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Understanding the Career Trajectories of Mid-Career Female Athletics Administrators: A Life Course Approach

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**Understanding the Career Trajectories of Mid-Career Female Athletics
Administrators: A Life Course Approach**

by

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Understanding the Career Trajectories of Mid-Career Female Athletics Administrators: A Life Course Approach

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Though there has been progress over the past decades, women continue to be underrepresented in intercollegiate athletics administration (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). This is especially true in higher-level positions, such as that of athletic directors or those considered to be in the pipeline to that top seat in the administrative structure of athletics programs (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Lapchick, Agusta, Kinkopf, & McPhee, 2012). Past approaches to the study of this phenomenon have primarily been from a singular angle, such as the macro-, meso-, or micro-levels of analysis. While such research has yielded important information and added to the knowledge base in this area, understanding of the problem is still piecemeal. There is a paucity of research that considers the underrepresentation of women in this field in a holistic fashion. What is needed is research that takes into account the combination of various factors at multiple levels. It is important to consider the context within which people live their lives along with the circumstances and events that influence career decisions and shape life paths.

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of women who work in intercollegiate athletics administration in a multi-level manner and identify the factors within their experiences that have influenced the decisions they have made regarding their careers and have helped shape their trajectories. Qualitative methods

were used along with the guiding framework of the life course perspective. Using data gleaned from a life/career map, interviews, and field notes, subthemes were identified within the four themes of the life course framework: life and historical times, timing of lives, linked lives, and human agency (Elder, 1994). Results demonstrate that women's careers within intercollegiate athletics administration are influenced by multiple factors and are susceptible to impact from the circumstances preceding and surrounding them. The career paths of the women who participated in this study were affected by each of the four themes outlined by the life course perspective and more specifically by the subthemes identified within each of those broader themes.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Women continue to be vastly underrepresented in intercollegiate athletics administration. This is especially true in higher-level positions and most markedly so in athletic director positions (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Lapchick, Augusta, Kinkopf, & McPhee, 2012). According to the most recent update to their 37-year longitudinal study of women working in the field of intercollegiate sport, Acosta and Carpenter (2014) report that women hold 36.2% of all administrative positions and only 22.3% of athletic director positions in NCAA institutions. These percentages diminish when considering Division I institutions, where women occupy approximately 32% of administrative positions overall and only 10.6% of athletic director positions. In addition, 11.3% of intercollegiate athletics programs still do not have any female administrators whatsoever in their executive structure (i.e., athletic directors, associate athletic directors, and assistant athletic directors). Division I features women best in this regard, as only 1.2% of its athletic programs lack female voice in their administration.

Though progress has been made over the last few decades (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Lapchick et al., 2012), the representation of men and women in leadership roles within intercollegiate athletics remains notably disproportionate. Lapchick and colleagues periodically publish racial and gender report cards for college sport to demarcate change or stagnation in regard to diversity in intercollegiate athletics personnel. As a part of these publications, they assign grades for different areas of athletics administration in regard to their gender distribution (see Table 1). An A is given

if 40% or more are female, a B is given for 32-39%, a C for 27-31%, a D for 22-26%, and an F for any percentage less than that. Areas of administration graded include professional administration, assistant and associate athletic director, and athletic director.

In their most recent report, Lapchick et al. (2012) assigned a grade of B+ in the category of professional administration, with 34.3% of these positions being held by women at the time of the study. Roles in this area include those in academic counseling or advising, compliance, life skills coordination, equipment, fundraising, facilities operations, and marketing. Such positions are seen as “starting points from which many people rise to higher level positions within a university or athletic department” (Lapchick et al., 2012, p. 25). For the most part, these positions are also considered to be outside of the pipeline to the athletic director position (Hancock, 2012; Lapchick et al., 2012; Suggs, 2005).

In the category of assistant and associate athletic directors, Lapchick et al. (2012) assigned a grade of C+, as women held approximately 30% of these positions at the Division I level. The numbers were higher in the lower divisions, however. At the Division II and III levels, respectively, women occupied 41.1 and 48.9% of these positions in the 2010-2011 academic year. These are important positions for career development, as the assistant and associate athletic director roles are considered to be the pipeline to the athletic director seat (Hancock, 2012; Lapchick et al., 2012). A failing grade was given for the position of athletic director, where only 8.2% of those holding this title at the Division I level were women at the time of data collection. The Division III level, in comparison, provides the best opportunities for women to obtain the title of

athletic director. At this level, women held approximately 28% of these top positions in 2011 (Lapchick et al., 2012) and now hold approximately 30% (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014).

| Category | Grade | Division I | Division II | Division III |
|-----------------------------|-------|------------|-------------|--------------|
| Professional Administration | B+ | 34.3% | 34.3% | 33.6% |
| Assistant Athletic director | C+ | 27.9% | 38.4% | 37.1% |
| Associate Athletic director | C+ | 30.0% | 41.1% | 48.9% |
| Athletic director | F | 8.1% | 17.5% | 27.9% |

Table 1 : Grades assigned for areas of athletics administration by Lapchick et al. (2012) by Division.

IMPORTANCE OF THE ISSUE

The lack of female representation within intercollegiate athletics programs is an important issue for two main reasons: (1) achieving social justice in regard to equity and equality, and (2) improving the effectiveness of athletics organizations. Explanations of both of these reasons are to follow.

Social Justice

One of the primary reasons women's underrepresentation in the administration of athletics programs is an important issue to examine is related to social justice in regard to equity and equality. Both of these terms bring with them the goal of fairness, but to distinguish the two, equity refers to the means, or the process, of making sure people are getting what they need while taking into account individual differences, whereas equality refers to the outcome of all people getting the same things without concern for individual differences (Clow, Hanson, & Bernier, 2012). In other words, if one group has a distinct

advantage over another, a focus on equality does not result in an environment of fairness. On the other hand, a focus on equity in the same situation would involve tailoring the treatment of the groups in a way that puts them on a level playing field (Clow et al., 2012). Therefore, in order to achieve the outcome of equality in men's and women's access to their desired positions within athletics administration, it is essential to have equity in the means, so as to offset the disadvantages women face in this profession.

Thus far, women have taken a liberal feminist approach to change by working within the current, male-dominated system of college athletics. Though some progress has been made in increasing the representation of women in this field, the effects of this approach have been minimal and, as is evidenced by the numbers, women have not yet achieved equality in their representations in athletics administration. Radical feminists might argue that by working within the existing patriarchal system and adapting themselves to the traditional masculine way of doing things, liberal feminists are contributing to the injustice that faces women in this career field (Lovett & Lowry, 1995).

Current policy initiatives in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) as well as the United States government demonstrate the extent to which issues of gender equity and diversity are of high importance today. The newest president of the NCAA, Mark Emmert, has put forth increased emphasis on promoting and embracing diversity in its member organizations. Under Emmert's leadership,

While maintaining a commitment to education and development, priorities of the inclusion effort have shifted to include strategies to develop a culture that recognizes and values diversity as a means to organizational excellence and to providing better service to the evermore diverse and complex higher education community and our student athletes. The Inclusion Initiative at the NCAA

emphasizes that an inclusive culture is the best approach to achieving diversity. It represents a shift from embracing diversity as a metric to encouraging inclusion as a value in leadership and decision-making processes (Lapchick et al., 2012, p. 61).

As a part of this effort, the NCAA has included in its core values a commitment to diversity, inclusion, and gender equity. Lapchick et al. (2012) gave the NCAA an A+ on their diversity initiatives and the fact that this being graded helps demonstrate its importance to the athletics community.

President Barack Obama has also spoken out about gender inequality in the workplace and has validated the importance of equity. For example, in his 2014 State of the Union Address, President Obama stated,

Today, women make up about half our workforce. But they still make 77 cents for every dollar a man earns. That is wrong, and in 2014, it's an embarrassment. A woman deserves equal pay for equal work. She deserves to have a baby without sacrificing her job. A mother deserves a day off to care for a sick child or sick parent without running into hardship – and you know what, a father does, too. It's time to do away with workplace policies that belong in a “Mad Men” episode. This year, let's all come together – Congress, the White House, and businesses from Wall Street to Main Street – to give every woman the opportunity she deserves. Because I firmly believe when women succeed, America succeeds (State of the Union Address, 2014).

This statement touches on two major themes: (1) some of the common barriers to women's career advancement, such as the wage gap and workplace policies that result in a “mommy tax” (Jones & Schneider, 2010; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005), and (2) the benefits that can be reaped from women's career advancement. This second point leads to the next reason women's underrepresentation in intercollegiate athletics administration is an important issue, improved organizational effectiveness and success.

Organizational Effectiveness

Research has demonstrated that organizations with more female representation at the top levels are more successful than those headed solely by men (Adler, 2001; Catalyst, 2013; Desvaux, Devillard-Hoellinger, & Baumgarten, 2007; Wittenberg-Cox, 2010; Wittenberg-Cox, 2014). A better climate of diversity and inclusive leadership has been linked to positive outcomes, including less turnover, improved team performance, and higher employee satisfaction, as well as better financial performance (Catalyst, 2013; Desvaux et al., 2007). These positive outcomes may be in part due to a more diverse group making way for people with different experience and backgrounds being able to contribute diverse ideas, thus encouraging more creativity and innovation (Catalyst, 2013; Herring, 2009). Diversity can expand a group's array of potential solutions to problems and help the group consider those problems from different angles, which is less likely to happen in more homogeneous groups (Surowiecki, 2005).

Gender diversity, in particular, has distinct positive implications for organizations. For example, Herring (2009) examined the effects of diversity on business performance using competing perspectives, one that views diversity as a contributor to organizational success and another that views diversity as a detriment to performance via conflict and hindered group functioning. Results from this study showed that gender diversity was related to multiple markers of organizational success, including increased sales profits, larger customer base, and greater relative earnings. Organizations with a critical mass of at least 30% of women in top management have been shown to have significantly better performance than those with no women in top management in regard to various criteria

(Catalyst, 2013), including but not limited to leadership, accountability, innovation, motivation, work environment, and values (Desvaux et al., 2007). In addition, having more women at the top as been linked to more positive public images of organizations, helping in the recruitment of a more talented applicant pool (Desvaux et al.).

It has also been argued that there may be an advantage to female leadership (Rosette & Tost, 2010) because of the leadership style women often employ (Eagly & Carli, 2007) and the unique skill sets women tend to bring into a group, including communal characteristics, such as communication and interpersonal relationship skills (Cunningham, 2008). Women are also more apt to accept feelings of vulnerability and fear, whereas men react to similar feelings with anger or rejection. In addition to being encouraged to trust their emotions and intuitions, women are encouraged to aid in the development of others and to be accountable for cooperation (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Women are now also achieving higher levels of education than men (NCES, 2012), giving them more human capital in the form of knowledge and expertise to bring into their organizations. Despite all of these demonstrated benefits to having more of a female presence in top leadership, women remain vastly underrepresented in higher-level positions in male-dominated fields, including athletics administration. This phenomenon leads to questions of why this is the case and how women's career experiences can be improved to help them gain access to positions of authority within athletics programs. A first step toward obtaining the answers to such questions is to understand what factors influence the decisions they make regarding their careers in this field. For instance, what draws them to the profession, what pushes or pulls them out of it (Hewlett & Luce,

2005), and what makes them want to stick with it? If these factors can be determined, then steps can be taken to improve the climate of intercollegiate athletics administration to one that can both welcome and retain them.

The purpose of this study is to examine the ways in which women's personal and professional life experiences influence the choices they make regarding their athletics administration careers over time. The proposed study aims to address the following research questions: (1) In what ways do women perceive their past personal and professional life experiences to have influenced the choices they have made regarding their athletics administration careers? (2) What factors (i.e., individual, social, cultural, and organizational) have influenced their career choices? The analysis of the data from this study will help glean insight into the ways in which personal and professional experiences and influences create turning points that shape the trajectories of women's athletics careers over time.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Women's lack of representation in leadership roles within intercollegiate athletics administration has been examined from multiple levels – macro, meso, and micro (Cunningham & Sagas, 2008) and various theoretical angles within those levels. The macro level refers to the broader societal or sport industry elements that generate and perpetuate gender roles or discrimination. The meso level includes forces within an organization that reproduce gender norms. Finally, the micro level is focused on characteristics of individuals that influence their opportunities for success or advancement (Cunningham & Sagas, 2008). Though some approaches may straddle different levels, many primarily focus on one. Past examinations of the issue from each of these levels has added to our understanding of the barriers women face when trying to progress in athletics administration careers.

MACRO-LEVEL APPROACHES

When using a macro-level approach, researchers consider the broader environmental context that influences the treatment and value placed on different groups of individuals. For example, macro-level forces that affect gender inequality include such things as a country's economic development, participation of women in the labor market, gender norms, and federal policy (Fuwa, 2004). Geographic location and political climate of a region can also be macro-level forces. For example, women are better represented in athletic director roles in areas of the country designated as “blue” (26.8%), which are generally more progressive or liberal, than in areas designated as

“red” (15.1%), which tend to be more conservative and traditional. Women also have lower representation in southern states (16.9%) than in northeastern states (29.9%) in the athletic director seat (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). This level may also include factors specific to the sport industry as a whole (Cunningham & Sagas, 2008), and in that case, NCAA or conference policy or regulations. In this section, some macro-level approaches to the problem of gender inequality in intercollegiate athletics administration will be discussed. Such approaches include gendered discourse analysis and examinations of role congruity based upon socially constructed gender norms.

Gendered Discourse

Discourse refers to the creation and passage of knowledge through language and interactions. Within organizations, discourses turn into cultural truisms that are often left unquestioned and internalized by the individuals within the organizational culture in which they exist (Shaw & Hoerber, 2003). As such, they are difficult to revise, despite being socially constructed. Gendered discourses can influence roles of men and women within sport organizations, as they tend to define not only what it means to be a man or woman in society, but also what roles are appropriate for men and women to hold within athletics programs (Shaw & Hoerber, 2003).

In their study of gendered discourses in three English National Governing Bodies, Shaw and Hoerber (2003) used data from internal documents and interviews to examine how discourses might influence the employment roles of men and women. They found that discourses of masculinity and femininity were indeed related to the positions men

and women held in those sport organizations. Employment roles were strongly influenced by discourses of femininity, specifically. Though feminine discourses (e.g., loyalty) were not always undervalued, they were minimally valued and unrelated to power. There was also an assumption among the group that women would leave to have children within a few years and thus were suited for certain roles that were not believed to be in the pipeline to senior management. Men's expressions of femininity were found to be acceptable temporarily, but men were expected to move up into management roles with more masculine discourses attached to them fairly quickly. This phenomenon has been shown in environments that are dominated by women as well and is referred to as the "glass escalator" (Budig, 2002; Williams, 1992). As Williams (1992) describes it, regardless of what men's goals are, they often "face invisible pressures to move up in their professions. As if on a moving escalator, they must work to stay in place" (p. 256).

Shaw and Hoerber (2003) also found that discourses of masculinity were highly influential in senior management roles and that the association of masculinity with leadership ability perpetuated the lack of a feminine presence in those positions of power. Excluding discourses of femininity from leadership roles further normalized the exclusion of women from the highest levels of management. In their case studies, they found that men were more likely to hold positions with greater power and influence, such as senior management and coaching. Women, on the other hand, were more likely to hold positions with less power and influence, such as regional development and teaching. These findings correspond with other studies (e.g., Lapchick et al., 2012; Suggs, 2005; Whisenant, Pedersen, & Obenour, 2002) that have demonstrated the tendency for men

and women to be segregated into different employment roles within athletics programs due to socially derived meanings of masculine and feminine. This gender based job segregation works to prevent women from attaining the more influential, senior management roles in organizations and will be discussed further in a subsequent section of this paper.

Knoppers and Anthonissen (2008) used data from interviewing executive directors and senior managers in the largest sport organizations in the Netherlands to examine the discourse surrounding gender and work in sport management. At the time of the study, all of these positions within the organizations were held by white men. Findings revealed four dominant themes: instrumentality, relationality, emotionality/passion, and homogeneity. Within the theme of instrumentality, there were discourses of toughness and perseverance, availability, and impression management. In regard to toughness and perseverance, men were viewed as being more likely to achieve desired results by maintaining control, resisting stress, and presenting themselves with confidence, regardless of their current circumstances – characteristics that are stereotypically masculine (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The men interviewed practiced impression management by dressing in ways they perceived to be most appropriate for the situation and also by making attempts to appear physically fit. They felt as though they may risk losing their credibility as sport leaders if they were significantly overweight or inactive. Being physically present implied availability and served as an indicator of one's commitment to the organization. Men have an advantage over women

in this regard because they are more likely to have partners who take care of the majority of the domestic duties (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2008).

The relationality theme indicated that the directors' interactions with others varied, depending on the group (e.g., employees, volunteers, or directors of other programs and agencies), and communication skills were a primary emphasis. The men described themselves as people-oriented and employed an informal leadership style. This demonstrates a shift from the older authoritarian methods of leadership to a more paternal method, whereby the directors display empathy for, connectedness to, and communication with their employees. Though this trend could be seen as an increase in femininity in the role, it may actually be a sign of the males' attempts to stay in control (Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2008).

Emotionality and passion in senior management was another discursive theme present within Knoppers and Anthonissen's (2008) data. The men saw their passion, as well as their personal history and current involvement with sport, as requirements for their jobs. The discourse surrounding these elements was gendered, however. They felt that the passion one had for the primary activity of the organization and for the job itself must be controlled, as a lack of control is typically considered a feminine trait ascribed to women. The ways in which passion or emotionality are displayed are of gendered significance as well. For example, while it would be seen as inappropriate for women to engage in heated arguments in management or board meetings, it may not be seen in the same light for men. Also, women may be viewed as being poor parents or spouses if they spend their time actively practicing the same kind of displays of passion that men do,

rather than spending that time tending to their domestic lives (Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2008).

The final discursive theme was that of homogeneity. The men who participated in Knoppers and Anthonissen's (2008) study worked in a homogeneous world in which men occupied virtually all of the senior management and director positions within the sport organizations in their country. These men had only a limited awareness of their male-dominated environment, however. This allowed them to remain somewhat oblivious to any possible marginalization of the other sex and to operate without concern for the ways in which their actions or behaviors may have affected others, specifically women.

The four themes together imply that workers must act like the "typical white male prototype" in order to succeed in sport management (Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2008); however, research has shown that this is not a rewarding strategy for women. When women express more masculinity and thus violate expectations of their gender role, they can be evaluated negatively by their colleagues, supervisors, and employees. Even if she performs her job well and receives favorable evaluations of her work, a woman may still be seen as a "dragon lady," "battle-ax," or even a "bitch" if she does not fit the mold for the stereotypical female (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Shaw & Hoerber, 2003), which leads into the next macro-level approach of role congruity and gender typing. These ideas are interrelated with gendered discourses because the ways in which gender is discussed and internalized contribute to the types of roles society assigns as best suited for each gender. As men and women do gender, or perform in ways that are consistent with what is

socially deemed as masculine or feminine (West & Zimmerman, 1987), their roles are reinforced, as in a vicious cycle.

Role Congruity and Gender Typing

According to social role theory, people have shared expectations of others who hold particular roles in society or in an organization. Gender role theory has a narrower focus on the socially shared role expectations of men and women, specifically, or the beliefs and attributes that are ascribed to a person based solely on gender. This includes both descriptive and injunctive norms, where the former are the assumptions of what men and women actually do and the latter are the expectations of what they should do. While descriptive norms are similar to stereotypes, injunctive norms apply a prescriptive component by considering what would be socially thought of as ideal for one's gender (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Researchers, both in the areas of sport and business, have used this theoretical framework to explore the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles (e.g., Burton, Barr, Fink, & Bruening, 2009; Burton & Hagan, 2009; Burton, Grappendorf, & Henderson, 2011; Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Burton and Hagan (2009) used gender role theory as a framework to examine whether job descriptions for certain upper level positions within athletics administration were written with a masculine, feminine, or neutral bent. To do this, the authors performed a content analysis of job descriptions for athletic director, senior administrator, associate director, and assistant director positions at NCAA institutions – primarily Division I, but also including Divisions II and III. They found that descriptions for athletic director positions had the most masculine phrases (e.g., planning and

organization, resource allocation, motivation and inspiration, strategic decision making, and clarification of roles and objectives). Contrastingly, role descriptions for compliance director positions contained more feminine phrases (e.g., monitoring, providing corrective feedback, evaluating employees, providing support, and developing personnel). In addition, there were some jobs that tended to be described in more gender-neutral terms, such as development director and marketing director. The results from this study suggest the ways in which job descriptions are written may be biased toward (or against) certain groups of applicants. Athletic director positions, in particular, tend to be biased in ways that benefit male applicants while potentially discouraging women from applying and/or constraining their chances of obtaining the position (Burton & Hagan, 2009).

Eagly and Karau (2002) extended gender role theory to consider the degree of congruency between one's gender and his or her role – more specifically between *expectations* of one's gender and *expectations* of the role. The resulting theory is called role congruity theory and, in addition to taking into account the match between gender and other roles, it also identifies important elements and processes that lead to perceptions of congruence and their potential prejudicial implications. This theory is particularly suited for examining gender and leadership, as society holds contradictory views of the traits of women and those of leaders, whereas views of male traits are more similar to those of leaders. For example, men are ascribed more agentic traits, such as assertive, controlling, ambitious, dominant, independent, and forceful, whereas women are assigned communal traits, such as helpful, kind, sympathetic, sensitive, nurturing, and

affectionate. Leaders tend to be thought of in more agentic (or masculine) ways, creating incongruence between “woman” and “leader,” which can lead to prejudice against women who either aim to be or are already in positions of leadership. In addition, the resulting prejudice can hinder the effectiveness of women who do attain leadership positions, especially in male-dominated fields (e.g., sport), as their abilities may be discounted because they are female (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Rosette & Tost, 2010).

Because of the divergence in how society thinks of leadership roles and those of the male and female genders, women encounter a double-edged sword when they are trying to get to the top in their careers. On one side, if they act in ways that are stereotypically feminine, they are seen as ill equipped for senior management or leadership positions. On the other side, if they act in ways that embody the conventional masculine view of leadership, they are violating the norms of their gender and are thus viewed negatively (Burton et al., 2011; Eagly & Karau, 2002). This puts women in a double bind, making it difficult for them to be successful and advance in their careers (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Burton et al. (2009) used role congruity theory as a framework in their examination of the gender typing of managerial subroles within athletics administration. The authors surveyed undergraduate students in sport management programs regarding the subroles they viewed as being important for three different positions within athletics administration: athletic director, compliance coordinator, and life skills coordinator. They first established which subroles were considered masculine and feminine by

performing a pretest with one sample of students. In this pretest, students rated various subroles as being masculine, feminine, or gender-neutral. Once the gendered subroles were identified, the authors performed their main study in which a second sample of students evaluated the importance of each subrole to each administrative position.

Results from the pretest revealed four categories of managerial subroles: two separate categories for masculine, one for feminine, and the other for gender-neutral. Findings from the main study showed that the first masculine category of subroles, which included resource allocation, conflict management, strategic decision making, motivation, and inspiration, was rated as highly important for the athletic director position and significantly less important for the other positions. The second masculine category, including punishment, discipline, and employee evaluation, was again rated as highly important for the athletic director position and significantly less important for the life skills coordinator position, but not significantly less important for the compliance coordinator position. Feminine subroles, such as planning and organizing, recognizing and rewarding employees, communicating and informing, consulting, and supporting were found to be most important for the life skills coordinator position, significantly higher than for compliance coordinator, but no different in importance from athletic director. This implies, first, that feminine skills or qualities are important alongside masculine ones for athletic director positions and, second, that femininity is also associated with positions that are not typically in the pipeline to top level management (Burton et al., 2009). Burton et al.'s findings suggest that, due to the gender typing of managerial subroles within athletic administrative positions in addition to the idea that

women should not violate their injunctive gender norms (as gender role theory asserts), men have an advantage over women when it comes to pursuing the top position of athletic director. This idea is mirrored in research showing that even with equal or identical qualifications and characteristics, men are seen as more likely to be chosen for advancement into athletic director positions (Burton, Grappendorf, & Henderson, 2011).

The role of the Senior Woman Administrator (SWA) position within athletic departments has also been examined using role congruity theory (Tiell & Dixon, 2008; Tiell, Dixon, & Lin, 2012). The SWA position was created by the NCAA as a way of ensuring that each of its member institutions has a female voice in the decision making process. The SWA “is the highest ranking woman in the athletics department” (NCAA, 2011, p. 2) and can be in any area within the department, including those not generally considered pathways to senior management. If there is a female director of athletics at an institution, she may choose to designate another woman for the role. Primary duties of an SWA include participation in the senior management team, support and management of gender equity and Title IX matters, advocacy on issues concerning both male and female student-athletes, and decision-making (NCAA, 2011).

Though the SWA is defined as an administrator by the NCAA, her actual role in decision making as well as her authority are limited when she does not also have “director” in her official job title, which can discount her function within her institution (Tiell et al., 2012). In their study using role congruity as a framework, Tiell and Dixon (2008) found that SWAs’ responsibilities at Division I institutions were fairly gender-neutral. In the Division II and Division III institutions, however, the SWAs had limited

responsibilities related to revenue generation or financial operations – tasks or roles that are considered to be more agentic or masculine. Despite increases in numbers of SWAs with “director” in their titles, this trend remained in their follow-up study five years later (Tiell et al., 2012).

Despite the equity-based intentions of the NCAA in their creation of the SWA role, the aforementioned findings indicate that it may not be doing exactly what it was meant to do. Though having such a role may automatically include a small number of women in some level of the administrative decision making process, it is not clear how much of a voice these women actually have in their departments or conferences, especially when decisions are regarding areas considered to be more masculine, such as finance or men’s sports programs. In addition, when there is not a female in the upper echelon of an athletic department with “director” already in her title, the SWA role is designated to a lower level employee, who may not garner the same level of respect as another who has worked her way up to the top over time with hard work and dedication. Such a circumstance may result in the SWA being marginalized and not truly having a voice in important matters, as well as having others view her as not belonging and only being in the room because she is female, further lessening her clout.

Examinations of the problem of women’s lack of representation in athletics administration at the macro level have provided information regarding the ways in which gendered discourse can perpetuate the status quo of the preponderance of men in positions of authority, as well as how the role congruity and gender typing of management roles can factor into the placement of men in roles associated with

leadership and women in more supportive work roles. Though these macro-level approaches help us gain insight into some of the broad, societal influences on the marginalization of women in the workplace and in sport, they do not take into account organizational or individual contributing factors. As such, only examining the issue from this broad level may lead to feelings of helplessness, as it may seem that there is nothing that can be done at the organizational or personal level to change the status quo – that society is the only culprit for the marginalization of women. This is why it is important to shift our perspective and use other lenses to take a closer look at the issue at hand.

MESO-LEVEL APPROACHES

Meso-level approaches focus on factors within organizations that reproduce or challenge existing social norms regarding gender that limit or facilitate women's career advancement (Cunningham & Sagas, 2008). Factors at play in the meso level of analysis include both formal and informal organizational policies and practices. For athletics administration, specifically, factors may include hegemonic masculinity or homologous reproduction of males in the workplace, discriminatory hiring practices, different kinds of power, as well as the segregation of men and women into different types of roles within sport organizations. These concepts will be addressed in this section.

Hegemonic Masculinity

Hegemony refers to the idea that particular groups have authority or power over others by means of imposing, manipulating, as well as permitting such domination. More

specifically, masculine hegemony involves the creation and perpetuation of men's power over women, or the placement of women's status below that of men's (Whisenant et al., 2002). The traditionally masculine domain of sport provides a context within which men have the opportunity to exert their dominance over women. In the sport context, women are excluded from the higher-level roles, men maintain their power and control, and there is an acceptance of this status quo. While the enactment of Title IX helped even out the playing field in sport participation, it led to more male dominance within the administration of athletics programs overall as men took over the leadership in women's athletics programs (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Whisenant et al., 2002).

The theory of hegemonic masculinity has been used to examine male dominance within intercollegiate athletics administration. For example, Whisenant et al. (2002) measured the effect of gender on rate of advancement of intercollegiate athletic directors at Division I, II, and III institutions. Their results demonstrated that men had higher success ratios overall, calculated by using their division and the age at which they reached their current position, but women had more success in the lower divisions (II and III). These findings indicate that women who do advance into athletic director positions most often do so in the lower divisions, which are associated with less power and value. This trend sends the message that athletics administration in Division I institutions is a male domain where women do not belong.

A related concept is that of homologous reproduction, whereby a dominant group (in this case, men) maintain their power by replicating themselves within organizations or other social structures based upon traits or attributes of their group. The status quo of

male domination is perpetuated by those with the power in an organization hiring others like themselves. When those in charge of hiring are men (e.g., presidents of universities and athletic directors), it is difficult for women to enter the pipeline to leadership in athletics administration. The idea of an “old boys’ club,” where women are not permitted, is common within the sport context. Unfortunately, the creation of an “old girls’ club” has not been successful (Grappendorf & Lough, 2006). When the number of women is low, opportunities for them to network and build positive working relationships are reduced, contributing to their continued disadvantaged position (Danylchuck, Inglis, & Pastore, 2000). Partly because of this, sport organizations continue to be areas in which traditional gender roles as well as male dominance and privilege are perpetuated (Cunningham & Sagas, 2008).

Power

Sibson (2010) discusses various types of exclusionary power that preserve gender inequality in organizations. First is positional power, which is the type of power that comes from one’s title or office within an organization. For example, those in senior management positions have positional power over those in lower-level positions. Because men hold the majority of senior management positions with higher status and more responsibility, women’s access to power is limited and thus gender inequality continues to pervade the organization. Second is agenda-setting power, which involves the ability to set the agenda of the organization and is based on its culture, values, and history. Because men are generally in the top ranks, they are the ones who typically have

this kind of power and, as such, items important to men have a place on the agenda, while those that are not important to men (but may be to women) are left off (Sibson, 2010).

The third type of power is hidden power, which is subtle and complex. With this kind of power at play, an issue may not only be left off of the agenda, but is also not even recognized as an issue. This kind of power restricts people because it is difficult to fight against marginalization about which there is no awareness. Fourth is the power of dialogue, which has the ability to either boost or restrain gender equity. This kind of power relates to the effects of gendered discourses described previously. The fifth type of power is that of conflict, which involves resisting or confronting the ways things are normally done (Sibson, 2010). For instance, as discussed by Shaw and Hoerber (2003), challenges to masculine discourses can lead to changes in attitudes and shifts in the ways people think about different roles within athletic organizations. In this way, the power of dialogue and the power of conflict, if used wisely, have the ability to improve gender equity in organizations.

Job Segregation

Men and women are often segregated into different types of positions within athletic programs. Typically, this segregation happens in a way that tracks men into roles that tend to be in the pipeline to executive management and women into roles that are not part of the same typical pipeline (Suggs, 2005). For example, Lapchick et al. (2012) found that women's numbers were high in positions such as academic counselor or advisor, life skills coordinator or officer, compliance coordinator or officer, and business

manager. Women occupied 61.5%, 69.5%, 50.4%, and 55.5% of these positions, respectively. This may be partly due to these positions being seen as more congruent with traditional gender stereotypes assigned to women at the macro or societal level (Burton et al., 2009; Danylchuk et al., 2000; Sibson, 2010).

In addition, when administrative tasks are assigned regarding different sports, men are more often given the higher profile, money generating sports, such as football, basketball, baseball, and hockey, whereas women are placed with lower profile sports, or sports that do not generate revenue, such as tennis, golf, swimming, and gymnastics (Danylchuk et al., 2000). Intercollegiate athletics programs are businesses, and as such, more value is placed on the sports that generate more revenue, allowing those businesses to operate at their highest level. Given this business model, those who work with the revenue generating sports will likely have more opportunity for advancement. The placement of women with the sports on which less value tends to be placed reflects the common social phenomenon of men being privileged, while women remain undervalued and overlooked (Sibson, 2010). When women try to make a lateral move into the tracks that may actually lead to professional advancement, they may encounter a “glass wall,” where they can see the senior management pipeline positions on the other side, but hit an invisible barrier when attempting to gain access to them (Galloway, 2012).

When viewing the problem from the meso level, it is apparent that existing organizational policies and practices perpetuate traditional and widely accepted social norms for men and women. Rather than challenging these limiting and outdated norms, current policies and practices depend on them. If the ones with the power (i.e., men) hold

onto that power, they will continue to make policies that suit their needs and preferences, thus maintaining their advantageous position while perpetuating the marginalization of women.

If organizations were to take into account the benefits of a gender diverse leadership team and develop and implement more modern and accommodating policies and practices, those policies and practices could potentially create avenues of strength and freedom – not only for women, but for men as well. For example, improvements in policies regarding leave for family/childcare or flexible work schedules could benefit both sexes as long as use of such policies are embraced and encouraged by the leaders of the organization, giving men and women more freedom to have a higher quality of life outside of work without necessarily sacrificing their career ambitions (Glass & Estes, 1997; Hewlett & Luce, 2005).

Research using meso-level approaches has contributed to our knowledge of factors at play within organizations that contribute to the underrepresentation of women in athletic administration. At this level of analysis, we gain a better understanding of how male dominance can be perpetuated through those at the top (i.e., men) hiring those like themselves and wielding various kinds of power over women, as well as through the segregation of men into roles with higher status and women into roles with lower status. While there is some attention paid to broader social and cultural influences, what is missing from this level is consideration of the individual – characteristics, preferences, and choices. These individual factors are addressed in micro-level analyses.

MICRO-LEVEL APPROACHES

While the macro- and meso-level approaches examine external factors contributing to the issue, micro-level approaches consider factors that are internal or central to the individual that may help or hinder one's career. Individuals are often the roots of social change, as they are agents working from the bottom up to influence others around them and alter their environment (Macy & Willer, 2002). As they are ultimately affected by social norms and organizational policies, individuals are the ones who can best challenge the status quo and work to change the policies that limit them. Common influences for this level of analysis include psychology, social psychology, and human resource management, to name a few (Cunningham & Sagas, 2008). Those who employ micro-level approaches in their research may hold the assumption that career paths are determined by personal preferences and personality traits, as well as identity and levels of perceived support from surrounding people or policies. While some might argue that researchers who use this level of analysis may be blaming the victim, there is wide recognition of the fact that individuals have agency and their choices do not occur in a vacuum, but are influenced by outside factors (Cunningham & Sagas, 2008). In this section, several micro-level factors will be discussed, including gender as it relates to leadership style and quality, human and social capital, career goals and expectations, as well as perceptions of support and barriers to advancement.

Gender and Leadership

As discussed previously, women often have to combat the widely held and perpetuated social norm that they are ill equipped to lead organizations (especially those in male-dominated fields) and, if they do manage to obtain positions of leadership, they may be evaluated less favorably or encounter resistance from their subordinates (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Peachey & Burton, 2011; Shaw & Hoerber, 2003). Many recent studies, however, have shown that women make excellent leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2007) and may even have a leadership advantage over men (Rosette & Tost, 2010). Evolving perspectives on effective leadership styles and strategies make way for a more feminine approach to management that highlights more communal traits, including collaboration, the sharing of power and information, and democratic relationships (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Rosette & Tost, 2010).

Part of the potential female leadership advantage relates to the types of leadership styles men and women tend to employ – transactional versus transformational. While transactional leaders are most concerned with the exchange of resources, transformational leaders are more interested in the fulfillment of subordinates’ higher order needs (Peachey & Burton, 2011), such as belongingness and appreciation, achievement and respect, and ultimately realizing their full potential (Hall & Nougaim, 1968). The transformational leadership style is characterized by four primary elements. The first is charisma, which involves providing a sense of purpose and values by which to abide, establishing trust, and instilling pride. The second is inspiration, which can be done by using symbolism to enhance focus, setting goals and expectations, as well as clearly and

simply communicating pertinent information. The third element is intellectual stimulation, which can include encouraging creative, innovative, and thoughtful problem solving. The fourth and final element is consideration of the individual, providing personal attention, coaching, and mentoring. These elements together empower workers by making them feel more valued in the organization, leading to more effective or higher quality contributions to the organization (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Peachey & Burton, 2011).

Transactional leadership, conversely, is more about exchanging performance of duties or responsibilities for rewards. This kind of leadership has more of a focus on rules and procedures than on relationships and employee development. Transactional leadership is characterized by four general substyles. Contingent reward is the first and is simply the trade of reward for production or effort. The second is active management by exception, which involves taking corrective action for unfulfilled expectations or rule violations. The third is passive management by exception, meaning corrective action is only taken when goals or expectations are not met. The fourth substyle is laissez-faire, which is more a method of non-leadership and involves avoiding or taking little responsibility for management or decision-making (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Peachey & Burton, 2011).

The transformational style has been shown to be a more effective form of leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2007) and has been linked to better organizational outcomes (Peachey & Burton, 2011), while transactional leadership has been linked to lower effectiveness (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Though either sex can lead either way and ideal leadership strategies can be taught and developed, women are more likely to use the

transformational style of leadership, whereas men are more likely to use transactional methods of leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2007). These elements taken together contribute to the idea that women may have an advantage over men when it comes to leadership quality (Peachey & Burton, 2011; Rosette & Tost, 2010). This potential female advantage, however, can be compromised in male-dominated or traditionally masculine contexts, where women tend to be evaluated less positively regarding their potential for and actual leadership, perhaps in part due to traditional views of gender (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Peachey & Burton, 2011).

There is an argument against the lower evaluations of women at the top of male-dominated organizations, however. Rosette and Tost (2010) claim that women who get to the top of such organizations are so few and far between that they become part of an elite group who have successfully advanced under adverse conditions. As such, these women may be more highly regarded and respected than their equally successful male counterparts. Their two-part study that involved having undergraduate and graduate students evaluate leaders after manipulating variables including hierarchical level within the organization, gender, attribution of success, and agentic and communal traits revealed supporting results. Their findings indicate that gender bias, as implied by gender role theory, may not be present in senior management positions within organizations, but instead only exist at the lower and middle management levels. Their results suggest that women at the top of the organizational hierarchy embody both agency and communality, and rather than having their agency count against them, they may be perceived as being more competent due to having faced more challenging circumstances, such as prejudice

and discrimination, because of their gender. These findings demonstrate how important it is to consider context and point to a *conditional* leadership advantage for women (Rosette & Tost, 2010), while also exposing flaws in the widely accepted social norms and ascribed traits based on gender.

Human and Social Capital

Human and social capital can affect an individual's level of career success, both in regard to external determinants of success (e.g., promotions, rank, or pay) and internal determinants (e.g., job satisfaction or sense of accomplishment). Human capital includes things such as education, training, and job experience. In regard to education, women would seem to have the upper hand, as more degrees at all levels are being awarded to women than to men (NCES, 2012). Obtaining higher levels of education does not necessarily seem to be the solution for women's career advancement, however. Instead, women who have made it into the athletic director seat indicate that gaining relevant experience (e.g., marketing and fundraising) and staying out of positions that are not in the executive pipeline (e.g., academics and compliance) may be a better route to top leadership (Grappendorf & Lough, 2006). In the context of athletics, it has also been argued that playing or coaching experience is a form of human capital, as it provides an additional, industry specific knowledge base and skills beyond what can be obtained solely through education and on-the-job training. It is feasible, then, for women who have grown up in a post-Title IX era to have more applicable human capital than their pre-Title IX counterparts, as there are more women's athletic teams and female sport

participants than ever before (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014) and thus potentially better opportunities to obtain higher-level administrative positions in athletics.

Social capital is essentially the extent of an individual's relational resources or influential networks (Sagas & Cunningham, 2004). The quality of one's network appears to be most important in career success, but network size can also be beneficial, especially when considering internal success determinants, such as satisfaction with one's career. Because people have limited resources in regard to network building (e.g., time), decisions must be made about what they are willing to invest in building their own social capital (Sagas & Cunningham, 2004). This can be especially challenging for women who are married and/or have children, as they still bear the majority of the domestic responsibilities of housework and childcare. Even though men's participation in unpaid domestic labor has increased over the last five decades, they still do not carry as much of the domestic workload as their female counterparts (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The traditional social expectations for women to take care of the home and children and for men to be the primary earners in their households has endured, despite women's increased participation in paid employment. This leads women to take on a "second shift" in the home and forgo networking opportunities that occur outside of normal work hours that could potentially enhance their careers (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Sayer, 2005).

The strength of one's network ties is also influential in personal career success, with weaker ties (as in acquaintances or loose connections) being of greater value in this sense because a wider net can be cast and, as such, the individual may gain access to more resources and knowledge not present among the stronger ties or inner circle. It is

especially beneficial for one's career success to have connections to others with high status and substantial power and authority. Networking relationships also tend to develop better with others of the same sex (Sagas & Cunningham, 2004). As previously mentioned, however, this can put women at a disadvantage due to so few females being in the higher levels of organizational hierarchies. Not only are powerful women difficult to find in traditionally masculine domains, but also when there are small numbers, women may feel the need to compete with, rather than assist, one another (Danylchuk et al., 2000; Hancock, 2012).

Even if investments in human and social capital are equivalent, men may receive greater return on their investments when it comes to reaping the career benefits. When women succeed, it is common for people to attribute their success to external factors, such as luck or affirmative action policies. On the other hand, when men succeed, it is more often attributed to their skill or ability. Because of this view and the importance that is placed on skills and abilities in the workplace, men tend to benefit more from their achievements than women do, despite similar levels of qualifications and investment in bolstering their own cache of human and social capital (Sagas & Cunningham, 2004).

Sagas and Cunningham (2004) found partial support for these ideas in their study in which they examined the effects of human and social capital on markers of career success among athletics administrators. Results from their study showed that, though men and women had invested similarly in building their social capital, men gleaned more in regard to promotions from those investments. The authors did not find any differential returns in regard to either human or social capital investments and the career satisfaction

of men and women. This is an interesting absence of difference because it implies that even when they do not reap as many promotional benefits from their investments in human and social capital as men, they are still just as content with their career status. Why these women appear to be “satisfied with less” (Cunningham & Sagas, p. 420) is an idea worth considering, as it could be partly due to having accepted the status quo of men advancing farther than women in their field, but could also be partly due to women having career goals or expectations that differ from those of their male counterparts. It must be acknowledged, however, that this could be a continuous feedback loop.

Career Goals and Expectations

Not everyone has the ultimate goal of becoming an athletic director. Though many women may enter the field with that initial aspiration, their goals often change over time as they have the chance to see what the expectations are for that top position. This can happen in the opposite direction as well, in which case women may enter the profession without the goal to become an athletic director, but then make the decision that it is a position they want to pursue. After beginning their careers in athletics, they may see the high probability of being outnumbered by men, long work hours, and the stresses that come with the high level of responsibility, but they may also see what enjoyment can be had by working with student-athletes and coaches, as well as the immense potential positive impact they can have on both the organization and on individual lives in the population they serve (Hancock, 2012). Depending on their

perceptions and on other factors in their lives, they may stay on course with their original goals or decide to change their plans and seek a better fit for their preferences and needs.

Hancock (2012) found two main sets of career goals in her qualitative study of women in athletics administration. One such career goal was to contribute to student-athlete development and the other was to advance to positions of authority in an athletic department. Participants in this study believed that having more positional power and responsibility would enhance their abilities to have a voice in the decision-making process of the organizations in which they worked as well as being better able to have a positive impact on the lives and experiences of student-athletes. In addition to obtaining a picture of what is expected of intercollegiate athletic administrators, women's perceptions of the factors that may either help or hinder success in the profession can further shape their career goals.

Perceived Supports and Barriers

Supports and barriers could be seen as occurring at multiple levels, including both the macro and meso levels, as they often originate from outside of the individual – from the broader social, political, and economic environment or from organizational culture and policies. For the purposes of this paper, however, supports and barriers are being considered at the micro level because it is how the individual perceives, internalizes, and utilizes them that can have the greatest impact on her personal experiences.

One source of support for women in athletics careers involves the interpersonal relationships with supervisors and mentors. Hancock (2012) found that women in senior

level management positions often received guidance, access to professional development opportunities, and encouragement from their supervisors. Not only did these relationships embody qualities such as trust and understanding, but they also increased the women's sense of confidence in themselves and their abilities. This effect of increased self-confidence actually had a positive, cyclical impact on the women's careers, as they were more likely to assume additional work responsibilities, and those responsibilities led to the acquisition of new skills and the honing of skills already acquired. Support from supervisors is also helpful for women when they are navigating the task of balancing their professional and personal lives. For women who have children or other familial responsibilities, supervisor support through flexible work schedules and a general understanding of their circumstances can be especially beneficial (Bruening & Dixon, 2008).

Another source of support is access to mentors. These can be both conventional, in the form of older men and women with extensive experience in the profession and who have positions for which the protégé strives, or peer, in the form of men or women with several years of experience, but who are at similar positional levels as the protégé. Mentors provide support through giving professional guidance, advice, and feedback, but may also help the protégé gain access to influential others through networking and sponsorship (championing and advocating on the protégé's behalf) (Higgins & Kram, 2001; Hancock, 2012; Ibarra, Carter, & Silva, 2010), thus augmenting the protégé's social capital. Like helpful supervisors, mentors may also encourage the protégé to take on more responsibilities (Higgins & Kram, 2001) or have a role in decision-making

processes, possibly pushing them out of their comfort zones and helping them enhance their industry-specific knowledge, experience, and skills, thus developing their human capital as well (Hancock, 2012). Though mentors and other supportive network ties can be either from inside or outside of one's organization or even one's career field, it is most beneficial for them to be from within the same organization where the worker is employed, as these intraorganizational ties are likely to be able to provide more of the information, resources, and sponsorship necessary to gain ideal career outcomes than ties with those from outside the worker's organization (Higgins & Kram, 2001; Sagas & Cunningham, 2004). It is also important that the intraorganizational mentor is a good source of psychosocial support. Otherwise, the protégé may experience more, rather than less, stress due to the mentor's apparent lack of confidence in the protégé's potential (Higgins & Kram, 2001).

Additional factors that can support women in their quest for career advancement could include gender equity policies within organizations, as well as society at large. For example, when the athletics organization a woman works for has it in their mission and/or core values to improve gender equity or achieve gender equality, the culture is more likely to adopt it as something important to the success of the organization (Cunningham, 2008) and, as such, the women are going to be more likely to perceive the support that stems from it. Also, as gender equity is highlighted more in the political climate, organizations themselves may start adopting policies that will support or enhance it in their particular environments.

Barriers to women's advancement in intercollegiate athletic administration include factors already discussed at the macro and meso levels, such as sport historically being an industry that has been dominated by men and traditionally ascribed beliefs about appropriate roles for people based on their gender. At the micro level, these factors can be perceived and internalized by women as being limiting to their career success, in that they may feel "pigeon-holed" into the "soft" career paths as in academic counseling or compliance that do not typically lead to positions at the top. It is also possible for women to see the status quo of male domination, perceive their limited advancement opportunities, and become complacent (Hancock, 2012).

Other barriers include unequal access to resources as well as unequal workload allocations. In regard to resources, Danylchuk et al. (2000) noted disparities in pay, access to facilities, and operating budgets. In addition, women in their study referred to having more work placed upon them than upon men, even when job descriptions were the same on paper. One example of this is that of a woman having the responsibilities of administration, coaching, and teaching, while a man at the same level was only charged with the responsibility of administration. These types of differences in responsibilities lead to men having more time for their administrative responsibilities and being able to take on more decision-making power (Danylchuk et al., 2000). Differing levels of responsibility where women have more duties than men could be seen as placing women on the edge of a "glass cliff," where they are put in a position where failure is likely to occur (Ryan & Haslam, 2005).

Analysis at the micro level contributes valuable information about factors within the individual that can affect her career – in the form of leadership style and effectiveness, investments in human and social capital (and their respective returns), career goals and expectations, as well as perceived support and barriers to her career advancement. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the ways in which women's careers are impacted by these factors are greatly influenced by what occurs on the macro and meso levels. For instance, what is happening in the political, economic, and social environments will trickle down to affect what goes on in and what is valued by organizations, which will then trickle down to the individuals working within those organizations in regard to their perceptions of support and opportunity (or lack thereof).

Though each of these different vantage points may provide some insight to the problem, viewing it from only one angle leaves out large pieces of the puzzle. For example, approaching the problem from the micro or individual level could be viewed as blaming the victim (Cunningham & Sagas, 2008) or attempting to fix the women (Shaw & Frisby, 2006), while not considering broader societal influences and organizational cultures. On the other hand, researchers examining the issue solely from the macro or meso levels risk losing sight of individual differences. Focusing too heavily on one particular perspective can distort our understanding of the issue being studied. Instead, it is important to approach the issue from multiple directions and levels to provide a more comprehensive understanding (Cunningham & Sagas, 2008) and thus provide the opportunity for the development of a more comprehensive solution.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND COUNSELING

Literature from the fields of career development and career counseling offer some promise for aiding in the discovery of the most effective ways to assist women who aim to obtain positions of leadership in the profession of athletics administration. There are various metaphors used to describe the shape or trajectory of a woman's career, as well as the barriers that can be encountered within it. For instance, some may describe a career as a path, a ladder, or a jungle gym with various obstacles along the way, and assume the individual will aim to get to the end, to the top, or to some place in the middle, while also avoiding or overcoming said obstacles. Examples of obstacles are often depicted as being constructed of glass, implying invisible and stable forces of some sort are at work that act against the progress of the individual who encounters them. First, there is the "glass ceiling," an invisible barrier (such as minority status, etc.) that prevents upward progression (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Another is the "glass wall," an invisible barrier that prevents one from moving laterally to positions that have more potential for promotion (Galloway, 2012). A third is the "glass cliff," an invisible precipice off of which one has a high probability of falling (Ryan & Haslam, 2005).

With all of these metaphorical obstacles come several assumptions. One is that if these obstacles are made of glass, they are invisible – they cannot be seen by the one who comes across them. Eagly and Carli (2007) argue that these barriers are indeed visible, if blurry. Another assumption is that the obstacles are set in a particular place and women hit against or fall off at that set place, when in fact women are being pushed out of their trajectories at various levels in their career expeditions. These metaphors are too simple

for such a complex issue as women's underrepresentation in upper-level management or leadership positions. Perhaps a more accurate metaphor for women's career journeys is a labyrinth. As Eagly and Carli (2007) describe it:

Passage through a labyrinth is not simple or direct, but requires persistence, awareness of one's progress, and a careful analysis of the puzzles that lie ahead...For women who aspire to top leadership, routes exist but are full of twists and turns, both unexpected and expected. Because all labyrinths have a viable route to the center, it is understood that goals are attainable. The metaphor acknowledges obstacles but is not ultimately discouraging. (p. 64)

If a woman can be equipped with a map of all the obstacles within the labyrinth to the center of which she wants to get, she is much better able to navigate the terrain. This idea highlights the importance of understanding the obstacles within a woman's career journey, including those situated in the labyrinth itself as well as those that come from outside (e.g., family commitments or other life circumstances).

Another metaphor that considers the complexity of women's careers is that of the kaleidoscope. Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) acknowledge that women tend to have non-traditional, nonlinear careers. Instead, they tailor their own career paths to suit their personal goals, needs, and life circumstances. Based on the relational nature found in women's career histories, Mainiero and Sullivan developed the kaleidoscope model of women's careers.

Like a kaleidoscope that produces changing patterns when the tube is rotated and its glass chips fall into new arrangements, women shift the pattern of their careers by rotating different aspects of their lives to arrange their roles and relationships in new ways. Women's careers, like kaleidoscopes, are relational. Each action taken by a woman in her career is viewed as having profound and long lasting effects on others around her. Each career action, therefore, is evaluated in light of the impact such decisions may have on her relationships with

others, rather than based on insulated actions as an independent actor on her own. (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005, p. 111)

In this view, a woman's career cannot be separated from context and there are elements that are shifted based upon what makes the best fit for her during a particular time in her life. The three elements that are shifted are authenticity, balance, and challenge, with some having more salience than others at different points in time or at different stages of her career (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). The kaleidoscope metaphor illustrates how different components of a woman's overall context, such as her life and career stages, social relationships, and the salience of each of the elements described combine to form her career at different stages in her life.

Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) developed a theory of careership with the intention of filling holes left by previously existing career development theories. Their theory of careership aims to combine macro- and meso-level forces with individual choice, incorporate a more refined learning model, and marry opportunity structures with personal preferences in order to integrate happenstance or serendipity into the career decision-making process. They define careership as "an uneven pattern of routine experience interspersed with...turning points" (p. 39). Where there are turning points, individuals make rational decisions within their horizons for action, or personal context and circumstances.

Rather than seeing an individual's career progression as a path, ladder, jungle gym, labyrinth, or any other metaphor, career construction theory (Savickas, 2005) views it as a story one tells about his or her working life. According to Savickas, the

foundations of career construction include the individual as actor, agent, and author. First, the individual develops a character or actor identity from childhood that builds upon a foundation of innate characteristics and is shaped by experiences in his or her immediate environment. Second, the individual becomes an agent through adapting to experiences in his or her extended environment, including tasks, transitions, and trauma. Third, the individual becomes an author, creating his or her own career story based upon experiences as actor and agent. It is in this stage that one takes an active role in pursuing career goals, assessing career opportunities, and navigating his or her way around social or organizational barriers blocking the path to the desired career.

The theory acknowledges the nonlinear and unpredictable nature of careers and recognizes that “individuals must construct an individual career that fits their own lives” (Savickas, 2005, p. 150). This reflects findings from research that demonstrate that women, unlike men, often have discontinuous and nonlinear careers. They often exit or are pushed out of the workforce because of familial obligations, having to take the majority of responsibility for caring for young children, aging parents, or both simultaneously for women in the “sandwich generation.” Once they are ready to reenter the workforce and resume their careers, they often have difficulty doing so and may end up only working part-time or changing their careers to be self-employed (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). Career construction theory (Savickas, 2005) also acknowledges the complex array of factors that influence one’s career journey, including those at the macro, meso, and micro levels. It takes into account broader societal factors, those in one’s community, as well as those within the self and his or her family. In addition, it

considers the fact that individuals make choices regarding their careers that are based upon the data they have from these multiple levels.

From career construction theory, Savickas et al. (2009) developed the career counseling method of life design, which is based upon five assumptions regarding paradigm shifts that need to be made in the field of career intervention. The first necessary shift is from paying attention to states and traits to focusing more on context. The second shift is from advising people on *what* to do to teaching them *how* to do it. The third is moving from linear causation to nonlinear dynamics that take into account happenstance or serendipity. Fourth is shifting from individuals relying on prescribed social norms regarding their careers to engaging in making meaning out of their own multiple realities. The fifth assumption is that there needs to be a shift from evaluating career counseling effectiveness by measurement of one or two outcome variables to instead being able to evaluate and model irregular, complex patterns and predict new arrangements of variables (Savickas et al., 2009).

Life design career counseling strategies take into account the aforementioned assumptions to help individuals design and build their careers over the course of their lives. In addition to being long-term, life design is also holistic; though the primary focus is on vocational aspects, other life roles are taken into consideration as well (e.g., parent, citizen, or hobbyist). Life design strategies should incorporate the environment or context in which one lives, including both past and present. The ways in which individuals have interacted with their environment as well as the meaning they have made from those experiences also need to be considered. In addition, rather than having

a life design intervention occur at transitions or turning points in one's career, they should ideally occur in a preventive fashion, so as to increase their opportunities for career choices. The life design method of career counseling should help improve adaptability to transitions, ability to understand and make meaning out of personal career stories, participation in activities that will help build their career resources, and intentionality – taking more ownership in the career they have constructed and making meaning of their behavior (Savickas et al., 2009). In a sense, this method of career counseling empowers individuals to be the architects of their own lives, designing and building their careers to suit their needs, desires, and personal contexts.

All of the career theories and metaphors discussed take into account the complex nature of individual lives and careers. What is needed in the body of knowledge regarding the underrepresentation of women in intercollegiate athletics administration is research that examines women's experiences while taking into consideration the context in which they live and work. It is important to gain a better understanding of how various contextual factors – macro, meso, and micro – combine to result in a particular career story, including personal *and* work experiences that lead to decisions that shape women's career futures. Once this kind of understanding is gained, improvements can be made in guiding women in their quests to design and build the careers they desire. The life course perspective could offer a rewarding path to obtaining such understanding.

LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE

The life course perspective (Elder, 1994) provides an excellent framework for examining the pertinent issue of the underrepresentation of women in intercollegiate athletics administration. There are four central themes to this perspective. The first involves the interaction of individual lives with historical times (Elder, 1994). As an example, women who have careers in athletic administration at this point in time have experienced the majority of their career in a post-Title IX era, which provides them with more opportunities than previous generations. Timing of lives is the second theme, which refers to typical expectations, based on age, in reference to developmental stages and social roles (Elder, 1994). For example, the period of life in which individuals are expected to develop romantic relationships and have children coincides with the period at which their careers are expected to be developing as well (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). The third theme is that of linked or interdependent lives, which refers to the idea that human beings exist in a social world in which individuals have relationships with others across their lifespan (Elder, 1994). For instance, once women do form a romantic bond and/or have children, they will consider those others when making decisions regarding their careers. The fourth theme is human agency in decision-making. Within personal contexts and constraints, individuals make decisions from their available options and those decisions in turn shape their lives (Elder, 1994). Within these four themes or frames, women experience a life and career trajectory that is influenced by key turning or decision points. Life course theorists (e.g., Elder, 1994) argue that by understanding

these key turning points, we can gain insight into life and career patterns, as well as the personal, organizational, and societal influences on these patterns.

Though this approach has not yet been used to examine the lack of females in athletics administration, one study has examined the experiences of female head coaches in NCAA Division I athletic programs (Bruening & Dixon, 2008). Bruening and Dixon used the life course perspective to examine the ways in which mothers who were also Division I head coaches were able to navigate the work-family interface. They found that women's choices regarding their careers were influenced by support (or lack thereof) from their organizations (particularly, their supervisors), as well as support (or lack thereof) from influential others, such as spouses or partners. Building on this work, there is a need for sport management researchers to explore the ways in which personal life factors may influence career progression within athletics administration and acknowledge the concepts laid out in the four frames of the life course perspective.

The life course perspective takes into account the common pattern of the development of career and the building of family happening in tandem, despite often being considered and researched as separate occurrences. When the current prototype of a career path is linear and lockstep, women often have to adopt adaptive strategies to make the best out of their circumstances. This can mean delaying childbearing, reducing hours when children are young, or exiting the workforce completely to focus on raising their children (Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Sweet & Moen, 2004). Because of the typical structure of paid work, most workers struggle to modify their lives to fit into a system

that is not conducive to having a balance between work and family obligations. As such, they often continue to work more than would be ideal for them (Sweet & Moen).

Using the life course perspective as a framework to comprehensively examine women's experiences while working in intercollegiate athletics administration could prove fruitful in gaining a better, more complete understanding of the factors that contribute to the key turning points in their careers. This kind of multi-level approach has not yet been taken in understanding women's careers in intercollegiate athletics administration and would add to the knowledge base in this area of study.

SUMMARY

Past approaches to studying the underrepresentation of women in intercollegiate athletics administration have yielded results that have added to the knowledge base and been beneficial in understanding various parts of the problem. The current understanding, however, is still piecemeal. What is needed now is a more gestalt approach, as the sum of parts does not equal the whole. We know from past research that the problem does not stem solely from traditional gender roles, a masculine environment, a preference for our leaders to be a certain sex, supports and barriers, or the balance of work with personal elements of life. Instead, it is a combination of various factors at multiple levels and it is crucial to consider the context within which people live and the circumstances and events that influence career decisions.

Men continue to dominate the profession of athletics administration, but women are showing they can be both successful and effective in positions of leadership once they

are given a fair chance. Current organizational policies do not allow for work environments that are conducive for women to advance their careers while still being able to have a life outside of work – whether that outside life includes having children, taking care of aging parents, or even having a hobby. In order to create and implement policies that promote a sustainable female presence in positions of leadership in athletics programs, it is first necessary to understand in the most complete way possible the experiences of women who work in the profession.

Though information gleaned from previous research has been important for understanding certain pieces of the puzzle, we need to also examine the problem from a broader and more holistic perspective. Women’s experiences in and out of the workplace need to be understood – events that shape their trajectories, what generation or cohort they are in, their personal relationships and how they might prioritize different aspects of their lives, how they do or do not balance work with family, and the nature of their personal and professional support systems. Using the life course perspective as a way to understand the underrepresentation of women in intercollegiate athletics administration would offer a multi-level approach to the problem that is currently missing from the sport management literature and needs to be added. Once a more complete understanding is gained, more effective career development strategies may be implemented to help women achieve the positions for which they strive within this profession.

Chapter 3: Method

The underrepresentation of women in intercollegiate athletics administration is a problem that can be best addressed through qualitative research. While quantitative research provides important information regarding the degree to which women are underrepresented (e.g., Acosta & Carpenter, 2014) and the types of positions they most often occupy (e.g., Burton et al., 2011; Zgonc, 2010), only qualitative methods can provide insight into women's lived experiences in the profession. Again, the following research questions were developed to guide this qualitative study:

- (1) In what ways do women perceive their past personal and professional life experiences to have influenced the choices they have made regarding their athletics administration careers?
- (2) What factors (i.e., individual, social, cultural, and organizational) have influenced their career choices?

Given the emphasis on women's perceptions of experiences within their own careers, a qualitative study is best suited to answer these questions.

This study employs qualitative descriptive methodology with hues or tones of phenomenology, which involves capturing thorough accounts of events in the everyday language of she who experienced them, interpreting the meanings placed on those experiences, and then describing them clearly and effectively (Sandelowski, 2000). According to Sandelowski, "the expected outcome of qualitative descriptive studies is a straight descriptive summary of the informational contents of data organized in a way that best fits the data" (p. 339). As such, this methodology fits the goals of this study by

providing a vehicle by which to understand women's lived experiences working in intercollegiate athletics administration and what elements of those lived experiences shaped their career choices.

SETTING

Data for the proposed study were collected from participants employed at NCAA Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) athletics institutions in the state of Texas. There are 12 Division I-FBS institutions in Texas, which are affiliated with five conferences (see Appendix E). The sampling frame was limited to FBS institutions for the following reasons. First, within the highest profile division, FBS is the highest profile subdivision (Marburger, 2015). One might compare this category within intercollegiate athletics to a Fortune 500 company in Corporate America, whereas the lower divisions might be compared to small businesses with fewer employees and resources. Schools within the FBS subdivision tend to have more personnel, due to their larger bases of operation, number of sports, and budgets (Won, Bravo, & Lee, 2013). With a higher number of people employed by athletics departments at these institutions, they provide a larger pool of employees from which to select participants, and within a larger pool of employees, one is likely to find more women. In Division I-FBS institutions, there is also a broader range of types of positions in contrast with Division II and III institutions, where a single employee often serves in multiple roles (Won et al., 2013). The nature of Division I-FBS institutions tends to be more competitive and seen as the more desirable positions in intercollegiate athletics administration, which can put more pressure

(perceived or otherwise) on the career path trajectories of women seeking to work in these high-status institutions (Burton et al., 2011; Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2008). In fact, FBS institutions have the lowest percentage of female athletic directors of all subdivisions at 6.3% (in comparison to 11.3 % at Football Championship Subdivision – FCS institutions and 15.6% at non-FBS or FCS institutions) (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014), posing an additional challenge for women seeking these top seats.

Further, the state of Texas is one that is politically painted red, in that the political climate tends to be more conservative. States with more conservative political climates have fewer women in athletics administration at the collegiate level (15.1% in red states versus 26.8% in blue states), as do states in the southern region of the United States (16.9% of ADs are female in comparison to the Northeast: 29.9%, the Midwest: 19.4%, and the West: 20%) (see Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). Texas fits into both of these categories. In addition, there may be a unique cultural element to the setting of Texas due to the importance of the male-dominated sport of football within the state (Whisenant, 2005). This unique element may make it even more difficult for women to penetrate the “old boys’ club” of intercollegiate athletics and specifically programs in which football is a key component. This unique cultural element adds an additional challenge for women who seek to gain entry into the top-level positions in these Division I-FBS institutions, increasing the pressure these women face. Football is a primary revenue generating force within Texas college athletics at the FBS level, putting more at stake for those who aim to run these programs (Won et al., 2013).

Limiting the sampling frame to one state also allowed for many of the interviews to be conducted in person, which allowed me the opportunity to foster trust and rapport, as well as to read and respond appropriately to body language. In-person, face-to-face, interviews are the ideal format for conducting qualitative interviews, as they allow the interviewer to read social cues, such as body language and voice intonation (Opdenakker, 2006). In the few instances where in-person interviews were not feasible, interviews were conducted via Skype or over the phone. Body language and voice intonation can still be assessed via Skype (Sullivan, 2012), however, telephone interviewing does not allow for the visual social cue of body language (Opdenakker, 2006).

SAMPLING CRITERIA AND PROCEDURE

As is appropriate for a qualitative descriptive study, purposive sampling was utilized, meaning that potential participants were selected only if they were seen as information-rich sources for the purposes of the study (Sandelowski, 2000). Those recruited consisted of female, mid-career intercollegiate athletics administrative employees in various areas of athletics departments, including but not limited to Compliance, Development (Fundraising) Events, Equipment, Life Skills, and Student Services. The sample inclusion criteria was chosen for several reasons, including that they would: (1) have enough years of experience to have potentially progressed in their careers (Morrow & McElroy, 1987) and have experienced facilitators and barriers to further career progression, (2) be in a typical age span (pre-menopausal adulthood) for

establishing or maintaining committed partnerships and/or families, and (3) still have sufficient time to continue progression within their careers.

To be eligible for participation in the study, women must have been employed in a Division I-FBS intercollegiate athletics program, have at least eight years of experience working in intercollegiate athletics administration, and be within the age range of 30-50 years old at the time of data collection. The minimum level of experience and age range were chosen based on previously utilized operational definitions of mid-career discussed by Morrow and McElroy (1987) in their review of career stages in various career fields. For example, some researchers have defined mid-career as an age range, such as 35-49 (e.g., Rabinowitz & Hall, 1981), 30-45 (e.g., Hall & Nougaim), or 31-44 (e.g., Gould, 1979). Though they may be referred to by different terms, such as mid-career, advancement, or stabilization, respectively, they are all meant to refer to the middle stage (typically of three) of one's career.

Other researchers have delineated career stages by number of years in the profession, organization, or position. Stages are defined as fewer than two years for the establishment or orientation stage, more than two and fewer than 10 years for the advancement or growth (middle) stage, and more than 10 years for the subsequent maintenance or plateau stage (Morrow & McElroy, 1987). These delineations get complicated, however, as the longevity used for these measurements of one's career are the same, regardless of whether one is examining occupational/professional, organizational, or positional tenure. Thus, combining the age range and longevity definitions allows for inclusion of those who entered the workforce immediately

following college graduation, as well as those who may have changed paths early on in their careers. As such, the eight-year minimum used for sample selection in this study takes both types of stage measurement into consideration.

The desired sample size for this study was approximately 10-20 participants. This sample size was desired due to the study's design – qualitative description with hues or tones of phenomenology (Sandelowski, 2000). Typical sample sizes for qualitative descriptive studies are moderate (20 or more) (Sullivan-Bolyai, Bova, & Harper, 2005), while phenomenological studies require smaller samples of approximately six (Sandelowski, 1995). Therefore, the sample size was expected to be in between these numbers. Other qualitative methodologies, such as grounded theory and ethnography tend to have larger sample sizes of 30-50 in comparison. (Sandelowski, 1995). Recruitment and enrollment were to continue until data saturation or “data adequacy” was achieved, when patterns and themes could be identified from the initially diverse and disconnected data and no new patterns could be identified (Morse, 1995).

Female intercollegiate athletics employees were selected and invited to participate in this dissertation research based upon knowledge of their employment in an intercollegiate athletics program. This knowledge was obtained by examining athletics department websites associated with the Division I-FBS institutions in the recruitment area. Information regarding work history and age can often be gleaned from these websites, which often have brief biographies of staff members. Such information was used to establish whether women fit the defined criteria for participation in the study. In the event that the athletics department websites did not have biographies of staff

members, online staff directories were accessed to determine which employees might fit the sampling criteria. This was done by looking at names and position titles, then using an Internet search engine and/or a career-oriented social media and networking site (i.e., LinkedIn) to determine their approximate age and work history. Using publicly accessible email addresses from the staff directories, selected prospective participants were sent an email with a description of the study and were invited to participate (see Appendix F). In addition, some participants voluntarily provided suggestions of other women they knew who might also fit the criteria for participation and offered to reach out to them on my behalf. No other advertisement or notice was posted for the purpose of recruiting participants.

After initial contact was made and the selected potential participants had shown a positive interest in participating in the study, a packet was delivered to them at their preferred address, which contained the consent form for participation in research and the first data collection tool. The consent form was approved by the University of Texas's Internal Review Board (IRB) (Study #2013-09-0089) and outlined the purpose of the study, what would be asked of them if they chose to participate, the potential risks and benefits of participation, and the ways in which participants' identities would be protected. The form also included contact information, not only for myself, but also for the IRB, to use if they had any questions or concerns about the study or their participation in the study (see Appendix B). Participants gave their consent by signing the form and returning it to me by scanning and emailing it or sending it via paper mail. No incentives or disincentives were offered to reward or punish for participation decisions.

FINAL SAMPLE

The final sample for this study was composed of thirteen mid-career athletic administrators from FBS institutions in the state of Texas. They ranged in age from 33 to 47 years and the average age was approximately 40 years. Participants' years of experience in athletics administration (excluding previous coaching-only careers or careers outside of athletics administration) ranged from eight to 28 years with a mean of approximately 15.5 years (including internships or part-time student positions) and eight to 24 years with a mean of approximately 13.75 years (excluding internships or part-time student positions). Any time working for either the NCAA or a conference office are included in these numbers.

The women in this study had different types of administrative roles and titles within their respective athletics departments. Titles included Coordinator (1), Assistant Director (2), Director (2), Assistant Athletic director (1), Associate Athletic director (3), Senior Associate Athletic director (4), and Senior Woman Administrator (4). Senior Woman Administrator (SWA) does not exist as a sole title, but rather is attached as a secondary title to those who hold that position. As such, someone will not be just an SWA, but will be, for example, a Senior Associate AD/SWA. The areas of athletics in which participants worked at the time of data collection included Compliance, Development, Events, Internal Operations, Life Skills, Marketing, and Student Services. Some did not work in a specific area of athletics, but instead served as senior members of the administrative staff in their respective athletics departments.

Eleven (84.6%) of the participants were White and two (15.4%) were Black. Twelve (92.3%) of the women in this study had earned a post-graduate degree, either a Master's or a professional degree, while the remaining one (7.7%) had earned a Bachelor's degree. Eight (61.5%) of the women were either married or in a committed partnership, and seven (53.8%) were mothers or soon-to-be-mothers (by birth or adoption). At the time of data collection, participants were employed at seven different Division I-FBS institutions within the state of Texas that were part of five different conferences (see Appendix E for a table of all Division I-FBS institutions in Texas and their respective conference affiliations).

DATA COLLECTION MEASURES

Data were collected using three measures – a life/career map (see Appendix D), a subsequent conversational interview, and field notes. First, data were collected via a life/career map. The life/career map is a version of a life history calendar (LHC), often used in life course research. The use of the LHC has been shown to improve the quality of data that come from retrospective accounts highlighting events and transitions that have taken place over the course of one's life. Recall of events comes easier when they are linked to key reference points and thus data collection can be more accurate when the LHC, or in this case, the life/career map is used (Scott & Alwin, 1998). This data collection method can help untangle the complexities that surround important turning points in people's lives in part by providing a graphical representation of events and also by enhancing the dialogue in the subsequent interview (Worth, 2011). The life/career

map used in this research was modeled in a way that fit the sample and purpose of this particular study. For example, specific historical events that could be seen as being instrumental to women's progression in the worlds of work and sport were included in the "social events" section of the map.

Second, data were collected using conversational interviews that occurred in person, via Skype, or over the phone. Interviews were guided by each participant's completed life/career map and included additional questions specifically designed for this study. (See Appendix A) The intention for interview data was to glean insight into the ways in which personal and professional experiences and influences create turning points that shape the trajectories of women's athletics administration careers.

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

After agreeing to take part in the study, a packet containing four items was delivered to each participant. These four items were (1) the consent form described above (2) instructions for completing the life/career map, (3) the life/career map, and (4) a pre-addressed, stamped envelope. (See Appendices B, C, and D for the first three items. Paper mail was used due to the size of the template, which was printed on an above average (11" x 17") paper size in order to make it more readable and easier for participants to complete. Participants were encouraged to complete the maps in a place with minimal distractions at their leisure to allow them the time and space to reflect upon their experiences. The life/career map used in this study was a chart containing a variety of socially significant events to aid in memory retrieval, a blank section to use for

inserting additional social events that were significant to each participant specifically, and an open space for the participant to note significant events in her career and personal life perceived to influence her career trajectory. The open space was designed in a way to allow the participant to place events higher or lower, depending on the level of significance to the participant herself. The bottom portion contained a section to write her age and a timeline with pre-labeled years to help organize events chronologically. The timeline went further into the past than their birth to allow for the women to include events that occurred before they were born, which they may have perceived as influencing their life or career in some way. For example, events such as the passing of legislation regarding civil, equal, or women's rights; an experience a parent may have had that was passed on through stories; or (because of this athletics-oriented population) sporting events such as Olympic Games.

Upon receipt of the completed maps and signed consent forms, the participants were contacted to schedule a time for the conversational interviews to be conducted. Interviews were scheduled to occur at a time and location most comfortable for the participant, when and where a reasonable level of privacy could be expected. The in-person interviews typically occurred in the participants' offices or conference rooms during their normal workday. The life/career maps were brought to the interviews, so that they could be referenced in the presence of the participant. When Skype was used, the map was scanned and emailed to the participant to reference as well. Questions were related to information indicated by the participants on their life/career maps and were guided by the theoretical perspective being used as a framework for this study – the life

course perspective. As such, questions were asked pertaining to the women's generation or cohort, perceived social expectations, important people in their lives, and other potential influences on their career choices and trajectories (see Appendix A). Due to the conversational nature of the interviews, questions were asked to follow up on topics previously touched upon, but not discussed in depth, in order to gain more insight into the participants' perspectives and experiences. Interviews were expected to last approximately 60-90 minutes, but lengths differed depending on the extent to which the participants chose to elaborate on their experiences.

In addition to the life/career map and subsequent conversational interviews, field notes were taken to document observations and impressions that would not come through in the interview. Information documented in field notes included, but were not limited to, general observations of the environment or setting where the interview took place, impressions of their moods and willingness to share, and comments about how particular topics mentioned in the interviews may relate to any of the themes or subthemes already identified.

Each of the thirteen women included as participants in this research participated by completing the life-career map and subsequent conversational interview specifically tailored to address the aforementioned research questions. Interviews lasted from 35 to 136 minutes with the average length being approximately 83 minutes. Eleven of the interviews were conducted in person, one was conducted via Skype, and one was conducted over the phone. Because of the conversational nature of the interviews, each one was slightly different. Differences in questions asked were based on what the

women had indicated as being of significance to their lives or careers on their life-career maps as well as what they had discussed throughout the interviews. For a list of sample interview questions, see Appendix A.

DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS

Interviews were recorded using a Sony digital voice recorder (Model #ICD-PX333). After the interviews were conducted, the recording was uploaded to a secure file, transcribed by a professional transcription service that guarantees confidentiality, returned to my password-protected email account, and then put into a separate secure file. No names were used in the transcripts or in the reported results. Instead, participant identification numbers were used in transcripts and field notes, while pseudonyms were used in reported results. Only one master list of participant identification numbers and names was used, which was kept in a password-protected file. To ensure accuracy, I listened to the audio recording while reading through the transcripts and made corrections as appropriate.

To analyze the data gathered from the conversational interview, I performed a qualitative content analysis using a combination of deductive and inductive coding techniques (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008), as is appropriate for this kind of study. First, individual meaning units were broadly categorized into the four frames of the life course perspective as prescribed by Elder (1994) – life and historical times, timing of lives, linked or interdependent lives, and human agency. For example, references to historical or environmental context, generational placement, and items circled or written on the

life/career maps in regard to social and historical events were categorized in life and historical times. References to social and biological timing, including attached expectations and experiences were categorized in timing of lives. References to connections with other people, including but not limited to support and considerations were categorized in linked lives. Finally, references to personal preferences, action, and decision-making were categorized in human agency. From the data in each broad category, patterns were then identified and distributed into subcategories or subthemes (See Table 2 for final code descriptions). These identified subcategories constitute the themes within the data that serve to answer the research questions guiding this study:

- (1) In what ways do women perceive their past personal and professional life experiences to have influenced the choices they have made regarding their athletics administration careers?
- (2) What factors (i.e., individual, social, cultural, and organizational) have influenced their career choices?

In addition, as suggested by Worth (2011), the life/career maps were used to interpret the temporal nature of the women's transitions or turning points in their careers by identifying the ways in which chronological time intersected with the complexities of their lived experiences from the start of their careers in athletics up to the time of data collection.

| Life Course Perspective Main Themes | Identified Subthemes | Descriptions: All include not only references to, but also effects upon thought processes and choices regarding career |
|--|--|---|
| Life and Historical Times | Generational or Cohort Effects | Placement in or comparison to other generations or cohorts and special characteristics about own generation or cohort |
| | Effects of Legislation | Perceived impacts of any circled (or written) pieces of legislation on the life/career map |
| | Impact of Events | Perceived impacts of any circled (or written) events on the life/career map |
| | Nature of the Profession | Environmental context of working in athletics administration |
| Timing of Lives | Age-Graded Activities and Expectations | References to activities and expectations at different times of life (e.g., childhood, adolescence, adulthood) |
| | Stages of Career and Life | References to different stages of career (e.g., beginning and advancement) |
| | Shifts in Priorities | Changes in priority structure due to other factors (e.g., following personal or social events, changes in career or life stage, etc.) |
| | Happenstance | Reference to fate, luck, chance, and fortune in relation to timing (including meeting the right people, being in the right place, higher power providing opportunities - all at the right time) |
| Linked Lives | Support from Others in Profession | Perceived support from supervisors, colleagues, coworkers, or mentors |
| | Leadership | Perceptions of good and bad leaders; elements of good leadership |
| | Support from Others Outside of Work | Perceived support from family, friends, or others in social circle |
| | Consideration of Others | Ways in which connections to other people serve as factors to consider when weighing possible options |
| Human Agency | Individual Interests | Likes, dislikes, preferences, passions, interests |
| | Person-Environment Fit | References to "fit" between individual and people, organizations, jobs, profession, physical environment |
| | Taking Advantage of Opportunities | Seeking out and/or acting upon opportunities to progress, take a job offer, develop professionally, etc. |
| | Career Decision-Making | Making decisions and taking action toward decisions; goals or aspirations |

Table 2 : Code descriptions.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) (as cited by Cohen & Crabtree, 2006), there are four elements that must be established in order to deem qualitative data trustworthy: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To establish credibility, or belief in the truthfulness of the data, I used methods triangulation by checking the consistency of the findings within the life/career map and the interview. In addition, peer debriefing was used to uncover any researcher bias by consulting with members of my dissertation committee (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). To aid in transferability, I have provided a description of the selection and recruitment of the participants, the context in which the research was conducted, and the processes of data collection and analysis in this dissertation report (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). To ensure dependability, I consulted with members of my dissertation committee for an external audit of the process and product of the study (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Confirmability was established through the aforementioned methods triangulation as well as through the use of an audit trail. I have retained all raw data, including the life/career map, field notes, and audio recordings of each interview.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As has been established, women remain underrepresented in intercollegiate athletics administration. Given this phenomenon, it is important to try to understand why this is the case, so that steps can be taken to ensure women have equal access to opportunities within this profession and know how best to navigate the terrain to obtain and thrive in the positions that they desire. Though previous research has approached this from macro, meso, and micro levels of analysis and has added much to the knowledge in this area, there is still a lack of understanding from a more holistic perspective that takes both career and life factors, as well as the timing of those factors into account. In order to make progress in making this profession into one that allows for a sustainable female presence, it is imperative to examine women's experiences in the profession in a multi-level manner and identify the factors within their lived experiences that have influenced the decisions they have made regarding their careers. The purpose of this study was to do just that. The questions guiding this study are as follows:

- (1) In what ways do women perceive their past personal and professional life experiences to have influenced the choices they have made regarding their athletics administration careers?
- (2) What factors (i.e., individual, social, cultural, and organizational) have influenced their career choices?

To answer these research questions, a qualitative study based in the participants' lived experiences was undertaken, which included using a life/career mapping technique followed by conversational interviewing. Results from this study indicate that women's

careers within intercollegiate athletics administration are influenced by multiple factors – short- and long-term; internal and external; macro-, meso-, and micro-level. These careers do not exist in a vacuum, and as such, they are susceptible to impact from the circumstances preceding and surrounding them. The career paths of the women who participated in this study were affected by each of the four themes outlined by the life course perspective (Elder, 1994) and more specifically by the subthemes identified within each of those broader themes.

Results and discussion of this study will be presented in four separate chapters – one for each of the four central themes of the life course perspective: life and historical times, timing of lives, linked lives, and human agency. Within each chapter, the subthemes identified within the respective central theme will be reviewed and examples will be provided that demonstrate those subthemes. There will be a brief discussion of findings within each subtheme, followed by a summary discussion at the end of each chapter. To uphold confidentiality, pseudonyms are used throughout the reported results and best efforts have been made to avoid using any identifying information.

Chapter 4: Life and Historical Times

According to the life course perspective, the period during which one lives will have implications for her lived experience. The historical and social context into which an individual is born will give her exposure to different realities from those born years before or after her, especially in surrounding socially progressive times. When social changes occur, a cohort effect may appear, where those changes are reflected in the life patterns of subsequent generations or cohorts (Elder, 1994). The data show that the study participants' careers were influenced by their historical context, which provided them with different opportunities, which would in turn affect their career decisions. Several sub-themes were identified within this theme: generational or cohort effects, legislation, social and historical events, and the current nature of the profession.

GENERATIONAL OR COHORT EFFECTS

The women in this study discussed various effects of being in their particular generation or cohort that have affected their careers in athletics administration. The effects discussed primarily included comparisons with generations or cohorts of women that preceded them, aspects of their own generation, and comparisons with subsequent generations. In addition, the intersectionality of race and gender was discussed in terms of the difficulty that accompanies being a minority female in this profession.

Generational Differences

Many of the women commented on the idea that they would not have the opportunity to be where they are now in their careers if it had not been for the women who came before them and paved the way. For example, Leah said, “I have never had a problem with employment or advancement as a result of my gender. I have never seen that firsthand. And I’m sure that’s because generations ahead of me fought for it.” Similarly, Michelle stated,

I think, in my generation, I feel like I’ve had some opportunities that have kind of fallen in my lap and have been a little bit easier than they may have been if I would have been an earlier generation. I think the ground had been broken for me to get into this profession way before.

Kate also felt as though she reaped the benefits provided by the women who fought for their place in this profession:

I’ve been able to stand on their shoulders. So I think I’ve been pretty fortunate... I think it’s not perfect, but it is very progressive from what it used to be, and it’s at least tolerable. And I think they were [in situations] where they were discriminated against, and they weren’t welcome, and they were treated despicably, and they still just kept showing up until somebody like me had the opportunity to at least legally have the right to be there, and sometimes required to have a position to be there. And then, from there, you have to prove yourself on your own merits. They didn’t have that. So I think that’s what I benefited from.

Kris commented on how women in this profession are fortunate because of the opportunities available to them today:

Our generation has been pretty fortunate. The one before us, I talk to my boss about how she got into this. They had like six people that did everything for women’s sports and that was it. They did everything – business office, promotions...So that was about all there was until probably in the late ‘90s and early 2000s, and then stuff started opening up. I have a feeling it was like that at a lot of other schools. I think our generation was probably the first one to have a

good amount of opportunities as athletic administrators, and it's just kind of gone from there.

Rebecca noted the differences among what different generations have experienced or are currently experiencing:

The women that came before me had it way harder, no doubt about it. Things have definitely changed, and they are changing for the better for the next generation for sure. I'm probably right at that cusp of women that pursued this field as a real career, as opposed to maybe a coaching, teaching job. The women that had administrative opportunities were working just in the women's athletic department...The women that came before us really...at least the stories...I know people embellish the past, but stories aren't always pleasant, what the women went through before us. But things have definitely changed, for sure – opportunities for student athletes, absolutely, but even for administrators. But there is so much yet to still be done.

In a similar vein, Kate said, “Seeing the women that went before us...they had it worse. And I always feel like it's too bad that people don't say thank you.” She went on to discuss hearing about younger women who have no idea what things were like for women even 30 years ago. “We've made such good strides,” she said.

In a way, it's refreshing. There's been so much progress that these generations have no idea how good they have it. But in the one way that it's frustrating, it's like to be able to appreciate...you don't understand what they did and what barriers were broken down and then how far they've come in the world that you have. But they probably didn't do it because they wanted you to know, but history sometimes repeats itself. It's trying to find that sweet spot between being able to appreciate and understand what you have and kind of acknowledge and respect the past. I'm not saying that you don't have to always get better, but the good news is we made a lot of strides. The bad news is I think so much, in a short amount of time, there's a lot missing to connect the generations.

Jessica described her generation as being “in between” those who worked so hard to create opportunities that are available now and the younger generation or cohort that may believe they are entitled to such privileges.

I think my generation is kind of right before the kids now that have a big sense of entitlement, which I think feel you hear a lot from people that work with current college students, the whole entitlement thing. My generation's weird because it's kind of in between....We were at an age where we'd remember 9/11. I know kids now, some kids don't even know what that's all about.

From these examples, it is apparent that the women in this study recognize the impact that living in the time they do has had on their own lived experiences. They see that because they are living now, rather than in previous periods of time, they have access to more opportunities. They are also grateful to those who came before for them who played a role in making those opportunities possible.

Comparison to Mothers and Grandmothers

In addition to commenting on how being in their particular generation or cohort affected their lives or careers, the participants were asked to reflect on how they thought their experiences may have differed from those of their mothers or grandmothers. Some mentioned that their ancestors did not have the chance to go to college or work. Instead, they were expected to get married young, have children, and stay home to care for those children. If their mothers or grandmothers did work, they were employed in stereotypically feminine fields, such as teaching or nursing.

For example, Rebecca said, “My mother didn’t have an opportunity to go to school. Her brother was allowed to go to school, but she wasn’t. It’s just very different what they went through.” Similarly, Amanda commented on her mother’s cohort:

They were small town [Midwestern] women. You grow up, and get married, and have babies. None of my...you know, my mom or my siblings went to university for four years and actually finished and graduated. I think my uncle went for a couple years, played baseball. But my mom went to a tech school and got [a

technical certification]... I think their generation was more about the old fashion of women getting married and having babies and that's what you're supposed to do. Obviously, my generation is a lot more individual-focused on where you are going and, along the way, getting married and having kids.

Several participants said that, unlike the women in previous generations, they were expected to go to college and maybe even graduate school. For example, Leah said,

I look at my grandmother, who I think had to fight her parents to allow her to go to nursing school. And then, with my parents, there was never a question: Do you go to college? In fact, everyone in my family has graduate degrees. So it's just what you do – the education to prepare you for a professional life... I think she had to push against her parents in order to do that. I didn't. Mine were like, "Of course you are going. It's just *where* are you going?"

Similarly, Rebecca expressed:

I always knew I was going to have a career. Somehow, it was always somehow instilled and engrained in me that I was going to college – that I was going to have some sort of a professional career. I can't remember exactly where that came from, other than I'm assuming that it came from my parents. My education was always very important to them.

Kris commented on how in previous generations, the women who had jobs worked in particular professions in comparison to the opportunities that women have today:

Back in those days, there were certain things that you did. My mom was a schoolteacher. My grandmother was a nurse. There's way more opportunities, not just in athletics obviously, but in life these days...career paths that you can choose from. Education is better and everything.

These examples demonstrate some of the differences between the expectations of previous cohorts of women and the expectations this cohort of women has faced in their own lives. Their mothers and grandmothers did not have the same access to education and ability to pursue careers that were not prescribed for their gender that these women have had in their own lives.

Stay-At-Home Moms

In part because their mothers did not have as much of an emphasis on their own careers, many of the women reported that they grew up in homes where their mothers stayed at home with them, which was commented on very positively. The women expressed that they really enjoyed having their mothers there with them growing up. For example, Michelle said about her mother,

She never finished her undergraduate degree. She pretty much just did part-time (once we were older, full-time) jobs, but her sole job was the family. If she was able to do work on the side, that was kind of just secondary. That was kind of a little bit of the expectation. Even growing up, that's what I wanted. I'm like, "I'm going to be a stay at home mom. I want to have four kids." That's kind of what I thought just because that's what I knew, and I appreciated that as a kid and having that support. I loved coming home and my mom being there. I was like, "I want to be that mom, too."

Jessica said,

My mom was a stay-at-home mom. She helped [run] the companies with my dad, she did everything, but we always had a family dinner, a hot meal. She made every Christmas and Thanksgiving dinner... She was just incredible with all of that stuff. And it was never about being successful in a career. It was always about family.

Though she also loved having her mom at home, Melissa also had the thought growing up that her mom should have done more. She said,

I always thought, "Oh, she should work." And she did have a job [in early childhood education]...But, "Oh, she should have finished her Master's degree," because she got her undergraduate degree and started her Master's degree and then got pregnant and had my brother.

This thought in turn made Melissa feel as though she should do more herself in regard to her own education and career.

Having had such positive experiences with their mothers staying at home with them while they were growing up influenced what kind of life several of them wanted for themselves – at least when they were younger. Inspired by their home experiences, some of these women wanted to have similar lifestyles, but also have the education and some sort of career. Several thought the road to such a lifestyle was to go into teaching as a profession – and being “sports-minded” individuals, some thought they might teach and coach. This would have provided them with the option of having summers off. As Alice stated,

The whole decision to go All-Level PE (teaching certification), I had one thing in mind, and that was when I’m married, if I have to work, because I would have wanted to have stayed home with children. But if I’m married and I have to work, if I do elementary PE, then I’ll have summers off and I won’t have a lot of paperwork to do at home... I just always figured I would be married. That’s what I wanted. I wanted to have a family and I wanted to be able to stay home with them if I could. But I also wanted to be prepared, because my sister, she has her degree, but she gets to stay home with her kids. My brother, he and his wife are both teachers, so they both have to work and have always had to work to support the family. So she didn’t have the luxury of getting to stay home with the kids like my sister does. So I always had the vision of staying home with kids.

When she was in college, Melissa had changed her goal from going to law school and having a career in politics to being a high school teacher and coach. She thought, “If I’m a teacher, I can stay home with my kids during the summer, so I can still have both worlds of career and mother.” Interestingly, though one of the women did actually pursue the teaching and coaching path at first, all of them ended up in the profession of intercollegiate athletics administration, where they do not have summers off and they have very busy schedules, as will be discussed in a later section.

Michelle saw teaching and coaching as a default career. After learning more about the profession she thought she was going into – sports medicine, she realized something that did not align with her personal life goals. She said,

I was looking at the time commitment and understanding a little bit more about what a sports medicine career would be, what the time demands would be, then thinking long term of my desire to have a family and what I wanted as far as being able to commit to my family and career and have that work/life balance, and I didn't feel like sports medicine was going to be able to allow me to do that.

She found herself lost for a while, knowing that she wanted to be involved with sports, but did not know in what way. She thought, “What could I do? I guess I need to teach and coach.” She did not end up pursuing that career path, but this quote demonstrates that teaching and coaching is viewed as a career that can be done alongside of being a mother and may be one that women pursue as a default if they want to have children and work in sports.

Although all of the women whose mothers stayed at home with them in their childhood appreciated and enjoyed that, and some of them were inspired by their mothers to have a lifestyle that would allow them to be able to spend time at home with their own children while also working outside of the home and having a career, some of them thought differently. Jennifer spoke about how her mother stayed at home with her and her siblings when they were young, but then pursued education and a career when they were older. She said about her mother:

She was very deliberate and specific in the way that she did things. There was a plan to it, even though it might have looked like madness to others... She made choices to be our mother at a time we needed her to be mother, and then she pursued other things once we were [older]...I mean she was always our mother. She would never say she put anything on hold. She made specific choices.

These women's mothers had impacted them greatly. Some may have aspired to be like them, while others were inspired to have a different kind of lifestyle. Some, as will be discussed in another chapter, are still negotiating how they want to enact motherhood themselves, if at all. It was apparent from the interviews, however, that all of these women had been influenced by and had deep respect for their mothers.

Being Encountered as Humans

In addition to commenting on her mother's deliberateness in her choices to stay at home while she and her siblings were young and pursue a career life later, Jennifer also commented on her father, who also had a profound impact on her by encountering her as a human being, rather than as a girl. She said,

I had a feminist for a father, even though he would never admit it. [laughs] I mean that. The man would never believe that if I told him that, but he truly is a feminist in the most pure sense of the word, because he never believed I couldn't be whatever I wanted or set my mind to, and he instilled that in me. He never treated me as anything other than who I was. He didn't say, "You're a girl," or, "You can't do this because you're a girl." He just encountered me as a human being. Yeah, I was his daughter and all of that, but it was this sense that I knew that there were doors open for me and I could walk right through them. And I never thought I couldn't. And I think that a lot of that came from the confidence my father had in me.

Jennifer, like her father, has had a very successful career thus far and has not felt many limitations as a woman in her career.

Similarly, Leah was only encountered as a human being by her parents, which has led to her not feeling limited by her gender. She said,

I was raised it doesn't matter if you are a boy or a girl. You have to learn to do everything. In some families, I understand there was division of labor. The boys

learned this and the girls learned this. And it was never that way in our home. So I think we were raised with the understanding of if it's going to get done, then somebody has to do it. And if you are the one around, then you are the one who is going to do it. And so, gender to me has never been a reason to do one task or avoid another. At that point, we're just people. And if the job is going to get done, then somebody needs to do it, and it doesn't really matter what gender you are. And so that may be another reason for my perspective, is that I haven't seen it as a barrier because I was raised that, boy or girl, it doesn't matter. It's got to get done. So get it done.

Intersectionality

Cohorts and cohort impacts can include age and gender, but also race and ethnicity. While it is challenging for a woman to be in a male-dominated profession, it is even more challenging to be a woman of color in such an environment. For example, Yvonne described her cohort as being a black female. She said, "It's been a challenge being a black female in this industry. It really is."

She discussed an experience she has had of being not only the sole female in her administrative staff, but also the only black female in her administrative staff:

Some things are better than others. Sometimes I don't want to share with another female. [laughs] But being a female and being a minority female in this department is tough because I feel like I'm always fighting for things that reflect African-Americans or minorities in general, and with women. So it looks like I'm always doing that just because I am "that person"... For a long time I felt like I didn't use my voice. And even still, I find myself not addressing certain things because I'm like, "I don't want to seem like the angry black woman when I'm not."

She also described a couple of experiences that made her feel discriminated against when seeking the next career move. One of these experiences will live on in her memory. She said,

I'll never forget one specific incident when a specific job came open. A lady who I thought we were really cool as far as the industry is related...she's probably at her last spot. She's probably ready to retire. She said, "You are going to be the person that we promote." So a really big job comes open and I hear about it, but I obviously hear about it on the backend. So when I call her to say, "Hey, do you have any connections there?" she's like, "You know what? They just asked me about people and I forgot you!" She's a white female and I'm just like...But she did promote the one who got the job. She didn't tell me that. And I'm not saying there's not good things out there happening for minorities, but you don't see many of us. It's just frustrating. I'm [in my 40s now and I saw this when I was [in my 20s]. And things just aren't really moving. So I look at the cohort from being a black female. And my generation, I think my generation is dealing with what people ahead of me are dealing with, people behind me. It's limited. A lot of people say it's limitless, but ours is limited. That's how I feel.

Yvonne's example demonstrates how having multiple disadvantaged identities can add to career constraints, perceived or otherwise.

Discussion of Generational or Cohort Effects

The subtheme of generational or cohort effects includes references to generational differences, comparisons to mothers and grandmothers, and intersectionality. Generational differences were largely discussed in terms of opportunity. In comparison to previous times in history, the women believed that they had much more opportunity for a variety of experiences, including career options, educational pursuits, and sports participation. They feel grateful to the women who came before and fought for the benefits they now get to reap. Some acknowledged that they do not feel as though they are at any disadvantage based upon their gender because of what those women in previous generations did. According to Elder (1994), the effects of historical placement on human lives can produce a cohort effect whereby social changes will impact the experiences and life patterns of the cohorts that follow. This was recognized by the

women in this study as an important influence on their own lives that helped provide expanded career opportunities and thus the ability to work in athletics.

When comparing their own experiences to their mothers' and grandmothers', the women expressed the idea that their mothers and grandmothers options were much more limited. Some were not allowed to pursue a college education, whereas it was expected and natural for these women to earn college degrees. Some of their mothers and grandmothers were also not allowed to play sports, as most of these women did. When their mothers and/or grandmothers had careers outside the home, they were in stereotypically feminine fields, such as teaching and nursing. Most of their mothers, however, stayed at home to raise them and their siblings. For some, this seemed more of an expectation, while for others, it was a life choice. Having stay-at-home moms influenced these women mostly by providing an example. Many of the women were inspired by their positive experience with their mothers at home that they wanted to be able to spend that kind of time with their own children, if or when that time came. In addition to that, they also had desires to have some sort of career. Having both of those desires made several of them consider professions that would allow them to have summers off, such as being a teacher (and perhaps a coach). Interestingly, they all chose a profession that has hefty time demands and sometimes odd hours, which can place a constraint upon them as they now try to navigate their multiple roles. While this switch in career goals could be seen as an individual choice, it also reflects how the temporal element of these women's contexts contributed to their opportunities and aspirations (Sweet & Moen, 2006), which influenced their career decisions.

One participant touched upon the concept of intersectionality, which is the intersection of multiple oppressed categories that can include gender and race. The experiences Yvonne described reflect a phenomenon called intersectional invisibility, which is when people who have multiple disadvantaged identities (e.g., black and female) tend to be overlooked. One of the consequences of intersectional invisibility is a lack of recognition or trouble having “voices heard, and when heard, understood” (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008, p. 383). This invisibility can contribute to black females being underrepresented in top positions in the profession of athletics administration, which have historically been filled by white males. For this participant, feeling invisible or as though she is present just to “check a box” may lead to feelings of dissatisfaction with her career and call into question whether she wants to be in her current environment.

Intersectionality is an important concept to consider when examining the underrepresentation of women in this profession, as African-American women make up a very small percentage of the leadership structure of athletics programs. According to Lapchick et al. (2012), in the 2011-2012 reporting year, there were zero athletic directors in this category at the Division I level, 1% at the Division II level, and .5% at the Division III level. The numbers for African-American females were slightly higher in the “pipeline” positions of associate athletic directors (3.2%, 1.4%, and 1.8%) and assistant athletic directors (2.5%, 2.3%, and 1.5%), respectively. For the SWA position, African-American females held 9.3%, 4.3%, and 2.8% at the different levels. If the goal is to match the student-athlete population, there is much progress to be made, as African-American female student-athletes made up 12.6%, 8.5%, and 5.2% at the three levels that

same year (Lapchick et al.). As such, NCAA member institutions at all levels should be making efforts to not only recruit talented African-American females into their structures, but also to make good efforts to implement inclusive practices that make these women feel welcome and valued in their environments.

EFFECTS OF LEGISLATION

Many of the women felt the effects of legislation in their lives and careers. The legislation they saw as significant to their personal experiences include FDA approval of the birth control pill and Roe vs. Wade (1973), Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, the Equal Pay Act, Title IX of the Civil Rights Act, and the ongoing legislation in the NCAA. Approval of the birth control pill and the decision in Roe vs. Wade were said to have impacted them because they gave women choice in their reproductive lives. Title VII was talked about in a way that pointed out differences between that previous era and the current one. The Equal Pay Act was discussed as being unfinished. Title IX was said to have impact them because of the additional opportunities it provided women. Finally, new and ongoing legislation in the NCAA is affecting them because of the changes that are happening within intercollegiate athletics as a whole.

Family Planning

The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the first oral contraceptive, or birth control pill, in 1962 (Junod, 2014), providing women with a new method of preventing pregnancy. Melissa noted the approval of “the pill” was

significant for her personally because of “family planning and deciding when we were going to start trying to have children, and how to work that in with my age.” It will also play a role in how she and her husband “work out” having a second child (if they choose to do so). “Without birth control,” she said, “I wouldn’t have had as much control. I wouldn’t have maybe had those choices, or it would have been different.”

Kate said that her mother used to talk to her about how the approval of the birth control pill was “where it really changed for women.” She discussed how her mother talked about it in comparison to how it was for women before then.

A lot of them were so busy rearing children that women were really not in the position to fight for rights and go to school. It was social, but also the physical aspect, in that you were taking care of children and you weren’t able to go ahead and fight. So she said that was the tipping point, she thought, for women. So I know from that that that was a huge impact in my life, because if that did not come into play, then it would be a lot harder to change what they were able to do when they could have children when they wanted and not just be physically bound to biological directives.

One participant noted that Roe vs. Wade and the approval of the birth control pill had been impactful in her life and career in similar ways. Kate said,

I think it’s the same thing, kind of the abortion, the right to choose kind of goes back to the birth control pill. At least women had some rights over their own body and could assert themselves in a legal fashion and the ability to choose and have more control over your biological predispositions, as opposed to not having a choice would allow women to really decide, “Am I going to have a child and have to stay at home?” or whatever that choice would be, “Or am I not?” empowered women, gave them choices, and to not make them really, I guess...it allowed you consciously to make some decisions instead of unconsciously just having to go through life. I know you could say consciously they could choose. But I just think society and, biologically, men don’t have the same innate responsibility. They don’t carry the child. And once you have the child, it’s just different. And so, I think that’s how it impacted my life, is just women being able to have more control over the biological function of their bodies and how that

impacted their life personally, professionally, just in every other facet, that biology wouldn't determine for them all those other factors.

These examples show how access to the pill and the right to obtain an abortion allowed women more freedom to choose how they would live their lives and gave them the ability to engage in things other than solely motherhood if they wanted and chose to do so, as well as the freedom to be intentional about if or when they would have children.

Equal Pay

The Equal Pay Act of 1963 was another legislative act that women cited as impactful on their career and life choices. This Act made it illegal to pay people lower wages for equal work based solely on the basis of sex. Kate, while acknowledging the potential for impact, also discussed the Equal Pay Act as still being a work in progress:

Clearly it still hasn't had an impact. [laughs] But I think it always starts with laws, and it takes a long time for society to play out. The theory and the reality are always disconnected. But those were the beginning to things that would be paid positions, like SWA positions, in which now if you have the education and you have the skills (arguably the skills) and if you have the portfolio or background, it gives me an opportunity to apply to if I ever needed it to say, "This is against the law." You either win because you win your case or you get what you need. I would say realistically that would be a last resort, because we all know there are the unwritten rules in society and pressures and you could get blacklisted. But I would say when I started in this business, mid-'90s, that was a bigger concern. I feel like now, women in the last 15 years have gotten more engrained naturally, not just forced that you could probably just have to get a job somewhere else.

She went on to say that it is still not equal, but it is much better than it used to be.

Title VII

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination in hiring based on race, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, or other related conditions), color, religion, and national origin. Some of the women noted on their life-career maps the importance of this legislation. When asked to talk about its effect on her life or career, Melissa said, “I think there is a link between that and just the world of college athletics.” She spoke about it in two different ways. First, she said, “I don’t think I would have had the opportunities that I’ve had, maybe more indirectly, because I feel like my opportunities in this career are a result of the people who hired me having those opportunities.” She talked about this having been more of a “trickle down” effect because the women before her were entrusted with the work in this profession, which she said, even though it is changing, “is still a man’s industry in a lot of ways.” Second, she mentioned that because there is often such a focus on hiring minorities these days, sometimes attention to competence can get lost in the process of choosing new staff.

Michelle discussed this legislation as having allowed her to progress in her career in intercollegiate athletics administration. She said,

I just think when you talk about, in this profession, in sports, which has generally been more of a male-dominated profession, that I kind of feel if that law weren’t in place, the rights to women and opportunities for more equality in hiring practices wouldn’t exist. So I may not be at the level I am and been able to progress as far in this career, in a sports related career that has typically been more male dominated.

Similarly, Kate spoke about this legislation as being a precursor to other shifts in society. She referenced a lawsuit she learned about in one of her courses in college, in which a

woman sued her employer because he sent her home for being pregnant. When she asked her mother about it, she said, “Mom. I think this is wrong. Did they really send women home for [being pregnant]?” Her mother confirmed, as did a friend of hers who was her mother’s age, who told her, “Yeah, I was pregnant and I had to go home, because if you were pregnant, they didn’t want you to be seen out in public. It was kind of like this taboo.” She was blown away by this, given it was her mother’s generation. She said,

Only 23 years before me and these women were experiencing that, and we had made such strides. I kept thinking the textbook was wrong. So that is the kind of law that would start the precursors to really mandate the societal changes that needed to happen. So then, I wouldn’t be where I am if that stuff didn’t happen, because clearly it was only one generation away.

Even though Title VII of the Civil Rights Act may not have affected these women directly, they are able to see how this important piece of legislation trickled down to impact their experiences as professional women.

Title IX

Title IX of the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1972. It consists of 37 words and has made a huge impact on educational and athletic opportunities for females. The 37 words are as follows: “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” Though the words “athletics” or “sports” are not mentioned in this statement, it has come to be known as a sports law. Many of the women in this study

attributed their opportunities and successes in the profession of intercollegiate athletics administration to this one string of 37 words.

For example, Jennifer said,

I think any woman who has been educated since the passage of Title IX who doesn't say, regardless of what profession you are in, if you were educated after the passage of Title IX, to not say you were affected by it, I don't think you understand what Title IX is then. I think so many times people think Title IX is about sports. It's not. It's about, as a woman, having that ability to be educated and have the same opportunities. Now, what you do with those opportunities is up to you. It's not a given. But for me personally, why the passage of Title IX was important is because, through Title IX, I believe I had the opportunity to participate in activities surrounding my education, specifically in sports. As a college athlete, even though it was a Division 3, I don't know that those opportunities would have been there if Title IX had not been enacted. And then, in my career it's provided me the opportunity, again, to have access. Now, what I've done with that, it doesn't matter what my gender is. But I just think it's a bright line in our history that's very important.

Michelle expressed that having had the opportunity to play sports growing up opened up her eyes to the opportunities that might exist working in sports. She said, in regard to how Title IX had affected her life and career:

Obviously the opportunities I had growing up to pursue sports. Sports was always an interest of mine. I not only was able to play whatever sport I wanted to, but I played several coed sports, coed baseball, where I think if it weren't for Title IX, that opportunity may have not been there. And then, also, to be able to play competitive sports in high school and venture into college. But playing competitive [sport] throughout my high school career, and giving me that interest that I had in sports and seeing what other opportunities are there due to that participation I felt led me down the path eventually to where I am today, just because I saw that because of that opportunity to participate in sports, there's other aspects...And just kind opened my eyes to other opportunities that I probably wouldn't have had if Title IX weren't passed.

Kate was also affected in a way that allowed her to play sports. She played multiple sports growing up and went on to play in college. In addition, she reflected on

the impact this law has had on creating spaces for women in athletics administration. She said,

Obviously there were lawsuits under Title IX and it opened up a lot of opportunity in college, not because people necessarily wanted to, but they were being forced under the law. So it impacted me because I had an opportunity to play [a sport in college], and those opportunities probably wouldn't have been there but for Title IX. Then the timing of my life when I was getting into it, they were creating the SWA position. They needed women administrators. So whether they were doing it willingly or begrudgingly, the reality is the impact was women were made to have a place in college athletics. And I just happened to be somebody, I guess, in the right place at the right time to benefit from the impacts of those lawsuits and those laws, and Title IX obviously probably having the most impact to date in sport.

Melissa also noted the effects of Title IX on her experience in that she would never have been in this career if she had not had the opportunity play a sport in college. She said, "I don't know what I'd do, what I'd be doing, but I never would have gotten into athletics administration." These examples show the importance of this 37-word piece of legislation in the trajectories of these women's lives and careers.

Current Legislation Specific to Athletics

Some of the women commented on the more recent and ongoing legislation that is currently impacting college athletics as a whole and potentially their careers. Kris spoke with uncertainty about how the 2013 formation of the "Big 5" power conferences and NCAA autonomy may affect her career. At the time of data collection, she had listed this as being low on significance for her, but noted that may change. She said,

At this point, I don't think any of us know how that's going to really affect [us]...the autonomy of the Power 5 basically meaning that those ADs and "powers that be" get to vote on NCAA legislation without the other 200 and something mid-majors and everything affecting them. One of the things they

have voted on recently is a full cost of attending versus tuition. What I understand from what I've heard is that it's going to be several more million out of our budget every year. So I don't know how that's going to come into play later on down the road when your ADs are sitting there looking at your budget going, "We have to make cuts. How do we do this?" I don't know. I don't know how it's going to impact sports. But I do know they have to keep Title IX...I don't know if there are any loopholes there, but I know...if they want to keep football, they are going to have to keep some of your Olympic sports, women's sports. I just don't know how many that's going to be. So looking at things, I don't know what the future is right now. It's a little bit uneasy for most of us that work, especially with our women's sports and our lesser-known men's sports. At some point that might jump up to my high significance. It's a little uncharted waters right now, and nobody seems to know exactly what that's going to look like in five years.

Similarly, Michelle reflected on some of those same issues, but also added more about current litigation facing the NCAA:

I don't know the exact number of cases, but I know it's in the double digits. Several on them are having to do with name-image likeness, changing the shape of college athletics as it is known now. It potentially could change the amateurism model. Who knows where it can go down the road? Intercollegiate athletics may be the minor leagues for the pros. The amateurism model as we know it could go out the door. There are some other things right now with the governance structure, too, and with this autonomy group, and the additional expenses that institutions are having to take on, where there's talks of schools cutting sports. What does this do for the Olympic sports? Is it just going to be a football, basketball model? It's kind of the unknown of, how is this going to shape my career down the road? Are they going to need professionals [in my area] or is it just going to change our focus completely? So we're kind of in this unknown territory right now. Five years down the road, who knows where we'll be?

These examples demonstrate the uncertainty surrounding the current changes in intercollegiate athletics due to recent and ongoing legislation the NCAA is facing. Those working in this field do not know what is to come, but at least for now, are still interested in remaining in the profession. Some are starting to question that, however. As Michelle stated,

It's kinda going through my mind maybe all this happening, it may no longer be kind of aligning as much with my values and what's important to me... But at the same time, it's also kind of interesting to see how it's all going to shake out. It's like I don't know that I want to jump ship. You know, kind of see it through. And if I get forced out, figure it out at that point in time, because it could be kind of one of these significant social events that could shape things for me down the road as well. So I don't know that I'm out the door or anything like that. I'm kind of intrigued by where this is all going to take us...it's kind of just the wait and see at this point in time.

This concept of value alignment will be discussed further in a later chapter, however this example shows how the uncertainty surrounding the current changes in intercollegiate athletics are causing some to question their commitment to the profession.

Discussion of Effects of Legislation

This subtheme includes legislation concerning family planning, equal rights, and athletics. The women in this study noted the importance of family planning legislation, including access to the birth control pill and abortions. Even though these pieces of legislation were passed before some of the women were born, and far before being physically able to procreate, they recognized these as important to their lives because they gave them choices regarding, and control over, their reproduction. This added control gave them more ways to design the trajectories of their careers.

The Equal Pay Act was viewed as being a work in progress, but still impactful. The perception is correct that the pay gap is still not closed. As President Obama stated, women make approximately 77 cents for every dollar men make (State of the Union Address, 2014). The Equal Pay Act, however, gives women a law to fall back on if they ever feel as though there is a case to be made for discrimination in regard to their own

salaries in comparison with men who do the same job. On the one hand, this may make women feel safer in pursuing the male-dominated profession of intercollegiate athletics administration in that they know that they cannot legally be paid less than men for the same work. On the other hand, if they do file a suit using the law, they run the risk of being blacklisted and pushed out of the profession altogether. This introduces an interesting dynamic that could be both liberating and constraining.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act was seen as important in several different ways. One way it was regarded as important was because it outlawed discrimination in hiring practices, allowing for equal opportunity for women. A second way was that it served as a precursor to subsequent and necessary societal changes that made meaningful impacts on their opportunity structures. The recognition that lawsuits were filed only one generation before due to employers sending women home from work because they were pregnant provides an example of the interplay between cohort effects and legislation. While one generation prior, women were being sent home solely because they were visibly pregnant, women today do not have to worry about that, which makes it more of an option to choose to bear children while also having a career.

The third way Title VII was seen as impactful was that it created a focus on hiring more minorities, which can be seen as both positive and negative. The student-athlete population is diverse and, as such, the NCAA and many of its member institutions have made efforts to promote diversity and inclusion in their programs. Part of the basis of these efforts is the idea that the population of the people working in intercollegiate athletics should be a generally close match to those served – the student-athletes. As

Yvonne said, “If you don’t have people representing who you represent, then you are going to have issues.” Choosing to hire a minority applicant instead of the typical white male can have positive implications because when minority student-athletes see people who look like them working in athletics administration, they may be more able to envision themselves going into the profession, as it serves as a form of vicarious learning (Bandura, 1977).

There can be a negative side to this practice as well, however, if that means that highly qualified applicants in a majority category (e.g., white or male) are being cast aside in favor of hiring less qualified individuals who are in a minority category (e.g., black or female). This phenomenon is called “reverse discrimination” and occurs when individuals in a majority or dominant group are discriminated against in favor of those in a minority or historically disadvantaged group. The intention of this kind of discrimination is to correct for the past treatment of the disadvantaged groups and can happen in reaction to policies established for that purpose (Von Bergen, Soper, & Foster, 2002), such as Affirmative Action policies. If institutions want to maintain a high level of quality in addition to a diverse workforce, those in hiring positions need to carefully weigh various factors and ensure that they are not simply checking a box to meet a quota, but instead hiring the best mix of people to accomplish their mission and objectives as a department or institution.

The impact of Title IX was seen as the most salient of all the legislation discussed in the interviews. Though not designed to address sport specifically, this law is known as a sports law because it gave equal access to sport involvement for males and females.

This has been especially important for women in this career, as without the opportunity to play sports themselves, it is unlikely that as many women would have pursued a career in sports. In addition to equal access to sports, it also gave them equal access to education, which many of them did not even acknowledge. Whether they realized that impact or not, they lived in a historical time during which they were able to pursue not only college degrees, but also graduate and professional degrees without their gender as a barrier. The experiences they had because of Title IX's enactment had important implications for process of creating their individual career paths (Savickas et al., 2009), which will be discussed further in a subsequent chapter.

The current and ongoing legislation and changes in the NCAA and intercollegiate athletics as a whole adds an interesting historical element to this study. Their placement in time and temporal proximity to this major change in how intercollegiate athletics programs function puts them in a situation where they may be compelled to make decisions that completely change the trajectory of their careers. It is still unknown what these changes are going to mean for the profession and whether there will still be a need for professionals in this field, whether whole teams or sports and thus employees will be cut from programs, or whether personal values and interests will align with what is to come. As this piece of history unfolds, these women may be faced with pivotal decision points in their lives and careers.

IMPACT OF EVENTS

Events were talked about as being significant to these women's lives and careers as well. Events include broader national events (e.g., tragedies, natural disasters, or first-time broken barriers), major sporting events (e.g. Olympic Games), and organizational changes within one's institution or conference. Events such as these have the ability to inspire, humble, make people think differently about their lives or careers, or provide opportunities for professional growth. As such, these events can serve as turning points that have the potential to change life or career trajectories.

National Tragedies

One national event women discussed as having affected their lives or careers was the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 (often referred to as 9/11). Though they did not lose anyone they knew personally in this national tragedy, they still felt that it affected them in some way – either personally or professionally, and sometimes both. For example, Rebecca said,

That was a very challenging time in a lot of people's lives. Being in [the Northeast part of the country] when that happened, I know I can tell you exactly where I was and what I was doing and how we had to evacuate the city. The aftermath of that for six months or so, having multiple times where the subways...we had to evacuate subways for days or months afterwards...It was a very traumatic experience. We had a lot of student athletes and a lot of friends that lost parents in the World Trade Center. I was doing NCAA waivers for things. We had completely rearranged competition schedules. It was just a very tough, challenging time. There was a lot going on during that time...It made you think. You know, something like that happens, it makes you think a lot...We never experienced anything like that. We couldn't fly. I remember I was supposed to fly that next week. When they finally got the airports back up and running, you'd go to the airport and there were police with machine guns. It was

things I remember like going to Mexico. That didn't happen in the US. So everything changed then.

When asked if that experience had changed the way she thought about her career in any way, she said,

No, probably not my career, per se. I think it was the beginning of wanting to get closer to home. Not only was it traumatic for me, but it was traumatic for my family. It's really weird. My father's birthday is [soon before that date], so I had just talked to him. I always kind of kept him abreast of what my travel schedules were and, if I was going somewhere, what I was doing. I had talked to him...that happened on a Tuesday. I talked to him that weekend saying, "I'm not going anywhere this week. I've got this and this, home events, whatever." All our phone lines went down. Everything went down. I remember when he was finally able to get ahold of me how relieved he was. That was one of those things it was like, "OK. I get it." They couldn't get a hold of us. Nobody could. There was no way to communicate. I actually could email before I could make phone calls. So I think that just...I was like, "Yeah, you're a little far from home." And I wasn't in a rush to get back home, per se. I didn't get back to Texas for another three years. But I think that was the first time where I thought, "OK. I'm going to start looking to get closer to home."

Melissa reflected upon that event and the timing of the event in relation to other things that were going on in her life at the time. That attack occurred at a time when Melissa had just entered what we call the "real world," in that she had recently started her first job after college and was living in another state for the first time. She said,

9/11 happened at a time in my life where I had just realized, because it didn't take me long once I had gotten there, that I didn't want to be there. So I think just how powerful that event was for all of our lives, and how vulnerable it makes you feel, how sad it makes you feel, and just not having a support system there besides I just knew one person...And I was very confident after 9/11 that I didn't want to be there very much longer. And I didn't want to be in [that profession] any longer either...That wasn't what I wanted to do. I think kind of those moments of how quickly our world really did change and how important our decisions are...I think 9/11 was just kind of one of those moments where, "I want to go home. Is this the right path for me?" Very selfish things to think when you are in a moment like that that affects our world. But I think those times really resonate with everybody and you kind of reassess everything that you are doing.

At that point, Melissa considered several different options for what she wanted to do with her life before deciding to go to graduate school and taking a part-time job in intercollegiate athletics administration, where she got her start in the profession.

In addition to 9/11, Melissa also felt the effects on her career and life of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, which devastated the city of New Orleans, Louisiana. Among many disastrous effects, including deaths, many students were displaced during that time. Though she placed this low on her life-career map in terms of significance, it did put things in perspective for her. She said,

I remember reviewing transcripts from students who were from New Orleans. I mean everything was so devastated. Like seeing this blank time in their life when they didn't have a school to go to. I think that that was just another humbling moment, and also another reminder... We get caught up in all the ridiculous stuff that goes on here and how unimportant it really is in the grand scheme of things.

These stories show how tragic events, such as Hurricane Katrina or the attack on the World Trade Center, can cause people to rethink what they are doing and how they are spending their time. They can make them want and take steps to be closer to the people they care about or just put things in perspective.

Historic Firsts for Women

In addition to national tragedies, historic firsts for women were also seen as significant for a few of the women in this study. Knowing about the first woman on the Supreme Court (Sandra Day O'Connor), the first American woman in space (Sally Ride), or the first woman Attorney General (Janet Reno) was inspiring for them when they were younger. Melissa discussed how O'Connor had inspired her:

She was the first...I don't remember what grade I was in, but it was the first biography I had to write, like research paper I had to write for a class. It was 4th or 5th grade. I found that story very inspirational. At that point I thought I was planning to go into politics somehow or in the government somehow, maybe be president or something... I very distinctly remember studying her and kind of having that cliché moment of, "Hey, it's kind of cool that she was the only woman among all these crusty old White guys." I always just have felt kind of this...kinship isn't the right word. [laughs] I've always been drawn to what she has stood for...I don't remember a lot of national figures who were women besides her...the First Ladies, who kind of fell into that category in my mind of the 1950s housewife. So I think that's why that image of her on the Supreme Court and her path to get there, I think that's why that was so powerful.

Kate also commented on how O'Connor's seat on the Supreme Court was meaningful:

I think anytime a woman or a minority breaks a barrier that hasn't been before, it just elevates the heights which you can reach. Obviously, a woman in that type of position, when you are a young girl or, now, being middle-aged, you think, "Oh, I can do that," or it doesn't look bizarre. So if a woman can be on the Supreme Court, why can't a woman be an AD or a university president? I think when there's something that prominent and that national becomes acceptable and people see that happening, it changes societal norms. So I feel like that's how that had an impact on me.

She also spoke about Ride and Reno being the first American woman in space and US Attorney General, respectively, in a similar way. She said,

Where you know there are women in positions that are hard to get, that are very prominent, that are very competitive, and that they are obviously competent and making their way, which just helps break barriers in society. Consciously or subconsciously, knowing that there isn't probably a hurdle you can't clear...so whatever you want to do, you can do it. You've just got to find a way. That woman did. That woman did. So what are you going to do to help break that cycle?

Jennifer also indicated that the first female US Attorney General was important to her.

She said,

I think it just shows that we've made progress. It's an example of a woman in a position of leadership nationally that became an example for women to pursue

opportunities beyond what, perhaps, they thought they could do before. It's just a good example.

Some of the women discussed someone who was not listed on the life-career map template, but is an icon in the world of women's sports in Texas, Jody Conradt. Conradt served as the Women's Basketball coach at the University of Texas from 1996 to 2007. She was also the Athletic director for Women's Athletics at that same university from 1992 to 2001. Not only is she a legend at the University of Texas, but people who were not from the state of Texas also knew about her.

Melissa saw Conradt as someone who was influential in women's athletics. She said, "Jody is the picture of Title IX to me. The word pioneer is overused, but she helped create the opportunity." Kate discussed a time when she went to her first women's basketball game. She did not grow up or live in Texas at the time and had been to football games before, but had not yet been exposed to collegiate women's sports. She said,

I remember seeing Jody and I was enamored because she was very strong. And it's probably what we were talking about, even the Supreme Court justice, she was the first woman coach that I might have seen, and one that I think was very elegant and classy, but a strong woman... I think she was one of the first female role models I remember seeing and she made it feel normal, which I probably didn't even know until now talking that I had really never seen that, and that was like, "OK. I can identify with that." And I'd be a horrible coach. I don't have the patience or whatever. But I think she was at least a woman being successful in athletics. And that was the year they went undefeated...and that was a pivotal time for me. I think it was the first time I'd ever seen a woman in a position who was successful and prominent. And it seemed very normal.

When asked if that had made her think about her life or what she wanted to do differently, she said,

I don't know differently, but I think it became a realistic possibility, that first time [I] had probably seen it that way. Even though I didn't know at the time, but that impact was probably like, "Oh, something like that is what I could do since I like sports and since I like to play and do all this." But before then, you see all male coaches. It's kind of like, "Well where am I going to fit in with this big part of my life? What do I do with it?"

Historic Sporting Events

Historic sporting events were also noted as being significant to some of these women's career journeys. The Olympic Games were some of these events, whether the women simply watched them, were trying to participate in them, or worked at them. For example, Kate talked about how the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow impacted her life. She talked about when she was a child, she had wanted to be a gymnast and Nadia Comaneci was her idol. "She got a perfect 10." This affected her by her "just seeing women that were successful and thinking, 'Oh, I can do that,' or, 'I want to do that.'" She also listed the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles as being significant. She said she was an "Olympics freak" and would watch as much of the Olympics as possible.

It wouldn't matter if it was curling or if it was volleyball and the sports I didn't like. I would just be fascinated that people could represent their country and that, nationally, you would compete to be the best, and that they had such a skill or passion for what they did. Kind of out of a respect factor, I would want to watch as much and just learn different cultures and for different reasons. But I would sit there and watch the Olympics as much as I could, as long as I could. And there would be times my parents would be like, "Fine. If you want to watch Olympics until two in the morning, I'll let you." But I always just was enamored and fascinated with the Olympics.

Kris remembered that the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona were the first Games during which she was old enough to realize what was going on. She said,

Obviously...other Olympics had gone on during my lifetime. I just didn't really get it until '92. I was like, "That's really cool. That happens every four years for the summer Games and then the winter Games." Though she said it may not have impacted her career directly, it was the first time she noticed that there were elite athletes that compete past high school.

The 1996 Olympic Games were important to several of the women as well. For Yvonne, it was because she got the opportunity to work the event. She said,

Working the Olympics was just an amazing opportunity. But I still, at that point, wasn't sure what I was going to do. I was hoping working with the Olympics would lead to other opportunities, because that's what they say... But what people don't realize is, or what I realized later was once the Olympics leaves, a lot of the jobs leave with it. It's just temporary... It was just defining because it gave me an opportunity that I did want to work in sports after college. As much as I loved sports, I didn't think about working in sports after college.

Melissa thought the Atlanta Olympics were important for her because they were validating. She knew someone on the team. She said,

I feel like that was a big time for [my sport]. It was validating for me because...between extended family, and friends, and all these people who didn't really know me because I was gone all summer playing [my sport] every year, just having some exposure of...some of those players with the Atlanta Olympics... It helped people understand the sport. It kind of validated all this time I was spending was for...like, this is a real thing because it's a sport that the world plays, and look, here are these American sweethearts who are on the [Olympic] team.

For Maggie, the 1996 Games occurred at the same time her career as an athlete ended because she did not have the chance to make the Olympic team and chose to move on instead of spend another four years training. She said,

I guess it was April 1st. I remember the exact day because I was like, "April Fool's Day. This is a very bad day." I got injured. I didn't really know that something was wrong with me... That was the meet I was going to qualify for the trials. After my second event, my coach goes, "You don't look right. Something's wrong. We need to take you to the hospital." I felt OK. I didn't really know. I was like, "What? This was my chance!" He sent me to the

hospital and I was there for three days. They said, “You have to be out. No exercise for three weeks.” I was like, “What?” And then it was over, basically, or I had to go do it for another four years. But I was done at that point... I was like, “I don’t know if my body is going to take another four years. Let’s try to move on and start my career.” That was a turning point.

For her, the 1996 Olympics served as a major turning point in her life and career – the time that she went from being an athlete herself to working on the other side as a coach and administrator.

For Melissa and Courtney, the most recent 2012 Olympic Games in London simply served as a reminder of the high caliber athletes that are served by Division I institutions. As Melissa stated,

I think it’s just a reminder of the elite level of athlete with whom we work. What they do here on a daily basis is often secondary to what they are capable of athletically, and just kind of the power of how many of our students or students with whom we work or students we recruited are participating on such an amazing scale. I’ve always been interested in how students kind of maintain both roles.

In addition to the Olympic Games, the 1999 World Cup was also seen as important to Kris. It was an event that made her want to go into athletics for her career. She said,

Something in that World Cup kind of inspired me to say, “Hey, I want to go into athletics. I want to do this for a living.” At that time, I wanted to work in soccer, but once I started working in our athletic department where I went to school, I was like, “Let’s work in all the sports.”...Something about that World Cup was inspiring, probably because it was here in the United States and we had a ton of coverage. I don’t know. It was just the way it went down, the way that they won it. It was inspiring to me.

Though impactful in different ways, these women recognized these historic sporting events as being important parts of their paths to working in athletics administration.

Organizational Changes

Organizational changes can also have an impact on women's career experiences. Such changes can include those in an institution's hierarchy, hiring a new Athletic director, or changing conferences, for example. Sometimes, when new leadership comes into an organization, the new leaders make changes to the former structure.

Kris described a change in her organizational hierarchy that stemmed from her supervisor's retirement and led to a change in the responsibilities of her area of the athletics department. In this series of changes, their office took on responsibilities of more sports. While they used to handle primarily women's sports, they began to handle more men's sports and report to someone else at a higher level of the organizational hierarchy. This was viewed as a positive change, as to her it meant more "job security" because they can now take on more sports and "organizationally, it makes more sense." It meant job security for her because, in her area, "you don't want one or two sports because you are easily low hanging fruit. You want to make sure you have many. I have five now that I'm in charge of. That's what I mean, job security." Being able to be in charge of more sports also makes her more marketable if she wants to look for a new job down the road. "You have the experience of running multiple sports, so if you are wanting to leave and apply for different jobs, you are much more marketable. You have that experience instead of just a couple of sports."

Amanda discussed a change in the staffing above her in the organization and the positive differences that occurred.

My [former boss] was very micromanager and wanted to know everything that was going on and control everything. So me and the other two [coworkers] had a fun time dealing with that. He ran a tight ship and any little mistake, he would freak out. I knew I could always go to him, but it wasn't something you were looking forward to, if that makes sense. So, not much of a support system.

When her previous supervisor left, she had the opportunity to take on more responsibility, which she had wanted, before the next supervisor was hired. She described the new supervisor as “night and day from the previous boss” and said he did not micromanager.

She said that he is:

Very open door, lets you do your thing, obviously wants to be kept in the loop. We meet weekly and he set certain policies that you have to go through for certain things, but he's not...it's completely different. So it's a good relationship. I think he came in and wanted to have a more personal relationship with everybody, too, which set the tone differently. He was like, “Hey, let's go to happy hour.” So you have more of a lighthearted personal relationship with someone than our previous boss, which we would never go to happy hour with. [laughs] So the new person has been great. And he leaned on me obviously, because I was, at that time, the person that had been here the longest. Actually, when he got hired, the two other [coworkers] were gone by the time he got here. So he had to fill those two positions. So I was the only support that he had. So I feel like we work side-by-side instead of boss and subordinate.

Michelle discussed how the new leadership within her organization is dealing with some of the changes coming with the new NCAA legislation. Though the changes are putting strains on the department's budget, they are also providing the opportunity to rethink the old ways of doing things. She said that, because the organization is facing additional budget constraints, they are not able to hire a new employee in an empty slot.

There's a freeze on the positions until [the AD] is able to reevaluate the whole organizational structure and see, are we able to do more with less? Do we really need this position? So, we're trying to demonstrate the value of the position and the reason it's needed. And finding the time to do that and keep up with all the work has been a little difficult, but we'll manage. The challenge to think outside of the box and do things a little differently is there now that that opportunity

exists. So trying to explore that while balancing being a little bit down-staffed is putting a little strain, but it's also, in some ways, exciting. It's making me break the model of this is the way we've always done it and this is the model. Let's think of what a potential different model could be, where we can find some crossovers within other departments.

Kate shared some of the thoughts she had regarding a change leadership at her institution.

[The new AD] coming in; he and [the former AD] are 180, and I loved [the former AD] and I really like working for [the new AD]. I think maybe longer term, it's not a thing against him, it's just [the former AD], it was a different relationship [at the beginning] than it was [at the end] as well. It's just all different. But I will say, when [the new AD] started, my [child] was [young] and I'm thinking, "What the heck? I've just bought a house, I've got a new child, and I've got a new boss." Because I know from being out there, and maybe it's from being where you are in the organizational chart, that he could come in and just have somebody that he's going to put here. No different than if I'm an AD, there may be great people at a certain place, and as much as you'd like time, you probably have a year or two to show that you're making an impact because you're up for a contract extension. I don't have a year to figure out who's nice and who's not. I need to bring some people that I know can get the job done in the way I want to get it done and I can trust and I can do that. So sometimes no matter who it is and how nice they are, they're probably not going to be my person... I know that that's where he is, so it's just one of those things where...it's stressful... Again, I don't think it's bad, and I think I'm very fortunate, because I think they're very different. So if you want to be an AD, I'm learning from two people that are very successful in very different ways. And so you get the experience of both of that, which will make me better for wanting to be in that chair.

These examples demonstrate that changes within an organization can be stressful or put some strain on the staff, but they can also provide opportunities to think differently and grow professionally.

Discussion of Impact of Events

The impact of events subtheme includes national tragedies, historic firsts for women, historic sporting events, and organizational changes. National tragedies, such as 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina were seen as impactful mainly because they were humbling, made the women reassess what they were doing, and served as an impetus for wanting to be closer to family or “go home.” Even though they were not necessarily directly affected by these events, they served as turning points by making the women think differently about their career paths.

Historic firsts for women helped the participants see that being a female in a prominent position is possible. This made them believe that more was possible than may have been modeled for them previously. Seeing women become the first to serve on the Supreme Court, first Attorney General, and first American woman in space served as pivotal vicarious learning experiences. According to Bandura (1977), learning can occur vicariously through the modeling and observation of others. Through observing these women reach high level positions in traditionally male-dominated fields, they were inspired and saw that it was indeed possible to obtain such positions. This, in part, may have influenced their decisions to pursue a male-dominated career field for themselves.

Historic sporting events were turning points for several reasons. One reason was that they were inspiring. Seeing athletes compete at such a high level inspired some to pursue a career in sports. For one participant, having worked in an Olympic Games solidified that she wanted to work in sports for her career. For another, the 1999 Women’s World Cup for soccer was seen as an integral turning point that made her want

to get involved in administering sports. For one, the Olympics served as a turning point because it was when her career as an athlete ended and her coaching career began. For another, the Olympics validated her own status as an athlete. Though important for different reasons, events such as these were turning points in making decisions about their careers and how they chose to spend their time.

Organizational changes were impactful in positive and negative ways. Events such as these can have a strong immediate impact on career decision-making. As will be discussed in another chapter, a change in leadership within an organization can lead to a lack of person-environment fit and make an employee want to leave. On the other hand, as demonstrated above, a change in leadership can also be seen as a welcome change if the leader coming in is viewed to be better than the last. In addition, structural changes in an organization can add stress and strain on the staff, but they can also provide opportunities to develop as professionals and think in different ways to improve the functioning of the organization. Depending on the transition, it can reinforce the desire to work in the profession and/or within the organization or call for a change in one's trajectory.

NATURE OF THE PROFESSION

Many of the women in this study commented on the nature or environment of intercollegiate athletics administration. They described it as being male dominated and time intensive, but also fun. In addition, they seemed to agree that there are certain types

of experience one has to have in order to move up the professional ladder in this field of work.

Male Dominated

It is widely known that the world of intercollegiate athletics administration is male dominated (see Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Lapchick et al., 2012). The women in this study consistently commented on that fact, describing the environment of this professional field male dominated or as an “old boys’ club.” For example, Rebecca said,

Texas is still a little bit of a good old boys’ network and still a little bit of a male-dominated area... There is only one female AD in Texas, Division I (with merged men’s and women’s programs)... There have been a lot of female presidents, but athletic directors, it’s hard to come by. I have a better chance of becoming a college president than I do an athletic director.

Similarly, Amanda said,

Since I’ve started here, there’s a lot more females in the department as a whole, which is great. It balances it out a little more. I still run into the old boys’ club. It’s just a different atmosphere working in athletics than the regular corporate world. It’s a lot more loose and the men get away with a lot more things. I feel like most of us are strong, independent women and we can give it right back to them. That’s kind of what you have to have to get by in athletics for sure.

When asked to elaborate on the ways she sees that it is an old boys’ club, she said,

It’s definitely them helping each other, especially up in the senior level. When it’s big events or something like that, it’s the boys’ club. It’s the boys’ club going. It’s them making the decision. There’s not a woman in there...just kind of that mentality. I know that our athletic director and our senior staff, they all respect every woman that works here greatly. I think that’s just what’s, I don’t know, embedded in them. Do I feel like we’re left out? Not 90% of the time, but maybe 10% of the time.

Kate spoke about the recent downward trend of women working as athletic directors and the male-dominated environment of her area, as well as the problem of

women needing, but not getting, the experiences typically required to get to the top seat.

She said,

It looks like it's going backwards, and it's interesting to me because from a different lens, when I've come into [this area], it's very male dominated and there's not a lot of racial diversity. It was just mind-blowing to me how much.

She went on to discuss the problem of having particular experiences as prerequisites for the AD position when “a lot of times nobody will give them those opportunities.” If that is the case, “you are not going to be able to fix that gap.”

Requirements to Climb the Ladder

The participants in this study often commented on the general requirements of moving up the professional ladder in this field of work. Requirements included having a graduate degree, experience working with football, and experience with fundraising. These types of experience were perceived to be prerequisites for obtaining the high level positions within intercollegiate athletics administration.

Graduate Degree

All but one of the women who participated in this study had obtained graduate or professional degrees. This in and of itself could be an indicator of the importance of having more than a Bachelor's degree to advance in this profession. The question of whether it was a requirement for their positions or the positions they aspire to was not asked, however, a graduate education was discussed as important pieces of their paths. Michelle stated how she believed a graduate education would be crucial. She said, “I saw

that getting into this profession probably meant having a Master's would be best for me long term career-wise... It was going to be, generally, a requirement for moving up the career ladder." Melissa commented on how having a graduate degree was a requirement for her to be hired in a full-time capacity. She said,

"At the time, [my supervisor] wasn't willing to offer me a position until I finished my Master's degree, but she agreed to hire me in an assistant position... She wasn't going to have any [in a full-time role] who weren't Master's degrees and significant experience."

For these two women, a graduate education was either a perceived or a real requirement for working in this profession.

Because Amanda did not pursue a sports-related undergraduate degree and wanted to work in sports, she felt like it was necessary to get a sports-related graduate degree. She said that she wanted "to get my Master's so I could have that Sport Management degree on my résumé." She was not alone in pursuing a Master's in a sports-related field after earning a Bachelor's in a different field. Several other participants did this as well, though their reasoning was not discussed.

For Courtney, wanting to pursue a Master's degree was partly in reaction to an upsetting event, but also indicated that it may have been thought of as a necessity to move up in her career. She said that when a man who was higher up in her organization left to take another position, he gifted multiple other men in the organization promotions and raises. She said,

I called it the parting gift. Right before he left, he gave all these guys in our department title changes and raises. It was all in an email... I remember going, "This is a bunch of crap. I had as much if not more [responsibilities] than all these men. Same amount of time in. I refuse to let this just go on."

After this happened, she mapped out a professional development plan with what she wanted and the things she was going to do, which included graduate school. She said, “I just refused to let that ever happen again.” This reaction implies that she thought that having a graduate degree might help her advance in the organization. Interestingly, she later expressed a conflicting idea. When asked how graduating with her Master’s degree had impacted her life or career, she said,

Honestly, not really. And I tell that to a lot of people. Grad school is for yourself, especially in athletics. It’s not for promotion. It’s not for money or prestige. It’s something that if you want a higher education, if you want to learn, it’s something to have. And if it helps you in the future, great. But it doesn’t impact at all, not for me, not the way I look at it.

Jessica also felt as though getting her Master’s degree in Business was beneficial to her personally. Unlike Courtney, however, she felt it benefitted her professionally as well, but not solely because of the knowledge she gained. She said,

The one thing that I never even considered that I think was the biggest benefit and my biggest takeaway from the MBA program was the personal development and the personal side of it. I think it was partly because the executive MBA focuses on leadership and decision making. And it’s an executive program. So it’s more at the 30,000 foot level. It’s not a traditional MBA where you are doing all the accounting nitty-gritty... It’s really more about: How can I be a more effective leader? How can I make better decisions for this organization? You do a lot of reflection. It made me think about: Who am I as a professional? Who do I want to be? Really, what are my strengths? Where do I need to work? What do I need to work on? It sounds so simple and so silly, but it just gave me another level of confidence professionally that I didn’t expect to necessarily have. So now, coming to [this organization], I felt like I can present the skills that I have and get a better job because I’m really confident in the experience that I have and the education that I have and all of that. I don’t have to take a job at the beginning starting all over again. Whereas, at [my former organization], I was just happy to get a job. I think the MBA program did more for me personally just in terms of confidence. And part of that, too, that program, there were only seven women in the whole program. MBA programs are typically very male dominated. So to be

able to kind of hack it in that environment, which is a lot like athletics; it's usually very male dominated in athletics. So it was, I think nice, to kind of get some positive affirmation and confidence from that environment that could translate into my professional life.

As can be seen from these examples, whether it was viewed as an actual requirement for working and advancing in intercollegiate athletics administration or as something that benefited them more personally, which may have then benefited them professionally, earning graduate degrees was seen as an important part of their individual paths.

Experience Working with Football

Given the importance placed on football in college sports, especially at the Division I-FBS level, at the magnitude of revenue the sport generates, emphasis was placed on how experience working with football can help intercollegiate athletics administrators climb the career ladder. For example, Kris said,

I am sitting here right now with zero football experience. It is one of those things that I have thought about if something were to happen, it could really affect me trying to find a job somewhere else. It really could. That's kind of the position I've put my own self in. I've thought about it before. So it is one of those things where I do think in our field you would have to have that experience [with] football to really catch the eye of a top school. Let's just say, for instance, if I decided to leave and go to Ohio State, they are probably not going to hire me because I don't have football experience. It's just a complete different beast.

Amanda expressed that before she came to her current institution, she had wanted to be at a school that had a Division I football program because she had not yet had that experience. She explained her reasoning:

I think it's key to progress up the ladder. I just hadn't been exposed to that and what all it involved. Football in an Ivy League school is completely different. So I felt that that was something I needed to have on my résumé in order to continue to move up.

Yvonne said,

I think being at an FBS, people think you have...I think it gives you a little leverage with jobs. I think they believe you've worked around football, so you know what the big time is like I guess... But typically you don't work with football. I was on the football search committee [when we hired our current coach], but I probably wasn't as involved as I would like to have been to really get the full experience. I even thought about that on my drive this morning. Yeah, I can say I was on the committee, but I would have liked to have been a part of more of that process... I'd still put on my résumé that I was on the search committee... But I didn't get to really participate in the questioning. I got to sit with the committee, talk about what we're looking for, look at their profiles, talk about things we needed to find out. But I never really got to go and have the conversations with the coaches. So I really don't know about that interaction.

She also spoke about how she was able to get a place on the committee. She said,

I asked [my supervisor] could I be on it and his initial response was, "There's going to be a lot of groups who will get to meet with the coach." So, to me his reply was saying, "Sure, because there's going to be a lot of you that get to talk to him, but not on the search committee." Then he came to me in an email...I think I was in a meeting...or he texted me and said, "Are you still interested in being on the committee." So, like, "Great. Awesome." But when I get in the room, I'm the only female and black. So, to me, did that satisfy your diversity and your committee makeup? I don't want to be used like that all the time. I appreciate it, but when you stop short of letting me go meet candidates, then I wonder what my purpose was... Like, have me on there because of the true opportunity to grow, professional development, not just to satisfy what I feel like I satisfy anyway, is you've got a minority, you got a female.

Again, this situation made her feel as though she was only there to "check a box" because she was the only minority female in the group, yet still kept out of the decision-making process.

Kate suggested that experience with men's sports, but especially football and basketball, helps in advancement, but that it is hard and/or rare for women to get that experience. She said,

Probably from being a woman, football and basketball are the two big ones that they'll look for that you've done... But having men's sports was probably helpful, too. Because I think a lot of women get women's sports, but then that's where the barrier will come, is like, "Well, can you handle the football and the basketball coach?"... I think that getting the exposure at [one of my previous jobs] is what helped get me the job at [my next organization]. When I'm 25, I'm presenting at the National Football Coaches Association because I had experience at [that university]. So I understood it... And then I knew some coaches, which gave me credibility with the rest or, when they came at you, gave you the opportunity to deal with them because you had been there and done that. So, football has helped me because what [my mentor] told me to do was go to a football school. I got the exposure at a young age. And I've been able to navigate that world and I continue to get the exposure here. So I think unique to most women, that's probably what's allowed me to get the positions I've got. Now I'm leveling out more, but... I think football exposure was key to what got me the job here. So it very ironically probably had a positive impact on me because I got exposure. I got my foot in the door and some ability to work with it, which gave me the credibility to keep moving along those paths... And a lot of times to be an AD they'll say you need to oversee football and men's basketball so you understand how to deal with power coaches. A lot of women never get that experience.

Her statements demonstrate not only the importance of having football (and men's basketball) experience can aid in career advancement, but also how the male-dominated nature of college athletics and, in particular, those revenue-generating sports keep women out of the old boys' club. The masculine culture serves as a barrier to women gaining experience in those crucial areas, then the lack of experience in those areas serve as barriers to advancement for women in the profession.

Time Requirements

Many of the women in this study also commented on the atypical time requirements associated with working in intercollegiate athletics administration. They spoke of it as not being an "8-5" or "9-5" job, and in both positive and negative ways. Yvonne discussed it as a positive aspect of working in the profession. She said,

“Working in athletics allows you the flexibility to do other things, because you are not truly just a 9-5.” She talked about how, because of this, she was able to go to graduate school while working full-time in athletics and take care of an ailing family member. She said, “Even though the hours are long sometimes, there are times when they’re not. And my bosses were always like, ‘Do what you need to do personally.’”

Michelle discussed it in a different light. She said, “I feel like it’s a profession that just never stops. It’s not an 8-5 [where] you go home, you leave your work at the office, and don’t have to worry about it.” Jessica talked about the inability to be involved in something outside of work because of her atypical schedule:

It’s not feasible with a full-time job for me, especially a full-time job in athletics where it’s not just a 9-5. And especially now... We’ll do events and things in evenings, where some nights I’m here until 9:30, 10 o’clock.

Kate spoke about how the atypical schedule can impact other areas of one’s life. She said,

It’s just all consuming. And maybe that’s all jobs, but sports, because you have your normal workweek, then you have events. Somebody acts out, something blows up. When you have a sport, it could be three in the morning and people are calling. God forbid, somebody’s in an accident or got arrested. It’s just all the time all consuming. And that has an impact on your personal life.

Rebecca talked about this aspect of the nature of the profession as a lifestyle choice. She said,

This is not an 8-5 job...never has been, never will be. I wouldn’t know what to do if I worked just 8-5. It’s a lifestyle. A lot of people will say that it’s a lifestyle. It’s a life. It’s a life choice.

In comparison to a coaching career, these hours might be better, though, as indicated by Maggie. After commenting about working “all these hours,” she discussed her typical schedule. She said,

I probably get in at like eight. I probably leave around six, 6:30. Sometimes I’ll have events at night, like a meeting at night, or a dinner, or a function, a sporting event. I’m always on my phone checking email and responding and stuff like that. I don’t know how many I actually work a week. And it varies throughout the season. It probably, in the end, balances out, because this month and next month I’ll go on vacation. I’ll leave early. I’ll try to leave at three or four. I’ll get in at like 8:30 and I’ll leave at like three or four. So, in the end, it probably balances out. It’s just seasonal where you work a lot. But when I was coaching it was like, even though it was Division III, it was still, the traveling and stuff, it was a lot.

These examples show that there are unique time requirements associated with working in intercollegiate athletics administration – good, bad, or just the way it is.

Fun

Despite some irregular hours, some of the women in this study talked about the environment of intercollegiate athletics as being fun. This fun aspect of the environment either drew them to the profession or made them want to stay in it. For example, Jessica talked about getting into the profession for the first time:

It was exciting. There were a lot of different things that I didn’t know about that would be fun to learn. There’s so many different parts of the athletic department that make it function. There were a lot of different opportunities, options... I guess that it just felt like it fit. It fit my personality. I liked that it wasn’t sitting behind a desk all day, necessarily. At the end of the day, I think it was just working with people. Looking back now about what do I love the most about my job, it’s getting to work with people, kind of the interpersonal skills side of thing. Being in athletics, you are always working with people or you are supporting them at games, which is fun. It's just more active. So I liked that. That was appealing.

Leah also spoke about her first role within an athletics department:

I loved having my foot in the door...and being able to work with the students. And athletics was just a fun environment just because of the camaraderie, the morale. There's a lot here that's fun to be a part of.

She also thought it was enjoyable to be able to have new responsibilities in her role. She said, "That was fun, because you get a new challenge and it's better than doing the same old thing over and over all the time."

A couple of participants spoke about some of the fun benefits of working in athletics in relation to their lack of a romantic partner at the time. Alice said, "Personally, I don't understand what's wrong with them (men). I think I have the coolest job. I can get them free tickets to sporting events, and I actually like watching sports! So, what the heck!" Yvonne has been told by some of her male friends that other men are intimidated by her because of what she does for a living, but she tells them, "What I do, they can do with me. I go to games all the time. So what I do, a guy should want that, right?" These examples show that despite the time commitments and male-dominated atmosphere of college athletics, it is still considered to be fun. This aspect of the environment can serve as a reinforcer of one's desire to work in the profession, even in light of other barriers.

Discussion of Nature of Profession

The nature of the profession subtheme includes male dominance, requirements to climb the ladder, time requirements, and fun. The male-dominated nature of intercollegiate athletics administration is well documented (see Acosta & Carpenter,

2014; Cunningham & Sagas, 2008; Grappendorf & Lough, 2006; Lapchick et al., 2012; Whisenant et al., 2002). As was discussed in the literature review, this can be perpetuated in different ways, such as through hegemonic masculinity (Whisenant et al., 2002), homologous reproduction (Grappendorf & Lough, 2006), power dynamics (Sibson, 2010), or gendered job segregation (Burton et al., 2009). The women in this study recognized that male dominance is still in effect and they still see an old boys' club, where women remain left out, at least some of the time. They acknowledged that as more women are integrated into the environment, it feels more balanced. They also commented on the special context of Texas, implying that it may be even more of a challenge to break gender barriers within the state. When women are denied exposure to experiences that are seen as pathways to the top, it makes increasing the representation of women in these positions seem almost insurmountable. As such, the pervasive male-dominated culture may serve as a barrier that may turn women away from actively pursuing those positions.

This barrier sustained through the male-dominated culture extends to the importance of football experience to move up the career ladder in this profession. As shared in Kate's example above, women are often excluded from opportunities to gain experience with that particular sport, which then serves as a barrier to their progression in the career. In fact, women are typically segregated into working with lower profile, non-revenue-generating sports, whereas men are typically segregated into working with higher profile sports that make money for the institution (Danylchuk et al., 2000), including and especially football. This common practice of gendered segregation

perpetuates male privilege in the profession and limits women's career possibilities. One participant commented on the idea that she was only included in a committee regarding football to meet a quota, making her the sole minority female included in the process at all, even if her inclusion was minimal. This again reflects the concept of intersectional invisibility described previously, which could cause black females in this profession to feel discouraged and opt out of the profession.

Though only a few women expressly commented on the need to have a graduate education to work in and/or advance in a career in intercollegiate athletics administration, all of the women who had earned a graduate or professional degree had found it to be an important part of their individual paths – professionally, personally, or both. It is possible that it is seen as a necessity at least partly because it is the norm. It is not uncommon for women in this profession to have advanced degrees – and more advanced degrees than their male counterparts (Grappendorf & Lough, 2006). As such, when competing against men and other women, it may give those with the higher degrees the added advantage they need to be chosen for their desired position. On the other hand, it is argued that it is not the education that matters as much as the types of experience one has, including those thought to be more crucial for advancement, such as fundraising, marketing (Grappendorf & Lough, 2006), and experience with revenue-generating men's sports (Danylchuk et al., 2000). Thus, with the prevalence of pursuing advanced degrees, it may be most beneficial for women who aspire to the AD seat or those in its direct pipeline to have both a graduate education and experience with football and other men's sports if they can attain it.

The time requirements associated with a career in intercollegiate athletics administration are quite demanding. As the women said, this profession is not one that has the typical eight-hour per day, 40 hour per week schedule. It often requires late nights and working on weekends, along with consistently checking and responding to email even when at home. For those who are not necessarily inclined to that “lifestyle,” this can function as a major barrier for women, especially those with committed partnerships and children. These extensive time requirements put strains on personal lives, as they may prevent people from pursuing a hobby or spending quality time with friends and loved ones (Bruening & Dixon, 2008). Women with spouses and children are at an extra disadvantage if they also have to take care of the bulk of household and childcare tasks, as men in the same position often have wives who handle the domestic duties in their absence (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2008).

The fun element of the nature of the profession may dilute the negative aspects of the long hours and male dominance attached to a career in athletics administration. The women in this study seemed to very much enjoy working in the field because of this fun side. It appears that the fun part of working in athletics may buffer some of the negative elements of the profession and still draw women into it and/or prevent them from choosing to leave it to pursue something else. All of these elements of the nature of the profession serve as either supports or barriers to career sustenance and progression.

SUMMARY DISCUSSION OF LIFE AND HISTORICAL TIMES

Within the broader theme of life and historical times, the following subthemes were identified: generational or cohort effects, effects of legislation, impact of events, and nature of the profession. All of these subthemes provided temporal and environmental context, within which women's experiences could be shaped. The experiences of these women contributed to their entry into and continuation of their paths within this field of work. The generational differences discussed set the scene for the opportunity structures available to these women and demonstrate the importance of considering the temporal context within which individuals live their lives.

The effects of legislation the women acknowledged show how social and political changes initiated decades ago increased their available opportunities and freedom to choose how they live their lives and they still see this evidenced today. Effects are still to be seen in regard to how the current legislation and changes in intercollegiate athletics as a whole will impact the climate of the profession, the need for these types of professionals, and alignment of values with individual workers. Events, including national level tragedies, historic firsts for women, historic sporting events, and organizational changes were also shown to have impacts on how these women wanted to live their lives. While some were humbling and led to reevaluation of current ways of living, others were inspiring and broadened their horizons of opportunity and choice. Patterns in the nature of the profession served as both barriers to entry and progression for the women. While the male-dominated culture, sex segregation within the career field, and extensive time demands can prevent women from advancing, the fun element

of athletics can help keep women engaged in the work and act as a buffer to those negative effects.

The macro- and meso-level elements visible within this theme have had important effects on the micro-level elements of personal choice. Historical and environmental elements have both long-term and immediate impacts on individuals' social worlds and individual opportunities. Without these broader contextual elements being considered, it would be easy to mistakenly blame the victims – the women (Shaw & Frisby, 2006) – for their inability or lack of interest in breaking the gender barriers in this profession. As will be seen in the next chapters, temporal and environmental context plays a key role in the sequencing of human life, the social relationships women have, and the opportunity structures that exist for creating, building, and shaping individual life and career trajectories.

Chapter 5: Timing of Lives

The timing of lives theme of the life course perspective takes into account the social meanings of age and social timing (Elder, 1994). There are often social expectations associated with biological age, such as reaching particular developmental stages or assuming typical social roles (Helson, Mitchell, & Moane, 1984). For instance, based on her age, a woman may be expected, by herself or others, to be at a certain point in her career, have a romantic relationship, and/or have children. Of course, there are other factors that come into play, aside from simply age, such as personal values, the importance individuals place on various roles, and examples set by others.

In addition, roles or events can be perceived to be on-time or off-time, early or late, depending on the norms or patterns of the society in which one lives (Elder, 1994). Examples of on-time events could be going to college immediately after graduating high school or getting married in one's late-20s (the average age in the United States is 27 for women and 29 for men) (Vespa, 2014), whereas examples of off-time events could include having a child in one's 40s or experiencing an unexpectedly early death of a loved one. Subthemes identified within the timing of lives theme include age-graded expectations, stages of career and life, shifts in priorities, and happenstance. Each of these subthemes affected the women's personal and career experiences, thus impacting their decisions and shaping their individual paths.

AGE-GRADED ACTIVITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

The women in this study experienced several different types of age-graded activities and expectations. These include childhood sports participation, educational progression, partnering, and family building. Most of the women indicated that their participation in sports was an important part of their path to working in intercollegiate athletics. There was also an expectation that they would get a college education or beyond. In addition, some acknowledged the expectation of getting married and/or having children.

Childhood Sport Participation

Though this may not be the case for all of society, for many of these women it was natural, and for some, expected by their parents that they would be involved in sports in their youth. All but two had specifically mentioned their childhood sports participation and the significance of that experience to their lives and careers. Some were encouraged and expected by their parents to be active and participate in sports. While some only participated in sports as children or adolescents, others competed in college at various divisional levels. Regardless of how long they continued their competitive athletic endeavors or at what level, their participation had a profound impact on their lives.

Participation Fosters Interest

The women in this study have a passion for athletics, which, at least for some, stems from their childhood sports participation. Alice, like many of the other women,

played sports throughout her childhood and into adolescence. She started participating in her first sport when she was five years old and progressively added more sports until forced to choose one, which seemed fairly typical for the participants in this study. She said,

In junior high, they still let you do all the sports, so we did volleyball, basketball, and track. We did tennis for fun in the summer. Once I started high school, my class was the first class that the volleyball and basketball coach got together and they decided rather than sharing athletes, they wanted us to pick starting in high school. So I chose basketball instead of volleyball, and then my spring sport was track. I didn't add cross-country until my senior year because the class ahead of me had a ton of girls who could run the two-mile. So I was always saved from that.

Later on in the interview, she shared unprompted:

I think my love for athletics came from all the opportunities that we had here growing up, and that my parents made sure that we participated in things... [In my neighborhood], all the kids played sports. We played sports all the time – after school, on the weekends together... Our parents loved that we did that. They liked us being outside. They liked us being active and stuff like that. I guess that fostered the love of sports, which now I get to do sports stuff all day long.

Though participation was not necessarily an expectation for some of the women, it was an expectation for Maggie. Because her mother was denied the opportunity to be an athlete, she made sure that Maggie had that opportunity. She said,

My mom gets so mad because she claims that she would have been an Olympian, because when she was growing up and where she grew up, they wouldn't let girls do sports and she had to be a cheerleader... She just goes on and on what a great athlete she would have been. And her dad would never let her wear shorts or pants. She always had to wear a skirt. I was opposite of that. My mom was having me run 10Ks when I was like seven. I guess maybe she saw the stuff that she missed out on and she was like, "Oh, you are going to do this, this, and that."

After being brought into sports by her mother, she continued her sport participation in multiple sports, then focused on one, which ended up being her route to a college education and a career in coaching and athletics administration.

For Kris, having been involved in multiple sports growing up helped foster a desire to administer them. She said,

I grew up playing a variety of sports. I played basketball, golf, swimming, track and field...softball. So I've always been interested in all sports... In [my area of athletics], most everything runs through you. You are kind of like the conductor of the band, so to speak. That was appealing to me. Still is.

Playing sports also gave the women human capital in the form of sport-specific knowledge that they could later apply to their careers in the field. For example, Courtney talked about how having competed in a sport in her youth gave her a background that helped her in her career. She expressed that, because there are not many people who know the specific sport, her “intimate knowledge” of it gave her an advantage that helped her run events, talk to coaches, and be on the NCAA committee for that sport, all because of her involvement in it when she was younger.

Playing with the Boys

Several of the women talked about how when they were young, they played sports with the boys – either on a coed team or on a boys’ team. As discussed in the previous chapter, Michelle said that she had the opportunity because of Title IX to play whatever sport she wanted, including coed sports. A couple of participants discussed playing on boys’ teams. While they enjoyed the experience, they also recognized that it was not seen by others as normal or, at times, gender appropriate. For example, Kate shared:

My dad said he would coach so they would let me play... But a lot of times I played boys' sports... Until I was in junior high, then they started saying, "Well, when you go to high school, you have to go play girls." There weren't a lot of girls. It was normal because I just didn't know anything different, but as you got older, people would say: "Oh, you play like a girl."

Though it felt normal for her, she recognized that it was "an anomaly" for her to be playing sports with boys, but enjoyed and wanted to continue doing it. As she got older, she noticed that people having conversations about it. She said,

Even on the boys' team, you'd have people saying, "Oh, what parents would let their daughter do this?"... My peers supported me, but external, parental, and other pressures like, "This isn't acceptable and you shouldn't be doing this." But I'm somebody that when I believe and I think it's right, it makes me want to fight for it more. So it motivated me more to be that anomaly than to give it up.

Melissa also played sports with the boys. She said, "Several times I was the only girl on the team and my dad was always the coach." Though she "loved" playing sports with the boys and enjoyed being in a position on her team that put her "in charge," she was teased about her athleticism by her peers and questioned her femininity.

I remember getting teased as a little girl in elementary school and in middle school about just being a strong athlete... Me and a bunch of young 10 year olds decided to all have an arm wrestling contest (on a class field trip). I won and I beat all the boys. I don't think that would have happened probably in middle school because you are a little bit more aware of hormones. That's when I started to think about masculinity, femininity, "Oh, I shouldn't be arm wrestling," [laughs] those kinds of things. But I remember winning the unofficial arm wrestling tournament and how I was both proud and embarrassed, and that just being a very interesting feeling about the situation... I think I've always kind of been riding that line of wanting to be in charge and the leader, but also trying to maintain the feminine ideals that we've all studied about being more soft-spoken, more subservient, or the weaker sex.

Though her experience did not make her give up playing sports or her goals of being a leader, it did affect her thinking. She said, "I remember always wondering, 'Well, if I

were not as strong, or not as athletic, or less outspoken, would that make a difference socially?” She did not think having such ideas changed her behavior, though, because she “was still driven to try to beat everyone.” She shared:

Middle school was kind of an intersection of full-force ahead being little miss perfect... and then being also the fastest, strongest... I think a lot of girls face that, though, who are in sport, about just how to balance how to be a little girl and be a good athlete.

For most of the women in this study, it was a typical reality for them to be involved in sports as children. Participating in sports during their youth influenced these women’s lives in ways that sparked and interest, provided them with inside knowledge, and/or called into question their femininity. Regardless of how their participation impacted their lives at those moments, they all recognized the profound effect it had on their futures. Without having participated in sports in their youth and having it be an important part of their lives, they most likely would not have ended up in a career in athletics administration as adults.

Educational Progression

Again, in comparison to their ancestors, the women in this study were expected to get at least a college education after completing high school, if not a graduate education. For some, it was natural and expected from their upbringing. For others, sport served as a vehicle to get a college or even graduate degree and then led them into a career in athletics administration.

Expectations for Education

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there was never a question of whether Leah would go to college. There was an expectation that she would, that “it’s just what you do.” She spoke about that expectation saying that it was “never one that I was against”:

It was an understood for all of us (her and her siblings). It was never laid out, “Hey, this is what’s going to happen.” It was just sort of understood after high school, you get a college education. It was just kind of like after your left foot is in front, then you right foot comes next. It was just part of what we were raised to expect.

After college, there were additional expectations, that she would get an education and then use it in the working world. She said that, after college the expectation was:

A job [laughs]... Everybody in my family has graduate degrees... Nobody suggested to me, “Hey, you are going to go to graduate school.” It was just sort of natural for me to consider that. I just had to decide: what do I want to study? And so, I took a couple different routes. But then the idea was to be employed.

When exploring those different routes, she also learned what was not expected, at least from her parents.

At one point, after I had graduated from college, I went and worked a camp for the summer. And I had my acceptance. I was going to another school for a Master’s program starting in the fall. During the summer, I decided, “This is not the path I want to pursue. I’m going to go this other route for a degree.” So I called home and I said, “Hey, I’m not going to go there in the fall.” They (her parents) said, “What are you going to do?” I said, “Well, I’m going to go do this instead. It’s too late to get in for the fall, so I’ll start in January.” So they said, “What are you going to do for the fall?” I said, “I’ll come home, stay with you, work a job, start school in January.” And like that my dad said, “No. You are a college graduate. You are not moving home. You call and find a way to get in this fall.” I said, “OK.” [laughs]... So I thought, “OK. So you don’t go back home. That’s what you don’t do.” What you do is you find a way to be a grownup.

She did exactly that – she called the school and got in for the fall. She said, “So in two weeks, I applied, was accepted, and I had a place to live. It was pretty impressive.”

Sport as a Vehicle for Educational Pursuits

For some, sport participation was a vehicle for obtaining a college degree, which in turn led them into working in college sports. For example, Jessica said,

I wouldn't have been able to go to [my alma mater] without athletics... Ultimately, that got me to the school that was the right fit for me. Kind of developmental-wise, that was huge, but then, also, professionally, without that, without having played college sports, I don't think I ever would have considered this as a career.

Maggie may not have gone to college or graduate school without athletics.

I was not the greatest student in high school. I was not the greatest student in middle school. When they told me I had to declare my major, and the coach is like, "Yeah, you gotta fill out the application and send it to me. You gotta pick a major." I was like, "Well, I don't really know what I want to study."

Her coach made a suggestion based on what he knew of her, which she followed, and even though she "hated" the classes she had to take, she got through it and earned a degree. In her senior year of college, her coach (a different one from the first) persuaded her to go to graduate school as well.

He was asking me, "What are you going to do after you graduate?" I said, "Well, I'm not sure." He said, "Why don't you stay here and keep training?" I said, "Oh, I would love to keep training." He said, "Well, one condition. If you are going to stay here, you have to be in graduate school. You can be my graduate assistant." I was like, "What? I don't want to do more school! And I want to try to train without school."

Sure enough, she did pursue and earn a graduate degree, then began her career in intercollegiate athletics, first as a coach, and then as an administrator.

Like Maggie, Yvonne also grew up playing multiple sports and her athleticism led to a way to get a college education. She said, "My life was sports. I don't remember doing

anything other than sports growing up.” She ended up focusing on one sport for several reasons. She said,

It’s probably just what I was best at. It was a sport that was just prevalent, I guess, because it was affordable. It’s just what we did in my community. [My sister’s] boyfriend was my coach when I was a little girl. My sister just always kept me involved in it, and I was just always selected. So it became one of those sports was just easy... I just saw that it was going well for me in high school and I had the opportunity to get a scholarship in college. That’s probably why I focused on it the most in high school.

For Melissa, her sport may not have been the reason she got a degree, but playing her sport in college was a pivotal experience that led to her pursuit of athletics administration as a profession. She said, “I wouldn’t be in this career had I not had the opportunity to play [my sport in college].” Close to half of the women in this study played a sport in college. For some, it was the vehicle for obtaining higher education, but for all it opened the door to a career in administering college sport.

Partnering and Family Building

Whether they were expectations placed on themselves or by others in their social circles or society at large, many of the women in this study were expected to have romantic relationships, get married, and/or have children – sometimes on a timeline. Some were not susceptible to adhering to expectations, whereas others felt more pressure.

Settling Down on a Timeline

Courtney talked about how she wanted “to fall in love and be happy, but at the same time, on my schedule” and was not ready to “join my journey with someone else’s”

when she was in her early 20s. According to her schedule, she would be “ready to be serious at 30.” She said,

A lot of people my age at the time, we feared 30 like we were so old and it was over. But I wanted to travel. I said, “I see myself on the west coast for two years, Midwest two, south...” I was going to travel to find out the different experiences from all the different college athletics areas. Clearly, my travel plans didn’t work out as planned... But 30, I was like, “OK. I should know what I want to do by then. I’ll be settled. I’ll be ready to go.” In my mind, I was fine with that. I dated a lot. It was fun. But I wanted to date. I wasn’t ready to settle down.

Alice had the mentality in college that, after college, “You get married, you have kids... That’s what women did.” That mentality impacted the choice she made to pursue the initial path she did instead of a career in the health professions. When she did not get married when she thought she would, she pursued more education. She said about her mentality:

That’s why I went the career path initially that I did and got the all level PE (teaching) certification instead of doing what I probably thought I should have – at least been a physical therapist, if not a pediatrician or an orthopedic surgeon. But those are decisions that when you are 18 or 19 years old and you are making those decisions, you are like...but that was my mindset. Everybody in my family was married, had kids. And that’s just what I thought you did. So when I didn’t get married in undergrad, I’m like, “Well, OK. I guess we go to grad school.”

Though several of the women did have a sense that they should settle down on a timeline, some did not. As Amanda said, “Obviously, my generation is a lot more individual focused on where you are going and along the way getting married and having kids.” This shows how the social timing of lives can be impacted by placement in historical times.

Social Pressures

Some of the women acknowledged feeling social pressures to get married and/or start a family. Amanda discussed these feelings and how her career helped satisfy or distract her from those pressures. She said,

I think we all feel pressure when it's like all of our friends are getting married and then they're all having kids and you're not even married yet. I think that's one thing I've liked about moving around and living different places, is just I feel satisfied in that I've gotten to meet all these different people and live all these different places and experience all these different things, which is just as satisfying to me, or maybe kept me distracted from those social pressures. [laughs] I think it's always in the back of my mind. I'm sure it's in the back of everyone's mind, that pressure, especially from your mother, that's like, "Oh, are you seeing anybody?" [laughs] It's like, "Mother, if I was, I would tell you." Thankfully, my mother hasn't put that much pressure on me. I have a variety of friends at different stages in their lives, some still single, some divorced, some getting married for the second time. So I think that my support system doesn't give me those kinds of pressures, thankfully. Sometimes you still put them upon yourself though, sadly. That's what we women do.

Kate acknowledged social pressure, but did not give in to it. She dated her husband for longer than is probably typical for most couples that marry. She said that she felt some family pressure to get married within a timeframe. She said, "When you are young and you meet and they're like, 'OK. Now don't go run off and get married!' And then they are all like, 'Well we didn't mean this long. When are you guys getting married?'" She explained that, even though she had been with her significant other for a long time, "it was just when the timing was right for me. I think if I felt a lot of social cues and norms, I probably wouldn't be where I am. I think I'm pretty good at ignoring those." "Where I am" refers to having a career in a male-dominated profession and working her way up to the top of the profession.

Questions about sexual orientation were not asked in the interviews, but the women who verbalized their heterosexuality seemed to be more affected by social pressures to get married or settle down with a partner. Two of the participants were vague about their current and previous partners and did not speak about goals of getting married or having children. Rebecca specifically said that she does not want children. Though she had referred to a previous partner with masculine pronouns, such as “he” and “him,” Rebecca made reference to her current partner as “this person.” Jennifer did not list anything on her life/career map regarding her personal life or romantic partners and did not seem interested in discussing that much, as she keeps things “pretty close to the vest.” She said, I’ve been in relationships, but I’ve never had children and I’ve never been married.”

Kris was the only participant who talked openly about having a female partner. Though she is in a long-term and cohabiting relationship, she expressed that she has never been prone to social pressures, but recognized that her situation may be unique. She said, “I’m sure that it is different for most women. But, honestly, I’ve never wanted kids. I’m one of those people that I don’t have to be in a relationship... I’ve never perceived those expectations socially, that kind of stuff.”

Having Children

For some, having children was something they had always envisioned and in a way that was on-time or typical for many. For example, after Jessica got engaged to her husband, she had it in her mind that she and her husband would be starting a family and

began thinking about the effects of that. She said, “Then it was like thinking about, ‘OK. This is family now, too. We’ll start a family eventually. How’s that going to impact things?’” Amanda acknowledged her desire to have children in relation to a general timeline or window of opportunity and any move she may want to make for her career. She said,

Obviously I’m not getting any younger, so we want to start a family. So that makes a difference on if we’re going to move somewhere. Are we going to move before we start a family? I feel like once you start a family then you are stuck here for at least a little while. Right now we’re still newlyweds and just want to continue down that path and maybe start a family in the next year.

When coming out of a previous relationship, Michelle recognized that she does not have to be on a particular timeline for achieving her personal goal of getting married and having children. She said about the experience,

I think it just better established myself and even my confidence in myself in what I deserve; not settling for something just because I wanted to go down the path of having a family and a marriage. And not feeling that I was on a time crunch, because I think that was some of it. “I’m getting older and I’ll make this work because I want to move forward and I want to have a family, and the clock is ticking” type of situation. So I had to get that out of my mind and learn that it’s better to be happy and find the right person to do that with than feeling like you have to do it in a certain timeframe.

Some of the women have or plan to be mothers in a less traditional way – through step-parenting, fostering, and/or adopting. This was their way of still being mothers now that they may be at a point where they will be off-time in that process. Alice acknowledged that there was a window of opportunity to have children in the biological sense, but that she might have missed it. As previously demonstrated, she always thought she would get married and have children after obtaining her education. Now that she is

older, she does still have a goal to be a mother in some way, but recognizes that “it would probably be like as a stepmom now.”

Yvonne also still wants to be a mother in some way. She said, “I thought I would have children by now. It just hasn’t happened. I have considered adoption... I want a child.” She still has some doubts about it because of what it would mean for her lifestyle.

She said,

As much as I want that purpose, it is so scary! Like, forever? [laughs] And the thing about adoption is you have to do foster care to adoption and I’m just not sure if I want to keep getting attached to kids that won’t be mine... I’ve gone through the process to a certain degree, and the goal is to get the kid reunited with their parent. You can’t have a goal of wanting to adopt a child. So that’s why I’m like I don’t know if I want to. So that was the scary part. And I just haven’t given back into that, and I should, because I’m like, “OK. Now a year is gone. I could have finished the process.” I probably would have survived fostering some kids. I think it will be fine. I know I want marriage and I want children.

Whereas some of the women always wanted to get married and/or have children, some never had that as a goal. For instance, Rebecca said, “I’ve never wanted children, which is not necessarily related to professional, but it’s something that I’ve never really wanted.” Similarly, it was never a goal for Kris to have children. She said she has “never wanted kids.” In addition, though she did not say that she never wanted to have children, Jennifer did not mention it as being a personal goal of hers.

For most of these women, there was no cookie-cutter process for having children. For some, it happened on a “typical” timeline or they still expect it to happen in a traditional manner. For others, they would like for it to still happen, but perhaps in a non-traditional way. There were also some who did not have a goal to be a mother at all.

Similarly, some of the women wanted to get married or settle down on a timeline and felt social pressures to do so, yet others did not.

Discussion of Age-Graded Activities and Expectations

The subtheme of age-graded activities and expectations includes childhood sports participation, educational progression, and partnering and family building. Each of these topic areas was impactful in these women's life and career trajectories. Participation in sports as children was almost universal for the women in this study, as only one participant did not mention it as an important part of her journey. Though having participated in sports as children is not a prerequisite for working in athletics as a profession, it does seem natural for those who have participated in sports and have had positive experiences to want to pursue some sort of profession that involves sports. It is fair to assume that increased sport participation among girls will have a subsequent mirroring impact on the numbers of women involved in athletics administration. The fact that most of the women in this study indicated that their personal experiences participating in sports supports that idea, as for most, it was a very important part of why they are in this career. In addition, their participation in sports gives them additional human capital in that it provided them with industry specific knowledge and skills from hands-on experience, which gives them an advantage when trying to obtain higher level positions within intercollegiate athletics administration (Grappendorf & Lough, 2006).

For all of the women in this study, it was expected – whether by others or by themselves – that they would get at least a college education, if not a graduate education.

For some, participating in sports was an avenue through which to do so, while for others, it was a natural progression in the course of their lives. All but one of the women in this study had a graduate or professional degree, which corresponds with today's educational trends. Women do tend to be more educated in today's society, as they are earning more of all levels of degrees (NCES, 2012). Though some would argue that gaining relevant experience in certain areas, such as fundraising or marketing, may be more beneficial to upward advancement in the profession (Grappendorf & Lough, 2006), in a competitive environment such as athletics, having a graduate or professional degree cannot hurt. This is not to say that gaining on-the-job experience in certain areas is not beneficial for career advancement, as the common belief among those in the profession is that gaining experience in fundraising specifically is a requirement for getting to the AD seat (Grappendorf & Lough; Hancock, 2012) now that rules are changing within the NCAA that require more financial resources to operate a successful athletics program.

The women in this study had different perceptions of social timing in regard to partnering and family building. This could be due to individual differences in belief systems or a result of social learning by seeing what others do, but it also could be a signal of the changing norms of human life. The median age at first marriage has risen by six years in the last three decades. In 1975, the median age for women was approximately 21, whereas in 2014, it was 27 (Vespa, 2014). Though getting married early may be desirable for some, the trend is moving toward waiting until later to settle down with a partner. In addition, many women are waiting to have children until later in life or forgoing having children altogether. Perhaps in efforts to establish their careers

first, women are now having children later in life than they did decades ago. More first births are occurring after age 35 than ever before. Delaying childbearing is now being seen as a viable option for many career women, especially with good health practices, higher income levels, and more education (Hewlett, 2003; Mathews & Hamilton, 2014).

Many women are electing not to have children at all. In fact, childlessness is at its highest rate ever for all groups, but the more educated portion of the female population still leads with the highest level of childlessness. Possible explanations include that social pressure to have children has decreased over the years and not having children is being considered more of an acceptable life choice. In addition, better career opportunities and contraceptive methods provide more options for women who do not want to have children (Livingston & Cohn, 2010).

The women in this study displayed an array of partnering and mothering goals. Some leaned more toward the traditional of getting married and having children somewhat early (twenties and thirties). Others had no intention of getting married or having children at all. Others are happy in a partnership that does not involve marriage, although that may or may not be due to Texas's law against same-sex marriage that was still in effect at the time of data collection. With the recent change in federal law regarding same-sex marriage, it is possible this could change. Still others want to get married and become mothers in less traditional ways, such as adoption or step-parenting.

The fact that there is no set way or expectation of living life demonstrates how these women's placement in historical times has influenced the social timing and way of living their lives. As historical time has progressed from when these women's mothers

and grandmothers were at this time of life until the present, it has become increasingly socially acceptable to choose to live individual lives differently. There is not so much of a stigma attached to remaining single or delaying marriage, having children late or not at all, having a same-sex life partner, or any combination thereof. Though some traditions live on and some women may still feel pressure to accomplish life or career tasks on a timeline, it has become more of an option to choose something different for themselves. As such, these women's placement in historical times has opened up their opportunity horizons for choosing how they want the timing of their own lives to unfold.

STAGES OF CAREER AND LIFE

The women in this study discussed various aspects of particular stages in their lives and careers, as well as movement into new stages. Career stage aspects included being young or new in the profession and career progression, while life stage aspects included getting married or committing to a romantic partner, becoming a mother, as well as witnessing their supervisors becoming mothers.

Career Stages

Career stages were often referenced by the women in this study. Most of them had placed their various positions on their life/career maps, indicating that those were things that were significant to them as steps toward getting them to where they are now. Some of the stages discussed include just starting out and progressing, either within one

organization or in multiple organizations, and were perceived to have occurred either on-time or off-time.

Starting Out

For those who knew in college that they might have wanted to pursue athletics administration for their career, it was natural to obtain internships or part-time positions either in an athletics department while completing their undergraduate degrees or after they graduated. This would be one example of an on-time step in their career progression. For example, Courtney worked in her college's athletics department throughout the time she was a student there. She said,

This shaped my life because I'd be able to do it all. And by do it all, just be a student, work the part-time job while having a sport, it allowed me to [go to my next job] and apply all my skills from [my part-time job in college] to make it work [at my next job]. So working there just gave me the foundation for the opportunities ahead... to get me to where I am now.

Amanda realized that she wanted to have a career in athletics while in college, but realized it too late to change her major, so she worked part-time in athletics to get some experience during college and pursued an internship after graduation. She said,

As I neared graduation, I started applying for jobs in college athletics and professional sports. Since I didn't have a ton of experience, just trying to do something that was very entry level, like an internship or a GA (Graduate Assistant) position that could get my foot in the door. By the time I decided I wanted to do grad school, I was too late. And I knew that I wanted to go to [a particular school], so I was going to take a year off and then go back to grad school. I narrowed it down to some internships and interviewed [for one of them]. It was just a phone interview. A girl that was in the class before me, also who I knew through the athletics department, had done the same internship up there. So I talked to her about it and she recommended it. So I took the job and packed up and went.

When she did go to graduate school, she also actively pursued another GA position there to gain more experience. She said,

So I got accepted. And I knew that there were GA positions there [in my desired area]. So I was set on getting it. I'm not going to go get my Master's and not have this graduate experience. So I kind of bothered them, and bothered them, and bothered them, and finally I got an interview. I got the GA position. They had two positions.

For others, having a part-time position in athletics in college was what initially piqued their interest in pursuing athletics administration as a career. Rebecca spoke about her first part-time job in an athletics office:

It probably changed the trajectory of my professional career. I had every intention of going to law school. I took on a part-time job in the ticket office in the fall. So I worked one football season and they asked me to move into administration. So I worked there the rest of my college career. It just changed my plans. I was going to go to law school... After I started working in college athletics, I've been doing it ever since.

Others talked about getting into the profession late. For example, Kris had pursued a science major in college with the intention of going to medical school to become a doctor, but decided after the 1999 World Cup for women's soccer that she wanted to work in athletics instead. After making that decision, she felt as though she needed to have an entry level position to get her foot in the door. She said,

With getting such kind of a late start...because really, if you want to go into this field, you kind of know earlier in your college career and you can get a little more experience. So I was a little bit late, I think, in getting the experience I needed to really get a full-time job at that point right out of college. So I had to do some internships and stuff like that.

Jennifer also felt like she got a late start, but proved herself wrong. She said,

I was 30 when I started and I was competing for positions against individuals who were somewhat younger than I was. I felt like perhaps I'd gotten to the game late,

but I definitely made up for lost time in my career progression. So I think maybe that was my only concern, was, “Wow. Am I getting to this too late?” But clearly I was not.

She later clarified,

“I said that wrong. It wasn’t a competition against younger people. That wasn’t what I was as concerned about. It was more thinking, “Wait a minute. I’m getting to the game late.” But, like I said, I made up for lost time.”

Because she had started her career in athletics as a coach, rather than an administrator, Maggie felt as though she needed to catch up. In speaking about how a professional development opportunity had helped her, she said,

They’ve mostly just helped me understand how...because I was just new and I was in administration kind of late without a lot of education background in it. So I kind of worked my way and learned that way. So it kind of helped me to learn more stuff, learn how it worked, and all that kind of stuff... It helped me advance because I knew what I was doing. And it helped me look good, I guess, because I started learning stuff and I could do it. But [the professional development opportunity] definitely helped me learn about athletics and how it works and all that kind of stuff, but nothing too specific that I learned, just kind of like a general how athletics works.

Unlike those women, Michelle felt as though she was perhaps in the profession early.

She said,

I felt like the challenge that I maybe had was more my age because I was pretty young coming in and being at the level that I was. I think I was 23 years old when I came here and considered the #2 person [in my area]. I felt I struggled a little bit more and had to work a little bit harder to earn respect for myself because I was so young and people saw me as so young and, “You don’t have the knowledge and experience that I do.”

Starting a career in athletics administration on-time – either while or after completing a degree in a sport-related field – might be considered the typical path, several of these women felt as though they started early or late because they did not go

that route. Though being off-time, whether early or late, may have presented challenges for these women, the challenges were not insurmountable and all have remained in and been successful in the career, regardless of what route they took to get where they are now. The perception of being off-time, particularly late in timing, can add distinct pressures to women's experiences in the profession with the belief that one has to be an early entrant to be successful. Kris, Maggie, and Jennifer's examples both demonstrate this additional pressure to catch up with others who knew early on that they wanted a career in this field.

Progression

People who stay in a profession might expect to progress upward periodically throughout their career – in title, responsibilities, or pay. For example, Courtney commented on her progression in her career. She said, “I got a promotion every four years or a title change every four years.” Speaking about a promotion that she felt was significant to her experience Kris said, “I took on more responsibilities. Each promotion that has happened here, it just didn't happen in title. It happened because you were given more responsibilities, not just because you hung around or stayed long enough.”

Melissa had been promoted throughout her career, but those promotions were not things she sought for herself and were not what was important to her. She explained,

The title thing never really was a big deal to me. And it's never been a conversation I've had with [my supervisor] in terms of me asking for advancement or promotion or anything like that. I don't care what my business card says. It's always been more of [my supervisor] advocates with whoever the boss is at the time that she thinks I should be whatever title and then tells me about it after the fact. So it's never been something that I've pursued. I mean I'm

very appreciative, but it's not something that's terribly meaningful to me. What's more important to me in this role is that I just do good work...and that I maintain interest in what I'm doing... So the title, I guess it's a nice thing, but I don't really think of myself any differently or I don't really think of my work any differently, except sometimes there's more of it.

Though Melissa did not necessarily seek advancement in her career, for those who do, such progression in their careers might mean moving to another organization. When asked if her current organizational structure is amenable to her achieving her career goals, Amanda said,

Only if someone leaves. There's no other way that they are going to change my title or give me more money as we are currently. So the only way for me to achieve my goals is for my boss to leave or for my boss's boss to leave so that my boss can move up and then I can move up. So, not really. But that's just the world we live in. People don't just create positions. Someone's got to go for someone else to fill in.

It is rare that positions are created specifically for particular people, but it does occasionally happen, as it did for Jessica. For most, however, advancement in one's career often does mean moving to another organization. Yvonne and Jennifer often moved for career progression, for example. Yvonne kept seeking "better" when she left a position where she saw a lack of opportunity for growth. She said,

If I stayed at [where I was], I probably would have been [at my particular position] forever without much room to grow because [my supervisor] wasn't going to leave anytime soon. I knew I had to get to that position to continue to grow in the area... I knew that I wanted to keep moving, but I didn't even think about where that was going, where that move was going to lead to. I never thought of that. I just thought, "This is better. OK. This is better. Oh, this is better..." I think that's why I left and went to [my next job], again, just thinking I wanted to continue to move up. And every position I'd taken was to move up. But I never thought about what's that last up? I just didn't. I just kept thinking, "I just want better."

Similarly, Jennifer's career moves were also for career growth.

When I'm approached about an opportunity, I evaluate it based on is it something I'm going to be able to learn and grow in? Is it something that's going to challenge me? Or is it just something that's going to be what I'm doing now? And so, with each move I've taken on additional responsibility, and it's always been about getting better and growth.

Interestingly, some of these women felt that they needed to move backward to move forward. Jessica initially thought this was the case, but realized later that it might have been a mistake. She talked about her thought process when she was first starting out in athletics administration in comparison with what she knows now. She said, "I thought at the time the best thing I could do is sort of get some experience in a lot of the key different departments, which only now am I realizing was a really bad decision." She thought that she would:

Spend a couple years almost doing my own little rotational program and trying these different departments, not only to see what I liked, but just to get the experience, so that eventually I could be an athletic director, or be an SWA, or move into a higher level administrative position, now having had the background in all of these areas. But the longer I've been in college athletics, the more I realize it's not necessarily the people that have exposure to all the different sides. It's the people that kind of work themselves up through one area, but the right area. Not academics. You're never going to be an AD for that. It's more the development side, or the facilities side, or maybe a little bit of the business office. There's just certain parts of the department that would definitely lend themselves more to an AD role. And compliance definitely would be there, too, I think. I think I realized at the time, it was like, "I'm fine with starting all over again at the bottom of the totem pole in [one area]. Now I'm going to do it all over again in [another area]. Now I'm going to do it all over again in [another area]." I'm so glad I had the experience and I think it's been invaluable, and it's definitely helped me, but I don't feel any closer to a higher level position, because all of my jobs were sort of lower level positions.

Jessica touched on another concept of getting stuck in one's career in saying that working in an area like academics will not lead to the AD seat. In addition to what she said above, she referred to positions such as academic counselor as "finite," a "dead-

end,” and a “destination job.” She said that it is “certainly like a destination job for a lot of people. Once you are an academic counselor, you do that for your whole career and that’s it.” She also recognized, however, that there is value in positions such as those because the people who work in them enjoy what they do and they get to work with students, get exposure to the academic and eligibility side of athletics, and get “keyed into the issues that student-athletes are dealing with” on a daily basis.

It is important to keep in mind that not everyone who works in intercollegiate athletics administration aspires to be an AD. In fact, most of the women in this study did not have that as an ultimate career goal. Some were happy at the level they were at the time of data collection, some wanted to move up (but not all the way up), and others wanted to make lateral moves into other areas of athletics administration. Alice is an example of someone who wanted to make a move into another area, but also move up in rank. She expressed some of the obstacles she saw in her path and her feeling of being stuck. She said (about what she thought when first starting in this profession),

I still had that idea that if you work hard enough and people see it, then they move you up. That may have been how it used to be, because I had several friends that that’s what happened for them. Now it doesn’t seem to be that way. It’s more you have to have the skills and the experience. They are not as willing to train you when it’s at that high of a level. And since I’ve been moved up to where I am, I’m at the point where I know I don’t want to be a director of [my area]. I just don’t. But to get over into something like [a different area], I don’t know how to do it. I mean I’m kind of stuck. Not that I don’t like what I’m doing, but I think I would really enjoy that more. And I see my end stop goal as being the director of [that different area somewhere] like what we have over here. But how do you quit your day job to get the experience that you need if you are already where you want to be (in regard to organization)? So that’s kind of the hurdle that I’m facing right now.

Life Stages

The women in this study talked about changes in life stages as being significant to them. They spoke about how these changes affected their lives and careers. Such life stage changes included getting married or having a committed partnership, becoming a mother, and experiencing deaths or illnesses of loved ones. These changes often affected how they thought about their lives and careers and were almost always placed in the high significance areas of their life-career maps. The implications of some of these life stage changes will be addressed more in the next chapter, but it is also important to address in this section due to the affect that the shift in stage had on the women's career paths.

Romantic Commitment

Committing to a romantic partner led to shifts in some women's thinking about their careers. For Melissa, being married to her husband meant that she had to do a better job of maintaining balance and boundaries with her work. She said that this life stage change was significant to her because she had to:

Balance a healthy relationship with work, because I didn't have work/life balance [before then]. I think [my husband] helped me start to keep things in perspective a little better and to actually have to call someone and say, "Hey, I've got to work on this last eligibility report or whatever it is," and he's like, "Why? What is that?" Putting that, "Why does that matter?" Or for him to kind of question like, "So why do you need to go see that recruit on Saturday?" In a sense, questioning what I do, but I had to think about how to answer his questions, like, "Why *am* I doing that?" I think he helped me put things in perspective and prioritize in a little bit healthier way. I've had better boundaries with work since I've known [him].

For Jessica, she said getting married has affected her career because of the industry in which her husband works, as he will always have more earning potential.

Because they decided as a couple that they would always go wherever the best opportunity was, that means that her career will always take a back seat to his. Also, given the places where he would be relocated, it likely means a decline in the quality level of the institutions where she would work. She said,

Professionally, I think I'll always take a backseat to his job, which really I'm fine with. But it does just make it a little challenging in the sense that...and I don't want to sound like a brat saying this, because I've loved the people that I've worked with in every school, and I've learned so much. But starting off in college athletics at a place like [where I started] is pretty awesome. It's like working at a Stanford or Duke. It's a good academic/athletic institution. And then I went to [my next job], which was an awesome school but not as prestigious as [the first one]. And now I'm [here], which is also a great school for very different reasons, but it's not, in my opinion, as prestigious as [the one before] or [the one before that]. Wherever we go for his job, there will be a school that I can work at, but it's probably never going to be better than the one I was at before. It's probably not going to be [like my first one] again, given his industry and given the places that are realistic for us to go. I don't see myself going to better and better schools, which normally I wouldn't have taken a job at [the second place] after [the first]. I would have only tried to do something that was what I thought would be a little bit better. And all of those institutions are amazing for different reasons. But in terms of college athletics and the amount of support you get from the university, or even just financially, the level or the caliber of student athlete, or the...all of it. It's just kind of been a gradual step down.

Becoming a Mother

Like Melissa discussed about getting married, becoming a mother also forced her to maintain better balance with work. She said,

First of all, when I first had [my child], the first six weeks I was quite sure I was going to quit and I was just going to be a mom. I probably faded in and out of that for the first year. It was very difficult to come back.

She compared it to before she was married and had a child. There was a “contrast with where I had been in my career in [earlier years] of just kind of all in all the time.” She said, “I had to make a separation.” After an interruption, she continued,

Being a mommy is more important. It’s hard to balance both. I’ve read all the articles...about work/life balance, and working mom, and how to do both, and nobody has an answer. So it’s kind of a day-by-day thing, and some days are better than others, and some days I feel really guilty for not being with [my child], and others I’m like, “I hope [my husband] can stay home today because I need to get this done.” So I expect it to always be that way as long as I work and as long as I’m a mom, which is hopefully for a long time.

Now that her child is a little older, she still struggles with balancing work and family at times. She said,

I’ve changed my schedule so I can get here earlier so I can be home in time to do bath time, dinner, and that kind of stuff with [my child]. But, like yesterday I got here earlier and stayed late for what I normally do and I only got to see [my child] for probably cumulative of an hour of his waking day. Sometimes that’s very upsetting to me as I’m going to bed at night and recounting my day. It’s like, “Wow. I only got to see him for 45 minutes today when he was awake because of other commitments, my commute, and all that kind of stuff.”

Like Melissa, becoming a mother forced Courtney to maintain better balance between her work and home lives. She said,

It forces you to work/life balance, because before you would stay late for something because you were all in. You can be all in from your house. You can be all in and still work 45 or 40 hours a week because you also need to be all in at home, because that’s something that I chose. If I can give 100% at work, I can give 100% at home, too.

Michelle also discussed how becoming a mother made her think about how she would balance her career with motherhood. She said,

I wasn’t quite sure. “OK. How am I going to do this now, balancing when I actually do have to do the career and raise the family?” I’m still kind of transitioning through that... I’m kind of struggling a little bit now. Am I really giving the time and attention to my family that I think they deserve with this

career? That is weighing on my mind a little bit now. But I know I can manage it and I can have a job and a family. It's just ultimately going to come down to me and to what level I can do both and if that is giving me the satisfaction that I need in both ends. I take my work and everything very seriously. I'm not going to do anything subpar. If I don't feel that I can fully give all of that to the job, then I don't know that I felt like I should stay in that position. Same thing with home. If I don't feel like I'm giving everything that I need to give to my family, and that even more important than the job, then maybe things need to change, whether that's a career change, whether that's refocus on how we do things here in the office. I don't know. But those are some things that I'm exploring right now.

Kate also talked about balance in relation to becoming a mother. She said, "I think it will probably be the most important thing you ever do. But I probably... Well, not probably. I get too career focused. I don't balance personal." Becoming a mother, for her, coincided with something major happening in her work, which made having balance even more difficult, as she did not take as much time off as she would have preferred, and made her consider how taking more time off would impact her professional life. She said,

A lot of people would say, "Oh, take all the time you need." But the reality in this job is, I said, "Look, when we are in front of [this committee] in a year, nobody is going to care that I had a child." But if we didn't have that major [incident], would I have felt the need to come back to work? I don't think I would have. So I think you balance the theory and the reality. The theory is like, everybody is like, "Oh, take all the time you want. You have a kid. Enjoy it. You'll never get this again." You won't, but your children need to eat and go to college. You've got to balance all that. I don't think that's different than what a lot of people deal with, but I do think that was the first time having a child that you really realize being the anomaly and not being the norm, and not feeling a sense of safety and security, like, is this going to impact me professionally in a negative way? That was when I felt it the most.

Jessica has also thought about how becoming a mother will affect her professionally, which she was planning on doing in the near future. She said,

In the very short term, obviously I'll take 12 weeks off for maternity leave, which is the full amount that I can do... I've never been pregnant before, I've never been a mom, I've never had a kid, so I need to just cross that bridge when I come to it. As much as I think I know, "I want to keep working," or, "maybe I want to work part time," I may get there and think, "No, I don't want to work anymore"... I've always been so Type A and organized and a planner. It's nice that I feel like my husband's kind of helping bring out that side of me where it's OK not to have everything figured out. We'll figure it out as we go.

For these women, becoming a mother caused them to rethink how they chose to spend their time. Their priorities often shifted, which will be addressed more later in this chapter.

Supervisors Becoming Mothers

The transition to motherhood can also be impactful in another way. A trend that was identified through this research is that when one's supervisor becomes a mother and goes on maternity leave, it can be a positive experience in a couple of different ways. First, it provides an opportunity for others to step up and take more responsibility, thus allowing them to learn, grow, and show their worth professionally. For example, when one of her supervisors went on maternity leave, Amanda was able to get some experience she may not have been able to get otherwise at that point in her career. She told her supervisor, "I want to run the last game that you won't be there." Her supervisor trusted her enough to let her do that, so she was able to get that experience, which she says, "was great." Similarly, Michelle was able to gain valuable experience when her supervisor went on maternity leave.

[My supervisor] went on maternity leave, which was a perfect opportunity for me, because then I had the opportunity to essentially step into her role. It just happened to work out to my advantage. I think that's when I really had a growth

spurt, I guess, in [my area], because I was just almost thrown into the fire and had to figure some things out along the way, because even though she had trained me on some things and given me exposure, until I had really done them on my own and figured them out...and I had even had the ability to enhance some things, put my own little spin on it... But that gave me that opportunity to think outside the box a little bit more... I didn't want to ever have to bother her on leave or whatever, so I'd just figure things out on my own, where before I could just always go ask her some questions. I made it my goal to not call her unless I got into a big crunch and really needed it. Generally, I was able to get an answer.

She also saw another benefit to being able to step into her supervisor's role temporarily while she was out. She added,

I think that also helped me develop some relationships and partnerships or networks outside of just [my organization], because I was forced to maybe call some other schools or call the [conference office] or the NCAA. That's where it gave me some of those exposures that I hadn't previously had because she would usually handle those situations.

During her career, she also had another supervisor go on maternity leave and had a similar experience of being able to step up into her supervisor's role temporarily while she was out. She said,

It forced me to have to, again, learn some things that we weren't able to really plan for before her leave, and then take on some challenges that before she would handle and bring me in the loop, but I wouldn't take the lead on it... It also gave me more exposure to the AD because I was having to go directly to them. I think she kind of gave me that free reign of, "Come in and you run the shop." So seeing that I had the ability to do that and being able to face the challenges and having some success and her having that confidence in me to be able to do it as well. I don't think she really checked in on me a whole lot. She was there if I needed her, but it was kind of my, again, self-pride. I wanted her to be able to do what she needed to do for her health and her family and not have to bring her in unless absolutely necessary. I think I only had to do that a couple times.

Second, having a supervisor become a mother demonstrates for others that it is acceptable and feasible to be a working mother in this profession. For example, Michelle

said that it affected the way she thought the experience of becoming a mother in this profession would be in the future. She said,

I think that getting into that profession and then seeing, obviously, my boss at that point in time, she ended up having a child, and then seeing that it was manageable. It's still a very demanding career... But I did see it was manageable. The fact that she could have a baby, take the time off that she needed, come back and, actually, they really provided her the flexibility she needed to get oriented back into the career definitely played a part in me continuing to want to pursue this profession. So yeah, that was, from the moment I got into it, something that was still on my mind, is can I do this and can I have the same work/life balance and commitment to family that I would want being able to still maintain this career?

The second time she experienced a supervisor going on maternity leave solidified these thoughts even more. In addition, she said,

In this day and age, there's opportunity. A lot of what we do can be done from home. You can have some of that flexibility. So it started to make me feel more comfortable that I could be able to manage both in the way that I would want to.

In contrast to Michelle's experience of having seen other successful women in this profession have children, Kate did not have that modeled for her. The only people she had seen in the upper level of the organization who had children, their children were already grown. She said,

I'm glad that I did it, but there's times where I'll be like... Especially, talk about pressures, like everybody's had their kids and there's that. You're doing this, and you don't know because you don't see anybody like you. So then when you do it and you know, you get the, "Am I going to come back?" "They're having a child?" Because that's what the generation has done before.

Despite feeling as though she was unable to take the time she needed because of her work responsibilities, she did feel as though the organization's AD was "family supportive."

She did have fears, though. When asked how she managed both roles upon her return to work, she said,

I don't know that I did. You have sleep deprivation. I think I kept thinking, "I'm going to get fired for something that's dumb," because you're just going all directions. It wasn't good...to come back so fast... So I was a little crazy.

Fortunately, she did not get fired and has maintained her successful career while also being a mother.

Death and Illness of Loved Ones

Courtney experienced an off-time death of a significant other. Though she went to a dark place for a while, she bounced back and moved through the tragedy by continuing to work and attend graduate school. She said about the loss,

I was dark. I wasn't happy. But I had to remember that before him, I had a life, a career, and a path, a goal, and a family. I have a very large hole in my heart. I miss somebody. It hurts. It can't be filled. But I still have to have a life, a goal, a career, and family afterwards. There's just a place that won't be filled again.

When asked about how the experience impacted her life and the way that she thought about what she wanted, she said,

I was still in my career, so things were fine there. I think that I got the idle hand thing. I was dark. I was not mean, but I just wasn't fair. I had the "it's not fair" kind of concept. Explaining to people...when you have friends that it affects them even more than it affects you and they hurt, I'm like "don't feel that way." I just can't imagine. Like, "If you do, then you'll be where I am. That's just a horrible place to be." So I think after he passed away, I was just kind of there for a couple years. And then I was like, "Let me go to grad school." I got bored, so I went to grad school.

In regard to how it affected her work, she recounted sending an email to the entire staff.

She said,

It was just one of those things where, let me talk about it. Anybody who loses someone has to carry around that burden of losing them for themselves. And it is hard to explain to other people not to feel for you, because if you feel for me, then you only allow me to go back to the place where darkness and sadness comes. So all I did was I continued to do work. I just asked everyone, "If I need to vent, if I need to cry, if I need time to shut my door, then just let me do that. When I ask for help, be available if you can. If not, I totally understand." You'll hear people say the look, the face that someone makes. You don't need or want that. Work was a good thing. It was something that I was able to do and keep going.

She took about a week off of work and the coaches she worked with "didn't seem to understand." She was told upon her return,

The coaches came in the office every day, like, "Is she coming back?" Like, "Where is she?" Once I was back there, they were like, "We didn't want to tell you. You were sorely missed." And it felt good to know that I was missed and I was needed. That was pretty cool.

Amanda, Yvonne, and Jessica also experienced the deaths of loved ones, although they were not as sudden. Each of these women experienced the death of a parent and, although they knew it was going to happen in advance, it was still difficult. For Amanda, the illness and subsequent death of her father coincided with her engagement to her husband and the planning of their wedding. She spoke about the experience as she cried.

My dad was a very personal person, so he didn't talk about it a lot. He didn't keep us in the loop. I think he knew for a long time...He didn't tell us how bad it was...Here I was, I got engaged and everything's exciting. We're planning a wedding. And then, before you know it, I have to go...for like three weeks in the hospital watching him. So it was hard. And then you have to plan funeral while you are planning a wedding. So was a rough year. But everybody at work was great. It's very supportive. Everybody kind of stepped in... Everybody helped take over everything that I had going on. They let me miss a lot of work. So everybody here was great. So I'm grateful that I work in a great place.

Yvonne's mother was ill for a longer time before she passed away and Yvonne cared for her throughout that time. Not only did her mother factor in to whatever

decisions she had to make about her career, but she also felt as though caring for her mother was her purpose. She said,

I needed something that needed me. That's what I needed, because my purpose was taking care of my mom. Even though I had good jobs, I didn't feel like they were my purpose. My mom was my purpose. And having those jobs...which I wouldn't say they all provided great salaries, but they allowed me to take care of her. I couldn't have worked in corporate America and do what I did for my mom without probably getting written up or having to clock in and out and not get paid. So my purpose was my mother. So when she passed away, I felt like I had no purpose. So for [another university] to need me, that's probably why I went there.

Something else factored into her decision to leave where she was after losing her mother, and that was an unsupportive and "selfish" supervisor. While at her mother's funeral, her supervisor called and left a rude message on her voicemail. She said,

When I got back, we had a conversation that wasn't very pleasant. I just said, "You know, it's probably time I start looking for another job." That was like the most disheartening reaction for such a situation, from not just my supervisor, but from a friend.

Jessica's mother also passed away after dealing with an illness. She spoke about the support she received and how appreciative she was of such support. She said,

The hardest time in my life was when my mom was diagnosed with [an illness], which is when I was working there. The support that I received on a personal level was the best gift I've ever had. My boss at the time literally had said, "Just do what you need to do. Go home. Whatever you need to do, we'll be here to support you." [That institution] emphasizes family, but they really do put their money where their mouth is in terms of supporting you. So when I needed time to be with my family, my boss literally...my mom was initially given about two months to live. I had said "I'm going to go home and be with my mom." In my head I'm like, "If I get fired, fine. If I lose my job, fine. I really don't care. I want to be with my mom." He hired someone to work part-time. He gave me a laptop to take home if I wanted to check in. My mom ended up living longer than we thought and I stayed home that whole time. I literally would work maybe an hour a day, maybe a couple hours one day and the nothing for a few days. When she was in the hospital, I was with her. When she had treatments, I was with her. But it was just incredible. I mean my job was there when I got back. They were

all incredibly supportive. I got paid the whole time. It was just, “Go home. Be with your family. That’s what’s important. We’ll figure this out. We’ll support you. Just let us know what you need.” Literally, he meant it. Yeah, it was incredible. That is probably...still, to this day, I feel like that’s the best gift that anyone could give. I mean he gave me time with my mom, who is my absolute best friend. So that was just huge. And I feel like I will forever be grateful and indebted to him.

These examples show how important a supportive work environment is when going through a traumatic experience like losing a loved one. A lack of support can mean losing a good administrator, as was the case for Yvonne.

Discussion of Stages of Career and Life

The women in this study did not start out or progress in the profession in the same way. Some knew early on that this was a career they wanted to pursue, while others found out later. Perceiving their careers to be off-time, especially later than their peers introduced a distinct competitive component, as the women who were “late to the game” felt as though they needed to catch up by taking lower level positions that they may not have pursued otherwise at that point in their lives, seeking out professional development opportunities to learn more about the profession, or by working extra hard to make up for lost time.

What Jessica said about certain areas of athletics administration being “destination jobs” that do not lead to advancement to the AD seat has been found to be true in the literature. Women who aspire to be at the highest level of intercollegiate athletics administration may actively avoid positions in such areas such as academics and compliance, as they are areas in which women can get stuck and unable to rise to a higher

level of athletics administration (Hoffmann, 2010). The same argument could be made for life skills coordinator roles, as those are also part of the “professional administration” category that is more female dominated (Lapchick, 2010). Interestingly, several of the women in this study indicated that a compliance position may be a good route to move up due to having thorough knowledge of the rules.

It is also important to keep in mind that not everyone who works in intercollegiate athletics administration aspires to be an AD. In fact, most of the women in this study did not have that as an ultimate career goal. Some were happy at the level they were at the time of data collection, some wanted to move up (but not all the way up), and others wanted to make lateral moves into other areas of athletics administration. Some of their goals changed as time passed, after learning more about the role and the requirements associated with being at the top.

Hancock (2012) discovered two primary types of goals in her study of senior level athletics administrators. One was to contribute to student-athlete development and the other was to advance to positions of authority in an athletics department. The goals of the women in this study were similar. Many talked about wanting to influence student-athletes in a positive way, whether it was academically, keeping them safe within the rules, or helping them develop important life skills. Others very much wanted to get into an AD or SWA position, where they would have the ability to participate in decision-making for their respective organizations. Some wanted both of those things and being at a higher level position would be a way to impact student-athletics in a positive way. Still others were happy right where they were or considering leaving the profession altogether.

The experiences they have had in their personal and professional lives have influenced those goals. The on-time progression in terms of pay raises or promotions likely served as reinforcement of their efficacy to do this profession successfully, whereas if they did not have such progression, they may have been discouraged or pushed out. This study did not include those who are no longer in the profession, so this was not something that could be analyzed using these data, however prior research (Maneiro & Sullivan, 2005) has shown that managers who are promoted are less likely to resign their post than those who are not promoted. Also, when opportunities for advancement exist, women are more likely to remain loyal than men. A lack of advancement opportunities is likely one of the most prominent reasons for women to leave an organization (Maneiro & Sullivan, 2005), so if career progression is perceived to be late, off-time, or nonexistent, women may get discouraged and “pushed” out of their careers (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). This could be a leak in the “pipeline” that could be repaired with consistent and timely promotions for loyalty and contributions to one’s organization.

“On-time” entry into or progression within a career in a competitive environment like athletics administration can be crucial for women. Though there are more available options for late entry, a short time off, or a non-linear career path than in previous generations, there do seem to still be strong pressures to get in early and stay on the path for fear of missing out or not being able to return and catch up. According to MIT economist, Lester Thurow (as cited by Hewlett & Luce, 2005), one’s thirties is the best time to both establish a successful career and for launching a family. If women delay

entry into their careers or take an off-ramp due to being pushed or pulled out, they may be unable to catch up and may get “lost on reentry” (Hewlett & Luce, p. 45).

In addition to career stages or progression, changes in life stage can impact women’s careers. Committing to a romantic partner and the entrance into motherhood affected the ways these women approached their careers. One of the main ways this happened was that these commitments made them create stronger boundaries between work and home, helping the women have more balance or harmony in their lives. Without those partners, they would spend more time and energy on their work. This could be seen as either positive or negative. In a positive light, more balance and harmony is likely to lead to better life and job satisfaction outcomes, as well as overall well-being (Bruening & Dixon, 2008; Guest, 2002). In a negative light, devoting less time to one’s career could give the impression that one is not committed to their work, as being physically present and ever available often serves as a signal of one’s competence and dedication to their job (Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2008).

Another way being partnered affected their careers is by making sacrifices in one’s own career for the sake of the partner’s as in Jessica’s case, where her husband has more earning potential, so her career takes a “backseat” to his. It is known that men typically have more earning power, as there is still a notable gendered wage gap. What is not known is, if there were no wage gap, whether married couples would prioritize a husband’s career over a wife’s. Benson (2014) argues that the trailing spouse is decided upon long before marriage, as men are more likely to choose geographically clustered occupations, whereas women are more likely to choose geographically dispersed

occupations. In other words, women tend to choose occupations that they can do anywhere, in part because of social role expectations reinforced throughout their lives. The results from this study indicate that earning power does get prioritized because when relocation was being considered, the primary earner's career seemed to take precedence. Interestingly, however, some couples chose to have long-distance relationships to give both careers a fair shot. This provides an interesting contrast to prior generations, demonstrating a cohort effect, as it would be unfathomable for women living decades ago to have long-distance relationships for the sake of her having a career outside of the home.

Becoming a mother added an extra role for the women to navigate and potentially give more of an impression of a lack of commitment to their jobs. Working mothers are especially prone to work-family conflict, an area that has been of much interest in the sport management literature in recent years (Bruening & Dixon, 2008; Dixon & Sagas, 2007). Conflicting demands between work and family can be a barrier for women's progress in athletics administration (Hancock, 2012) due to the male-dominated culture because men do not typically have the same sense of work-family conflict. Women are still assumed to be responsible for home tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, and childcare (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Though the mothers in this study did express feelings of work-family conflict, they also felt as though being in a committed partnership or being a parent made them strive for better balance in their lives.

Having supervisors become mothers and go on maternity leave benefited the women in a couple of different ways. First, it allowed them to step up and take on some

of their supervisor's responsibilities, which led to increased knowledge, skills, and confidence in their abilities. These enhancements of human capital and self-efficacy beliefs helped them in their career development and progression. Second, it allowed them to witness other women in the profession handle the transition to motherhood and balance work and family roles. This made them feel more confident that they would be able to do that themselves if or when the time came for them to become mothers themselves.

Some of the women in this study expressed how having aging parents has affected their careers. This aspect of the timing of lives impacted their career decisions by making them want to be physically closer to their parents to be able to take care of them or at least be able to visit often. This desire to be close to their parents has led them to limit their careers to particular geographic locations or not look for better jobs, even if "stuck." This leads into the idea that as women progress through various life stages, priorities can shift. Needing to care for aging parents can serve as a factor that "pulls" women out of their planned career trajectories (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). That "pull" factor becomes stronger when women are considered to be in the "sandwich generation," caring for both aging parents and young children (Bennett & McDaniel, 2006; Hewlett & Luce, 2005). Interestingly, only two of the women in this study fit into that category (one with a parent living in her home and the other living elsewhere, but close enough to visit). The other women had either young children or aging parents, but not both, again reflecting the changing norms and patterns of life choices available to women today to be able to opt out of or delay having children.

SHIFTS IN PRIORITIES

In part due to other influences, such as the previously discussed noteworthy national events, changes in relationship or family status, deaths of loved ones, or perhaps simply getting older, the priorities of these women changed over time. In some cases, it made the women want to be closer to home, as was touched upon in the previous chapter.

Motherhood

For the women in this study who are mothers, the entrance into motherhood changed the way they prioritize the different areas of their lives. The shift in priorities manifested in different ways, however. Melissa discussed how her priorities changed when she became a mother.

Just like I had done when [my husband] challenged me, like, “OK. So who is more important? Your work or me?” I choose [my husband]. And I definitely choose [my child]... I don’t feel like I’m forced to make a choice, but in terms of prioritizing my time, my energy, and my life, they win and work doesn’t. So if some student is ineligible or if some student doesn’t get the [resource] that they want or some coach gets pissed off about something, I don’t care, because my priority is my [child] and my husband and my dogs, of course. So I think the most significant thing is it also made me look back and think, “Wow. A lot of the stuff I do really isn’t that important in the grand scheme of things.” And a lot of the things we do just in general around this place are not that important.

Later on, she said,

I think my ultimate and most important goal is for me just to be as good of a mom as I can be. I can be a good wife most of the time. But mostly just making sure I’m providing [my child] with every opportunity to be happy, and successful, and healthy.

When she first became a mother, she was very seriously considering quitting her job to stay at home with her child. She still struggles with how best to enact motherhood to do

the best she can as a mother. She talked about her considerations in weighing her options:

Certainly, it's financially better for our family if we have two incomes, so that's kind of the black and white of the situation. I didn't have another alternative...like, I didn't know what I would do to get back...I wouldn't know how to get back into a different career, get back into this career if I did leave. So if I took a hiatus or something, I don't really have a sabbatical option. So what do I do? I wouldn't be able to start over. So I felt like I worked so hard for a long time to establish myself in a career and know what's going on and then I didn't want to have to start over in anything. I thought about it a lot.

She expressed that her supervisor probably knew that if she were pushed, she may not return, so she was allowed to return slowly – first working some from home, then working more and more in the office. She said that she “probably would have [quit] because I was wasn't ready to leave [my child] at that point.” She said that she still entertains the idea of quitting. She said,

This place would certainly function without me and would be fine. I would be fine without it. I don't think I could have said that probably in [an earlier year] because I was so enmeshed with my work... It's a daily struggle, though. It's not a decision that I've totally made about doing both or doing one. I can't quit being a mom, so that's not an option or something I would want. But it's not an easy thing to balance.

Michelle's priorities also changed when she became a mother. She said, “My goals and my passion are shifting more towards my family, obviously now that I have a [child] and a husband at this point in time.” She also touched upon another phenomenon that is happening in society more and more – women as primary breadwinners in a household. She said,

I think being, right now, kind of more of the breadwinner in our family puts a little bit of stress on me, too, that I need to make sure I maintain this so I can help financially support our family. So there you have that pressure. You kind of get a

taste of what, generally, I think we're seeing more and more. Women are being more of the breadwinners in their household. But I understand a little bit more of the stress that sometimes families have.

Like Michelle, Kate is also the primary breadwinner in her family and has conflicting thoughts about how to be the best mother she can for her children. She said,

I think now I'm at a point where I'm trying to figure out how do you give your kids what they need to be successful? And a lot of that's needing to be home with them more. Then I also see that it helps them when they see you working and you're doing these things; that's the example, whatever they decide to do. I don't know. I don't think any of it's easy. You just try to do the best you can in that moment and, at the end of the day, know that that's what you're doing as long as that's what you're doing. It may not be perfect. You may look back and go, "I should have done this and not that." But if you're doing the best you can in the moment and trying to do all of it, then it's going to be what it's going to be. That's all you can do.

When asked how she balances the thoughts of wanting to be home more for her children and also wanting to set an example for them, she said,

I don't think I balance them very well. I think, if anything, I defer to the professional. But right or wrong, I think I know they need to be provided for. They need to go to college. They need the stability of those resources, so I do this so they can have that.

These examples demonstrate how entering the stage of motherhood can cause priorities to shift. Regardless of how that happens, these women are enacting motherhood the best way they see fit for their particular family circumstances. Unlike their mothers or grandmothers, these women are not constrained to a particular way that motherhood should be. They have more options for how to be good mothers, which is the goal of all of these working mothers.

Death and Illness

In addition to the transition to motherhood, the death of a loved one can also be the catalyst for shifts in priorities. For the women who experienced it, it made them want to be closer to their family or ensure that they do purposeful work. For example, when asked how her mother's death had affected her career or the decisions she made about her career, Jessica said,

I've always been so close with my family. My mom's always been my best friend. It just made me realize even more that I wanted to be closer to my family. The most important thing is the relationships that you have, and your family, and the people that you want to spend your time with. And it just emphasized that even more, because now one of the people that I wanted to spend time with I couldn't ever again... It made me realize, yeah, work's great, but that's not what's important. It just makes you think about your priorities... Do I want to accept a job that's maybe further away because it's a great job, or do I want to be closer to my family? I think more than anything it just really made me reflect on what's important to me. How do I want to prioritize life? What do I want out of certain jobs or relationships? I think it just makes you think a whole lot more. It makes you grow up a lot. I think you learn a lot about yourself in a time like that.

Yvonne felt as though she lost her purpose after losing her mother, which made her reconsider where she is and what she is doing. She said, "It just feels like I want to go where I can truly have a purpose. And sometimes I feel like this is a job, not really my career, really a purpose. And I don't like that feeling." These feelings are making her consider either going back to her alma mater, where she would feel more needed, or leave the profession altogether to pursue a completely different career.

A loved one's illness can also shift priorities. A couple of the women mentioned that they have at least one ill parent and the ways that is impacting them. As an example, after her father's death, Amanda's mother is now ill, so it is a priority for her now to be in

a geographical location that is close enough to her mother to be able to visit and help take care of her when possible. She said,

It's been hard because I'm not there. When [another] job option came up and it was like on the west coast and even farther way, I was like, "OK. If this happens again, I'm going to be even farther away." I mean that's kind of affected my outlook of where do I want to go? And I don't want to be too far. I know I'm never going to move back to [my home state], but, I don't want to be too far to help her... I drove [to where she lives] one weekend just to help and be there for her because she couldn't do anything. So if I had to get on a plane for five hours, that just wouldn't economically be possible or I couldn't take that much time off.

These women's experiences demonstrate that it can be difficult to balance the competing priorities of work and family. Leah provided an analogy of a swinging door in regard to this struggle that sums it up nicely. She said,

I've heard that you can describe work and family is a swinging door. Sometimes family will push a little bit harder and you have to allow that, and sometimes work will push a little bit harder and you have to allow that. But you have to find your balance and know that the door is going to swing. It's not always going to be in the same place. So you have to allow that door to swing and recognize when it is swinging.

Discussion of Shifts in Priorities

Life events, such as becoming a mother or experiencing the illness or death of a loved one led to shifts in the priorities of the women in this study. These events served as turning points that could change the trajectories of their lives. Melissa in particular touched upon the issue of off-ramps and on-ramps that Hewlett and Luce (2005) discuss as being problematic for women who want to take more time off after having a child. There are often factors in the workplace that can push women out, as well as factors at

home that can pull them out of their careers. If they do choose to take that off-ramp, it can be very difficult to find an on-ramp back into a career, particularly in this field.

The shifting priorities for these women have not called for career exit, at least for now, but could mean transitioning to lower pressure positions, reduction to part-time status, relocation, or a career change to pursue what they believe to be more meaningful work (Hancock, 2012; Hewlett & Luce, 2005). If athletics organizations intend to recruit and retain talented female administrators, considerations should be made to accommodate women who are experiencing life transitions such as these through allowing for flexible scheduling, telecommuting, and time off that is greeted not with judgment or penalty, but instead with understanding and support.

HAPPENSTANCE

Many of the women in this study spoke about being lucky, fortunate, or blessed at different points in their professional lives. Sometimes, such fortune was attributed to a higher power, based on individual belief systems.

Fortuitous Encounters with Helpful Others

Some of the women described chance encounters with others that were helpful in their career progression. For example, Jessica told a story of how she got to where she is now. She said,

Fortunately, I met the [person that facilitated] my position kind of just haphazardly, got to talking with him and he got to know my background, and he knew that I wanted to move more into [a certain kind of role]... He loved that and he also saw the value in having something like that here at [my institution]. Our

athletic director at the time really valued that [type of role]. And then [this person] was willing to [facilitate] my position, which was great. That's how I came to be here... So I am the only person that's ever been in this role and it's the first time we've had it.

When asked more about this experience, she said, "It was really talking about what my skills were, I think, and what [the AD] wanted to see. And it was just luck that those aligned." She spoke about how her interests, experience, and educational background helped, but:

It was just lucky that I had the right experience to fill a role that we were creating. And it was nice because this was new. It was like, "How do we want to shape this?" Not, "We need you to be X, Y and Z," but "How can we blend all of this so we're getting the most out of you but you're also really giving the most to our student athletes?" It was very lucky.

God Takes Care of You

Sometimes fortunate timing was attributed to a higher power. For example, Leah had various things happen in her life around the same time, including having children and her spouse losing his job, while she was working on an hourly basis in an athletics department. She said,

So they all worked together in really neat ways in that...God had his hand in it through it all. And so, when we had [another] child and then my husband loses his job, we said, "Well this is interesting. We're going to have to make it work." And it was right at that same time that we were short-staffed in this office. So the director said, "Hey, Leah. We have an extra role that we need you to fill. Can you give us some more hours?" And so, I was available because [my] husband was not working. So he was at home with the kids, which availed me to come in and pick up more hours and grow a little bit more in my job here, as well as take home a little bit more pay to take care of the family when [my] husband was out of a job. And so all those things are very meaningful when you look at the whole life experience, because as much as you try or habitually, maybe, do, you can't completely compartmentalize your life. They interweave. So it was neat to see

those things happen and work together – the supportive director and then the opportunity to do more, and just the timing of it all. God takes care of you.

These examples demonstrate the importance of happenstance for these women’s lives. Without the influence of fortuitous circumstances, these women’s career journeys would not be the same. More examples of happenstance will be shared throughout this and subsequent chapters.

Luck

Many of the women attributed some of their success to sheer luck. As an example, Rebecca said, “I’ve been very lucky in my career. I’ve never not worked. I’ve never been fired. And I’ve been able to pursue the positions that I want... I’m blessed every day.” In addition, Alice often mentioned being lucky or fortunate in her life and career. For example, she talked about how she felt after interviewing for her first job in intercollegiate athletics – one that happened to come available at a time she was interested in leaving her former job. She said,

I luckily felt well prepared after leaving there. It was one of those deals where you just don’t really think somebody is going to take a chance like that on you. So I was honestly surprised that I got the job offer.

She later added about being so fortunate,

[My supervisor] was willing to take a chance on somebody with no experience and let me, because I had zero experience [in this area]. He saw enough in me to be willing to train me. So he’s the one that really has given me the biggest break of my career.

These examples show how being in the right place at the right time or meeting the right person at the right time can be instrumental for individuals’ career development. As

previously stated, there are other factors that come into play, including the time period in which one lives, the connections one builds from those chance encounters, and what steps one takes when an opportunity presents itself.

Discussion of Happenstance

Happenstance, or chance, can have an important influence in shaping life paths (Bandura, 1982). This can manifest in the form of serendipitous timing – just happening to meet particular people at the right time, or being fortunate enough to be present and have the skills needed exactly when organizations need them. Though the concept is being introduced in this chapter regarding timing of lives, it is apparent that happenstance floods into the other themes of the life course perspective. As discussed in the previous chapter on life and historical times, living in a particular time period can mean having different types of opportunities available that perhaps were not there before. Also, as will be addressed in subsequent chapters, after having the serendipitous timing that provides opportunity, there are important connections with others that play into how the opportunities are fostered and personal action that is required to take advantage of such fortuitous opportunities. The timing aspect of the concept of happenstance has been addressed in this section, as the women acknowledged that fortuitous timing was important for their career journeys.

SUMMARY DISCUSSION OF TIMING OF LIVES

The subthemes identified from the data within the theme of timing of lives were age-graded activities and expectations, stages of career and life, shifts in priorities, and happenstance. Each of these subthemes contributed to the shaping of these women's life and career trajectories. Participation in sports was one age-graded activity that had a significant impact on the women's careers, as without that, it is unlikely that as many of them would have gone into athletics as a profession. In a post-Title IX era, more females are participating in sports than ever before (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). With more females participating in sports in their youth, it can be assumed that more females will want to pursue a career in athletics administration. It is important for the next generation of female athletes to see women being successful in this field and able to choose it without having to sacrifice any goal of having a family. Just as the women in this study benefited from seeing their female supervisors manage multiple roles of career woman, wife/partner, and mother, the incoming group of women will likely benefit from seeing them succeed in managing these multiple roles.

Education was another age-graded activity and expectation. All but one of the women in this study had earned a graduate or professional degree, which they thought was important for their career paths. Though some might disagree that a graduate degree is essential for success in athletics administration, the competitive environment of athletics calls for this competitive advantage. Though many of the women in this study pursued education in sport-related fields, it was not the case for all. One advantage to the sport-related degree programs that was visible in these women's backgrounds was the

attainment of industry-specific knowledge and a chance through internships or GA positions to gain hands-on experience during their degree programs. Those who pursued business or law programs instead also felt as though there was an advantage to their chosen degree programs because college athletics is a business and there are so many laws and pieces of legislation to know when leading an athletics program.

Partnering and family building had important implications for these women's careers. Partnering alone helped the women maintain stronger boundaries and balance between work and home. In addition, partnering gave them a support system, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Having children has also helped them have better boundaries with work, but also led to questions of whether they want to continue in the profession. As previously mentioned, however, seeing their female supervisors have children has helped them feel more confident that they can maintain both roles of worker and mother.

The illness and deaths of loved ones have caused the women to want to be closer to family and look for more purpose in their work. All of these life changes have served as turning or decision points that have shaped the trajectory of these women's lives in part by making them rethink and rearrange their priorities. Priority shifts have led to narrowing their desirable career options. Their desires to be close to family or maintain a partnership have led to them limiting themselves to certain geographical locations, for example. Now that some are mothers, they may not consider taking on new job responsibilities or they may consider changing their careers to be able to spend more time with their children.

Happenstance helped shape these women's careers as well. Through fortunate timing of events, happening to meet people at the right time, or having the right qualifications exactly at the time when they were needed, this element of chance opened up possibilities that they could choose to take advantage of if they were willing. It cannot be ignored, however, that career paths are not created solely by accident. There are individual and social factors at play as well, including interests, skills, agency, and connections to other people.

All of these experiences – both at work and in their personal lives – have contributed to the shaping of these women's trajectories. In addition to serving as key turning points, virtually all of the situations described in this section, including sport participation, education, partnering and family building, moving through one's career, and happenstance, provided opportunities to connect with other people. As social creatures, human beings regularly interact with others and those interactions have the ability to impact experiences and outcomes. More about the ways in which these women's experiences and career decisions were impacted by such connections will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Linked Lives

The third central theme of the life course perspective is that of linked or interdependent lives. This theme considers the connections or relationships human beings have with one another that influence their lived experience (Elder, 1994). According to Elder, individual lives are “embedded in social relationships” (p. 6) with various groups of others (e.g., family, friends, and coworkers). These social connections will interact with and influence one’s individual experience and potentially her decisions. Several subthemes were found within this broader category, including support from others in the profession, leadership, support from others outside of work, and consideration of others.

SUPPORT FROM OTHERS IN PROFESSION

The women in this study discussed various sources of support from others within their profession throughout their careers, primarily from supervisors, mentors, and colleagues. The types of support included personal support in dealing with life events such as births and deaths, as well as professional support that came in various forms, including introductions to others who could help them in their career moves.

Supervisors

Supervisor support for these women came in various forms and served as both personal and professional support. The participants talked about the ways they were or

were not supported in these different areas and the impact of having or not having that support.

Personal Support

As addressed in the previous chapter, some of these women have had support from their supervisors in dealing with the deaths of loved ones, which has made the women feel grateful, appreciative, or indebted to them (e.g., Amanda's and Jessica's experiences). They have also experienced supervisor support in their transitions to motherhood (e.g., Melissa's experience of being allowed to return slowly to her full-time status). In discussing her personal goal of becoming a mother through fostering or adoption, Yvonne talked about the support for this part of her life she receives from her supervisor. She said, "He's very supportive. We actually have conversations about it. He'll ask me, 'How's it going with expanding your family?' He'll ask me about it." She explained that it felt like support, rather than pressure. She said,

He knows how important it is... He's taken an interest in my family life and we have good conversations about it. I feel like he'll be supportive to the very end. And I actually told him before, I said, "It will be different because I'm single. All of you guys have wives that stay at home, so when the kid is sick, you don't have to worry about that. But if I do it, I'm home." I said, "You understand that, right?" He's like, "Yeah." I was like, "I just want to make sure that's clear, because it will be different. I know you support me having a family, but it will be different if I'm not married." So that's it. I think he will be pretty supportive.

Michelle also felt supported by her supervisor when she became a mother and was on maternity leave. She said,

I think she made sure when I was on leave that they didn't need to bother me. There were some things that came up where I think people wanted to talk to me and wanted to interview me on some issues, and she was able to keep them away

and say, “Let’s not bother her. If we need her when she gets back, we can do that.” I think just making sure I had everything I needed.

For Leah, supervisor support during her transition to motherhood was especially significant because she had a child with special needs. When she found out, she said,

All of a sudden that means a lot more doctors and a lot of therapists, and a lot of appointments, and a lot of things that don’t happen with your typically developing child. And so, it very much affected every part of our lives. I had a director here at the time who was fantastic who said, “Take all the time you need. Figure this out. When you are ready to come back, come back.” That’s pretty amazing... He was taking a real leap of faith at that time because he was brand new. He didn’t have a history with me. And I had this child and he said, “Take the time that you need.” So I did. I took about three months. Normally, I think it would have been about six weeks. But I took about three months just to get all of our therapy set up and all of our doctors. And then I came back.

He let her come back gradually, which she says,

Was good because we had so many visits. I mean there were times when we would have double digit visits each week.” And so I couldn’t have worked the hours that I had been previously working and been a parent to a child with special needs. I couldn’t have done it otherwise. So they were very accommodating and that helped a lot. That was a big deal.

Supervisor support can be a key factor in how women navigate the work-family interface in the athletics industry, as has been shown with female coaches. The support they do or do not receive can affect their work satisfaction and in turn their well-being (Bruening & Dixon, 2008). Likewise, Dixon and Sagas (2007) found in their study of collegiate coaches with children that supervisor support was the key mediator of job and life satisfaction. In addition, Kossek, Colquitt, and Noe (2001) demonstrated that a work climate that encourages sharing concerns regarding family care, both for children and for aging parents, fosters better work performance and personal well-being. When these women felt supported and as though they could adequately take care of their personal

needs, they were grateful and appreciative. The support they received also made them more likely to stay with their current organization, as opposed to the lack of support Yvonne felt from her supervisor when her mother passed away. Support or lack thereof in a personal time of need can be a turning point for women in their careers in that it can make them decide that they want to stay or pursue something different.

Professional Support

There were many ways that supervisors supported these women professionally. This occurred through providing exposure to different tasks and areas within athletics administration, opportunities to attend professional development events, or simply being encouraging and trusting in their abilities to perform their work well. For Melissa, her supervisor supported her professionally through guidance, encouragement, and trust. That support was instrumental in her choice to pursue athletics administration as a profession. She said,

[My supervisor] has been a sounding board since I've worked here and has been very much a guide in my career, especially in those early years where I was like, "I don't know what I'm going to do with my life." I didn't really realize that this was the path that I was going to go on. I think she encouraged me to consider it... She [has] always [been] good about saying, "This is a career field you can do. This is something that you should consider." And then in a more unspoken way, I think just relying on me more for certain things in the office, and duties, and responsibilities, and trying to help me build [my skillset], which in her way is also serving her, but helping the employee.

In addition to experiences of having supportive supervisors, some of the women in this study discussed their experiences with supervisors who were not so supportive. Just as having supportive supervisor can foster loyalty or a desire to stay at an

organization, having an unsupportive supervisor can contribute to someone wanting to leave their position to go somewhere else. For example, Yvonne also shared about a former supervisor that was not supportive and said, “That’s one of the reasons I left. Not the only reason, but it helped me make a decision to leave.”

Michelle commented on how a couple of her supervisors both helped and hindered her progression. She said,

It’s kind of interesting. Some of the people that both helped me I think, in some ways, also hindered me at some point. [One of my former supervisors], who was over the entire office at that time, he was very open to giving opportunities and exposure, so he think was supportive of pretty much anything I needed to do. He eventually left and took another position. We hired another individual, who was just kind of a different style. I think he was great, would give me opportunities. But there were some things, like given where I am now, I’m like, “Wow. He was really doing that?” We have our entry level people doing it. But there were some things he was very passionate about wanting to do, and he didn’t want anyone else to be handling those responsibilities. So while he gave me some exposure in some areas, he didn’t really give me the exposure in other areas. So I think, fortunately, it didn’t hold me back from progressing in my career, but I think I would have been an easier transition for me had I had some exposure and better understanding of kind of the big picture in other areas of [my work] that I felt he kind of sheltered me from having that exposure. On the same note, [one of my other supervisors], she was probably my biggest supporter and involved in really developing me and helping me understand the dynamics of [the work I do] to the level that she had known and had exposure to. So she was very open for giving me whatever experience and opportunity I wanted. And then, as great as she was at developing me, when she came back from maternity leave, I think that’s when there was a little bit of a struggle with...And I don’t know if it was that she felt threatened because things had run smoothly and she saw that I was able to handle her job with her being on leave and there wasn’t really any issues. So we kind of struggled a little bit for a while when she returned. I think that’s when I started seeing that, “Look. I can do more than I’m doing,” and wanting to start explore moving on. Then I saw that the opportunity wasn’t going to happen [there]. And so, I say that she really helped develop me and then, I think, kind of hindered me a little bit because of the battles and the struggles we had coming back. “Well, this is mine and this isn’t yours,” and a little bit of that dynamic of just feeling threatened by another female that is starting to see some success in the field.

Aside from giving exposure and providing encouragement and guidance, another way supervisors showed support for these women was giving them opportunities to attend professional development events. For example, Jessica talked about the professional development opportunities she had, in addition to the support she received for earning her graduate degree while working full-time. She said,

I would say my role [at one of my former institutions] was the most supported I felt in terms of having opportunities to advance, opportunities for professional development. I feel like my boss and the people there were just so supportive of all of that... I got to go to a number of different conferences and different things for just professional development in that sense. That was great. Not only if I asked to do something would they support me, but they would also present me with opportunities, which I didn't feel like necessarily had happened before. So that was nice. So I think there was a lot of support, a lot of opportunity there.

Alice spoke highly of her supervisor and the opportunities he gives to her and the rest of his staff to develop themselves professionally. She said,

I feel a great sense of loyalty to him because he did give me that chance (to work for him without any experience in the area). But he also has been the best boss. And I've worked for a couple of my best friends. In my mind, he is a better boss because he is so fair. And he gives us so many opportunities to better ourselves. He always wants us to try new things. He always encourages us to go to different conferences or to try anything that our office does.

These examples show how having supportive supervisors that allow employees to gain exposure to different areas or types of tasks and build their skillsets can be highly beneficial to the employees as well as to the supervisors and organizations. When supervisors do not adequately support, shelter, or micromanage their employees, they run the risk of pushing talented people out of the organization. In contrast, helping employees build their portfolios of skills and knowledge can foster loyalty and help retain talent.

Mentors

Supervisors are not always seen as mentors, but sometimes they are. Courtney referred to one of her former supervisors as a “great mentor.” She said, “I don’t think I realized that she was a great mentor and advocate until after she left, because you don’t realize what people are doing for you until they are not doing it anymore.” When asked what kinds of things her supervisor did to mentor her, she said,

I didn’t have to do it her way, but I had to explain to her what I was thinking, why I was thinking that way. She’s a short woman, wasn’t really loud, and little. Short but little, but she could command a room and people had to respect her. And she was smart. She didn’t fly off the handle for no apparent reason. You could reason with her. You could talk to her. She had knowledge and she was smart. She could also make you feel guilty as hell. But everything she said made sense. And you look back on things now and...most people are really excited if you get pregnant or if you are getting married, like these are things they ask you. I remember when I got into grad school, it was the first time she hugged me. I was like, “You just hugged me.” Not really sure why, but I think it made her proud, even if she didn’t say it. She loved talking about school and the things I found interesting that weren’t always athletics related. But when you are in the moment, it just seems it was normal. It’s when she was gone you realized the support that she was giving you the entire time in your [work] and telling [you] that you can do it, never taking recognition for things that you did, always making sure that you were out there standing up for our whole department and things like that were real support things. I mean I’ve called her when I was having a bad day, that kind of support. But professionally and career-wise, she was great.

Rebecca spoke about the encouragement and exposure she was able to get from her supervisors who she considered mentors in her first athletics jobs and how she now pays what she received forward to those she supervises. She said,

There were a lot of people [at my first job] that were great mentors and encouraged me, and taught me, and helped me along the way. There’s quite a few, actually. I had a lot at [my next job], too, because that really molded my career. I worked full-time while I was there and then [stayed] on after I graduated... I got exposed to a lot of different things. Back then, the athletic department was really small. There’s probably a gazillion people there now in the

athletic department. But when I was there, it was a much smaller operation, so I got exposed to a lot of different things. While I did work for compliance and academics, the development side asked me to be involved in some of their activities at their fundraisers or events. I may have started out working nametag tables or dealing with different things. I hosted [the AD's] box at football games, so I made sure all of his guests had their seats and had their food and made sure that they were enjoying the experience. If they needed to go somewhere, we escorted them around. So I did that. I got involved with sports information and working press row. They encouraged us and I encourage my young staff to try other things, to move around, be exposed to as many people, learn from as many people as you can. It was just a great environment to grow and learn from.

She also commented on what mentors should do to help others develop professionally.

She said,

Every mentee/mentor relationship is a little different, depending on what somebody is looking for. But being a mentor is also being able to be a good listener and to find out what those goals are for your mentee and try to help them achieve those goals. It may vary a little bit depending on how you want to deal with a situation. Including them, providing them information, providing them experiences, giving them educational opportunities, but also being able to listen to them, work through a problem or work through a situation, "How do I deal with a crazy coworker? I really want this project or I really want to do it this way. How do I convince my boss to do it?" You've got to listen. You've got to listen and give advice, and give them options and solutions on ways to get things done, on ways to achieve what they are trying to achieve. So a little bit of everything.

Michelle also spoke of one of her supervisors, whom she also considered a mentor, and the struggles they had at first. She said,

We're kind of like completely opposites. I was very independent. I would do the job. I was a workhorse. You could tell me what I need to do, I'll do it... [My supervisor] and I struggled a little bit initially just because of, one, understanding what she really wanted and trying to meet her needs and her demands. But I think in the end I wouldn't be where I am today if it weren't for her pushing me and having the confidence in me and giving me the opportunities and exposure that she did. I think her background and knowledge, I didn't have somebody that had that at [my previous institution], or at least was open for sharing that with me. So she taught me a lot... I felt like once I got here I didn't know anything about what I was doing... But she really empowered me to help figure out how we could do things better... So I was challenged with having to kind of develop my own way and own vision, where I really hadn't had the opportunity to do that. And I

struggled because that wasn't my nature... But it also opened up my eyes to when I was successful. I wasn't always, so when I wasn't successful, she would help me understand why I wasn't and how we could prevent it in the future. But then when I was successful, recognizing that, giving me more opportunities and more challenges, and just continuing to push me when I didn't feel like I could be pushed anymore... There was always that opportunity for more exposure, more challenges. Aside from just looking at the [job] itself, the personal development was something that she was very passionate about and always gave me opportunities...and constantly pushing me to grow and develop in other ways.

Some might think that women need to have female mentors to show them the ropes or teach them how to get where they want to go professionally. Though some of these women had great female mentors, many also had great male mentors. For example, Maggie talked about a male mentor she has had, whom she met at a previous job. She said,

We kept in touch over the years after he left. We became friends just from working in the athletic department. And he's now the athletic director at [another university]... I call him for advice all the time. He gives me great advice and he helps me. Sometimes when I'm feeling, not insecure, when I'm like, "Gosh. Am I doing this right? Is there something else I should be doing?" He reminds me...he's funny, because he'll tell me, "What are you talking about? You know what the hell you are doing! Just do what you know what you are supposed to do and just do it good! Like, "Oh, OK."... And then he gets me back on track and then I'm focused again. But he's really good.

Similarly, Kate also felt as though she had more male mentors than female mentors and thinks that the role of men in helping women progress professionally is a substantial one. She said,

It's interesting. I think some men have been the ones that really have advocated and given me opportunity. And I think that's what it's going to take. And I think it's men having daughters. And then they truly love and respect them so much, and then they might not have been there in their own generation, but then they see, "Wow. I wish..." And then when they had the power and position, they could change it. That's the only way it will change for women.

Some of the women who spoke about their mentors did so in a similar way that the spoke about their best supervisors, in that they gave them exposure to different things, advocated for them, encouraged them, and empowered them. These actions did not just help them grow professionally, but they also helped them feel more confident in their abilities. Sometimes they might be one and the same, but not all supervisors are mentors, just as not all mentors are supervisors. From these women's examples, it is apparent that mentoring requires more effort in trying to help the employees truly grow as people and as professionals.

Colleagues

Whether they were those in one's same office or organization, or those that work in the profession at another institution, colleagues were instrumental in supporting these women in their professional pursuits. For example, Kate spoke about some of her colleagues in the profession that have been supports for her along the way. She said,

I think the support network was having people that were maybe in the same shoes as you in the same place in life as you and just having that kind of support network of just trying to get through it together. And there are still people to this day... I think it was a collection of the people that were there at that time, just the standard they set, and they were very smart. But I think I also had a subset of friends who [are now SWAs in various places around the country]. You have some people like you on your left and your right and you are all just going through it together, so you kind of have a support system that way.

Colleagues within the women's respective organizations were also seen as sources of support, especially when going through personal transitions with births, illnesses, or deaths. For example, when Michelle went on maternity leave, the other people on staff

were able to take care of most things while she was out of the office. She felt confident in her ability to take the full time she needed because of this. She said,

I had the confidence in the staff at that point in time that I felt that I didn't have to worry about work was pretty important to me, because I wanted to be able to commit that time solely to my family. I didn't want to have to worry about anything. Fortunately, we were at a place at that time where I could do that. I don't think they bothered me except maybe towards the end of my maternity leave, which was great. I think that helped me feel better about, "OK. I've had a child and things were going well in the office."

She later added about the support she was able to receive from her coworkers during this transition,

The staff here, mostly [one of my male colleagues], again, being able to take things on. The fact that I feel like I was able to trust him and I knew he'd do a good job when I was away. Again, making sure he didn't have to bother me very much throughout the whole process. Then when I came back, it was an easy transition. There wasn't a lot that was left undone. There were a few things, but it was because we were down staff, that they couldn't get to. But he did his best to make sure that he wasn't just dumping on me when I came back.

Similarly, Melissa felt as though her coworkers were able to "pick up the slack" when she was out for maternity as well as whenever she needs to be home with her child – if he is sick or if she is unable to arrange childcare.

From these examples, it is apparent that colleagues can provide support in multiple ways. One way is by simply being in the same kind of positions and helping each other navigate the terrain of the profession. In addition, colleagues can provide support by pitching in to take on responsibilities when someone is out, whether it is for maternity leave, taking care of sick children, or dealing with other personal business. This highlights that, even though athletics is a competitive environment, it can also be team-oriented and supportive.

It's a Small World

Many of the women who participated in this study referred to the profession of intercollegiate athletics as a “small world.” They implied that in this profession, people tend to know each other and have connections with others who work in the profession across institutions around the country. They emphasized that having connections with others in the profession can be an important resource in performing their jobs at their current level, getting to the next level in their careers, or getting information about applicants they are looking to hire. For example, Amanda talked about how she stays in touch with people she has met in the profession. She said,

We'll keep in touch, maybe if it's ideas or it's, “Hey, I have someone that was at a school you were at that applied for this job. Can you tell me about them?” Stuff like that. Sports is a small world. That's for sure.

Sometimes, happenstance plays a role in having this “small world” be beneficial. For example, Michelle talked about how her mother had just “fallen into” a job with a conference office and was able to make connections for her when she was first starting out in the field. She said,

[My mom] feels that connection helped me get the job, which I tell her I think it was my interviewing skills, [laughs] experience. But it all probably somehow had an impact... I think it just potentially opened doors. And I think also the networks that I...because she had developed and connected me with them, I think down the road and even in my career, because of the people she worked with there, they had some knowledge of me. It's a small world, intercollegiate athletics. So it's just kind of the connections that they had and being able to use their names as references down the road I think always helps. Sometimes it's not always what you know, it's *who* you know. I think because of some of the people who I knew who were pretty established in the profession, that maybe gave me a second look when I may have not gotten one otherwise.

Jennifer benefitted from a combination of happenstance, a connection with another person, and her own actions. When she was at a professional development and networking event, she contacted someone she knew in the general area where it was being held and asked to meet up for coffee. When they were having coffee, she expressed to him her discontent where she was due to her new supervisor's poor leadership. She shared with him the steps she had taken to get into a new position at a different university and not only did he encourage her to seek an opportunity that was better than the ones she was seeking, but he also helped her get a new position by introducing her to someone at a nearby table who just happened to be looking to fill a position. She described what happened.

He said, "See that guy sitting over there?" And I turn and I look and he was talking to some girl, like sitting at a table with some papers and they were talking. He said, "He's interviewing right now for [a] position. Do you want me to get you that job?" I was like, "What school?" And he [told me]. I was like, "Where is [that]?" I had no idea where [it] was. He [told me]. I said, "Texas! I have never left [my home state]! I would never move to Texas!" And he goes, "Well, do you want the job or not?" I was like, "OK. If he thinks I am qualified for that job, then I guess I am." Because I don't think he would do that if I couldn't do it, or maybe he would do it. I don't know. And then I just looked at him and I said, "Yes." And he said, "OK. You wait here." He went over there, talked to my (now) boss and he came back. And then he took me over there and he introduced me. Then we talked for a little bit. And then [my boss] said, "Well, can you send me your résumé? Check out this website. It's our athletics website. And then meet me back here at 5 o'clock." I was like, "Oh, OK." I ran up to my room and I sent him my résumé. I called my husband. I was like, "You are not going to believe this!" He just told me, "Go for it. We'll figure out the details later." And then I met with [him] at five and we talked for like two hours, and we just connected. And then two weeks later I was here for an interview. And then at the end of the interview he offered me the job. I said yes. And then I moved out here two weeks after that.

This shows how fortunate timing combined with connections with others in this “small world” and personal action can lead to new opportunities for career enhancement.

Now that these women have progressed beyond the beginning of their careers, enough to be referred to as “mid-career,” they now have the opportunity to be good leaders, mentors, or facilitators for the younger cohort’s career progression and help them take advantage of the “small world” that is intercollegiate athletics. For instance, Kris talked about how she had other people reach out on her behalf to advocate for her and, now that she supervises others, she can pay that forward. She said,

I tell our interns all the time: If you come in as a young person as an intern, or a GA position, or whatever, if you work hard, and you see a position that you want, let us know and we’ll call and see what we can do. It’s not guaranteed you are going to get the position just because we call. Sometimes we know people that are hiring. Sometimes we don’t. But I do think pretty much with any career, sometimes it’s who you know. It really is. And it’s who will call on your behalf. I just think you need to, if you are in that position to be able to help someone like that, if they are worth helping...it’s kind of like passing the baton.

These stories demonstrate how beneficial it can be to have support from colleagues, both within and outside of one’s own organization. Supportive colleagues can help individuals in their attempts to have balance between work and family obligations by helping or picking up slack if they need to be out of the office. They can also help by advocating or sharing ideas. As Kris and Michelle both indicated, it is not always *what* you know, but *who* you know that can help you get to the next level. It could be taken a step further to say it is not who *you* know, but who knows *you* and will advocate for you when the time comes.

Discussion of Support from Others in Profession

Support from others in the profession came from supervisors, mentors, and colleagues. Some supervisors were seen as mentors, but this is not a prerequisite for mentor status. The data from this research fall in line with what Hancock (2012) found in her study of senior administrators in Division I institutions in that these women received professional support from their supervisors and mentors in the form of encouragement, guidance, and professional development opportunities.

In addition, the professional support these women received included providing exposure to new tasks and chance to develop new skills. Not only did this support foster strong working relationships, but it also helped them build confidence in their own abilities when moving to the next level or increasing their work responsibilities. The positive, cyclical impact this support can have makes it a win-win for supervisors and organizations, as helping the employee develop new skills and increase their social capital also helps the supervisors and organizations. Having an employee that can competently take on more responsibilities can take some of the load off of supervisors and/or free up their time to be spent on higher order matters for the organization.

In addition to the support they received from supervisors, some of whom may also have been considered to be mentors, some of the women identified mentors who were not their supervisors. Regardless of whether mentors were within or outside of their organization or had ever been their supervisors, the women received support from them in the form of encouragement, confidence building, and introductions to others in the

profession. At times, mentors were able to see more potential in the women than they saw in themselves, thus increasing their feelings of self-efficacy.

Mentors also helped connect the women to others in the “small world” of college athletics, thus increasing their social capital by broadening their network and sometimes helping them get a new and better position. Increased social capital, or relationships with influential others, is beneficial for career success and satisfaction (Sagas & Cunningham, 2004). These findings are in line with those of other studies (e.g., Higgins & Kram, 2001; Hancock, 2012; Ibarra et al., 2010) and demonstrate the importance of mentors for women’s career development in this field. Though the women in this study did benefit greatly from intraorganizational mentors, contrary to what Higgins and Kram (2001) and Cunningham and Sagas (2004) suggested, several of these women benefited more from mentors outside of their own organization.

The women in this study named both men and women as supportive supervisors and mentors. There are discrepancies in the literature regarding effectiveness of male versus female mentors (Young, Cady, & Foxon, 2006). Past research suggests, however, that there is a gender difference in regard to how mentors help their protégés. While women typically provide more role modeling and psychosocial support to their female protégés, men typically provide more career development assistance. Role modeling is associated with transformation leadership (to be discussed further in the next subtheme) and generally includes qualities or actions that lead to attributions of idealized influence, which can be done through personal achievements, character, and/or behaviors. Psychosocial support includes acceptance, coaching, and counseling. Career

development functions include sponsorship, protection, challenging assignments, exposure, and visibility (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000).

Though there was no formal measure for these types of career assistance, subtle gender differences were seen in this study. It appeared that the women may have received more career development assistance from male supervisors and mentors through visibility, by making introductions to others in the field, as well as counseling or coaching. Again, however, this is not something that was explicit. From the women's discussion of male supervisors and mentors, it did seem that the men may have been more blunt and overt in their attempts to encourage their female protégés, which was well received and effective in quelling any self-doubt. The data from this study show that extraorganizational mentors, particularly males, were influential in that they encouraged the women to seek new opportunities beyond those available (or not) at their current institution and beyond what they may have initially thought was in their range of options. Maggie's example from her coffee shop rendezvous with her mentor demonstrates this, as he encouraged her to pursue a position better than the one she was looking for initially. She had thought that to get from a Division III to a Division I school, she would have to "start over" in a position much lower than she was in at her previous university. He reminded her of all that she had already accomplished in her career and asked her, "Why are you wasting your time with [that kind of] position?" That is when he decided to introduce her to the man at another table who was hiring for a high level position, which she obtained through that introduction.

In contrast, the intraorganizational, female mentors did seem to provide more role modeling. Particularly in the circumstances where the participants had not yet entered motherhood, but had that as a goal, and also had supervisors or mentors who were mothers themselves, the women were able to see how their supervisors or mentors were able to manage their multiple roles. That modeling gave them hope that they would be able to do the same or better themselves. It could be argued that women will select themselves into same-sex mentor-protégé dyads because they want to have that role modeling and guidance from people like themselves (Young et al., 2006) – people they can try to emulate if it is a positive experience. It could also be argued that women will select themselves into such dyads because of the types of roles they often pursue in athletics administration, such as academics, compliance, or life skills roles that tend to have more of a female presence (Burton et al., 2009; Lapchick et al., 2012; Suggs, 2005). In addition, because athletics administration and particularly the positions that lead to the top, are heavily occupied by men, women who have the goal in mind to climb into the pipeline to the athletic director positions might select themselves into opposite-sex mentor-protégé dyads. This could be either because men are the primary ones they see in those positions or because they perceive that men have more power and ability to introduce them to their more powerful social networks (Young et al., 2006).

Opposite-sex mentor-protégé dyads might also be more beneficial for women's career advancement for another set of reasons. First, because there is not a substantial female presence in this field of work, women could see themselves as competitors with other women for the roles they seek. This could be extended to say that women may not

want to “share with another female” their place at the table, as Yvonne had expressed. This reflects a perception that perhaps there are only so many seats in the room available for females to occupy.

Also, women may feel stigmatized for helping other women advance in their careers. This also mirrors a statement not included in the examples above that was shared by Kate. She said, “Sometimes I feel like I can help ethnic minority categories more than I can help women, because when I help women, people go, ‘Oh, you are just doing that because you’re a woman.’” Hekman and Foo (as cited by Academy of Management, 2014) found that female and minority leaders in high level management positions who behave in diversity-increasing ways, including helping other members of their disadvantaged group, receive lower performance ratings than their white male counterparts. As such, Yvonne’s and Kate’s sentiments were actually quite accurate in that remaining a token by not helping other women (or in Yvonne’s case, other minority women) advance can benefit their own careers. The continuation of this type of trend will not help women gain a more substantial presence in leadership positions in athletics administration, but will instead serve as a barrier to progression.

LEADERSHIP

Many of the women provided examples of witnessing both good and bad leadership, which led to questions regarding what makes someone a good or a bad leader. Maggie shared experiences with a bad leader and a good leader. At her former

institution, they had a change in the sitting athletic director while she was there, which made her want to leave the organization. She said,

She came in and she was not a good leader. And everyone was just like...they couldn't believe it. Everyone was so upset. And since I was still [near the top of the organization's administration], they were coming to me. And they were afraid to go talk to her... I could see it. After a couple months I was like, "Oh, this is not going to be good." Then I started looking for jobs. I learned a lot from her of what not to do and what not to be like. And I feel bad because... I had never worked for a female. I always had males. And then she comes in and I was like, "Oh, this is going to be great." It was opposite. It was really bad. All around I liked her. She's still there. Everyone who I worked with there, they all left. My position has been filled like two times since I left, and I've only been gone [a fairly small number of] years. So it's just not good. But that changed my life right there. I was like, "OK. I gotta go. I can't work here like this anymore."

When asked what made her a bad leader, she said,

The way she treated people. She didn't tell the truth. She wasn't honest. The way she would act in the office and people were questioning what she was doing... But she was so picky to other people, like with how they were doing their job and this and that. And yet, she would just do the opposite of what she was trying to tell people to do... We're like, "It doesn't make sense!"... She would want people to do stuff and she wouldn't do it. She wasn't being a leader by example at all. It was opposite. She was very sneaky. She'd always do stuff behind people's backs, and people would know. It wasn't a secret. They would know... I just learned a lot about being honest and open as much as you can, because I know there are some things you can't really talk about at certain points. But leading by example. And if you are going to enforce something, you should be doing the same as well. So those are some things I think I learned. And really understanding, too, like where you're working. She didn't understand where she was. She was trying to make it something that it probably can't be. And some people would say, "Oh, you are being negative." But you have to be realistic about what you are and what you have and the type of place you're working. I don't think she really understood the school and what their goals and expectations were. It was a lot she didn't know.

In comparison, she talked about what makes her new supervisor a good leader. She said,

His honesty. His ability to talk to people. He's friendly. He's open. He leads by example, like everything he does is always great. Everyone respects him. He just does a good job. He understands what our mission is of the school and we follow

it in the athletic department. He works hard. But he's not like a micromanager. That's kind of who I like to work for. It just wasn't that at the other place.

Jennifer spoke about the difference between leading and managing. She said, "To me, a good leader is someone who leads and doesn't manage. I've always tried to be, rather than transactional kind of leader, but truly be transformational and inspirational." She indicated that good leadership involves meeting people where they are, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, religion, or other parts of their background. Good leaders can "help them transition from whatever space they [are] in to focusing on the task at hand and using that to then help them be successful as they walk out the door." She later expanded on the difference between managing and leading. She said,

Leading is inspirational. If you lead well, people seek you out. They want to follow you. They want to come alongside and work with you. Managing is you are having to pull them along... Managing people, to me, it's almost a negative because you are having to kind of come behind them and look over their shoulder. I want to hire people and lead people who see what needs to be done and do it, but also, at the same time, recognizing there is a lot to learn and I can help them with that.

This example is one of what is considered to be good leadership and what Jennifer strives for in her own career. It is apparent from her language that she has studied the topic and ascribes to the transformational style of leadership that has been shown in other research to be the more effective and desired style (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Discussion of Leadership

Though only two women's comments on leadership are provided here, many of the women talked about their experiences with good and/or bad leadership, though this was not a topic that was explicitly asked about in their interviews unless it seemed like a

critical turning point in their individual stories. Maggie's first example reflects some others that were shared and shows how poor leadership can make good employees want to leave, whereas her second example shows how good leadership can make people want to stay and keep working for that leader. Jennifer talked more about the kind of leader she tries to be and sees as being actually leading, rather than simply managing.

In the women's comments on good and bad leaders, there did not seem to be any major gender difference. Women and men were both good and bad leaders in their experiences. Transformational leadership is characterized by charisma (providing a sense of purpose and values, establishing trust, and instilling pride), inspiration (enhancing focus, setting goals and expectations, and communicating clearly), intellectual stimulation (encouraging creative, innovative, and thoughtful problem solving), and consideration of the individual (providing personal attention, coaching, and mentoring). Transformational leaders are more concerned with fulfilling subordinates' higher order needs versus simply making an exchange of resources (Peachey & Burton, 2011). Though research has shown that women are more likely to use the transformational style of leadership, believed to be more effective at motivating employees to do quality work (Eagly & Carli, 2007), there were examples of both men and women using this style.

Knoppers and Anthonissen (2008) found that the male sport leaders in their study practiced more of a paternal style of leadership, demonstrating empathy, connectedness, and communication with their employees. They suggested that it could be seen as increased femininity in their leadership roles or simply a way to stay in control. Though this could be seen that way, it might also be the case that there is enough literature and

buzz about quality leadership that they have taken it upon themselves to learn more about how to be a good and effective leader.

Transformational leadership has not only been found to be more effective (Eagly & Carli, 2007), but it has also been shown to be positively related to employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Walumbwa, Orwa, Wang, & Lawler, 2005). Thus, regardless of the leader's sex, the use of the transformational style of leadership will likely aid in employee retention, even as life changes occur. Encountering the transformational style of leadership can therefore serve as an important influence on women's career decisions at those crucial turning points.

SUPPORT FROM OTHERS OUTSIDE OF WORK

Support from people outside of work can be just as important as support from those in one's profession. The women in this study talked about various sources of support from people in their non-work lives, including family members, friends, and significant others. These sources of support were helpful in multiple ways, whether it was simply listening, encouraging, providing financial resources, doing some housework, or sharing food and beverages over non-work-related conversations.

Family Members

All of the women in this study listed family members as being sources of support for them, both professionally and personally, and all listed parents as sources of support, specifically. Whether through encouragement, guidance, or financial assistance, all of

these women's parents were considered to be important in their overall support systems. For example, Jennifer shared how her parents were supportive of her shift in career goals after completing her education. She said,

My parents had always modeled behavior that you do what you do and you do it to the best of your ability, but you pursue something that feeds your spirit and you pursue something that you can give back the most possible of yourself to society. It doesn't matter what the job is. My parents just always really modeled that behavior. My father was extremely successful [in his profession] and decided when I was about 10 that he was over it. He still has dabbled [in the profession], but he decided he wanted to do something else and he pursued it, and was really good at it, and loved it. And so, for me it was a matter of...it was shifting gears, but it was shifting gears to determine what it was that I wanted to do. And so, they were great.

Rebecca had a similar experience of shifting her career goals and having the support of her parents. She said,

From a family perspective, my parents have always been incredibly encouraging, incredibly open to let me do whatever I wanted to do. I think there was probably a little bit of hesitation on my father's part when I told him that I wasn't going to law school and that I was going into sports administration. But after I explained and kind of reminded him that sports in the largest entertainment industry in the world and that there were always going to be jobs available, I think that was like, "OK. That's fine. Then you go. Go run with it." Again, always been encouraging and supportive. [My] parents helped out financially with grad school and giving me the opportunity to do what I wanted to do.

Michelle shared that her parents were upset with her when she first decided to shift her career goals, but mainly because they knew that she had been so passionate about and had spent so much time and energy on her initial goal of getting into sports medicine. It took some convincing, but her parents eventually jumped on board and supported her choice. She said,

It maybe took them a little bit of time. I think they knew whatever I did I would be successful in. I was always strong academically. I always was pretty

independent. Whatever I set my mind to, I usually would do a good job and be successful at. So I think it was just more some initial shock, because I had always been so, so passionate about it and very direct that this is what I wanted to do. Once they got over the initial shock that, “You’re not going to do this? What?” I think they were on board with supporting whatever it was that I wanted to do with my life.

Kate spoke about how her family members, including her parents, were supportive of her in her career. She said,

I think what they’ve done is just if you want to do a goal, they are supportive of me getting that goal. I just don’t see how it happens if they are not supportive of it, because these jobs are not normal jobs. It’s a profession.

These are only a few examples, but each of the women spoke about support from their family in their career pursuits. Some of them had to convince their parents that this was the right career path for them, but were supported nonetheless – through acceptance, encouragement, and sometimes financial assistance.

Friends

Many of the women talked about how friends have been important sources of personal support as they progress through their careers. For example, Rebecca said that in addition to the support she receives from people at her institution and other colleagues within the profession, “I have a few friends outside the business that are very helpful.”

When asked what kinds of things they do to help her, she said,

Listen. [laughs] Most of the time, just listen. Sometimes you need people to vent to, just be there. They’re just supportive. Don’t ask a lot of questions. I know not to ask questions. Sometimes you just want to go have a good meal, sit down and have a glass of wine and talk about something other than work.

Courtney made one of her best friends through work and considers her a sister and one of her biggest supports. When asked how she supports her, she said,

You mean aside from showing me happy hour with [beer] and queso? I blame her for the [beer] and queso addiction that I have. But just checking in, like if I needed something, or being around, family things. It's kind of hard to explain, because it's been now 15 years. But yeah, just always there. Never had to worry.

Melissa talked about how her “close friends who I can whine to or talk to” have helped her in navigating her dual roles of career woman and mother. She said,

I have several friends who are in similar situations of either trying to decide whether to stay home with children or stay at work. One of my dearest friends, she and her husband are on year four of trying to get pregnant. They are giving it one more shot and then they are probably just going to be a family of two. So hearing her side of it, too, because she's kind of a high power attorney, how she's thinking of that is an important voice in how I'm handling my roles.

Amanda was able to make friends in new cities through her college's alumni and sorority groups that have been personal supports for her along the way. She said,

I started going to alumni watch parties and stuff. I did that a lot in [my previous city] and met some friends outside of work, so that was nice. And so I did the same here and met a couple friends that I could hang out with outside of work, which is nice. And then through my sorority alumni group, did some activities and met some people so I could kind of know some people outside of work. So that was good, too... It was nice to know people outside of work and people to go out with. You know, single ladies to go out and meet guys and talk about personal things, and dates, and stuff like that. It was a good personal support system.

Friends seemed to be an important source of support for the many of the women in this study. They provided support by listening, being social outlets, helping them navigate multiple roles, or helping them relax with food and beverages.

Significant Others

Those of the women who had them at the time of data collection talked about how their significant others were supportive of them in their lives and careers. They shared that their significant others are supportive of their careers in various ways and can help them have balance between their work and home roles.

Support of Career

None of the romantically attached women in this study indicated anything other than having support from their current significant others in their career endeavors. Alice, though not attached at the time even mentioned that a partner who was unsupportive of her career had to go. She said, “The guys I dated through that time period, for the most part, were supportive of my work and the hours that I put into it. There were a few obvious ones that had to hit the road because they weren’t.” Rebecca spoke about the support she receives from her significant other in the form of understanding what her work requires of her. She said,

This is kind of a crazy business. We have crazy hours. This person (significant other) worked in the business before, doesn’t work in the business now, but kind of gets it and understands it and lets me do it, deal with it. Not everybody gets the phone call that you have to take in the middle of dinner because somebody has done something, or somebody is hurt, or something has to happen, or the amount of hours that we put in, the travel and those kinds of things. I found the right partner this time, so it’s good.

Similarly, Amanda talked about how her husband supports her in her career. She said,

He definitely supports me through my job. He knows that I have weird, long hours. So he’s very supportive of that. He’ll come to games. He’ll do stuff around the house because he knows that I’m not going to be home till 10 o’clock at night. So he’s very supportive of that. I mean he gets to reap some of the

benefits – free tickets, some gear, maybe a trip. So I'm sure that helps. But he's always been very supportive and not upset because I have so much going on. He's just very relaxed and easy going, so it's been nice.

Kate made an interesting statement about how having such a strong relationship with her husband helps her to be able to put more energy into her work.

I think it goes without saying like, you hope to be married to the end. But I'm bad in that regard. I don't prioritize professional; I just feel like the personal stuff is so strong that that doesn't need as much as this (work). It's not something I question, like stability and strength. I know I still need to invest in that because those things can die, but the part that I feel like is most unstable is the work part. That's why I think sometimes you spend more time (with work). And so, you just get a balance.

Support from significant others may come in different forms, but all of the attached women in this study indicated that their significant others are indeed sources of support for them in their careers.

Support of Balance

While having a strong marriage helped Kate feel like she could put more attention on her work, contributing to her sense of balance, others talked about how their significant others helped them achieve more balance in their lives. Melissa talked about how her husband is a source of support for her in navigating her roles as a professional and as a mother. She said,

[He] gets to hear me cry when I'm upset because I miss [my child] because I've been working too much, or he gets to hear me whine because I am frustrated with something at work. I think what he reflects back to me is those times when I'm with [my child], but I seem distracted because either my phone is blowing up or he knows I need to get back to whatever, an email, or I've told him that, "Hey, I need work on [a work task] later." Those types of things. I think what he has been able to support me through the most is kind of that...like, is work a distraction, or when I am at work, is [my child] a distraction? Neither are really

distractions. How do I do both? He doesn't really have an opinion one way or the other, whether I work or not, but he knows that working does fulfill a certain part of me, and he knows that I also want to be always present for [my child]. So he's a source of support.

Michelle's husband has also been a support for her who has helped her have more balance between work and family by taking care of more tasks in the home. She said,

Without him, I don't know how I would have been able to do the transition back to work (after having a child). I don't know how single moms do it at all, so I have the utmost respect for them. I'm more the breadwinner in our relationship and he works from home, so he has a lot more flexibility. So he's able to do a lot of the stuff and give me some relief so that when I come home from work, I don't have to clean house or cook dinner or do all that. So he's able to help provide some of that balance. And then we can spend time with [our child] versus having to feel like you have to do all those household things. So by giving me that support, he is helping me be able to balance more of the work and the personal.

For her, being taken off of the "second shift" that many working mothers have to take on by having to take care of household duties following her normal workday has made a major impact in her ability to have balance in her life.

Though she is not a mother, having a committed partnership was also a support for Kris to have balance between her work and her home life. She said that when she was single, she tended to put more time into her work. Now that she has a long-term partner, she said,

I would say that my work/life balance [was] not there at that point. I feel like right now my life is in good harmony. I work hard when I work. But when it's time to have family time, I can put down the cell...I'm real good at putting down the cell phone these days. I didn't used to be. I used to be available 24/7 as far as emails and stuff like that. I don't do that anymore. I have a better work/life balance and it makes me a lot more happy.

Though it may have been expressed in different forms, these women's significant others were integral in how they achieved their own sense of balance between work and home.

Discussion of Support from Others Outside of Work

Support from people outside of work was important for these women. They all talked about their parents being a major part of their support systems in their career pursuits. Support from friends helped them to have social outlets, to have someone to listen to them, or to help them navigate multiple roles. Significant others also provided them with support for career and for balance by understanding when they have to put in more time at work, taking on home tasks, or helping them find harmony in their lives. These multiple sources of support outside of work were important for these women in their journeys.

Parental support was especially important for the women as they made decisions about their career goals. Though parents may have disagreed with their choices at first, they eventually came around and provided them with support in the forms of financial assistance, encouragement, and guidance. Without that support, they may have either not pursued this as a career or had a more difficult journey. Friends were also an important source of support for the women in this study. Friends provided support by being social outlets, helping them get their minds off of work, and being sounding boards for navigating multiple life roles.

The support the women received from their spouses or partners came in the form of being understanding of the nature of their work and the time requirements involved, putting things in perspective, and helping with home tasks. These findings are similar to what Bruening and Dixon (2008) found in their sample of coaching mothers, however, in their study, spouses and partners were more inclined to relocate for their wives'/partners'

careers, at least prior to having children, and husbands were more willing and able to do this in part because they had flexible jobs that they could perform wherever they were to go. After having children, incompatibilities between the coaching lifestyle and childcare needs were discovered and the types of support provided by spouses shifted. The idea of relocating for their wives' careers only came up with a couple of the participants in this study, one of whom is now a mother and the other of whom hopes to become one in the near future. As will be seen in the next subtheme, while some would be willing to move in order to support their spouses' careers, there were more factors at play, such as having a location that would be comfortable for both partners and whether their spouses or partners would be able to work in their own profession there. Some of the women in this study endured long-distance relationships at some point, past or present, for both partners to be able to perform their desired work, whereas another has been willing to sacrifice her own career to support her husband's.

Another way that spouses of mothers, specifically, supported their wives' work was by taking care of tasks at home. Two of the women acknowledged that they are the primary breadwinners in their homes at present, while one other was previously. One husband works from home, so he is able to take care of their child and home duties, while the other does not currently do paid work, but instead stays at home to take care of their children. This reflects a trend of more women being primary earners in dual-earner couples and takes away what is known as the second shift, where because women are usually responsible for more home duties, such as childcare, cooking, and cleaning, they end up having a home shift after the end of their normal workday.

Interestingly, though close to a quarter of married women in the U.S. earn more than their husbands (up from six percent in 1960), in marriages where the wife makes more than the husband, the couple often takes on more traditional gender roles in the home, where the women take on more of the household work and childcare (Rampel, 2013). It was the opposite for the women in this study. For these women, taking away that second shift opened up their time and energy to be spent on quality bonding time with their husbands and children. In additions, it continues to allow them more freedom to choose to keep pursuing their current career paths. This is a reversal of what would be seen as typical in this profession – of male athletics administrators having a supportive partner/spouse at home taking care of the domestic responsibilities, so that they can dedicate more time and energy to their work (Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2008). Such a reversal reflects a substantial step forward in the male-dominated field of intercollegiate athletics administration that, if continued, could result in more options and opportunities for women who aspire to work in the profession.

Having a spouse or partner who will listen to the women's career and role balancing concerns can be very helpful for women who have children or parents to care for in addition to their work. Having a family climate that encourages sharing concerns helps women get feedback on their development of strategies for work-life integration and the sharing caregiving roles with their partners. This kind of family climate is related to better outcomes – lower work-family conflict and well-being (Kossek et al., 2001). As such, if women in this profession have support from their partners in this way, in that they are able to share their concerns and receive helpful feedback and support, they will

likely have more success in navigating multiple life roles, including worker, mother, wife/partner, and daughter. This can make them feel freer to choose to manage those multiple roles instead of taking an off-ramp from their careers to tend to family needs.

CONSIDERATION OF OTHERS

One of the main characteristics of linked or interdependent lives is that people will consider the others with whom they are closely connected in the decisions they make and thus influence their life trajectories. These women consider the important people in their lives whenever making choices in their careers, thus helping shape their paths. They have considered, and still do consider significant others, children, and other family when weighing alternatives.

Significant Others

Several of the women in this study have been or are still in long-distance relationships with their husbands. Maggie is one of these women who has sustained a long-distance relationship with her husband and is considerate of him in any job change decisions. She said, “I know I would never move east of [my current city] because that’s just too far. My husband can’t leave his job...so I’m kind of limited.”

Jessica is another participant who was in a long-distance relationship with her husband and changed locations to be with him. Because she wants to be in the same place as her husband, Jessica is willing to take a “backseat” to his career, even if it means sacrificing her own career goals. She said about leaving her previous job, “I wouldn’t

have left if it wasn't for my husband.” She also said, “I never thought in a million years I'd live in Texas, because it's really far from my family. But my husband's job brought us here and he's my family now, too.”

Amanda shared the reasons she did not take a job she was considering in part because she was thinking about her husband's comfort in the area where the job was located. She said,

In the end, it was going to be too far from both of our families. It was in an area where we just didn't think that it was going to be the best situation for us. One, economically, because obviously he would have to find a new job. We'd have to sell our house, which we're going to have to run into eventually. But is this the place that's going to be worth it? I don't know. I mean the job was a great opportunity, but personally we just decided in the end that it wasn't going to be the best choice for us. My husband is black. I'm in an interracial marriage, so that was something else that we had to consider, or I have to be considerate of him. Is he going to be comfortable in a place like this that does not have a lot of minorities? So it was an interesting thing we had to go through and will probably have to go through again. I think we realize this was just one opportunity. There will be others.

Kris also indicated that because she is settled with her partner in a new home, her partner has a “great job,” and they are “happy” where they are right now, she is “not going to jump around from school to school” to chase a better position. She expressed that it would have to be a great opportunity, but also be in a great location where her partner could work for her to consider a career move.

These examples demonstrate how these women's connections to their significant others factored into their decisions about their career paths. Whether it was moving to be in the same state, moving to a place that is close enough, or considering the other's comfort in the place where a job was located, these women thought about how their

partners and their relationships would be impacted by particular pathways and made decisions accordingly.

Children

The fact that the women who are mothers consider their children in their career decisions has been touched upon previously. The mothers in this study thought about things such as providing for their children financially, spending enough time with them, setting an example for them, and raising them to the best of their ability. An example that has not yet been shared is that of Maggie. Thinking of her children has affected her career decisions in multiple ways. First, before she had children, she was a collegiate coach at a Division III school and her goal was to be a head coach at a Division I school. When she got married and started having children, she factored them into the equation. She said,

What I realized is that where I was at Division III and at that school, to be able to start having children, it would probably be a lot easier at Division III than being a coach at [a Division I school]. And so, I made a decision to just stay and not even pursue Division I. That was big in my career, because I stayed [where I was] like 15 years. At that point, having a family and stuff kind of changed my path and what I was thinking I was going to do.

When her children were older and she was an administrator, she wanted to get back into Division I when she was looking for a new job and found her present one. She said about her reasoning,

It was more competitive. The athletics were just more exciting, more spectators. I think, too, because of my kids, they are really into sports. My husband was [an athlete]. So I wanted them to be around competitive athletics and to see what it was like. I think that had a lot to do with it also. Whenever I'd bring them to a sporting event where I was before, they'd be like, "Ugh. It's so boring! Do we

have to go?” And they hated going to that. I wanted them to learn and to see what it was like so that if they decide to go in sports, that they kind of already understand what it’s like or what it could be like if they wanted to go to that level. I think I have one son who will maybe go to that level if he wanted to. He’s a pretty good athlete and he loves going to games here. He’s like, “When’s the next one?” He gets excited when he goes. He’s the ball boy. He’s with the players and they like take him under their wing. They’re like, “Yeah, you can go here...!” He has the best experience when he goes to these events. And so, that was another reason we wanted them to be around. And if they don’t want to be athletes, I think it’s still...like maybe being a manager, or eventually be a graduate assistant, or something like that, I had to get in somehow to kind of get those connections so that I could...it just opens another door. And then, of course, my husband loves it.

There have been times when she has questioned whether her working like she does is the best thing for her children, but ultimately, she and her husband believe it is a good thing for them. She said,

In the long run, we’re trying to get them to be most successful in whatever they want to do. So with them seeing both of us working hard and all the opportunities come up and stuff, it makes them...I mean they are already talking about where they want to go to college, what they want to do when they’re older... I think that’s kind of helping them in the bigger picture and the long run. And I could be wrong. Who knows? Or maybe I am just justifying that it was OK for me to work and not be at home when they were young. I’m sure they’ll turn out fine. But that was always kind of a challenge. And people still, in the department they go, “I don’t know how you do it. How do you work all these hours and you have three kids and you are basically by yourself? I don’t know how you do it.” Then I start thinking, “Is this bad that I’m doing this?” But then I’m like, “No. My [kids] love it and they’re happy. Everything is good.”

The women in this study who are mothers considered their children in their career choices and wanted to do the best they could for them. These considerations came in the form of wanting to make sure they were provided for financially, being able to spend more time with them, setting an example for them, or exposing them to competitive sports and the potential within it. At least for now, what they think is best is to stay with

their current careers, although, as Melissa and Michelle have expressed, the decision to stick with it is still an ongoing negotiation.

Other Family

In addition to their significant others and children, the women in this study consider other family members when making decisions about their careers. The women who do not have children, but do have nieces and nephews, thought about those nieces and nephews when considering career options. Aging parents were also a consideration for many of the women in this study.

Nieces and Nephews

Some of the women, specifically those who do not have children themselves, expressed that their nieces and nephews were very important to them and they wanted to be able to be involved in their lives in some way. The ones whose interviews were in their offices had pictures of their nieces and nephews placed prominently in their offices, indicating to me that they were important people in their lives. For example, Yvonne talked about her nieces and nephews. She said,

My nieces and nephews are probably the most important people in my life. I bring them down in the summer for a week...just teach them...that they can do all things... I want them to see nice. They don't all live in the best places, so I want them to know that they can have this, too, and that if you work hard you can get those things. If you want these things that I'm doing for you, you have to work hard. So I'm trying to teach them those things early. I break my bank to bring them here, but it's worth it... it's important.

Similarly, Rebecca talked about how important it is for her to be in a location that allows her to be involved in her niece and nephew's lives.

I'm close to family. My sister lives two houses down from me. I'm helping her raise her two kids. They mean the world to me and kind of give me that opportunity to be a mom without really being a mom. I have a brother in [another city in Texas] and one of his girls is here at [this university]. So I'm getting to spend time with my niece that way... I think it's going to be hard for me to leave what I have right now, having all my family in Texas and, again, some of my immediate family very close to me. It would have to be a great opportunity. And...if I want to come back and watch my nephew play baseball, I want to be able to get on a plane or hop in the car and do that.

Alice has several nieces who she considers in her career choices as well. She said,

Because they are here in Texas, I feel like I'll always stay and work in Texas, because I enjoy getting to go see them do their things and just spending time with them. If I were, for example, back in [the state I used to live in], I'd see them maybe once or twice a year and that would be it. And that's my personal choice, just because I want to be around and see them grow up... My brother, a couple years back, he and my sister-in-law were doing their will. He called and said, "If something happened to both of us, would you take the girls?" Of course, I agreed. It made me think at that time, if that were to happen, what would I do? I'm not sure, but I might end up having to go back into teaching just so I could have more time for them. Because I spent a lot of time with teaching and coaching, but a lot of that was the coaching aspect. So if I were just teaching, I feel like I'd be able to be there for them and be better support for them. But this job would make me more financially secure for them. So it's hopefully not a decision I'll ever have to make. But you do have that thought when somebody asks you that: "What are you going to do?"

Now that her nieces are old enough to be able to be at home by themselves, she feels more confident that, if something were to happen to their parents and she needed to step in as their guardian, she could stay in her current job, but she said, "I wouldn't put in the hours that I do, necessarily, because I'd have somebody waiting for me."

Aging Parents

A consideration for some of the women in this study was living close enough to their parents to be able to care for them. As previously discussed, some of the women have already had parents pass away or become ill. Alice is an example of a woman who has parents she wants to be able to care for as they get older, which is a consideration for her that makes her want to stay in her same location, even if she feels stuck in her career. She said,

My parents still live here. They retired here because this is where we grew up. Nobody in my family has ever said, “OK, Alice. You are the one there. You are still single. You get to take care of mom and dad.” Nobody has said that. But the reality of it is...my dad has been very sick and I am the one that’s here. And I am the one that gets to help out. It makes more sense for me to be the one doing all of that, because for my sister to she’d have to leave her kids. My brother, he’s working. He has to support his family. They’ve helped when they could. And they’ve come on weekends and taken off from work and come and helped and everything like that. But I’m glad that I could be here to help my parents when they needed it. But they are always like, “Don’t ever think that you have to stay here because of us!”

Yvonne said that when her mother was still alive, “I wasn’t going to leave her. I knew everything I did, I had to consider her.” She did consider her mother in all of her career moves, making sure that she would be able to be comfortable and happy wherever she was living. Despite the sometimes long hours of working in athletics administration, Yvonne, appreciated the flexibility associated with a job that did not have set hours. She said,

Taking care of my mother, I’ve always had jobs that allowed me to be available to my mom, take her to the doctor or whatever. So just working athletics, choosing the [jobs] I have, those have had impacts on me staying in it even this long, just because of the flexibility.

For one of her job changes, there were several factors involved in the decision, but one of the major considerations in leaving the job she was in was her mother. She said that in addition to another specific issue,

Everything else said leave—the politics, the bureaucratic part of it, the weather. It was just always gloomy. My mom didn't seem to do well there. It was just always depressing there. In [the previous city] I had somewhat of a support system for her. Even though she lived with me, she lived in the same city with me, but I would always get her her own apartment, because that was her last piece of independence. So she could still get up and take care of herself to a certain degree. I didn't want to take that from her. In [the previous city], she was living in a place where there were other people...It wasn't like assisted living or anything, but it was a big building with people like her. It was her peer group and she had a good time there. So we went to [the new city] and I found a similar type of living environment, but she didn't know them... I just don't think she was very happy there. So when [the new supervisor] called me, I was just like, "It's the best for me and my mother."

Rebecca's parents also factored into her decision to be where she is now. She said, "I think at some point my parents wanted me to move back home, and that's part of why I am back here, but they never would have forced me. That's just not how they are." As mentioned in the previous chapter, Amanda's mother is now ill and she wants to be close enough to help her when possible, which she considers whenever looking into a new job opportunity. In addition, one of the things Maggie would look for in her next job is "being close to my mom and dad. That would be pretty important."

Discussion of Consideration of Others

It is apparent that the women in this study consider the people with whom they are connected when thinking about career options. They demonstrated their considerations for their significant others (spouses) in multiple ways, including moving

and sacrificing one's own career to be with a spouse, turning down a job opportunity for the comfort of a spouse, and limiting oneself geographically to be close enough to a spouse. They demonstrated their considerations of their children by maintaining their career to provide for them, set examples for them, inspire them, or having better balance with their careers to spend more time with them. In regard to parents, nieces, and nephews, these women wanted to make sure they were close enough to be able to be a part of their lives and take care of them as needed.

Though some of the women in this study had sustained long-distance relationships in the past or are still in the present, it was important for them to be either with their significant others in the same location or at least close enough to be able to visit regularly. One has been willing to sacrifice her own career to go with her husband wherever he gets a job. Another has made a joint decision with her husband to pursue their careers in separate locations, but is limiting herself geographically to where she can be close enough to him to be able to see each other on a regular basis, as he does not feel he can leave his job. Another participant took her spouse's comfort into consideration when looking into a job opportunity. Because they are in an interracial marriage, she feels as though it is important for them to be in an environment that embraces diversity. She said that if she were single, she would have taken the job, but she is not and needs to consider his comfort. For another, though she is not actively looking for a new position, she knows that she would consider her partner in any decisions to move, as her partner has a good job and they are happy where they currently live.

As can be seen from the data, connections to spouses or partners factors into any decision-making regarding the women's careers and can help shape the trajectory of their career paths in a few different ways. One way is that one spouse follows the other and sacrifices his or her own career. A second way is that the couple finds a location where both can pursue their careers, even if one or both partners may have slower career progression. A third way is that they abandon the idea of being in the same location so that they can both pursue their individual career paths more aggressively. In any case, the women seem more invested in making their lives work than only making their careers work.

The fact that these women are willing to live apart from their spouses to pursue their own careers while also allowing their husbands to pursue theirs, along with the fact that some of the men are willing to relocate with their wives for their career progression again reflects a societal shift and cohort effect. In previous generations, these two scenarios would be unthinkable and, instead, women would be automatically expected to be wherever their husbands were, even if it meant sacrificing their own personal goals. Such a shift shows again how the themes of the life course perspective influence each other. In this case, placement in historical time and the societal shifts that have occurred over time have now affected the ways that romantic relationships function as well as the individual options that are available and then chosen. This results in a broadening of women's horizons of opportunity in the working world.

The women who are mothers also considered their children in career decisions. It was important for them to provide for them financially, spend enough time with them, be

role models for them, and do the best they can at raising them. In any career decisions, they are continuously factoring these goals into the equation. For some, this means continuing to pursue their careers because they see the financial and role modeling benefits. For others who verbalized more conflict between their roles, it is an ongoing struggle and negotiation because though they see the benefits of maintaining their careers, they also see the benefits of being able to spend more time with their children. It may also mean changing roles or goals to be able to still maintain a career, but also be more able to dedicate themselves to the raising of their children. In any case, the well-being of their children is an important factor in their career decisions.

For many women in this study, aging parents were another group of people they considered in their career decisions. One discussed being the caregiver for her mother before she died and, in her case, she considered her mother in every career decision she made, making sure that she would be happy and comfortable in whatever environment where a job would be located. For many, their aging parents factored into their career decisions in the way that they wanted to limit themselves geographically to be able to be close enough to care for them or visit them regularly. Some of the women have or will soon have an aging parent living with them, while also raising children, putting them in the “sandwich generation” (Bennett & McDaniel, 2006). As of now, this aspect of their lives was not seen as an added strain, but instead an added resource. Though not included above in examples, these particular parents were able to help with home tasks, including childcare. One expressed that her mother is not able to drive, but she can cook, which takes a task off of the shoulders of her and her husband. As these parents continue

to age, however, they may have to start caring for them in addition to their children, which could play into career decisions.

In addition to their own children and aging parents, several of the women also consider their nieces and nephews in their career decisions. This was specifically the case for women who do not have children of their own. The women considered their nieces and nephews by wanting to stay in a location close to them or be in a position where they could have them visit. They wanted to be active participants in their nieces' and nephews' lives – go to their sporting events, show them what is possible for them to have with hard work, help raise them, or step in as a guardian if the need were to arise. This was mostly demonstrated by a desire to have geographic proximity, but also in organizational flexibility (e.g., being able to take a flight to watch a nephew's baseball game). In addition, one participant, in consideration of potential guardianship, also demonstrated the desires to be able to financial provide for them and to be able to be home enough in the evenings for them.

The connections to and relationships with these different groups of others have factored (and continue to factor) into these women's career choices in various ways. Considerations are made for comfort, time, location, resources, and role modeling. The social bonds they have formed across time with these other individuals continue to shape the trajectories of their careers by influencing the decisions they make.

SUMMARY DISCUSSION OF LINKED LIVES

The subthemes of support from others within the profession, leadership, support from others outside of work, and consideration of others were identified within the broader theme of linked lives. Sources of support from within the profession were supervisors, mentors, and colleagues. These were important sources of both personal and professional support. Personal support from supervisors was especially critical at times of life transitions, such as births, illnesses, and deaths of loved ones. While support made the women more likely to choose to stay with their organization and/or profession, a lack of support made them want to leave their organizations. Within profession support also helped the women build their human and social capital, increasing their knowledge, skills, and social networks that would open up doors to new possibilities and opportunities in their careers.

The results from this study provide support for the transformational style of leadership being an effective style. Transformational leadership is characterized by charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and consideration of the individual (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Though most did not name this style, they described scenarios of those who they labeled as “good leaders” with some or all of these characteristics. When the women had “good leaders,” they felt valued and respected, making them more inclined to stay in their jobs. This contrasted greatly with those they described as “bad leaders,” who were dishonest, disrespectful, or did not practice what they preached by leading by example. When the women faced leadership such as this, they did not want to stay.

The support the women in this study received outside of their profession was crucial for them, especially as they were experiencing life transitions, such as deaths and illnesses of parents or other loved ones or becoming a mother. Sources of this kind of support were family members (primarily parents), friends, and significant others. Parents were mostly supportive in regard to the women's initial choice to pursue intercollegiate athletics administration as a career through encouragement, guidance, and financial assistance. Friends served more as social outlets, helping the women have an escape from work, but also helped them navigate multiple roles. Significant others supported through understanding, helping maintain balance, and helping navigate their multiple roles (especially for parents). Support from outside of work is crucial for these women as they manage multiple roles and helps them feel as though they are able to make less constrained choices in their lives and careers.

It has been shown in previous research (e.g., Bruening & Dixon, 2008; Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2008) that succeeding in an athletics career, either as a coach or as an administrator, while also being a parent requires a strong external support system, regardless of one's sex. Knoppers and Anthonissen (2008) found that the male athletics leaders were able to remain in control of their lives and careers by having a spouse who took care of all of the domestic responsibilities while they worked long hours. Bruening and Dixon (2008) found that to succeed as coaching mothers, women also needed to have supportive spouses to be able to take responsibility for some of the domestic duties. One difference between the findings for men and women seems to be that while men need the support of a wife, women need a whole support network of spouses or partners, other

family members, and friends – and men seem to be more willing to be an active part of that support network.

The women considered multiple groups of others in their career decisions. Based on their social connections to these other people, they have and continue to think about how their choices regarding their careers will affect them. They consider comfort, proximity, economics, role modeling, and quality time when making their career decisions. Some might view such considerations a limitation or constraint on their choice options; however, it is a choice on their parts to make such considerations. Decision making within context will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Chapter 7: Human Agency

The theme of human agency refers to the idea that humans are active participants in their own lives. In consideration of their personal contexts, individuals make decisions and carry them out, which then shapes the trajectory of their lives (Elder, 1994). Within human agency, there were four subthemes identified in the data: individual interests, person-environment fit, taking advantage of opportunities, and career decision-making.

INDIVIDUAL INTERESTS

One of the subthemes identified within the broader theme of human agency is that of individual interests. All of the women in this study have personal interests that drew them into the profession of athletics administration and have helped keep them in it. This came through in several ways, including a love for sport, desire to work with college students and/or in education, and administrative interests.

Love for Sport

Almost all of the women in this study had expressed a love for sport. As previously discussed, many of them had participated in sports as children or adolescents. Some of them also grew up watching sports or considered their families to be sports families. Though Rebecca did not mention playing sports in her youth, she did say, “I’m a Texas girl. I love football.” Kate, in addition to playing sports herself, considered her family to be a “sports family” and talked about how her father would take her to all sorts of games when she was growing up. She had put it in her life/career map as “family went

to sporting events as entertainment from high school to professional throughout life.”

She said,

I think that was my family’s entertainment. My mom was oldest of six...My dad was the oldest of six. And they both just loved sports. So we would go to high school games. We would go to college games. We would go to pro games. That’s what we did for a lot of our entertainment. So I think an impact on me was sports were just always a part of my life and my family’s entertainment. They would say, “You need to play sports. You need to go to school. If you do that, then you’ll have a good life.” So I think this all seems kind of normal because that was just what we did.

She went on to talk about a specific college football game she went to with her father that seemed like a turning point for her. She said,

At the very end there was a Hail Mary. I think that’s why I can remember it so clearly. And I think I remember seeing that game, and then the excitement, and just seeing the people and the impact. I think that’s the first time I remember being like, “OK. Somehow, some way, this is an important event to me.” At first, I was like, “OK. You want to go to college and maybe you want to be a student-athlete.” But I knew there was some type of impact or connection where I can remember that very clearly and from then was always kind of figuring out, “OK. How do I take that experience and...” I think from seeing the impact of it, “be a part of that in a way?”

Michelle played sports in her youth and into high school and said, “Sports was always an interest of mine.” She added that playing competitively in high school gave her the interest she had in sports and, “seeing what other opportunities are there due to that participation I felt led me down the path eventually to where I am today, just because I saw that because of that opportunity to participate in sports, there’s other aspects.” She also said that her exposure to sports from a young age drove the “interest and desire in continuing to work in sports in some capacity.”

Additional examples of childhood participation in sports were provided in a previous section, but the love for sport that the women expressed was one element that led them to choosing to pursue working in sports for their careers. The personal interest they had in their youth that carried over into adulthood helped shape the trajectories of their life paths by influencing the activities they took part in, sometimes their educational pursuits, and eventually the career area to which they were drawn and in which they still work.

Desire to Work with College Students and/or in Education

Even if they did love sport, not all were driven to this career specifically because of that interest. Some had a desire to work with college students or in education. For example, Leah's goal was not specifically to work with student-athletes, but to work with college students, and athletics was a way to do that. She said that after earning her degrees, she "wanted to be on a college campus, working with college students." She spoke about how she got her start in athletics:

I had a friend who worked at [the university] in HR. I said, "How do I get my foot in the door on campus? I want to work with college students." She said, "You know, Leah, one of the best ways to do this is to sign up to be a tutor over in the athletic department." I said, "Done." So I called and they said, "Well, yeah, we need tutors. What can you tutor?" I said, "A whole list of things." So I started in athletics as a tutor. That's all I did. And I signed up to tutor as many courses as I could and as many students as I could just so I could have that interaction with them, because I wanted to work with college students. So that's how I started in athletics.

She said that over time, her role has "morphed" into what it is now. She said,

It's simply a position that morphed over time. It's not something I was looking for. I loved having my foot in the door here and being able to work with the

students. And athletics was just a fun environment just because of the camaraderie, the morale. There's a lot here that's fun to be a part of. The position itself morphed, and I can't say that it was a goal of mine for it to morph. But it was nice that I was available when the need arose. And so, it came a time I had tutored enough and they said, "Hey, we can count on her. She's dependable. She knows what she's doing. We need her to mentor some at-risk students." So that's what I started doing. The tutoring really dropped off at that point because I was just doing a whole bunch of mentoring with our kids. Then it happened that they had had somebody in here doing [another role], and he left. And they said, "She's here. She can handle the organization. Let's hand this to her."

Melissa was an athlete from childhood throughout college and even though she had a love for sports, she did not see herself having a profession in it at first. She said that in elementary and middle school, she wanted to go into politics. In High school, she had known that she "wanted to be related to education in some capacity," but she "didn't think about educational administration or anything like that." She tried coaching for a while, but it was not for her. Interestingly, although she did not pursue athletics administration until she had started her graduate degree, she had a memory mid-interview that indicated that the seed had been planted a while before, during college. She said,

I took career planning in college. It was an elective during senior year. My mapped out career at that point was to work in college athletics. So I do remember some part of that. I guess it was my junior year I took [a speech class] and we had to write our own eulogy. The career that I wrote about having was basically [my current supervisor's] job.

Unlike Melissa, Alice always had a desire to work in education. Having been raised in a teaching family, where both parents and some grandparents were teachers, that was what she knew and thought she could do while caring for a family of her own one day. Her parents even tried to persuade her not to go into teaching because they "could see the way things were becoming harder in education and they encouraged us (her and

her siblings) to study things other than education.” Despite their advice, she chose that route anyway. She waived in college, considering a medical route instead, but stuck with education in part because she wanted to have a family. Interestingly, when in graduate school in a sport related program, her goal was to be in academic support for collegiate student athletes. Lacking experience needed, however, she became a middle school and then high school teacher and coach after earning her graduate degree. In a more roundabout way, she did end up working in college athletics, but in a different area than she thought she would when she was in graduate school.

Many of the women, even if not originally interested in specifically working with student-athletes, were interested in being in a career that involved education and/or working with college students. That interest, at least in part, helped shape their trajectories by influencing the choices they made regarding their careers.

Administrative Interests

The women in this study, regardless of love for sports, saw themselves as being interested in and as being able to excel at the administrative side of athletics. For example, Yvonne had a love for sports and an interest in working in education, but in addition to those things, she had interests in administering sports. She said, after serving as a coach for a while,

Coaching just wasn't my passion. My passion was the student-athletes, but my biggest passion was the things outside of the actual coach on the court. So I like dealing with academics and compliance – the administrative part of it. That's what I enjoyed doing. That's why I knew administration was more me than coaching, and traveling to recruit, and breaking down videos. That just wasn't

what I wanted to do. Now, if I look at the money they make, I probably would have stayed in it. But I wanted to be happy.

When asked what sparked the interest in the administrative side, she said,

I guess it's just my personality. When I went to compliance, because compliance at [another university] was my next position, I always wanted to be, growing up, a teacher. And so, compliance is really education in sports. So it's kind of like walking a line between my two passions – being a teacher, an educator, and being in sports. So that's why compliance fit for me. When I realized the actual coaching part of the profession wasn't what I enjoyed, but the administration was, I said, "Which support service area would I want to go into?" I just looked internally and said, "What's my passion?" Compliance made sense.

Yvonne is no longer in a compliance area of athletics, but it was an important step in her path to where she is now as a high level administrator.

Like Yvonne, Michelle also loved sports and had interests in education, as after deciding that a career in sports medicine would not allow her to have the lifestyle she wanted for herself, she had considered going on the path of teaching and coaching. That was only until she saw an advertisement for an internship in athletics compliance at her university during her senior year of college. She said,

I started going on the track of teaching and coaching and looking at doing that at the junior high, high school level. So that was my path until I got to my senior year of undergrad, and I had seen an advertisement...I was taking summer school and I had seen an advertisement for a compliance job in the athletic department. I didn't know anything about that. I was like, "What is compliance?" So I did a little research. And then my mom happened to be working at [a conference office] at that point in time, so she had some understanding about college athletics and the different departments that were there. So I just talked to her a little bit about it, and then she talked to a few others that she worked with and helped me understand. It had to do something with rules and regulations and kind of had a legal type of environment. So I was like, "That sounds interesting...I could do something and this is sports related and really fits my skill sets, because I can be organized and detail oriented, the legal side of things." Rules have always been something that seemed to interest me as well. So that's really how I got started.

Kris also originally thought she might become a coach when she was in graduate school, but then realized that it was not the career for her. She said,

After I graduated, I stayed on with them a few years as a grad assistant coach, thinking I might want to go into coaching. But then that's when I realized I didn't really have the skills to go into coaching that sport or really didn't want to go into coaching. I wanted to go more into the administrative side of it. So that's when I started working my way through the athletic department, trying to figure out what it was I wanted to do, whether it was media relations or events or equipment.

As can be seen from these examples, these women's interests in sports, education, and administration in part led them to choose a career in intercollegiate athletics administration.

Discussion of Individual Interests

It has been demonstrated that interests play a role in the directions women go in their careers. It is not as simple as that, however, as interests can be shaped by other factors, such as self-efficacy and expectations for success. Throughout childhood and adolescence, people are exposed to various activities that may be of relevance to their future careers (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Engaging in these activities (including sport and education) are important pieces of the process of creating individual career trajectories (Savickas et al., 2009). Through experience, both direct and vicarious, individuals are not only exposed to these activities, but receive reinforcements through their interaction with their surrounding environment that can influence the degree to which they can envision themselves having success in different areas. According to Bandura (1982), individuals select and produce their environments. After developing their personal interests, preferences, and behavioral standards, people select activities and

peers who share those same characteristics, who then also reinforce their inclinations. The women in this study took an active role in creating their own environments through this process.

Contextual factors, such as opportunity structures, supports, and barriers, can further shape career choices by either broadening or limiting available options (Lent et al., 1994). For the women in this study, such contextual factors included, but were not limited to, the opportunities to play sports and get a college and graduate education, as well as reinforcements through positive feedback and witnessing others in the profession. This relates to the concept of habitus, which “encapsulates the ways in which a person's beliefs, ideas and preferences are individually subjective but also influenced by the objective social networks and cultural traditions in which that person lives” (Hodkinson & Sparks, 1997, p. 33). The influence of the social construction of gender cannot be ignored in career choice processes, as there are gender-stereotypes still at play that may impact what women see as viable career options (Lent et al., 1994). As previously noted, many (though not all) of these women had wanted to have a family of their own at some point and what they witnessed in their childhoods as being “what women did” influenced what they thought they could do themselves if they did want to be mothers. Many of their mothers were stay-at-home mothers who did not work or, if they did, they did so part-time and/or in professions that are stereotypically feminine, such as teaching or nursing. Now that they have had the chance to witness other professional women having other types of careers, including in athletics administration, while also having children, they are seeing that it is feasible to be a working mother in this profession.

The time in which these women live also have an impact. Just having the opportunity to play sports, unlike some of their mothers or grandmothers, exposed them to a whole new arena of possibilities that were not there in previous times. Such opportunity and exposure opened doors and broadened potential career options to those previously only available to men. Among the career options they may have seen as viable, their own human agency led them to choosing a profession in intercollegiate athletics administration, where they saw they had the interests and aptitudes that would match well with the field of work.

PERSON-ENVIRONMENT FIT

Many of the women discussed fit during their interviews, including fit between their personality and the type of work they do, or fit between themselves and the organization or people leading the organization.

Strengths, Personality, and Type of Work

The women in this study felt as though their strengths and personality matched well with the work they do in intercollegiate athletics administration. Some of the things that kept Rebecca engaged with working in athletics administration when she was first starting out were the variety and working with student-athletes. These were aspects of the profession she enjoyed and felt fit with her personality and strengths. When she was working in academics and compliance, she said,

It was just interesting. Compliance is a lot of problem solving. You get a situation and you have to figure out how to manage it and how to deal with it. It's

one of my strengths, so I found it interesting. I like puzzles. I enjoyed it. I apparently appear to be good at it. They really encouraged me to consider a career in it.

Jessica talked about the fit between her personality and her work. She said,

It just felt like it fit. It fit my personality. I liked that it wasn't sitting behind a desk all day, necessarily. At the end of the day, I think it was just working with people. Looking back now about what do I love the most about my job, it's getting to work with people, kind of the interpersonal skills side of thing.

Jennifer also spoke about the fit between herself and the work. She said, "I think it was as an athlete and knowing what that opportunity had provided to me, and enjoying working with young people as well as understanding what my skill sets were. I thought it was a good fit." Alice played sports growing up and loves them, making working in athletics seem like a perfect match for her. She said, "For somebody who loves sports as much as I do and the variety of sports that I enjoy, it's perfect."

Michelle felt as though some of her experiences growing up had helped her develop particular strengths that made her a good fit for the type of work she does.

Because of her father's career, her family moved a lot when she was younger. She said,

For me, all I remember growing up is we would generally move on an average of 2 ½, 3 years. So, to me, I didn't know anything different. But I feel that also helped me, especially moving at the times we were in my life, when you are young and you are in the stage where kids can be into more cliques and I've developed my friends. So being forced to have to adapt to change, adapt to new cultures, styles, environments, and people I feel really helped shape who I am today and allowed me to be a lot more adaptable, whether it's in my personal life or my career. I especially look at my profession today and you can't expect to do one thing every day, come in and have your day all planned out. You can, but it could change in a moment's notice if something comes up. So I feel like just some of that experience that I was kind of forced into because of the constant moving and lifestyle changes allows me to be more comfortable with change and ever-changing and evolving environment today. And I think working with different people as well, different people and personalities. I lived anywhere from

[a city] right on the border of Mexico, to [a city on the west coast], then [a city in the South], then [a place in the Rocky Mountain region]. And they are all very different, in my mind, very different people, very different viewpoints. You kind of have to learn how to fit in, in a way, or just to evolve to understand why they are who they are. And I think there were some times in my earlier childhood [that] I think also helped me be more resilient. Probably most significant was the move from [the South] to [the Rocky Mountain region], where we moved in the middle of 6th grade, and it was probably the worst year of my life as a child because they weren't very accepting of a southern girl, especially in the middle of the school year when they had all kind of established their friendships. So it was a big challenge for me and I feel like [it] helped me develop a little bit more of a backbone and learn how to deal with conflict in different situations, maybe be a little more independent as well.

Now that Maggie is solely in administration as opposed to coaching in addition, she said,

It's great. I love it. I think what's happened over my career, I've had so many different jobs, and responsibilities, and different types of positions that it's kept me engaged. I haven't gotten bored with it. So it's just always a new challenge and something new and different. So I really like this. And even here it's different day to day. Things just pop up and it's like, "What?" You just have to manage things all day long different. So it's never the same every day. And that's something, I guess, that is good for me. Looking back, I could never have had a job where I just sit at the desk and do the same thing every day.

As can be seen, the women in this study felt as though their personalities and strengths aligned well with the work that they do in this profession. The nature of the job includes many elements, including variety, not necessarily being stuck behind a desk all day, the opportunity to work with people and be surrounded by activities (sports), problem solving. The women felt like these aspects of the work matched themselves, thus contributing to their continued choices to stay in the profession thus far.

Self and Organization

Many of the women touched upon the importance of fit between themselves and the organization during their interviews. For example, Jennifer said,

I think your personal and professional values have to line up with the institution or neither of you are going to be successful. It's not going to be a successful relationship if what the institution has in mind doesn't line up with what your vision, whether it's intercollegiate athletics or academics.

Jessica discussed how when she was first getting started in the field, her ultimate goal was to be an AD, an SWA, or at least move into senior administration. Now, she may still have that goal, but it is more about fit than about title. She said,

I figured ultimately I'd probably want to do something in an AD role or at least a senior level position, but really, at the time, not knowing what that entailed. And with the longer that I've been in college athletics, the more I get what it means to be in each of those roles. And that still, ultimately, I think would be the goal. But I think it's more important now to find a school that's the right fit than just maybe a job that's the right title.

Rebecca talked about fit when she discussed a previous job search to get back to the state of Texas. She talked about only being willing to move for the right positions because she was "picky." She said,

I wasn't willing to take just any job to get back to Texas. I'm very picky about where I want to work and what I want to do. I want to be happy, first and foremost. I'm not going to do a job just to do a job. I interviewed for two different jobs. One was in [another state] at The University of [that state]. A friend of mine had recommended me for that position. I went out there and I was not sure that that was going to be a good fit. Very hesitant about that one if I was to get offered that position. I left there going, "Yeah, I'm not sure about that." One of the people that interviewed is still one of my very good friends in this business. I liked the people. I wasn't sure if I liked the town. The university was great. The people in the athletic department were great, but I wasn't real sure about [the town]. Needless to say, I didn't get that job. I interviewed for another job at [another Texas university]. Again, loved the people, wasn't sure I was going to love [the town]. Struggled with that a little bit. Also didn't get that job. Things work out for a reason. Those were probably about a year apart. I wasn't throwing résumés out there left and right. I was, again, very selective.

Jennifer also described herself as "picky" when evaluating if a job opportunity is right for her. She said, "I think that I'm really picky. I was offered a director of athletics position

before I came [here], but it wasn't the right fit for me. It wasn't the right job. And I found that out through the process.”

Now that some of these women are in the position to hire new personnel, they now consider the fit of any potential new hires with their environment; and touching back on the “small world” element of athletics, rely on references from others when making hiring decisions for their departments. For example, Rebecca said,

Athletics is a very...it's a very fast-paced...you don't have a lot of room for mistakes. Making a hiring mistake is incredibly detrimental to your entire department. So we rely heavily on references and who you know, and who you know that knows who can work for you or work with you. We spend so much time together and we work so many hours that the personalities have to match. I've told people and I've talked to assistant coaches, especially that are trying to be head coaches. I interview a lot of people when I'm looking for a head coach. I may phone interview 25 or 30 people. I may bring in five or six people, because I'm trying to find that fit. Anybody I bring to campus can probably do the job. I'm not going to bring you to campus for an interview if I don't think you can really do the job. But are you a fit for [this university]? Are you a fit for [this city]? Are you a fit for who we have on staff? Are you a fit for the student-athletes that we have? There's a lot of that that's really important. And I think it's important on their end, too, that they are coming into a situation where they're going to be successful. I want to do everything I can to make my coaches successful when I bring them in. So making sure that that fit works for them and is not forced.

Michelle learned from a negative experience how important fit is within an organizational culture. That negative experience caused her to reevaluate whether this was the right career for her. She explained,

We had had some staff at that point in time that I was overseeing that I had major struggles with. As a manager in my career, it put a huge strain on me.. It made me question, “Do I really want to manage people? Am I cut out for this? Do I want to deal with these types of issues for the rest of my career?” So it made me reevaluate that. It made me reevaluate my career. It made me want to think, “Is this something I want to do? Do I want a career change, something completely different?” Just because I was just completely unhappy. It was amazing to me

how working with people that just don't fit within your goals and your vision can make you that miserable and so miserable that you want to evaluate a career change. I was able to work through those and persevere... Ultimately, we ended up non-renewing both of the individuals, reorganizing our staff, and reevaluating the direction we were going... It was just a situation of not a good fit with the mission and values of our department. But that process, I think eventually getting through those challenges, getting to where we are now, where there is a staff that has the right people on the bus, and we're all going in the right direction has made a world of difference. I'm much happier in where I am right now. But I was ready to jump ship for a while there.

She did not jump ship. She is not the kind to give up. This example shows how having a bad fit between employee and organization or the people in the organization can be a factor that is taken into consideration when making choices about one's career.

Some of the women commented on how some of the more recent and ongoing changes within intercollegiate athletics as a whole may change the degree to which they feel like this career is a good fit for them. They feel as though some of these changes may be misaligned with their values. For example, Melissa said,

I have a real internal conflict with how spoiled they (student-athletes) are, and how much we do for them, and how much they appreciate it, and what they are actually learning in college in terms of being self-sufficient and accountable. So if the NCAA push for student-athlete well-being (in terms of payment) overrides everything else, then I don't think I'll respond well to that.

In addition, Michelle said,

It's kind of going through my mind maybe all this happening, it may no longer be kind of aligning as much with my values and what's important to me. Does this mean that it is time for me to find what that next opportunity, my next career that helps give me the full balance work and personal lives?

These examples show how a mismatch between person and environment can cause people to question whether they want to remain in the profession at all.

Discussion of Person-Environment Fit

Person-job fit is related to various career outcomes. The degree to which individual characteristics match with those of the job they are doing is positively correlated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and career success, and is negatively related to employee turnover. In addition, person-culture fit, or the congruence of personal and organizational goals and values, is also related to various outcomes, including career satisfaction, commitment, and turnover (Ballout, 2007). The findings in this study reflect these ideas. Obviously, the sample in the present study did not include women who had exited the profession, however, the fit between individual characteristics (e.g., personality and strengths) was seen as a factor that had led these women into the profession in the first place and served as a reason to continue in the profession going forward.

The fit between the person and the organization was also seen as relevant. The women considered this kind of fit when considering new job opportunities, hiring new employees, eliminating existing employees, and continuing to work in their current organizations. It seems as though person-job fit and person-organization fit are important to women's continued commitment to the work they do, but perhaps in different ways. If they have found a job that seems like a good match for them, they will likely stay with the career in general. If they feel a mismatch with their organizations, they may decide to leave. Their choices may vary, however, based upon available options and limiting considerations. For example, if a woman has a good fit with her job, but not her organization, and has minimal limiting factors keeping her in her location, she may be

able to find a better fit at another institution. If circumstances with the job and organization are the same, but she has family ties to consider that limit her geographically, she may continue on and be less satisfied with the work or leave the profession entirely. On the other hand, if she feels a good fit with the organization, but not with the job, she may stay out of loyalty and either try to change her role within the organization to one that is a better fit, but she may also leave to pursue a job that is a better fit despite feeling like the organization is a good match. The ideal situation for a woman to stay with the profession and maintain loyalty to her organization would be to have a fit with both parts – job and organization.

As was discussed in the previous chapter regarding leadership, a mismatch between the women and the people leading their organizations also caused them to want to leave the jobs they were in previously, which would be an element of person-organization fit. Also, some women are now starting to consider leaving the profession due to the changing priorities or values of intercollegiate athletics as a whole, now that there is less of a fit with their own values. It is unknown at this point what decisions they will make, but it could result in them perceiving a mismatch between themselves and the jobs and cause them to go in a different direction with their careers.

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES

Whether they were opportunities that were given to them, created by them, or provided by happenstance or a higher power, the women in this study took advantage of opportunities to advance their careers. Leah said,

I very much believe that God puts opportunities in our lives... If He's given you those opportunities and you see good reason to take them, you take them... And there are some that you would put farther down the list and you would say, "I can't do one more thing right now." And you have to do that, too.

When opportunities were available that seemed good for them, they took advantage of them. This can be seen in the previously provided examples of stepping up when a supervisor went on maternity leave, as well as the example of Maggie's job opportunity that arose from a coffee meeting with a colleague. The women discussed taking advantage of various types of opportunities, including those related to professional development, those stemming from major infractions cases and other major issues, as well as new job opportunities.

Professional Development

Some of the opportunities these women had that helped them in their careers were being allowed to attend, or even sent by their universities to attend, various professional development events, such as conferences, conventions, and seminars. The women in this study found these events to be highly beneficial to their careers. For example, Rebecca said that the universities she has worked for have provided her with opportunities to attend these types of events. When asked what she felt were the most beneficial professional development opportunities she was able to take advantage of were, she said,

I do think the networking opportunities that I got out of going to NCAA conventions and regional rules seminars and other development opportunities, even some of the things that we did conference-wise. They did a lot of seminars for conference members. So getting to meet people at other institutions to build our resource and our database of folks that you could rely on and get help from is a huge advantage. So that was important. And then I really think being able to shadow my [bosses as a couple of institutions]. I had an amazing boss at [one

institution] that really took me everywhere – took me to every meeting, every event. I mean just made sure that I was included so that I was exposed to a lot of different things. And there were people at [some other institutions] that did the same thing. That was kind of in combination. Until you do it, you don't know how it's done. But if you've at least seen it, you can have a good idea. Then when you are thrown into having to make that decision or having to build that facility, you've got some kind of either network or background to help you through it.

Yvonne also had opportunities to attend professional development events that benefited her in a couple of different ways. She did not speak extensively about this topic, but it was touched upon in different areas throughout her interview. One way it helped her was in building knowledge and skills in dealing with people. This helped her in a situation where she had to “play the middle” between the AD and other employees at her university. Another way professional development helped her was in building her network. One of her job opportunities stemmed from meeting a man at one of the professional development events she attended. She said about how she got the job, “There was a gentleman, who I had known from just different professional development opportunities, and he was working there. He mentioned my name to someone there, so they reached out to me and asked was I interested.” In addition to this positive networking experience through a professional development event, she also had a more negative experience. She said,

I went to [an] institute. It's one of the professional developments they say if you want to be a future AD, you should go to. So I went to it last year... You go to these things. You hear all these presenters. They tell you what to do, call. And then you call. And there's two other guys here who I have called and reached out to and they still haven't responded. But they like lead searches or help people get jobs. And one of them, I even said, “I'll come to your office.” He's like, “No. I'll come to your office. I'd like to come to [your university].” This has been going on since last July and I can't get them to...That happens all the time. I'm

like why invest in these opportunities if this is how it is? But that's just what happens all the time.

Michelle had positive experiences with professional development opportunities.

During the earlier part of her career, she had the opportunity to go to a conference-held rules workshop at which her later supervisor spoke. She said,

I had some opportunities to kind of engage with the head directors of compliance, where I really hadn't had that opportunity before. I think some of the exposure I had during that meeting and that session, [my later supervisor] remembered that. So when I applied, I think it gave me a little leg up on some other candidates and some other candidates that were probably more qualified, at least as far as what experiences they had had, just because I guess I somehow impressed her or she at least remembered some of the things that I had done, or said, or contributed to during that meeting. So that ultimately led me to applying for [the job at this university] and eventually getting the job here.

As previously mentioned, Michelle's supervisor at her present university encouraged professional development. One of the main events she took advantage of helped her both personally and professionally. At the time when she attended, she was going through some difficulties in her personal life. She said about the opportunity,

[It] really helps explore what your core values are, makes you develop your own personal mission statement, and understanding who you are, what you want in life, and then committing to that and living by it. So it was really the self-evaluation. The timing was perfect because I was really struggling both with my [personal life] and with career and figuring out...just kind of lost. So that helped put things back in perspective. And [my supervisor] gave me that opportunity to go there. I don't even think she knew at the time that I was going through some of those struggles and the perfect timing that that would be... It really helped refresh, for me, who I was and what I wanted in life and put me back on track to the direction I wanted to go. It also helped me, I think, be more open and honest with [my supervisor] about what I wanted as well. I think before it was just like whatever she wants, whatever she does. I didn't feel like I communicated very well with...I just was kind of on her path. But here's what I want my path to be. So I think that also helped shape our working relationship a little bit more as well, and the dynamic of that.

Maggie also shared about how professional development opportunities have helped her in her career. She has attended various events held by NACWAA (National Association of Collegiate Women Athletics Administrators) and have found those events to be helpful in different ways. One way has been opening her eyes to some of the challenges that face women in this profession and ways to navigate those challenges. Another way is by helping her learn more about how athletics administration works and, having come from a coaching background and getting into the game late, this was helpful for her as well. She said,

I think it's helped me to know that it is tough for women to get in AD roles. It kind of opens my eyes. I don't know if I'm naïve or what, but I know both. I know female and male athletic directors. But it helps me to keep in mind how difficult it is and the things you can do to get better. I mean I did those trainings that they have, the leadership institutes. I've done a couple of those. They've mostly just helped me understand how...because I was just new and I was in administration kind of late without a lot of education background in it. So I kind of worked my way and learned that way. So it kind of helped me to learn more stuff, learn how it worked, and all that kind of stuff. But it didn't really help me get any jobs or any positions that I got. It helped me advance because I knew what I was doing. And it helped me look good, I guess, because I started learning stuff and I could do it. But it didn't help me get...like the person who got me this job...I mean of course my résumé helped me to get this job, but it was a guy. He always tells me it's about who you know. I think it's a little bit of both, because I had all this stuff on my résumé, and if I didn't have it, if they would have looked at my résumé and they'd be like, "Ugh"...but it was my résumé plus who I knew. But NACWAA definitely helped me learn about athletics and how it works and all that kind of stuff, but nothing too specific that I learned, just kind of like a general how athletics works.

These examples show how taking advantage of professional development opportunities has helped the women in their careers in different ways. One way was by increasing their human capital in the form of profession specific knowledge and skills. Another way was

by increasing their social capital by providing forums within which to meet other people in the profession and gain potentially valuable resources and connections.

Major Infractions Cases and other Issues

Several of the opportunities that arose for these women came from occurrences such as major infractions cases and other departmental issues that needed attention. Major infractions cases refer to serious violations of NCAA rules and result in penalties to university athletics programs that can include recruiting limitations, reduction of scholarships, banning from competition, or other sanctions. These cases sometimes called for more staff to handle such repercussions or current staff to build and hone new skills.

Michelle said that it was because of a major infractions case that she even had the opportunity to have her first internship, the experience during which helped her gain skills that she would be able to use throughout her career. She said,

That was really why I had the internship and the opportunity I did initially, because they were looking to expand their staff. I came on the tail end of that infractions case and got some immediate exposure to some things from the NCAA rules side of it that I probably wouldn't have if they didn't have the infractions case. I had more opportunities to learn about the importance of compliance and the key elements that make kind of an effective compliance program, because they were being forced to have one of the best compliance programs... So I think because of that it gave me the opportunities and experience that I may have not gotten elsewhere.

When Kate was in graduate school, she was aiming to work in various areas to get experience, so that when she would become an AD someday (her ultimate goal), she would have an understanding of what people do in the department. During that time,

there was a major infractions case at her university that provided an opportunity to gain skills in the area of compliance. She attributed some of this to happenstance or being in the right place at the right time. She said,

The president was involved. The AD was involved. It was a major infractions case and I gained a lot of exposure, because they were working on the report and I was doing a lot in the office. So I just was in the right place at the right time to get a lot of good experience early on.

Because she took advantage of that opportunity and did good work, she was offered a full-time position there, which was “too good of an opportunity to pass up.”

Yvonne also had an opportunity because of a major infractions case at her alma mater. Because her purpose (her mother) was then gone, she felt like she “needed something that needed me,” so she went at a time when they were in trouble. She said, “They breathe trouble. They just can’t seem to stay out of it.” She talked about the experience and what resulted from it. She said,

They were in a lot of trouble, going through the NCAA major infractions case. When I got there, there was a lot more going on than just that. So that was from the past, but then they were dealing with the current day-to-day of eligibility certification...just all that stuff...they just didn’t have the staff that had been trained. So I’m dealing with the eligibility certification. I brought a staff member in with me, a young lady that was one of my student-athletes at [my former institution]. I brought her with me to help me with that. We got through the case. It was pretty successful... It ended up going for a year longer, actually, because we had to do an appeal. That’s probably one of my most proud moments, because the attorney that we worked with, the outside attorney, told me and told the university that he got more out of me in four months that he got out of the university in four years. That’s just how much we worked, though. When I got there we were working...I think I probably gained the most weight there because we were working from like six in the morning to 11 at night. And I’m talking about like a month straight. The young lady I brought in, her mom came down and would just feed us. People would just bring us food. So we’re not doing any working out, we’re not playing. It was just work. But again, when I look back on it, I was diving into it because of my purpose. I needed a purpose.

The work that she did in that time period led to another opportunity, a promotion. She ended up leaving that position once she realized that the leadership within the organization wanted to go back to “business as usual” and it was no longer a good fit for her and her values.

Melissa shared about an experience that had allowed her to gain valuable knowledge and skills to use throughout her career, which had stemmed not from an infractions case, but from other issues in the department. She said that when one of the areas “fell apart” and their office took on new responsibilities, that was when her supervisor did not have a choice but to use her more and she had to earn her way into her supervisor’s trust. One of the ways she did that was taking the opportunity that had presented itself through this “disaster.” She said,

I was probably working 12-hour days because we had huge messes to clean up eligibility-wise. That’s how I got to know the admissions process well. That’s how I got to know eligibility. It was just kind of like I had to force-feed myself all these things. I didn’t know NCAA rules before that point... So I would say that was the first time that I completely threw myself into work. And everything was secondary to career just out of necessity for, not living and breathing, but there was just a ton of work to be done, a bunch of students who were really poorly positioned academically and personally, and a staff that had no training, and a very small staff to absorb all that... I was really all in for work. I was interested in what was going on, because it was a disaster and I like to fix things. So it gave me some motivation to feel like, “Oh, now student Billy Bob can be eligible for the national championship game for baseball because I happened to find a credit that hadn’t been claimed.” And looking back on that, that sounds ridiculous, but that was a big deal. So I think I kind of fell more and more into it and deeper and deeper into it because it was reinforced by my... We were having some success with what we were doing in terms of our service, structure, and support.

She did earn her way into her supervisor's trust and has been promoted several times since then because of that and her continued commitment and value to the organization.

Job Opportunities

Many of the women in this study talked about various job opportunities that they did or did not take advantage of throughout their careers. For example, Jennifer only applied for her first job. Since then, others have approached her with job opportunities.

She said,

I was at [my first university] for 18 months and was approached by someone at [another university], who said, "I would like to hire you in a position greater than the one you have now." Went there, took the job, then left within 8 months when I was offered an AD position running in my own compliance job at [another university]. Then I worked [there] for four years and then was pursued by [another university] to take on a job with them. So each of the jobs...I applied for my first job and that was pretty much it. The rest of them have just been I've worked hard, people have noticed, and I've been given opportunities.

When she took those opportunities, the things that factored into those decisions were the opportunities for growth, the people, and sometimes location. Again, she is "picky" and it needs to be the right fit. In general, she said,

When I'm approached about an opportunity, and like I said, typically that's what it is, when I'm approached about an opportunity, I evaluate it based on is it something I'm going to be able to learn and grow in? Is it something that's going to challenge me? Or is it just something that's going to be what I'm doing now? And so, with each move I've taken on additional responsibility, and it's always been about getting better and growth.

For Michelle, taking advantage of an opportunity is what first got her into intercollegiate athletics administration. She said,

Now my former boss, who is the Director of Academic Services at [my alma mater], had called...and I had worked with him as a student-athlete a bit. And

they had said, “We have a position open as an academic counselor here. Is it something that you might be interested in?” And I never in a million years thought about going into college athletics. And I certainly didn’t think about going back to [my alma mater], because I loved {my alma mater}; don’t get me wrong. I love it. But once I graduated, I thought, “OK. I want to be in a big city again. I don’t want to go to a small town.” But when he talked about the role, I thought that it would be really fun to get to work with student-athletes and just be on the flipside of it. Having been in their shoes and dealt with some of their struggles and ups and downs, to now be in a position to say, “OK. I’ve been there. This is how I can help you get through it, or this is how I can help put you in the right direction,” or just to be a resource to make their collegiate experience better was really appealing. So I thought, “Yeah, that sounds like a really cool job.” So I jumped at that opportunity.

She said that she loved that job, but did not end up staying in it because she wanted to explore other areas of athletics administration, rather than being stuck in a “destination job.”

Kate also took advantage of a job opportunity without necessarily seeking it out on her own. She said,

I got a call about the job [here]. And I was open to [it] because I always wanted to be an AD... And [someone] said to me, “Kate, you have to look at this job.” He’s like, “You’ve always said you wanted the best of the best.” He’s like, “There’s probably not anywhere better. You need to at least talk to them.” [The former AD] laughed; he said he looked around everywhere and he offered it to everyone to take it. And then he laughed and said I’m the only one young and stupid enough. So maybe I was just young and stupid enough where you just put your head down and do the work. And by the time you look up, you survived. They always knew I wanted to be an AD. They knew that was part of the reason why I wanted to come down here. And I think why I kept getting more opportunity was because I had always said, from the get-go, this is what I want. And if I did what we agreed upon, they would keep doing that and other opportunities that would come along.

More opportunities have come along that she has also taken advantage of and, though she is not an AD yet, she is highly ranked within her organization and respected in her field.

These are only a few of the examples of the women in this study taking advantage of

opportunities, but demonstrate that taking advantage of opportunities is something that can help shape women's career trajectories.

Discussion of Taking Advantage of Opportunities

Again, the women in this study provided many examples of taking advantage of opportunities at various stages of their careers. These included opportunities in relation to professional development, opportunities that stemmed from major infractions cases and other major issues, as well as opportunities for new jobs. Some opportunities were self-created in that they sought out the opportunities by voicing their goals to the right people, whether it was letting a supervisor know that they wanted to attend a professional development event, letting a colleague know that they were looking for a new job, or attending an event out of their own volition. This relates to the idea of planned happenstance, whereby individuals take an active role in creating opportunities that have the potential to create chance encounters with people or knowledge (Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999).

Some opportunities came out of need, such as those stemming from major infractions cases and other departmental issues. Sometimes the needs dictated having more staff to handle the issues, opening up positions for the taking. Sometimes the needs called for learning new things and developing new skills. Often, the needs required long hours of hard work and sacrifice of any sort of personal life. The hard work that they put in to mastering new information and skills resulted in increased human capital and proving of their abilities as athletics administration professionals, which then often led to

more opportunities – typically in the form of advancement or another job opportunity. Whatever the opportunity, the women had to make a decision and take action toward that decision, which will be discussed more in the next section.

CAREER DECISION-MAKING

All of the aforementioned themes and subthemes come together to create an environment within which these women have made and continue to make decisions. Some of the decisions and actions taken have been addressed periodically throughout the previous sections and the accompanying examples. The women in this study have had goals, both personal and professional, and moving toward those goals has required making decisions and taking action to make their goals reality. When their goals changed, they made decisions and took action toward the new goals. Given new circumstances, some goals are continuing to change and decisions are still being made.

Pursuing Jobs

The majority of the women in this study took action to pursue this career field and jobs within it. For example, Kris had originally gone to college thinking she would become a doctor, so she majored in Biology, pre-med. Inspired by the 1999 Women's World Cup and uninspired by another eight years to become a doctor, she decided to go into athletics as a profession. She said,

I had gone to school the previous three years there and I had just gone to games as a fan. I didn't really think about working in that avenue. I was going to get a premed degree. But then I decided that I didn't want to go eight more years of school to be a doctor. So I decided I wanted to go into athletics.

When she graduated, because of her circumstances of not having much experience aside from a student manager position, she took action by applying for internships to get her foot in the door. Amanda also pursued an internship, despite low pay, to get her foot in the door following her graduation from college. In addition, she took action to get the job that she has now. She said,

I knew I wanted to be closer to my parents and I wanted to be at a school that had a Division I football program, because I hadn't had that yet. Since I was in college, I definitely wanted to have that experience. I think it's key to progress up the ladder in [my area]. I just hadn't been exposed to that and what all it involved. So I felt that that was something I needed to have on my résumé in order to continue to move up. I started looking. I applied for a few things. Then I saw this job and I was like, "Oh, I'm going to apply for it." So I got all my stuff ready and then the next day the job was down. And I was like, "Oh, no!" So I emailed the guy that was doing the hiring. I was like, "I didn't know it was coming out." The next day he called me. We did a phone interview. And then the next week I was coming up here for an interview. I don't know. It was just kind of fate, because I hadn't been applying to a lot that long and hadn't had any interviews anywhere else. I had a couple of phone interviews, but that's it. I came here and interviewed and loved it. And he offered me the job, and so I packed up and came. It was a lot more money than I was making [where I was] and it was a cheaper cost of living. And it was halfway between my parents, so it was kind of a no-brainer.

A combination of having a goal, taking action, some happenstance, and opportunity resulted in her getting the job she wanted.

Rebecca talked about how she took action to get a job. She said,

I've always been really independent. I was raised independent. I was an only child growing up. And so, I wanted to explore other places other than Texas. [At that time], there were not a lot of females running athletic departments, or universities, or anything else. I really felt like I needed to have a different experience to build my résumé and to build my background. So I started looking for opportunities on the east coast... It was kind of weird. Back in the day, they used to print the NCAA News. This was all before anything online. You'd have to imagine it, if you can. It was a weekly paper that you got. They had job postings in the back. I applied for the job. It was one of the first jobs

I'd ever applied for out of the NCAA News. I applied for the job. And they called and asked me to come interview. So I went out there and I interviewed. The SWA, the Senior Associate AD out there at the time had actually been a coach before she got into administration. She had been the head coach at [a university in Texas]. So she was familiar with Texas. I didn't know her, but she knew enough people to call that knew me and was able to get good references on me that way. So they called and I came out and interviewed for a couple days. Loved it. Wanted to move to [that city] in a heartbeat. They called a couple days later and offered me the job. That's a very old-school way of getting a job in athletics, for sure.

With a combination of having a goal, taking action, people knowing her, and being given the opportunity, she was able to accomplish her goal of getting a job on the east coast.

Courtney discussed how she got to her first position after college. She had worked part-time in athletics during her whole time in college in media relations. She said,

When I saw the post I was like, "It's everything I do and it's no more writing. I don't have to be the last person at the event anymore." All about that. So I called the number on the bottom. It was [someone else who was running the office] at the time. I swear she didn't exist. I called her and called her. She never answered her phone. I left a million messages. And when I finally talked to her, I was like, "I am willing to move out here for free." But she didn't believe me. She was like, "Are you sure?" I was like, "I'm coming."

Courtney was not the only one who got a job by offering to do it for free. Yvonne did that as well with her first coaching job. She said,

I remember going over to [the university in the city I was living in]'s campus to their HR department just for a job. Didn't matter; just needed a job. I remembered thinking to myself, "Let me just go over to the basketball office and see if they need some help. I did that. I remember sitting out in the lobby area of the basketball programs. I remember looking at the nameplates on the front of the coaches' offices. At that time, the men's basketball offices were next to the women's, the head coaches were... I remember sitting there thinking, "What am I doing here? There's no way I'm going to work in an area with [this reknowned coach]," just thinking I wasn't good enough, I guess. I don't know if that was my word, but I was just so young and didn't know. Anyways, the head coach was in her office talking to someone. It was just taking them a little while and they

didn't know I was out there, so I didn't interrupt them. I was getting ready to get up and the head coach comes out and says, "Hey! Can I help you?" I'm like, "Yeah. I was just coming over to see if you guys needed help with anything." She's like, "You know what? We're going to have practice on whatever day. Why don't you come by and see it?" I was just like, "Sure!" So I do that. At the end of practice she calls me down to the court and says, "This is Yvonne ...". They were preparing to go to Europe for their foreign tour. And so, I left it at that, no big deal. She's like, "I'll talk to you later." So all I was thinking about was just volunteering my time. I wasn't thinking about getting hired. So while they are in Europe, they won a game or something. I wrote her a note and said congratulations. I thanked her for letting me come to practice and I said, "Congratulations on your win." Unbeknownst to me, she was huge on thank you notes. And no one taught me thank you notes. Now they tell you that all the time: Write a thank you note. But I never knew that. I just was polite. My mom taught me to be polite. So I just thanked her. She called me and said, "I appreciate what you did. I have an opening. Send me your résumé and we'll go from there." She said, "Don't even worry about typing it. Write it out and give it to me." I didn't have much experience anyway, so it wasn't much to write. I did that and she hired me. All because I said thank you. And I presented myself well. I wasn't bogarting her, trying to just fight my way in. I was just like, "Can I do this?" And the other thing was she was big on volunteers. So she said, "For you to offer to volunteer your time..." meant something to her. So volunteering and saying thank you was huge to her. So that's how I got my start in coaching.

These examples show how the women took action toward the decisions they made and with a combination of that and other factors, were able to get where they wanted to go. Not all action ended with desired results, however. While Alice loves her job, she does have a goal to oversee a different area of athletics. When a job opened up, she applied for it. She said,

There was a Senior Associate AD position that opened up after the new administration took over. It was for [the area I want to get into]. I really was intrigued by that. But, again, no experience. All my experience had been in [this area]. And I really felt like I could do the job, but I didn't know the new staff at all. So they didn't know my work ethic. They didn't know anything about me. Then there was another job that opened up a year after that and I toyed with the idea. The Senior Woman Administrator job opened up... I don't know. I realized I was better suited for the one that I didn't even get an interview for that I had applied for. And by then I knew enough that I was like, "They know me well

enough. If they think I could do the job, they would ask me to apply.” So when they didn’t, I didn’t even bother to apply.

The experience of not even getting an interview for the job she wanted was “disappointing” for Alice and led her to opt out of applying for other positions. The experience reinforced for her that she did not have the right kind of experience, even if she felt she was qualified for the position. Given that she is also limiting herself geographically because of other life circumstances – having aging parents to take care of – she feels “stuck” in her career.

Though results did not always end up as desired, these women did take action toward their goals. Within their particular circumstances – context, opportunities, and constraints – the women have made decisions regarding their careers and took action based upon those decisions. The decisions do not seem to ever really end, however. Instead, it seems that the women are continuously reevaluating their circumstances and priorities, and then making decisions. Some of those decisions are still being processed.

Ongoing Negotiations

As life and work circumstances have changed over time, the women in this study have had to make ongoing negotiations in regard to what they want for themselves, what decisions they are going to make, and what actions they will take. Various factors are contributing to these ongoing negotiations, including partner and parental status, whether they have aging parents to care for, and the changing climate of intercollegiate athletics. Some examples have been provided in previous sections that demonstrate this, but more will be given here.

With all the changes in the NCAA and intercollegiate athletics as a whole, Kris has thought about how that is going to affect her and if she is going to do anything different in her career. She said,

I'm not going to panic right now. Some people maybe, I don't know if they will or not, try to make sure they are working on certain sports – football, men's basketball. That's all well and fine if they want to do that. I've always supported our women's athletes, our women's sports. That's kind of what I've built my whole career doing, trying to advance that, advance women's sports in the limelight, on TV. We have so many games on TV now for all of our sports. It's great, the exposure that we get nationwide. I mean I might live and die by that, but I'm staying with what I'm doing right now.

Even with the uncertainty that faces those in the profession, because she is so interested in, passionate about, and committed to what she is doing, she does not want to change that.

Though it is not the case for all mothers in this study, some of the women who have become mothers are reevaluating what they want to do in regard to their careers while doing the best they can to raise their children well. For example, Michelle is still “struggling” with finding balance between work and home and sometimes wonders if she is doing right by her family. Because of the nature of her work, not being able to “shut it off” and feeling that it is “constant,” she feels as though she is unable to commit all of herself to her husband and child the way that she wants to, but recognizes that she is able to provide financially for her family with her career, which also helps them. As previously discussed, the changes within intercollegiate athletics may change her mind to stay in her career if she either gets pushed out because there is no longer a place for her or decides that her values do not align enough anymore.

Melissa is also constantly reevaluating her career aspirations and what she wants for her family life. When asked about her career goals, she said, “I’m very much at kind of a day-to-day, week-to-week kind of thing, because it’s nice to daydream about the option of being a mom full-time. So I don’t really have a great aspiration to be president of the NCAA or anything like that.” When asked if she did want that at one point, she said,

No. But I thought I wanted to be maybe an athletics director or, I don’t know, the [supervisor of this area] or whatever. But I don’t know if that’s because that’s what everybody has always told me to do or if that’s what I wanted... I don’t ever want to be in the position to be expected to be up at 4 AM and spending my whole weekend working. While I don’t necessarily think it has to be like that, it’s also not an act I want to follow. I don’t know. Maybe I’ll change my mind when [my child] gets older. I don’t know. But this institution is undergoing so many changes right now anyway, maybe it’s time to make some shifts. But I don’t think things have to necessarily be done the way that they’re done. I know there’s a rhyme or reason to it, but I think we could make improvements. I don’t think we’re at a point where we can do that without ruffling too many feathers. So I don’t really even think about the “if I were in charge” kind of thing anymore.

These examples show how the women are continuously reevaluating their circumstances and making decisions about their careers.

Discussion of Career Decision-Making

It is apparent that the women in this study took an active role in creating their career paths. In addition to individual interests, person-environment fit, and taking advantage of opportunities, these women have made decisions regarding their career and then have taken action toward those decisions. As demonstrated by multiple examples, the women actively pursued roles. Though elements of fate or happenstance were acknowledged, it was their own actions that produced results. Even when it appeared that

fate may have closed the door, they still pushed through the door with their own behaviors (e.g., calling about a job repeatedly, missing a window for application and following up, or “bothering” people until results were achieved). In the cases that the women were sought out for a position, rather than seeking themselves, they still made a choice to pursue the position presented to them and considered various factors involved, including location and opportunity to grow professionally.

The women are not finished shaping their life and career paths, but instead are constantly negotiating their decisions based on both internal and external factors. As their circumstances in life and in work continue to change, they are encountering new decision points. Multiple elements are being considered at each of these points, including their connection to and needs of their partners, how they see themselves being the best parents they can for any children present, concern for aging parents, and the changes being made within the profession as a whole. The decisions that they make and the actions they take at each decision point will continue to shape the trajectories of their lives and careers.

These ideas are reminiscent of Hodkinson and Sparks’s (1997) theory of careership, which combines macro- and meso-level forces with individual choice. In addition, the theory aims to merge opportunity structures with personal preferences in order to integrate happenstance or serendipity into the process of career decision-making. The theory suggests that people make decisions within their own horizon for action, which means “the arena within which actions can be taken and decisions made” (p. 34). These horizons for action are influenced by habitus and opportunity structures, which

they view as being interrelated elements. Within one's horizon, she will make "pragmatically rational decisions" (p. 36) and these decisions continue to be renegotiated and made at each turning point. These ideas were visible in these women's stories and seem somewhat similar to the life course perspective, which also considers multiple levels of forces.

SUMMARY DISCUSSION OF HUMAN AGENCY

The subthemes identified within the broader theme of human agency include individual interests, person-environment fit, taking advantage of opportunities, and career decision-making. Through initial interests, aptitudes, and experiences, the women in this study selected themselves into a career in intercollegiate athletics administration. It was not by accident that they entered this profession. Within the first subtheme, the exposure to and love for sport, desire to work with college students and/or in education, and administrative interests were all elements that led them to choose this as a career. They were also all elements that created a good person-job fit, which contributed to not only their decisions to pursue the career field, but also their decisions to stay in the profession. Another part of the person-environment fit was their fit with their respective organizations. Where good matches between the individual and the organization existed, the women were drawn to them and more inclined to stay loyal to them. Contrastingly, where there was not a sense of a good fit, the women either chose not to take a position or chose to leave the organization to go somewhere else. As long as the women continue to feel as though working in this field aligns with their values and personalities, they are

likely to choose to stay in them, although other personal context considerations will play into those ongoing decisions.

The women took an active role in their career trajectories by creating and/or responding to happenstance situations, where opportunities existed for the taking. The results did not happen to them, but instead they then took action to take advantage of those opportunities to create results. They pursued professional development opportunities that helped them increase their human and social capital, which in turn provided more opportunities. In addition, the circumstances accompanying major infractions cases and other departmental issues provided a context within which they could step up, work hard, and increase their value to their organizations and professional field by learning and honing new knowledge and skills. The women also took advantage of job opportunities that presented themselves if it felt like a good person-environment fit.

The women made decisions regarding their careers and took action toward their goals. They actively pursued the jobs that they wanted, even when faced with barriers. As time passes and life and career circumstances change, the women continue to make decisions regarding their careers while considering multiple factors, or in their horizons for action. The ways these women have made decisions in their careers seem to be similar to Manieiro and Sullivan's (2005) kaleidoscope model in that they are not separated from context, but elements of life may be shifted based upon what fits best at the particular time of their lives. The kaleidoscope metaphor illustrates how different components of a woman's overall context, including her life and career stages, social

relationships, and the salience of each of the elements described combine to influence her career decisions during different parts of her life.

The data from this study demonstrate how different aspects of a woman's personal circumstances combine to provide a context within which she can exercise human agency by using her personal characteristics to select a fitting career environment, taking advantage of opportunities, and making and following through on decisions. Her context will depend on various factors as outlined by the life course perspective: placement in historical times, timing of human life, linked or connected lives, and her personal human agency.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways in which women's personal and professional experiences have influenced the decisions they have made regarding their careers while considering the context within which they live their lives. Qualitative methods, including a life/career mapping technique and conversational interviews were used to collect data regarding women's lived experiences. Results demonstrate that there are multiple levels of forces at work in creating the context within which women make choices in their careers. Instead of controlling for what might be considered contaminating variables (Sweet & Moen, 2006), it is important to consider these contextual elements as important pieces that contribute to molding and shaping women's career trajectories. This study examined women's career trajectories within the profession of intercollegiate athletics administration with a multifocal lens, using the life course perspective as a guiding framework.

The four themes of the life course perspective – life and historical times, timing of lives, linked lives, and human agency (Elder, 1994) – all played a role in these women's lives in meaningful ways that influenced their experiences and their choices. It would be unwise to assume that any one of these elements can be considered as completely separate, as each influences the other to create a multidimensional and complex combination of conditions within which individuals live their lives. Individuals are both influenced by and impart influence upon their surrounding environments in a reciprocal fashion.

CONTRIBUTIONS

This study adds to the current knowledge base in this area of research. Previous research on this topic has provided invaluable contributions to our knowledge regarding factors that prevent women from reaching the highest levels of intercollegiate athletics administration. To date, however, there is a paucity of research that addresses the issue from a multilevel perspective. Most studies thus far have focused on individual, organizational, or societal factors that limit women from the athletic director seat. It is important to recognize that none of these factors is the sole reason for the lack of female presence in those top positions, and it is also important to acknowledge that these factors cannot be completely isolated from the others. They interact with one another to create the context within which human beings live their lives, which is why it is crucial to examine the problem from multiple levels to gain a better understanding.

The life course perspective is a framework that allows for the consideration of various elements, including historical context, social timing, connections with others, and personal action. As such, it provides a multifocal lens through which to view human lives and careers. A challenge that accompanied the use the life course perspective as a guiding framework was that it is very difficult to isolate any one theme completely, as they overlap and influence each other. This makes for a somewhat artificial separation of interrelated parts, similar to what is described in the theory of careership (Hodkinson & Sparks, 1997). Placement in historical times can impact social timing, which can impact the people with whom one connects. All of these different pieces of personal circumstances then create a context in which people make decisions and take action.

Decisions and actions in turn can influence the other themes. All of the factors come together to shape life and career trajectories. While a challenge in terms of coding and analyzing qualitative data, this is also a strength of the framework, as it does actually take multiple factors into consideration.

The present study adds to the existing knowledge base in this area by using this multilevel framework to examine the issue of women's underrepresentation in intercollegiate athletics administration. The design of the study allowed for a deeper and more nuanced examination of the ways in which women's career trajectories are constructed and shaped throughout the life course. The analysis spanned multiple levels of analysis and illuminated the multifaceted contextual elements that mold women's career paths in intercollegiate athletics administration. Results from this study show that there are indeed many elements at play that shape women's experiences and decisions regarding their careers in this field of work. This research provides a more comprehensive view of the ways in which those elements can serve as turning or decision points in their lives and careers.

This research has demonstrated that placement in historical time, or temporal context, plays a critical role in women's careers in athletics administration. Without the societal shifts that have occurred over time and the pieces of legislation that have passed that have given women more opportunities and freedoms, it would not be possible for women to pursue a profession in a male-dominated career field such as athletics. It will be interesting to see what cohort effects emerge in the coming decades as societal norms and gender expectations continue to shift toward equality and acceptance of life choices

that were not real options in prior generations. It also remains to be seen how current changes within the specific environment of intercollegiate athletics will affect opportunities to work in the field and whether the work associated with athletics administration will still be appealing to women if it no longer fits with their value systems.

Temporal progression in terms of historical context has impacted social timing of lives as well, giving women fewer constraints on how they can choose to live their lives. The existence of a wide array of birth control options, including the birth control pill and the right to obtain a legal abortion, that stemmed from legislation decades ago is still seen as having a major impact on women's lives today. Women can now choose if, when, and how they want to be mothers, allowing them the option to take time to establish careers and/or partnerships first. This is very different from what was expected of women in the mid-twentieth century and liberates women to be more able to live the lives they choose. This is also very important in regard to pursuing a career in intercollegiate athletics administration because, though there is no set lock-step pattern to women's careers in this field, there does seem to be a benefit to getting into the profession "on-time" so as not to have to feel behind or in need of catching up. It seems especially important for women to have fortuitous timing in terms of their career opportunities and actions in order to progress upwardly in their careers.

Timing issues also come into play when women in the profession become mothers. The women in this study who gave birth to children took anywhere from two weeks to several months off of work for maternity leave. Although the women in this

study felt very supported by their supervisors when becoming mothers and needing to take time off, they were also fairly well established in their careers at those times. It was not in the scope of this study to examine the experiences of women who were new in the field during their entry into motherhood and none of the women in this study were in the beginning stages of their careers when they became mothers. It is unknown how this aspect of the intersection of personal life and career might affect such a population. If women choose to take an off-ramp (Hewlett & Luce, 2005) from their careers to care for young children or for other personal reasons, such as caring for aging parents, however, it may be difficult for them to get back on their previously desired paths – that is if they still desire them. Many of the women in this study experienced shifts in their priorities and consequently their career goals after going through life changes, such as entry to motherhood or experiencing the illness or death of loved ones, indicating that goals can change based on life circumstances.

The changes in social norms for gender roles are of great import as well, especially as women enter motherhood or have other familial obligations. Now that men are starting to take more responsibility in the domestic domain – some even being stay-at-home dads, women are becoming more and more able to actively pursue careers outside the home. This is especially crucial in a highly competitive, time demanding, and male-dominated profession like athletics administration. Not only are women establishing careers, but their spouses are also even sacrificing their own careers to support them in their pursuits. This would not have been in the average woman's realm of possibilities in previous generations. These are some of the interesting ways this study has shown that

the multifaceted aspects of human lives intersect with the broader historical and social context within which they exist.

IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study have implications and uses for various groups, including women who work or aspire to work in this career field, those who are in positions to hire new administrators, career counselors or coaches, mentors, and researchers. This research can be used to help women navigate the terrain of intercollegiate athletics administration by alerting them to both inside and outside factors that can expand and contract their horizons of opportunity within the profession. Guidance for women who desire a career in athletics administration should be tailored to the individual, as each woman may have different goals and circumstances. There are particular suggestions that would be more universally helpful, however.

Women in the Profession

One suggestion for women who want to establish and maintain a successful career in intercollegiate athletics administration would be to establish a network of other men and women in the profession. Because intercollegiate athletics is such a “small world,” building positive professional relationships with others in the field, especially those with power or influence, can be extremely beneficial when seeking a new position. If possible, women should seek a mentor/protégé relationship that best fits their own individual goals, as mentors can help give exposure to new types of responsibilities or

areas of athletics, guide and give advice, serve as role models, broaden network connections, and advocate for their protégés.

Another suggestion would be to seek and take advantage of any opportunity to learn new skills and develop professionally. Building social and human capital by doing these few things can enhance confidence and self-efficacy, while opening doors to new possibilities. If possible, women should try to enter the profession early on in their working lives. Though it is feasible to enter later, there seems to be a benefit to getting in early to be able to develop knowledge, skills, and social connections that will help in career advancement. Once in the profession, it would be beneficial to gain experience in different realms of athletics administration to better understand the overall functioning of an athletics program. Springboards to higher level positions can include experience with men's sports, especially revenue-generating sports such as football and basketball, experience with fundraising, and experience with compliance.

Those Who Hire

Those who have the power to hire new administrators would benefit from the knowledge gained from this research, as it provides insight into what supervisors, leaders, and mentors can do to help support women in this profession in ways that can help foster loyalty to the organization rather than inducing turnover and losing valuable human assets. A suggestion for those who hire for their organization would first be to be mindful of their own biases. Because people tend to hire others like themselves, thus perpetuating a lack of diversity in organizations (Grappendorf & Lough, 2006), those in

the position to hire need to be able to recognize this tendency and avoid hiring people solely for that reason. They should also make sure they understand the benefits of diversity and actively recruit applicants that will add to their organizations' effectiveness by bringing in new ways of thinking and solving problems (Catalyst, 2013; Herring, 2009; Surowiecki, 2005). Also, those in the position to hire new administrators should actively recruit more talented women to bring them into the field of work early on in their career paths to help them get their feet in the door to make connections and build the necessary human and social capital to succeed in the profession. In addition to recruiting a diverse work force, it is essential that the leaders of organizations create an inclusive culture that makes people with different backgrounds feel welcome and valued in the organization, as inclusive leadership is associated with better employee and organizational outcomes (Catalyst, 2013).

Leaders and Supervisors

Organizational leaders and supervisors should also understand and support employees' personal life circumstances as well. Especially when employees are parents or are taking care of their own aging parents, flexibility in work arrangements are key. Work-family policies should be modified to accommodate these types of needs that women often face, including flexible work schedules and telecommuting options when possible. Though the nature of the work these women do often requires long hours, there is often some work that can be done remotely without being physically present in the office, so having flexible arrangements as options would be highly beneficial.

Organizational leaders and supervisors should make best efforts to reduce the stigma attached to taking advantage of these types of accommodations as well – for both women and men. In addition, there needs to be more of an openness to non-linear career trajectories, so that if a woman needs to take an off-ramp from her career to tend to family by taking a leave of absence or reducing her status to part-time, she can still have a viable on-ramp available to her to be able to reestablish her career when she is ready (Hewlett & Luce, 2005).

Career Counselors and Mentors

Career counselors and mentors can use the information from this study to help their clients and protégés develop adaptive strategies to successfully manage multiple roles and attain their professional and personal goals. These groups of supports should always keep the goals of the individual in mind and recognize that goals can change based on contextual elements. Career counselors and mentors might consider incorporating Savickas's (2009) life design methods into their interactions with their clients or protégés by incorporating the women's context into their methods and helping them recognize how contextual elements have intersected with and influenced their individual experiences. Ideally, strategies can be utilized in a preventive manner, rather than only in reaction to surfacing issues, which will aid in the individuals' ability to plan for and adapt to changing circumstances (Savickas, 2009), as chance favors the prepared. These career guides should also encourage the use of planned happenstance, whereby the

individual will seek out opportunities that can lead to chance encounters that can potentially enhance their careers (Bandura, 1982; Hodkinson & Sparks, 2007).

Researchers

Finally, researchers can use this study as a springboard to further the knowledge in this area of inquiry and continue to build upon existing literature. More research is needed to better understand the career development of women from a holistic and multilevel perspective, especially in male-dominated fields such as athletics. Longitudinal, qualitative research that follows women's choices and trajectories over time would be especially enlightening. In addition, it would be interesting to gain a male perspective on the issue of women's underrepresentation in intercollegiate athletics administration. As came through in this study, men inside and outside of the women's work seemed to be very supportive of their advancement. Perhaps this is a signal that men welcome change in the athletics environment, and maybe also in social roles. Perhaps male administrators also want to have more work-life balance, flexible work arrangements, and more involvement in the home. To date, a male point of view on this issue has not been established. As time moves forward and different social arrangements are becoming more accepted, this could be an important element to gauge.

LIMITATIONS

A limitation of this study is that the sample used is not representative of all female intercollegiate athletics administrators in the United States and cannot be generalized as

such. Though some of the women who participated in this study have lived and worked in other parts of the country at various points in their careers, they all currently live and work in a particular region that is, politically speaking, “red” and, geographically located in the South. As was mentioned in the literature review, this macro-level factor may have implications for the women working in this profession. As Acosta and Carpenter (2014) reported, states with more conservative political climates (i.e., red states) do not have as much of a female presence in intercollegiate athletics administration than states with more liberal climates (i.e., blue states). There is also a difference when considering geographic region. This study’s sample was pulled from the southern region of the country, which has the lowest level of female representation in the athletic director, associate athletic director, and assistant athletic director titles.

CLOSING REMARKS

Much of the research in this area seems to assume that the ultimate goal for those in this profession is to be an athletic director. This is not the case and it is important to remember that. Though many do aspire to that kind of role, many also do not. Some aspire to be Senior Woman Administrators, which often means being in one of the titles considered to be in the “pipeline” to the AD seat, such as Associate or Assistant AD. Some are happy being in positions lower than that, even in those seen as “destination jobs” or “dead-ends” in the athletics world. This is likely due to the lifestyle that is associated with being an AD – the long hours, high level of responsibility and visibility,

and need to essentially be on call and ready to address any issues or needs that arise at all times.

As it stands currently, being an AD (especially at a Division I-FBS institution) is not thought of as a role that is conducive to having a life outside of work – whether that involves having a family, a spouse or partner, or simply a hobby. Perhaps this will shift as time moves forward and gender roles continue to morph in the social and family realms. Perhaps the culture or nature of the job will change as new legislation affects the way intercollegiate athletics programs operate. Perhaps they will not. For now, organizations need to do the best they can to provide equal access to those higher-level positions in addition to other desired positions within the athletics administration structure to all interested and able, regardless of whether they are male or female, and make sure that the pursuit of those jobs is actually a fair choice.

In order to do this, those who run these organizations need to modify the existing culture to be accommodating to and inclusive of women. This would entail actions, such as encouraging both women and men to live balanced lives, encouraging new parents to take adequate maternity and paternity leave to tend to new children without judgment or penalty, and allowing for flexible scheduling and telecommuting when feasible. Ideally, these types of actions would be modeled at the top of the organization, so that they could more easily trickle down. If these types of practices are implemented, athletics administration would be a more attractive and realistic career for women to have and the representation of women in the athletics administration career field would likely increase.

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Intro to Interview

Thank you again for participating in my study. As was mentioned in the consent form, my goal here is to understand how women's personal and professional experiences influence their careers, so I will be asking you about things you indicated as being of significance to you in your own career journey in addition to some other questions along the same lines. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

Turn on audio recorder.

Interview Questions

1. You had indicated that _____ was significant on your life/career map. Could you tell me why you think that event was significant and how it affected your life or career? (Repeated for various events – both listed and circled)
2. (Surrounding event) At that time in your life, were there any other people who were significant to you personally or professionally that impacted your decisions regarding your career? Who, how, why? *Note or ask about marital/partner/family status at each point.*
3. (Regarding career movement) *Note what is indicated on map.* Tell me about the factors that helped you move [up/in another direction/out] in your career.
4. *If mentors mentioned:* What kinds of things did your mentor do or not do to help you in your career/professional development? In your opinion, what should a mentor do to help develop their mentees?
5. Were there any supports or barriers within your career/personal life that have not yet been mentioned? *Ask to explain.*
6. *Note DI-FBS status of institution.* How, if at all, has football impacted your career?
7. What is your ultimate career goal at this point?
8. What kinds of experience do you think you would need to reach that goal?
9. Do you think your current organizational structure is amenable to the movement/changes you would like to make in your career? Why/why not?
10. Do you think your current life structure amenable the movement/changes you would like to make in your career? Why/why not?
11. What are your personal (non-work) goals at this point?
12. Is your current work situation amenable to the movement/changes you would like to make in your personal life? Why/why not?
13. Can you tell me about how you think being in your particular cohort may have affected your career or your life? How do you think your experience differs from that of your mother and/or grandmother?
14. Is there anything else you would like to mention before we finish?

Appendix B: Consent Form

IRB USE ONLY

Study Number: 2013-09-0089

Approval Date: 12/08/2014

Expires: 12/07/2015

Funding Source: N/A

Consent for Participation in Research

Title: Understanding Career Trajectories of Mid-Career Female Athletic Administrators

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. The person performing the research will answer any of your questions. Read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to be involved in this study, this form will be used to record your consent.

Purpose of the Study

You have been asked to participate in a research study about the career trajectories of women in intercollegiate athletics administration. The purpose of this study is to examine the ways in which women's personal and professional life experiences influence the choices they make regarding their sport administration careers over time.

What will you be asked to do?

- You will be asked to complete a life/career map to collect a version of your life history calendar.
- You will be asked to participate in an audio recorded interview to provide insight about your personal and professional experiences that influenced your career in athletics.
- This study will take approximately 2 hours in total to complete.

What are the risks involved in this study?

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, the researcher hopes that the findings of this study will provide best practice strategies for the development of women's careers within intercollegiate athletics administration.

Do you have to participate?

No, your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate at all or, if you start the study, you may withdraw at any time. Withdrawal or refusing to participate will not affect your relationship with The University of Texas at Austin (University) in anyway.

Will there be any compensation?

You will not receive any type of payment participating in this study.

What are my confidentiality or privacy protections when participating in this research study?

This study is confidential. Your identity will be protected in three ways. First, interview audio files will be immediately uploaded to a password-protected computer, in a password-protected file. Second, in any future write-ups, names will be changed so that readers will not know the identity of the interviewee. Finally, the key for the aliases will be kept in a locked

file. Original, subject identifiable data (e.g., master key and signed consent forms) will be destroyed after one year.

If it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review the study records, information that can be linked to you will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order. The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate it with you, or with your participation in any study.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only the research team will have access to the recordings. The data resulting from your participation may be used for future research or be made available to other researchers for research purposes not detailed within this consent form.

Whom to contact with questions about the study?

Prior, during or after your participation you can contact the researcher, Ally Hartzell at (512) 350-4506 or send an email to allyson.hartzell@gmail.com.

This study has been reviewed and approved by The University Institutional Review Board and the study number is 2013-09-0089.

Whom to contact with questions concerning your rights as a research participant?

For questions about your rights or any dissatisfaction with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at (512) 471-8871 or email at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Participation

If you would like to participate, please sign this form and return it to Ally Hartzell via email (allyson.hartzell@gmail.com) or in person. A copy will be provided only by request.

Signature

You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this form (if requested). You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, procedures, benefits, and the risks involved in this research study.

Print Name of Person obtaining consent

Signature of Person obtaining consent

Date

Appendix C: Instructions for Completing Life/Career Map

Life-Career Mapping Background to Individual Interviews

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study about life and career trajectories for female athletics administrators. Before our interview, I would like you to think about your life and career and prepare a “life map” for us to discuss at your interview.

Begin with your first job or internship after college and use the template to create a timeline of significant career and life events that have brought you to your career and life status as of today.

At the top of the map, please circle any of the listed social events that you believe were important to your personal career journey. A section for additional social events is provided for you to write in any other events that were of importance to you.

In the lower section, labeled “Social Meaning,” please write in any occurrences that impacted your career journey and place them either higher or lower to indicate how meaningful they were to your career path. For instance, you will want to highlight such things as: promotions, job changes (e.g., being laid off, resigning, or making lateral moves), family status changes (e.g., romantic commitments, partnerships, marriage, childbearing, adoption, death, divorce or separation), or anything else that seems important to you. Surrounding these events, please think about the situation itself and the circumstances leading to the actual event, the outcome of the event, and how that changed or altered career or life trajectories. In addition, think about the people involved and their influence on the event and its outcome.

Appendix E: List of Division I-FBS Institutions in Texas

| Institution | Conference | City |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Baylor University | Big 12 Conference | Waco |
| Rice University | Conference USA | Houston |
| Southern Methodist University | American Athletic Conference | Dallas |
| Texas A&M University | Southeastern Conference | College Station |
| Texas Christian University | Big 12 Conference | Fort Worth |
| Texas State University | Sun Belt Conference | San Marcos |
| Texas Tech University | Big 12 Conference | Lubbock |
| University of Houston | American Athletic Conference | Houston |
| University of North Texas | Conference USA | Denton |
| University of Texas - Austin | Big 12 Conference | Austin |
| University of Texas - El Paso | Conference USA | El Paso |
| University of Texas - San Antonio | Conference USA | San Antonio |

Appendix F: Recruitment Email

Dear _____,

My name is Allyson (Ally) Hartzell and I am a PhD student in Sport Management working under Dr. Marlene Dixon at the University of Texas at Austin. I am conducting a research study for my dissertation that examines the ways in which women's personal and professional experiences affect their career trajectories, for which I am seeking participants who are female administrative employees in intercollegiate athletics programs with at least eight years of experience in the field. I am contacting you because you were identified as someone who meets the criteria for the study.

Participation in this study involves completing a life/career map and then being interviewed in a conversational manner. For both of these parts, you would be asked to reflect upon your personal and professional experiences from the start of your career in athletics until the time of your participation in the study. Participation would take approximately two hours of your time in total – part for the completion of the life/career map and part for the interview that would follow. Each of these parts can be completed in a place that feels most comfortable for you. There will be no monetary incentive for your participation.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at allyson.hartzell@gmail.com and provide me with a mailing address to send the participation consent form and life map template with instructions (or, in your case, you may elect for me to deliver the materials in person). If you have any questions about this study, please contact me at the email address provided above or call me at [512-350-4506](tel:512-350-4506).

Respectfully,

Ally Hartzell

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