

ABSTRACT

FOWLER, KRISTIN L. Female Sport Management Students' Perceptions toward Their Sport Degree, the Educational Environment, and Their Future Careers. (Under the direction of Dr. Heidi Grappendorf.)

Despite the increase in female athletic participation and sport consumption over the last decade, empirical evidence suggests that women are underrepresented in sport management academic programs, as well as employment within sport. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of undergraduate female sport management students toward their sport degree, the educational environment, and their future careers in sport. Examining the perceptions of female sport management students could provide insight into the factors underlying the underrepresentation of women in sport, as well as provide recommendations to assist sport academic and industry leaders achieve gender equality. Due to a relative lack of sport management studies, a broad review of the literature was required, incorporating research from a variety of fields such as education, psychology, counseling, business, and sport. A qualitative approach was used to reveal undergraduate female sport management students' perceptions. Three focus groups, comprising of 16 undergraduate female sport management students (i.e., sophomores, juniors, and seniors), were conducted at a large Division I University. Data were analyzed and coded into themes. Participants' responses suggested that the underrepresentation of female sport management students may be caused by the following: (a) a lack of awareness of sport management programs, (b) a belief that the academic program is male-dominated (e.g., perception of female underrepresentation, chilly climate, lack of social support), and (c) the recognition that the degree is nontraditional (e.g., multiple-role conflict, low salary, nontraditional hours, travel). Participants concern regarding the sport management academic field could also be impacting

the underrepresentation of women employed in sport. Participants' responses regarding their future careers in sports suggest (a) a lack of readily available information regarding post graduate sport management degrees, (b) concern regarding the potential to experience future job discrimination (e.g., stereotypes, difficulty networking), and (c) concerns related specifically to employment in the sport industry (e.g., multiple-role conflict, low salary, nontraditional hours, travel). Finally, female sport management students were found to share similar characteristics (i.e., traditionally masculine characteristics, high self-confidence) and backgrounds (i.e., members of the Millennial Generation, previous athletic participation) that influenced their decision to study sport management. In an effort to strive for gender equality and to improve the educational experience of female sport management students, high-school counselors, university educators, female sport management students, and sport industry leaders should strive to understand the perceptions of female sport management students and provide opportunities to combat their concerns. Most importantly, university educators should strive to better promote the existence and benefits of the sport management curriculum by better educating high-school counselors. Furthermore, university educators should encourage college recruiters to better promote the degree among potential female students. Furthermore, educators should assist female sport management students in improving their educational environment by providing opportunities to socialize with other female sport management students (e.g., support group, association). Future research is recommended to understand when and how female high-school students obtain information about the sport management degree. Furthermore, a longitudinal study is recommended to understand how the perceptions of female sport management students influence their entrance and advancement in the sport industry.

Female Sport Management Students' Perceptions toward Sport Management Degree and
Future Career in Sport.

by
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BIOGRAPHY

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Colleges and universities in the United States (U.S.) have seen a considerable increase in female enrollment, due in part to Title IX legislation enacted by Congress in the early 1980s. According to the U.S. Department of Education (1994), “Women now make up the majority of students in America’s colleges and universities in addition to making up the majority of recipients of masters degrees... [and the US] is a world leader in giving women the opportunity to receive a higher education.” Female enrollment in postsecondary education has increased 195% since 1970 (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). For every 1,000 men enrolled in postsecondary institutions, there are 1,355 women. According to King (2006), “The number of men enrolled [in college] has increased, but not fast enough to narrow what is now a 57% female majority in total enrollment.” According to King (2006), women have also shown significant enrollment progress in traditionally male-dominated academic post-graduate programs, including medicine (51% women) and other health-science programs (53%). Although women have made great advancements in their entrance into male-dominated academic fields, Jones and Brooks (2008) found that 81% of sport management programs nationwide reported a female student population of less than 40%. Furthermore, 40% of sport management programs reported a female student population of 20% or less.

The underrepresentation of women employed within the sport industry mirrors that of female sport management students (Acosta & Carpenter, 2010; Lapchick, 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c). This underrepresentation can be seen at the college and professional levels. Female head coaches are an anomaly in both men’s and women’s collegiate sports (Acosta &

Carpenter, 2010). Although female athletic participation has increased significantly since the enactment of Title IX (i.e., 457% increase in high school athletic participation), women who direct their own collegiate sport teams has significantly decreased. In contrast to women's teams comprising 90% of head coaches in 1972, today 43% of women's teams are coached by women (Acosta & Carpenter, 2010). Moreover, prior to the enactment of Title IX legislation, females served as athletic director for 90% of athletic programs for women. However, recent statistics indicate that women make up only 19% of collegiate athletic directors (Acosta & Carpenter, 2010), a slight decrease since 2008, and that 13% of collegiate athletic departments lack a woman in their administration. Furthermore, women are underrepresented in professional sport organizations (Lapchick, 2009b, 2009c).

Although the empirical evidence suggests an underrepresentation of women studying and employed within sport, it does not translate into the positive athletic participation and consumption (i.e., following and/or watching sports) evidence of women. According to the National Federation of State High School Associations ([NFSHSA], 2010), female athletic participation in high school has increased by 15% since the 1990s and 457% since the 1970s. Women constitute 41% of high-school athletes. According to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (2010), the percentage of collegiate student-athletes who are female has grown significantly at the Division I level: by 31% in 1991–92, to 45% by 2005–06. Opportunities for female athletes to compete professionally have also increased, including the National Pro Fast Pitch (i.e., women's professional softball), the Women's Professional Soccer league (WPS), the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), and the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA).

Increases in female athletic participation have likely contributed to the growth in female sport consumption that has been demonstrated in reports by Nielsen Media Research and professional sport leagues (USA Today, 2008). According to the National Football League (NFL), 69.7 million women watched the 2007 Super Bowl and women comprised 45% of NFL fans during the 2007–2008 season. During the Beijing Olympics, several global companies, including AT&T, McDonalds, Visa, and L’Oreal, strove to promote their brands with the 49% of viewers who were women.

Statement of the Problem

The underrepresentation of women in sport has been found to undermine the career motivation of women interested in sport by “negatively influencing how girls and boys perceive women in the workplace... [forcing] many girls to abandon career pursuits associated with athletics because of the absence of a network of women to serve as role models and mentors” (Whisenant, 2003, p. 183). This finding suggests that the lack of female role models in sport helps perpetuate gender inequality within the industry. Experts have researched the effects that perceived career barriers have on women in sport (e.g., Acosta & Carpenter, 1988, 2010; Grappendorf, Lough, & Griffin, 2004). However, the underrepresentation of women continues (Acosta & Carpenter, 2010). Therefore, experts need to continue research into possible causes and solutions for the gender inequality in sport.

Furthermore, research suggests that diversity adds value to organizations (Cox, Lobel, & McLeod, 1991). According to Robinson & Dechant (1997), diverse occupational environments result in cost savings due largely to lower employee turnover, decreases in

absenteeism, and reductions in lawsuits. Furthermore, organizational-diversity strategies help to attract talented people, “winning the competition for talent [by] attracting, retaining, and promoting excellent employees from different demographic groups” (p. 851). Moreover, diversity has been found to drive business growth by increasing creativity and problem-solving capabilities (p. 851). Diversity also benefits educational environments. Striving for equal gender representation in sport education programs will also encourage the recruitment of talented students by eliminating “chilly climates” for female students.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of my study was to examine undergraduate female sport management students’ perceptions toward their sport management degree, educational environment, and future careers in sport. Data were obtained through three focus groups conducted at a university. Specific research questions associated with my study were as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of female sport management students regarding the sport management degree (i.e., degree and educational environment)?
2. What are the perceptions of female sport management students regarding their future careers in sport?

Significance

Examining the perceptions of female sport management students provided preliminary insight into female sport management students, who are most likely to become the future workforce in the sport industry. Participants cited factors that discourage women from entering the field, as well as provided information to assist sport academic and industry

leaders in achieving gender equality. The findings also offered insight into methods for improving female sport management students' educational experience.

Researcher's Background

According to Merriam (1998), a qualitative researcher should “clarify assumptions, worldviews, and theoretical orientation at the onset of the study” (p. 205). My personal experiences could result in potential research bias.

My father is a former collegiate student-athlete, coach, and administrator, enabling me to obtain an insider's perspective of a collegiate athletic department. I also was a two-sport collegiate athlete and currently work for a professional sport agency. Although I have not previously researched sport management, I majored in that field as an undergraduate and witnessed the underrepresentation of women within the program. I also had formed perceptions regarding possible future career barriers. To limit possible bias, I used a questioning route pre-approved by sport management and recreation experts, as well as member checking to further clarify the meaning of participants' responses.

Definition of Key Terminology

The following definitions and concepts were used for my study:

1. *Sport(s)* – Sports are institutionalized competitive activities involving rigorous physical exertion or the use of relatively complex physical skills by participants motivated by internal and external rewards (Coakley, 2004).
2. *Sport Consumption* – Sport consumption is defined as the financial, emotional and temporal resources an individual invests in to follow and watch sports (Trail & James, 2011).

3. *Sport Management* – Sport management is a postsecondary academic program that prepares students for specific jobs within the sport industry (Parks, Quarterman, & Thibault, 2007).
4. *National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)* – The NCAA governs collegiate athletic programs in the U.S. (NCAA, 2010). The NCAA’s mission is to govern member competition while promoting educational experiences among participating student-athletes.
5. *Title IX* – Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 banned discrimination based on gender in educational settings (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). Title IX states, “No person in the US shall, on the basis of sex be excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal aid.”
6. *Perceptions* – My study defines perception as a focus-group participant’s positive or negative feelings about a particular topic, formed from the person’s intellect, education, and life experience.
7. *Career Barriers* – Career barriers were any factor, perceived or actual, that discouraged or limited a person from entering or progressing within a particular field.
8. *Underrepresentation* – This study uses underrepresentation to mean gender disproportion, specifically, anything less than 50% of women within an organization. This is based on the idea that gender proportion should reflect the gender percentages of the U.S. population.

9. *Gender Equality* – Gender equality is defined as the ability for men and women to be “free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, and prejudices” (International Labour Office of Geneva, 2000, p. 48). Support for gender equality in the educational setting contributed to the passage of Title IX of the Educational Amendment of 1972, which banned discrimination based on gender (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). Specific to sport required athletic departments to take necessary steps to provide equal opportunities for women in comparison to men (i.e., gender equity).
10. *Millennial Generation* – According to Howe and Strauss (2003), the Millennial Generation defines the population born after 1982 and distinguishes it from their parents’ generation (i.e., Baby Boomers) and their immediate predecessors (i.e., Generation X).

Summary

With the passage of Title IX, women in the U.S. have experienced increased access to educational and athletic participation. Although athletic participation and the popularity and consumption of sports among women have increased, the underrepresentation of female sport-management students and women employed in sport continues (Lapchick, 2009a). Although previous research has examined the career barriers of women working in sport, no previous research has examined female sport management students’ perceptions towards the sport degree, the educational environment, or their future careers in sport. Therefore, research into this new population could provide insight into possible factors influencing gender disproportion in sport-management academia and in sport organizations nationwide.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

While female athletic participation and sport consumption have increased, the underrepresentation of women employed within the sport industry mirrors the underrepresentation of female sport management students (Acosta & Carpenter, 2010; Jones & Brooks, 2008; Lapchick, 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c). Although female athletic participation has increased significantly since the enactment of Title IX, female head coaches have decreased by 47%. The underrepresentation of women also exists in collegiate athletic administration. Due to the continued underrepresentation of women in sport management academic programs nationwide (Jones & Brooks, 2008), the purpose of my study was to examine undergraduate female sport management students' perceptions toward their sport management degree, educational environment, and future careers in sport. Examining the perceptions of female sport management students, a population that is most likely to become the future workforce of the sport industry, may provide additional insight into the factors that influence the disproportion of women in sport. Results from my study may also provide information to assist sport academic and industry leaders in achieving gender equality, as well as offer insight into methods for improving female sport management students' educational experience.

Due to a relative lack of sport management studies, a broad review of the literature was required, incorporating research from a variety of fields such as education (e.g., Armour, 2007; Wilson, 2004), psychology (e.g., Baber & Monaghan, 1998; Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Caldera, Robitschek, Frame, & Pannel, 2003; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974), counseling (e.g.,

Almquist & Angrist, 1993; Betz & Sterling, 1993; Burlew, 1992; Tittle, 1982; Whitmarsh, Brown, Cooper, Hawkins-Rodgers, & Wentworth, 2007; Yang & Gybsers, 2007), business (e.g., Alba & Marmorstein, 1987; Bettman, Luce, & Payne, 1998), and sport (e.g., Acosta & Carpenter, 1988, 2008, 2010; Bell, 2007). Specific to the sport literature, my study incorporated information about the history of gender equality within educational institutions (i.e., sport management academic programs), as well as the representation of women in sport (i.e., participation, employment). A summary of educational and vocational decision-making theories were also incorporated in the literature review to better understand factors (i.e., external, internal) that influence the decision-making of my participants. Literature specific to the unique characteristics of the current majority of postsecondary students (i.e., Millennial Generation) were also incorporated into the literature review.

Gender Equality in the Educational and Sport Environment

Although U.S. colleges and universities have seen a significant increase in female enrollment, female sport management students are underrepresented. Female sport participation and consumption have increased significantly, yet their representation has not equally translated into employment within the industry (Acosta & Carpenter, 2010; Lapchick, 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c). This section will seek to provide a historical background of gender-discrimination legislation and its impact on gender representation in the educational environment and on employment representation in collegiate and professional sports.

Prior to Gender-Discrimination Legislation

Female athletic participation opportunities in sports evolved significantly prior to the enactment of Title IX. In fact, according to Bell (2007), opportunities for women to participate in sports in the U.S. began recreationally in the late 1800s. This was due to an industry emphasis on women's physical activity rather than competition, which was the result of misconceptions about the negative effects exertion had on a woman's overall wellbeing. Nevertheless, women continued to seek more physical competition by forming informal athletic clubs. As a result, colleges began sponsoring coed athletic competitions as social opportunities for students (Gerber, Felshin, Berlin, & Wyrick, 1974). Subsequently, colleges added intramural competitions for their female students. According to Gerber et al. (1974), the first women's intercollegiate competition began in 1896, when the University of California at Berkeley's women's basketball team competed against Stanford's, as did the University of Washington vs. Ellensburg Normal School. Competitive athletic opportunities for women continued to increase. In 1943, the All-American Girls Baseball League was started as an attempt to replace Major League Baseball (MLB), which had been cancelled due to World War II (Gerber et al., 1974). The establishment of the first professional athletic league (i.e., All-American Girls Baseball League) contributed to an increase in competitive opportunities for women. Moreover, the 1950s and 1960s brought about an increased emphasis on equal opportunities for women, culminating in passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In 1966, the Commission on Intercollegiate Sports for Women (CISW), later renamed the Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (CIAW), began conducting intercollegiate competitions, announcing a schedule of national championships for women in

gymnastics, track and field (1969), and later swimming, badminton, and volleyball (1970), as well as basketball (1972). The CIAW was replaced in 1971 by the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW), an institutional membership organization. The AIAW dissolved in 1981, and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) began governing intercollegiate competition for women. Although athletic-participation opportunities have increased significantly for women, earlier misconceptions regarding the negative impact exercise or sport activity had on a woman's health, may have contributed to the stereotype that employment in the sport industry (i.e., which is traditionally male-dominated,) is more suitable for men than women.

Title IX Legislation

The lack of educational and athletic opportunities for women contributed to the passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. The legislation prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender in educational programs receiving federal financial aid, stating:

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 educational program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance (Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, P.L. 92-318, 20 U.S.C.S. 1681).

Shortly after the passage of Title IX, several Supreme Court decisions granted legal precedent for Title IX enforcement. However, in *Grove City College vs. Bell (1984)*, the Supreme Court ruled that educational institutional programs (e.g., athletic departments) that did not receive specific institutional federal funding from the university were exempt from Title IX (Women's Sports Foundation, 2002). Nevertheless, the case was struck down three

years later by the passage of the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, which established that universities that received federal funding as well as their individual programs (e.g., athletic departments) were subject to Title IX (Cunningham, 2007). *Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools* further promoted Title IX compliance by establishing that decisions made in Title IX lawsuits could result in monetary damages being rewarded to wronged parties. Furthermore, *Jackson v. Birmingham Board of Education* set precedent for the protection of whistle-blowers, who suffered retaliation for filing Title IX claims, through the awarding of monetary damages. In *Cohen v. Brown University*, the First Circuit ruled that the assumption that men were more interested in athletic opportunities than women were, was false and rested on gender stereotypes that perpetuated the discrimination of women in sport (Women's Sports Foundation, 2002). The passage of Title IX and the precedents that were set by later court decisions helped to increase opportunities for women in sport.

Athletic Participation Outcomes. According to the NFSHSA (2010), female athletic participation in high school has increased by 457% since the 1970s and 15% over the last two decades. Women currently represent 41% of high school athletes. Additionally, the NCAA (2010) has seen a 14% increase in women at the Division I level. Female athletes now represent 45% of all college athletes. Opportunities for female athletes to compete professionally in the U.S. have also been established including the National Pro Fast Pitch (i.e. women's professional softball), the Women's Professional Soccer league (WPS), the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), and the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA).

Although female athletic participation has increased, literature suggests an underrepresentation of women in sport administration. This gender disproportion has been found to undermine the career motivation of women interested in employment within sport (Whisenant, 2003, p. 183). This finding suggests that the lack of female role models in sport helps perpetuate the underrepresentation of women in sport. The passage of Title IX prohibited educational institutions from discriminating against students due to gender, thereby increasing women's access to educational opportunities.

Education Enrollment Outcomes. Today, women make up the majority of postsecondary students (King, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 1994, 2009). Although women have experienced increased access to male-dominated academic fields such as medicine (51% female) and other health science programs (53%), female enrollment in sport management academia is not equivalent to men (King, 2006).

Sport Management Academia. James G. Mason, a physical education professor at the University of Miami, was one of the original founders of the sport management core curriculum (Parkhouse & Pitts, 2001). Mason founded the first postgraduate sport management degree, at Ohio University in 1966 (Parkhouse & Pitts, 2001). Shortly thereafter, Biscayne College and St. John's University founded the first undergraduate sport management programs. Since the 1960s, the number of colleges offering sport management programs has grown rapidly. Although an academic degree in business is applicable to the field, more sport management experts are finding that sport degrees better prepare students for the sport industry (Masteralexis, Barr, & Hums, 2009). The Commission on Sport Management Accreditation (COSMA), jointly established by the National Association for

Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) and the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM, 2009) is a “specialized accrediting body that promotes and recognizes excellence in sport management education in colleges and universities... and [promotes] continuous quality improvement” (NASSM, 2009). Although NAASM recognizes 257 U.S. colleges and institutions offering undergraduate sport management degrees, only 54 undergraduate sport management programs (21%) have been accredited by COSMA.

The exponential growth in sport management programs has resulted in a lack of consensus on the appropriate academic department to house sport management (Stier, 1993). According to Sawyer (1993), a majority of sport management curricula nationwide were included as programs in institutions’ physical education departments. Furthermore, Jones and Brooks (2008) found that 28% of sport management programs were housed in Health and Human Services. However, Sawyer (1993) suggested that the physical education department is not broad enough to cover the demands of students interested in sport management (e.g., facility management, sport programming, merchandising, administration, finance, and law). Furthermore, Jones and Brooks (2008) found that a majority of the study’s participating sport management programs had low program admission standards. For instance, 66% of the sport management programs did not require students to submit an application, 91% required no letters of recommendation, 36% did not require a minimum grade point average, and 76% had no maximum number of students enrolled. They also found that most applicants were college freshmen or sophomores. Germane to my study, Jones and Brooks (2008) found 30% of programs to have had no female faculty and that sport management faculty identified the

perceived legitimacy of the sport management program as a critical issue facing sport management experts.

Sport Management Enrollment. Apparently only one study (Jones & Brooks, 2008) researched the gender ratios of sport management students. It found that 40% of the study's participating sport management programs had a female student population of 20% or less, and 80% of programs had a female representation of 40% or less. Specifically, the women-to-men ratio for all participating programs ranged from 0.06 to 0.72. This finding was supported by my personal communication with sport management administrators. Ohio University, founder of the first postgraduate sport-specific program, offers an undergraduate degree in sport management, but in 2009 the program consisted of only 19% women (T. Tedrow, personal communication, December 17, 2009). Additionally, the undergraduate sport management program of the University of Massachusetts, the second oldest in the nation, consisted of only 20% women (M. Kocot, personal communication, January 14, 2010). Last, Elon University's undergraduate sport management program was found to have the highest percentage of women, at 38%. Jones and Brooks (2008) suggested that the underrepresentation of female sport management students may be caused by the low number of female faculty. Jones and Brooks (2008) found that nearly 30% of sport management programs had no female faculty members. North Carolina State University's undergraduate sport management program was comprised of only 23% women (C. Vick, personal communication, December 10, 2009).

Undergraduate sport management students are predominantly male. Although women have made significant progress in traditionally male-dominated academic post-graduate

programs, their advancement has not translated to undergraduate sport management programs (American Council on Education, 2006). These findings were instrumental in giving my study purpose and significance.

Women Employed in Sport

The underrepresentation of female professionals in the sport industry, particularly senior administration and athletic directors in intercollegiate athletics, has been extensively researched (e.g., Acosta & Carpenter, 2008; Cheslock, 2008; Drago, Hennighausen, Rogers, Vescio, & Stauffer, 2005; Lapchick, 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; Tiell, 2002; Whisenant, 2003). More recently, Acosta and Carpenter (2010) found that women continued to be underrepresented among collegiate head coaches in both men's and women's sports. Only 43% of all women's collegiate athletic teams in 2010 were led by women, compared to 90% prior to the enactment of Title IX. Acosta and Carpenter also found only 19% of athletic directors were women. Furthermore, 13% of athletic departments lacked a woman within their administrative hierarchy.

The Racial and Gender Report Card (RGRC), a definitive assessment of minority hiring practices in sport organizations within the US that is based on federal affirmative action policies (Lapchick, 2008), found that 22% of NCAA vice presidents were women, a 4% increase in the last 10 years. As defined earlier, underrepresentation of women in the workplace is anything less than 50% of women, based on the gender proportion of the U.S. population (Lapchick, 2009a, p. 27). Women were most underrepresented in administrative positions at NCAA member institutions (8%), which was a 2% decrease since 1999. The senior athletic director position, considered a feeder position into the head athletic director

position, also showed poor gender equality with only 27% female representation. Thus, at the collegiate level, there have been few advancement opportunities for women in sport administration.

Lapchick also publishes the RGRC for professional sport organizations within the U.S. The National Basketball Association (Lapchick, 2010) remained the professional sport league leader on gender-related hiring practices. Women held 44% of professional positions in the NBA League Office. However, there were no female CEOs or Presidents of any NBA teams.

According to Lapchick (2009b), the National Football League (NFL) received their highest-ever overall grade, due to improvements in female hiring. Women in vice presidential and senior administrative positions were found to have increased slightly, but only to 22% and 15%, respectively. Additionally, there was only one female CEO of an NFL franchise during the 2008–2009 season.

Lapchick (2009c) also found Major League Soccer (MLS) to have made improvements in female hiring. MLS increased female representation in League Office positions by 16% in 2008 and by 6% in 2009. Women in administrative positions decreased slightly to 28%. Last, women made up only 7% of member teams' vice-president positions.

In conclusion, women are underrepresented in sport administration at the collegiate and professional levels. Therefore, not only is there a lack of female administrators, but the lack of female role models has been found to perpetuate the impression that athletics is not a viable career option for women interested in sport (Tiell, 2002). Empirical evidence also demonstrates that women face career barriers.

Perceived Career Barriers

Empirical evidence suggests that actual and perceived career barriers decrease the career motivation, persistence, and satisfaction of women. Specifically, Swanson, Daniels, and Tokar (1996) found certain perceived career barriers to impact the vocational choices of college students. This finding led to their creation of a standardized measurement referred to as the Career Barriers Inventory (CBI). The Swanson et al. model was used to group applicable career-barrier literature for several disciplines, including psychology, counseling, business, and sport. The CBI's scale measures the following 13 barriers: sexual discrimination, lack of confidence, multiple-role conflict, conflict between children and career demands, racial discrimination, inadequate preparation, disapproval by significant others, decision-making difficulties, dissatisfaction with career, discouragement from choosing nontraditional careers, disability/health concerns, job market constraints, and difficulties with networking or socialization.

The CBI encompasses sexual discrimination and “experiencing sexual discrimination in the hiring for a job” (Swanson et al., 1996, p. 225) and includes items related to gender stereotypes that hinder the entrance and advancement of women in the workplace. Quarterman, Dupress, and Willis (2006) found that most female managers in male-dominated occupations believed that success for women was attributable to the possession of certain “masculine” personality traits. This finding supports the empirical evidence suggesting that sexual discrimination exists in the workplace, specifically, sexist attitudes toward women in leadership roles. This finding is also consistent with sport-specific research by Grappendorf and Lough (2006), in which 77% of female athletic directors believed that the perception that

women cannot lead men was a barrier to their overall career success. Gender discrimination in the workplace has also been found to discourage the entrance of women in male-dominated occupations such as sport. For instance, Grappendorf and Lough (2006) found that a majority of female athletic directors believed that gender bias and discrimination contributed toward the underrepresentation of women pursuing a career as a collegiate athletic director. Additionally, sexual discrimination has been found to hinder the career progression of women. Kirchmeyer (2002) found that sexual discrimination caused midcareer women to have fewer promotions and raises than their male counterparts.

Lack of confidence, another barrier included in the CBI, was specific to educational and vocational choices and included statements similar to, “not feeling confident about my ability on the job” (Swanson et al., 1996, p. 225). A study by Yang and Gybsers (2007) on male and female college seniors found that a lack of readiness and external support negatively influenced the self-confidence needed for the transition from student to working professional. Research on women in gender-neutral and male-dominated occupations found a positive correlation between gender representation and self-confidence (Whitmarsh, Brown, Cooper, Hawkins-Rodgers, & Wentworth, 2007). In other words, women in gender-neutral careers were found to possess higher career self-confidence than women working in male-dominated vocations.

Multiple-role conflict (e.g., traditional gender role responsibilities) was reflected in the CBI and included statements similar to, “stress at work affecting my life at home” (Swanson et al., 1996, p. 225). Multiple-role conflict has been found to impact the educational and vocational decision-making process, as well as influence the confidence and

career motivation of working women. In relation to the decision-making process, a study on postsecondary students found that women had more difficulty making occupational plans than men, due to stronger family aspirations (Almquist & Angrist, 1993). Cinamon and Rich (2004) found that female college students were more willing to change their educational and vocational interests and ambitions to avoid multiple-role conflict. Unlike men, women who did not alter career aspirations for family responsibilities were more likely to perceive the necessity to make compromises in other important life areas (Whitmarsh et al., 2007). Conflicts between family and work responsibilities were found to negatively influence women's career motivation (Gottfredson, 1996). Specific to sport, Grappendorf and Lough (2004) found that of the female collegiate athletic directors with children, nearly half (47%) believed that multiple-role conflict was a barrier facing women interested in head athletic-director positions. Equally noteworthy, female athletic administrators believed that men received greater leeway in meeting work and life demands; whereas women with the same responsibilities were seen in a negative light (Drago et al., 2005).

The barrier conflicts between children and career responsibilities encompassed comments comparable to "feeling guilty about working while my children are young" (Swanson et al., 1996, p. 226). The empirical evidence suggests that child-rearing responsibilities may negatively influence women's occupational plans and their motivation to seek nontraditional occupations. Women were found to be more likely than men to disrupt or discontinue vocational careers to focus on the care of their children (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). Although child-rearing conflicts have been found to influence the career entrance and advancement of women, literature suggests that the impact is greater for women in male-

dominated occupations. Quimby and O'Brien (2004) found that college women were more likely than men to choose gender-neutral vocations, due to the perception that male-dominated occupations resulted in more work-family conflicts. Baber and Monaghan (1998) found that women who sought male-dominated occupations planned to have fewer children than women interested in gender-neutral occupations. Additionally, women in male-dominated occupations held more feminist attitudes and planned to share more household obligations with their significant other (Hallet & Gilbert, 1997).

Discouragement from outsiders in choosing a nontraditional career was also included in the CBI (Swanson et al., 1996). Empirical evidence suggests that the value that an individual places on potential educational and occupational choices can be influenced by their socialization experiences (e.g., gender-role beliefs). Eccles (1987) speculated that individuals categorically reject educational and vocational options that do not align with their gender-role schema. A positive correlation was found between self-confidence and support from outsiders. Parental support has the greatest impact on an individual's self-confidence. Women in gender-neutral occupations recalled strong parental messaging about what were excellent careers for women, as well as discouragement in the pursuit of traditionally male-dominated occupations (Whitmarsh et al., 2007, p. 230). Additionally, perceptions of family members were found to be positively correlated with an individual's confidence to pursue an occupation among high-school- and college-aged women (Caldera et al., 2003). Specific to sport, Yiamouyiannis (2008) found that female head coaches of men's sports cited feedback and support from family and peers as one of the top career motivators. Consistent with the empirical evidence suggesting traditional gender roles, Whitmarsh et al. (2007) found that

women in traditionally male-dominated occupations reported being told by others that they would be unable to appropriately manage their work and family responsibilities.

Perceptions related to difficulty networking as a barrier in educational and vocational choices pertains to my study and included thoughts comparable to being “unsure of how to advance in my career” (Swanson et al., 1996, p. 228). Lent (2002) found that perceptions regarding the ability to network can affect the career choices of college seniors. Participants enrolled in technical colleges reported access to mentors as a factor influencing their pursuit of career goals. Specific to sport, 54% of NCAA Division II female athletic directors reported difficulties due to the “good Ole Boy’s Network” (Quarterman et al., 2006). Lough and Grappendorf (2007) found that 19% of Senior Women Administrators (SWA) regarded the “Old Boys Network” (p. 201) as a barrier to their career advancement. Yiamouyiannis (2008) found that female head coaches of men’s sports believed that the top career influencer was access to male and female role models.

Although the literature has explored the underrepresentation of women employed in sport, as well as the perceived barriers toward women in that industry, apparently no previous research has explored undergraduate female sport management students. Therefore, I will now review the literature regarding the characteristics and educational decision-making process of post-secondary students across disciplines and in disciplines other than sport management.

Today’s Post-secondary Undergraduate

Characteristics (e.g., age, gender, and race) of students enrolled in higher education today are significantly more diverse than in previous years (U.S. Department of Education,

2009). Furthermore, representation of female students has increased. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010), 74% of high-school graduates were women. However diverse the student population may be, the majority of today's college students are members of the Millennial Generation (i.e., born 1982–1992).

The Millennial Generation

Howe and Strauss (2003) introduced the term Millennial Generation in the book titled *Generations*, which described distinct characteristics associated with specific generations. The Millennial Generation, the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in U.S. history, is comprised of individuals born 1982–1992, who were thought to be distinct from their predecessor Generation X (i.e., born 1965–1982) and that generation's Baby Boomer parents (i.e., born 1946–1964). The Millennial Generation is also referred to as Generation Y, Generation Next, The Nintendo Generation, The Digital Generation, Generation O, Net Generation, and Echo Boomers (Raines & Arnsperger, 2010). Irrespective of the label, generational experts agree on several characteristics that distinguish this cohort from previous generations. Howe and Strauss (2003) indicated seven distinct characteristics (i.e., special, sheltered, confident, conventional, pressured, team-oriented, and a high proclivity to achieve) that directly influence the Millennial Generation's entrance into higher education.

Howe and Strauss (2003) asserted that because Millennials (i.e., members of the Millennial Generation) "grew up in an era that placed high value on children," that the generation is unique: "Their problems [are] the nation's problems, their future is the nation's future, and that, by extension, the American people will be inclined to help them solve those problems" (p. 2). Therefore, the Millennial Generation tends to be more trusting of larger

institutions, including the government. This finding was supported by a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2007), which found the Millennial Generation to be less critical of government regulations than any previous generation, as well as more likely to support privatization of Social Security.

Howe and Strauss (2003) also described the generation as more sheltered than previous cohorts, due to the close supervision of their Baby Boomer parents. According to Raines and Arnsparger (2010), parents of the Millennial Generation are more likely to intercede on their child's behalf. As a result, Wilson (2004) anticipated the increased likelihood of parents' playing a more active role during the college application process, with overly involved parents even "choos[ing] courses and majors for students... contact[ing] professors about grades... and monitor[ing] course content" (p. 66).

Additionally, Howe and Strauss (2003) wrote that the Millennials' sheltered childhood has contributed to high confidence levels and a more well-rounded view of success. According to Armour (2007), the Millennial Generation is known for placing a higher value on work-life balance, in which they seek jobs accommodating aspects of their personal and social lives (e.g., family, children, and hobbies). This is consistent with Sweeney (2006), in which members of the Millennial Generation were less willing to work additional hours or to "sacrifice their health and their leisure time, even for considerably higher salaries" (p. 5). Howe and Strauss (2003) found an increased generational emphasis on making a valuable contribution to society. This finding was confirmed when Martin and Tulgan (2006) found the Millennial Generation to be more socially conscious and more

likely to “reject high-prestige positions to work on good causes... or to contribute to important societal issues of the day” (p. 17).

The Millennial Generation is also believed to be more conventional than other generations, perceiving less of a generational gap in relation to their Baby Boomer parents (Howe & Strauss, 2003). In other words, they tend to identify more closely with their parents’ values than any generation before them (Oblinger, 2003). This finding is consistent with the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2007), which found that nearly 80% of members of the Millennial Generation maintain daily communication with their parents and that 50% report face-to-face interaction on a daily basis.

The Millennial Generation seems to be under greater pressure than any previous generation. According to the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, 29% of 2010 college freshmen reported being frequently overwhelmed by all their responsibilities, up two percentage points from 2009 (Pryor, Hurtado, DeAngelo, Palucki Blake, & Tran, 2010). This finding could be the result of Baby Boomer parents “micromanaging their lives [as children], leaving them with little free time” (Raines & Arnsperger, 2010, p. 1). This finding may also be the result of increased participation in non-educational activities (Sweeney, 2006). The pressure may be caused by the generation’s belief that their long-term success is dependent on their current educational and vocational choices. Additionally, the state of the job market and the increased difficulty to find employment upon graduation may be contributing to the pressure (Raines & Arnsperger, 2010).

Due to their rule-following nature, as well the importance placed on planning and time management, the Millennial Generation exhibits a high proclivity to achieve. In fact,

results from a 2010 survey of college freshmen indicated an increase in self-confidence in academic ability and drive to achieve (Pryor et al., 2010). Murray (1997) found the generation to be more willing to do what it takes to succeed compared to previous generations. Therefore, it is unsurprising that of those who graduated from high school in 2010, a record-breaking 70% enrolled in universities and colleges (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010).

Although the college-student population continues to become more diverse, the majority of students today are members of the Millennial Generation. A thorough review of the characteristics of this generation was necessitated by the likelihood that my study's participants would be Millennials. However, a thorough understanding of the influences on the educational and occupational decisions of college undergraduates is also needed, specifically due to the continued gender disparity in specific college majors.

Education and Vocational Preferences

However diverse the college student population may be, gender disparity persists in numerous college majors (e.g., science and engineering fields) (Hagedorn, Nora, & Pascarella, 1996; Leslie & Oaxaca, 1998). This disparity could be the direct result of the tendency for women to select academic majors perceived to be dominated by women (Jacobs, 1986; Lackland & De Lisi, 2001; Solnick, 1995). Because choice of undergraduate major influences future job stability, satisfaction, and job earnings (U.S. Department of Education, 1998, 2001), as well as life satisfaction (Carbonero & Merino, 2004), the gender inequality has prompted investigation about the educational- and vocational-choice process.

Eccles (1987) found that education and vocational choices were influenced by the value an individual places on potential majors or employment options and the confidence exhibited by that individual to succeed at those options. The value an individual places on perceived choices can also be influenced by different socialization experiences (e.g., gender-role beliefs) and self-interpretation of past-performance (e.g., grades in high school). Eccles indicated several influences that affect education and vocational choices.

Although Eccles (1987) acknowledged that the full range of education and vocational options is not always recognized by individuals, she proposed that individuals often overlook options because they do not align with their gender-role schema (p. 141). In other words, educational or vocational “activities classified as part of the opposite sex’s role may be rejected without any serious evaluation or consideration” (p. 141). This finding may offer insight into the underrepresentation of women studying in sport (a male-dominated field).

Additionally, Peterson and Fennema (1985) suggested that women were more likely than men to avoid situations and environments perceived to be competitive. This finding is also applicable to my study; due to the already overly competitive job market’s negatively influencing the advancement of women in male-dominated fields. Furthermore, Eccles (1987) proposed that a woman’s perception of cost (e.g., family-work conflict, amount of training required) associated with a potential degree or vocation could negatively influence her decisions. Herzog and Bachman (1982) and Tittle (1982) believed that this may affect women more than men due to the former’s need to modify work roles for the sake of their family. This may make women reluctant to study or work in sport, as the sport industry is known for long work hours and lower salary ranges (Tiell, 2002).

Parents, teachers, school counselors, role models, and peers can positively or negatively influence an individual's perception of available education and vocational options. Eccles, Adler, and Meece (1984) found parents to significantly influence education and vocational information. Parents also shaped an individual's attitude toward traditional gender roles. Furthermore, Eccles and Hoffman (1984) found that school counselors were less likely to provide high-school students with information on nontraditional occupations than on traditional ones. Eccles (1987) suggested that this is due to the numerous responsibilities and work load of school counselors, which constrains them to rely on pre-packaged college information to help guide students in their college decisions. However, comprehensive career counseling has been found to increase the representation of female students in math and science, typically male-dominated academic fields (Fennema, Wolleat, Pedro, & Becker, 1981). Furthermore, Casserly (1980) found that schools with large numbers of female students enrolled in advanced math and science had teachers who placed a high value on career counseling and encouraging students to pursue those fields.

Research has found additional influences on educational and vocational preferences, including sex, age, race, social status, skill level, interest, and personality. As a result, experts have produced theories regarding the educational- and vocational-choice process, including (a) the theory of vocational choice (Holland, 1966), and (b) a chilly climate (Hall & Sandler, 1982).

Theory of Vocational Choice. Holland (1966) found that a high-school graduate's vocational choice "is an expressive act which reflects [a] person's motivation, knowledge, personality and ability" (p. 3). Carbonero and Merino (2004) confirmed Holland's theory in

their finding that life and job satisfaction are positively correlated to choosing a career path that most closely matched an individual's skill level, interest, values, and personality. Individuals were found to actively seek "environments and vocations that will permit them to exercise their skills and abilities" (Holland, 1966, p. 11). As a result, Holland (1966) introduced the Vocational Preference Inventory, which included six distinct personality types (i.e., enterprising, conventional, intellectual, realistic, artistic, social) and was based on the established "psychological needs and motives, self-concepts, life history, vocational and educational goals, preferred occupational roles, aptitudes, and intelligence" of individuals (p. 11).

Although Holland's (1966) theory is applicable only to men, other research has supported Holland's personality types across both genders and shown some individual personality types as being more masculine (i.e., enterprising, conventional, intellectual, realistic) and others as more feminine (i.e., artistic, social). In a study on college students, men were more likely to rate salary (i.e., conventional, enterprising), position (i.e., conventional, enterprising), freedom (i.e., conventional, enterprising), and the opportunity to lead (i.e., enterprising) as the most important characteristics of a future job (Lyson, 1984). However, women were more likely to favor helping and working with people (e.g., social) and the opportunity to be creative (e.g., artistic).

The majority of the population was found to be most closely associated with the *realistic* model type, preferring occupations that require physical and technical skills with defined goals and tasks (Holland, 1966). The realistic model type has a propensity to avoid tasks that "require subjectivity, intellectualism, artistic expression, and social sensitivity" (p.

19). Individuals belonging to this model type perceive themselves to be mature and practical but exhibit low self-confidence. Garcia-Sedeno, Navarro, and Menacho (2009) found similar introversion or unsociable personality characteristics associated with individuals studying mechanical-type occupations, providing further evidence for Holland.

In contrast, Holland's (1966) *intellectual* model type copes with their environment through their intelligence. This model type prefers to work independently of others and is more inclined to choose a profession that expresses his or her intellectualism, such as academic and scientific occupations. These individuals perceive themselves as unsocial, independent, and achieving.

The *social* model type desires everyday social interaction. The social individual is "concerned with the welfare of dependent persons: the poor, uneducated, sick, unstable, young, and aged... relying on his emotions and feelings" (Holland, 1966, p. 25). Individuals belonging to this type exhibit high self-confidence, perceiving themselves as popular, dependable, expressive, and understanding (p. 26). These individuals displayed more feminine characteristics, which was confirmed by Daymont and Andrisani's (1984) finding that women were more likely than men to seek jobs that provide the opportunity to work with people. In fact, Daymont and Andrisani found a positive correlation between a woman's desire to work with people and her likelihood of majoring in a gender-neutral field.

The *conventional* model type characterizes individuals who are averse to tasks that require creativity, spontaneity, or leadership. The conventional individual perceives himself or herself as practical, dependable, and conservative.

The *enterprising* model type is opposite of the social model type, in the former's desire for positions of authority that result in public acknowledgment. The enterprising individual perceives himself or herself to excel at public speaking, emotional stability, popularity, and self-confidence (p. 32) and to be more masculine. Daymont and Andrisani's (1984) findings suggested that men were more likely than women to prefer a career that provides an opportunity for public acknowledgement, implying that the former would more likely be drawn to the sport business.

Last, the *artist* model type copes with his or her environment through emotions and creativity. Artists find masculine activities objectionable and perceive themselves as unsocial, feminine, sensitive, and irresponsible. Garcia-Sedeno et al. (2009) found the absence of tough-mindedness in individuals interested in artistic occupations. This finding is consistent with Holland's personality findings for this model type, which included suffering "more frequently from emotional disturbances" (p. 17).

Holland (1966) found social, conventional, enterprising, and artistic individuals to change their vocational choices more frequently. However, enterprising, social, and artistic individuals have a tendency to be overconfident in their abilities and to hold higher career aspirations. A limitation to Holland's theory of vocational preference was its original application to men only. Nonetheless, research has since confirmed the influence of personality type on vocational choice. Daymont and Andrisani's (1984) research on job preferences and majors of college students found, "Men were more likely to major in business, engineering, and professional fields, while women were more likely to major in the humanities, health or biology, and education" (p. 414). Additionally, Rae and Strange (1983)

found that women in male-dominated careers rated themselves as possessing more masculine characteristics than did women in gender-neutral occupations. Lackland and De Lisi (2001) found that students with higher femininity scores were more likely to choose traditionally female-dominated majors such as nursing and education. Although Holland's (1966) theory of vocational preference offers insight into influences that personality traits have on the decision-making process, empirical evidence also confirms the influence of certain environments on women's entrance into male-dominated fields.

A Chilly Climate. Hall and Sandler (1982) coined *chilly climate* to describe a male-dominated educational environment that inequitably treated women who entered or remained within certain fields, most notably male-dominated majors. Both overt (e.g., discouraging female participation in class, making sexist jokes) and subtle (e.g., making better eye contact with men, giving men more detailed instruction on assignments, calling on men more often) behaviors typical of chilly climates were identified by Hall and Sandler (1982). However, some studies have found chilly climate to encompass a far broader set of behaviors.

Although Morris and Daniel (2008) found that women were more likely than men to characterize a climate as chilly, female students in traditionally male-dominated majors were not more likely to perceive a chilly climate than were those in gender-neutral majors. Moreover, Monk-Turner and Fogerty (2010) found that female faculty members who felt less welcome in comparison to male department members were less productive. Although there is disagreement concerning the effects of chilly climates, the terminology is applicable to my study in that the sport management degree is traditionally implying a higher likelihood of a chilly climate.

Summary

The relative lack of sport-specific academic research necessitated a broad review of the literature in an effort to better understand the underrepresentation of women in sport, the causes for the underrepresentation, and the educational decision-making process of today's postsecondary student. Although Jones and Brooks (2008) found women to be underrepresented in sport management majors, apparently no research has studied the perceptions of female sport management students toward their degree, educational environment, or future careers in sport. The results of my study combined with published empirical evidence across a wide range of fields may provide insight into the causes for the underrepresentation of female students in sport management and ways to improve their educational experience.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of my study was to examine undergraduate female sport management students' perceptions toward their sport management degree, educational environment, and future careers in sport. Examining the perceptions of female sport management students provided insight into a population that is likely to become members of the future workforce in the sport industry. These topics were explored through a series of focus groups conducted at a large Division I institution in North Carolina.

Method Choice

A focus group design was chosen as the qualitative method due to the limited amount of sport management academic research. Three focus groups, comprised of undergraduate female sport management students enrolled in the spring 2010 semester, were used to collect qualitative data. Krueger and Casey (2000) found that the best use of focus group instrumentation was to determine the perceptions and feelings of people about certain issues. Therefore, focus group instrumentation was used due to purpose of my study to examine the perceptions of female sport management students, as well as to provide preliminary insight into an understudied population.

Focus groups have been defined as a "carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment" (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 5). To allow participants to feel comfortable in disclosing personal information in a group setting, they were given aliases to use throughout focus group discussions. Additionally, focus group participants were asked to sign a

statement of confidentiality (Appendix A). Krueger and Casey (2000) also recommended that a study employ several focus groups. Consequently, my study involved three different focus group discussions, with a total of 16 different participants.

Participant Confidentiality

A summary of my study was sent to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval, which included specific information on potential participants and on informed consent and confidentiality procedures. A request for exemption was made and approved (Appendix B).

According to Krueger and Casey (2000), communicating and ensuring confidentiality among participants in a focus group is critical within social scientific research, especially when participants were asked to reveal sensitive information. Therefore, participants were asked to sign a statement of confidentiality (Appendix A) at the onset of focus group interviews. At the beginning of each focus group, I communicated the importance of all participants' upholding the confidentiality agreement. However, to further safeguard participants' identity, aliases (i.e., candy names) were assigned to each member and were used throughout the research process.

Procedures

I contacted two university sport management professors via telephone for permission to speak to their female sport management students prior to their classes. Once I was given access to their female students, I explained to them the purpose of the focus groups, while I handed out an information sheet (Appendix C). I then invited students to volunteer to participate by filling out a consent form (Appendix D) that was then to be turned in to their

professors at their convenience. Students who volunteered to participate were sent a reminder email prior to focus group meetings (Appendix E).

Three separate focus groups were formed on different dates to better accommodate participants. At the onset of focus group interviews, participants were given a demographic survey (Appendix F) that asked information specific to participant demographics (e.g., age, race, marital status, number of dependents), educational background (e.g., grade level, grade point average, collegiate athletic participation), and future career expectations (e.g., entry-level salaries and work experiences). The survey was developed to provide additional information on the demographics of participants (Oblinger, 2003) and information specific to the population. Responses from this survey were later matched to participants' aliases to provide additional insight into a given participant's perceptions.

Once introductions were made, a questioning route was utilized to elicit the feelings and perceptions of participants, without biasing participants' responses (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The questioning route incorporated open-ended questions to encourage open dialogue among participants. The questioning route was designed as follows: (a) opening questions, (b) introductory questions, (c) transition questions, (d) key questions, and (e) ending questions. The opening question was used to encourage everyone's participation. The introductory and transition questions were then used to initiate discussion about the topic under investigation. The ending questions were used to help participants to reflect on their comments, as well as add any final comments. Probing questions were used to better understand and confirm participant responses. Respondents' conversations introduced independent themes and concepts. The questioning route used was as follows:

1. Opening Question: Tell us your alias name, where you are from, and something you enjoy doing outside of school?
2. Introductory Question: Talk about when you first found out sport management was an academic program offered in college.
3. Transition Question: Can you recall why you chose to study sport management in college?
4. Key Question: Talk about anyone in your life who encouraged you to pursue a degree in sport management or a career in sport. Was there anyone who discouraged you from choosing sport as a degree or career option?
5. Key Question: Thinking back to when you first started studying sport, have your expectations changed towards either your program or towards your future career in sport?
6. Key Question: As you keep up with the current industry trends in classes, are there any issues that concern you as you look to a career in sport?
7. Key Question: When you compare your future in sport to friends or peers in other programs, how do you think your careers will differ?
8. Key Question: Now that you are towards the tail-end of your studies, can you talk about how your feelings related to securing your first job?
9. Key Question: As you are looking to the future, can you talk about what you are most looking forward to? What you are least looking forward to?

10. Key Question: Hindsight is 20/20, is there anything you wish you had known as you began studying sport or any advice you'd like to give to future female sport management students?

11. Closing Question: Is there anything I missed? Is there anything you wanted to say in which you didn't get a chance to?

I was the only moderator used during the focus group discussion. Therefore, tape recorders were used to increase the accuracy of the data collection and allow more attention to be placed on the participants (Patton, 1987). Additionally, participants were asked to use their aliases prior to responding to a question to help with the accuracy of the transcription process. Notes were also taken to capture additional information on non-verbal participant behavior. At the conclusion of the interview, the notes were reviewed to assist in quality control to further guarantee the accuracy of the data obtained. According to Yin (1984), "Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence, to address the initial propositions of the study" (p. 99). Therefore, to accurately analyze the qualitative data, focus group discussions were transcribed using a process called transcript-based analysis, in which verbatim transcripts were made and used in the analysis (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

Sample

A convenience sample of female undergraduate sport management students from a large NCAA Division I institution in the Southeast were asked to participate in the focus group. In the spring of 2010, students were contacted to participate in the focus groups. Randomization was not needed due to the intent of my study to explore the perceptions of the

group rather than generalize (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Participants were grouped into three pre-determined focus group dates based on participants' availability. The first focus group consisted of seven participants, the second consisted of three participants, and the final group was comprised of six participants. Focus group participants ($N = 16$) were all in the age range of 20 to 22 and were single with no children. A majority of focus group participants ($n = 15$) were White/Caucasian, with only one African-American student.

Analysis

The focus group transcripts were analyzed, and the data coded. Coding facilitated data analysis by organizing the data captured by the transcripts. Two investigators coded and searched for emerging themes from the focus group transcripts. This was done by identifying statements related to the perceptions of female sport management students in relation to the sport degree or their future careers in sport. Each statement was assigned a code (e.g., "industry-specific concerns") that best summarized the quote. Then a label (e.g., difficulty networking, job-market constraints, long work hours, low salary range) was assigned to capture the essence of the quote. An additional analysis was executed by the second investigator, a sport management expert, to help ensure accuracy (Krueger & Casey, 2000). If any discrepancies in the codes were found, a third investigator would have been used until an agreement was reached. However, there were no discrepancies, and thus a third member was not needed.

Trustworthiness

Due to my study being qualitative, several methods were used to increase the trustworthiness of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility (i.e., internal validity),

transferability (i.e., external validity), and dependability (i.e., reliability) were all addressed. Credibility was established through the authenticity of giving a “fair, honest, and balanced account of social life from the viewpoint of someone who lives it every day” (Neuman, 2000, p. 31). Additionally, although my study’s purpose was to explore the perceptions of a small sample of undergraduate female sport management students and not to generalize about an entire population (Merriam, 1998), necessary steps were taken to increase the external validity of my study. To provide detailed information on my study’s data, significant respondents’ quotes from the focus group transcriptions were used to help illustrate the coding and themes. “Thick description” (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993) was utilized to validate the meaning of participants’ responses and the investigators’ interpretations. Notes were taken to complement focus group recordings and transcripts. Informal member checking, in which the investigator verbally summarizes a participant’s statement, was used throughout the focus group process to validate the accuracy of participants’ responses (Erlandson et al., 1993).

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of my study was to examine undergraduate female sport management students' perceptions toward their sport management degree, educational environment, and future careers in sport. Results from the study were divided into four sections. The first section offers results from the demographic survey handed out prior to focus group discussions. The survey included information specific to participant demographics (i.e., age, race, marital status, and household children), educational backgrounds (i.e., grade level, grade point average), previous athletic participation, and future career expectations (i.e., entry-level salaries, relevant work experience). The second and third sections included analysis of the perceptions of female sport management students regarding the sport degree, the educational environment, and their future careers in sport.

Characteristics of Focus Group Participants

This section offers results from the demographic survey handed out prior to focus group discussions. The survey included information specific to participant demographics (i.e., age, race, marital status, and household children), educational backgrounds (i.e., grade level, grade point average), previous athletic participation, and future career expectations (i.e., entry-level salaries, relevant work experience).

Demographics

Focus group participants ($N = 16$) were all in the age range of 20 and 22 years old (e.g., members of the Millennial Generation), were single, and had no children/dependants.

The majority of focus group participants ($n = 15$) were White/Caucasian, with one African-American female participant.

Educational Background

Focus group participants ($N = 16$) were sophomores, juniors, or seniors and had Grade Point Averages (GPAs) in the range of 2.5 and 3.7. A majority of participants ($n = 13$) indicated previous participation in organized athletics (see Table 1).

Grade Point Average (GPA). Focus group participants ($N = 16$) had GPAs within the range of 2.5 to 3.7, with a mean of 3.2. Nearly half of participants ($n = 7$) had GPAs of 3.0 or higher, with several ($n = 5$) having GPAs from 3.26 to 3.50.

Previous Athletic Participation

A majority of focus group participants ($n = 13$) indicated previous organized athletic participation. Over half of participants ($n = 9$) played sports in high school, and nearly half ($n = 7$) reported playing intramural sports in college. Several participants ($n = 5$) reported playing intercollegiate athletics.

Future Career Expectations

Data were gathered on the future career expectations of focus group participants. This data included expected entry level salary as well as related work experience (see Table 1).

Entry-Level Salaries. Nearly half of focus group participants ($n = 7$) expected a starting salary from \$35,000 to \$39,000. Nearly half of participants ($n = 6$) expected to make less, from \$25,000 to \$34,000. Only two ($n = 2$) participants expected to make \$40,000 or more. One focus group participant ($n = 1$) did not respond to this question on the questionnaire.

Relevant Work Experience. All focus group participants ($N = 16$) reported having at least one year of relevant work experience. Half of participants ($n = 8$) indicated having four or more years of relevant work experience. However, participants were not asked to distinguish between full-time or part-time work. No participants indicated having only two years of relevant work experience.

Table 1. Demographic & Educational Information

Group #	Alias	Age	Race	Marital Status	# of Dependents	Grade Level	GPA	Athletic Participation	Work Experience (Years)	Expected Entry-Level Salary
1	Crunch	20	White	Single	0	Sophomore	3.6	High School & Intramurals	3	\$35K - \$39K
	Hersheys	21	White	Single	0	Senior	3.4	Intramurals	4+	\$35K - \$39K
	Reese	21	White	Single	0	Senior	3.1	Collegiate	3	\$35K - \$39K
	Twix	22	White	Single	0	Senior	3.6	High School & Intramurals	3	\$25K - \$34K
	Skittles1	22	White	Single	0	Senior	3.4	High School & Intramurals	4+	\$25K - \$34K
	Snickers	22	White	Single	0	Senior	3.3	Collegiate	4+	\$35K - \$39K
	Starburst	22	White	Single	0	Senior	2.5	Collegiate	4+	\$25K - \$34K
2	Sweetarts2	20	White	Single	0	Sophomore	3.7	None	1	Over \$80K
	MilkyWay	20	White	Single	0	Junior	3.4	High School, Intramurals, & Collegiate	4+	\$40K - \$49K
	Gobstopper2	21	White	Single	0	Senior	3.4	None	4+	\$25K - \$34K
3	M&Ms	20	White	Single	0	Junior	2.8	High School, Intramurals, College Club & Collegiate	4+	\$25K - \$34K
	Gobstopper3	21	White	Single	0	Junior	3.0	High School, College Club & Collegiate	4+	\$25K - \$34K
	Nerds	21	Black	Single	0	Senior	2.5	None	1	\$35K - \$39K
	Sweetarts3	21	White	Single	0	Senior	3.7	High School	3	\$35K - \$39K
	Butterfinger	22	White	Single	0	Senior	3.0	High School	0	No Response
	Skittles3	22	White	Single	0	Junior	3.1	High School & Intramurals	3	\$35K - \$39K

Perceptions Regarding the Sport Management Degree

Nearly all focus group participants ($n = 15$) shared their impressions of the sport management degree (see Table 2), with only one ($n = 1$) focus group participant offering no feedback in relation to her sport management degree. The two following topics emerged regarding the sport management degree: (a) perceptions regarding an undergraduate sport management degree (i.e., lack of knowledge of degree existence, delayed transfer into the program, gender make-up of student population, outsiders' perceptions of the degree), and (b) perceptions regarding a postgraduate sport management degree. Qualitative results from focus group discussions are presented in subsections below.

Perceptions Regarding Undergraduate Degree

In response to questions about the timing of their decision to attend a sport management academic program, over half of focus group participants ($n = 9$) found out about the opportunity after they were already enrolled at the university (see Table 2). Nearly half ($n = 7$) conveyed their knowledge about the sport management degree prior to their arrival on campus. Therefore, two subcategories emerged regarding this theme: (a) participants who found out about the sport management degree after beginning their college studies, and (b) participants who knew about the sport management degree prior to their college enrollment.

Over half of focus group participants ($n = 9$) indicated no previous knowledge related to the existence of a sport-specific academic degree prior to their college enrollment. For instance, Skittles1 recalled finding out about sport management while studying a different curriculum at the university. "I learned about the program as I started working in intramural sports and my boss told me about it," recalled Skittles1. While Starburst did not specify the

way that she found out about the sport management curriculum, she recalled learning of the program during her second year of college after having “original plans of doing a biology degree.” Likewise, Hersheys conveyed learning of the program “[at] the end of [her] sophomore year.” Butterfinger found out about the curriculum her “freshman year of college [at another university]” and transferred in, “not really expect[ing] to stay in the [program].” Similarly, Gobstopper3 recalled not “even know[ing] until halfway through [her] freshman year when an advisor said [she] should really think about the sport management program” based on her favorite class topics and assignments.

Nearly half of focus group participants ($n = 7$) indicated prior knowledge of the sport curriculum before enrolling in college. For instance, Gobstopper2 recalled learning of the program during the “college search” process, which was required by her high school. Sweetarts3 reported finding out about the program in high school through “a guy [she] was dating who was studying sport management.” However, she began college as a “poly-polymer chemistry major” and later transferred to sport management. Several participants ($n = 5$) who indicated knowledge of the sport management degree prior to college conveyed finding out about the degree due to athletic participation, sport-specific projects, or jobs related to sport. For instance, Snickers noted finding out about the degree during “recruiting trips [for intercollegiate athletics] where [she] talked to people and they were telling [her] that [she] might be good in PE since [she] likes sports.” Snickers expressed not “know[ing] it was a degree until [she] picked the schools [she] went on recruiting trips to.” M&Ms indicated “going through the recruiting process... and [having] no idea what [she] wanted to do... [but] then [she] just saw a flash of sport management and thought ‘oh that’s perfect.’”

Crunch recalled finding out about the sport program in high school, due to a “graduation project” related to sport and it was “something [she] thought that would be interesting to study further.” MilkyWay learned of the program due to “a sport marketing class... [and] going on field trips [in high school].” Nerds recalled “[finding] out about [sport management] when [she] was a senior in high school... on the JV chain crew... and managing [the] JV and Varsity football team.”

Perceptions Regarding Gender Make-Up of Sport Management Students. Nearly half of participants ($n = 6$) indicated an underrepresentation of women within the sport management program (see Table 2). The remaining participants ($n = 10$) within the sample offered no comments regarding this topic. Two subcategories emerged regarding this theme: (a) significant underrepresentation of female sport management students within classes/program, and (b) effort required to compensate for the underrepresentation of women within the program.

Nearly half of participants ($n = 6$) indicated an underrepresentation of female sport management students within the program. For instance, MilkyWay explained when she “came for orientation, I was the only girl out of 26 [guys] in my group, that’s very intimidating when you’re on your first day on a college campus.” She indicated she was aware of the gender disproportion, saying, “In my classes there is a handful of girls and tons of guys and it’s a lot more challenging.” Gobstopper2 added, “With four girls and forty guys... it’s intimidating being in a class with all guys.” Nerds said, “Being a female in this major is kind of hard [because] I’ve been the only women in the classroom, and sometimes

it's frustrating." Sweetarts3 added, "Classes are a majority guys, there were many instances where I was the only girl in the group."

Nearly half of participants ($n = 6$) indicated that extra effort was required to compensate for the underrepresentation of women within the program. For instance, MilkyWay encouraged the group, saying, "Take advantage of the situation... when you're working in groups take the leadership role... speak up and be the one to raise your hand and be vocal, make relationships with your teachers." Gobstopper2 believes that females need to be comfortable "talking about issues that you just know stereotypically [guys] think they know more about." Sweetarts2 recommended "definitely keep up with ESPN, read sporting news and keep up with that so you can talk to those guys in your classes, because it will be mostly guys." Nerds believed female sport management students "have to work and do twice as much as [their] male counterparts," and "not take a lot of crap from guys... put your foot down." M&M's explained previous experiences of being the "only girl in [all guys] group, they expect you to do everything." Sweetarts3 indicated that a certain "leadership style" helps to counteract the gender disproportion, in which women "take charge to begin with" and "end up doing most of the work."

Outsiders' Perceptions of Sport Management Degree. A majority of participants ($n = 14$) indicated concern regarding outsiders' perceptions of their sport management curriculum (see Table 2). Three subcategories emerged regarding this theme: (a) explaining the sport management degree to outsiders, (b) receiving discouragement from outsiders regarding their sport management degree, and (c) justifying the sport management

curriculum. A few participants ($n = 2$) had nothing to offer about outsiders' perceptions of the sport management degree.

Over half of participants ($n = 10$) indicated occasions in which they were required to explain their degree to family, friends, and peers. For instance, Crunch recalled, "When people ask what your major is and you say sport management... they're like 'well, what do you want to do with that one day?'" Snickers explained the misconception of sport management as "[associated with] PE teachers or something like that... the whole sport management major itself isn't really well known enough, they just don't know enough of the major to look good upon it." Twix agreed, saying, "You do kind of have to explain yourself and why you're doing it." Reese indicated, "People don't know about it... a lot of people don't know about the curriculum and what it entails." MilkyWay explained, "A lot of people" believe the sport curriculum is very narrowly focused and limited to "'going to school to be a coach' [but] I'm like, 'no there are fifty things that I can go to school for with this degree.'" Gobstopper2 agreed, saying, "With my parents... they just wanted to make sure that it was very business... I remember they kept saying, 'is that something where you can go on and get your MBA?'" Moreover, M&Ms also noted the misconception about sport management, in which "they don't understand it's just like business or anything else... it's almost harder because it so concentrated." Nerds explained that she too "had to explain it to most of my colleagues and other college students." Likewise, Gobstopper3 also experienced people asking her "what I'm majoring in and I say 'sport management' and they ask 'well what can you do with that?'" Lastly, Sweetarts3 expressed frustration with this commonality, saying:

I hate whenever anyone asks me what I'm doing, I tell them "sport management" and they always say "well what can you do with that?" I have a difficult time trying to explain it to some people because they just don't comprehend that it's a new field and a lot of people are trying to get in it, they just don't understand that it's business.

A handful of participants ($n = 3$) expressed receiving discouragement from family, friends, and peers regarding their degree of choice. For instance, MilkyWay explained her experiences with her dad regarding her degree, saying, "He wasn't super keen on the idea of sport management." Gobstopper2 recalled her reservation in telling peers about her degree choice, saying, "I do remember that I didn't really talk much about it to my high-school friends because I did think it was just kind of random sounding." Sweetarts3 explained that "[her] parents," were definitely "not stoked" about her degree of choice.

A majority of participants ($n = 11$) expressed frustration at having to justify their sport management degree to others. For instance, Snickers explained that she feels people "look down on me because I study sport management" because they think "you just do that 'cause you're an athlete' ... [and] they think it's like the easy major or easy way out." Twix agreed regarding outsiders' "negative connotation" towards the sport management degree because they believe "it's going to be easy." Reese said it is "not seen as a harder major... because it's nontraditional." Starburst explained her family's hesitation regarding her career choice, saying "When they hear about a major that they don't know much about, at first they get a little worried and are like 'oh no, she's going to be on my payroll for another couple of years' ...so they want to make sure that they get us on out of there." MilkyWay indicated, "It kind of annoys me when people saying 'oh, that's probably an easy degree, you're in classes with all the athletes and it's probably super easy, people think it's just a pushover, easy

major.” Sweetarts2 recalled her mother’s “brushing it off as the easy major for people who couldn’t really get in unless they were athletes.” Similarly, Nerds indicated her “colleagues and other college students see sport management as easy... even when you tell people, they say ‘it’s easy’.” Butterfinger added, “Whenever somebody asks me about my major, it’s a pain always having to defend myself.” Sweetarts3 noted experiencing this misconception with students from other programs who also say, “You’re taking the easy classes.” M&Ms said, “The biggest stereotype that comes along with being a sport management major is whenever you tell someone they think, ‘she took an easy major out’.”

Perceptions Regarding Postgraduate Degree

Three-fourths of participants ($n = 12$) perceived a lack of available information regarding postgraduate sport management degrees (See Table 2). A handful of participants ($n = 3$) verbalized the importance of obtaining a postgraduate degree, while only one focus group participant ($n = 1$) offered no comment related to this topic. Three subcategories emerged regarding this theme: (a) a lack of access to readily available information concerning postgraduate or advanced sport degrees, (b) educational or career indecisiveness due to the lack of ready information, and (c) the importance of postgraduate degrees for women.

Over half of focus group participants ($n = 9$) communicated a lack of access to readily available information regarding postgraduate sport degrees. For instance, Twix indicated a lack of knowledge regarding the importance of a postgraduate degree until she began “applying for internships [in which] they preferred a masters [degree]” and recalled it was too late, as it was “a month before graduation.” Crunch expressed confusion with where to

obtain information regarding postgraduate degrees, saying, “I’m just unsure of how much help I can get in grad school and just learning [more] information about it.” Reese recalled no information “com[ing] out in our classes” and students feel they “need more guidance on how to get more information,” which would be “helpful just to find out more about the different programs.” While Snickers reported having previous knowledge of graduate school sport management programs, she would have liked more information because she “didn’t think [she] would have picked the same [graduate] schools.” MilkyWay recalled wanting “more advice on post grad[uate] degrees cause I want to get my masters... you kind of have to research it on your own.” Gobstopper2 agreed, communicating that her “professors don’t talk about it too much, as far as which jobs [in sport] need [postgraduate degrees] and I don’t know if they think we know, but personally don’t... up until now I just have been assuming that I would figure that out.” Sweetarts3 added, “I haven’t really heard much about furthering my degree... I haven’t really heard much about continuing your education.” Nerds clarified she too had “been looking at different grad schools and you really have to do your homework, it’s not... where you can easily find it.” Sweetarts3 added, “I didn’t really know where to look at as far as going to get my masters either.”

Several participants ($n = 4$) expressed indecisiveness between continuing their education or pursuing a specific career in sport. Snickers noted being “stressed about it,” because she “had no idea what [she] wants to do.” Hersheys expressed being “really stressed out” because she only had 10 days to decide. She explained that she was “educated on the opportunities that we had, but not in a way that was going to be enough to make a decision.” Gobstopper2 expressed indecisiveness, saying, “I don’t know because people ask me if I

want to go to grad school and I still don't know." M&Ms gave additional insight into the source of indecisiveness, explaining, "I think I want a few years of experience first to make sure that what I'm getting my masters [degree] in is definitely something that I plan on pursuing [because] every year of my college career I've changed what I want to be doing... that could change after an internship or entry level [position]."

A handful of participants ($n = 3$) discussed the importance of postgraduate degrees for women in sport. Starburst expressed the belief that "for women, it is a little bit more important to have a master's degree or doctorate, because men are taking more female jobs." Skittles3 questioned the importance of a postgraduate degree, explaining she knows other "females who haven't gotten jobs because they were overqualified with a masters ... it kind of depends on what [field] you want to do." M&Ms agreed that the importance of postgraduate degrees depends on the field, saying, "every professional [she] has ever talk[ed] to has a different [level of degree] ... you can't just rely on doing a certain pathway of education... it's kind of hard to say."

Table 2. Information on Sport Management Curriculum

Focus Group	Alias	Age	Race	Grade Level	GPA	Access to Undergrad Info.	Access to Post-grad Info.	Underrep.. of Women	Concerned with Others' Perceptions
1	Crunch	20	White	Sophomore	3.6	No	Yes	NA	Yes
	Hersheys	21	White	Senior	3.4	Yes	Yes	NA	No
	Reeses	21	White	Senior	3.1	No	Yes	NA	Yes
	Twix	22	White	Senior	3.6	No	Yes	NA	Yes
	Skittles1	22	White	Senior	3.4	Yes	NA	NA	No
	Snickers	22	White	Senior	3.3	No	Yes	NA	Yes
	Starburst	22	White	Senior	2.5	Yes	NA	NA	Yes
2	Sweetarts2	20	White	Sophomore	3.7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	MilkyWay	20	White	Junior	3.4	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Gobstopper2	21	White	Senior	3.4	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	M&Ms	20	White	Junior	2.8	No	NA	Yes	Yes
	Gobstopper3	21	White	Junior	3.0	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
	Nerds	21	Black	Senior	2.5	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Sweetarts3	21	White	Senior	3.7	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Butterfinger	22	White	Senior	3.0	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
	Skittles3	22	White	Junior	3.1	No	No	Yes	Yes

Perceptions Regarding Future Career in Sport

All participants expressed perceptions regarding their future careers in sport (see Table 3). The following themes emerged: (a) perceptions regarding potential job discrimination (i.e., sexual harassment, gender stereotypes, gender discrimination), (b) perceptions regarding industry-specific concerns (i.e., difficulty networking, job market constraints, long work hours, low salary range, multiple-role conflict, excitement regarding entrance into the field), and (c) excitement regarding future careers in sport. Qualitative results from focus group discussions are presented in subsections below.

Potential Job Discrimination

Over half of participants ($n = 10$) conveyed their perceptions towards potential job discrimination (see Table 3). The following sub-themes emerged regarding potential job discrimination: (a) sexual harassment, (b) gender stereotypes, and (c) gender discrimination.

Sexual Harassment. A few participants ($n = 2$) indicated they held perceptions regarding sexual harassment in the workplace. No other focus group participants ($n = 14$) recalled perceptions of sexual harassment. M&M's explained her concerns with sexual harassment specific to the sport industry, saying:

As far as harassment, every time I've said I've applied for an internship with a team they say "oh yeah, you're going to hook up with all the guys, that's why you're doing it"... when people talk about Erin Andrews... every perception of her is "she sleeps with all the players." It's so rude and demeaning all the time. It's always about the sexual side of things... It doesn't discourage me but why would they put that label on somebody. Basically they are saying every girl that wants to go into sports is a slut because they want to go hang out with the athletes and be a jersey chaser. I could definitely see how it could affect somebody to the point where they just want to [do an] internship with the girls' soccer team.

Nerds agreed, saying, “sexual harassment can have a negative impact because it can stop you from what you want to do... it’s psychological because if that happens it’s like ‘should I continue this, what should I do?’”

A few participants ($n = 2$) expressed concern regarding workplace discrimination due to sexual orientation. No other focus group participants ($n = 14$) recalled perceptions on this theme. Hersheys indicated, “The whole homophobia thing is a real barrier for a woman; as someone that is gay, [I] already knew that it was going to be a barrier, because it has been for years.” Starburst agreed, saying:

I would rather not work for a company that focuses too much on lifestyle changes, rather than getting the job done... if you’re gay or whatever... I would just rather not work for them if they were not only going to discriminate, but just kind of look down upon someone who wants to live a different lifestyle.

Gender Stereotypes. Several participants ($n = 5$) indicated dealing with negative gender stereotypes associated with sport. No other focus group participants ($n = 11$) recalled perceptions relevant to gender stereotypes in the workplace. Snickers indicated, “[Because] you’re a girl you’re not going to be looked at as knowing enough about sports.” Snickers explained, “Guys look down on girls in sport because they don’t think they know as much.” Snickers reported having experienced this since “high school [guys] picked on you during P.E. because you’re a girl.” Gobstopper2 agreed, explaining that her female friends “who love exercising and sports and going to games” believe they must “enjoy it on a different level” because they view sports as “dominated by guys.” Nerds explained, “Growing up as a woman, you couldn’t really like sports and really know a lot about it... the guys kind of look at me like I’m crazy.” Sweetarts2 indicated experiencing the same stereotype and offered

suggestions on overcoming the stereotype, saying, “Talk on their level, [so] they will learn to respect you and know that you do know what you’re talking about.” Sweetarts3 explained that women were placed in “front offices in either community relations or something to do with fundraising, positions where they have you out in public” due to the belief “that [that] is what [women] can do best.”

Gender Discrimination. Nearly half of participants ($n = 7$) also perceived facing gender discrimination in their future careers in sport. No other focus group participants ($n = 9$) recalled perceptions relevant to gender discrimination in the workplace. Snickers indicated she “worried that [she] might not get the higher job because [she’s] looked down upon because [she is] a girl.” She added:

If I decide I want to go into coaching, I know that the chances of me getting hired for a good DI [Division I] college team are very unlikely, that is frustrating... I also know because I’m a girl and I’m a coach... a lot of people don’t really want a girl coach. I feel like that is discouraging... in the sense that realistically I know that I may or may not get the job just because I am a girl and girls aren’t looked upon as qualified coaches.

Starburst explained that female coaches of women’s teams “might [have it] a little easier getting a job, [because] men are taking more female jobs like women’s basketball.” Hersheys offered a recommendation for overcoming gender discrimination, saying, “The more you do, the earlier and the better it is [for yourself]” because “[females] are disadvantaged.”

MilkyWay described previous experiences with workplace hiring within sport, saying, “I’ve been in a handful of job interviews for potential openings but a guy will get it... [even though] I had the same qualifications... it’s frustrating to see.” Sweetarts3 explained the negative effects perceived gender discrimination has had on her career plans, clarifying, “So

many people I have met want to [work in sports]... and they're all guys and it's just such a male-dominated area... I feel like it was going to take so much effort to break through that and I thought, 'Well I don't know if I want to go through all that.'" Gobstopper2 expressed that as women, "we are disadvantaged [and] the more you do, the earlier the better."

Interestingly, Gobstopper3 explained her relief at choosing "cheerleading and dance... a predominately female sport," saying:

I know specifically what I'm doing and fortunately for me cheerleading and dance are predominantly female sports... I don't really feel like it's going to be a problem for me to find a job and be discriminated towards at all... I definitely understand totally what [you girls] are saying though. I've looked into other things and I've thought, "Wow, that's going to be scary" because I'm not very... I don't really stand up for myself that often. So that would be a hard thing for me to do, to get into a predominately male field.

Industry-Specific Concerns

Over half of focus group participants ($n = 11$) expressed concerns about their future careers in sport (see Table 3). The remaining focus group participants ($n = 5$) did not offer any concerns regarding their future careers in sport. The following themes emerged regarding industry-specific perceptions: (a) difficulty networking, (b) job-market constraints, (c) long work hours, and low salary range, and (d) multiple-role conflict.

Difficulty Networking. Nearly half of participants ($n = 6$) experienced difficulties networking in sport. No other focus group participants ($n = 10$) offered perceptions relevant to difficulty networking. Hersheys indicated that women have more difficulty networking because "historically, men have had more opportunities [to network] in sport, they have more connections... and they are more likely to get the jobs through networking than females." Gobstopper2 indicated the desire to "talk to more professionals [in the field]." Sweetarts2

expressed her “concern about how few women are in the field of being a sport agent,” resulting in difficulties networking or socializing. Nerds explained that increasing network opportunities for women in sport “would help increase the number of women who actually want to do sport management because... a lot of women that are interested in sports are afraid to take that extra step of doing it because of the lack of a support system... [for instance] networking, what to do with internships and experiences in the academic setting.” Nerds added that she wished she “had been able to actually talk to women in positions within sport because I haven’t met anyone like that so far.” She further explained how “it can deter you a little bit, like ‘there’s not one like me’ and it’s kind of like being lost.” Gobstopper3 specified the underrepresentation of women in sport is caused by the lack of “networking.” M&Ms suggested bringing “professionals in the classroom” but understood the challenge associated with it, in that “there’s just not that many to go after and find.”

Job-Market Constraints. Several participants ($n = 4$) expressed perceived job market constraints in the pursuance of future careers in sport. No other focus group participants ($n = 12$) recalled perceptions relevant to job market constraints. Twix indicated concern with “the sport management programs being sold as a major for a lot of students, so they are getting a lot more students in, but not enough jobs to cover all the people in the programs right now.” Starburst noted the state of the economy and “how it’s not as big as it was” as the reason for experiencing discouragement from outsiders regarding the sport industry. MilkyWay expressed, “It’s going to be a reality check when [we] actually go out and try to find a job,” due to the state of the economy. Butterfinger attributed the job-market constraints to the popularity of the sport industry, saying:

Even though I'm a sport management major, and a lot of jobs I would want, do want me to be a sport management major, they also take a communications major, a marketing major, a business major. You're not just competing with sport management, you're competing with every other major. So if you like sport marketing, you're competing with all of the other people who are in normal business and marketing majors that also want that job too. So that's something that I always worry about. What if they like their experiences better than mine... so that's why it's important to find a specific thing that you want to focus on.

Long Work Hours and Low Salary Range. Nearly half of focus group participants ($n = 7$) noted concern with the (a) long work hours, and (b) low salary ranges specific to the sport industry.

Several participants ($n = 5$) communicated concern about the long work hours associated with sport. No other focus group participants ($n = 11$) recalled perceptions relevant to long work hours associated with sport. Twix indicated, "You may be working one day, nine to five or something and then one day you're working 'til midnight working a game or something... so it's definitely a concern." MilkyWay suggested, "If you're single your whole life [then] sports is the job for you," implying that a majority of time will be dedicated to your career in sport. Gobstopper2 agreed, saying, "I'm almost more worried about how I'm going to feel later on, when I've put in a lot more hours and probably not getting paid as much; I kind of worry about how that's going to make me feel." Sweetarts3 expressed that while she is young, "the hours don't concern me," but looking towards the future when she "starts having a family" she will be more concerned. M&Ms agreed with the inconsistency of work schedules in sport, saying, "The lifestyle is different, [because] it's not always a nine-to-five job."

A few participants ($n = 3$) communicated concern about the low salary ranges associated with sport. No other focus group participants ($n = 13$) recalled perceptions relevant to low salary ranges associated with sport. MilkyWay, said:

With the pay, I think it will take a little bit more to advance up the ladder to get to a higher job than some other fields across the board. I think overall it takes more time to get to the top... takes a little bit more time to make more money because as a whole it isn't a super-paying industry.

Nerds agreed, saying, the "entry level [salary] for sport management is not that much." She further explained, "A lot of internships are unpaid... I'm going to have to work a part-time job so I can pay the bills or whatever... since you're either not bringing in any money or very little money, what back-up plan do I have to support me, pay is my concern, especially in this kind of economy with it being hard to get a job." Likewise, Butterfinger was concerned with unpaid internships upon graduation, saying:

With the NFL there is talk about there not being a season [in 2011]... they've cut a lot of positions and now there are unpaid internships. And they're realizing that they can do a lot of stuff that way, unpaid. That is a concern going into it. I feel like there have been less jobs and now they're being turned into unpaid internships and now sport is becoming more that way, because people are willing to bust their butt for nothing just to get in.

Multiple-Role Conflict. Several participants ($n = 5$) perceived future conflicting work and family responsibilities. No other focus group participants ($n = 11$) recalled perceptions relevant to multiple-role conflict. Twix indicated their professors "talked a lot about, as a woman if you want to have children that could definitely put a strain on your career, especially in sports because there are a lot of men in sports, they don't really understand you." MilkyWay believed once she "hit the age of wanting to have kids... [she] might want to move into an advanced administrative role where it's a little more toned down

with your work hours.” M&Ms said, “if you ever want to start a family, it’s little bit different because you might have to move a lot [because] it’s totally different hours.” Nerds explained that while she desires to have a family, it has been forced to the “backburner” because she “thought [she] was going to settle down by 24 or 25 [but] looking at the job landscape and what I’m going to do in my career... I’m going to have to put that off in order to advance and do what I want to do in my career, eventually I want to have a family but not now.” Sweetarts3 said, “I want to have a family someday... as far as the whole family thing, it’s on the backburner [because] I want to have time where I can go into the industry and maybe travel around and have my own time.”

Excitement Regarding Entrance into the Field

A majority of participants ($n = 11$) were excited about their entrance into the sport industry and beginning their career in sport (see Table 3). No other focus group participants ($n = 5$) expressed perceptions relevant to excitement towards future careers in sport. Snickers explained how her excitement is specific to the sport industry, saying:

I’m excited because I don’t want to have a job where you sit at a desk all day. Sports kind of gives you that freedom to... you can have a job where you’re up on your feet all day and you’re like moving around and active instead of a job where you just have to sit at a desk... with sports ... I’d much rather enjoy my job than not enjoy it ... I think it’ll be fun.

Gobstopper2 also exhibited excitement, saying;

I’m looking forward to... when I’m done with college. I like using what I’m learning ... And I’m also excited because I feel like I’m a very much relational person and I like to establish myself with people, so that is another thing that I’m really excited about. ... I would say getting my foot in the door immediately, start establishing myself so then I could use more of what I’ve learned with what I want to do and hopefully be able to do something with that.

MilkyWay agreed, saying, “I’m really excited to put my ideas out there... I’m just looking forward to being a young professional... have something I can take the reins on and say this is mine... I’m just looking forward to real work.” M&Ms described in detail what she looked forward to most about a future career in sport, saying, “opportunities... travel. ... I want to do things that require traveling ... it’s cool that you get to meet a lot of famous people... people that have a lot of influence, there is a lot of glamour to the sport industry.” Sweetarts3 indicated that sport provides “opportunities... traveling and networking... as far as looking forward to it, being excited to get up and go to work in the morning, that’s my biggest thing.”

Table 3. Excitement Regarding Future Careers in Sports

Focus Group	Alias	Age	Race	Grade Level	GPA	Work Place Discrimination	Industry-Specific Concerns	Future Career Excitement
1	Crunch	20	White	Sophomore	3.6	No	No	Yes
	Hersheys	21	White	Senior	3.4	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Reeses	21	White	Senior	3.1	No	No	Yes
	Twix	22	White	Senior	3.6	No	Yes	No
	Skittles1	22	White	Senior	3.4	No	No	No
	Snickers	22	White	Senior	3.3	Yes	No	Yes
	Starburst	22	White	Senior	2.5	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	Sweetarts2	20	White	Sophomore	3.7	Yes	Yes	Yes
	MilkyWay	20	White	Junior	3.4	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Gobstopper2	21	White	Senior	3.4	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	M&Ms	20	White	Junior	2.8	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Gobstopper3	21	White	Junior	3.0	Yes	Yes	No
	Nerds	21	Black	Senior	2.5	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Sweetarts3	21	White	Senior	3.7	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Butterfinger	22	White	Senior	3.0	No	Yes	No
	Skittles3	22	White	Junior	3.1	No	No	No

Recommendations for Female Sport Management Students

Nearly half of participants ($n = 7$) offered recommendations to future female sport management students (see Table 4). The following themes emerged regarding recommendations: (a) combating outsiders' criticism, and (b) persevering against gender discrimination. Qualitative results from focus group discussions are presented in subsections below.

Combating Negative Criticism

Several participants ($n = 5$) offered recommendations for combating negative criticism for future undergraduate female sport management students. No other focus group participants ($n = 11$) offered recommendations regarding combating negative criticism. Twix stated that negative criticism should be used as a "motivating factor to go out there and prove that [you're] just as qualified as any guy with the same credentials." Gobstopper2 indicated that women who are "less confident and little bit more perceived as really nice" need to go into it more defensively, expecting "that you're going to be perceived that way... [and] go into it a little bit tougher than you naturally [would]." Nerds stated, "Women in the sports industry do have to be tougher and take the lead... [because] any signs of weakness, [males] will use that against you." Butterfinger stated that women should not "let anyone get to you about not being able to do it... [because] it's usually a guy major." Sweetarts3 agreed, saying, "You really have to be tough skinned" to be a woman in this particular field.

Persevering Against Gender Bias

Nearly half of participants ($n = 7$) specifically offered recommendations for persevering against gender bias. Twix would advise future female sport management students, “Be pushy,” and “Don’t be afraid to volunteer and go ask people in the athletic department if you can help out... get involved and show others that you’re willing to work.” Hersheys recommended using gender bias as a motivating factor, saying, “It pushes me to work harder... [and] break the stereotype... opening the door and setting a different type of stereotype that women can be just as good as men, if not better.” Hersheys also offered advice to “get the internships, get multiple... don’t just sit back... don’t be complacent... go 100% balls to the wall.” Reese agreed with Hersheys and Twix, explaining:

If you’re a female and it’s just a few days a week, you need to just bug someone about stuff because I feel like a lot of people think they can just sit back and get things done half ass... that’s just kind of, being a female, what you have to do... just work hard and get your name out there.

MilkyWay explained that because “there is more competition... with more people getting degrees in the [sport] field, you’re going to need to set yourself apart.” MilkyWay also suggested setting oneself apart by pursuing “masters and doctorates... which will set you apart and give you a better opportunity... [because] as a female you need every advantage you can when you’re trying to get a job in sport.” Sweetarts3 suggested, “Getting some experience, there are so many opportunities given to us by our advisors and professors, an internship here or there... it’s something to take advantage of.” However, Nerds believed it takes a certain type of personality to work in the industry as a woman, saying, “That’s personally the only way I think we can get ahead, especially in this industry... have the

mentality and be somewhat aggressive and somewhat straight forward... it's a balancing act." Sweetarts3 also expressed that she had already accepted that she "would have to work twice as hard as a male."

Table 4. Recommendations for Future Female Sport Management Students

Focus Group	Alias	Age	Race	Grade Level	GPA	Withstanding Criticism	Hard-Working
1	Crunch	20	White	Sophomore	3.6	No	No
	Hersheys	21	White	Senior	3.4	No	Yes
	Reese	21	White	Senior	3.1	No	Yes
	Twix	22	White	Senior	3.6	Yes	Yes
	Skittles1	22	White	Senior	3.4	No	No
	Snickers	22	White	Senior	3.3	No	No
	Starburst	22	White	Senior	2.5	No	No
2	Sweetarts2	20	White	Sophomore	3.7	No	Yes
	MilkyWay	20	White	Junior	3.4	No	Yes
	Gobstopper2	21	White	Senior	3.4	Yes	No
3	M&Ms	20	White	Junior	2.8	No	Yes
	Gobstopper3	21	White	Junior	3.0	No	No
	Nerds	21	Black	Senior	2.5	Yes	Yes
	Sweetarts3	21	White	Senior	3.7	No	Yes
	Butterfinger	22	White	Senior	3.0	Yes	No
	Skittles3	22	White	Junior	3.1	No	No

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of my study was to examine undergraduate female sport management students' perceptions toward their sport management degree, educational environment, and future careers in sport. Several themes emerged that will be discussed in this chapter and related back to the literature to provide a comprehensive discussion. First, the perception by female sport management students that they are underrepresented is due to the following: (a) potential students' lack of knowledge of the sport management degree, (b) the perception that the academic program is male-dominated (e.g., perception of female underrepresentation, chilly climate, lack of social support), and (c) the perception that the degree is a nontraditional educational choice. Second, negative perceptions of female sport management students regarding their future careers in sport were caused by the following: (a) a lack of information regarding postgraduate sport management degrees for potential female candidates, (b) perceptions regarding potential job discrimination (e.g., stereotypes, difficulty networking), and (c) concerns related specifically to employment in the sport industry (e.g., multiple-role conflict, low salary, nontraditional hours, travel). Finally, female sport management students were found to share characteristics (i.e., traditionally masculine characteristics, high self-confidence) and backgrounds (i.e., members of the Millennial Generation, previous athletic participation) that influenced their decision to study sport management.

Underrepresentation of Female Sport Management Students

According to Jones and Brooks (2008), female sport management students are underrepresented in sport management programs nationwide. This was true of the sport

management program at the study's chosen university, which was comprised of only 23% women. Therefore, one of the purposes of my study was to understand the perceptions of undergraduate female sport management students specific to their sport management degree and educational environment. Focus group participants' responses introduced three factors that are believed to be influencing the underrepresentation of female students in sport management among potential students, specifically, (a) a lack of knowledge of the sport management degree by potential students, (b) the perception that the academic program is male-dominated (e.g., perception of female underrepresentation, chilly climate, lack of social support), and (c) the perception that the degree is nontraditional.

Lack of Knowledge of Sport Management Degree

Consistent with Jones & Brooks (2008), the majority of focus group participants indicated transferring into the sport management program from other academic fields as freshman and sophomores. More than half of participants recalled a lack of knowledge regarding the existence of sport management academic programs prior to their enrollment in college. Previous research has identified potential contributors to this lack of knowledge. First, sport management is a relatively new field of academic study. This could account for its being less known, especially to individuals in Generation X (i.e., born 1965–1982) and to Baby Boomers (i.e., born 1946–1964). This has implications for my study, in that a majority of focus group participants, being members of the Millennial Generation, would be more likely than their predecessors to rely on their parents to assist in the educational and vocational decision-making process (Howe & Strauss, 2003). Second, the lack of knowledge regarding the sport management degree may also be the result of the inconsistency in housing

the degree among different academic departments (i.e., physical education, business) (Jones & Brooks, 2008). Third, high school counselors greatly contribute to the information on potential educational and vocational choices provided to high school students. However, high school counselors were less likely to provide education and vocational information on nontraditional occupations (Eccles & Hoffman, 1984). Future research could address high school counselors' knowledge regarding sport management degrees.

Further, participants who indicated knowledge of the sport management program prior to their enrollment in college, attributed this to specific experiences in sport (i.e., intercollegiate athletic participation, sport-specific college assignments, and relevant work experience). This may be the direct result of women's increased participation in high-school and college athletics and may translate into more female sport management students in the future. It is evident from the research that Title IX has increased the number of women participating in sport. Hopefully, this participation will lead to more women finding out about sport management programs and seeking degrees and jobs in the field.

Findings from my participants provide a basis for several suggestions to increase the knowledge of the sport management degree among potential female students in order to address their underrepresentation. First and foremost, colleges' sport management administrators and recruiters should strive to educate high-school counselors on the existence and benefits of sport management programs for both genders. Second, sport management administrators and recruiters are encouraged to promote the program among female high-school students (e.g., scholarship/financial aid opportunities, college-campus and department-specific field trips, guest speaking). Furthermore, with the majority of focus

group participants indicating a delayed transfer into the sport management program, sport management administration and recruiters should promote the program to college counselors as a possibility for female students having the aptitude and who are undecided on their academic major. Likewise, sport management faculty should initiate opportunities to better promote the program among undecided female college students (e.g., through scholarship/financial aid opportunities, department/classroom tours, mentoring programs with upper-level students). Further, it may be beneficial to better market sport management programs among parents of Millennial students, as they may not be aware that such programs exist. This could be done through, sport management presence at high-school college nights, web information, and major fairs at universities.

Perception of Sport as Traditionally Male-Dominated

Women have been underrepresented within the sport industry (Acosta & Carpenter, 1988, 2008, 2010). Moreover, Jones and Brooks (2008) found that women are underrepresented in sport management programs. The perception that sport is dominated by men was found to give the impression that sport is not a viable education and/or career option for women (Tiell, 2002). This finding is consistent with empirical evidence (Jacobs, 1986; Lackland & De Lisi, 2001; Solnick, 1995) that revealed that gender disparity in certain academic majors is due to women's tending to perceive them as dominated by men. My study did not research the decision-making process of high-school students. However, this is suggested to provide insight into the factors that influence the underrepresentation of women in sport programs. It would be interesting to observe whether traditionally male-dominated fields like sport will become less so perceived as more girls and women participate.

A chilly climate has been described as a male-dominated educational environment that hinders women's entrance or performance in a particular field (Hall & Sandler, 1982). Results from my study suggested that a chilly climate does exist for female sport management students in their interactions with male peers. Several focus group participants indicated negative experiences due to the underrepresentation of women within the program and described specific situations and/or environments as "challenging," "stressful," "hard," or "frustrating." Several focus group participants also noted experiencing negative gender stereotypes during interactions with male peers. This may be the result of the stereotype that women are not as knowledgeable in sport as men are. Findings from the study are also consistent with Grappendorf and Lough (2006), in which female athletic directors believe gender bias and discrimination contribute to the underrepresentation of women in sport. Sport management professors and administrators must address this "chilly climate," to increase the representation of women in sport management education and professions. Therefore, it is recommended that female sport management students elicit the assistance of sport management faculty in forming support groups to encourage females in the major.

Literature also suggests that environments perceived to be male-dominated are more likely to result in a lack of social support for women. Whitmarsh et al. (2007) found that women in gender-neutral careers were strongly discouraged by their parents from pursuing a traditionally male-dominated career. Eccles et al. (1984) found that parents were the strongest contributor to an individual's acceptance of traditional gender roles and speculated that individuals overlook educational and career options that do not align with their "gender-role schema" (p. 141). Specific to my study, a handful of focus group participants indicated

receiving discouragement from their parents regarding their sport management pursuits, explaining their parents' reactions as not "super keen" or "stoked." These findings suggested that women may experience a lack of social support from parents or immediate networks that might have helped them choose to study a nontraditional field. This could explain why a majority of the focus group participants had transferred into the major from other college majors.

Additional research is recommended to determine if the perceptions of these participating female sport management students are similar to the perceptions of female high-school students interested in studying sport curriculum in college. Furthermore, future research should seek to understand the perceptions of female high-school students regarding their interest in studying sport to better determine the impact the perceived existence of a chilly climate.

Findings from my study suggested that female sport management students' perception of sport management as male-dominated may be discouraging women from entering that field. Therefore, I recommend that sport management experts encourage the formation of a nationwide female sport management task force or association comprised of female industry leaders, faculty, and students that would strive to promote gender equality and increase the presence of women in sport management programs nationwide. The task force would be responsible for marketing sport management academic programs among female high-school students and providing opportunities for current female college students to network with female role models in the industry. As opportunities for female sport management students to

network with other women increase, the perception of a chilly climate may decrease and in return increase the number of women interested in sport.

Perception of Sport as a Nontraditional Educational Choice

It is commonly acknowledged that the sport industry is nontraditional. In fact, the nontraditional characteristics of employment in sport were raised by focus group participants. Several participants offered both positive (i.e., freedom, opportunity for hands on experience, ability to take ownership over responsibilities, traveling, meeting famous and influential people) and negative (i.e., inconsistent hours, long hours, low salary range, unpaid internships) characteristics associated with employment opportunities within sport. Additionally, participants indicated experiencing negative feedback regarding their degree of choice from parents, family members, friends, and college peers studying other majors. This lack of social support has been found to undermine the self-confidence of high-school and college-aged women to pursue a particular occupation (Caldera et al., 2003) and may be encouraging women to choose more gender-neutral or female-dominated educational and occupational fields. Although additional research is needed to confirm why these perceptions exist, empirical evidence suggests many influences. For example, outsiders' perception of a lack of difficulty may be the result of the tendency for sport management programs to have low admission requirements (Sawyer, 1993). Additionally, the lack of consensus regarding the proper department placement for sport management may contribute to the perception that sport is a nontraditional educational choice (Stier, 1993).

Several recommendations are offered to combat outsiders' negative perceptions of the degree. Sport-management and university administrators should seek to establish admission

requirements for potential students interested in the program, to improve the perception of the program as “easy.” Additionally, university and sport-management administrators should consider implementing an enrollment cap to decrease the student-to-faculty ratio. These steps will help address outsiders’ negative perceptions regarding the legitimacy of the degree, which was also reported as a critical issue facing sport management faculty (Jones & Brooks, 2008). Furthermore, sport management administrators nationwide should reach a consensus about the proper location of the degree. During the college search, potential students and their parents may be confused to see sport management housed in different departments at different universities.

The purpose of my study was to examine undergraduate female sport management students’ perceptions toward their sport management degree, educational environment, and future careers in sport. I believe the lack of knowledge regarding the degree, coupled with the perception that the academic program is male-dominated and nontraditional, may be contributing to the underrepresentation of female sport management students nationwide.

Underrepresentation of Women Employed in Sport

Acosta and Carpenter (2008), Cheslock (2008), Drago et al. (2005), Lapchick (2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c), Tiell (2002), and Whisenant (2003) found women to be underrepresented in the sport profession. Therefore, one of the purposes of my study was to understand the perceptions of undergraduate female sport management students towards their future careers in sport. Focus group participants’ responses introduced three factors that could be influencing the disproportion of women employed in sport: (a) a lack of information regarding postgraduate sport management degrees, (b) perceptions regarding potential job

discrimination (e.g., stereotypes, difficulty networking), and (c) employment concerns in the sport industry (e.g., multiple-role conflict, low salary, nontraditional hours, required travel).

Lack of Postgraduate Information

According to Tiell and Dixon (2008), 94% of senior woman administrators in college sports had obtained a master's degree. Furthermore, Grappendorf et al. (2004) found that female athletic directors were more likely to have master's and doctoral degrees. Therefore, a postgraduate degree seems to facilitate the entrance and advancement of women in sport. More than half of focus group participants reported a lack of readily available postgraduate information. Focus group participants expressed concerns about the lack of available information on whether a given sport employer requires a candidate to hold an advanced degree, postgraduate degrees applicable to employment in the sport industry (e.g., sport management, business), and which universities offer the best-regarded postgraduate degrees. The majority of participants indicating a lack of readily available postgraduate information were seniors. These findings suggested that graduating female sport management students striving to find employment in sport and who are unaware of the importance of postgraduate degrees will likely be at a disadvantage in an overly competitive job market. Sport management administrators are encouraged to review the way in which postgraduate information is compiled (i.e., NASSM website) and offer more comprehensive information about the various schools offering a sport-specific program. Additionally, it is suggested that the NASSM website be more comprehensive and accessible and include applicable postgraduate information such as the benefits of continuing one's education, the importance of postgraduate degrees to securing jobs within sport, the various types of postgraduate

degrees, the various programs offering postgraduate degrees, and financial aid and scholarship opportunities for students wishing to continue their education. Female sport management students that are interested in employment within the sport industry should take advantage of relationships with sport management faculty and industry leaders to find out more about the importance of continuing their education in sport.

Perception Regarding Potential Job Discrimination

According to Kirchmeyer (2002), sexual discrimination in the workplace does impact the career progression and potential for raises of midcareer women more often than it does men. Furthermore, Grappendorf and Lough (2006) found that a majority of female athletic directors believed that gender bias and discrimination was a contributing factor to the underrepresentation of women in the sport industry. My study corroborated this. A majority of focus group participants conveyed concern about facing future sexual discrimination in the workplace. This concern involved the hiring practices of sport organizations, coping with the effects of sexual harassment, overcoming gender stereotypes, and having difficulty networking with other professionals. These issues need to be addressed by university officials and sport management administrators. Due to the influence of sexual discrimination on the number of women employed in sport (Kirchmeyer, 2002; Grappendorf & Lough, 2006), female sport management students' perception of potential sexual discrimination in the workplace may impact the self-confidence and motivation needed to make the education-to-career transition. Additional research is needed on how perceptions of sexual discrimination affect an individual's self-confidence and motivation to persist in a male-dominated occupation. Furthermore, research is recommended to understand how these

perceptions develop, so that educational and occupational environments can be improved for women.

Sport-Industry Concerns

Howe and Strauss (2003) and Sweeney (2006) suggested that individuals of the Millennial Generation are less willing than their predecessors to work additional hours or “sacrifice their health and leisure time, even for considerably higher salaries” (Howe & Strauss, 2003, p. 5). Several focus group participants indicated concern with the long work hours common within the sport industry and with not receiving as much pay as in other industries. Additionally, individuals from the Millennial Generation were found to place a higher value on work-life balance than did those of its predecessors, seeking jobs that accommodated their personal and social lives (Armour, 2007). This was inconsistent with my findings, in which several participants indicated placing their aspirations for a family on the “backburner” due to the “strain [families placed] on your career, especially in sports.” Sport organizations could certainly incorporate family-friendly policies, such as, flex time, day care, and other policies that would encourage more women to enter or persist in the field.

Participants also discussed concern with multiple-role conflict due to the nontraditional nature of sport. This finding is consistent with Grappendorf and Lough (2004), which found that nearly half of female athletic directors believed multiple-role conflict was limiting the entrance and advancement of women within sport. Quimby and O’Brien (2004) also found that college women are more likely to choose traditionally female vocations due to the perception that nontraditional occupations result in more work-family conflicts.

Cinamon and Rich (2004) found that female college students were more likely than males to

change their educational and vocational ambitions to avoid multiple-role conflict. Therefore, perception of multiple-role conflict may be deterring women from entering the field. Future research is recommended to better understand how perceptions of multiple-role conflict impact the educational and vocational decisions of high-school students. Finally, it is recommended that a longitudinal study be initiated to evaluate the education-to-career transition of female sport management students nationwide. These studies will provide more information on the impacts that multiple-role conflict and other perceptions have on female sport management students' career motivation and advancement.

Last, Peterson and Fennema (1985) found that women are more likely than men to avoid situations and environments perceived to be competitive. This was apparent in my study, in that several participants were concerned with the number of “jobs to cover all the people in the [sport] programs” and with the “state of the economy.” These perceptions are likely the direct result of the increased popularity of sport management programs, which coupled with the stagnant state of the economy affects the number of available sport industry jobs. Findings from my study suggest that the characterization of occupations in sport as nontraditional (i.e., multiple-role conflict, long hours, low salaries, competitive job market) may be negatively impacting women's career motivation.

Analogous Characteristics and Backgrounds

According to Holland's (1966) theory of vocational choice, educational and vocational choices were positively correlated with the existence of certain personality traits. As a result, at the onset of my study it was plausible to expect that women who choose to pursue a degree in a male-dominated academic program such as sport management might

share personality characteristics. Participants were found to share several similar characteristics (i.e., traditionally masculine personality traits, high self-confidence) and backgrounds (i.e., members of the Millennial Generation, previous athletic participation).

Traditionally Masculine Personality Traits

Holland's (1966) Vocational Preference Inventory introduced distinct personality types that were considered more masculine and/or feminine. Rae and Strange (1983) found women in traditionally male-dominated careers to rate themselves as possessing more masculine traits than did women in female-dominated careers. This finding was consistent with the responses of focus group participants, who preferred to take the lead within group academic settings and displayed a "take charge" attitude when delegating classroom project responsibilities among group members. My study's findings were also consistent with Quarterman et al. (2006), which found that female managers in male-dominated occupations believed that possession of certain "masculine" personality traits would help women succeed. Several focus group participants indicated a positive correlation between a woman's possession of masculine personality traits (i.e., tough skin, aggressiveness, candidness) and the ability to succeed within the sport management program. Future research is recommended to determine whether traits found in participants are found in female sport management students at other institutions. By incorporating Holland's (1966) Vocational Preference Inventory, an enhanced understanding of the "type" of individuals interested in studying sport management might help counselors and recruiters to better identify potential female candidates, and in turn increase female representation in the field.

High Self-Confidence

Yang and Gybsers (2007) found that the amount of preparedness and social support of male and female college seniors was positively correlated with self-confidence levels needed for the occupational transition. However, this conclusion was inconsistent with my finding that focus group participants exhibited excitement and confidence despite their perception of a lack of available postgraduate-degree information (i.e., preparedness) and social support. Focus group participants' previous athletic participation may have bolstered their confidence toward their future careers in sport. Whitmarsh et al. (2007) found that women in gender-neutral careers possessed higher self-confidence than did women working in male-dominated occupations. Although my study did not compare self-confidence levels of women studying sport to females in gender-neutral academic programs, focus group participants were highly self-confident in their ability to outperform their male peers by applying a stronger work ethic. Additional research is needed to measure the impact that self-confidence has on the ability of female sport management students to succeed both academically (e.g., consistently high grades, productivity) and occupationally (e.g., transition from college, overcoming perceived barriers) in sport.

Members of the Millennial Generation

With the majority of today's college students consisting of members of the Millennial Generation (i.e., born 1982–1993), it was noted at the onset of my study that my sample would consist of members of this generation. The distinct characteristics associated with this generation (Howe & Strauss, 2003) may provide insight into the characteristics and backgrounds of participants, specifically (a) high self-confidence as a result of a sheltered

childhood, (b) consideration regarding future work-life balance, and (c) the high amount of relevant work experience as a result of long-term planning and time management. A majority of focus group participants indicated high self-confidence regarding their ability to overcome perceived barriers in sport. Additionally, participants vocalized concern with multiple-role conflict due to the long work hours and travel typical of an occupation in sport. Furthermore, focus group participants had a minimum of one year of relevant work experience, with half of focus group participants having four years of relevant work experience.

Previous Athletic Participation

According to Carbonero and Merino (2004), an individual's vocational satisfaction was positively correlated with choosing a career path that matches his or her interests. Therefore, it came as no surprise that a large majority of focus group participants indicated having participated in organized athletics (i.e., high school, college intramurals and club teams, intercollegiate athletics). Moreover, several focus group participants indicated finding out about the sport management degree due to their involvement in sport, specifically, organized athletic participation (i.e., student-athlete), high-school sport-specific assignments (i.e., senior project), or sport-specific job responsibilities (i.e., manager of a sports team). An enhanced understanding of the athletic interests and participation experiences of individuals studying sport management might help counselors and recruiters better identify potential female candidates, and in turn increase female representation in the field.

Implications

My study has potential implications for professionals and students that work with sport management students. These implications could lead to positive change for sport management programs and their female students.

Implications for High-School Counselors

First and foremost, due to high-school women's lack of knowledge of the sport management academic offering, college advisors should incorporate information regarding sport programs into college literature distributed to students. Additionally, findings from my study regarding the similar characteristics (i.e., traditionally masculine personality traits, high self-confidence) and backgrounds (i.e., members of the Millennial Generation, previous athletic participation) of students studying sport should help high-school counselors better identify potential female sport management students. Furthermore, due to the popularity of occupations in the sport industry, high-school administrators should consider developing sport-industry curricula. This might better educate students with regards to the educational and vocational opportunities that are available in the sport industry.

Implications for University Sport Educators

Results from my study have many implications for university sport educators. Administrators should promote research that seeks to better understand the similar characteristics and experiences of potential and current female students. Future research, coupled with encouraging college recruiters to promote the existence and benefits of a sport degree to high school women, may help to increase the representation of women in sport academic programs. Additionally, sport educators should seek to implement programs and

curricula that improve the educational environment for female students. For instance, to help increase female students' career self-confidence, professors should seek to provide opportunities for them to socialize with other female peers (i.e., through support groups) and with women employed within the industry (i.e., through career fairs, guest speakers, networking opportunities). Moreover, professors should better promote postgraduate degree information among their students. Improving the educational environment for female students should help to increase the self-confidence of women interested in future employment in the sport industry.

Implications for Female Sport Management Students

Female sport management students could benefit from much of the information and suggestions from my study. Forming student groups, and asking female sport management professors to mentor such groups, could assist female sport management students in combating their negative perceptions of a "chilly climate" due to the program's being male-dominated. However, female sport management students need to be proactive in stating their concerns to university and sport management administrators. If there is a lack of awareness regarding their concerns, nothing can be done to alleviate them.

Implications for Industry Leaders in Sport

Although this research did not involve women employed in sport, there are many implications for leaders in sport organizations who seek to recruit talented female sport management students. Perceptions of female sport management students indicated concern regarding their entrance (e.g., discrimination in hiring) and advancement in sport due to their gender. Industry leaders should seek to minimize perceived or actual gender discrimination

within their organizations (i.e., implement organizational policy with the objective of increasing gender diversity, require diversity training for all employees, appoint committees to increase diversity in recruitment for hiring). Furthermore, sport industry leaders should increase networking and social-support opportunities for women within the industry. Successful businesswomen within sport should be encouraged to give presentations to, speak to, and mentor female sport management students. These opportunities will enable organizations to diversify recruiting methods.

Summary

The purpose of my study was to examine undergraduate female sport management students' perceptions toward their sport management degree, educational environment, and future careers in sport. Three major implications were found: (a) the underrepresentation of female sport management students is influenced by a combination of a lack of knowledge of the sport management degree and the perception that the academic program is male-dominated and nontraditional, (b) the underrepresentation of women employed in sport may be the result of negative perceptions held by female sport management students regarding their future careers in sport, (c) female sport management students were found to share analogous characteristics and backgrounds that may help high-school counselors target potential sport management students. These findings have implications for college educators, industry leaders, and practitioners. Further, it is strongly recommended that research further examine the career-related perceptions of female sport management students.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A**Statement of Confidentiality**

We do ask all group members to respect the privacy of other group participants by not discussing what is said during the focus group with anyone who did not participate in the group. Therefore, as a group member we ask if you **MUST** reference participants outside the group you use alias names.

As a participant of the focus group, I understand I am privy to information or statements considered confidential. I acknowledge my responsibility to respect the confidentiality of my fellow students and focus group participants. I agree to follow all necessary measures to protect information within the group.

Print

Name:

Sign

Name:

Date:

APPENDIX B

IRB Approval Letter

North Carolina State University is a land-grant university and a constituent institution of The University of North Carolina

**Office of Research
and Graduate Studies**

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

Sponsored Programs and
Regulatory Compliance
Campus Box 7514
2701 Sullivan Drive
Raleigh, NC 27895-7514

919.515.2444
919.515.7721 (fax)

From: Carol Mickelson, IRB Coordinator
North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board

Date: March 16, 2010

Project Title: Female Sport Management Students' Perceptions of Future Career

IRB#: 1346-10

Dear Ms. Fowler;

The research proposal named above has received administrative review and has been approved as exempt from the policy as outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations (Exemption: 46.101. b.2). Provided that the only participation of the subjects is as described in the proposal narrative, this project is exempt from further review.

NOTE:

1. This committee complies with requirements found in Title 45 part 46 of The Code of Federal Regulations. For NCSU projects, the Assurance Number is: FWA00003429.
2. Any changes to the research must be submitted and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.
3. If any unanticipated problems occur, they must be reported to the IRB office within 5 business days.

Please forward a copy of this letter to your faculty sponsor, if applicable. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Carol Mickelson
NCSU IRB

APPENDIX C

Information Sheet for Focus Group Participants

North Carolina State University

Principal Investigator: Kristin L. Fowler

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Heidi Grappendorf

Title of Study: Female Sport Management Students' Perceptions of Career Development

You will be participating in a focus group on female college students' view of future careers in sports. We are interested in finding out what outside factors, both positively and negatively influence female student's perceptions of career development in the sport industry.

Voluntary participation in the focus group study will require a 60-minute time commitment on campus. The focus group will be comprised of other female sport management students enrolled at NC State. You will be given an alias to use during the focus group to protect your identity during the data collection and reporting process. The focus group does not involve any risk to participants. The benefits of the results from the study could impact society by providing further insight into the perceptions of female sport management students towards future progress within the sports industry.

You are not required to participate in the study, nor will you be penalized for not participating. Participation in the study is not a course requirement and your participation, or lack thereof, will not affect your class standing or grades at NC State. If you agree to participate, you will *not* be obligated to answer questions which make you feel uncomfortable. You *will* have the right to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher Kristin Fowler, graduate student of Sport Management at North Carolina State University. Her phone number is (919) 531-3123. You can also contact Kristin via email at kristin.fowler@sas.com. You can also contact faculty sponsor, Dr. Heidi Grappendorf at Heidi_grappendorf@ncsu.edu, if you have any questions or concerns.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919) 515-4514.

Thank you.

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in the study is voluntary. You do have the right to not be a part of the study or to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty.

The purpose of the study is to examine female sport management students' perceptions of future careers in sport. If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to participate in an hour long focus group study. The focus group will be made up of other female sport management students enrolled at NC State. The focus group investigator is an NC State Sport Management graduate student. Dr. Heidi Grappendorf, the faculty advisor and NC State Sport Management professor, will also be assisting with the study. You will be given an alias to use during the focus group to protect your identity during the data collection and reporting processes. The data from the focus group study will be tape recorded.

Data will be stored securely in a locked file cabinet. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study. As stated previously, you will be given an alias name to use during the groups discussions. You will NOT be asked to write your name on any study materials so no one can match your identity to the answers you provide. We are hoping you will feel comfortable answering any questions or elaborating on other group member's responses openly and honestly. Your decision to answer questions will be respected.

Participants will not receive anything for participating in the study. Participation in the study is not a course requirement and your participation or lack thereof, will not affect your class standing or grades at NC State.

We do ask all group members to respect the privacy of other group participants by not discussing what is said during the focus group with anyone who did not participate in the group. Therefore, as a group member we ask you do reference participants outside the group you use alias names. We do not foresee any risks to participants, but because a group discussion is involved, we cannot guarantee what you say in the group will not be discussed outside the group.

All information collected during the focus group, including transcripts and investigator notes, will be stored in a locked file cabinet in which only the investigator and the faculty sponsor will have access. Audio tapes will be stored in the locked filing cabinet and will then be destroyed following the conclusion of the study and the transcription process.

If you choose to participate, please sign on the bottom of the form. The consent form will be stored in a separate area from the other study data in an effort to keep your name protected. Please feel free to ask for a copy of the consent form to retain for future reference.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher Kristin Fowler, graduate student of Sport Management at North Carolina State University. Her phone number is 919-531-3123. You can also contact Kristin via email at kristin.fowler@sas.com. You can also contact Dr. Heidi Grappendorf at Heidi_grappendorf@ncsu.edu, if you have any questions or concerns.

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in the form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of the project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

Consent to Participate

“I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of the form. I agree to participate in the study with the understanding I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.”

Subject's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX E

Participation Reminder

I hope this email finds you doing well! I just wanted to send a reminder regarding my focus group in which you volunteered to participate in which will take place Monday, April 19th from 4:30 – 5:30 p.m. The location has been finalized and will take place in Biltmore on the fourth floor in Room 4020 (PGM Small Conference Room). I have attached another copy of the information sheet in case you have any questions about my study.

If you have a conflict with this date, please remember that there is also a second focus group meeting on Tuesday, April 20th from 4:30 – 5:30 p.m. Please send me a confirmation, letting me know that you have received this email and plan to be in attendance on Monday. Thank you very much for participating.

APPENDIX F**Demographic Survey**

1. Please fill in your age: _____

2. Please check the box indicating your current grade level.

Undergraduate Student:

- 1st year undergraduate, never attended college before
- 1st year undergraduate, has attended college before
- 2nd year undergraduate/sophomore
- 3rd year undergraduate/junior
- 4th year undergraduate/senior
- 5th year undergraduate/other undergraduate

Graduate Student:

- 1st year graduate/professional
- Continuing graduate/professional or beyond

3. Do you consider yourself an athlete: Yes No

If yes, please indicate your level of participation:

- Intercollegiate varsity sport
- Intramurals
- High School Varsity
- Club Team

City League

Other: _____

4. Which of the following categories best describes you? (Please check one or more boxes)

American Indian or Alaska Native Asian American Hispanic or Latino

Black or African American Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander White

Other

5. Current overall Grade Point Average : _____

6. What type of industry do you hope to work in when finished with your education?

Business

Human Sciences

Medicine

Education

Exercise/Sport Science

- Law
- Agriculture
- Other: _____

7. What salary range do you expect upon completion of your education?

- \$25,000 - \$34,000
- \$35,000 - \$39,000
- \$40,000 - \$49,000
- \$50,000 - \$59,000
- \$60,000 - \$69,000
- \$70,000 - \$79,000
- Over \$80,000

8. What is your current marital status?

- Single, Never married
- Married/Living with Partner
- Separated
- Divorced
- Widowed

9. How many children under the age of 16 years old live in your household?

- None
- 1
- 2

- 3
- 4 or more

10. Please indicate the years of experience you have working within the sport industry

(i.e., full-time work, part-time work, internship, volunteering, etc.)?

- None
- 1 year
- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 or more years