

RUNNING HEAD: NCAA FBS SENIOR WOMAN ADMINISTRATORS

NCAA Division I-FBS Senior Woman Administrators

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation  
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NCAA Division I-FBS Senior Woman Administrators

Presented by Nicole C. Buchholz, a candidate for the degree of doctor of education and hereby  
certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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To my Family,  
I love you more!

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### Abstract

This study looks at the lack of female leadership in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) in conjunction with the designation of the Senior Woman Administrator (SWA). Conducting qualitative research, the study aimed to understand the motivation of SWAs in career advancement. The study also aimed to understand the limitations of the SWA position on individual motivation. Does the designation of the SWA still hold a purpose in collegiate athletics? Or does it place a glass-ceiling style barrier on women in these jobs in ascending to the Athletic Director title?

## Section I

## NCAA Division I FBS Senior Woman Administrators

The glass ceiling is alive and well in intercollegiate sports. Although some have named it the glass cliff after a few women have cracked the barrier. The glass cliff is a barrier in which women only find themselves in the midst of promotion after scandal or employed at an institution facing impossible odds (Glass & Cook, 2016, p. 51). As of 2013, the National Association of Collegiate Women Athletics Administrators (NACWAA) discussed the disproportionate number of female athletic directors to male athletic directors at the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) level. The FBS had 128 member institutions and only seven of those institutions employed a female athletic director (Butts, 2013). Due to the consistent turn-over in athletic departments, the number of female athletic directors has hardly remained steady.

A quick internet search of 128 FBS universities' websites revealed that three of seven women have retired from their positions or were fired. Sandy Barbour jumped schools from University of California at Berkeley but remained in the FBS when she joined Penn State University. Barbour was hired at Penn State after the Jerry Sandusky scandal of 2013. She is still at Penn State (Littlefield, 2015). Deborah Yow has been at North Carolina State University since 2010 (Biography). Heather Lyke has been at Eastern Michigan since 2013 (Biography). Cary Groth retired after a nine year term at University of Nevada at Reno (Lundin, 2012). Lisa Love was let go from Arizona State University after nine years for failure to produce winning revenue sports (football and men's basketball) (Metcalf, 2012). The shortest tenure was Julie Hermann at Rutgers with two and a half years. Hermann was hired after a scandal and fired for continued issues with Football. She was fired in conjunction with the head football coach at the time

(Sargeant, 2015). The longest tenure was nineteen years and counting with Kathy Beauregard at Western Michigan (Biography). In May of 2016, Jennifer Cohen was named the Athletic Director of University of Washington. Regardless of the constant change in athletic administration, one thing has remained the same: there are not many female athletic directors at the FBS level (Adam, 2016).

Observers of collegiate athletics see the position of Athletic Director as the direct overseer of football. Due to that oversight, women have been hard to find at the upper echelons of FBS. This research begs the question: Why? When diving into the history of women in collegiate athletics, there is one title that stands above the rest: Senior Woman Administrator (originally known as Primary Woman Administrator). The Senior Woman administrator or SWA is one of two titles with defining terms of purpose in the NCAA Division I Manual (2016-17). The SWA designation is the only title that specifies gender. The SWA is a designation, not a position, as the highest ranking female on an athletic staff. The designation is not required to go to a woman with a position or title in the athletic administration, but to a woman who is designated as the woman's voice in administrative decisions. An institution who employs a female Athletics Director, the designation may be appointed to another woman. There is no current research on this trend. However looking at the websites of the four FBS institutions who employ a female Athletics Director, three institutions (Penn State, North Carolina State, and Eastern Michigan) have personnel directories designating an SWA. Western Michigan's athletic website states the SWA position is "TBA" or to be announced.

When the Association of Women in Intercollegiate Athletics (AIAW) was about to collapse in 1981, many institutions combined their women's and men's programs under one Athletic Department (Tiell & Dixon, 2008). Prior to this merger, 90% of women's programs had



women as directors of their women's sports. Many of these women were members of the university as faculty in their Education Departments for Physical Education (Hogshead-Makar & Zimbalist, 2007; Wushanley, 2004). The designation of the Primary Woman Administrator was formed in 1982, the designation was the NCAA's attempt to provide a voice to women and assist in the transition. Two years later, in 1984, 21.4% of Division I athletic departments lacked any female administrator (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014, p. 39). The PWA title was changed to SWA in the 1991-1992 academic year (Tiell & Dixon, 2008, p. 340). The formal definition of SWA was created in 2006 under article 4.02.4 (Tiell & Dixon, 2008, p. 340; NCAA Manual 2015-2016, p. 18). Since 1984, Division I athletic departments have all but closed the gap in lacking any female administrators to 1.2% of institutions with no female administrators by 2014 (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014, p. 39). At the Division I level (all three subdivisions), 96.2% of SWAs reported having an administrative title (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2010, p. 2). So, most of the women with administrative titles have also been designated SWA.

The SWA designation was a quick-fix quota system aimed to help protect women from being completely wiped out of athletically related duties. "A quota law requires all companies that meet specified criteria to reserve a certain percentage of boardroom seats for women" (Lansing & Chandra, 2012, p. 3). Supporters of quota systems claim it is the only way to break out of "old boys networks." (p. 4). Opponents say that "this system diminishes the achievement of women who already hold seats..." (p. 4). A quota system that never stops needing to hit its marks is not a system that seems to be working.

This is evident by the number of people who have started to see the SWA position as the career target for women in collegiate athletics. Meaning that a career target for women is not the Athletic Director role, but the number 2 or sometimes 3 in charge of the department at the FBS

level. Burton (2015), found that women in the SWA position have been denied opportunities to engage in traditionally male dominated roles such as budgeting, marketing, fundraising, and facility design. They have also been denied sport specific oversight of football and men's basketball (p. 161). Without these opportunities and experiences they are hard pressed to advance to the Athletic Director position. Hancock & Hums (2016) said:

*Organizational structures contribute to power inequities and perceptions of visibility when women perceive limited opportunities for advancement....specifically, when the upper-level "position" being sought is the title of Senior Woman Administrator. While women in this study understood the historical importance of the title, many felt as though it aided in the perception of a "glass ceiling." (p. 204).*

Without the opportunity to oversee football operations, women lack the appropriate experience to run a division purposed for football domination. The NCAA is comprised of three divisions, Division I, Division II, and Division III. Division I or DI is also comprised of three divisions, Football Bowl Subdivision, Football Championship Subdivision, and Non-Football. For the purposes of this study, the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) was explored due to the high volume of money and notoriety the member institutions receive. FBS institutions are the Fortune 500 companies of collegiate athletics (Berkowitz & Upton, 2011).

Title IX was passed in 1972 as part of the Educational Amendments of that time. It is a federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex by any organizations who receive federal funds for educational programs and/or activities (OCR, 2012). The law states, "No person in the United States 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" (p. 1). Many people associate Title IX with athletics, but the powers of the

law extend far beyond sports. However, for the purpose of this study, the law stimulated the rapid growth of girls' and women's sports in America and yet may have unintentionally caused a decline of female leadership over those sports.

The perpetual gender gap in intercollegiate athletics looks more like a brick wall surrounding the male-dominated position of NCAA DI-FBS Athletic Director. However, glass ceilings and gender inequality seem to exist in every profession. From all three NCAA divisions (DI, DII, and DIII), there are statistical discrepancies in the number of female athletic directors. In 2014, DIII had 30.3% member institutions with female athletic directors. DII had 23.2% member institutions. While DI had 10.6% across all its subdivisions, 15.6% in non-football, 11.3% in Football Championship Subdivision, and 6.3% in the FBS (Acosta and Carpenter, 2014, p. 37). It is statistically understood that since the passage of Title IX, girls' and women's participation in sport has increased. However, the fact is, women in athletically related leadership positions decreased quickly and have struggled to make gains since.

### *Background*

Despite Title IX's immediate impact on girls' and women's participation in sports, equity is a long way off. According to the Women's Sport Foundation (2013), male sport participation opportunities are still higher than female in both high school and higher education. Women's Sport Foundation claims that opponents of Title IX argue that females have less desire to participate in sports, so females do not need as many opportunities as men. "The dramatic increase in girls' and women's participation in sports since Title IX was passed in 1972 by (560% at the collegiate level and 990% at the secondary level) demonstrates that it was a lack of opportunity – not lack of interest – that kept females out of high school and collegiate athletics for so many years" (Women's Sport Foundation, 2011). The lack of women in administrative

positions could be attributed to a similar phenomenon; the lack of opportunity not the lack of interest.

There is now an entire generation of women who have profited from Title IX's establishment, but few of them have seen women rise through the ranks to be leaders of the athletic department of the universities for which they played. Before Title IX was passed, over 90% of coaches for women's teams were women. As of 1978, the percentage fell to 58.2% for women's teams. In 2014, the percentage dropped as low as 43.4% over all three divisions of the NCAA (Acosta and Carpenter, 2014, p. 19). From 1981 – 1982, the NCAA took control as the dominant regulatory system in amateur athletics by offering 29 women's championships between all three divisions. The addition of women's sports in the NCAA saw a decrease in women serving in leadership positions they had held when the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) monitored women's sport (Wushanley, 2004).

In 1982, the NCAA established the designation of a Primary Woman Administrator in an effort to correct the lack of female leadership within athletic departments and ensure that a woman's voice was heard in decision making. The designation is now known as a Senior Woman Administrator. The designation is assumed to be required by the NCAA for all member institutions under the following bylaw:

*4.02.4 Senior Woman Administrator*

*Institutional Senior Woman Administrator. [#] An institutional senior woman administrator is the highest-ranking female involved in the management of an institution's intercollegiate athletics program. An institution with a female director of athletics may designate a different female involved with the management of the member's*

*program as a fifth representative to the NCAA governance structure. (Adopted: 11/1/01 effective 8/1/02, Revised: 10/27/05) (NCAA 2015-16 Manual)*

According to a file issued by the NCAA called “SWA: Senior Woman Administrator: Understanding the designation and her role on your senior management team,” the women designated SWA is not required to hold an administrative level title. Administrative level titles would include any variation of Director of a department, Assistant to the Athletic Director, Associate Athletic Director, or Senior Associate Athletic Director. At each DI, DII, and DIII levels of the NCAA, “81 percent of SWAs indicated high levels of agreement to the statement that the SWA should have an accompanying title as an athletics administrator (assistant, associate, or senior associate athletic director) within three years of her designation” (Morrison, 2012). It could be deduced that the designee was not required to be a member of the administration before being appointed. In a 2010 NCAA Executive Summary, “68% of SWAs reported that they were employed at their institutions prior to being assigned as an SWA” (p. 3). Which means that 42% of SWAs were hired at institutions and then designated SWA. The Executive Summary does not mention whether that employment was in the administration or elsewhere in the department.

### *Statement of Problem*

There is a disconnect between the number of women in senior administrative positions and the number of women in the Athletic Director role at the FBS level. There are far too few female Athletic Directors serving the FBS level of the NCAA. When men’s and women’s collegiate sports programs merged, it was the men and not the women who were promoted to the Athletic Director position (Armstrong, 2011). The NCAA’s response was to designate a Senior Woman Administrator (SWA). The designation was a well-intended effort to “return to women

the administrative opportunities they had lost and to ensure that women had a voice in the administration of intercollegiate athletic programs” (Hatfield, Hatfield, & Drummond, 2009).

The passage of Title IX and its language is not the barrier that has limited the advancement of female leaders in athletics. Title IX was the catalyst for change in structure of the NCAA. As of June 2016, the FBS has only 4 female Athletic Directors. As of 2014, 96.2% of those institutions designated a female with an administrative title as the Senior Woman Administrator (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014, p. 37). There are women in administrative roles and yet so few of them have been promoted to Athletic Director.

#### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of SWAs at the Division I FBS level terms of advancement and promotion. The study operates under the assumption that the SWA designation is a required position at all NCAA member institutions from Bylaw 4.02.4 (NCAA Operating Manual, 2015-16). The research intended to understand the SWA mandate and the policy’s benefits and/or restrictions. The researcher explored the glass ceiling phenomenon at the FBS level using a transformative paradigm through role congruency theory and critical feminist theory.

#### *Research Questions*

This study used the guidance of qualitative design to formulate a study that reached a purposeful sample of participants. According to Merriam (2009), areas of applied social sciences are prime for the use of qualitative studies; “Having an interest in knowing more about one’s practice and indeed in improving one’s practice, leads to asking researchable questions” (p. 1). This study was rooted in phenomenology to better understand the lived experiences of women designated SWA through semi-structured interviews (p. 25). The qualitative research will give a

voice to the numbers by asking for more detailed experiences with the designation of SWA and the motivations the woman have to advancing to the Athletic Director position.

**RQ1:** How do women in the FBS feel the designation of Senior Woman Administrator has had an impact on their career advancement?

**RQ2:** What are the career advancing experiences of women who have been designated Senior Woman Administrator?

**RQ3:** What are the perceptions of SWAs on women advancing to the position of Athletic Director at the FBS level?

### *Theoretical Framework*

The study used an anti-positivism paradigm to guide the theoretical framework which included Critical Feminist Theory, Post-Feminist Theory, and Role Congruity Theory while exploring the Glass Ceiling Phenomenon. Each of the theories will be defined in this section and discussed in further detail in section 3, The Scholarly Review. The glass ceiling is an invisible barrier that prevents minorities from moving forward in their careers (Powell & Butterfield, 1994; Jackson & O’Callaghan, 2009). The glass ceiling will persist as long as people are still asking “why are women underrepresented in elite leadership roles?” (Hoyt, 1994; as cited by Northouse, 2013, p. 350). And to that end, when will women be satisfied with workplace equality? Does workplace equality mean genders have to be represented at 50% each? Or as Lofsdottir (2011) cautioned, the more women point out how few women there are at higher levels, the less celebration and attention is given to the women who have broken the glass.

Gender equality in the work place was protected by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VII was meant to ensure that everyone was given a fair opportunity to work and were not discriminated against based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin (Equal

Opportunity Employment Commission, n.d.). Title VII protects minorities from workplace discrimination and has been amended multiple times to help facilitate fair practices. For the purpose of this research, Title VII provided the legal requirement for equal consideration for jobs traditionally held by men. Despite the law demanding equal consideration, women remain relatively absent in the upper echelons of the workforce.

One of the first excuses for the lack of women in the workplace has been defined by lack of investment women put toward their “human capital.” Human capital is defined as a person’s worth in the workforce, i.e. training and skill-sets that make them employable (Hoyt, 1994; as cited in Northouse, 2013, p. 354). A lack of investment on human capital is a poor excuse when women have earned more than half of the Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctoral degrees. Women comprise 51.5% of all management and professional jobs. However, advancement can be seen as limited when women only hold 25.5% of chief executive officer positions and less than 3% of Fortune 500 CEO positions (p. 354). “Even in female-dominated occupations, women face the glass ceiling, whereas White men appear to ride a glass escalator to the top leadership positions” (Northouse, 2013, p. 353). Research provided some speculation that the glass ceiling suggests women have the same opportunities for lower level positions but at some point in the progression of a woman’s career she hits an impenetrable, invisible barrier. The researchers have suggested the barrier is not a ceiling but a labyrinth of glass barriers that prevent the same career momentum (Northouse, 2013). The SWA position could be the athletic equivalent to a glass barrier. A few women have cracked the glass and achieved the highest athletic position at the university level, but the disproportionate number of women left behind the glass, at the SWA position, is telling.



Critical feminist theory focuses on “issues of power and oppression in terms of gender, the politicizing of women’s experiences as central to feminist research” (Merriam, 2009, p. 36). Critical research is meant to critique and challenge the status quo in an effort to transform socially reinforced structures (p. 34). Using critical feminist theory, the research intends to explore the experiences and opinions of NCAA DI-FBS SWAs and her experience climbing the ladder of the athletic leadership elite.

A post-feminist would caution the continued discussion and demand for equality because it begs the issue: Are women looking for equality or equity? Post-feminists also caution against the continued discussion about the glass ceiling, because there have been women who have become leaders. They have broken the glass. If there are women on the other side of the glass, does the barrier still exist? By denying her advancement, society down plays her success in breaking the barrier (Koller, 2010). The power struggle to advance the positions of one group should not come at the expense of oppressing a different group (Merriam, 2009).

Women have broken the barrier, but why have there been so few? Role Congruency Theory suggests that the stereotyped division of labor continues a pattern “of prejudice toward women leaders as a way to explain how gender roles and leader roles come together to produce two types of prejudice that underlie a preference for male leaders” (Ritter & Yoder, 2004, p. 187). The Role Congruency Theory defines the traits assigned to males as agentic and females as communal. Communal traits are attributed to women in a subordinate state and agentic traits place men at a leadership level within a social environment (Ritter & Yoder, 2004; Harrison & Lynch, 2005; & Tiell & Dixon, 2008). More women are breaking down traditional gender norms as they take on roles generally held by males, thus challenging the assumption of agentic or communal traits assigned by social constructs. According to Harrison & Lynch (2005), “as

predicted by social role theory, their perceived gender role orientations (masculine or feminine) become linked to the societal roles they occupy rather than their sex.” Women in leadership tend to be ranked high in agentic traits and low communal traits (p. 228). Women might have a restricted role within the leadership of the department based on gender role expectations (Tiell and Dixon, 2008, p. 343).

There is evidence that widely accepted social prejudice and attitudes involving both sexism and racism are declining at the macro level. Subtly, however, opinion polls show incongruences with gender-leadership roles (Rudman & Kilian, 2000). Rudman & Kilian (2000) gave participants drawn figures of female and male authority figures and timed them with how long it took to assign positive or negative adjectives. Women were more favorable to female figures than were men, but were still slow to attribute positive responses. This suggests that even women display stereotyped feelings towards female leaders. The social constructs of feminine roles are expected even amongst females.

The negative feelings females have for female leaders could stem from social disconnect between being feminine and being a leader, or being feminine and being athletic, because “female athletes perceived themselves lower in femininity” (Harrison & Lynch, 2005, p. 228). Similarly, then would female leaders who were found to have higher agentic traits find themselves lower in femininity? Women struggle to see themselves as both female and an athlete. Or female and a leader. Many athletes have agentic traits, thus seeing themselves as both communal and agentic is problematic. The same could be attributed to the negative associations of females to female leaders. To differentiate between being perceived as feminine while demanding agentic leadership traits in a positive manner would prove difficult.

These issues are further highlighted by homologous reproduction or the practice of hiring similar individuals as employees or grooming those individuals to be replacements, Whisenant (2008) said:

*The three structural barriers that limited careers for women in sport were opportunity, power, and proportion...women lacked opportunity to sustain careers in sport due to various obstacles which restricted their ability to establish a well-defined career path. Men were often hired to coach women's sports whereas women were seldom hired to lead men's programs. This limited access to coaching roles for women whereas men could coach both genders. The result is that men were empowered with far more opportunities to advance in sport organizations (p. 770).*

The glass ceiling effect was created by homologous reproduction (Whisenant, 2008). In order to diversify senior-level positions in society, gender and racial barriers need to be addressed and broken. According to Jackson & O'Callaghan (2009), "diversity among students and faculty are not reflective of demographic shifts in society," thus proving homologous reproduction exists and continues. If white males have power, they will continue to hire white males into positions of power (p. 461).

Despite the glass ceiling effect, in higher education, more and more women are finding their way within the ranks of leadership and power. "...Women hold 40% of all faculty and senior staff, only 21.1% of all college presidents are women. Additionally, 84% of presidents, 83% of business officers, and 75% of academic deans are male at colleges and universities" (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009, p. 464). More females than males attended public universities with a ratio of 54.4% to 43.6% in 2008 (Borzelleca, 2012). Proportionality suggests that female

opportunity and leadership at colleges and universities should have grown along with attendance rates in order to address the demographic shift in society.

Conversely, analyzing the growth of athletic departments from a post-feminist perspective, there are too many references or policies to equalize gender in leadership and they could reinforce the stereotype (Loftsdottier, 2011). The NCAA policy of designating a woman to be a key decision maker in the Athletic Department without the requirement that the SWA be a member of the administrative staff is a prime example. According to Loftsdottier (2011), "...The feminist approach to intersectionality was particularly important in order to capture how, within localized contexts, racism and gender interacted and became entangled in nationalistic notions of normality and nationhood" (p. 201). Racism and sexism are key reasons for disproportionate hiring practices because the opportunity for education and experience increased which could be attributed to the quota systems put in place to help provide equality.

The theoretical framework guiding this study was used for the purpose of gaining a stronger understanding of larger issues. Critical and Post-feminist theories gave the researcher insight into the issues that impact women and the continued missed objectives of such research. Role Congruity Theory gave the researcher a defined set of social roles in which to dispute the validity of their assignments and the continued perpetuation of these roles to keep women in a subordinate position.

### *Design of the Study*

This study used qualitative research in order to understand the lived experience of FBS SWAs and their satisfaction with maintaining the designation. The SWA designation has been explored from multiple different angles, as seen in Chapter 3. The design of this research study

used a phenomenological platform to understand the purpose of the designation as it relates to college athletics by exploring the lived experiences of the women who hold the title.

### **Setting**

The NCAA Division I FBS level was chosen for the study due to the high profile nature of the department. The FBS athletic departments are often compared to big businesses who often overlook their first priority of education. The study zeroed in on SWAs due to a disparity between the percentage of SWAs serving FBS administrations 96.2 % and the number of females holding the Athletic Director title at 6.3% (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2010, p. 2; Acosta & Carpenter, 2014, p. 37).

### **Participants**

Senior Women Administrators at the NCAA Division I FBS level (n=126) were contacted via email with an electronic survey. The survey asked for volunteer participants for a one hour one-on-one phone interview (n=8). The email addresses were collected using each individual university's athletic website. There was no up-to-date or valid database of this information. There were 128 FBS member institutions, however, two institutions did not have an SWA appointed at the time of the study.

### **SWA Motivation Survey**

The SWA Motivation Survey asked 13 questions in order to establish demographic information: 1) years of athletic department service, 2) years served with designation, 3) process of receiving the designation, 4) number of athletic directors served, 5) number of female athletic directors served, 6) agreement with the designation, and 7) a Likert scale was utilized to understand the desire to advance to Athletic Director. The survey's exact questions and format can be found in Appendix B.

In an effort to receive a higher rate of return on the internet survey, the researcher found that multiple emails proved prudent in gaining participation. Armstrong (2011) found that multiple contacts helped achieve a response rate of 28% for her study. Survey Monkey (as cited in Armstrong, 2011) found that a response rate of 30% was average for internet surveys. Armstrong used Dillman's (2007) Tailored Design Method which had a series of contacts. For the purposes of this research, there were four contacts while distributing the surveys electronically.

The first email sent was an introductory email to explain the purpose of the study and test the compiled list of SWA emails. This email did not include the link to the survey. "The purpose of this contact was to leave a positive impression for the importance of the coming survey so that recipients would not immediately discard the message containing the link to the survey (Dillman, 2007, as cited by Armstrong, 2011, p. 81). Any emails immediately returned due to incorrect address were checked for accuracy against the institutional website and resent. If returned for a second time, the email was sent to the department's administrative assistant with the request to forward on to the appropriate recipient. Many institutional website directories are constantly being updated therefore it would be difficult to guarantee accuracy with the first attempt.

The second email, sent 3 days after the initial contact, included a link to the Senior Woman Administrator Survey. The email included a reassurance of confidentiality, unlikely harm to participant, and assumption of informed consent by completion of the survey. The third email was sent 15 days later as a reminder to please participate in the survey. The fourth and final email was sent 3 days later as a thank you email and deadline for completing the survey by the end of the week. The emails were sent over the summer-term months. The intended time-frame for the emails was formed by researcher's experience in NCAA athletics as a period of

lower-levels of work with the completion of competitive athletics seasons for the academic year. Although, many would argue there is no down-time in athletics. With this time-frame, the researcher fears many administrators also take much needed vacations and therefore needed to keep the window for completing the survey open longer. Multiple emails sent at a variety of times during a 2 week span meant that with varying quantities of emails being received, the survey might not go unnoticed.

### **Interviews**

Phone interviews were conducted in a semi-structured method, to ensure that all participants were asked the same series of questions, but allowed for follow-up questions based on answers given by participants. Conversational interview style allowed for an understanding of individual motivation and circumstance. The number of SWAs interviewed filled a purposeful sample of the responding population. The interviews were completely voluntary and were chosen based on demographic information received on the SWA Survey. The selection criteria was: 1) conference membership, 2) tenure with the designation, and 3) availability (respectively).

The interviews started with conversational style introductions and informalities. The interviewer read a summary of the informed consent form, found in Appendix D. The informed consent form, found in Appendix C, had been sent prior to the interview via email. The interviewer reiterated that the interview was completely confidential and asked for permission to record the session to ensure accurate information was obtained. The participant could ask for the recording to stop at any point in the interview. At the conclusion of the session, the interviewer thanked the participant and asked for permission to contact them further in the case of needing further clarification upon analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

The surveys were analyzed by simple percentages of the population. The quantitative data was scrubbed using the guiding hand of Field (2013). The survey was comprised of mainly closed - categorical questions and a few Likert-style questions. The Likert question was analyzed using the median and mode of the collective responses.

The interviews were analyzed using the constant comparison method. By choosing themes, the interviewer compared the responses of each participants' answers to each other to divide the participants' responses into categories.

### **Existing Data**

Existing data collected from key contributors Acosta and Carpenter (2014) and their Women in Intercollegiate Sport a Longitudinal National Study Thirty-Seven Year Update has proved vital to the initial exploration into this study. Acosta and Carpenter's data consisted of statistical analysis of surveys sent to the SWAs of every NCAA member institution. The report was divided into multiple sections with comparative analytics across NCAA divisions as well as Division I subdivisions. The information provided the researcher with the initial inquiry regarding the disparity between females holding FBS Athletic Director positions and the number of females serving titles in FBS administration while holding the SWA designation.

Tiell and Dixon (2008) also contributed statistical analysis with their article called Roles and Tasks of the Senior Woman Administrator in Intercollegiate Athletics. Tiell and Dixon's survey was sent to every SWA and Athletic Director- for each NCAA member institution. Their purpose was to explore the actual roles and tasks of SWAs. They found that SWAs served more communal roles over agentic roles and that there was no difference in contribution between membership levels (DI, DII, or DIII). The study found "clear perceptual differences between the



AD and SWA ( $p < .5$ ) regarding the extent to which SWAs performed roles related to core management team participation – a finding which raises the question as to whether the SWA truly has a meaningful role in the athletics department” (Tiell & Dixon, 2008, p. 339).

### *Limitations and Assumptions*

The limitations of the study draw from potential design and methodology flaws (Creswell, 2014). The limitations were (a) the list of participants were collected through individual websites and not a recognized collection of Senior Woman Administrators. (b) In order to participate in the interview process, participants were required to respond to an electronic survey. Electronic surveys require some technology literacy as well as access to both a computer and Internet. Many people have computers but may not have the skill sets to complete a questionnaire via email. (c) The survey was voluntary and could be stopped without completion at any time. (d) “There was never a best time of the year to collect data from busy athletic administrators who may have periods during the year when they are distracted by demanding sports schedules” (Armstrong, 2011, p. 37). (e) There is a rather constant flux of individuals in athletic departments and therefore it is difficult to guarantee accuracy of population.

This study approached a statistical problem where the number of male to female Athletic Directors was greater and much different than the population served in collegiate athletics. The first assumption was that this statistic was a problem. A few other assumptions followed which led to the development of the research questions and survey model. (a) People want to advance in their career. (b) The SWA to Athletic Director title is a logical step to career advancement in intercollegiate athletics. (c) The designation of Senior Woman Administrator is an issue.

### *Definitions of Key Terms*

This study used a number of terms specific to the research that outsiders or non-stakeholders may not understand. Those terms were defined for the purpose of clarity and universality (Creswell, 2014):

**Athletic Director:** The head of the athletic department. Their purpose is to oversee the daily activities of the department including each sport program, department budget, NCAA requirements, conference requirements, Title IX compliance, fundraising, and much more. There is no written or formal definition of this term, the above definition is based on the experience and literature review provided by the researcher.

**Critical Feminist Theory:** focuses on “issues of power and oppression in terms of gender, the politicizing of women’s experiences is central to feminist research” (Merriam, 2009, p. 36). Critical research is meant to critique and challenge the status quo in an effort to transform socially reinforced structures (p. 34).

**Football Bowl Subdivision:** An NCAA affiliate division of the larger Division I. FBS institutions are required to meet certain minimum requirements in order to maintain membership. Requirements include but are not limited to: maintain 16 varsity sports; at least 60 percent of their football schedules must be against other FBS institutions; average 15,000 people in attendance over a rolling two-year-period; provide 90 percent of the maximum 85 football grant-in-aid over a rolling two-year-period; offer at least 200 student-athletes grant-in-aid over a rolling two-year-period (ncaa.org, 2014).

**Glass Ceiling Phenomenon:** An invisible social, prejudicial barrier that prevents minorities from advancing the work-place at the same rate as individuals in the majority (Glass & Cook, 2016).

**National Collegiate Athletics Association:** A quasigovernmental organization of voluntary membership comprised of higher education institutions' athletic departments. There is no formal definition of this organization, this explanation provided by the researcher's knowledge from the review of literature.

**Post-Feminist Theory:** focuses on the harm demanding equity over equality for recreating the disproportionate gendered roles in leadership has on female progress (Loftsdottier, 2011).

**Power 5 Conferences:** A group of conferences (the Big-12, the Big-10, the Pac-12, the ACC, and the SEC) who have been granted autonomy by the NCAA for the purpose of allowing those conferences to make their own rules; rules in which other conferences may adopt. The autonomy is a new model of governing for the NCAA. Each of the conferences are considered members of the NCAA DI-FBS. There are only 5 other non-Power 5 conferences in the FBS (The American, Conference USA, Mid-American, Mountain West, and Sun Belt). There are also 3 institutions independently associated with the FBS but not members of a conference (Solomon, Aug, 2014).

**Role Congruency Theory:** Implies that jobs inhabited by males and females are determined by traditional social constructs. Males do masculine tasks. Females do feminine tasks (Tiell & Dixon, 2008).

**Senior Woman Administrator:** A position designated to a senior ranking female in the athletic department for the purpose of having a female included in the general decision making processes (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2015-16).

**Title IX:** A small portion of a larger law known as the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX was meant to protect people from discrimination in regards to participation in any

educational activity or program based on sex at all institutions that receive federal financial assistance (Acosta & Carpenter, n.d).

### *Significance of the Study*

Tiell and Dixon (2008) explored the purpose of the SWA's position and the individual NCAA membership's departmental understanding of how to include them in decision making. This study aims to further this research and explore the lived experiences of the designated SWAs. The study used the glass ceiling phenomenon to highlight a gender specific designation placed on females as they seek advancement. Tiell and Dixon (2008) report that more than 50 percent of SWAs at all levels intend to continue or advance in Athletics on her career path. If the SWAs feel it was the creation of the SWA position that is preventing them from advancing in the department, then it could be assumed that homologous reproduction has a stronghold on the male dominated position of Athletic Director. However the risk of abolishing the SWA position is that there will be no female in a leadership position at any level. The position protects females from being excluded but could also be preventing females from advancing.

Changing the SWA assumed-mandated policy and including all SWAs on an administrative level staff, would create better on-the-job-training for future advancement. Changing the inclusion policy would prevent the SWAs from being considered honorary members of the administration and guidelines for how to include SWAs in the decision making process will not need to exist. The policy does not require the SWA to be in the administration, but according to the brochure the NCAA published called, *SWA: Senior Woman Administrator: Understanding the designation and her role on your senior management team*, 81 percent of SWAs believe that the SWA should be promoted to an administrator by her third year in the position (Governance Office of Inclusion, n.d.). If 9 out of 10 schools at all levels have a female

administrator, but female Athletic Directors only hold 23.3 percent of the positions, there is clear gender inequity (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). A radical step would be to remove the SWA position and replace it with an Associate Athletic Director or Senior Associate Athletic Director level title. Would women then become obsolete in the decision making process all together?

By no means is this research a suggestion of separate but equal practices, however, this is a glaring issue of disproportional gender inequalities and historical trends in educational institutions. To help correct the indirect effect of the implementation of Title IX and the addition of women's sport into the male dominated NCAA, there needs to be a stronger effort toward the advancement of women in leadership positions outside of the SWA designation. These efforts need to be universal for all genders: (1) mentoring programs; (2) qualification standards and training; (3) requiring positions to be filled by a committee hiring process; and (4) higher standards of experience with collegiate athletics.

There is no question that Title IX has had a positive effect on gender equity when it comes to student involvement. And Title IX extends beyond sport, even though sport is the most widely recognized effect. To correct the imbalance of gender inequity in leadership the policies need to extend upward. The implication of the title, SWA, is separation of women's and men's sport. Giving women's sports a separate administrative title while men's sport is under the executive title, devalues the SWA as lessor and implies a limit to the advancement of women's administrative potential due to the *senior* position. As in there is no position higher than senior.

### **Scholarship**

The changing landscape of NCAA Division I was occurring during the research. Few scholarly articles have been written about the change in the Division I governance structure. The research was intended to explore the designation of SWAs at the individual institutional level but

could not limit the study due to the change in the governance structure. The continued practice of isolation of females in decision making limits the growth of women in athletics. The designation of SWA is a continuation of separate spheres of influence dating back to before the passage of Title IX when the AIAW and the NCAA came to an agreement about keeping men's and women's collegiate sports separate (Hogshead-Makar and Zimbalist, 2007). More can be found on this in Chapter 2.

### **Practice**

The current Division I governance structure is under review until 2017 for the purpose of finding discrepancies with the restructure. This research hopes to encourage discussion around the continued practice of separate spheres for women's contribution and decision making in the new Division I Governance Model. A discussion of some magnitude could lead to a change in the governance structure before the end of the implementation period. The removal of a required woman's voice, the Senior Woman Administrator designation, could increase the value placed on a woman's opinion and service to the governance.

### *Summary*

“Women who are able to gain entry into the athletic director ranks are segregated into lower, less esteemed, and powerful athletic director positions at Division II and Division III institutions” (Wheisnant, Pedresen, and Obenour, 2002, p. 498). The purpose of the research is to understand the lived experiences of SWAs as it relates to purpose and promotion. To understand if it is the individuals' motivation or the SWAs designation's which limiting advancement beyond an assistant, associate, or senior associate title to become an FBS Athletic Director. Using role congruency theory, critical feminist theory, and post-feminist theory in conjunction with the glass ceiling phenomenon, the researcher intends to discover what has prevented women

from advancing at the highest levels of collegiate athletics at a comparable rate to their male counterparts. And further establish sound recommendations to transform the practice of homologous reproduction.

## Section II

### Practitioner Setting for the Study

Exploring the historical components of the NCAA and women in sports could make up the context of a very large book. The complicated relationship of the NCAA as an organization and the hesitant addition of women into the equation is difficult to summarize without bias. According to *Playing Nice and Losing* by Wuhanley (2004), the women of the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women worked hard to keep women's and men's sport separate. Women wanted to amass the same sort of power of men's sport but on a completely separate field. According to *Equal Play: Title IX and Social Change* by Hogshead-Maker and Zimbalist (2007), the NCAA wanted to keep women out of the big-leagues, so they sued to keep women's sports out after Title IX was passed. Both books cover many of the same events but with slightly different flair as to who was in charge of decision making. Who was correct? And what does that have to do with the Senior Woman Administrator position? Perhaps there are women in these positions of power who would prefer to keep men's and women's sports in separate spheres, so the title of SWA does not bother her and guarantees women will always have a voice in the administration. Perhaps there are men in positions of power who resent the need to have female input in administrative affairs and assign them feminine internal tasks to appease them.

#### *History of Women's Sport in America*

From a time when both men and women alike were against the idea of women over exerting themselves in physical activity, came the creation or adaptation of women's basketball as a non-competitive sport around the year 1899. The participation of women in basketball was based on participation and participants were not required to keep score (Wushanley, 2004). Sport has since morphed to an extended youth club scene of highly competitive athletes vying for



athletic scholarships and a chance to continue competing past high school, to college, and maybe even the Olympics or professional organizations like the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) (Slack and Parent, 2006). Up until the merger of the NCAA and the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW), men's and women's sports were controlled by and encouraged to maintain an era of separate spheres (Hogshead-Makar and Zimbalist, 2007, p. 7). Men's and women's sports should not combine championships due to the physical inferiority of the female body (Wushanley, 2004). In fact, the women of the era pleaded with the men's programs to stop allowing women athletes to compete in men's championships. There was a fear that the women would be injured during play and that women's programs would never grow if the best female athletes were being asked to play for the men's side (Hogshead-Makar and Zimbalist, 2007, pp. 14 – 15).

*In 1963, Sara Staff Jernigan of the DGWS addressed the NCAA's annual convention, asked the association to stop allowing women to compete on men's teams.... Women leaders were also deeply suspicious of the regular scandals in men's sports – stories of players being allowed to skate through classes, boosters handing out bribes to recruit talented players, and point-shaving to help gamblers (Hogshead-Makar and Zimbalist, 2007, p. 15).*

The AIAW was the leading collegiate association for women's athletics from 1972 to 1982. The association was the result of the American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation's (AAHPER) creation of the Division of Girl's and Women's Sports (DGWS). The purpose of the division was to address the growing interest in competitive sport among collegiate women in the 1950's and 1960's (Hogshead-Makar and Zimbalist, 2007, pp. 14-15).

The mission of the AIAW was to “further women’s intercollegiate athletics through: (1) fostering broad programs consistent with educational objectives, (2) assisting member institutions in program extension and enrichment, (3) stimulating the development of quality leadership, and (4) encouraging excellence in performance” (Wushanley, 2004, p. 16). The mission was everything the women of the AIAW thought was wrong with men’s sports. The roots of the league were deeply held in the educational base, a model that was later adopted and restructured by the NCAA when the two organizations seemed to merge.

Another model that the NCAA later adopted was the strict rules on fair recruitment of athletes. The system for recruiting was described as “a system that attempted to achieve three goals: (a) to avoid the harassment of high school athletes; (b) to create a system that was financially reasonable to all member institutions; and (c) to prevent the burnout of coaches who spend excessive time in the recruitment of athletes” (Hogshead-Makar and Zimbalist, 2007, p. 18).

Hult (1999) said, “Title IX stood in the wings at the birth of AIAW as a two-edge sword that ultimately led to male-dominated governance of women’s athletics” (p. 29). The AIAW became a chartered governing body in 1972, but had been organizing national championships for women since the 1960’s. With the passage of Title IX, AIAW gained government supported purpose and thrived for a decade as the governing body of women’s intercollegiate athletics (Wu, 1999). “The roots of AIAW’s demise lie in its successful defense of Title IX and in its success as an association. A contributing factor was AIAW’s inability to be an equal partner with the NCAA in the entire amateur athletic Olympic movement” (Hult, 1999, p. 30). AIAW held its last national championship in 1982. By the end of AIAW’s run, they had “over 960 member schools and conducted 41 national championships in 19 different sports with about 99,000 athletes.

AIAW had a million-dollar TV contract, good officiating, recruitment somewhat under control, and scholarship adjustments made for the benefit of the athletes” (p. 30). After years of failed lawsuits to overturn Title IX, the NCAA voted to offer women’s championships in 1980 and member institutions quickly turned over their women’s programs to the historically men’s athletics governing body (Dohrman, 2012). The management of a singular institution’s sports with one governing body proved easier.

### *Senior Woman Administrator*

In the shuffle to run both men’s and women’s athletic programs, the NCAA mandated the designation of a Primary Woman Administrator for all member institutions. The designation was intended to include women on the decision making team of athletic departments (Morrison, 2011). After the merger of NCAA and AIAW, many female administrators were demoted to the Primary Woman Administrator role later known as Senior Woman Administrator (Griffin, 2011). “When institutions merged male and female sports divisions under a single AD, it was the male, and not the female, senior athletic administrator who was most typically assigned the coveted AD spot” (Armstrong, 2011, p. 3) The designation was a well-intended effort to “return to women the administrative opportunities they had lost and to ensure that women had a voice in the administration of intercollegiate athletic programs” (Hatfield, Hatfield, & Drummond, 2009).

The SWA was assumed to be required designation by the NCAA for all member institutions but does not require that the woman hold an administrative title. It was not until 2006 that there was a uniform and formal definition of an SWA’s tasks and responsibilities across all three divisions (NCAA, 2006, p. 20, as cited in Tiell & Dixon, 2008, p. 340). The definition most prominently declared that “the SWA is the highest ranking female involved with the management of the institution’s intercollegiate athletics program” (p. 340). There is a specific clause in the

definition which states an institution with a female athletic director can assign a staff member the designation of SWA and report to the NCAA governance system as an additional member of program (p. 340). Thus, with a female athletic director, women could potentially have two voices in one athletic administration. This sort of structure goes virtually unreported via Acosta and Carpenter's (2014) extensive study into *Women in Intercollegiate Sport*. Their study reports that there are 2 structures with 2 women in the administration tied for 5<sup>th</sup> most common at 3.78%. The first structure has a female athletic director with 1 female assistant/associate and 1 male assistant/associate. The 2nd structure has 1 male athletic director with 2 female assistant/associates, and 1 male assistant/associate (p. 43).

It should also be noted that in the case of an institution having a female athletic director, the opportunities for additional women in the administration could be eliminated (Schneider, Stier, Henry & Wilding, 2010). "By definition, a female athletic director can be considered the SWA, and the athletic department may choose not to designate a second woman as the SWA" (p. 18). There was no current literature establishing a trend for female athletic directors designating a second woman as SWA or maintaining the designation.

The formal definition of SWA can be found in Article 4.02.4 of the NCAA manual (Levick, 2002; Raphaely, 2003, as cited in Tiell & Dixon, 2008, p. 340). In 2012, the NCAA issued a brochure on their website titled *SWA: Senior Woman Administrator: Understanding the designation and her role on your senior management team* (Morrison, 2011). According to the brochure, the purpose of the SWA was to: (1) act as an important decision-maker within the athletics department; (2) participate on the senior management team; (3) strategize ways to support and manage gender equity and Title IX; (4) advocate issues for both genders; (5) educate individuals on issues for both genders; (6) behave as a "role-model and resource" for the

department; (7) help student-athletes balance academics and athletics; (8) “review Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act Report and the Gender Equity Plan” (p. 2); and (9) was an active member of professional organizations (Morrison, 2011).

### *The National Collegiate Athletic Association*

Wushanley (2004) suggested that “the NCAA became interested in women’s athletics during the Cold War era because it had not been successful in its struggle with the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) over the control of amateur sports. The repeated U.S. defeats by the Soviet Union at the Olympics during the Cold War not only highlighted the importance of women’s sports but also spurred their growth in the 1960’s” (p. 5).

The NCAA was founded in 1906 by a small group of U.S. colleges and universities and was known as the Intercollegiate Athletic Association. In 1910, the organization changed its name to the National Collegiate Athletic Association or NCAA which it is known as currently. According to Slack and Parent (2006), the NCAA was a loosely structured group of member institutions operated by a small group of 7 representatives from those member institutions. The original intent was to “regulate and control intercollegiate sport through the establishment of a set of stringent rules and strict enforcement codes” (p. 237). The original purpose was changed to allow for a more educational approach. Which meant that the control of the sport was monitored by each member institution, thus the NCAA became an advisory model to member institutions (Slack and Parent, 2006). Relieving the NCAA of the ability to control and regulate sport created an advisory, quasigovernmental organization.

### *Organizational Analysis*

There would be no doubt in any avid ESPN viewer’s mind that the NCAA has enormous power over collegiate athletics. There is rarely a day when there is not talk about some

controversy over an NCAA bylaw that has been broken or stretched by a school, especially in the FBS, although they might not be responsible for the most infractions+----. The NCAA's governing rules include areas to make fair recruiting policies, academic accountability, amateurism, and more. In 2015, the NCAA was notoriously trying to establish a more firm grasp on academic misconduct or academic cheating. Many schools have faced penalties known broadly as impermissible academic assistance, in regard to employees taking tests, writing papers, or persuading professors to pass students who did not earn a grade (Solomon, 2015). To that end, the NCAA's purpose is to "govern competition in a fair, safe, equitable and sportsmanlike manner, and to integrate intercollegiate athletics into higher education so that the educational experience of the student-athlete is paramount" (NCAA Division I Steering Committee on Governance Report to Division I Board, July 2014, p. 14.)

As of July 11, 2014, the NCAA voted to make changes to the Division I governance structure. The key changes listed in a document provided by the NCAA.org website titled Supplement No. 1 recognizes eight areas of improvement: (1) Size of Board of Directors; (2) Five-Conference Voting Threshold in Autonomy Governance; (3) Transfer Eligibility; (4) Future Additions to Autonomy List; (5) Size of Council and Weighted Voting; (6) Board Jurisdiction to Monitor the New Governance Structure; (7) Football Bowl Subdivision Legislation; and (8) Autonomy Governance in 2014-2015. The changes were meant serve and benefit the differences in FBS, FCS, and Non-Football levels of Division I.

In 2014, the NCAA Division Board of Directors voted on a new structure for Division I athletics. With a 16-2 vote, the board adopted a new governance and membership model akin to a divisionalized form. "The bulk of the work is done in quasi-autonomous units, as with free-

standing campuses in a multi-campus university...” (Bolman and Deal, 2008, p. 83). The NCAA is simply the governing body to the individually functioning member institutions.

At the FBS level there are 128 member institutions. It would be tedious to analyze the organizational structure of each individual one. The structures that have been reported most common by Acosta and Carpenter (2014) include all levels of NCAA member institutions. Structures with the highest number of administrators could be assumed to be most common in the large expanse of the FBS, but cannot be guaranteed. Therefore for the purpose of this research and to further analyze the organizational understanding of collegiate athletics, it is important to understand the 2014 restructure of the NCAA at the Division I level and the impact it has had on women’s leadership.

The new governance structure was split into four sections with a common vision and core values. The board chose to: (1) expand the size of the Board of Directors; (2) granted 5-conferences autonomy; (3) added a Council and weighted voting; (4) refocused the NCAA vision and core values (NCAA, Supplement No.1). The purpose of the new model was to “allow for a more transparent, responsive, participative, and streamlined governance system” (NCAA.org, governance, 2014, p. 10).

The structural changes included presidents or chancellors from each of the three sections of Division I (FBS, FCS, and Non-football) to serve on the Board of Directors. The Board also included 1 SWA, 1 Athletic Director, 1 Student-Athlete, and 1 Faculty Athletics Representative. The Board of Directors has 20 positions for presidents/chancellors of member institutions (10 FBS, 5 FCS, and 5 Non-football). The first appointed board members included 4 females (1 president/chancellor, 1 SWA, 1 student-athlete, and 1 faculty athletics representative) and 20 males (18 presidents/chancellors and 1 athletic director) (Division I Board of Directors,

NCAA.org). Out of 24 voting members of the newly appointed Board of Directors and the NCAA Division I Governance structure, there were 4 women, one of whom was a mandatory appointment.

### **The Structural Frame**

As mentioned, the NCAA Division I level experienced a giant overhaul of structural components in the 2014/2015 academic year. The Steering Committee on Governance reported that, “the most successful membership organizations have discovered that governance redesign works effectively when it is based on a core ideology of shared purpose, values and vision” (p. 14). According to Bolman and Deal (2008), there were 6 assumptions about the structural frame that applied to organizations. These assumptions provided a framework to analyze the components of an organization. The first assumption of the structural frame established that (1) “Organizations exist to achieve established goals and objectives” (p. 47). The basics of the structural frame were described by a metaphor in that the structure of an organization was built like a factory or machine; it was founded on principles and policies; and leadership was required to task out assignments (p. 18).

Upon analysis of the entire new Division I governance model, the Steering Committee must have had Bolman and Deal (2008) in mind. Each step of their report answers to one of the key assumptions of the Structural Frame. The second assumption said, “Organizations increase efficiency and enhance performance through specialized and appropriate division of labor” (p. 47). The Steering Committee report declared that their unifying principles allowed governance to operate in a “streamline manner” and at the same time created divisions of labor known as “the Board of Directors, The Council, The Council’s Substructure, Autonomy Governance System, and Council Governance System” (NCAA Division I Steering Committee on Governance Report



to Division I Board, July 2014, p. 5). The old division of labor consisted of a complex system of groups who had significant overlap on duties and responsibilities. “One of the key design principles of the new governance system is simplicity in focus and approach” (p. 24).

The biggest dilemma facing the restructuring of the NCAA was in the addition of the Autonomy structure. Autonomy separated the FBS schools from the rest of Division I. With that, it all but guaranteed the continued stronghold of the FBS schools and their financial power. The third assumption stated, “Suitable forms of coordination and control ensure that diverse efforts of individuals and units mesh” (Bolman and Deal, 2008, p. 47). With a closer look to the Board of Directors, there were 10 FBS appointed positions, 5 FCS appointed positions, and 5 Non-football appointed positions. The Board was designed to give FBS a higher percentage of the vote. There was also an attempt to spread the decision making power to extraneous members of athletics: 1 Athletic Director, 1 Senior Woman Administrator, 1 Faculty Athletics Representative, and 1 Student-Athlete. The requirement of a senior woman administrator was the defining moment for restructuring by ensuring “that diverse efforts of individuals and units mesh” (p. 47). The National Association of Collegiate Women Athletics Administrators (NACWAA) said in a press release, “The intent of the appointment was to designate a senior level female practitioner of national stature, recognition, and respect, whose voice will represent the well-being of all student-athletes in Division I. The designee would also serve in an ex officio roll to the NACWAA Board of Directors (Lewis, Dec. 10, 2014, NACWAA.org). Without this designation, there could possibly be no women on the Board of Directors.

The Council and the Council Substructure included representatives from all 32 conferences in their structure by way of conference representatives. Both the Council and the Council Substructure was comprised of a combination of appointments consisting of athletic

directors, conference administrator or commissioner, senior woman administrator, other athletics administrator or faculty athletics representative, as well as 2 designated student-athletes, four commissioner seats, and two designated faculty positions. There were 40 seats on the council and it was supported by the committee that 60 percent of the seats be filled by athletics directors (NCAA Division I Steering Committee on Governance Report to Division I, July 2014, p. 6). Upon further review of the first Council, there were 12 women serving, which means 30 percent of the 40 seats are filled by women: 6 athletics directors, 1 SWA, 1 student-athlete, 2 assistant/deputy commissioners, and 2 commissioners. Of those 6 female athletics directors, only 1 of them was in the FBS. The other FBS representative on the council was a female student-athlete. The Council recommended but did not require the appointment of an SWA and yet, 11 women still received an appointment. “The Board believes that student-athletes, faculty athletics representatives and senior woman administrators also have important voices that should be considered along with votes in the conduct of intercollegiate athletics matters” (p. 22). It should also be noted that it was required that there was 1 male and 1 female student-athlete representative. Because the council system does not mandate the appointment of an SWA, potentially the only female representation could be the student-athlete.

Throughout the process of redesign, the NCAA continued to reference the current working model and was very insistent on making sure that each member institution have copies of key changes as well as input in the process. As with assumption five, “structures must be designed to fit an organization’s current circumstances (including goals, technology, workforce, and environments) (Bolman and Deal, 2008, p. 47). The previous structure had 2 councils: there was a FBS council with 11 members and an FCS council with 7 members. The redesign has 4 main structures: (1) Board of Directors; (2) The Council Governance; (3) Autonomy or Power 5

Conferences Group; (4) Council Substructures (NCAA Division I Steering Committee on Governance Report to Division I Board, July 2014). The main purpose of the governance structure was to provide rules to membership institutions to abide by and hold to a higher level of professional practice. “Rules can be adopted in April only, instead of April and January. Additionally, the process for requesting reconsideration of a rule will be simplified. If a rule change is defeated, that same change can’t be considered again for a least 2 years” (Hosick, 2014).

The steering committee has a contingency plan for continued restructuring because assumption six states that, “problems arise and performance suffers from structural deficiencies, which can be remedied through analysis and restructuring” (p. 47). Therefore, for the first 2 years that the new governance model is in effect, “The Board will conduct assessments biannually to evaluate the operation of the governance structure and to monitor membership standards and criteria affecting Division I and subdivisional membership...the Board of Directors retains legislative authority until August 1, 2017 to address unintended results, correct errors that become apparent following adoption of this model or to adopt recommendations regarding substructures recommended by the Council” (p. 17).

The structuralized components to the NCAA Division I model took a divisionalized form. Bolman and Deal (2008) describe divisionalized form as a quazi-autonomous organization as with free-standing entities; or in this case free-standing conferences with free-standing universities and colleges. “The divisionalized structure offers economies of scale, resources, and responsiveness while controlling economic risks, but it creates other tensions” (p. 84). The new NCAA model resembled as close to a capitalist democracy as it could. The model is capitalist because it focused on the distribution of power based on the institutions with the most monetary

investment; and democracy because it allows for stronger participation amongst stakeholders in the voting process for new legislation with the requirement of an SWA, Student-Athletes, and Faculty Athletics Representatives.

The biggest problems that the new Board of Directors would face has to do with assumption four, “organizations work best when rationality prevails over personal agendas and extraneous pressures” (Bolman and Deal, 2008, p. 47). The weighted voting and extra provisions given to FBS member schools could cause some turmoil and possibly a failure to exact a perfect new Division I Governance structure. There was a balance between “excessive autonomy and excessive interdependence” as the stakeholders in the equation could feel isolated from each other (p. 75). The end result being disbanding the entire governance structure and the creation of a separate sphere of male athletics designed around the needs of football.

### **The Political Frame**

Bolman and Deal’s political frame operated under the assumption that organizations are inevitably political. The new governance model provided a healthier political climate, while also providing power to those who wield it. If the student-athletes were the “scarce resources” that provide a purpose for an athletic department, than the 5 conferences that make up the Power-5 have the most talented of the resources (p. 196). It was this difference that the athletes at the Power-5 level have felt due to the high levels of public scrutiny of their performance over any other division or level in the NCAA that made restructuring a requirement:

*The complexity of intercollegiate athletics has increased enormously over the past decade...As our enterprise continues to evolve, we have a clear responsibility to maintain focus on our historic values and to ensure that our Association continues to advance in the right direction...NCAA – the member schools, conferences and the national office*

*staff – have an absolute obligation to make certain that intercollegiate athletics is successfully woven into the fabric of higher education. That key principle is stated clearly in the purpose of this play. It is the foundation upon which our enterprise rests. It is our future.* (NCAA Executive Committee, 2004)

The purpose of the NCAA was to govern competitive collegiate athletics and integrate the world of athletics into higher education “so that the educational experience of the student-athlete was paramount” (NCAA.org, governance, 2014, p. 14). By providing the FBS autonomy the NCAA has allowed them the political capital to change the face of amateur athletics by providing their high-profile athletes with different monetary benefits that smaller FCS institutions cannot afford. The addition of autonomy to the governance structure was the first step in creating a separate sphere of capitalist governance. The decisions of the board and council were politically motivated by the members who controlled the most capital. And to that end, the universities with the most capital could attract the highest quality athletes by providing monetary compensation in the form of cost-of-attendance.

The first assumption of the political frame said that “organizations are coalitions of assorted individuals and interest groups” (Bolman and Deal, 2008, pp. 194-195). The assorted individuals were be comprised of the different subdivisions of the new governance, the conferences, and the institutions. The interest groups were the student-athletes. The second assumption stated that each member had their own values, beliefs, information, interests, and perceptions of reality. The governance wanted to help return collegiate athletics to an integrated higher-education model, the conferences in autonomy wanted to keep athletics as a big-business, and the student-athletes wanted to continue to compete and maybe make a little money.

The most important assumption involved the most important decisions: distributing resources (Bolman and Deal, 2008, pp. 194-195). Every political arena faces the decision of who gets what. NCAA had ensured through the governance that the FBS retains their *what*. The FBS retained their most important commodity in the form of both literal and political capital. By doing so would continue to attract the best athletes. Winning brought sponsorships. Sponsorships brought money. Money brought athletes. Athletes brought Championships. Championships brought more money. And the cycle continues. The fourth assumption said, “scarce resources and enduring differences put conflict at the center of day-to-day dynamics and make power the most important asset” (pp. 194-195). Providing the Power-5 with autonomy granted them all power over the resources and could create an environment of FBS against everyone else. Thus the final assumption was about how goals and decisions emerge from member institutions having a chance to battle for their own interests. The governance structure helped maintain the demands and needs of sports other than football.

### *Leadership Analysis*

The biggest issue with a leadership analysis of the NCAA stemmed from the divisionalized structure. There is a multilayered structure with individual substructures and at each level a new leader emerged. Leadership with that many different working pieces was hard to pinpoint as to a specific kind of leader. Therefore this research focused on gender-based leadership. Leadership that stemmed from socially constructed attitudes about different jobs and tasks.

### **Athletic Director**

There was something to be said that at an International Labor Organization conference in 1997, there were 20 countries who agreed that “social attitudes and cultural biases were

identified as major factors discriminating against women holding them back from attaining higher-level jobs” (Wirth, 1998 as cited in Dennis and Kunkel, 2004, p. 155). It begged the question, why? When looking into FBS athletics, the beast that is college football is often discussed as big-business. So it was safe to compare NCAA Division I FBS Athletic Directors to Chief Executive Officers or CEO’s of their departments. The addition of women’s athletic programs into the same department as the men’s athletic programs increased the amount of revenue required to maintain programs at an equitable level; and increased the number of administrative support staff required to manage the increased number of teams with their respective staffs and players. Athletics imploded as an entity that needed major direction and support. Traditionally, athletic directors ascended to the throne through coaching responsibility and administrative service within their departments (Cuneen, 1992).

Mullin (1980, as cited in Cuneen, 1992) suggested that this model of ascension was acceptable because there was no written curricula to denote the education side of the job and concluded that successful coaches maintained the experience over education to hold the position. When a respected curricula had been established in the form of sport management bachelor’s and master’s degrees, the appropriateness of ascension through experience was called into question. The growth of athletic departments demanded job-related curricula in order to prepare students for meeting the demands of athletic administration.

Therefore there were two schools of thought: 1) experience in coaching prepared a person enough for a position of athletic director or 2) only curriculum based education could prepare a person for the multi-disciplined area of sport management (p. 16). At the first meeting of the North American Society of Sport Management (NASSM), Hay (1987, as cited in Cuneen, 1992),

the organization had prepared a sample curriculum that contained an interdisciplinary model with 2 core values: sport and management (p. 17).

A background core of sport contained courses in exercise physiology, biomechanics, sports facilities, coaching, physical activity research, sport sociology, sport philosophy, sport psychology, sport history, and sport economics. A background core of management contained courses in business enterprise (production, marketing, and finance), the external environments of profit/non-profit business (economic, political, and legal), accounting, statistics, information systems, personnel, organization, communications, and strategies in uncertain conditions (Hay, 1986, as cited in Cuneen, 1992).

In 2010, University of Michigan chose to hire David Brandon as athletic director for its multimillion dollar athletic department. Brandon was hired due to his experience as the CEO of Domino's Pizza. The correlation and direct money trail from managing a multibillion dollar company to running a collegiate athletics program was not that difficult to connect. "College sports had become increasingly big businesses, more institutions had made similar assessments and turned to outside business executives to run their programs – but it was not clear that the shift in preferred skill sets was paying off" (New, 2014). Tim Perneti was a television executive before being hired on as Athletic Director at Rutgers University. Perneti lasted only 4 years at the helm of the department, same as Brandon at Michigan. These men were hired for their business sense and ability to manage a large team and lots of money. They did not last the term of their contracts because they failed to recognize the core values of the universities they served (p. 1).

Collegiate athletics used to be about hiring and developing good coaches and winning championships. In 2014, athletics was all about generating revenue, according to Dan Rascher



(as cited by New, 2014), “that changed the nature of who would be successful in running a program.” When departments were spending exorbitant amounts of money on their head football coach’s salaries, revenue was an important part of hiring and maintaining quality coaches. From 2007 to 2009, the salaries of head football coaches at the FBS level rose 46% to an average of \$1.36 million. Some of the FBS head football coaches made 5 to 10 times that of their university’s president (Zimbalist, 2010). The power of football, therefore went unquestioned.

The stakeholders of an athletics program includes: Athletes, students, alumni, fans, administrators, television networks, sponsors/boosters, etc. Not a single one of them was expecting the same thing out of the athletics department. Rascher (as cited by New, 2014) said, “In many ways, it was more complex than running a large company. You can’t sell it like it’s a standard product. Students have a fixed income, so you can’t just raise ticket prices. You’ll maybe figure out that you can make a bunch of money by getting alcohol sponsorships, but you’ll probably choose not to do that because you can’t be seen promoting alcohol use to underage students. There are all these things that you can’t really do that an outside business might not think twice about.” So, what does an athletic director do? How do they manage all of the working components of the department?

Through all of the research that has been conducted for this study, there was never a concrete list of daily tasks associated with the position. Even in the NCAA operating manual 2015-2016, there is no definition or declarative purpose to the Athletic Director. The researcher concluded the main jobs of the Athletic Director are to make strong hires for head coaches and bring in money to support the teams. Many jobs in athletics operate with an understanding that every day is different. One day, the Athletic Director could be shaking hands with boosters and sponsors, collecting donations to help fund the department. A different day could call for closed

door meetings with an underperforming coach. And yet another day could have a mixture of both managerial and leadership type tasks. All of the research that was collected for this study went on to try to deduce which gender was preferred for the job. A job without a true or strict definition of tasks.

### **Senior Woman Administrator**

Gender is a social construct; it is the continued acceptance of men and women being different in social aspects and nature of life. A study by Peachy and Burton (2011), “indicated transformational leadership was related to more positive organizational outcomes, that there was no difference between male and female leaders on attaining these outcomes, and that there was no interaction between leadership style and leader gender (p. 416). Transformational leadership was a series of events and/or experiences that change a person’s “emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals” (Northouse, 2013, p 185). Transformational leaders tended to listen and react to the needs of their followers; they wanted the employees to feel valued (p. 186). The study also wanted to determine if gender played a significant role in the perception and satisfaction of a leader. They utilized Role Congruity Theory and Social Role Theory to understand the gendered characteristics that could be deemed more favorable. Role Congruity Theory and Social Role Theory postulate that traditional expectations of each gender continued to influence the designation of responsibilities in the workplace (Ritter & Yoder, 2004, p. 187; Tiell & Dixon, 2008, p. 342; Peachy & Burton, 2011, p. 418).

Tiell and Dixon (2008) suggested, despite the formalized list of responsibilities and decision making areas, there are still a few questions regarding the purpose of the designation: (1) did the SWA actually make decisions or was she simply part of the discussion; (2) were the

SWA's tasks gender-specific or gender-neutral; and (3) "were the roles and tasks performed congruent with gendered norms" (p. 340)?

It was found that the Division I SWAs were designated with a dual title tied to the administration versus Division II or Division III SWAs who are often SWAs with a primary coaching title. Division I SWAs hold authoritative titles of Senior Associate Athletic Director, among others (Tiell & Dixon, 2008, p. 345). According to the *2010 NCAA Executive Summary*, SWAs held a primary administrative title at Division III institutions at 71.2%, Division II at 79.1%, and Division I at 96.2% (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2010, p. 2). The SWAs at Division I institutions were found to have more involvement with the department and greater decision making power than those of Division II or Division III (Tiell & Dixon, 2008, p. 345). There was also a much higher percentage of female athletics directors at Division II and Division III, as well as a lower percentage of SWA's with an administrative title at 41% and 55% respectively (p. 354).

It was important to note as well, the SWA was a designation and not a guaranteed position within the administration. Thus the purpose of the designation was to provide women a voice in the administration, and could be seen as merely a title and appeasement. It was found that women in these positions were "frustrated with unequal opportunity for advancement, fought the ol' boy networking, lack of genuine interest in women's issues by athletic administrators, and blatant discrimination" (NCAA Women's Administrator's Report, 1989, as cited in Griffin, 2011, p. 3). Also, "while the majority of female administrators indicate satisfaction with their current overall employment, some indicated dissatisfaction with gender equality within athletics departments and the equality of race/ethnicity in athletics departments" (Bracken, 2008, p. 3).

*Implication for Research in the Practitioner Setting*

The implications of the research suggested the designation of the SWA limits the advancement of women in athletic departments based on the patterns provided by social role theory. Women's lack of progress was due to the lack of opportunity to have experiences which would make them qualified candidates for Athletic Director positions. However, the continued effort to develop legislation mandating equality, equal opportunity, or voice, such as the designation of SWA, did more harm than the good intentions it implies. The designation of SWA had turned purposeless and limited the advancement of women in athletics. Powell & Butterfield (1994) defined the glass ceiling as an invisible barrier based on "attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization" (p. 69). Did the SWA title create a barrier for women to advance beyond a member of the administration to the leader of the administration?

Women's careers have limited potential because they were fighting for a quarter of the jobs in the market. If women's athletics made up 50% of all the programs in the NCAA and 50% of those leadership roles were filled by men, then men could fight for 100% of all leadership positions over men's and women's programs, while women were fighting for a quarter of the jobs or 50% of only women's programs. All in all, women had far less opportunity to prove their leadership abilities in athletics than men. The designation of SWA did not indicate a leadership role nor did it improve the opportunity as it was intended. Rather the designation created a top female position, as the highest title to acquire, deterring SWAs from attempting to obtain the title of Athletic Director.

If there were 43% women leaders over women's programs and 3% of women over men's programs in 2014, where are all the women who want to lead (Acosta and Carpenter, 2014)? Is it

because of the lack of hiring or that women were not even applying for positions on the men's side, in which they can only blame themselves for not holding more positions over men's programs. "Female administrators agree that there are qualified men and women who do not apply for job openings in intercollegiate athletic administration. Females agree to a lesser extent that qualified men do not apply (61%) than they agree that qualified women do not apply for open positions (95%). Only 40% agreed with the statement that they believe that the most qualified applicants are being hired in athletics administration regardless of gender" (Bracker, 2008, p. 19).

### *Summary*

There was no denying the significance in the decline of women in leadership positions in collegiate athletics since the passage of Title IX. It has been statistically understood that women's participation in sports had increased in all facets except for women in athletic leadership positions (Acosta and Carpenter, 2014). A few questions come to mind when it came to discussions on gender equity in employment, an issue that had more to do with Title VII of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Equal Opportunity Employment Commission, n.d.). Did employers have an ethical obligation to attempt to employ an equitable and diverse workplace? What were the effects on underrepresented minorities not seeing versions of themselves in positions of power and their potential in advancement? Did female athletes not want to advance to a career in athletics because they had limited exposure to women in those positions? Did equal opportunity exist when women were still fighting the patriarchy of an old boy's network? Are institutions in violation of Title VII when they hire for positions based on gender?

When will women feel they are completely equal to men in the workplace? A post-feminist would caution greatly against the continued pursuit of equality and be satisfied with the opportunity for equity. Women have broken the barrier in college athletics and must continue to mentor and encourage women who follow. The SWA position was designated to help ensure that a woman's voice was always heard when it came to the decisions made that impact women's sports at the collegiate level.

When the NCAA restructured in 2015, they made the conscious effort to include an SWA on the Board of Directors which included a vast majority of University Presidents and Chancellors. Of all the members on that Board, there were only 4 women to represent all the women in NCAA Division I athletics. This was almost 50 years after Title IX. A woman's voice was still a mandated position in an organization that serviced a 50% female population.

### Section III

#### Scholarly Review for the Study

Gender inequity was still a powerful issue a decade into the millennium. As of June 2016, only 4 member institutions out of 128 at the NCAA Division I-FBS level employed a female Athletic Director. There was a startlingly low 3.1% of female leaders in the upper echelons of collegiate athletics. Many factors contributed to the disproportionate percentage of female leaders at this level including historical events, gender-biased policies, and the continued practice of homologous reproduction.

After the NCAA's merger with the AIAW, the member institutions gave the male athletic director the title of Athletic Director over the department instead of the female, who was often more qualified, had more experience, held a higher degree, and had tenure (Hatfield, Hatfield, & Drummond, 2009; Dohrmann, 2012; Hult, 2013). The gender stereotyping of women in leadership roles prevented women from making early gains in the merger. "Women within intercollegiate athletics also report being relegated to less important administrative responsibilities within their positions in athletic departments, including being assigned to oversee more female appropriate sports instead of the more significant revenue producing sports" (Burton, Barr, Fink, & Bruening, 2009, p. 417).

Historically, the NCAA was founded by men for men's collegiate athletics and actively fought against the passage of the Education Amendments of 1972 amendment known as Title IX, which passed in 1972. The NCAA actively and unsuccessfully sued for reversal of the legislation in 1976. It was not until 1980 the NCAA succumbed to the law and offered championships for women's sports (Dohrmann, 2012). In 2014, there were over a thousand membership institutions in the NCAA over three divisions. No more than 23% of them employed

a female Athletic Director. The female athletic directors at the FBS level reached only 6.3% the same year (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014, p. 37). Which was up 2% more from the year before or about 1 female AD.

Since early in its history, at all levels, the Athletic Director position has been a hallmark of an *Ol' Boy's Network* made from homologous reproduction (Whisenant, 2008). Whisenant (2008) said, "Women have been denied the ability to amass the same levels of personal power and position power within sport as a result of the organizational structures within sport." The organizational structure was generally hierarchical and formatted with clear delineation of power. Bolman and Deal (2008) would classify an athletic department with a hierarchical structural frame of organizational analysis.

The Athletic Director was the highest ranking person in the department. He/she oversaw the associate and assistant athletic directors, who were generally the overseers of department specific areas such as Sports Information, Marketing, and Athletic Training (Armstrong, 2011). Women had continuously been denied advancement, even into leadership positions in the third tier of the department. In 2014, at the Division I level, 98.7% of member institutions had at least one full-time Sports Information Director; only 7.7% of those positions were filled by females (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014, p. 47). Similarly, 99.4% of those institutions had at least one full-time athletic trainer; 19.5% of those positions were filled by a female (p. 45). In total, 2.12% of administrators in Division I athletics were female (p. 42).

The purpose of this review of literature was to establish a stronger understanding to theoretical concepts; a brief historical timeline and impact of Title IX; the designation of the Senior Woman Administrator; the significance of the FBS in the fight for gender equality; and a



presentation on theories to suggest why there was a lack of women in athletic leadership positions.

### *Review of the Extant Scholarship*

#### **Theoretical Concepts**

Continuing with a post-feminist lens, female leaders should stop trying to be seen as other than female. Embrace the feminine leader. Define new ideals of leadership through example. “We stare at powerlessness and poverty from universal assumptions about gender equality but simultaneously fail to engage with our own position of power, our own embeddedness within past and present inequalities, and the fact that these people belong to the same political context as we do” (Lofsdottier, 2011, p. 203). Women, who practice homologous reproduction, reinforce gender discrimination stereotypes. Because the practice of homologous reproduction has run rampant in the past amongst males, women who hire women could be accused of making a conscious effort not to hire males. As the NCAA’s *Perceived Barriers Report 2008 – 2009* found, 51% of women agreed that women only hire women (p. 19). The purpose of talking about inequity is not necessarily to determine ways to fix the policy that created it but to understand why it happened. To push for equality is to “risk reproducing colonizing discourses and relationships” (Loftsdottir, 2011, p. 199).

The 1989 NCAA Women’s Administrator’s Report found, “female athletics administrators in collegiate athletics were frustrated with unequal opportunity for advancement, fighting ol’ boy networking, lack of genuine interest in women’s issues by athletic administrators, and blatant discrimination” (p. 13). Having an SWA perpetuates the social role of women to *other* than leader but as a second-in-command female with administrative decision-making abilities. What other job is titled by the gender of the intended person filling the position,

which does not have a gendered inverse? In other words, there is no senior male administrator because the Athletic Director position is statistically and historically filled by a man.

There are several things working against women who desire to become an athletic director. According to Quartermann, DuPree, and Wallis (2006), women who desire managerial roles face: (1) stereotyping leadership abilities, (2) being a part of the Ol' Boys Network, (3) limited training for management, (4) limited flexibility for work schedule, (5) demands of family obligations, and (6) blatant gender discrimination (p. 530). Athletic directors fill the managerial role of the department, the Chief Executive officer, fundraising, compliance officer, and more.

The NCAA is a prime example of Acker's (2006) *Inequality Regimes*, she says, "all organizations have inequality regimes, defined as loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and means that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organizations" (p. 443). In conjunction with this, homologous reproduction and hegemony, are two serious business practices designed to keep the glass ceiling impenetrable. Homologous reproduction is a phenomenon where the group's power and leadership works tirelessly to reproduce itself (Whisenant, Miller, & Pedersen, 2005, p. 912; Whisenant, 2008, p. 770). Hegemony has evolved from a concept where a state rules over another state to include ruling class policies accepted as the norm. "Hegemony is the condition in which certain social groups within society wield authority through imposition, manipulation, and consent – over other groups" (Whisenant, Pedersen, & Obernour, 2002, p. 485 – 486). In essence, inequality regimes exist because of the practices of homologous reproduction and the normality of hegemony.

Men hire men who are like them. The NCAA's *Perceived Barriers Report from 2008 - 2009*, found 80% of women in administrative positions agreed with the statement men only hire men. While 51% agreed that women only hire women (p. 19). Each member institution is

slightly different with its hiring practices, but at some point the president of the university has a hand in choosing the head of her/his athletic department. In 2009, 84% of university and college presidents were men (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009, p. 464). In 2010, 80.7% of all athletic directors were men at all levels of the NCAA (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014, p. 37). With multi-year contracts for both positions, one could deduce that the homologous reproduction affects more than just the athletic department.

Gender is a social construct; it is the continued acceptance of men and women being different in social aspects and nature of life. A study by Peachy and Burton (2011), "indicated transformational leadership was related to more positive organizational outcomes, that there was no difference between male and female leaders on attaining these outcomes, and that there was no interaction between leadership style and leader gender (p. 416). Transformational leadership is a series of events and/or experiences that change a person's "emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals" (Northouse, 2013, p 185). Transformational leaders tend to listen and react to the needs of their followers; they want the employee's to feel valued (p. 186). The study also wanted to determine if gender played a significant role in the perception and satisfaction of a leader. They utilized Role Congruity Theory and Social Role Theory to understand the gendered characteristics that could be deemed more favorable. Role Congruity Theory and Social Role Theory postulate that traditional expectations of each gender continue to influence the designation of responsibilities in the workplace (Ritter & Yoder, 2004, p. 187; Tiell & Dixon, 2008, p. 342; Peachy & Burton, 2011, p. 418).

Social role theory suggests that "behavioral sex differences spring from the differential social roles inhabited by women and men, especially those concerning the division of labor" (Harrison & Lynch, 2005, p. 227). Male and female roles were defined in every labor task

according to their physical abilities. Male tasks tended to be more physical and female tasks were more social (Harrison & Lynch, 2005). Traditional gender norms spawned past tasks and roles and into titles. The NCAA national basketball tournament for both men and women, held the exact same month but are titled differently by one word. The men's side called "The NCAA National Championship" and the women's side called "The NCAA Women's National Championship" (Harrison & Lynch, 2005). The inclusion of the word "women's" removes the universality of the competition and subjects it to something only for women; potentially even women only fandom. Equity suggests they should both be gendered in title or neither.

FBS institutions are notoriously high-profile and garner a lot of public attention and scrutiny. By strategically looking at high profile FBS universities, instead of the rest of Division I or even DII and DIII, the research can demonstrate: 1) continued male dominated strong-holds on coveted, high profile institutional positions such as Athletic Director (Burton, Barr, Fink, & Bruengin, 2009); 2) minor advances in breaking the glass ceiling and masculine stereotypes in leadership at the coaching level; 3) no significant difference in male verse female transformational or transactional leadership qualities in high or low profile institutional positions (Peachy & Burton, 2010), and 4) recognizing the policies that guide the correction of inequality as potentially part of the problem (Loftsdottier, 2011).

### **Senior Woman Administrator**

There was a clear and definite discrepancy for females in leadership positions at all NCAA member institutions after they started sponsoring women's championships. The Senior Woman Administrator (SWA) position was designated in 1982 in an effort to "return to women the administrative opportunities they had lost and to ensure that women had a voice in the administration of intercollegiate athletic programs" (Hatfield, Hatfield, & Drummond, 2009).

Many female administrators from AIAW member institutions were demoted to the Primary Woman Administrator later known as SWA (Griffin, 2011). These women were “frustrated with unequal opportunity for advancement, fought [the system of] ol’ boy networking, lack of genuine interest in women’s issues by athletic administrators, and blatant discrimination” (NCAA Women’s Administrator’s Report, 1989. As cited in Griffin, 2011, p. 3).

The SWA was a required designation by the NCAA for all member institutions but did not require that a woman hold an administrative title. According to the *2010 NCAA Executive Summary*, SWAs held an administrative title at Division III institutions at 71.2%, Division II at 79.1%, and Division I at 96.2% (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2010, p. 2). The designation was a secondary title and not a singular position for most member institutions. For example, female coaches could be designated SWA on top of their role as coach. Respondents of the survey agreed that the SWA should hold an administrative title after three years of the designation. Therefore, the SWA was a designation and not a guaranteed position within the administration. Thus the purpose of the designation as a means to provide women a voice in the administration could be seen as merely a title with no real authority or compensation.

Thirty years after the designation, in 2011, the NCAA issued a brochure on their website titled *SWA: Senior Woman Administrator: Understanding the designation and her role on your senior management team* (Morrison, 2011). According to the brochure, the purpose of the SWA was to: (1) act as an important decision-maker within the athletics department; (2) participate on the senior management team; (3) strategize ways to support and manage gender equity and Title IX; (4) advocate issues for both genders; (5) educate individuals on issues for both genders; (6) behave as a “role-model and resource” for the department; (7) help student-athletes balance

academics and athletics; (8) “review Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act Report and the Gender Equity Plan” (p. 2) and was an active member of professional organizations (Morrison, 2011).

What happened when the Athletic Director was a female? The opportunities for women in the administration could be eliminated (Schneider, Stier, Henry & Wilding, 2010). It should be noted that, “by definition, a female athletic director can be considered the SWA, and the athletic department may choose not to designate a second woman as the SWA” (p. 18). The department could also choose to designate another woman as SWA, thus adding two women to administrative decision making. There was no current literature establishing a trend for female athletic directors designating a second woman as SWA or maintaining the designation. The designation of a female Athletic Director as SWA further suggested that the designation served more as an appeasement for women in athletics and offered very little expectation of contributing to the decisions of the department if she was not a member of the administration.

### **Athletic Director’s tasks and responsibilities**

Where there was a brochure issued for the tasks and responsibilities of an SWA, there was no formal list found for the tasks and responsibilities of the Athletic Director. A dissertation called, *Career pathways of Athletic Directors: Consideration of the impact of diversity*, by Lenora Armstrong (2011), found that an Athletic Director was responsible for “overseeing the budget, scheduling, facilities, staffing and compliance of the athletic department at his or her institution” (p. 2). She also cited areas such as fundraising, marketing, alumni relations, and department development (p. 2). Each of these areas was also found to be support divisions within many different departments. Therefore, the Athletic Director oversaw the support divisions and the individual athletic programs. The Athletic Director held significant power over the department and was seen as a prominent face of the department.

The growth of athletic departments brought more responsibility for its leaders. Athletic departments had been growing entities since Title IX passed. In 1980, there were 6.48 women's teams on average per NCAA institution, which increased to 8.83 teams in 2014 (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014, p. 5). There was an increase of 307 NCAA women's teams between 2012 and 2014 (p. A). During the scholastic years 2008-09, the average NCAA institution sponsored 17 teams, eight for men and nine for women (Armstrong, 2011, p. 4). With the growth of the department, the power of the Athletic Director became more significant.

With the FBS, the power of the Athletic Director stemmed from the amount of revenue brought back to the university. A report by Miller & Washington (2011) found the average revenue brought in by the combined FBS bowl games was \$400 million (p. 219). That figure did not include the revenue brought in by those programs during the regular season. The University of Texas at Austin brought in an estimated total revenue of \$73 million for the 2009-2010 season (p. 218). What was the significance of the Texas athletics' department? It was the only FBS member institution known to have two Athletic Directors, a man for the men's side and a woman for the women's side, both with the distinguished title of Athletic Director.

The trend and hiring practices for the coveted athletic director position started to change as the departments started to grow. Growth meant the need for more money and the search for more money found a path towards big-business. Cuneen (1992) found that as athletic departments became million-dollar a year businesses, institutions started hiring individuals with business backgrounds despite little to no knowledge or preparation for athletic administration. The traditional path to becoming an athletic director was long-time service and established success as a coach. However, coaches are not necessarily known for their budgeting and fundraising. In 2010, both the University of Michigan and Rutgers University had hired

established big-business, former Chief Executive Officers, to run their athletic departments. It was also found that 9 out of the 65 institutions in the FBS's Power-5 conferences have Athletic Directors who were executives of some measure before taking over the athletic departments (News, 2014).

### **The Football Bowl Subdivision**

The significance of the NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision institutions (FBS) stemmed from limited quantity of member institutions and the gross revenue brought in by each department. The division was called Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) because the universities competed for a bid to one of the nationally televised Bowl games for their conference and made millions of dollars in ticket sales, television exposure, sponsorships, and advertisements. There were 128 Division I member institutions in the NCAA-FBS, of those 65 schools were members of the 5 conferences that make up the Power 5.

The Power 5 were 5 conferences who consistently rank at the top of the money generating institutions. The Power 5 consisted of The Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), the Big 10, The Big 12, The Pacific-12, and the South Eastern Conference (SEC) (ncaa.com, 2015). These conferences combined their bowl games into the Bowl Championship Series (BCS), a national championship for FBS football. The BCS had a 4 year contract with Fox Sports worth \$80 million. Bowl games, even outside of the series generated money. In 2010, the top payout for a non-BCS bowl game was \$4.25 million, the Capitol One Bowl Game. The money was generated through ticket sales, ad revenue, and naming rights over the game. Athletic directors were in charge of everything and when the football team was bringing in millions of dollars in revenue – it was safe to say there was a lot to manage and lead.



College football was noted as one of the largest, most consistently viewed sporting events in recent history. The average FBS regular season college football game had approximately 6.06 million viewers. The national championship game for the Bowl Championship Series between the Power 5 conferences had 30.78 million viewers in 2010 (Miller & Washington, 2011, p. 220). The more power a position had, the more masculine people had viewed it (Northouse, 2013, p. 352 – 363). Athletic directors were the most powerful people in their department; subconsciously they were thought to be men.

As previously mentioned, the athletic director was often considered one of the public faces of leadership for the department. Women generally occupied very little of the athletically based television. Women's sports television exposure increased during the Olympics and World Cup soccer, which only happened every few years. Even though "...ESPN does a great job during the NCAA women's basketball Final Four, at other times of the year, girls receive negative or inconsistent messages from sports television. Televised WNBA games are played during a shortened summer season by players making 10-20 times less than their male counterparts." (Lopiano, 2008). Having a woman presented as the face of an athletic department was counter intuitive when women were not considered revenue makers.

### **Significance of the Football Bowl Subdivision**

The NCAA's Division I level was divided into three subdivisions: the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) the Football Championship Subdivision (FCS), and Non-football. Financially speaking, FBS schools acquired more money from game-attendance rates at football and men's basketball competitions. There are 128 FBS level schools who were required to maintain 16 varsity sports; at least 60% of their football schedules must be against other FBS institutions; average 15,000 people in attendance over a rolling two-year-period; provide 90% of the

maximum 85 football grant-in-aid over a rolling two-year-period; offer at least 200 student-athletes grant-in-aid over a rolling two-year-period (ncaa.org, 2014).

Comparably, the 141 FCS level schools met only the minimum 14 varsity sports; provided maximum 60 football scholarships; and met a lower number of contest and participant minimums (ncaa.org, 2014). There was a third subdivision of Division I whose 95 institutions did not sponsor football. The definitions of FBS, FCS, or Non-Football only applied to football divisions, all other sports are under the broader, Division I. Division II and Division III schools each have their own regulating operations, the most notable difference was the number of athletically related scholarships that each could grant. Division II could offer scholarships for athletics, where Division III could not offer any athletically related scholarships (ncaa.org, 2014).

There was an unequal distribution of power between male and female athletic directors at all NCAA member institutions. However the more powerful division, FBS, hired the fewest females to run the departments. Data was very limited for athletic administration prior to 1980, however the trend of women as Athletic Directors seemed to average 9% at all levels of Division I from 1980 to 2014. The gap between women as Athletic Directors was biggest between FBS and FCS institutions. FCS institutions in 2014 held about 11.3 percent of Athletic Directors as women, where FBS institutions were only at 6.3%. From 2004 to 2014 there was a growth of 51 female Athletic Directors across all levels, including a 1.4% increase at the FBS level (Acosta and Carpenter, 2014, p. 37). These differences demonstrated the unequal distribution of power in the NCAA member institutions and a trend towards powerful schools hiring powerful men over women.

*Summary*

The FBS level employs the highest number of females with administrative titles but the lowest number of females as athletics directors. The SWA position varies greatly on its continued importance in the role of providing women a voice in athletics. The importance of FBS was found in the monetary contributions and notoriety of football to the general public. Since the restructure of the NCAA Division I governance was still in its implementation infancy during the composition of this study, there was little research to supplement the extant scholarship.

## Section IV

### Contribution to Practice

#### **Type of Document**

I will request to present a power point presentation to the National Association of Collegiate Woman Athletic Administrators at their conference in October. NACWAA is a membership organization that works in conjunction with the NCAA to help with the advancement and training of women in collegiate athletics.

#### **Rational for Contribution Type**

The study aims to understand the lived experiences of the SWA and evaluate the continued need for gendered leadership roles in collegiate athletics.

#### **Outline of Proposed Contents**

The analysis of the study will include an introduction to the study, a review of literature, summary of methods, summary of detailed findings from the interviews with SWAs, and summary of areas for further research.

#### **Plan for Dissemination of Practitioner Contribution**

I will share the findings of the SWA Motivation Survey and subsequent interviews with SWAs at a conference with the NACWAA Board of Directors through a power point presentation. The presentation will highlight the key areas in which the SWA designation has provided experiences to women in athletics and areas to continue research before proposing possible policy changes.

NCAA Division 1, FBS Senior Woman Administrators

*To: National Association of Collegiate Women Athletic Administrators*

*From: Nicole C. Buchholz*

*Subject: Analysis of the Senior Woman Administrator Designation*

Dear NACWAA Committee,

The following presentation is an outline of a study conducted by me to complete my requirements towards a Doctorate in Educational Leadership. The study was intended to explore the lived experiences of the NCAA Division I - FBS Senior Woman Administrator as those experiences relate to purpose and promotion. The research was limited to FBS Senior Woman Administrators due to the high profile nature of the institutions they serve and the low percentage of female athletic directors who run their departments. The information is not conclusive but the research has several areas for continued research.

The study was intended to provide a basis for the potential review of the SWA policy, however, it provided more questions than answers. I believe that the findings will provide the committee with enough curiosity to conduct further research. I thank you so much for your time, and hope to continue to contribute research to this particular designation and athletics as the new governance system settles in.

The following articles are a whitepaper report on the study and findings, as well as a power point outline of the study.

Sincerely,

Nicole C. Buchholz

## Whitepaper Report

### *Introduction*

There are 128 Division I – FBS member institutions in the NCAA. Of those institutions, 126 of them had an appointed Senior Woman Administrator serving their department as of August 2016. After a quick internet search and comparison of past articles from Butts (2013), when there were seven female athletic directors, by August 2016, only four institutions had a female serving as Athletic Director. In other words, only 2% of member institutions had a female athletic director, while 98% employed a female on their senior leadership team who had been designated Senior Woman Administrator.

### *Background*

There is a disconnect between the number of women in senior administrative positions and the number of women in the Athletic Director role at the FBS level. When men's and women's collegiate sports programs merged, it was the men and not the women who were promoted to the Athletic Director position (Armstrong, 2011). The NCAA's response was to designate a Senior Woman Administrator (SWA). The designation was a well-intended effort to "return to women the administrative opportunities they had lost and to ensure that women had a voice in the administration of intercollegiate athletic programs" (Hatfield, Hatfield, & Drummond, 2009). Prior to the passage of Title IX, 90% of leadership over women's sports was filled by a female (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014, p. 37). There are women in administrative roles and yet so few of them have been promoted to Athletic Director.

This study was guided by critical feminist theory and post-feminist theory while exploring the glass ceiling phenomenon and role congruity theory. Critical feminist theory was used to critique the status quo and helped understand why the SWA designation exists. The

research was critical of the use of a designation for creating more equal opportunities to work in athletics. Post-feminist theory cautioned against the very conversation about finding ways to solve these inequities. Post-feminists suggest a glass ceiling in collegiate athletics no longer exists because women have held the coveted Athletic Director title. Continuing to demand more and more females in power undermines the women who have succeeded. However, the designation of SWA still exists and women are still delegated to traditional roles and tasks based on their gender. Role congruity theory says that men have male tasks and women have female tasks. A review of previous studies found SWAs consistently run the internal affairs of the athletic departments; academics, compliance, sport oversight, etc. While the athletic directors are in charge of external affairs; fundraising, marketing, and communications.

### *The study*

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of the Senior Woman Administrator in terms of purpose and promotion. The study asked: **RQ1:** How do women in the FBS feel the designation of Senior Woman Administrator has had an impact on their career advancement?; **RQ2:** What are the career advancing experiences of women who have been designated Senior Woman Administrator?; and **RQ3:** What are the perceptions of SWAs on women advancing to the position of Athletic Director at the FBS level? The participants were selected using the results of a survey. The selection criteria was: 1) conference membership, 2) tenure with the designation, and 3) availability (respectively). Of 126 sent out, 35 surveys were returned (27%). There were 8 FBS Senior Woman Administrators interviewed for thirty-minutes using a list of common questions to create dialogue.

### *Findings*

The surveys found, 65% were already members of the administration before being designated SWA. The average number of Athletic Directors the participants had served under at their current institution was (n=2); the most was (n=6). Only (n=5) participants had worked under a female athletic director, (n=1) for each institution. There were (n=3) participants who had served as an interim Athletic Director during their time at their current institution. 60% said “yes” when asked do you believe the tasks associated with the designation of SWA provides you with experience to advance to the position of Athletic Director. 77% said the SWA designation still serves a purpose. *Figure 1*. Depicts the Likert Scale question for SWAs to rank their desire to advance to the Athletic Director position. The scale ranged from 1 to 10, with 10 being very strong desire. Of (n=35) participants, (n=13) of them ranked their desire to advance at a 1. A different analysis of the question found 51.4% of the responses were ranked below a 5 on the scale. Of the rankings above a 5, only (n=2) ranked their desire to advance at a 10.

Key themes emerged from the interviews: 1) Experience with the designation; 2) Tasks associated with the designation; 3) Experience with Advancement; and 4) Need for social change. Each interview started out with very positive language about their experience with the designation. All but one interview turned negative as the process continued. SWA #4 remained positive but this could be attributed to her outspoken nature about wishing to be promoted to the Athletic Director position. The negative feelings associated with the designation were mostly described by feelings of being pigeonholed, marginalized, and minimized in terms of work load. Only one interview participant was in charge of external affairs tasks and her feelings of being marginalized were attributed more to conference participation and understanding of the collective experience. Each participant spoke of a need for some level of social change before the



athletic world will see more women promoted to the FBS Athletic Director role. The participants cited issues with athletics being resistant to change.

### *Conclusion*

The research was inconclusive in terms of fully understanding the purpose of the designation and the path to promotion. The research was found inconclusive because of the small sample of the population whom participated, however provided areas for further study. It is the author's current opinion that more research needs to be conducted before addressing the issues associated with the SWA designation and the lack of females represented in Athletic Director roles. The research suggests conducting a true-mixed methods research study to help understand the designation of the SWA and its purpose at all Divisions of the NCAA. It is also suggested that research explore the circumstances in which the designation was received (hiring). The potential is that women are being hired to fill the designation and that institutions are in conflict with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

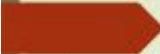
### References

- Acosta, R. V. & Carpenter, L. J. (2014). Women in intercollegiate sport: A longitudinal, national study thirty-seven year update 1977-2014. Unpublished manuscript. Available for downloading at [www.acostacarpenter.org](http://www.acostacarpenter.org).
- Butts, A. (2013). Football's five percent: New FBS women's AD meet on the gridiron. *National Association of Colligate Women Athletic Administrators*. (<https://www.nacwaa.org/join-nacwaa/news-and-shout-outs/shout-outs/1972>).
- Hatfield, L., Hatfield, L., & Drummond, J. (2009). The perceived role of senior women administrators in NCAA division I institutions. *Sport Journal*, 12(4).



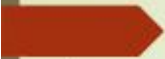
# NCAA Division I FBS Senior Woman Administrator

Nicole C. Buchholz  
University of Missouri, Columbia



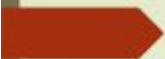
## Statement of problem

- Researcher found that there was a disparity between the number of male Athletic Directors at the NCAA Division I - FBS level and the number of female Athletic Directors at the FBS level.
- The research found that 96.2% of member institutions at the FBS level employ at least one woman, known as a Senior Woman Administrator, at the administrative level (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014, p. 37).
- The use of qualitative research was to explore the lived experience of the Senior Woman Administrator in terms of purpose and advancement.



## Purpose of the study

- The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of the NCAA Division I Football Bowl Subdivision, Senior Woman Administrator, as those experiences relate to purpose of the designation and promotion.



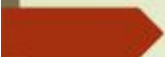
## Research Questions

- **RQ1:** How do women in the FBS feel the designation of Senior Woman Administrator has had an impact on their career advancement?
- **RQ2:** What are the career advancing experiences of women who have been designated Senior Woman Administrator?
- **RQ3:** What are the perceptions of SWAs on women advancing to the position of Athletic Director at the FBS level?



## Methodology

- 126 FBS member institutions were surveyed
- 35 SWAs returned surveys
- All survey participants had 10+ years in athletics
- Interviews were selected based on conference membership, tenure with the designation, and availability
- 8 interviews were conducted, representing 6 of 11 Division I - FBS conferences



## Survey Stats

- 65% of survey participants were members of their institution's administration prior to receiving SWA designation.
- 2 participants were hired into administrative roles and granted the SWA designation at the same time.
- The average number of Athletic Directors participants served was 2. The most Athletic Directors served was 6.
- 5 participants had worked under a female athletic director.
- 3 participants had served as an Interim Athletic Director.

## Survey Stats

- 60% said yes when asked if they believe the tasks associated with the designation provides enough experience to advance to the position of Athletic Director.
- 77% said the designation still serves a purpose.
- When asked to rank their desire to advance to the Athletic Director position on a Likert Scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being very strong desire to advance.
  - 13 participants ranked their desire at a 1, meaning no desire.
  - 51.4% of the responses were ranked less than 5 on the scale.
  - Of the rankings greater than 5, only 2 responses were a 10.

## Graph depicting participants desire to advance.



## Interview Themes

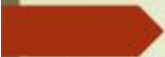
- **Tasks**
  - Title IX compliance/coordinator
  - Overseeing sports
  - Day to day department operations
  - Conference governance
- **Experience**
  - Great
  - Minimalized/Marginalized
  - Pigeonholed
  - Challenging
- **Advancement**
  - Fundraising
  - Football and Men's Basketball
  - External Operations
- **Common titles**
  - X2 Deputy Athletic Directors
  - X2 Executive Associate Athletic Director (Compliance & External)
  - X4 Senior Associate Athletic Director

## Interviews

SWA #2, #6, and #8 agreed that there is no difference in her primary title and her SWA designation

- SWA #8 said, "A lot of my SWA peers are really holding similar working titles at their universities too. I think it's meant to indicate, like it does here, that you are the number 2 person behind the director of athletics and really a key administrator and kind of a go-to person for most of the area. For me, it's one and the same really."
- SWA #1 said that she was hired as an Associate Athletic Director and the title was automatically given to her. She also stressed that the title was just a title, not a job description and that the tasks associated with her primary title were based on what the university needed and why she was hired, which was internal affairs.

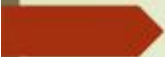




## Interviews

SWA #3 and #7 stressed that the tasks associated with the designation did not take up much of their day.

- SWA #3 said, "I can't imagine if all I did was SWA. It's not enough to warrant me having a position. I spend maybe 10 to 15% of my time on SWA stuff. I spend 85% of my time on external."
- SWA #7 said that her time was divided 5% SWA tasks and 95% primary tasks.

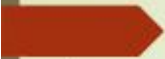


## Interviews

7 of the 8 SWAs interviewed agreed that the designation still served a purpose at the university they serve.

- SWA #5 said, "If close to 50% of your student-athletes are women, it's important that you have a senior leader who is female. If institutions were not required to have a woman, I'm not sure that every institution would designate a woman, prepare a woman, or promote a woman in those positions. I'm not sure that that would happen. So, absolutely I think that's important."






## Interviews

7 of 8 participants mentioned that they wished the designation did not have to exist.

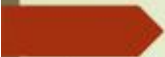
- SWA #7 said, "I think the role serves a purpose. I don't believe that the role as identified does. I think that there is some value in ensuring that, especially at some leagues and some universities, having that opportunities to ensure that woman is involved in some decision making. I don't know that the timing isn't necessarily right for us to get rid of it. I would welcome the day that that happens, but I do think that there is some confusion in the way that the role is defined as far as the title goes."



## Suggestions for further research

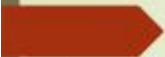
- Expand the study conducted to further the sample of the population before coming to a conclusion about the policy.
  - Explore SWA motivation and experience at Division I – FCS, Division II, and Division III levels
- Explore training options to provide SWAs more opportunities for advancement
  - NCAA/NACWAA Women's Leadership Symposium, Pre-Level I - held annually
  - NCAA/NACWAA Institutes for Administrative Advancement, Level I - two sessions held annually at two sites
  - NCAA/NACWAA Leadership Enhancement Institute, Level II - held every other year
  - NCAA/NACWAA Executive Institute, Level III - held every other year

[www.nacwaa.org](http://www.nacwaa.org)



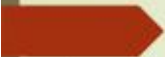
## Further areas for research

- Conduct a true mixed methods study to understand the FBS level Senior Woman Administrator's ability to step into the athletic director role versus her current desire to hold the position.
- Are the feelings of pigeonholing, marginalizing, and minimizing preventing the Senior Woman Administrator from feeling like they have the right to want to advance?
- Has the Senior Woman Administrator tried to advance so many times and failed, therefore has settled into her position and designation?
- Or is the current research validated and the Senior Woman Administrator is satisfied?



## Exploring other divisions

- Exploring the other divisions would allow the research to transcend the upper echelons and understand if the designation is helping women at all levels in their career advancement.
- Understanding the roles other women are holding for their primary titles and the significance of those roles.
  - Are the SWAs coaches or administrators?
  - Do the SWAs feel they have a true voice in the administration?
  - Are these women feeling the same internal affairs pigeonholing effect?
  - Where would they rank their motivation to advance in their careers?
  - Are they receiving adequate training for advancement?



## Summary

- The research looked at the disparity between the number of male and female athletic directors by using the Senior Woman Administrator designation as a female position in the administration that each institution is required to have.
- Research found that each Senior Woman Administrator did a slightly different task at their institution but tasks mainly revolved around Title IX compliance, gender equity, and governance.
- Research found that despite having great experiences with the designation, many of the Senior Woman Administrators felt pigeonholed, marginalized, and minimized in their careers.
- Research found that the participants did not feel they were getting enough exposure to external affairs and therefore lacked the training for advancement.



## References

Acosta, R. V. & Carpenter, L. J. (2014). Women in intercollegiate sport: A longitudinal, national study thirty-seven year update 1977-2014. Unpublished manuscript. Available for downloading at [www.acostacarpenter.org](http://www.acostacarpenter.org).

National Association of Collegiate Women Athletic Administrators. *Training*. [www.nacwaa.org](http://www.nacwaa.org).

## Section V

### Contribution to Scholarship

#### **Target Journal**

##### *Sex Roles*

#### **Rationale for this Target**

While conducting research on the leadership disparities of males and females in collegiate athletics, a large number of articles were found in the Sex Roles journals. The following information was copied from the Sex Roles website:

The scope of the journal is a “global, multidisciplinary, scholarly, social and behavioral science journal with a feminist perspective.”

##### *Manuscript Submission*

Submission of a manuscript implies: that the work described has not been published before; that it is not under consideration for publication anywhere else; that its publication has been approved by all co-authors, if any, as well as by the responsible authorities – tacitly or explicitly – at the institute where the work has been carried out. The publisher will not be held legally responsible should there be any claims for compensation.

##### *Permissions*

Authors wishing to include figures, tables, or text passages that have already been published elsewhere are required to obtain permission from the copyright owner(s) for both the print and online format and to include evidence that such permission has been granted when submitting their papers. Any material received without such evidence will be assumed to originate from the authors.

## Outline of Proposed Contents

The following was copied from the Sex Roles website:

The 2010 (sixth) edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association should be used as the style guide for the preparation of manuscripts, particularly with respect to such matters as the use of nonsexist language, citation of references, and the use of abbreviations, numbers, and symbols.

Manuscripts should be checked for content and style (correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar; accuracy and consistency in the citation of figures, tables, and references); and stylistic uniformity of entries in the References section.

Type double-spaced using generous margins on all sides. The entire manuscript, including quotations, references, figure-caption list, and tables, should be double-spaced. The suggested running head should be less than 80 characters (including spaces) and should comprise the article title or an abbreviated version thereof. Number all pages consecutively with Arabic numerals, with the title page being page 1. In order to facilitate masked (previously termed “double-blind”) review, leave all identifying information off the manuscript, including the title page and the electronic file name. Appropriate identifying information is attached automatically to the electronic file. Upon initial submission, the title page should include only the title of the article.

- The length of a typical regular report is 25 to 40 manuscript pages, including references, tables, or figures, although page limits are not rigidly enforced (especially for qualitative and multi-study papers).
- Sex Roles does not use footnotes. All footnoted material must be integrated into the text.

- Use italics for emphasis.
- Use the automatic page numbering function to number the pages.
- Do not use field functions.
- Use tab stops or other commands for indents, not the space bar.
- Use the table function, not spreadsheets, to make tables.
- Include tables and figures in your manuscript after the References section, with tables first and in numeric sequence followed by figures in numeric sequence. Cite each table and figure in the text where appropriate (for example; see Table 1).
- Use the equation editor or MathType for equations.
- Save your file in docx format (Word 2007 or higher) or doc format (older Word versions).

Manuscripts should be submitted in Word.

Manuscripts with mathematical content can also be submitted in LaTeX.

The following is my proposed outline of information: introduction to study; review of scholarly research, detailed leadership analysis of SWAs, methodology, summary of results, and suggestions for continued research.

#### *Plan for Submission*

I will submit the article for publication upon the successful defense of my dissertation, target date in March or April of 2017. I will create an online account to submit the completed manuscript for online review.

## NCAA Division I FBS Senior Woman Administrators

The glass ceiling is alive and well in intercollegiate sports. Although some have named it the glass cliff after a few women have cracked the barrier. The glass cliff is a barrier in which women only find themselves in the midst of promotion after scandal or employed at an institution facing impossible odds (Glass & Cook, 2016, p. 51). As of 2013, the National Association of Collegiate Women Athletics Administrators (NCAWAA) discussed the disproportionate number of female athletic directors to male athletic directors at the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) level. The FBS had 128 member institutions and only seven of those institutions employed a female athletic director (Butts, 2013). Due to the consistent turn-over in athletic departments, the number of female athletic directors has hardly remained steady.

A quick internet search of 128 FBS universities' websites revealed that 3 of 7 women have retired from their positions or were fired. Sandy Barbour jumped schools from University of California at Berkeley but remained in the FBS when she joined Penn State University. Barbour was hired at Penn State after the Jerry Sandusky scandal of 2013. She is still at Penn State (Littlefield, 2015). Deborah Yow has been at North Carolina State University since 2010 (Biography). Heather Lyke has been at Eastern Michigan since 2013 (Biography). Cary Groth retired after a nine year term at University of Nevada at Reno (Lundin, 2012). Lisa Love was let go from Arizona State University after nine years for failure to produce winning revenue sports (football and men's basketball) (Metcalf, 2012). The shortest tenure was Julie Hermann at Rutgers with two and a half years. Hermann was hired after a scandal and fired for continued issues with Football. She was fired in conjunction with the head football coach at the time (Sargeant, 2015). The longest tenure was nineteen years and counting with Kathy Beauregard at

Western Michigan (Biography). In May of 2016, Jennifer Cohen was named the Athletic Director of University of Washington. Regardless of the constant change in athletic administration, one thing has remained the same: there are not many female athletic directors at the FBS level (Adam, 2016).

Observers of collegiate athletics see the position of Athletic Director as the direct overseer of football. Due to that oversight, women have been hard to find at the upper echelons of FBS. This research begs the question: Why? When diving into the history of women in collegiate athletics, there is one title that stands above the rest: Senior Woman Administrator (originally known as Primary Woman Administrator). The Senior Woman administrator or SWA is one of two titles with defining terms of purpose in the NCAA Division I Manual (2016-17). The SWA designation is the only title that specifies gender. The SWA is a designation, not a position, as the highest ranking female on an athletic staff. The designation is not required to go to a woman with a position or title in the athletic administration, but to a woman who is designated as the woman's voice in administrative decisions. At an institution who employs a female Athletics Director, the designation may be appointed to another woman. There is no current research on this trend. However looking at the websites of the four FBS institutions who employ a female Athletics Director, 3 institutions (Penn State, North Carolina State, and Eastern Michigan) have personnel directories designating an SWA. Western Michigan's athletic website states the SWA position is "TBA" or to be announced.

When the Association of Women in Intercollegiate Athletics (AIAW) was about to collapse in 1981, many institutions combined their women's and men's programs under one Athletic Department (Tiell & Dixon, 2008). Prior to this merger, 90% of women's programs had women as directors of their women's sports. Many of these women were members of the



university as faculty in their Education Departments for Physical Education (Hogshead-Makar & Zimbalist, 2007; Wushanley, 2004). The designation of the Primary Woman Administrator was formed in 1982, the designation was the NCAA's attempt to provide a voice to women and assist in the transition. Two years later, in 1984, 21.4% of Division I athletic departments lacked any female administrator (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014, p. 39). The PWA title was changed to SWA in the 1991-1992 academic year (Tiell & Dixon, 2008, p. 340). The formal definition of SWA was created in 2006 under article 4.02.4 (Tiell & Dixon, 2008, p. 340; NCAA Manual 2015-2016, p. 18). Since 1984, Division I athletic departments have all but closed the gap in lacking any female administrators to 1.2% of institutions with no female administrators by 2014 (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014, p. 39). At the Division I level (all three subdivisions), 96.2% of SWAs reported having an administrative title (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2010, p. 2). So, most of the women with administrative titles have also been designated SWA.

The SWA designation was a quick-fix quota system aimed to help protect women from being completely wiped out of athletically related duties. "A quota law requires all companies that meet specified criteria to reserve a certain percentage of boardroom seats for women" (Lansing & Chandra, 2012, p. 3). Supporters of quota systems claim it is the only way to break out of "old boys networks." (p. 4). Opponents say that "this system diminishes the achievement of women who already hold seats..." (p. 4). A quota system that never stops needing to hit its marks is not a system that seems to be working.

This is evident by the number of people who have started to see the SWA position as the career target for women in collegiate athletics. Meaning that a career target for women is not the Athletic Director role, but the number 2 or sometimes 3 in charge of the department at the FBS level. Burton (2014), found that women in the SWA position have been denied opportunities to

engage in traditionally male dominated roles such as budgeting, marketing, fundraising, and facility design. They have also been denied sport specific oversight of football and men's basketball (p. 161). Without these opportunities and experiences they are hard pressed to advance to the Athletic Director position. Hancock & Hums (2016) said:

*Organizational structures contribute to power inequities and perceptions of visibility when women perceive limited opportunities for advancement....specifically, when the upper-level "position" being sought is the title of Senior Woman Administrator. While women in this study understood the historical importance of the title, many felt as though it aided in the perception of a "glass ceiling." (p. 204).*

Without the opportunity to oversee football operations, women lack the appropriate experience to run a division purposed for football domination. The NCAA is comprised of three divisions, Division I, Division II, and Division III. Division I or DI is also comprised of three divisions, Football Bowl Subdivision, Football Championship Subdivision, and Non-Football. For the purposes of this study, the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) was explored due to the high volume of money and notoriety the member institutions receive. FBS institutions are the Fortune 500 companies of collegiate athletics (Berkowitz & Upton, 2011).

Title IX was passed in 1972 as part of the Educational Amendments of that time. It is a federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex by any organizations who receive federal funds for educational programs and/or activities (OCR, 2012). The law states, "No person in the United States 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" (p. 1). Many people associate Title IX with athletics, but the powers of the law extend far beyond sports. However, for the purpose of this study, the law stimulated the

rapid growth of girls' and women's sports in America and yet may have unintentionally caused a decline of female leadership over those sports.

The perpetual gender gap in intercollegiate athletics looks more like a brick wall surrounding the male-dominated position of NCAA DI-FBS Athletic Director. However, glass ceilings and gender inequality seem to exist in every profession. From all three NCAA divisions (DI, DII, and DIII), there are statistical discrepancies in the number of female athletic directors. In 2014, DIII had 30.3% member institutions with female athletic directors. DII had 23.2% member institutions. While DI had 10.6% across all its subdivisions, 15.6% in non-football, 11.3% in Football Championship Subdivision, and 6.3% in the FBS (Acosta and Carpenter, 2014, p. 37). It is statistically understood that since the passage of Title IX, girls' and women's participation in sport has increased. However, the fact is, women in athletically related leadership positions decreased quickly and have struggled to make gains since.

### *Background*

Despite Title IX's immediate impact on girls' and women's participation in sports, equity is a long way off. According to the Women's Sport Foundation (2013), male sport participation opportunities are still higher than female in both high school and higher education. Women's Sport Foundation claims that opponents of Title IX argue that females have less desire to participate in sports, so females do not need as many opportunities as men. "The dramatic increase in girls' and women's participation in sports since Title IX was passed in 1972 by (560% at the collegiate level and 990% at the secondary level) demonstrates that it was a lack of opportunity – not lack of interest – that kept females out of high school and collegiate athletics for so many years" (Women's Sport Foundation, 2011). The lack of women in administrative

positions could be attributed to a similar phenomenon; the lack of opportunity not the lack of interest.

There is now an entire generation of women who have profited from Title IX's establishment, but few of them have seen women rise through the ranks to be leaders of the athletic department of the universities for which they played. Before Title IX was passed, over 90 percent of coaches for women's teams were women. As of 1978, the percentage fell to 58.2 percent for women's teams. In 2014, the percentage dropped as low as 43.4 percent over all three divisions of the NCAA (Acosta and Carpenter, 2014, p. 19). From 1981 – 1982, the NCAA took control as the dominant regulatory system in amateur athletics by offering 29 women's championships between all three divisions. The addition of women's sports in the NCAA saw a decrease in women serving in leadership positions they had held when the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) monitored women's sport (Wushanley, 2004).

In 1982, the NCAA established the designation of a Primary Woman Administrator in an effort to correct the lack of female leadership within athletic departments and ensure that a woman's voice was heard in decision making. The designation is now known as a Senior Woman Administrator. The designation is assumed to be required by the NCAA for all member institutions under the following bylaw:

*4.02.4 Senior Woman Administrator*

*Institutional Senior Woman Administrator. [#] An institutional senior woman administrator is the highest-ranking female involved in the management of an institution's intercollegiate athletics program. An institution with a female director of athletics may designate a different female involved with the management of the member's*

*program as a fifth representative to the NCAA governance structure. (Adopted: 11/1/01 effective 8/1/02, Revised: 10/27/05) (NCAA 2015-16 Manual)*

According to a file issued by the NCAA called “SWA: Senior Woman Administrator: Understanding the designation and her role on your senior management team,” the women designated SWA is not required to hold an administrative level title. Administrative level titles would include any variation of Director of a department, Assistant to the Athletic Director, Associate Athletic Director, or Senior Associate Athletic Director. At each DI, DII, and DIII levels of the NCAA, “81 percent of SWAs indicated high levels of agreement to the statement that the SWA should have an accompanying title as an athletics administrator (assistant, associate, or senior associate athletic director) within three years of her designation” (Morrison, 2012). It could be deduced that the designee was not required to be a member of the administration before being appointed. In a 2010 NCAA Executive Summary, “68% of SWAs reported that they were employed at their institutions prior to being assigned as an SWA” (p. 3). Which means that 42% of SWAs were hired at institutions and then designated SWA. The Executive Summary does not mention whether that employment was in the administration or elsewhere in the department.

#### *Statement of Problem*

There is a disconnect between the number of women in senior administrative positions and the number of women in the Athletic Director role at the FBS level. There are far too few female Athletic Directors serving the FBS level of the NCAA. When men’s and women’s collegiate sports programs merged, it was the men and not the women who were promoted to the Athletic Director position (Armstrong, 2011). The NCAA’s response was to designate a Senior Woman Administrator (SWA). The designation was a well-intended effort to “return to women

the administrative opportunities they had lost and to ensure that women had a voice in the administration of intercollegiate athletic programs” (Hatfield, Hatfield, & Drummond, 2009). The passage of Title IX and its language is not the barrier that has limited the advancement of female leaders in athletics. Title IX was the catalyst for change in structure of the NCAA. As of June 2016, the FBS has only 4 female Athletic Directors. As of 2014, 96.2% of those institutions designated a female with an administrative title as the Senior Woman Administrator (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014, p. 37). There are women in administrative roles and yet so few of them have been promoted to Athletic Director.

#### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of SWAs at the Division I FBS level terms of advancement and promotion. The study operates under the assumption that the SWA designation is a required position at all NCAA member institutions from Bylaw 4.02.4 (NCAA Operating Manual, 2015-16). The research intended to understand the SWA mandate and the policy’s benefits and/or restrictions. The researcher explored the glass ceiling phenomenon at the FBS level using a transformative paradigm through role congruency theory and critical feminist theory.

#### *Research Questions*

This study used the guidance of qualitative design to formulate a study that reached a purposeful sample of participants. According to Merriam (2009), areas of applied social sciences are prime for the use of qualitative studies; “Having an interest in knowing more about one’s practice and indeed in improving one’s practice, leads to asking researchable questions” (p. 1). This study was rooted in phenomenology to better understand the lived experiences of women designated SWA through semi-structured interviews (p. 25). The qualitative research will give a

voice to the numbers by asking for more detailed experiences with the designation of SWA and the motivations the woman have to advancing to the Athletic Director position.

**RQ1:** How do women in the FBS feel the designation of Senior Woman Administrator has had an impact on their career advancement?

**RQ2:** What are the career advancing experiences of women who have been designated Senior Woman Administrator?

**RQ3:** What are the perceptions of SWAs on women advancing to the position of Athletic Director at the FBS level?

### *Theoretical Framework*

The study used an anti-positivism paradigm to guide the theoretical framework which included critical feminist theory, post-feminist theory, and role congruity theory while exploring the glass ceiling phenomenon. Each of the theories will be defined in this section and discussed in further detail in section 3, The Scholarly Review. The glass ceiling is an invisible barrier that prevents minorities from moving forward in their careers (Powell & Butterfield, 1994; Jackson & O’Callaghan, 2009). The glass ceiling will persist as long as people are still asking “why are women underrepresented in elite leadership roles?” (Hoyt, 1994; as cited by Northouse, 2013, p. 350). And to that end, when will women be satisfied with workplace equality? Does workplace equality mean genders have to be represented at 50% each? Or as Lofsdottir (2011) cautioned, the more women point out how few women there are at higher levels, the less celebration and attention is given to the women who have broken the glass.

Gender equality in the work place was protected by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VII was meant to ensure that everyone was given a fair opportunity to work and were not discriminated against based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin (Equal

Opportunity Employment Commission, n.d.). Title VII protects minorities from workplace discrimination and has been amended multiple times to help facilitate fair practices. For the purpose of this research, Title VII provided the legal requirement for equal consideration for jobs traditionally held by men. Despite the law demanding equal consideration, women remain relatively absent in the upper echelons of the workforce.

One of the first excuses for the lack of women in the workplace has been defined by lack of investment women put toward their “human capital.” Human capital is defined as a person’s worth in the workforce, i.e. training and skill-sets that make them employable (Hoyt, 1994; as cited in Northouse, 2013, p. 354). A lack of investment on human capital is a poor excuse when women have earned more than half of the Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctoral degrees. Women comprise 51.5% of all management and professional jobs. However advancement can be seen as limited when women only hold 25.5% of chief executive officer positions and less than 3% of Fortune 500 CEO positions (p. 354). “Even in female-dominated occupations, women face the glass ceiling, whereas White men appear to ride a glass escalator to the top leadership positions” (p. 353). Research provided some speculation that the glass ceiling suggests women have the same opportunities for lower level positions but at some point in the progression of a woman’s career she hits an impenetrable, invisible barrier. The researchers have suggested the barrier is not a ceiling but a labyrinth of glass barriers that prevent the same career momentum (Northouse, 2013). The SWA position could be the athletic equivalent to a glass barrier. A few women have cracked the glass and achieved the highest athletic position at the university level, but the disproportionate number of women left behind the glass, at the SWA position, is telling.

Critical feminist theory focuses on “issues of power and oppression in terms of gender, the politicizing of women’s experiences as central to feminist research” (Merriam, 2009, p. 36).



Critical research is meant to critique and challenge the status quo in an effort to transform socially reinforced structures (p. 34). Using critical feminist theory, the research intends to explore the experiences and opinions of NCAA DI-FBS SWAs and her experience climbing the ladder of the athletic leadership elite.

A post-feminist would caution the continued discussion and demand for equality because it begs the issue: Are women looking for equality or equity? Post-feminists also caution against the continued discussion about the glass ceiling, because there have been women who have become leaders. They have broken the glass. If there are women on the other side of the glass, does the barrier still exist? By denying her advancement, society down plays her success in breaking the barrier (Koller, 2010). The power struggle to advance the positions of one group should not come at the expense of oppressing a different group (Merriam, 2009).

Women have broken the barrier, but why have there been so few? Role Congruency Theory suggests that the stereotyped division of labor continues a pattern “of prejudice toward women leaders as a way to explain how gender roles and leader roles come together to produce two types of prejudice that underlie a preference for male leaders” (Ritter & Yoder, 2004, p. 187). The Role Congruency Theory defines the traits assigned to males as agentic and females as communal. Communal traits are attributed to women in a subordinate state and agentic traits place men at a leadership level within a social environment (Ritter & Yoder, 2004; Harrison & Lynch, 2005; & Tiell & Dixon, 2008). More women are breaking down traditional gender norms as they take on roles generally held by males, thus challenging the assumption of agentic or communal traits assigned by social constructs. According to Harrison & Lynch (2005), “as predicted by social role theory, their perceived gender role orientations (masculine or feminine) become linked to the societal roles they occupy rather than their sex.” Women in leadership tend

to be ranked high in agentic traits and low communal traits (p. 228). Women might have a restricted role within the leadership of the department based on gender role expectations (Tiell and Dixon, 2008, p. 343).

There is evidence that widely accepted social prejudice and attitudes involving both sexism and racism are declining at the macro level. Subtly, however, opinion polls show incongruences with gender-leadership roles (Rudman & Kilinaski, 2000). Rudman & Kilianski (2000) gave participants drawn figures of female and male authority figures and timed them with how long it took to assign positive or negative adjectives. Women were more favorable to female figures than were men, but were still slow to attribute positive responses. This suggests that even women display stereotyped feelings towards female leaders. The social constructs of feminine roles are expected even amongst females.

The negative feelings females have for female leaders could stem from social disconnect between being feminine and being a leader, or being feminine and being athletic, because “female athletes perceived themselves lower in femininity” (Harrison & Lynch, 2005, p. 228). Similarly, then would female leaders who were found to have higher agentic traits find themselves lower in femininity? Women struggle to see themselves as both female and an athlete. Or female and a leader. Many athletes have agentic traits, thus seeing themselves as both communal and agentic is problematic. The same could be attributed to the negative associations of females to female leaders. To differentiate between being perceived as feminine while demanding agentic leadership traits in a positive manner would prove difficult.

These issues are further highlighted by homologous reproduction or the practice of hiring similar individuals as employees or grooming those individuals to be replacements, Whisenant (2008) said:

*The three structural barriers that limited careers for women in sport were opportunity, power, and proportion...women lacked opportunity to sustain careers in sport due to various obstacles which restricted their ability to establish a well-defined career path. Men were often hired to coach women's sports whereas women were seldom hired to lead men's programs. This limited access to coaching roles for women whereas men could coach both genders. The result is that men were empowered with far more opportunities to advance in sport organizations (p. 770).*

The glass ceiling effect was created by homologous reproduction (Whisenant, 2008). In order to diversify senior-level positions in society, gender and racial barriers need to be addressed and broken. According to Jackson & O'Callaghan (2009), "diversity among students and faculty are not reflective of demographic shifts in society," thus proving homologous reproduction exists and continues. If white males have power, they will continue to hire white males into positions of power (p. 461).

Despite the glass ceiling effect, in higher education, more and more women are finding their way within the ranks of leadership and power. "...Women hold 40% of all faculty and senior staff, only 21.1% of all college presidents are women. Additionally, 84% of presidents, 83% of business officers, and 75% of academic deans are male at colleges and universities" (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009, p. 464). More females than males attended public universities with a ratio of 54.4% to 43.6% in 2008 (Borzelleca, 2012). Proportionality suggests that female opportunity and leadership at colleges and universities should have grown along with attendance rates in order to address the demographic shift in society.

Conversely, analyzing the growth of athletic departments from a post-feminist perspective, there are too many references or policies to equalize gender in leadership and they

could reinforce the stereotype (Loftsdottier, 2011). The NCAA policy of designating a woman to be a key decision maker in the Athletic Department without the requirement that the SWA be a member of the administrative staff is a prime example. According to Loftsdottier (2011), "...The feminist approach to intersectionality was particularly important in order to capture how, within localized contexts, racism and gender interacted and became entangled in nationalistic notions of normality and nationhood" (p. 201). Racism and sexism are key reasons for disproportionate hiring practices because the opportunity for education and experience increased which could be attributed to the quota systems put in place to help provide equality.

The theoretical framework guiding this study was used for the purpose of gaining a stronger understanding of larger issues. Critical and Post-feminist theories gave the researcher insight into the issues that impact women and the continued missed objectives of such research. Role Congruity Theory gave the researcher a defined set of social roles in which to dispute the validity of their assignments and the continued perpetuation of these roles to keep women in a subordinate position.

### *Design of the Study*

This study used qualitative research in order to understand the lived experience of FBS SWAs and their satisfaction with maintaining the designation. The SWA designation has been explored from multiple different angles, as seen in Chapter 3. The design of this research study used a phenomenological platform to understand the purpose of the designation as it relates to college athletics by exploring the lived experiences of the women who hold the title.

### **Setting**

The NCAA Division I FBS level was chosen for the study due to the high profile nature of the department. The FBS athletic departments are often compared to big businesses who often

overlook their first priority of education. The study zeroed in on SWAs due to a disparity between the percentage of SWAs serving FBS administrations 96.2 % and the number of females holding the Athletic Director title at 6.3% (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2010, p. 2; Acosta & Carpenter, 2014, p. 37).

### **Participants**

Senior Women Administrators at the NCAA Division I FBS level (n=126) were contacted via email with an electronic survey. The survey asked for volunteer participants for a one hour one-on-one phone interview (n=8). The email addresses were collected using each individual university's athletic website. There was no up-to-date or valid database of this information. There were 128 FBS member institutions, however two institutions did not have an SWA appointed at the time of the study.

### **SWA Motivation Survey**

The SWA Motivation Survey asked 13 questions in order to establish demographic information: 1) years of athletic department service, 2) years served with designation, 3) process of receiving the designation, 4) number of athletic directors served, 5) number of female athletic directors served, 6) agreement with the designation, and 7) a Likert scale was utilized to understand the desire to advance to Athletic Director. The survey's exact questions and format can be found in Appendix B.

In an effort to receive a higher rate of return on the internet survey, the researcher found that multiple emails proved prudent in gaining participation. Armstrong (2011) found that multiple contacts helped achieve a response rate of 28% for her study. Survey Monkey (as cited in Armstrong, 2011) found that a response rate of 30% was average for internet surveys. Armstrong used Dillman's (2007) Tailored Design Method which had a series of contacts. For

the purposes of this research, there were four contacts while distributing the surveys electronically.

The first email sent was an introductory email to explain the purpose of the study and test the compiled list of SWA emails. This email did not include the link to the survey. “The purpose of this contact was to leave a positive impression for the importance of the coming survey so that recipients would not immediately discard the message containing the link to the survey (Dillman, 2007, as cited by Armstrong, 2011, p. 81). Any emails immediately returned due to incorrect address were checked for accuracy against the institutional website and resent. If returned for a second time, the email was sent to the department’s administrative assistant with the request to forward on to the appropriate recipient. Many institutional website directories are constantly being updated therefore it would be difficult to guarantee accuracy with the first attempt.

The second email, sent 3 days after the initial contact, included a link to the Senior Woman Administrator Survey. The email included a reassurance of confidentiality, unlikely harm to participant, and assumption of informed consent by completion of the survey. The third email was sent 15 days later as a reminder to please participate in the survey. The fourth and final email was sent 3 days later as a thank you email and deadline for completing the survey by the end of the week. The emails were sent over the summer-term months. The intended time-frame for the emails was formed by researcher’s experience in NCAA athletics as a period of lower-levels of work with the completion of competitive athletics seasons for the academic year. Although, many would argue there is no down-time in athletics. With this time-frame, the researcher fears many administrators also take much needed vacations and therefore needed to keep the window for completing the survey open longer. Multiple emails sent at a variety of

times during a 2 week span meant that with varying quantities of emails being received, the survey might not go unnoticed.

### **Interviews**

Phone interviews were conducted in a semi-structured method, to ensure that all participants were asked the same series of questions, but allowed for follow-up questions based on answers given by participants. Conversational interview style allowed for an understanding of individual motivation and circumstance. The number of SWAs interviewed filled a purposeful sample of the responding population. The interviews were completely voluntary and were chosen based on demographic information received on the SWA Survey. The selection criteria was: 1) conference membership, 2) tenure with the designation, and 3) availability (respectively).

The interviews started with conversational style introductions and informalities. The interviewer read a summary of the informed consent form, found in Appendix D. The informed consent form, found in Appendix C, had been sent prior to the interview via email. The interviewer reiterated that the interview was completely confidential and asked for permission to record the session to ensure accurate information was obtained. The participant could ask for the recording to stop at any point in the interview. At the conclusion of the session, the interviewer thanked the participant and asked for permission to contact them further in the case of needing further clarification upon analysis.

### **Analytic Strategy**

The surveys were analyzed by simple percentages of the population. The quantitative data was scrubbed using the guiding hand of Field (2013). The survey was comprised of mainly closed - categorical questions and a few Likert-style questions. The Likert question was analyzed

using the median and mode of the collective responses. As well as percentages above and below the middle of the scale.

The interviews were analyzed using the constant comparison method and “winnowing” the data, as described by Creswell (2014, p 195). Winnowing is the process of selecting the relative information to assist in the process of answering the research questions. Some data was disregarded because it was not relevant to the research (p. 195). The transcripts were read and highlighted to breakdown individual statements. Those statements were then placed into a grid labeled, participants (row) and questions (column). The author then went row by row, gathering a sense of each participant. All themes were put into the final column. The author then repeated the process by going down each column and finding common themes from each question, putting all themes in the final row. The last column and row were then cross referenced in an effort to condense the information and limit repetitive information.

### **Existing Data**

Existing data collected from key contributors Acosta and Carpenter (2014) and their Women in Intercollegiate Sport a Longitudinal National Study Thirty-Seven Year Update has proved vital to the initial exploration into this study. Acosta and Carpenter’s data consisted of statistical analysis of surveys sent to the SWAs of every NCAA member institution. The report was divided into multiple sections with comparative analytics across NCAA divisions as well as Division I subdivisions. The information provided the researcher with the initial inquiry regarding the disparity between females holding FBS Athletic Director positions and the number of females serving titles in FBS administration while holding the SWA designation.

Tiell and Dixon (2008) also contributed statistical analysis with their article called Roles and Tasks of the Senior Woman Administrator in Intercollegiate Athletics. Tiell and Dixon’s



survey was sent to every SWA and Athletic Director- for each NCAA member institution. Their purpose was to explore the actual roles and tasks of SWAs. They found that SWAs served more communal roles over agentic roles and that there was no difference in contribution between membership levels (DI, DII, or DIII). The study found “clear perceptual differences between the AD and SWA ( $p < .5$ ) regarding the extent to which SWAs performed roles related to core management team participation – a finding which raises the question as to whether the SWA truly has a meaningful role in the athletics department” (Tiell & Dixon, 2008, p. 339).

### **Limitations and Assumptions**

The limitations of the study draw from potential design and methodology flaws (Creswell, 2014). The limitations were (a) the list of participants were collected through individual websites and not a recognized collection of Senior Woman Administrators. (b) In order to participate in the interview process, participants were required to respond to an electronic survey. Electronic surveys require some technology literacy as well as access to both a computer and Internet. Many people have computers but may not have the skill sets to complete a questionnaire via email. (c) The survey was voluntary and could be stopped without completion at any time. (d) “There was never a best time of the year to collect data from busy athletic administrators who may have periods during the year when they are distracted by demanding sports schedules” (Armstrong, 2011, p. 37). (e) There is a rather constant flux of individuals in athletic departments and therefore it is difficult to guarantee accuracy of population.

This study approached a statistical problem where the number of male to female Athletic Directors was greater and much different than the population served in collegiate athletics. The first assumption was that this statistic was a problem. A few other assumptions followed which

led to the development of the research questions and survey model. (a) People want to advance in their career. (b) The SWA to Athletic Director title is a logical step to career advancement in intercollegiate athletics. (c) The designation of Senior Woman Administrator is an issue.

### *Data Analysis*

Of the (n=126) surveys sent, there were (n=35) surveys returned. From those surveys, 65% were already members of the administration before being designated SWA. The average number of Athletic Directors the participants had served under at their current institution was (n=2); the most was (n=6). Only (n=5) participants had worked under a female athletic director, (n=1) for each institution. There were (n=3) participants who had served as an interim Athletic Director during their time at their current institution. 60% said “yes” when asked do you believe the tasks associated with the designation of SWA provides you with experience to advance to the position of Athletic Director. 77% said the SWA designation still serves a purpose. *Figure 1.* Depicts the Likert Scale question for SWAs to rank their desire to advance to the Athletic Director position. The scale ranged from 1 to 10, with 10 being very strong desire. Of (n=35) participants, (n=13) of them ranked their desire to advance at a 1. A different analysis of the question found 51.4% of the responses were ranked below a 5 on the scale. Of the rankings above a 5, only (n=2) ranked their desire to advance at a 10.

Figure 1. The SWA's desire to advance to the Athletic Director position.



### Interview Analysis

After an expansive analysis using a visual grid to constantly compare participant data, four themes emerged: 1) experience with the designation; 2) tasks associated with the designation; 3) experience with advancement; and 4) a need for social change in athletics. The participant pool included (n=2) Deputy Athletic Directors, (n=2) Executive Associate Athletic Directors (External and Compliance), and (n=4) Senior Associate Athletic Directors.

#### **Theme 1: Experience with the designation**

The experiences started out strong, with lots of positive language, however towards the end of the interviews, the frustration of the participants began to unfold. The language changed and had more negative tones. One participant, SWA #4, maintained positive language throughout the entire interview. She started by saying:

*I feel it has been a very positive experience, I have learned a lot both good and bad.*

*Learned what not to do as I've grown in the profession. I know what I've done well and how I can enhance that. I have been lucky enough to have athletic directors who see me*

*as a valuable asset. I've been involved in senior leadership from the moment I stepped foot on campus. So, I feel it has been a very positive experience for me.*

The collective experience started with words like great, appreciative of the opportunity, and fortunate. The designation had provided them career advancement into the administration. Their experience had included them in conversations they would not have been a part of under their primary title. Such as, oversight of men's sports or participation in the governance structure. Meetings with conferences and/or serving on Championship Committees. The experience then turned to pigeonholed, marginalized, and minimized by their title. 7 of the 8 participants agreed that the designation still serves a purpose at their university. All 7 of their answers to what the negative impacts the designation might have had for the university suggested that they were not completely satisfied with their designation.

SWA #3 said she understood the designation but it was, "weird and a little bit discriminatory. Really what we are overseeing or in charge of is Olympic sports. So a male could do that just as well as a female could. I don't know why it would have to be a female to hold that position." The others agreed that the designation was still necessary but they hated that it was necessary. SWA #6 said it pigeonholed the woman into Title IX Coordinator and internal affairs type of job assignments. SWA #8 said,

*It's a Catch-22, because if you told people you didn't have to, I don't think we are sophisticated enough to ensure that we would have diversity, gender or otherwise.*

SWA #4 was the positive outlier of the study. She said that her career goal was to advance to the athletic director position and had communicated that desire to her current athletic director. SWA #4 said that her Athletic Director was making sure that she continued to gain the experiences necessary to aid in career advancement goals. She mentioned that one of the

experiences she feels she and other SWAs lack are associated with external affairs tasks. She said she had had some Athletic Director interviews but did not receive the positions due to her inexperience with development and fundraising.

Of all the participants, 7 of 8 mentioned that they wished the designation did not have to exist. The designation was equated to a catch-22, pigeonholing, minimizing, and marginalizing. SWA #1 has been in the field for over 30 years and said, “I think it’s a shame we had to legislate getting a woman to the table. I understand why we did. I’m happy that it was done. And I hope to live to see the day when it doesn’t need to happen anymore.”

SWA #2 said, “I think having that SWA title pigeonholes you. I think that there’s this idea amongst men in athletics, there is this idea of what the SWA is meant to be. You know they tend to push a lot of women toward a lot of the soft areas of the department, compliance or student-welfare...I was in more roles that were traditionally men and I think that by taking on that role [SWA] and moving forward with that, while it’s good, I think it has really limited my career and pigeonholed me.”

SWA #3 said, “I tend to look around and see a lot of SWAs who are minimized by their title. So they say, “Okay you’re the SWA.” But they have no other responsibilities. That’s it. And they don’t oversee any units, like I oversee external. They don’t oversee anything. All they are is an SWA so to me you are minimizing that female. You are checking a box and putting her in that role because you have to have one, not because you actually value her as a top member of your team.”

SWA #6 said, “I think that the SWA title – is a just a title. But there are pieces of it that I feel are outdated and misunderstood. They have revenue sports that see the SWA designation, so that means you’re automatically against them. Which is, you know at least in my case, not true.

But when you have an SWA they become the sole person who is pushing the cause for gender equity in athletics. And that can pigeonhole a female, unless she has an AD that also believes that that is a very important thing. It think that’s kind of key.”

SWA #7 said, “I think the role serves a purpose. I don’t believe that the way the role is identified does. I think that there is some value in ensuring that, especially at some leagues and some universities, having that opportunity to ensure that a woman is involved in some decision making. I don’t know that the timing is necessarily right for us to get rid of it. I would welcome the day that that happens, but I do think that there is confusion in the way that role is defined as far as the title goes.” She would prefer if the role was strictly relegated to governance.

**Theme 2: Tasks associated with the designation**

There were several different tasks found throughout the interview analysis process. The researcher concluded that the tasks associated with the designation could most commonly be summarized using the NCAA issued brochure called, *SWA: Senior Woman Administrator: Understanding the designation and her role on your senior management team* (Morrison, 2012). The majority of the participants had at least one SWA related task that could be associated with the suggested tasks as outlined by Morrison (2012).

Table 1

*Tasks of the SWA using Morrison’s brochure.*

Tasks outlined in SWA brochure issued by the NCAA in 2012	Participants who associated with the task
To serve as an important decision-maker in the department	All participants
Participate on the senior management team	All participants
Strategize ways to support and manage gender equity and Title IX	7 of 8 participants

Advocate for both genders	All participants
Educate individuals on issues for both genders	#4
Behave as a role-model and resource for the department	#4 and #6
Help student-athlete balance academics and athletics	#2, #4, #5, and #6
Review the Equity and Athletics Disclosure Report and the Gender Equity Plan	#1 and #6

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The tasks that the participants did not associate with the designation were in both internal and external affairs. 7 of 8 participants said their primary title provided them with tasks more associated with the internal affairs requirements of the department. Those tasks could be characterized by student-athlete welfare, sport administration, academic advising, sub-departmental oversight, day-to-day operations, and Title IX compliance. 1 of the 8 participants had a primary title associated with external affairs. SWA #3 offered a job description with tasks such as, marketing, communication, sponsorships, TV contracts, and all things related to the public.

There were three SWAs who mentioned that their designation and their primary title were one and the same, they could not separate the tasks associated with one from the other. SWA #2 had served with a female Athletic Director and suggested that when there was a female in charge of the department the SWA designation did not seem to be as necessary, but now that she is serving a male Athletic Director again, she thinks there is still a lot of need for it.

SWA #6 and SWA #8 agreed that there was no difference in her primary title and her SWA designation. SWA #8 said, “A lot of my SWA peers are really holding similar working titles at their universities too. I think it’s meant to indicate, like it does here, that you are the number two person behind the director of athletics and really a key administrator and kind of a go-to person for most of the area. For me, it’s one and the same really.”

SWA #3 and SWA #7 said that the tasks associated with the designation did not take up much of their day. SWA #3 said:

*I can't imagine if all I did was SWA. It's not enough to warrant me having a position. I spend maybe 10 to 15% of my time on SWA stuff. I spend 85% of my time on external. When I think about people who are hired to be the SWA, I'm thinking what are you doing the 85% of the time I'm working on external? They're doing nothing. So, so what happens then is that it hurts all of us, all females.*

She explained that when the department views a person's workload as minimal and useless, they start to question why they get a salary that could be going to someone else. She continued by saying, "If some AD came to me and said, "Do you want to be my SWA?" I'd be like no. I want to be your Associate AD or Senior Associate AD. If that means I qualify as the SWA than that's fine, but I would not take a job just to be the SWA. I don't understand how that helps you, or helps other women, or helps the department. I wouldn't feel good about that, but it happens quite a bit." SWA #7 was even more extreme when quantifying her tasks, 95% went to her primary title with risk management and 5% was spent on SWA tasks with governance.

### **Theme 3: Experience with advancement**

When it comes to advancement, only SWA #4 said with certainty that she wanted to advance to the athletic director position in the future. Most of the participants did not have a current desire to advance. They had been approached by *search firms* for athletic director positions at NCAA institutions, divisions unknown. Some of them entertained the searches but eventually found that the institutions were not the right fit. However, their years of experience provided the research some insight into what it takes to advance to Athletic Director. The majority of the SWAs mentioned needing experience with external development: fundraising,



donors, revenue sports (football and men's basketball), facilities, and ticket sales. What is needed for advancement has to do with an ability to raise money and not the ability to help the student-athletes.

One of the research questions posed in this study was if the Athletic Director role was the logical next step in career advancement for the SWA. Of the participants, 4 suggested that they were the number two behind their athletic director, running the department if he is out of the office or unavailable. One of the participants suggested she was number three behind the athletic director, but would be number two when their current Deputy Athletic Director retired. The other participants suggested that their primary roles would lend them a stronger opportunity for advancement than the designation would by itself. SWA #2 said:

*As more and more presidents are hiring ADs, it seems like they really value external development because it's the money that drives the department. You have to have that. I don't think they are as focused on the actual mission and having a person in the department that really understand the inner workings and doing what it takes to help the student-athletes.*

SWA #1 provided an interesting insight when she said, "25-years-ago, I was told that if I would have been a man, I would have been a Big-10 Athletic Director already. Would my career have taken a completely different path? Perhaps. I think it's because women have been ignored and frankly, it's pretty frustrating." She also mentioned that she was interested in advancing to the athletic director position when she was "young and naïve" but that she prefers being able to help the student-athletes and coaches, because that is why she got into athletics.

**Theme 4: Need for social change**

Each of the participants were asked what it would take for more women to advance to the FBS Athletic Director role. The responses were all very similar: Social change. Social change was not just needed in athletics or at the institutional level, but for boosters and fans. SWA #4 suggested that there are schools in the south that might have boosters who would withdraw their support if the president were to hire a female over their football dominated athletic departments.

SWA #1 said that for more women to advance, athletics would need to see *a cataclysmic change*. She stressed that there are institutions out there that are so focused on raising money that they are hiring lawyers and business men who have very little athletic experience. She was not sure that women would want to continue athletics down the money driven path it is currently on.

SWA #2 said that there is still a lot of bias in college athletics and that it has been so male dominated for so long that it will take a long time to stop seeing the effects of that structure. She mentioned that there is a social assumption that women do not understand football and men's basketball because those sports are so driven by money. Her final thoughts on the subject were, "I think we have to persevere and continue to do what we're doing and show that there are different voices, diverse voices, and that women can have a significant impact. That we belong here and that we bring value."

Other participants echoed these sentiments. Women would need to prove that they could generate revenue and oversee men's sports. Proof that they could handle a hot-headed football coach who was in violation of a NCAA ordinance. They also suggested, that women need to advance to the position of institutional president to really ignite change. Institutional presidents, the research found, are the real agents behind the placement of athletic directors. SWA #7

suggested that a woman would have a stronger chance of acquiring an Athletic Director role if she could prove that she could, “manage the budget and stay out of the red.”

### *Summary of findings*

The lived experiences of FBS Senior Woman Administrators was not limited to the defined experiences found in the review of literature and each of the themes found in the interviews could directly play into the research’s theoretical framework and research questions.

First, RQ1 asked how do women in the FBS feel the designation of Senior Woman Administrator has had an impact on their career advancement. The majority of the participants suggested they appreciate their experiences but are frustrated with the areas their designation assigns them. Their feelings of pigeonholing/marginalizing/minimizing are all in line with the structures of the glass ceiling phenomenon. Critical feminist theory would caution against the continued use of the quota system because of these results. The use of the SWA designation could be seen as enhancing the strength of the glass ceiling.

Role congruity theory helped the researcher understand why the majority of participants held primary responsibilities in the internal affairs areas of an athletic department. Women are placed in the communal areas of an athletic department, helping student-athletes and coaches, monitoring student-welfare, mentoring coaches, etc. Role congruity theory also helped the research relate the suggested requirements for advancement with agentic roles in the department, such as fundraising, marketing, and other external affairs areas.

Second, the results of the first research question are in direct opposition of RQ2: What are the career advancing experiences of women who have been designated Senior Woman Administrator? The survey results suggested that over half of the surveyed population has little to no desire to advance to the athletic director position. The interviews confirmed that analysis

when only 4 of the participants said they would entertain the possibility of advancing to the athletic director position. This question and the results are in direct consultation with the Post-feminist theory: continuing to stress the need for equality and breaking the glass ceiling negates the feelings of satisfaction with the position the participants hold. The majority of the participants agreed that the designation was still a very powerful and purposeful role in the athletic department. SWA #5 said it best:

*If close to 50% of your student-athletes are women, it's important that you have a senior leader who is female. If institutions were not required to have a woman, I'm not sure that every institution would designate a woman, promote a woman, or promote a woman in those positions. I'm not sure that that would happen. So, absolutely I think that's important.*

Finally, RQ3 asked, what are the perceptions of SWAs on women advancing to the position of Athletic Director at the FBS level? The participants all agreed that some level of social change was needed to help women advance in athletics. Meaning that the roles assigned to women, whether designated SWA or not, needed to be more than just traditionally the feminine tasks. In order for women to advance they would have to gain more experience with agentic roles like fundraising.

#### *Suggestions for continued research*

There are several areas of the current research that would benefit from an expanded inquiry. What are the training experiences of the FBS SWA? The National Association of Collegiate Women Athletic Administrators (NACWAA) and the NCAA provide several opportunities for leadership and administrative training. What percentage of the FBS SWAs take advantage of those training opportunities prior to seeking advancement? Understanding the

SWAs advancement training would provide a chance to continue research into if the SWA is a qualified candidate for advancement to the athletic director role, despite the suggested low desire to take on that level of advancement.

Understanding the training opportunities would provide another avenue into the found feelings of pigeonholing, marginalizing, and minimizing of the SWA. Are these feelings preventing her from seeing herself advance to the athletic director role? Has she been told no so many times she has decided to be satisfied with her current position and no longer pursue advancement? Or is the current research validated with a larger pool of participants and at other levels of the NCAA?

The research could be expanded upon by increasing the size of the population studied or the division studied. Explore the motivation and experience of Division I – Football Championship Subdivision, Division II, and/or Division III. Conduct a true mixed methods research study to compare and contrast a larger portion of the population with interviews of a smaller portion of the population to get a more in-depth view of the experience of the Senior Woman Administrator overall.

Finally, research the circumstances in which the designation of the SWA was received: 1) after a long-time SWA retired; 2) upon being hired into the administration; 3) while holding a coaching title; etc. Could the practices of mandating an SWA place the institutions under a Title VII of the Civil Rights Act violation for biased, gendered hiring practices? The assumed requirement that the SWA designation be filled by a female could encourage some institutions to hire based on gender instead of merit.

*Summary*

The research conducted in this study explored the lived experiences of the NCAA Division I - FBS Senior Woman Administrator. The research was rooted in the phenomenology of the glass ceiling, using role congruity theory, critical feminist theory, and post-feminist theory to assist in understanding the findings. Ultimately the research must be said to be inconclusive on the necessity of the SWA policy in NCAA Athletics. The findings of the research were rooted in four themes: 1) experience with the designation; 2) tasks associated with the designation; 3) experience with career advancement; and 4) a need for social change in collegiate athletics.

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## Section VI

## Scholarly practitioner reflection: Losing battles

A person learns a lot about themselves when facing a competitive record of 7 wins and 23 losses. You especially learn what you are made of when you are the coach of a team with that record. The 2016 competitive season started with every glimmer of hope you could possibly have for a team. We had an amazing crop of freshmen that were supposed to change the game for the Southeast Missouri State Redhawks. We had a transfer from a junior college who had been nothing but the praise of the team all summer. We had been dealt some really interesting and crummy blows, lost a few players due to injuries but gained some really good ones too. We felt strong and confident going into the season. We felt so strong, we won the first game. And then we lost 18 straight games.

I kept polling my friends, colleagues, and old teammates. What do I do? How can I help them? Authors like Daniel J. Levi, Peter Northouse, and the excerpts from Harvard Business Review were floating through my head. I would ask my players: what do you need from me? I wanted to scream at them: Tell me how to help you! I sat and analyzed every second of every match. I watched the team from warm-ups to final whistle blow. I would read passages from the authors previously mentioned – maybe there was a clue in the book. I asked my players again: what do you need from me? How do I get you through this? They had plenty of requests, but each attempt to provide what they needed did not yield a different result. It was my belief that our losing season had nothing to do with our physical ability to play the game and be successful. We lacked leadership. We lacked a voice. We lacked the calming presence of someone who could get us to the finish line of games. I feel like I need to stress that point. We were lacking the ability to finish games – we were not being trounced at every point, we were losing sets by 1 or 2

points. We were holding our own and in a lot of cases we were out scoring our opponents – but we were losing by also making more mistakes. You learn a lot about yourself when you are in an 18 game losing streak.

This assignment requests that we explain how the dissertation process has influenced my practice as an educational leader. You have to understand that as I was writing my dissertation, I was failing at being an educational leader. A coach's entire career is measured by wins and losses, and profoundly by wins. All the coaches whom a sports scholar has ever read about had an impressive number of wins behind their name. These winning coaches have been gathered together, in the recent years, to form a group and write a book called *What drives winning* by Brett Ledbetter and Becky Burleigh. The two of them have interviewed successful coaches, started forums, and travelled the country spreading their knowledge of what it takes to create a winning program. And every single last coach on that stage has a significant number of wins, championships, and accolades to provide the weight of their name. The irony that we, the Redhawks Volleyball team, read excerpts from this book in preseason does not escape me. Reading *What drives winning* and then losing 18 matches in a row – that makes you question everything you thought you knew about how to do this job.

My dissertation is in a very large sense dedicated to the Senior Woman Administrator I am most familiar with. She was the inspiration for trying to understand the designation. She was the fuel that pushed me to keep digging. And she has been a solid sounding board to help me formulate and understand the world of college athletic administration. She was also a volleyball coach for 16 years, has had two teams inducted into the SEMO hall of fame, and 8 Ohio Valley Conference Championships. As well as the only volleyball coach in SEMO history to go to the

NCAA tournament. I enjoy talking to her about volleyball and athletics in general. Her depth of knowledge is extraordinary.

I went into my Senior Woman Administrator's office one day and was frustrated with how to help my team get out of this slump. She told me not to give up but also not to chase it [wins] so hard. She explained that when you start chasing the wins, you stop seeing the bigger picture. Your job as a coach is to shape and form student-athletes into professionals who represent your program and the school. Chasing wins tarnishes the relationship you have with the athletes, it becomes too much about your need for validation and less about helping them understand how to find success. When you teach them how to find success outside of the gym; help them gain confidence in themselves – that is when your team will find winning success.

I knew that! Deep in my heart of hearts, I knew that. I even wrote about it to get into the ELPA program:

*What are coaches if not leaders? They are professors of life lessons and harsh realities while working in real time. Only one team can finish with a win for the season in any given series – leaving most teams to deal with the agony of defeat. While only one player can score a point at any given time, a whole team can feel the devastating effects of a loss or the joys of success. A coach guides them through it all – a navigational system to the end and beyond. A coach is their guardian when a parent is absent, their teacher when a problem arises, their counselor when conflict happens, and their friend, always.*

I believe the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program at the University of Missouri has helped me recognize my ability to be a leader. I am not your typical leader, loud and boisterous. I am more quiet and reserved. I learned more about myself in a season riddled with defeats than I ever did when we were successful. I learned that the gleam of a championship

trophy should never outshine the real task at hand – teaching the athletes how to persevere, battle, and never give up.

Not giving up leads me to the second question in this reflection: How has the dissertation process influenced you as a scholar? Throughout the process, I was able to speak to multiple different Senior Woman Administrators and the majority of them had nothing bad thing to say about their experience. They were all serving the institutions they wanted to serve, they were happy with their titles and roles at their institutions. Their commonality was that they all spoke in terms of *everyone else they know*. One might say, my experience has been wonderful, but I know of this one SWA who has applied multiple times to be an Athletic Director and has not gotten any call backs. Or they would begin talking about themselves and follow it up with their experience with other Senior Woman Administrators. For example, I know at my institution, my AD, is very knowledgeable of Title IX and women's issues. Other SWAs do not have it the same way. They have to fight tooth and nail to get everything their women's teams have. Generalizations were the way of each and every interview I conducted – even though I was asking about their own personal experience.

The leadership scholar in me questioned this generalization trend. This *it's not me, but it is happening to this person*. It felt phenomenological. It reminded me of denial. I do not think the women I was interviewing were up to the challenge of speaking up. I needed a larger sample to better understand the entire group. During my proposal process I was talked out of conducting a mixed methods study on the Senior Woman Administrator. I was told that the quantitative portion of my proposed study was not conducive to analysis with the questions I wanted to ask during qualitative research. I had the support of my advisor and one member of the committee, but the rest were not on board. I was disheartened but agreed in an effort to finish my degree. I



do not think my curiosity about this topic has been curbed and I will continue to pursue avenues to answer the questions I have. Namely, why the lived experiences of some Senior Woman Administrators differ so greatly from the hearsay of others'. I think that conducting a more intensive and broad reaching mixed methods study would have allowed me to ask more Senior Woman Administrators the questions I had to ask and compare them to the interviews I had planned to conduct. Questions like: where do you rank your ability to step into the role of athletic director if you had to tomorrow? In comparison to: where do you rank your desire to advance to the position of Athletic Director? The collective answer to these questions would have helped me determine if the Senior Woman Administrators simply did not want the task of Athletic Director or if they were not getting the right amount of training and therefore were not qualified to advance. To then interview a few Senior Woman Administrators and really get to the heart of their daily training and what they were doing, if anything, to prepare for advancement.

A few of them said they spent so little time on their Senior Woman Administrator tasks that the tasks would never provide them with the training they needed to advance. Which meant that their primary title was a stronger pipeline to the Athletic Director chair. There were two Senior Woman Administrators who said that their designation could not be separated from their daily tasks. So, I question why the same designation could look so different at each university it is used. As I said, my curiosity has not been satisfied.

I think that my experience with this program will help me keep digging. Just as I have not and will not give up on providing the best experience possible for my athletes. I will not give up questioning the need for the Senior Woman Administrator designation and the conflicting use of the designation amongst NCAA member institutions. Experiencing a losing season has provided

me with a never surrender perspective. There is more to the story than what the record currently shows.

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## Appendix A

*Email Correspondence 1:*

Dear Senior Woman Administrator,

Thank you for taking the time to read this email. I am a doctoral student with the University of Missouri – Columbia in the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis Department. I am currently working to complete my degree by finalizing a research study. My research has lead me to look into the designation of the Senior Woman Administrator at the Football Bowl Subdivision Level. The purpose of the research is to understand the continued use of the designation and any limitations it may or may not impose on career advancement of women in FBS athletics.

In a few days you will be receiving another email from me with a link to a Google Form. The form has 25 questions on it and should take between 5-10 minutes to complete. The more participants I can get to complete the survey, the better understanding I will gain surrounding the designation. I hope to be able to contribute to the growth of women in athletics through my understanding of your designation.

I know your time is precious, so I thank you in advance for your participation. I look forward to discovering more about FBS athletic organizations through this process.

Sincerely,

Nicole C. Buchholz  
Doctoral Candidate in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis  
University of Missouri-Columbia

*Email Correspondence 2:*

Dear [Name],

As promised, here is a link to the Google Form titled Senior Woman Administrator Survey. This link will be active for 30 days. Please feel free to complete at your leisure. The form will not save unless completed. It should take between 5-10 minutes, depending on how much you want to contribute.

[Click here] for a link to survey.

Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

Nicole C. Buchholz  
Doctoral Candidate in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis  
University of Missouri-Columbia



*Email Correspondence 3:*

Dear [Name],

I'm writing to remind you to complete the Senior Woman Administrator Survey. The form should take between 5-10 minutes to complete. There are 15 days left to participate in the survey!

[Click here] for a link to survey.

Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

Nicole C. Buchholz  
Doctoral Candidate in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis  
University of Missouri-Columbia

Email Correspondence 4:

Dear [Name],

This is the final reminder to complete the Senior Woman Administrator Survey. There are 5 days left to participate in the study! If you have already participated, I thank you so much for your time. I also apologize for the continued emails, this will be the last one. Due to the confidential nature of the survey, it is impossible to tell who participated. I appreciate your time and your patience. As I have stressed before, the completion of the survey will help me better understand the designation of Senior Woman Administrator. I hope to contribute to the growth of women in athletics.

[Click here] for a link to survey.

Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

Nicole C. Buchholz

Doctoral Candidate in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis  
University of Missouri-Columbia

## Appendix B

## 2016 Senior Woman Administrator Survey

The purpose of this survey is to provide a selection tool for populating a qualitative study based on the lived experiences of NCAA Division I - Football Bowl Subdivision designated Senior Woman Administrators. The survey aims to provide the researcher with enough demographic background and career experience information to select a purposeful sample of individuals to interview. Selecting a purposeful sample instead of an anonymous/random sample is intended to provide as diverse a population to the study as possible.

The final question of the survey will ask you to provide your email address. This step is completely voluntary. Providing your address will be the first step in volunteering to participate in an interview. Upon selection, you will be contacted by the researcher with an informed consent form and a request to set up an agreed upon date and time to perform the interview. The interview will take less than an hour to complete. The information gained in the interview will be confidential. No identifiable information will be used.

The results of this survey will remain confidential and will only be used to provide the study demographic information. The researcher will not use any information that could identify you or your university. The research will benefit from the completion of the survey even if you do not wish to participate in the interview process. There are 14 questions and the survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete.

Your submission serves as your implied consent that you understand the minimal risks associated with completing a survey. Thank you for your participation.

~Nicole

\* Required

1) How long have you been at your current university? \*

- 0-12 months
- 1-4 years
- 5-9 years
- 10+ years

2) How long have you been designated SWA at your current university? \*

- 0-12 months
- 1-4years
- 5-9 years
- 10+ years

3) What is your primary title? \*

Example: Associate Athletic Director

Your answer

4) Were you designated the SWA prior to advancing to a position within the administration? \*

- Yes
- No

- I am not a member of the administration

5) How long were you designated SWA before advancing to a position within the administration? \*

- 0-12 months  
 1-4 years  
 5-9 years  
 10+ years  
 I am not a member of the administration

6) How many years have you worked in collegiate athletics? \*

- 0-12 months  
 1-4 years  
 5-9 years  
 10+ years

7) To what conference does your current university belong?

- American Athletic  
 ACC  
 Big 12  
 Big Ten  
 Conference USA  
 FBS Independants  
 Mid-American  
 Mountain West  
 Pac-12  
 SEC  
 Sun Belt

8) How many Athletic Directors have you worked for at your institution while designated SWA? \*

Please answer in the numerical form, i.e. 4.

Your answer

9) How many female Athletic Directors have you worked for at your current institution while designated SWA? \*

Please answer in the numerical form, i.e. 4.

Your answer

10) Have you served as Interim Athletic Director at your current institution? \*

- Yes  
 No

11) Do you believe the designation of SWA serves a purpose at your university? \*

Yes

No

Other :

12) Do you believe the tasks associated with the designation of SWA provides you with experience to advance to the position of Athletic Director? \*

Yes

No

Other :

13) Where would you rank your desire to advance to the position of Athletic Director at the FBS level? \*

No Desire    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10    Strongly Desire

14) The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of SWAs as it relates to career advancement and motivation. The survey is meant to provide a selection tool in an effort provide a purposeful population. If you would be willing to participate in a less 1 hour interview to lend your experience to the research, please leave your email in the space provided below. The interviews are completely confidential and the researcher can guarantee that you and/or your university will not be identifiable in the final paper.

Your answer

SUBMIT

## Appendix C

Researcher's Name: Nicole C. Buchholz

Project Title: NCAA Division 1, FBS Senior Woman Administrators

### **Introduction:**

This research is being conducted to help analyze perceptions of Senior Woman Administrators within colleges and universities with membership ties to National Collegiate Athletic Association Football Bowl Subdivision. As a participant invited to join the research, you have a right to be informed about the study procedures so you can decide whether you consent to participate. This form may contain words or concepts you do not know. Please ask the researcher to explain any information you do not understand.

### **Purpose of the Research:**

The purpose of this research is to explore the lived experiences of Senior Woman Administrators at the Football Bowl Subdivision of the National Collegiate Athletic Association. For this study, the designation is understood to be a requirement of all NCAA member institutions per bylaw 4.02.4 in the Division I Manual 2015-16. The designation is the highest ranking female with administrative input. The primary purpose is to explore the career motivations and lived experiences of females with the SWA designation and their advancement within athletic administrations.

### **Selection:**

Each participant for the survey was selected based on the designation Senior Woman Administrator for each of the NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision.

### **Voluntary Participation:**

You have the right to know what you will be asked to do, so you can decide whether or not to be in the study. Participation is completely voluntary. You do not have to be in the study if you do not want to. You may refused to be in the study and nothing will happen. If you do not want to continue to be in the study, you may stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

### **What am I being asked to do?**

You have received an email link with 14 survey questions; the survey should take 5-10 minutes. The purpose of the survey is to provide demographic information to help the researcher select a purposeful sample of participants for a telephone interview. The 14<sup>th</sup> question will ask you to volunteer for a 1 hour or less interview by providing their email. From the list of emails collected on the survey, only 11 participants will be selected for the interview process.

### **Risks:**

Participation in this study will result in no more than minimal risk to yourself or your institution and is not expected to cause your institution any risks greater than those encountered in every day operation. Participation in this study will result in no more than minimal risk to any individual participants.

**Benefits:**

Participation will benefit your institution and the governing body overseeing your institution. These benefits include an increase in the knowledge of the influence of women in athletic departments and best practices relating to the continued use of designations by colleges and universities.

**What are my rights as a participants?**

You have the right as a participant to terminate the participation in this study at any time.

**Confidentiality:**

Your identity and participation in this study will remain confidential. No information you provide will be shared by the researcher. Nothing will be attributed to you or your institution by name. All identifying markers will be removed from the record to insure anonymity.

**Who do I contact if I have questions, comments, concerns, or complaints?**

Please contact Nicole C. Buchholz, researcher, or Dr. David Stader, advisor if you have any questions about this study.

Nicole C. Buchholz  
41 E. Rodney Drive  
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701  
Cell Phone: 703-403-2154  
Email: nicbuc15@gmail.com

Dr. David Stader  
Southeast Missouri State University  
One University Plaza  
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701  
Email: dstader@semo.ed

The task of this committee is to make sure the research participants are protected from harm. You may contact the IRB if you have any questions about you or your institution's concerns, complaints, or comments as a research case study site. You can contact the IRB directly by telephone or email to voice any concerns, questions, input, or complaints about the research study.

University of Missouri – Columbia  
Institutional Review Board  
483 McReynolds Hall  
Columbia, MO 65211

Phone: (573) 882-9585  
Email: [umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu](mailto:umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu)  
Website:  
<http://www.research.missouri.edu/cirb/index.htm>

Sincerely,

Nicole C. Buchholz

## Appendix D

## 2016 Senior Woman Administrator Interview Question Protocol

Hello and thank you for taking time to participate in my study on FBS Senior Woman Administrators. Before we begin, I would like to go over briefly the informed consent form that you returned. This interview will take less than an hour to complete. You have the right to stop the interview at any time. You have the right to not answer certain questions. The purpose of this research is to explore the lived experiences of FBS Senior Woman Administrators. I will ask you a series of 10 questions to answer at any length. If I need clarification or further explanation about a response, I may ask follow-up questions. Participation in this interview will result in no more than minimal risk to you and your institution. The institutional identity and participant's identifying characteristics will remain confidential. I request that you refrain from using any names, including that of the institution or mascot. Would you mind, for the purpose of accuracy if I recorded the interview? You have a right to decline. Do you agree to participate in the interview? Thank you.

- 1) What has your experience been like as a Senior Woman Administrator?
- 2) What duties, responsibilities, or tasks do you have because of your SWA designation?
- 3) What is your primary title at the university?
- 4) Could you please describe the duties, responsibilities, or job description of your primary title?
- 5) Do you believe the tasks associated with the designation of SWA provides you with experience that could lend you an opportunity to advance to the Athletic Director position? Please explain.
- 6) Please describe a situation where the role of SWA has served your university?



- 7) Do you believe the designation of SWA serves a purpose at your university? Please explain.
- 8) What have your career advancement opportunities been since you assumed the SWA designation?
- 9) Have you ever wanted to be the Athletic Director of an FBS institution? Please explain.
- 10) In your own words, why do you think there are so few female Athletic Directors at the FBS level?

## VITA

Nicole was born in Fairfax, Virginia to Monica and Timothy Buchholz. She has one brother, Evan Buchholz. Nicole was engaged to Kandice Abner on November 15, 2016, just a day after completing her dissertation defense. Wedding plans are in the works. Nicole has been working at Southeast Missouri State University as an Assistant Volleyball Coach since 2010. Her plans after graduation with the doctorate are to stay in coaching. She believes that sport provides more than just physical training, it provides a person with an ability to persevere through the seemingly most difficult times.