

5-2017

The 12th Man: A Woman. Inequity in Professional Football Leadership Hiring

Cristy Brusoe

Winona State University, cbrusoe06@winona.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://openriver.winona.edu/leadershipeducationcapstones>



Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Brusoe, Cristy, "The 12th Man: A Woman. Inequity in Professional Football Leadership Hiring" (2017). *Leadership Education Capstones*. 5.

<https://openriver.winona.edu/leadershipeducationcapstones/5>

This Capstone Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Leadership Education - Graduate Studies at OpenRiver. It has been accepted for inclusion in Leadership Education Capstones by an authorized administrator of OpenRiver. For more information, please contact klarson@winona.edu.

© 2017 Cristina Brusoe

THE 12TH MAN: A WOMAN.
INEQUITY IN PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL LEADERSHIP HIRING

A Capstone Project

By

Cristy Brusoe

Submitted to the Graduate College of Winona State University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Science in Education

ABSTRACT

This is a comprehensive study of gender inequity in professional leadership within NFL organizations. 5 former and 5 current employees involved in the hiring process of NFL organizations were surveyed and offered insight into hiring practices and a breakdown of gender equality within the NFL.

Dedicated to my future children

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the support of my friends, family and peers. Thanks to my advisor, Dr. George Morrow, for showing patience and putting up with my stubbornness. Thank you to Winona State University for the opportunity to advance my education and complete a major goal. And finally, thanks to my partner, parents, siblings and friends, who supported me through this process, offering guidance and love.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	7
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	17
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	31
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS.....	43
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS.....	51
REFERENCES.....	59

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Currently, there are more than six million sports-related jobs available, creating abundant opportunities for women to obtain a leadership position in athletics (Women's Sports Foundation, 2011). Professional sports organizations continue to take measures to try and recruit women. In September 2016, the National Football League (NFL) hired Sam Rapoport as the director of football development in an attempt to create a pipeline for women to enter into positions that have been traditionally held by men around the league. With the increase in available opportunities for women to work in traditionally male-dominated sports, identifying the reasons factoring into why women aren't being hired for football management positions is crucial in increasing the number and sustainability of women in these leadership roles (Frank, 2015).

The efforts to increase the number of opportunities for women working in sports started in 1972 when Congress passed Title IX. The Title IX law requires gender equity for men and women in every educational program that receives federal funding, including athletics. Title IX was written subsequently to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which did not include any prohibition on gender discrimination in public education or federally assisted programs. The enactment of Title IX led to female participation in sports increasing from 30,000 athletes in collegiate athletes in 1972 to over 193,000 today (Dusenbery & Lee, 2012). However, research reveals that the spike in female athletes has not led to a corresponding increase in the number of women in leadership positions.

Throughout the past ten years, research has fixated on the limited number of women and their experience in sports leadership positions. Rather than focusing on those in the decision-making roles of hiring and retention, research has centered on factors preventing and leading women away from leadership positions in football.

For example, a 2010 study by Kamphoff conducted one-on-one interviews with former female coaches about potential solutions in increasing the number of women in the field. The results of the study indicated that no matter how long women are a part of an organization, their tenure may never lead them to feel like part of the family. The study also found that 67.5 percent of women noted leaving coaching for negative reasons. Kamphoff pointed out that few studies have asked female coaches for recommendations. These participants worked in the system and had unique perspectives (Kamphoff, 2010).

Previous studies on similar subjects have concentrated on the effects of Title IX on women (Acosta & Carpenter, 2008, Lowry, 1988, Acosta & Carpenter, 2012, Pauline, 2013,), the role gender plays in sports leadership positions (Kamphoff, 2006, Yiamouyiannis & Moorman, 2008, Light, 2013, LaVoi, 2014, Schoenberger, 2015,), and researched the traits and leadership style of women in sports (Messmore, 1995, Newell, 2007, Massengale, 2009, Simmons, 2011, Lovelin & Hanold, 2011, Fulmer, 2012, Ballaro & Neil, 2013). Overall, these studies document the overall lack of support for women in football leadership positions, but further research is needed to identify the reasons factoring into why women haven't been hired for leadership positions. There has been little research focused on those in the role of hiring and what their experience has been in the hiring process. Along with that, there is a need for further study on the state of recruiting women in the sport of football, and in the NFL, specifically.

Identifying the factors contributing to the limited hiring of female football leaders is necessary to increase the recruitment and hiring of effective female leaders, and thus, increase the number of capable women in management roles. Therefore, qualitative research on what reasons factor into the hiring process of female football leaders becomes essential in not only recruiting and hiring but also increasing the sustainability of women within these organizations.

Statement of the Problem

There is little research on the perspectives and viewpoints of hiring managers in regards to the hiring of female football leaders. Further research is required to identify the reasons factor into the hiring decisions which place women in leadership positions.

Background of the Problem

On January 20th, 2016, the NFL hired the first-ever full-time female football coach, Kathryn Smith. With the addition of Smith, the NFL tied the NBA for the best record in US professional sports to hire women to coach men's teams. Upon hiring, Buffalo Bill's co-owner Kim Pegula stated, "Kathryn has been a part of [Rex Ryan's] staff for the past seven years and has proven that she does excellent work. While we understand the significance of this announcement, it's important to understand that Kathryn earned this position because she has shown she is qualified, dedicated and puts in the work needed for this role." (Rodak, 2016).

The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports released its first report of the National Football League in 2004. The Racial and Gender Report Card is an assessment of hiring

practices of women and people of color in most of the professional and amateur sports organizations throughout the United States. The report considers the composition of players, coaches and front office employees in the US' professional sports organizations, including the National Basketball Association (NBA), Major League Baseball (MLB), Major League Soccer (MLS), Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) and the NFL (Lapchick, 2005).

The initial report graded the NFL a D+ in the gender category. The report found that there were three female presidents/CEOs in the NFL. There were no female general managers. Women held 7 percent of the vice president positions during the 2003 season. 17 percent of the senior administrators of the NFL were female. 26 percent of the league office's management team were women (Lapchick, 2005).

In 2011, the Diversity Council and Human Resources launched the NFL's first women's affinity group, called the Women's Interactive Network (WIN). The goal of WIN is to accelerate the career advancement of women in the NFL. WIN creates opportunities for male and female employees to educate each other on gender issues in the workplace; provides a peer network; and helps foster the hiring, retention, and development of female employees (Malveaux, Davison & Grant, 2016).

In 2014, the Commissioner of the NFL, Roger Goodell, strengthened the league's domestic violence policies and hired more women in key leadership positions, including as vice president, chief of government affairs and chief marketing officer. Robert Gulliver, executive vice president of human resources in the NFL, stated his belief that diversity at the league office level continues to increase and the NFL is always looking to improve. The league is committed to diversity and inclusion, noting that the organization benefits from a variety of background and personalities (Belson, 2014).

In 2016, the Racial and Gender Report Card awarded the NFL a C+ in the gender category. The report found that there are 35 women who served as vice presidents in the league office, a decrease from 22.9 percent in 2015 to 21.1 percent in 2016. There are no team presidents or general managers who are women. Women hold 59 of the vice president positions throughout the league, a decrease of eight from 2015. In the senior administration category, which includes directors, assistant general managers, chief legal counsel, salary cap managers, public relations directors and directors of community relations, women hold 21.0 percent of positions, a decrease of 1.2 percent from 2015. The percent of women at the management level increased to 30.7 percent in 2016 from 30.3 percent in 2015 (Malveaux, Davison & Grant, 2016).

The league office offers diversity training league-wide, including diversity accountabilities for senior management, enhancement of diversity recruitment resources, and talent management programs. In 2016, the league announced it would begin applying the 2002 Rooney Rule to women when it comes to all NFL executive positions. The Rooney Rule requires teams to interview one minority candidate for each coaching position (Malveaux, Davison & Grant, 2016).

Although the NFL currently has the highest percentage of women in football leadership positions ever, the numbers haven't risen much over the past 12 years. The percent of women in NFL management positions has increased from 26 percent in 2004, to 30.7 percent in 2016, an increase of 4.7 percent. The number of women in senior administrator positions has decreased to 17 percent in 2016, from 21 percent in 2004. Therefore, a study focused on the specific factors affecting the hiring of females for these positions can offer insight into how to increase the percentages of women working in football leadership positions (Malveaux, Davison & Grant, 2016).

Theoretical Framework

The basis of the theoretical framework for this study consisted of five theories. The theories utilized within the study are Trait Theory, Feminist Theory, Gender Schema Theory, Role Congruity Theory, and the Leadership Labyrinth/Pipeline Theory.

Trait Theory

Trait theory states that effective leaders share some common traits and personality characteristics. Trait theory helps to identify traits and qualities that are needed when leading others. The trait theory of leadership focuses on the physical, social and mental characteristics of a leader, to gauge which characteristics are common among leaders (Leadership Theories, n.d.). Trait theory was developed in the 1920's and 30's and differentiates leaders from non-leaders. The focus of this theory was on what an effective leader looked like and not how to effectively lead (Maslanka, 2004).

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory explores both inequality between males and females and the construction of gender. Feminist theory accompanied the feminist movement in the mid-seventies where theories began to explain women's oppression globally. Feminist theories are used to explain how institutions operate with gender-based assumptions and choose to reward or punish gendered practices (Carlson & Ray, 2011).

Gender Schema Theory

Gender schema theory can explain some of the processes by which gender stereotypes become psychologically ingrained in society. Kohlberg (1966) emphasized children actively self-construct their gender through a conceptual pattern in mind called a schema. The schemas develop through a combination of social and cognitive learning processes. A child observes how male and females act in society and these observations guide the child's gender-related actions. Kohlberg (1966) stressed that children actively self-construct their gender through a conceptual pattern in mind called a schema, (Goldstein & Naglieri, 2011).

Role Congruity Theory

Role Congruity Theory is what women experience in evaluation of their leadership behavior as a result of stereotypes regarding women's behavior that is inconsistent with the expected behavior of a demonstrated leader. Eagly's (2007) research states that each sex has typical - and divergent - traits and behaviors. One consequence of role congruity theory in regards to leadership is that attitudes are often less positive towards female leaders than male. It is often more difficult for women to become leaders and achieve success. Attitudes are less active toward female than male leaders and potential leaders (Eagly, 2007).

Labyrinth/Pipeline Theory

Eagly (2007) developed the Leadership Labyrinth Theory in exploring the concept of the glass ceiling and the challenges women face in their journey to a leadership position. The metaphor implies that there is a barrier that blocks women from rising to a leadership position. The labyrinth includes sex discrimination, women's domestic responsibilities, and a women's failure to believe in herself (Eagly, 2007).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate what has previously and currently does factor into the hiring decision in regards to women for football leadership positions.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. How does gender factor into the hiring process for football leadership positions?
2. What are the reasons women are passed over for football leadership positions?
3. Which leadership traits are lacking in females applying for football leadership positions?
4. What are the different expectations of women and men in sports management?

Definition of Terms

Argentic: Argentic behaviors, focusing on goals and control, tend to be associated with males (Patton & McCalman, 2008)

Labyrinth: A labyrinth comes from the Greek word “labyrinthos” and describes any maze-like structure (Mark, 2009).

Qualitative Research: A means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures; collecting data in the participants’ setting; analyzing the data

inductively, building from particulars to general themes; and making interpretations of meaning of the data (Creswell, 2014).

Sustainability: To pursue sustainability is to create and maintain the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony to support present and future generations (Environmental Protection Agency).

Significance of the Study

There is limited information on the perspective and viewpoints from hiring managers on the limited number of female football leaders. This study may be significant to some individuals and organizations. Specifically, the outcomes of this study can potentially benefit football executives, hiring managers, team organizations, the NFL as a whole, and those women pursuing a career in football leadership. By investigating which traits factor into the hiring or not hiring of women in football leadership positions, this study may provide guidance on how to increase the number of females in football.

Limitations of Study

Some of the limitations identified in this study are how truthful the participants are in responding, the willingness of the subjects to participate, and the potential bias of the research. Participants of this study represent a small percent of the hiring managers in the U.S., and thus the study may not be representative of the entire population. The subjects may not be honest

about their experiences of hiring or not hiring women. As a woman, the researcher has a potential bias, as the study focuses specifically on women.

Delimitations of Study

This study is delimited to football-specific hiring managers, who work or have worked at a professional football organization.

Overview of the Study

This phenomenological study consists of five chapters. Within the first chapter is a brief background on the issue, as well as why it needs to be explored further. Chapter two discusses the gaps and challenges in the literature, as well as the theoretical framework used to guide the research on what factors into the hiring or not hiring of women in football leadership positions. Chapter three will offer the research methodology for this study. Chapter four will present the results of the study and the survey results will be used to answer the research questions. Chapter five will discuss implications of the study and make recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This study will investigate what factors into the hiring decision for females in football leadership positions. In order to evaluate the past and present status of female leaders in football, chapter two will examine past studies and theories that concentrate on the effects of Title IX and the history of female leaders in the NFL, the role gender has played in sports leadership, and the barriers women have faced, and the traits and leadership style of women in sports. The literature review focuses on past studies that are relevant to the current study being conducted and any gaps in previous research that this study will address. The first section reviews studies that cover the historical perspective of women in sports and effect of Title IX. The second section examines the role gender has played in sports leadership. The third section reviews studies based on the leadership style and traits of female sports executives. The last part of the literature review summarizes theories that support the research.

The Effect of Title IX on Gender Equity in Sports Leadership Positions

Since the implementation of Title IX in 1972, the percentage of women coaching female intercollegiate sports has decreased by 48 percent (Acosta & Carpenter, 2008). In an attempt to identify why the number of female coaches had declined, Acosta and Carpenter conducted initial research on the effects of Title IX in 1985. Acosta and Carpenter surveyed men and women involved in intercollegiate athletics and asked them to rank the causes for the diminishing role of women. The researchers concluded the barriers for females included: 1) The good old boy's network, which kept women from getting an opportunity; 2) The lack of qualified female

candidates for sports leadership positions; 3) The failure of women to establish a networking system among one another; and 4) Discrimination of those in a position of power.

Similarly, Lowry & Lovett (1988) conducted a study to determine how Title IX had affected female coaching in Texas. The researchers projected that if the current trend few females in sports leadership roles continued, there would be no female coaches left in the state by 1991. In 1994, Lowry and Lovett researched the reasons why women have left and continue to leave coaching. Survey data was collected from interscholastic and intercollegiate coaches. The study found that the most common reasons for leaving coaching were based on social conditions, rather than individual traits (Lowry & Lovett, 1988).

40 Years After Title IX

Acosta and Carpenter's 2012 longitudinal study investigated the history of female athletes and coaches, forty years after the enactment of Title IX. Questionnaires were mailed to the Senior Woman Administrator at every National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) member school that had a women's athletic program, 1,100 women. The study specifically focuses on NCAA intercollegiate sports for women. The study found that in 1970, before the enactment of Title IX, females coached 90 percent of women's teams. By 1978, that number had dropped to 58.2 percent. Women coach 2 to 3 percent of men's teams. In 2012, there were 3,974 female head coaches of women's teams, the highest number in history. Women coached 42.9 percent of women's teams. 100 more female coaches of women's teams were employed than in 2010. The study found that men's tennis, track, and swimming had the most female coaches. The study concluded that access to female role models in leadership positions is critical, especially

for women. Women have fewer role models in their lives than do men. (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012).

Pauline, 2013 also reviewed the effects of Title IX for females in athletics 40 years after it was implemented and found that overall, there are a severe lack of women in leadership positions. However, Pauline noted there are significantly more opportunities in sports for female athletes. Along with that, women have had a stronger presence at the Olympics. Yet, Pauline found that in other areas, such as athletic employment, things have not changed very much. In fact, women rarely occupy many upper management positions. The sports industry, which is 90 percent male-dominated is beginning to implement changes and initiate programs to create more opportunities for women. Women are underrepresented and are paid less in the sports workplace. Also, women don't have the same opportunities to hold upper management positions (Pauline, 2013).

Role Gender Plays in Coaching Leadership Positions

A series of studies have taken place over the last decade in regards to the role that gender plays in sports leadership. These studies have concluded that although the role varies, gender certainly does play an important part in sports leadership positions. The most studied leadership position in the sports industry is the coaching position.

In 2006, Kamphoff completed a study on the experiences of 121 former female coaches. The study focused on the coaches' decision to terminate their careers with an emphasis on the patriarchal nature of US collegiate sports. The survey used a mixed-methods design, with in-depth questions. The survey found that time and family commitments were the main reasons women chose to leave the coaching profession. 18 percent of the participants left coaching for

positive reasons, such as a new opportunity or advancement. The patriarchal nature of collegiate athletics was noted in many of the open-ended responses. Kamphoff concluded several factors that influenced a woman's decision to leave the coaching profession. Women receive run down facilities, lower salaries, and more responsibility, with less support. Several of these female coaches were subjects of homophobic administration and environments. All the participants noted struggling with the balance between work and home life. Family commitments were the second most common reason for leaving coaching. Kamphoff concluded that Title IX has not been fully effective and has had several unanticipated consequences for female coaches (Kamphoff, 2006).

Yiamouyiannis and Moorman (2008) conducted the first research on women who had coached men's sports teams. 84 female coaches from NCAA Division I, II and III, detailed their experience on job access and discrimination in coaching roles. Results from the questionnaire indicated that women coaching men's teams face unique barriers including job access, workplace discrimination and gender stereotypes of the coaching position (Yiamouyiannis & Moorman, 2008).

Research has also been conducted on how student athletes have perceived female coaches in sports organizations. Light (2013) studied the perceptions that student-athletes have of female coaches to gain an understanding as to why a limited number of females are coaching male sports. The method used for obtaining data was a cross-sectional survey, which was sent out to 314 male and female student-athletes within the NCAA Division III Empire 8 conference.

The survey consisted of open and closed questions. Open-ended responses showed that there was a significant difference in the number of agentic traits versus communal traits. These responses suggested that athletes see certain characteristics such as confidence and assertiveness,

being attributed to male coaches and may lead to a more favorable perception of men. Light concluded female coaches still have a long way to go to break into "masculine" sports or teams. Light also found women are advancing in gender-neutral sports and may be perceived by athletes more positively than previous studies have suggested (Light, 2013).

LaVoi (2014) investigated why the sports industry was seeing a decline of women in leadership roles. LaVoi noted that a decline in the number of women in head coaching positions is crucial, as this is a leadership role that proves women a point of influence and power within sports. The research was conducted on 113 female intercollegiate athletes, who were competing for NCAA Division I universities. Each athlete was given a fictional situation depicting male or female head coaching styles using either argentic or communal leadership behaviors. Results of the study found that attitudes towards women in leadership positions are biased when women act outside of stereotypical female gender roles. When the participants are exposed to stereotypical role models, the bias is less (LaVoi, 2014).

In contrast to the studies on the negative experiences and factors causing few women to hold sports management roles, Schoenberger (2015) completed a study on which factors influence women to enter and remain in the field of coaching and what role mentoring plays in the process. The study consisted of 15 participants, including two administrators, eight head coaches, and five assistant coaches. The participants were all from Division III athletic departments at colleges in the Northeastern region of the US. Schoenberger concluded four central themes of the study.

The first theme was the journey that led each participant towards athletics. For example, how a woman transitioned from playing to coaching to developing athletes. The second theme was gender inequity and the improvements that members witnessed and experienced over their

career. Women noticed positive changes within their organizations. The third theme was attaining balance and the struggle to have a successful career and fulfilling life at home. The women in this study leaned towards choosing their career over home life if balancing both wasn't an option.

The fourth theme of the study was the support of the community. The community in Schoenberger's study referred to peer coaches, mentors, sport-specific staff, and student-athletes. Along with these themes, the participants noted that they got into and stayed in the coaching profession because of their roles as mentors and for the development opportunities that came along with the position (Schoenberger, 2015).

The Traits and Leadership Style of Women in Sports

A similar area of research has been on the leadership traits that women bring to the sports industry. The focus of these studies is primarily on the female leader and the experience in the role. There has been little research into the viewpoints from those in the position of hiring these women. Therefore, there is a gap in the research that is important and needs to be addressed.

Messmore (1995) completed research on the lack of women in sports leadership and what can be done to increase the representation of women in this field. Messmore interviewed a sample of women in leadership positions within the sports industry. The purpose of the study was to identify which leadership traits and styles are successful in breaking the glass ceiling within the sports field. The results of the study indicated that women are aware their style of leadership is different than their male counterparts. Messmore also concluded that the proposed correlation between athletic ability and cognitive leadership skills is unjustified. Women face

barriers in becoming leaders in sports organizations, such as prejudice and being treated differently (Messmore, 1995).

In regards to leadership style and gender performance, Newell (2007) conducted a study on the relationship between the two in a college basketball setting. The goal of the study was to explore the relationship between leadership style among head basketball coaches from NCAA Division II men's and women's basketball teams and performance outcomes. Another purpose was to explore gender differences in leadership styles and outcomes. The participants included 16 men and women's head basketball coaches from the California Collegiate Athletic Association (CCAA). The study consisted of demographic coaching questions and the Leadership Scale for Sports to assess leadership behavior styles. The outcomes indicated that there was a positive relationship between autocratic leadership behavior and performance outcomes. There were no findings of a significant relationship between gender differences among coaches for leadership behaviors (Newell, 2007).

Massengale (2009) investigated the underrepresentation of women in interscholastic sport leadership positions. The research was done through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with nine female leaders in interscholastic athletics. The questions focused on a career path, perceptions of the current representation of women in interscholastic athletics, and experiences inherent to role congruity. Five themes emerged from the data. They include: 1) Formative career experiences; 2) Perceived barriers to advancement; 3) Perceptions of role congruity; 4) Experiences associated with role congruity, and 5) Strategies to overcome prejudice associated with role congruity. The results of the study indicated that the participants experienced backlash if they exhibited a more argentic style of leadership and that women in leadership positions have been experiencing prejudice (Massengale, 2009).

Two years later, Simmons (2011) conducted a study on women currently working in the sports industry to explore their experiences in the workplace. Seven interviews took place with women working in leadership positions throughout the sports industry. The purpose of the study was to identify why women stay employed in the sports industry. Those interviewed were at the management, Director, President, or Chief Executive Officer (CEO) levels. There were six major themes that came through in the results of the study. These included, 1) Women feel respected by their male subordinates, 2) Belonging, 3) Importance of a Mentor, 4) Internships, 5) Most women did not feel pigeon-holed into a position, 6) Application of social role theory. Simmons discovered women are overcoming the barriers that were set in the past and more women are showing success in management roles within the sports industry (Simmons, 2011).

That same year, Lovelin and Hanold (2011) examined what female sports leaders think is important to their development and advancement as a leader. "While women have made notable progress in leadership in business corporations, little has changed in the sports industry with still far fewer women than men in senior decision-making positions in sports management." The researchers interviewed ten high-ranking, successful female administrators from non-profit sports organizations, sports equipment manufacturing, and retail companies.

The researchers found that female sports leaders recognize that leadership and management serve separate but complementary functions in an organization. Two important implications for female sports leaders were noted. The first was that successful female leaders need a rather complex skill set and the ability to use the right skill at the right time. The second suggested that the skills of both management and leadership can be learned. This study shed light on the approach taken by women to enact change in an organization through leadership skills (Lovelin & Hanold, 2011).

The experience of two female leaders in regards to leadership style was documented by Fulmer 's (2012) research on the leadership style and sustainability of two female head coaches at Southeastern University. The purpose of the study was to examine the coaches' experiences and better understand how they sustained their role as a head coach. The specific objectives of the research were: (a) to understand female head coaches' knowledge of what a land-grant institution was created for and if its purpose affects the way they coach; (b) to determine how female head coaches sustain their title as head coach; and (c) to determine the female head coaches' preferred leadership style.

The researcher conducted the study through in-person interviews, by asking about the life of the interviewees. The researcher sought answers to how and why the female coaches lead their team the way they did. After completing the study, Fulmer concluded that added expectations and pressure of female coaches might lead them to withdraw from coaching. "The lack of experience that females had in coaching could explain the inexperience and professionalism of Mary's coaches; however, putting females in the position to coach has allowed females more opportunities to gain experience and learn how to be successful coaches," (Fulmer, 2012).

Ballaro and Neil (2013) conducted a similar qualitative study to explore the lived experiences of two women who achieved executive-level positions in the league offices of major league sports organizations. The research study centered on the problem of underrepresentation of women executives in revenue-driven positions in the league offices of major league sports. The study consisted of recorded telephone interviews using the life story model (LSM). The study was limited to two women in executive roles, as they were the only participants available.

Five themes emerged from the research that explained how the two women transcended gender barriers to become sports league executives: Passion for sports, high-achieving and high-

energy personality, earned credibility in generating revenue in the business of sports, the importance of family values about morality, work ethic and community, and uncompromised values.

The researchers concluded that women had made advancements in some traditionally male-dominated industries, yet women continue to be excluded from executive positions. (Ballaro & Neil, 2013).

Theories Supporting Research

The theories that support this research include Trait Theory, Feminist Theory, Gender Schema Theory, Role Congruity Theory and the Leadership Labyrinth and Pipeline Theory.

Trait Theory

Trait Theory is centered on the study of human personality. Theorists are interested in the measurement of traits as habitual patterns of behavior, thought and emotion. Gordon Allport was an early pioneer in the study of traits. In his approach, "cardinal" traits are those that dominate and shape a person's behavior; their ruling passions/obsessions. Central traits, such as honesty, are characteristics found in some degree in every person. Secondary traits are those only seen in certain circumstances (MSG Management Study Guide, n.d.).

Robbins & Coulter (2002) describe traits as characteristics that might be used to differentiate leaders from non-leaders. Later research on the leadership process identified seven traits associated with successful leadership: Drive, the desire to lead, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, intelligence, job-relevant knowledge, and extraversion. The trait approach to

leadership rests on the premise that universal can be identified, which differentiate between successful and unsuccessful leaders (Robbins & Coulter, 2002).

Feminist Theory

Feminist Theory focuses on gender as a social construct, social construction versus biological construction, and the sociology of gender. While many theorists concentrate on the question of how gender inequality manifests in the workplace, home and public environment, others explore how gender is constituted about other social relations.

The fundamental purpose of feminist theory is to liberate women. Feminist researchers are interested in change, as well as influencing the world, transforming social institutions, and making a difference in the lives of women (Thompson, 1992). Feminist research is conducted for women, not on women. Therefore, feminist research follows a careful and systematic adherence to the methodology. Feminist researchers believe in a collaborative process between participant and researcher that incorporates reciprocity, reflexivity, and intersubjectivity to create an environment in which the participant can feel validated (Kamphoff, 2006).

Gender Schema Theory

Kohlberg introduced the concept of gender constancy in 1966. Kohlberg presented a new view of early gender role development, which was contrary to previously held views by psychologists. Gender Schema Theory assumes that a gender-schematic individual will view the world regarding traditionally masculine and feminine attitudes and will exhibit behaviors that conform to their sex (Campbell, Shirley, & Candy, 2004). Children grow up and conform to appropriate social behavior, which leads to the expectation to behave like other boys or girls.

Female athletic or coaching participation in traditional "male sports" would be an example of a gender inconsistent behavior.

For example, a girl sees her brothers, who play youth football, practice and compete in a game every week. The girl notices that there are only boys on the team, while girls wear the sparkle outfits and cheer for the boys on the sidelines. This may be witnessed for years, and thus the girl may develop the idea that boys play football and girls are cheerleaders. Conforming to social cues, the girl assumes she is to be a cheerleader (Barragan, 2015). From birth, girls are encouraged to act feminine, and boys are encouraged to be masculine.

Role Congruity Theory

Role Congruity Theory suggests that a group will be positively evaluated when its characteristics align with typical social roles. A Role Congruity Theory of prejudice toward women proposes that perceived inconsistency between the female gender role and leadership roles leads to two forms of prejudice," (a) viewing women less favorably than men in leadership roles and (b) evaluating leader behavior less favorably when the role is filled by a woman (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Consequences of these prejudices include a less positive attitude towards female leaders and that it is more difficult for women to achieve success as leaders.

Labyrinth Leadership/Pipeline Theory

Although women have had increased access to higher management positions, the number of female executives is low. This phenomenon has been explained through the glass-ceiling concept. The glass ceiling refers to the invisible barrier of prejudice and discrimination that women face in obtaining leadership positions. The glass ceiling is seen as particularly dominant

in athletic organizations, where the workforce is often male-dominated. It has been found that women experience not only the glass ceiling but also the glass wall, referring to making a lateral move within an organization (Galloway, 2013).

Eagly (2007) developed the leadership labyrinth to describe the challenges women face when attempting to become leaders within an organization. Instead of the commonly used term glass ceiling, the author proposes that a more accurate metaphor to describe the complexity of women seeking high-level positions is the labyrinth. One of the barriers for women is that they aren't being hired into line positions, rather they find career advancement opportunities by working in administrative roles. Eagly found that women and men differ little in personality traits that contribute to successful leadership. Eagly points out that few people intend to discriminate, but make assumptions based on stereotypes of traditional leader traits. The tactics that men use to obtain leadership positions often don't work the same for women.

Women may be more successful when engaging in leadership traits similar to male counterparts. Research does not indicate that women desire leadership roles any less. There is a strong resistance to women in leadership roles due to the fact that most people see men and women as having different, innate traits. For example, women have less time for networking that leads to leadership. Also, the demands of family life are another wall that limits women (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Pipeline theory focuses on the idea that there are a low number of qualified women applying for leadership positions. Women in the sports profession often have less education, training and work experience than men, resulting in a limited number of qualified women. The pipeline is leaking in that women haven't been in leadership position long enough for natural

career progression to occur. Often women choose a motherhood track that doesn't funnel into a leadership position (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Summary

Chapter two presented a literature review of the historical perspective and effects of Title IX, the role gender plays in coaching positions, the traits and leadership styles of women in sports, and theoretical background employing Trait Theory, Feminist Theory, Gender Schema Theory, Role Congruity Theory and the Leadership Labyrinth and Pipeline Theory. Chapter three contains the research design and methodology for addressing what factors into the hiring decision for females in football leadership positions.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

This study will investigate what factors into the hiring decisions of women for football leadership positions. The study will focus on those in a position to make decisions in the hiring and retention within professional football organizations and the NFL. Chapter three presents the research design, rationale for research design, research questions, research setting, selection of participants and sample, the role of the researcher, instrumentation, assumptions, procedures, data processing, and analysis.

Research Design

The research design selected for this study is qualitative. Qualitative research is a method for discovering and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups give to a communal or human problem (Creswell, 2016). Creswell outlines the process of research as collecting data in the participants' setting, analyzing the data inductively, building from particulars to general themes; and making interpretations of the meaning of data. In this type of design, the following procedures occur: Data collection involved interviews, observation, and archival data.

This study will explore what factors contribute to a lack of female football leaders. The researcher will conduct the study using one-on-one interviews, surveys, and review of public documents.

The approach to this study is phenomenological in nature. Phenomenological research is employed along with qualitative research. The researcher identifies the principle of human

experiences about a phenomenon as explained by those participating in the study (Creswell, 2014). This study will explore the experiences of the female football coaches given from their personal perspective and viewpoint.

Rationale for the Selected Research Design

The qualitative research design will be used in this study. Qualitative research is appropriate for this research study in that it involves understanding the meaning individuals or groups attribute to a social or human problem. The process of qualitative research involves emerging questions, collecting data in the participants' setting, analyzing the data, identifying general themes and making interpretations of the meaning (Creswell, 2014).

The intent of the research is to understand why women are being passed over for football leadership positions and what leadership traits they are missing.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. How does gender factor into the hiring process for football leadership positions?
2. What are the reasons women are most passed over for football leadership positions?
3. Which leadership traits are lacking in females applying for football leadership positions?
4. What are the different expectations of women and men in sports management?

Research Setting

The setting for this study is the National Football League and teams that are located throughout the United States. There are 32 professional football teams. There is one female football coach in the NFL. 30 percent of the 330 employees at the league headquarters are women. 30 out of 120 executive positions, or 25 percent, are held by women (TIDES). The number of women coaching men's sports teams is less than 300 in the US. 17.7% of all teams (men and women's teams) are coached by a woman. Less than 2% of men's teams are coached by a female head coach (The National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education, 2015). As of 2015, there were two female head coaches of high school football teams. In 2010, there were none (Dusenbery & Lee, 2012).

Setting A and Setting D are located within the South region of the US. The organization is based in a city of over 350,000 individuals. The team has been around since the 1970s. The organization has nearly 450 employees. 51 percent of the population is female. 34.8 percent of the citizens have a bachelor's degree or higher (US Census Bureau, 2016).

Setting B is located within the South region of the US. The organization is based in a city of over 445,000 people. The team has been around since the 1960s. The organization has nearly 440 employees. 49.6 percent of the population is female. 47.9 percent of the citizens have a bachelor's degree or higher (US Census Bureau, 2016).

Setting C and Setting H are centered in the Eastern region of the US. The team is based in a city of over 8,500,000 citizens. The organization was established in the 1920s and has over 1,800 employees. Women make up 52.5 percent of the population in this city. 35 percent of the

residents hold a bachelor's degree, 80 percent of citizens are high school graduates (US Census Bureau, 2016).

Setting E is located in the Southern region of the US. The team is located in a city of nearly 440,000 citizens. The team has been around since the 1960s and employs more than 240 employees. 50.2 percent of the population is women. Of all the city's residents, 17 percent didn't finish high school, 23.5 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher (US Census Bureau, 2016).

Setting F is located in the Southern region of the US. The team is based in a city of more than 2,200,000 people. The organization has been around since the 1990s and has over 400 employees. Females comprise 49.8% of the resident population. 29.8 percent of the residents have a bachelor's or higher (US Census Bureau, 2016).

Setting G is found in the Midwest region of the US. The organization is located in a city of more than 400,000. The team has been established since the 1960s and has more than 330 employees. Women make up 50.2 percent of the residents. 47.4 percent of residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher (US Census Bureau, 2016).

Setting H is located in the Midwest region of the US. The team is located in a city of nearly 390,000 citizens. The team has been around since the 1940s and employs more than 515 employees. 52 percent of the population is women. Of all the city's residents, 15.6 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher (US Census Bureau, 2016).

Setting I is located in the Midwest region of the US. The team is located in a city of nearly 300,000 citizens. The team has been in existence since the 1960s and employs more than

180 employees. 47.2 percent of the population is female. Of all the residents, 33.1 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher (US Census Bureau, 2016).

Selection of Participants

Ten hiring managers from ten various teams within the National Football League will be selected as participants for this study. Five of the managers are current employees, and five are former hiring managers for the league. Five of the managers are female, and five are male.

Participant 1 has worked for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for over 3 years. Her role was as manager in sales. He is responsible for job posting, initial phone calls, official interviews and decision making.

Participant 2 works for the Atlanta Falcons as a director. He has been in the role for nearly six months. He is responsible for hiring managers of events, booking and, event coordinators.

Participant 3 worked for the National Football League offices for nearly eight years. She worked as a human resources executive for the league. She was part of the NFL League Office Diversity Council.

Participant 4 works for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers as a director. She's been in the role for four years and has hired business roles from entry level game day staff to senior executives.

Participant 5 works for the Miami Dolphins as a director. He has been in a hiring role for three years. He has hired or been in the interview process for graphic designers, videographers, editors, social media coordinators, and project managers.

Participant 6 worked for the Houston Texans for two years as a human resources manager. In this role she was responsible for hiring business operations staff, such as senior accountants, corporate managers, marketing coordinators, and game day staff.

Participant 7 works in football administration for the Minnesota Vikings. She has been in this role for over ten years. She is responsible for conducting research and analysis and hiring interns and game day staff.

Participant 8 is currently senior director for the NFL. In her six years working for the league, she has hired directors, managers, coordinators, associates and consultants.

Participant 9 worked for the Cleveland Browns as a strategist. He was in the role for two years and was involved in the hiring and interview process of scouts, analysts and interns.

Participant 10 work as an assistant director and manager for five years. His role within the organization included interviewing interns, sales people, activation specialists. He was involved in various steps of the process.

Sample

The sample for the study consists of ten individuals in a position of interviewing and/or hiring for game day, manager, director, leadership-level positions for various NFL teams and the league office. The researcher selected participants that were either formerly or currently working as hiring managers for the NFL. The participants were selected purposefully. Purposeful selection concentrates on participants or locations. A qualitative researcher selects participants who will best help them comprehend the research problem questions (Creswell, 2014). The

participants of this study are or were recruiters for NFL teams, who have had experience hiring for the management, director, president or CEO positions.

The participants in this study were identified through football team websites and career title on the professional networking website, LinkedIn. The participants were selected at random through a LinkedIn search including the terms “hiring manager” along with all 32 NFL teams. Connection invitations were extended to each participant found. Those who responded were sent an initial message that said:

“Hello – Thanks for connecting! My name is Cristy and I’m in the final year of my Master’s program in Leadership Education at Winona State. I was wondering if you would be able to help me out with my thesis research. I’m doing research on the NFL and female hiring for management positions. The survey is anonymous – to get the most honest research information. I’m interviewing former and current hiring managers for NFL teams. Would you be able to help me out with a survey/interview in the next few weeks? Thanks so much!”

The participants were chosen without consideration of location or level of experience. Since this study will be based around professional football, the sample was limited to only those who had worked or currently work for a professional football organization. The researcher has no prior relationship with any of the participants included in the study. Each participant made a choice to take part in the study on his/her free will.

The Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in this qualitative study is to act as the primary instrument for collecting data. This means that data are mediated through human instrumentation, rather than

through surveys or machine. Qualitative researchers collect the data themselves by exploring behavior, reviewing documents, and interviewing participants (Creswell, 2014).

Instrumentation

The tool that will be used to complete this study is one-on-one interviews. These instruments will be used while gathering and recording data for the study.

Assumptions

The researcher will make no assumptions before interviewing the participants to keep a completely open mind and understanding of the participant's experience, opinions and thoughts.

Procedures

The first step in starting the summary will be to gain approval from the Instructional Review Board (IRB). The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is a committee on a college and university campus that determines if the research could possibly place the participants at risk during the study. The researcher applies to the IRB to gain approval for the research. Informed consent forms are then offered to participants. The consent forms acknowledge the risk the participants are agreeing to while participating in the study (Creswell, 2014). Upon IRB approval, the research proposal process outlining the purpose of the study, a literature review, statement of the problem and procedures will be completed.

The researcher will then obtain consent from all participants who will participate in the study. Once consent is obtained and participants are informed of all ethical considerations including risks to them personally or professionally, benefits and the privacy of the data., A

survey will be sent through email to the participants. All participants will receive the same survey. Survey data will be captured in the Google Survey form and transferred to a Microsoft Excel sheet. This method was selected, so the results of the survey are completely anonymous, even to the researcher. The survey data will not be shared with anyone but the researcher. Once the survey results are obtained, and data is categorized, the survey results will be deleted. The research will be validated through a review of past documents and studies on female leadership styles and women coaching sports.

Data Processing and Analysis

One-on-One Interviews

The researcher will conduct one-on-one interviews with hiring managers before collecting survey data. These interviews will be used to establish credibility of each participant as an appropriate interview subject. An interview protocol form is used by a qualitative researcher when recording and transcribing data obtained during the interview (Creswell, 2014).

Survey Questions Will Include:

1. For the researcher's information – What is your name and title? None of this information will be disclosed – and it will be deleted after results have been collected.
2. Do you currently work in a hiring role within an NFL organization? If yes, how long have you been in this role? If not, what year were you last in that role and for how long had you been in that role?

3. What types of roles have you hired for within your organization (give examples)? What was your role in the hiring process?
4. The NFL has launched several diversity initiatives in the last few years to improve the representation of racial and ethnic minorities and women in the league headquarters and among the teams. What do you think of the current programs in place? Have they been effective?
5. Within the NFL there are no female team presidents or general managers. Women hold 21 percent of senior admin positions (PR Director, Chief Legal Counsel, Assistant General Manager, etc.). Women hold 30.7 percent of management positions within sports organizations. What do you think of these statistics? Do you think they are low, high, or average?
6. Are there different expectations for women versus men in leadership positions – in your sport's organization? (Ex: Family expectations, time commitment)?
7. What leadership traits do you believe women (in particular) bring to an NFL organization?
8. According to the 2016 Racial and Gender Report Card, the NFL achieved a C+ for gender hiring practices, with a score of 76 percent, an increase from 75 percent in 2015. Has the state of diversity in the NFL improved or not improved during your time working in a hiring role?
9. When a female (candidate) isn't hired for a senior level position within an NFL organization, what are some of the reasons they are passed over?
10. In your experience, have women/do women face a more difficult process in being hired for or elevating into leadership roles?

11. Do you feel like you have ever seen or been a part of a situation where a candidate was not hired because of gender for a senior level position? Would you care to explain?

Data collection for the study will begin after obtaining approval from the IRB.

Grounded Theory

The data will be analyzed through the grounded theory methodology. Grounded Theory is a method for developing a theory that is grounded in data methodically gathered and examined (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). One common method used in Grounded Theory includes participant interviewing. The process begins with the researcher asking questions designed to lead to the origination of theory. After collecting data, the researcher analyzes it and begins to develop a theory. Based on the initial theory developed, the researcher chooses how to next sample. The process continues until the researcher reaches the point where there are no new insights that emerge from the data and strong themes begin to emerge. The data will then be coded through three methods: open, axial and selective coding. (Glaser & Strauss 1967).

Triangulation

Triangulation is a tool to support the researcher's construction. The purpose of triangulation is to discover the understanding of the object under investigation from different aspects of empirical reality. Denzin (1978) identified four basic types of triangulation:

- Methods Triangulation – Checking out the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods.

- Triangulation of Source – Examining the consistency of different data sources from within the same method.
- Analyst Triangulation – Using multiple types of analysis to review findings
- Theory/Perspective Triangulation – Using multiple theoretical perspectives to examine and interpret the data (Denzin, 1978).

Chapter Summary

Chapter three detailed the methodology for the research study. This chapter detailed how the study will be qualitative and take a phenomenological approach to exploring what factors into the hiring process of women in football leadership positions. Chapter four will present the results of the study.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Chapter four combines and analyzes the data collected from ten interviews with former employees of NFL organizations involved in hiring organizational leaders. In this chapter, background is provided about the participants and data (statistics and recurring themes) are presented in a manner to address each of the research questions proposed in chapter one.

Participants

The sample for this study consisted of 10 current and former employees within NFL organizations, who had or were involved in the hiring process of leadership positions within their organization. Five of the participants were female and five were male. Six of the participants were currently working for their respected organization and four were former employees of NFL organizations. Ten participants were identified after the IRB process had been completed. Participants who took part in the survey, but weren't in a hiring role, were excluded from the study.

The intended data collection process was by phone call or Skype conversations. After three weeks of resistance from the participants to schedule a time, the data collection process was changed. Time seemed like a factor in the interviewing process, therefore the interview questions were entered on Google Forms and sent to each participant after the consent form detailing any risks of participating in the study.

Data Analysis Strategy

A coding process was used to analyze the data, to make sense of its meaning and to identify themes. Each participant was assigned a number and data was recorded.

After obtaining the ten surveys back from the ten participants, each participant's answers were looked at individually and then alongside the others. Grounded Theory was used to sort through the responses. The first step was to analyze the data through open coding, by breaking down, examining, comparing and categorizing data. Keywords, phrases, and themes were sought by reading through interview responses multiple times. Initial themes were developed, coded, and then searched for in other interviews. Through this iterative process, themes began to emerge. Key words, patterns and general themes were grouped together. Once codes were determined and instances were identified in the responses, they were compared.

After the open coding process was complete, the next step was axial coding. Axial coding was used to analyze the data by assembling it in new ways and identifying connections between categories. The researchers own concepts and categories were used while re-reading the text to confirm that the themes accurately represented the responses and to explore how the categories were related.

Data Analysis

Question 1: The NFL has launched several diversity initiatives in the last few years to improve the representation of racial and ethnic minorities and women in the league headquarters and among the teams. What do you think of the current programs in place? Have they been effective?

The themes that emerged from this question included two participants not being made aware of these initiatives, three thought the initiatives have not been successful and six either saw it as a good first step or as being successful to bringing more diversity in gender and race hires in prominent positions in their organizations. Subject 5 (S5) and subject 6 (S6) both were not familiar with the initiatives. Subject eight stated, "I see an emphasis on practices for

interviewing women and ethnic minorities.... However, having been a minority in every role I have ever held, I feel like there are more ways to ensure inclusion.” Meanwhile, S9 said, “I do not think the programs have been effective to date for women, but are very effective for minorities. You have to create the developmental pipelines for women...” Two independent thoughts included, S3 who brought up the success of the Rooney Rule (an example of one of the initiatives) and S7 who explained how the programs have not been effective for women, but have been effective for minorities. “It was an excellent decision to apply the Rooney Rule to front office hiring for women.” Prior to completing the research, I was curious to see how many of the participants were aware of the diversity initiatives put in place. Although there were only two participants who said they were “unaware” of such initiatives, there was hesitancy from a majority of the group. Only three participants outright stated that the programs and initiatives have been successful. From this question, I learned that employees league-wide are not being informed of the initiatives that have been put in place over the last few years. I would think all employees, upon starting at an organization, should be made aware of these initiatives (especially women and minorities).

Question 2: Within the NFL there are no female team presidents or general managers. Women hold 21 percent of senior administrative positions (PR Director, Chief Legal Counsel, Assistant General Manager, etc). Women hold 30.7 percent of management positions within the NFL. What do you think of these statistics? Do you think they are low, high or average?

One theme that emerged from this question included the idea that there has been an improvement, but the numbers need to or will increase. Subject 10, and S3 used the words “will increase,” when answering the question. Subject 6, S2, and S8 summarized that the numbers are low, but it’s a national industry-wide problem, not just an NFL problem. Subject 7 agreed that

the numbers are low in some departments, but not others. "...If you look strictly at women on the football side, the numbers would be even lower. At our club, we are well represented by women in sales, marketing, finance, human resources, and legal, but the football side is a different story," said S7. Subject 9 noted that that the Rooney Rule has not been successful for women and to increase the percent of females in NFL organizations, there need to be more development opportunities for women. "How many women above are coaching high potential women in programs grooming women for executive level positions? How many of the women above are actively mentoring and providing sponsorship to aspiring women candidates?" said S9. "You cannot break into this league without a sponsor." Overall, 7 out of the 10 participants acknowledged that the numbers are "low." This question aligns with question one, in that, 3 participants in question one thought the initiatives the NFL put in place were successful, and 3 participants in question two thought the numbers of women in management have improved.

Question 3: Are there different expectations for women versus men in leadership positions within your sport's organization? (Examples: Family expectations, time commitment, etc)?

Eight of the ten participants thought that the expectations for women versus men were not different. "No different expectations. We have several male and female executives. All do a good job of balancing their work and family time," said S4. Another theme was that working mothers need more support. "I think my organization does a poor job of recognizing that a working mother has different needs than a working father (in general)," S8 noted. S7 stated women aren't in leadership positions because of families.

...Most of the men on the football side have a spouse who stays at home – very traditional family structures. Since stay-at-home husbands/dads are non-traditional, the

fact of a woman being in a higher position on the football side automatically becomes different. I would say it's more of an expectation that high ranking employees on the football side are primarily dedicated to their job, available to work many hours and don't have to worry about anything at home. (Participant Seven - S7)

I was surprised by the response of this question, but I discovered that expectations tend to be the same for both men and women across the NFL. With that said, the two participants that stated that the expectations were different, were both women, who noted "motherhood" as a varying expectation.

Question 4: What leadership traits do you believe women (in particular) bring to an NFL organizations?

There were several themes from question four. The key terms that were repeated consistently were: different perspective and viewpoints, diversity of thought and ideas, different way of framing and solving problems, empathy and relationship skills. "Women are more collaborative and focus on team excellence. Male-dominated teams are very competitive, leading to a distrustful atmosphere," S10 explained. Three of the participants noted that women bring the same traits as men. "I don't believe you can categorize any leadership traits based on someone being a male or female," said S1. The number of varying responses to this question showed that the skills women bring to a football organization are appreciated, noticed, and valued.

Question 5: According to the 2016 Racial and Gender Report Card, the NFL achieved a C+ for gender hiring practices, with a score of 76 percent, an increase from 75 percent in 2015. Has the state of diversity in the NFL improved or not improved during your time working in a hiring role?

The responses on this question were about 50-50 split. Five of the respondents stated that yes the state of diversity has improved in the NFL. S2 stated, “It has improved since my start in the NFL in 1998.” The other five weren’t sure, or hadn’t noticed a significant change. “I have not noticed much of a difference personally,” said S5. Two of those who had noticed a change also noted that things are changing slowly. S7 said, “There is a definite awareness here of the need to hire women into football-related positions where that awareness was probably close to zero as recently as 2-3 years ago.” Subject 1, S2, S3, S8, and S9 gave straight forward, numbers-driven answers. Subject 7, S10, S4, S5, and S6 took what they’ve personally experienced in their organization into consideration.

Question 6: When a female (candidate) isn’t hired for a senior level position within an NFL organization, what are some of the reasons they are passed over?

Six of the responses to this question were based around the thought that the candidates weren’t qualified or needed more experience. S8 added that the candidate is “too passive” or “not dynamic enough.” S2 concluded, “There was a more qualified candidate or someone that perhaps had a past with the hiring manager or someone in the power structure.” The one outlining theme was that women don’t have experience in the sport itself. “Women didn’t grow up in a football setting and try to compete with a conceptual or academic understanding of the position requirements. Said another way – they have the skill but haven’t demonstrated it in an NFL setting,” S9. I was surprised that gender didn’t play more of a role in the participants’ answers. “Qualifications” is a very gray category which could have a wide variety of meanings. I would have liked to dig deeper into what exact qualifications were missing in these scenarios.

Question 7: In your experience, have women/do women face a more difficult process in being hired for or elevating into leadership roles?

Five out of 10 of the participants thought that women do not face a more difficult process. “Not from my experience. I do believe that for the sales positions specifically, it’s very difficult to find women who are interested in the positions,” said S1. In further examining the data, another theme of yes, women do face a more difficult process came to light. S6 stated, “I would like to see more formal programs and initiatives to support elevating women in leadership roles – not just lip service... I also want to see more support for women with children – this seems to be a common reason women exit the workforce.” S8 agreed, “In this organization, I think women have more difficulty elevating into leadership roles. I also think women have difficulty being hired sometimes due to a perception of not knowing as much about the sport. Typically, women are not seen as strong leaders in this organization, but more as support.” Again, the answers were split 50-50 on this question. Three of the “yes” respondents were female. Two of the “no” respondents were male. Sex didn’t seem to play a role in how each gender answered this question. Through this question’s data, I identified that it can be difficult for women to elevate or be hired for management-level roles, but it depends on each NFL organization.

Question 8: Do you feel like you have ever seen or been a part of a situation where a candidate was not hired because of gender for a senior leader position? Would you care to explain?

Nine of out ten participants answered this question with a “no.” However, S1 offered an interesting experience they were involved in. “In 2014, I wanted to hire a sales executive who was more than qualified (a male). I only had one open positions and the Director forced me to hire a female candidate so that we could have more diversity on the staff. She was not as

qualified as the other candidate.” I was surprised to learn that the one case of gender discrimination came in a reverse-discrimination situation.

Summary

Chapter four presented the data results of each question of the survey, by each individual and as a complete picture. Personal viewpoints were provided by participants of the study and offered an eyewitness account of the state of diversity throughout NFL organizations. Chapter five will examine the results of the study and offer conclusions based on the data analysis process and make recommendations for future studies on similar subjects.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion, Recommendations

Chapter five will analyze the data presented in Chapter Four, while synthesizing it with the information, methods and theories discussed in Chapter One and Two. From this, the researcher will draw conclusions and relationships to the research questions. Chapter Five will outline limitations of the current study and recommendations for future research on similar subject matter.

Question 1: Question one was “The NFL has launched several diversity initiatives in the last few years to improve the representation of racial and ethnic minorities and women in the league headquarters and among the teams. What do you think of the current programs in place? Have they been effective?”

I found it rather interesting that two of the participants were unaware of any of the initiatives put in place. Not all of these initiatives are necessarily “new.” For example, in May 2011, the league inaugurated the Women’s Interactive Network, a networking group for employees. Those of the subjects that thought the initiatives had been successful, referenced some sort of “Rooney Rule” for women. That initiative wasn’t listed in the question and is one of several diversity initiatives among the NFL. Specific diversity initiatives weren’t listed, to gain an understanding of which initiatives each participant were aware of. Participants also suggested that several years needed to go by until we had a better idea of the initiatives effectiveness. However, several of these initiatives have been in place since 2011. Only three of the participants stated that the programs have been successful – while a majority were unaware of didn’t see them as being successful. I do see optimism that diversity within the NFL will

improve in the coming years, but the fact is, it hasn't drastically improved yet and it would be hasty to declare these initiatives and programs successful.

Question 2: Question two was "Within the NFL there are no female team presidents or general managers. Women hold 21 percent of senior administrative positions (PR Director, Chief Legal Counsel, Assistant General Manager, etc). Women hold 30.7 percent of management positions within the NFL. What do you think of these statistics? Do you think they are low, high or average?"

Two of the subjects seemed defensive in that, numbers could be spun however the person presenting them would like and comparing the numbers to averages in other industries. It was interesting that S9 brought up the "Rooney-like Rule" in a negative context, in that it isn't effective. Two of the subjects who were most critical of the diversity in the NFL were male. These two participants referenced the numbers being low and women needing more mentoring, sponsorship, development programs. It was insightful to see that two of the participants felt the need to make a comparison, all on their own, to other industries, as if to say – "Well it's not just the NFL that's like this." That appears to imply that the numbers aren't great, but are the reality throughout the industries. The Rooney Rule for women was enacted in 2016, yet one participant has already deemed it unsuccessful. Although women are directly affected by these statistics, it was two of the male participants that felt the complete lack of support for these women.

Question 3: Are there different expectations for women versus men in leadership positions within your sport's organization? (Examples: Family expectations, time commitment, etc)?

Seven of the participants believed that expectations were essentially the same for women as for men. Two of the participants that saw the expectations for women differently were both

female. These women both brought up motherhood in their responses. The one male subject that saw expectations as different also mentioned “family responsibilities” on female workers. Previous studies such as Eagly & Carli, 2007 and Kamphoff, 2006, found that family commitments and motherhood were the main reasons for women leaving the profession. I believe the responses of this question indicate a similar finding, and a belief that there needs to be a different process for mothers and more lenient schedules for those with family commitments.

Question 4: Question four was “What leadership traits do you believe women (in particular) bring to an NFL organizations?”

Three participants thought that women bring the same traits as men. The seven others listed traits such as: courage, listening skills, engaging others, diversity of thought, great ideas, empathy, people perspective, collaboration, and a focus on the team. These answers are insightful, yet several of the words are stereotypical feminine-specific traits, such as empathy. S9 went the opposite way and identified male-dominated teams as competitive and distrustful. The question was focused on female traits, but S9 compared positive female traits to negative male trait to emphasize the importance of female leaders. The results of this question indicate that those in a hiring role, do identify and appreciate the value that women bring to the profession.

Question 5: According to the 2016 Racial and Gender Report Card, the NFL achieved a C+ for gender hiring practices, with a score of 76 percent, an increase from 75 percent in 2015. Has the state of diversity in the NFL improved or not improved during your time working in a hiring role?

This question brought split responses. S2 offered up that the state of diversity has improved since his start in the NFL in 1998. That's a very broad timeline and doesn't offer a lot of perspective on the current state of the NFL's diversity. I find it interesting that another reoccurring theme is that things "are changing" but will be better in a few more years. That length of time isn't an effective method of evaluating the state of diversity in the NFL, as a shorter time span would more accurately portray the progress. It is simple to say that things "will improve" or "have improved" but on what scale did they or will they improve? In a league of thousands of employees, a one percent increase isn't a drastic increase.

Question 6: Question six was "When a female (candidate) isn't hired for a senior level position within an NFL organization, what are some of the reasons they are passed over?"

I did find it unique that two of the subjects deferred from answering this question, whether it be because of lack of experience or because each situation is different. Overwhelmingly, the response to this question was lack of experience or better qualified candidates. That appeared to be the safe response, whether true or not. S9 brought up a specific perspective, that women are passed over because they didn't grow up in a football setting and try to compete with a conceptual understanding of the position. This is telling, especially because one of the most notable females hired in the NFL, Jennifer Welter, was a football player for the Indoor Football League. This data helped to answer research questions number two and three, in why women are passed over for leadership roles and which traits they lack.

Question 7: Question seven was "In your experience, have women/do women face a more difficult process in being hired for or elevating into leadership roles?"

Three females and one male stated that they thought women face a more difficult process in being hired or elevating into a leadership role. S6 hinted at the diversity initiatives being lip

service, instead of actual action. She also mentioned the reoccurring theme of “motherhood” being a reason for the lack of women in leadership roles. This data answers research question four, in addressing the differing expectations of women versus men in the sports management field. Two participants believe that motherhood and family commitments were reasons for women having difficulty moving up in the field. In question six, a majority of respondents noted that women have been passed over for positions because they aren’t qualified. However, four participants believe that women face a more difficult process in being hired or elevating into leadership roles.

Question 8: Question eight was “Do you feel like you have ever seen or been a part of a situation where a candidate was not hired because of gender for a senior leader position? Would you care to explain?”

Nine of the participants hadn’t had any experience with this. I was expecting this result, as this is a very touchy subject area. What I wasn’t expecting was participant S1’s experience. This was a case of a male not elevating to a leadership position because of his gender. You don’t often hear cases such as this in the world, but they should not be overlooked. This type of situation would be a negative effect of the Rooney Rule and shows its ineffectiveness. I was hoping the data collected through this question would help to answer research question one, about how gender factors into the hiring process. However, many didn’t offer up scenarios and the only insight received was that of reverse discrimination, which assumably seems to be a rare occurrence within the league.

Reflection

Throughout this research process, I identified several steps that I would have done differently if I were to complete the study again. I was unaware of the timetable on this research when first starting. I contacted the survey participants too early. They agreed to take part in the research study months before it began. Therefore, when the time came to complete the research, the participants weren't all available or easily reached. I had to search to find enough participants to gain a meaningful sample of responses to identify themes. I also wish I would have given myself more time to interview the participants through phone call or video chat. With such little time, I relied on receiving the results through an online form. I missed out on the respondents' emotions, nonverbal reactions, and verbal cues by completing the research through this method. I believe the participants would have been more forthcoming with their responses if there had been an in-person feel during the process. The participants may have felt safer in giving me truthful answers and I would have been able to guide the interview more effectively and gain the insight I was looking for.

For the sake of time, I opened my search to subjects outside the "human resources" department. I did find that it isn't always the human resources professionals that handle the hiring of leadership positions within NFL organizations. In my study, I had a mix of human resources employees (who seemed to have less information) and a mix of senior level administrators (who had participated in a hiring/promoting process). If I could do it over again, I would have stuck to one group – either human resources employees or senior level administrators within organizations. Although both perspectives were insightful, it provided a wide variety of information and made it tougher to identify reoccurring themes.

Overall, the data collected from these surveys can be categorized into three overlying themes. The first is, there has been improvement in gender diversity within the NFL and NFL

organizations, but it differs by organization, department and type of role. More drastic improvement is expected to come in the next 5-10 years. The second is, women who are passed over for promotions or hiring, are lacking qualifications or experience, yet it is often difficult for women to gain that experience, as there is a lack of female development pipelines and mentorship. Motherhood and family-life plays a role in women exiting the sports management field. The third is, women bring a wide variety of essential traits and benefits to a sports organization, that are recognized and valued by both sexes.

Future Research Recommendations

Future research about female leadership in sports organizations should focus more specifically on a team-by-team basis. The research in my study was often negated because as several participants pointed out – each NFL organization/team is different. One’s organizational processes and standards may differ from another’s and it would be insightful to see the perspectives on female leadership at a more in-depth institutional level. Future research should break up the “football” side from the “administrative” side of NFL leadership, as they are quite different in diversity and standards. Future studies should focus on the hiring of females for the higher-ranking officials within the various NFL organizations, as team presidents, general managers, vice presidents, and CEOs hold more power and if truthful, offer more insight into the methods of hiring within the NFL.

Summary

Results of this study support many of the stereotypical thoughts on the hiring and diversity of females within leadership positions in the NFL. While some maintain the “it is

better” or “it’s getting better” perspective, there are just as many that believe it either hasn’t improved or that the progress made so far isn’t enough. While many studies have examined females in sports organizations, few have focused on the NFL and on the hiring managers, versus the employees or interviewees. This study provided viewpoints from those sitting across the table, in the position of doing the hiring. Through continued investigation into female leaders in sports organizations, we can create transparency on both sides of the hiring process and continue to close the gender gap and improve diversity within traditionally “male-dominated” professions within sports organizations.

REFERENCES

- Acosta, V., & Carpenter, L. (2008). Women in intercollegiate sports (Rep.). Retrieved November 13, 2016, from [http://webpages.charter.net/womeninsport/2008 Summary Final.pdf](http://webpages.charter.net/womeninsport/2008%20Summary%20Final.pdf)
- Acosta, V., & Carpenter, L. (2012). Women in intercollegiate sports (Rep.). Retrieved November 13, 2016, from <http://acostacarpenter.org/AcostaCarpenter2012.pdf>
- Ballaro, J., & O'Neil, M. (2013). Transformational and transactional leadership behaviors: A phenomenological study of women executives in Major League Sports (Unpublished master's thesis, 2013). University of Phoenix. Retrieved November 11, 2016, from http://www.tesu.edu/documents/ILJ_Winter_2013.pdf#page=46
- Barragan, R. (2015). Sport participation, gender schema, athletic identity, and internalized homophobia in lesbian women (Unpublished master's thesis, 2015). Walden University. Retrieved November 22, 2016, from <http://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2373&context=dissertations>
- Belson, K. (2014, September 25). N.F.L. examines Its record on hiring of women in wake of Ray Rice case. Retrieved November 23, 2016, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/26/sports/football/nfl-examines-its-record-on-hiring-of-women-in-wake-of-ray-rice-case.html>

- Campbell, A., Shirley, L., & Candy, J. (2004, February 7). A longitudinal study of gender-related cognition and behavior. (Published master's thesis, 2004). Retrieved October 20, 2016, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15323112>
- Carlson, J., and R. Ray. "Feminist Theory - Sociology - Oxford Bibliographies - Obo." Oxford Bibliographies. N.p., 27 July 2011. Web. 14 Sept. 2016.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Crust, Lee, and Ian Lawrence. "A review of leadership in sport: Implications for football management." Athletic Insight. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Oct. 2016.
- Denzin, N. K. (1978). The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Dusenbery, M., & Lee, J. (2012, June 22). Charts: The state of women's athletics, 40 years after Title IX. Retrieved September 08, 2016, from <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/06/charts-womens-athletics-title-nine-ncaa>
- Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2007). Through the labyrinth: The truth about how women become leaders. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Eagly, A., & Diekmann, A. (2005). What is the problem? Prejudice as an attitude-in-context (Unpublished master's thesis, 2005). Retrieved November 26, 2016, from https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=Tzdse30AAAAJ&citation_for_view=Tzdse30AAAAJ:qjMakFHDy7sC
- Eagly, A., & Karau, S. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. Retrieved November 27, 2016, from http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~search1/pdf/Eagley_Role_Conguity_Theory.pdf

- Frank, V. (2016, September 13). NFL names Sam Rapoport Director Of Football Development. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/vincentfrank/2016/09/13/nfl-names-sam-raपोport-director-of-football-development/#4df6c51811d3>
- Fulmer, A. K. (2012). Examining the leadership style and sustainability of two female head coaches at a Southeastern Land-Grant University (Published master's thesis).
- Galloway, B. J. (2013). The glass ceiling: Examining leadership perceptions within the domain of athletic administration (Published master's thesis, 2013). Eastern Michigan University. Retrieved November 26, 2016.
- Gender constancy. (n.d.). Retrieved November 27, 2016, from <http://www.healthofchildren.com/G-H/Gender-Constancy.html>
- Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. (1967). The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research. Chicago: Aldine.
- Goldstein, S., & Naglieri, J. A. (2011). Encyclopedia of Child Behavior and Development. Boston, MA: Springer Science Business Media, LLC.
- Harding, Sandra G. Feminism and Methodology: Social Science Issues. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987. Print.
- Hoff, LA. "Collaborative feminist research and the myth of objectivity. | POPLINE.org." Collaborative feminist research and the myth of objectivity. | POPLINE.org. N.p., 1988. Web. 14 Sept. 2016.
- Kamphoff, C. (2006). Bargaining with patriarchy: Former women coaches' experiences and their decision to leave collegiate coaching (Unpublished master's thesis, 2006). Retrieved November 15, 2016, from <https://libres.uncg.edu/ir/uncg/f/umi-uncg-1242.pdf>

- Kamphoff, C. S. (2010). Bargaining with patriarchy: Former female coaches' experiences and their decision to leave collegiate coaching. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 81(3), 360-72. Retrieved from <http://wsuproxy.mnpals.net/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/751606035?accountid=15069>
- Lapchick, R. (2005, May 24). The 2004 Racial and Gender Report Card: National Football League (Rep.). Retrieved November 22, 2016, from The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports website: <http://nebula.wsimg.com/6f82cfee62817955a4103f404d2e56a2?AccessKeyId=DAC3A56D8FB782449D2A&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>
- LaVoi, N. (2014). Head coaches of women's collegiate teams (Rep.). Retrieved from http://www.cehd.umn.edu/tuckercenter/library/docs/research/2014-15_REPORT_Head-Coaches-of-Womens-Collegiate-Teams.pdf
- "Leadership Theories - In chronological order." Leadership-Central.com. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 Oct. 2016.
- Lemert, E. M. (1951). *Social pathology; a systematic approach to the theory of sociopathic behavior*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Light, A. (2013). How are student athletes perceiving female coaches (Unpublished master's thesis, 2013). St. John Fisher College. Retrieved November 22, 2016, from http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1087&context=sport_undergrad
- Lovelin, M., & Hanold, M. (2011). *Female sport leaders' perceptions of leadership and management: Skills and attitudes for success* (Unpublished master's thesis, 2011). Seattle University. Retrieved October 22, 2016.

- Lowry, C., & Lovett, D. (1988, July). The role of gender in leadership positions in female sport programs in Texas colleges. (Master's thesis, 1988). Journal of Sports Management.
- Malveaux, C., Davison, E., & Grant, C. (2016, September 28). The 2016 Racial and Gender Report Card: National Football League (Rep.). Retrieved November 22, 2016, from The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports website:
<http://nebula.wsimg.com/1abf21ec51fd8dafbecfc2e0319a6091?AccessKeyId=DAC3A56D8FB782449D2A&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>
- Mark, J. (n.d.). Labyrinth. Retrieved November 26, 2016, from <http://www.ancient.eu/Labyrinth/>
- Maslanka, A. M. (2004, December). Evolution of leadership theories (Published master's thesis, 2004). Grand Valley State University. Retrieved November 26, 2016, from <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1627&context=theses>
- Massengale, D. (2009). The underrepresentation of women in interscholastic sport leadership: A qualitative study on the effects of role incongruity (Published master's thesis, 2009). Retrieved November 12, 2016, from <http://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1079&context=thesesdissertations>
- Messmore, T. (1995). Women 's leadership in the sports field (Unpublished master's thesis, 1995). University of Richmond. Retrieved November 17, 2016, from <http://scholarship.richmond.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1730&context=masters-theses>
- MSG Management Study Guide. (n.d.). Retrieved November 27, 2016, from <http://www.managementstudyguide.com/trait-theory-of-leadership.htm>
- Newel, B. (2007, August). The relationship of coaches' leadership styles and gender to performance outcomes and academic performance in college basketball (Unpublished master's thesis,

2007). Retrieved November 20, 2016, from http://humboldt-dspace.calstate.edu/bitstream/handle/2148/292/Entire_Thesis.pdf?...

O'keeffe, Michael. "She's playing in a man's world: Poseluzny's knocking down PSAL doors." NY Daily News. N.p., 2004. Web. 06 Oct. 2016.

Paton, R. A., & McCalman, J. (2008). *Change management: A guide to effective implementation*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Pauline, G. (2012). Celebrating 40 years of Title IX. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 83(8), 4-56. doi:10.1080/07303084.2012.10598818

"Principles of Management, v. 1.0." Flat world knowledge. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 Oct. 2016.

Renzetti, Claire M. *Feminist Criminology*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. Print.

Robbins, S. P., & Coulter, M. K. (2002). *Management*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Rodak, Mike. "Bills Hire NFL's First Full-time Female Assistant." ESPN.com. N.p., 21 Jan. 2016. Web. 06 Oct. 2016.

Schoenberger, L. (2015). *The role of mentoring in the advancement of women in coaching* (Unpublished master's thesis, 2015). Ithaca College. Retrieved November 20, 2016, from http://digitalcommons.ithaca.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1140&context=ic_theses

Simmons, K. (2011). *Women in top management positions in the sport industry: Breaking down the barriers and stereotypes* (Unpublished master's thesis). St. John Fisher College.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1994). "Grounded Theory Methodology." In NK Denzin & YS Lincoln (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 217-285). Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications.

Thompson, Linda. *Feminist methodology for family studies*. 1st ed. Vol. 54. N.p.: National Council on Family Relations, n.d. Print.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2016). *State & county Quickfacts: Allegany County, N.Y.* Retrieved January 25, 2007, from <http://quickfacts.census.gov>.

Yiamouyiannis, A., & Moorman, A. (2008). The under representation of women as coaches of men's collegiate sport teams: (Unpublished master's thesis, 2008). Retrieved November 17, 2016, from https://www.nassm.com/files/conf_abstracts/2008-388.pdf