification Form" before proceeding with your research. The Modification form can be found at the following link: <https://irb.brandman.edu/Applications/Modification.pdf>.

Best wishes for a successful completion of your study.

Thank you,

Doug DeVore, Ed.D.

Professor

Organizational Leadership

BUIRB Chair

ddevore@brandman.edu

www.brandman.edu

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent Form

INFORMATION ABOUT: Female Athletic Directors in California: Attaining and Retaining the Position of Athletic Director.

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Katherine Levensailor, Ed.D. candidate.

PURPOSE OF STUDY: You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Katherine, Ed.D. candidate, a doctoral student in the Brandman University School of Education, part of the Chapman University system. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological inquiry study is to examine and describe how female athletic directors in the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) face and overcome barriers in attaining and retaining their positions.

This study will fill in the gap in the research regarding women not being equally represented in athletic leadership roles as a result of social and organizational structures at the interscholastic level. Research points to a need of understanding females in the athletic director role at the interscholastic level that is guided by female athletic director perspectives, including documentation about how female athletic directors perceive the importance and significance of their career preparations, progressions and experiences of high school female athletic directors, and practices used to select high school athletic directors. The current research study attempts to address these gaps and contribute to the current body of knowledge of female high school athletic directors. Upon addressing gaps in the literature, this study will identify contributing barriers to the unequal representation of females in the high school athletic director position. The results of this research will be used by those who are considering a career path in athletic administration and administrators when selecting individuals for athletic administration.

By participating in this study I agree to participate in a one-on-one interview. The one-on-one interview and focus groups will last between 30 and 45 minutes and will be conducted in person. This research will begin and conclude between September 2017 and February 2018.

I understand that:

a) There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research. I understand that the Investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes and research materials in a locked file drawer that is available only to the researcher.

b) The possible benefit of this study to me is that my input may help add to the research regarding contributing barriers to the unequal representation of females in the high school athletic director position. The findings will be available to me at the conclusion of the study and will

I understand that I will not be compensated for my participation.

c) If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Jeffrey Lee, Ed.D. at jlee1@brandman.edu or Katherine Levensailor at katherinelevensailor@iusd.org or xxx-xxx-xxxx.

d) My participation in this research study is voluntary. I may decide to not participate in the study and I can withdraw at any time. I can also decide not to answer particular questions during the interview if I so choose. I understand that I may refuse to participate or may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the Investigator may stop the study at any time.

e) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent reobtained.

I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the "Research Participant's Bill of Rights". I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

Signature of Participant or Responsible Party

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Research Participant's Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

APPENDIX F

Interview Guide Sheet

This sheet was modeled after the Sample Interview Protocol or Guide provided by Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 167).

Interview Protocol and Script

“Hello, my name is Katie Levenasilor and I am a high school science teacher and athletic director. I’m a doctoral candidate at Brandman University in the area of Organizational Leadership. I am conducting research to examine and describe how female athletic directors in California face and overcome barriers in attaining and retaining their positions. Based on the works of Acosta and Carpenter (2014), Coakley (2001), and Smith (2005), barriers for female athletic directors are defined within seven categories: (1) the impact of the “old boy’s network”; (2) the impact of marital status, (3) the impact of having children; (4) being female in athletic administration; (5) the impact of sexual discrimination; (6) time demands of the job; and (7) travel demands of the job. The questions I will ask you during this interview will focus on these seven categories.

I will be conducting 15 interviews with female athletic directors, just like yourself, within the CIF Southern and San Diego Sections. The information you and other participants provide will create a context which will be used to describe the experiences of female athletic directors in California and add to the body of knowledge on this topic. The results of this research will be used by those who are considering a career path in athletic administration and administrators when selecting individuals for athletic administration.

I will read verbatim the questions that are outlined in my interview protocol to ensure that all of my interviewees have a similar experience during the interview process.

Informed Consent

Prior to our meeting I sent you the Informed Consent and Brandman Bill of Rights by email. Did you receive these documents? Do you have any questions about the documents or need clarification regarding the information contained within the documents?

As a participant in this study I want to remind you that any personal or identifiable information that is obtained via this study will remain confidential. This interview will be recorded and later transcribed. At that point I will send you an electronic copy of the transcription and give you the opportunity to ensure that your ideas and thoughts were accurately captured.

Our interview is set to last approximately 45 minutes, at any point during the interview you may ask me to skip a question or stop the interview. Do you have any questions before we begin? Again, I would like to thank you for your time and participation. I will now begin the interview process.

Researcher will state-

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer name:

Interviewee name:

Position of interviewee:

Questions:

“Old Boy’s Network”

Females in professional fields such as athletic administration describe an informal system in which men with the same social and educational background help each other, also known as the “Old Boy’s Network”. In your position as athletic director have you experienced the “Old Boy’s Network”? If so, what happened? What have you done to face and/or overcome the “Old Boy’s Network” during your career?

Potential Follow-up Questions:

When did it happen? Who was involved? Why do you think it occurred? How has it impacted your career?

Impact of Marital Status

Women who seek to be leaders in professional career paths report considering the impact of their career and career ascension on their partner. Do you have a partner and/or are you married? If so, during your career ascension into the position of athletic director did you consider the impact your career may have on your partner? If so, what impacts were you concerned with? What have you done to face and/or overcome these concerns?

Potential Follow-up Questions:

Why were you concerned with the impact your career may have had on your partner? At what point in your career ascension did you become concerned about this?

Impact of Having Children

In line with the previous question, women also report considering the impact of their career and career ascension on their children and family life. Do you have children and/or a family? If so, when accepting the position of athletic director did you consider the impact your career may have on your children? What have you done to face and/or overcome these concerns?

Potential Follow-up Questions:

What impacts were you concerned with? Why were you concerned with the impact your career may have had on your family? At what point in your career ascension did you become concerned about this?

Impact of being female

Being a female in athletic administration is not common. What experiences have you had that might explain the impacts of being female in athletic administration? How have you faced and/or overcome being female in a male dominated career?

Potential Follow-up Questions:

Who was involved in your experiences? What did they do? When did this or these experiences occur? Where did these experiences occur?

Impact of Sexual Discrimination

In a recent report by the NCAA, female athletic directors cite sexual discrimination as a barrier to career ascension in athletics for women. Have you experienced sexual discrimination in your career? If so, please explain how you faced and/or overcame the discrimination.

Potential Follow-up Questions:

Who was involved in your experiences? What did they do? When did this or these experiences occur? Where did these experiences occur?

Impact of Time Demands of the Job

Athletic directors report that the job of athletic director requires work outside of the typical school day and school year. Do you agree with this statement? If so, how has the time demands of the position of athletic director impacted your career? What impact, if any, has this had on your decision to stay in the position of athletic director?

Potential Follow-up Questions:

Who has the time demands had an impact on? Why do you believe these time demands have impacted your career?

Impact of Travel Demands of the Job

Athletic directors have a variety of responsibilities including traveling to and from athletic events. Have you experienced travel demands in your career as athletic director? If so, how has the travel demands of the position of athletic director impacted your career? What impact, if any, has this had on your decision to stay in the position of athletic director?

Potential Follow-up Questions:

What do the travel demands of the position look like (please describe them)? Who has the travel demands had an impact on? Why do you believe these travel demands have impacted your career?