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Full Length Research Paper

Career Experiences of Women Working in Paralympic Sport Organizations Internationally

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify and understand the career factors considered important for women working in leadership positions in the Paralympic Movement. This study relied on in-depth interviews and demographic information as the primary means of collecting data. Formal semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 participants who have worked in leadership positions in the Paralympic Movement for a minimum of 5 years. The three parts of the interview were (a) personal life history including demographics and career path, (b) career experiences including the most/least enjoyable and greatest challenges as a woman working in the Paralympic Movement, and (c) career aspirations and career advice. The results provide insight into the career challenges and work climate for women working in Paralympic sport.

Keywords: Women , Paralympic sport, Social Role Theory

Introduction

A major international sporting event people around the world anticipate and enjoy watching is the Olympic Games. Elite athletes who represent their countries gather in a spirit of competition and fair play in hopes of making the medal podium and hearing their nation's anthem played. Another major sporting event follows the Olympic Games by two weeks and in the same city and same venues - the Paralympic Games. At the Summer Paralympic Games, over 4000 elite athletes with physical disabilities compete on the world stage just as their Olympic counterparts did a few weeks earlier.

The Paralympic Games are a rapidly growing part of a greater industry known as the sport industry. The sport industry includes specific segments such as professional sport, intercollegiate athletics, scholastic sport, facility management, event management, and international sport. The sport industry is traditionally considered a male dominated industry (Bower & Hums, 2009; Burton, Barr, Fink, & Bruening 2009; Burton, Borland, & Mazerolle, 2012; Burton, Grappendorf, & Henderson, 2011). The under-representation of women within sports organizations has received considerable attention (Inglis, Danylchuk, & Pastore, 1996, 2000; Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). Researchers indicate that women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions in intercollegiate

athletics (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012; Bower & Hums, 2014; Hancock, 2012; Lapchick, 2010), interscholastic sport (Ladda, 2007; Mather, 2007; Whisenant, Pedersen, & Obenour, 2002), campus recreation (Bower, 2004), health and fitness (Bower & Coffee, 2007), professional sports (Hums & Sutton, 1998; Itoh, 2014; Itoh & Hums, 2014; McDonogh, 2007) and international sport (Hums, Barr, & Döll-Tepper, 1998; Hums, Moorman, & Nakazawa, 1998; IOC, 2012; Itoh, Hums, Bower, & Moorman, 2013). According to Strawbridge (2000), national and international sports organizations made slow progress incorporating women into leadership positions. The first two female members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) were not elected until 1981 (IOC, 2012), and for 87 years the IOC was exclusively male (Davenport, 1996). Henry and White (2006) conducted research to provide information and evaluate progress on the implementation of IOC policies related to women's leadership in the Olympic Movement. However, there is limited research on women's leadership in Paralympic Movement (Döll-Tepper, 2005; Hums & Moorman, 2001; Sharp Center for Women and Girls, 2013), and it is important to understand the limitations and barriers women face in leadership positions in the rapidly expanding Paralympic Movement.

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) (2012) announced that a record number of women took part in the

London 2012 Paralympic Games and new events will be available for women to compete in at the 2020 Tokyo Summer Paralympic Games in taekwondo and badminton (BBC, 2015). While strides have been made for female athletes, work remains to be done on the leadership side despite IPC efforts to increase the number of women in leadership positions over a decade ago. In 2002, the IPC formed its Women in Sport Committee in response to the issue of gender equity within the Paralympic Movement. The Committee was established to address the low number of female athletes and events in the Paralympic Games as well as the lack of women in coaching, officiating, and leadership positions. The role of the Women in Sport Committee is “to advocate for the full inclusion of girls and women at all levels of Paralympic sport, to identify barriers that restrict participation, to recommend policies and initiatives that address these barriers, and to oversee the implementation of initiatives to increase participation” (IPC, 2010, p. 4). The language “at all levels” applies not only to athletes, but leaders as well. Although achieving equality on the field of play is a main priority, there is a low representation of females in leadership positions in Paralympic sport (IPC, 2010).

It is important to address the lack of representation of women in leadership positions in the Paralympic Movement for a number of reasons. First, sport and physical activity for people with disabilities generally is becoming more relevant internationally. This is illustrated by the fact that the 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities contains specific language related to sport and physical activity (Hums, Wolff, & Legg, 2014). Second, Paralympic sport, just as any other sport industry segment, needs to become more inclusive of women in leadership positions (IPC, 2009). In 2003, the IPC General Assembly adopted a policy stating that the IPC, National Paralympic Committees, International Organizations of Sport for the Disabled, and sport entities belonging to the Paralympic Movement should immediately establish a goal that women hold 30% of all offices in their decision-making structures by 2009 (IPC, 2009). Though many member organizations missed the target deadline, the number of female representatives has increased. According to the IPC Women in Sport Committee (2008), the percentage of women in leadership positions is as follows: 19% of positions within all IPC decision making, 29% of IPC Standing Committees and Councils, 10% of the leadership positions within the IPC Governing Board and National Paralympic Committees’ leadership structures. In 2008, 17% of NPC staff was women, and that number rose to 23% in 2010 (IPC, 2012). Also only 11% of countries have women as Presidents of their respective NPCs (Sharp Center for Girls and Women, 2013). As of 2015, three women are on the IPC governing board - Ann Cody of the United States, Rita van Driel of Netherlands, and Hyang-Sook Jang of South Korea (IPC, n.d.).

Women in the Paralympic Movement likely face barriers similar to women in other segments of the sport industry such as women’s underrepresentation in higher levels in sport

organization (Knoppers, Bedker Meyer, Ewing, & Forrest, 1990; Sartore, & Cunningham, 2007), in athletic administration (Burton, Grappendorf, & Henderson, 2011), and face the so-called old boys network (Bower & Hums, 2009; Hancock, 2012; Schein, 2001; Shaw, 2006). It is important to acknowledge these barriers and consider recommendations to overcome them.

Career Barriers

Gender can be an obstacle to women in their careers. Since employers tend to select people with masculine characteristics as leaders, it may lead to the perception that women are not identified as suitable to hold leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Swanson and Woitke (1997) defined barriers as events or conditions that make career progress difficult. Women seeking employment in male-dominated professions face many barriers that decrease their chances of obtaining leadership positions.

Hayes (1985) defined non-traditional and male-dominated occupations as those having less than 30-34% women in their ranks. As mentioned in the previous section, the sport industry is considered a male-dominated industry. Women who are eager to become leaders usually face unique challenges in addition to what male leaders have to face (McCauley & Van Velsor, 2004). In the business setting, “homologous reproduction” and the “old boy’s network” are common barriers women face during their career development. Stangl and Kane (1991) explained, “Homologous reproduction is a process whereby dominants reproduce themselves based on social and/or physical characteristics” (p. 47). A “boys’ network” refers to organizations that have traditionally been male-dominated. These organizations are typified by male-dominated culture, atmosphere, and traditions (Schein, 2001). According to Brass (1985), “because men have historically dominated high-level hierarchical positions, women are less likely to be included in these informal, high-level interactions” (p. 329). There is definitely an old boys’ network where women face difficulties in order to get accepted.

Previous studies have identified barriers to women’s career development in the sport industry especially in intercollegiate athletics, including (a) old boys’ network (Bower & Hums, 2009; Hancock, 2012; Schein, 2001; Shaw, 2006), (b) homologous reproduction (Aicher & Sagas, 2009; Whisenant et al., 2002), (c) work-life balance issues (Bruening et al., 2008; Bruening & Dixon, 2007; Dixon & Bruening, 2007; Sagas & Cunningham, 2004) and (d) gender role stereotypes and perceptions of gendered opportunities (Burton et al., 2009; Burton et al., 2011; Grappendorf et al., 2004; Grappendorf et al., 2008). Sartore and Cunningham (2007) addressed how these “gender discrimination and stereotype factors become obstacles to women who have careers in athletics because “they obstruct the development of women’s identity as leaders and have consequences for self-limiting behaviors” (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007, as cited in Itoh, 2014, p. 11). In addition to

these barriers, women's careers are also at times influenced by social role theory.

Social Role Theory

Eagly (1987) defined social role theory as notions that "are more than beliefs about the attributes of women and men: Many of these expectations are normative in the sense that they describe qualities or behavioral tendencies believed to be desirable for each sex" (p. 13). Since men's and women's expectations are gendered, social role theory can be used to better explain gender stereotypes and expectations. Gender role is explained as the expectations and behaviors of men and women in society (Eagly, 1987). The negative and unfavorable expectations of women's abilities to perform a task are deeply related to traditional gender stereotypes. According to many studies, women are perceived to be less effective leaders whereas men are perceived to be more effective leaders who are suited for decision-making tasks (Eagly & Carli, 2007). This perception that women lack leadership abilities creates a barrier that discourages them from taking on managerial positions, regardless of their self-esteem.

It is evident that women face career barriers in the workplace, including in the various segments of the sport industry. Few formal scholarly studies of careers of women working in the management of Paralympic Sport have been undertaken (Döll-Tepper, 2005; Hess, n.d., Hums & Moorman, 2001; Sharp Center for Girls and Women, 2013). Given the dearth of information about women in the management of Paralympic sport, this current study attempted to establish basic information about women working in leadership positions in Paralympic sport.

Method

Study Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study, therefore, was to explore and understand the experiences of women working in leadership positions in the Paralympic Movement. The present study investigated one central question: What is the experience of being a woman working in a Paralympic sport organization?

Study Design

The researchers chose a qualitative research design to examine the experiences of women working in Paralympic sport organizations for several reasons. First, most existing research on women's sport industry work experience has been conducted from the North American perspective of intercollegiate coaches (Bruening & Dixon, 2007; Dixon & Bruening, 2005, 2007; Inglis, Danylchuk, & Pastore, 2000), intercollegiate administrators (Burton & Peachey, 2009; Peachey & Burton, 2011), and professional sports (Hums & Sutton, 1999), and was quantitative in nature. This qualitative study examined the career experiences of women working in Paralympic sport from the perspective of women holding leadership positions in Paralympic sport organizations.

Utilizing a qualitative design allowed for a naturalistic, interpretive approach of inquiry (Denzin, 1994; Patton, 2002). The researchers gathered data in the natural world as opposed to experimental laboratory conditions, quasi-experimental designs, problematic sampling strategies, or using groups to compare interventions (Ross & Rallis, 2003). This approach to inquiry does not remove participants from their everyday world and seeks to understand their lived experiences (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). A qualitative design is useful in for "documenting how structures shape individual experiences, and also how individuals create, change, or penetrate the structure that exists" (Glesne, 2011, p. 39).

The interpretive approach allowed the researchers to focus on description, analysis, and interpretation as opposed to a quantitative approach that attempts to control and predict (Ross & Rallis, 2003). Specifically, the phenomenological tradition was the particular qualitative research genre used for the study. Creswell (1998) described a phenomenological study as "the meaning of lived experiences for several individuals about a concept of the phenomenon" (p.51). Since a phenomenological study is composed of in-depth, exploratory interviews as its main means of collecting data (Ross & Rallis, 2003), a greater understanding of participants and the meaning they make of their experience provided a "thick description" as opposed to quantifiable data.

The exploratory nature of the study allowed participants to explain their experience of being a female leader in a Paralympic sports organization. Patton (1998) explains that exploratory research is used "because sufficient information is not available to permit the use of quantitative measures and experimental designs" (p.37). With little previous research conducted on women's leadership in Paralympic organizations, the researchers explored these female leaders' experiences and work environments to gain insights about their roles in their organizations.

Finally, the use of an emergent design allowed the researchers to avoid imposing a rigid framework on the design of the study. Researchers can make changes to the conceptual framework and guiding questions during the study.

Phenomenological Genre

The phenomenological genre uses a specialized interview technique in searching to define the meaning of lived experiences for several individuals about a concept of the phenomenon (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), a "phenomenology assumes that shared experiences have an effable structure and essence. Interviewing elicits people's stories about their lives" (p. 190). Van Manen (1997) further noted that there are two purposes of the phenomenological interview including, (a) "a means for exploring and gathering experiential narrative material for developing richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon" (p. 66), and (b) "a vehicle to develop a conversational relation with a partner (interviewee) about the

meaning of an experience” (p. 66). Further, a phenomenological design utilizes in-depth, exploratory interviews as its primary means of collecting data (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). This type of interviewing allows the meaning relationship to be examined in an exploratory nature, providing a greater understanding of women’s career experiences (Patton, 2002)

Participants

The research participants were selected using purposeful sampling. According to Ross and Rallis (2003), purposeful sampling provides the researcher with “ reasons (purposes) for selecting specific participants, events, processes” (p.137). In addition, according to Patton, “information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p. 46).

Female leaders in Paralympic sport organizations were contacted for participation in the study. The researchers contacted participants from the list of official Paralympic sports organization and participants from the researchers’ knowledge and connections within Paralympic sport. A total of 10 women working in leadership positions in Paralympic sport were interviewed. The researchers identified these professionals based on the following criterion: they had worked in leadership positions in the Paralympic Movement for a minimum of 5 years. Miles and Huberman (1994) defined this type of sampling as criterion sampling. According to Miles and Huberman, criterion sampling works when all individuals participating represent people who have experienced phenomenon forming the basis of the study. Criterion sampling means that each person meets a specific condition required for participation in the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Creswell (2007), and Marshall and Rossman (2011) also recommended criterion sampling because the qualitative design requires participation from individuals who have worked in similar environments. Further, the use of sampling criteria aids in the trustworthiness of the study.

Sample Size

The sample size for this research project was ten. This sample size was based on the recommendations for phenomenological study. Polkinghorne (1989) recommended that researchers interview from 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon. Other researchers suggest two criteria for determining the number of the participants for a phenomenological study. Siedman (2006) labeled the first criterion as sufficiency. “Are there sufficient numbers to reflect the range of participants and sites that make up the population so others outside the sample might have a chance to connect to the experiences of those in it? ” (p. 47). The second criterion is saturation of the information (Creswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Saturation of the information is “a point in a study at which the interviewer begins to hear the same information reported” (Seidman, 1998, p. 48).

Access and Entry

According to Creswell (2007), “in a phenomenological study, the access issue is limited to finding individuals who have experienced the phenomenon and gaining their written permission to be studied” (p.154). Creswell (2007) indicated, “Gaining access to the site or individuals also involves several steps regardless of the approach to inquiry” (p.152).

Permission to conduct a study on human subjects was obtained through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the researchers’ home institution. Ethical issues as they pertain to the protecting participants are of paramount concern (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2002). Following IRB approval, the researchers contacted qualified participants via email to schedule an interview.

Interested participants received a letter describing the purpose and procedures of the study. Next, the researchers scheduled interviews with each participant during the month of March, April and May. Then, at the initial interview, the participants received information describing the purpose and procedure of the study. The researchers proceeded with the interviews after each participant signed an informed consent form. In addition, to maintain confidentiality, the researchers assigned each participant a pseudonym by which she is referred to in the results of this study. The researchers notified participants that identifying information such as organization, country, or race would not be directly linked to their participation in this study. The researchers informed participants about how the data would be handled, stored, and disseminated.

Finally, the researchers described measures taken to ensure the secure storage of research related documents such as interview transcripts, resumes, or job descriptions. The researchers stored participant files in locked cabinets in their respective home offices. The researchers stored electronic transcripts of interviews and other electronic correspondence with participants on password-protected computers.

Pilot Study and Expert Panel

A pilot study consisted of one person from an international Paralympic sport organization. The wording of interview questions was revised from the results of the pilot study. Since this was an emergent design, questions were added at the completion of each interview. The researchers used an expert panel comprised of sport management faculty members and as well as other faculty members with expertise in interview question and protocol development. The proposed interview questions were distributed to the panel members, and the researchers asked for their feedback regarding the questions. They were asked to make suggestions to improve the readability and functionality of the interview questions.

Data Collection

In qualitative studies, multiple sources of data are typically collected (Creswell, 2007). Data collection from multiple sources provides a more holistic account of the problem or issue being studied (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2011; Marshall &

Rossman, 2011). Collecting data from multiple sources aids in the triangulation of data. Triangulation “is the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). A data source may include an interview, a document, or an observation.

The questions for this study were utilized in previous studies examining women’s careers in other segments of the sport industry including campus recreation (Bower, Hums, & Keedy, 2006), professional baseball and professional basketball (Hums & Sutton, 1999), sport for people with disabilities (Hums & Moorman, 2001), intercollegiate athletics (Bower & Hums, 2013), and international physical educators (Bower, 2009).

We relied on in-depth interviews and demographic information as the primary sources of data. Formal semi-structured interviews were conducted until saturation of the data was reached. A total of 10 women working in leadership positions in Paralympic sport were interviewed. The women worked in leadership positions in the Paralympic Movement for a minimum of 5 years. The methodology for this study used a modified three-interview series technique (Bower & Hums, 2009; Siedman, 1981). The interviews took place in one designated time period, with breaks between question sets. The three parts of the interview were (a) personal life history including demographics and career path, (b) career experiences including the most/ least enjoyable and greatest challenges as a women working in the Paralympic Movement, and (c) career aspirations and career advice. Each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The researchers relied on in-depth interviews as the primary means of data collection. Demographic information was collected using forms developed by the researchers. The researchers used a background data collection form to determine the following for each participant: (a) gender, (b) age, (c) race, (d) highest level of education obtained, (e) current job title, (f) the type of organization for which they worked, and (g) the number of years they worked at each position. Additionally participants were asked about their work experience in three areas: (a) in Paralympic sports organizations, (b) in the sport industry outside Paralympic sports organizations, (c) and outside of the sports industry.

The participants were asked the following questions about their experience working in Paralympic sports organizations:

1. What is the best part about being a woman working in Paralympic sports organizations?
2. What is the hardest part about being a woman working in Paralympic sports organizations?
3. What were the biggest challenges you faced as a woman working in Paralympic sports organizations?
4. What are your career goals in the next 3-5 years?
5. What is your ultimate career goal?

6. What advice would you give women wanting to pursue careers in Paralympic sports organizations?

Data Organization

The data were transcribed following each interview. The researchers organized each transcript by the interviewee’s pseudonym and kept a list of data collected throughout the study. They also kept notes following interview and wrote down analytic ideas throughout the study in a journal.

Files were created for each participant in the study and included a contact summary form (Miles & Huberman, 1994), field notes collected during and written after the interview, participant documents (i.e., resume, signed informed consent), and an interview transcript. The researchers recorded dates, times, and locations on field notes, documents, and interview transcripts. Understanding when and where certain information was obtained provides a more holistic picture of the observation experience for a particular field session. In addition, organization of the data allows for more efficient analysis and enhanced trustworthiness of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data Analysis

The research analysis was shaped by the phenomenological framework of the study. A phenomenological analysis requires the researcher to approach the data with an open mind while seeking what meanings and structures emerge (Heidegger, 1998). According to Van Manen (1990), “when we analyze a phenomenon, we are trying to determine what the themes are, the experiential structures that make up the experience” (p. 79). Thus, a categorical strategy of analysis was used for the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The categorizing strategies “identify similarities and differences among the data, coding and sorting them into appropriate categories” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 273).

Reducing the interview data is the first step in allowing a researcher to present the interview material, analyze it, and interpret it (Wolcott, 1994). The researchers used a simplified version of the methods discussed by Moustakas (1994) as follows:

1. First describe participant’s personal experience with phenomenon under study.
2. Then develop a list of significant statements.
3. Take the significant statements and then group them into larger units of information, called “meaning unit” or themes.
4. Write a description of “what” the participants in the survey experienced with the phenomenon.
5. Next write a description of “how” the experience happened. This is called “structural description,” and inquirer reflects on the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced.

6. Finally, write a composite description of the phenomenon incorporating both textual and structural descriptions. This passage is the “essence” of the experience and represents the culminating aspect of a phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994).

Trustworthiness of the Qualitative Data

The researchers used several techniques developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to establish trustworthiness of the study. The goal of trustworthiness with qualitative research is to produce findings “worth paying attention to” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). Four issues of trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility, or internal validity, reflects whether the research finding “represents a credible conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the participants’ original data” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296). Credibility can be established through authenticity or giving a “fair, honest and balanced account of social life from the viewpoint of someone who lives it every day” (Neuman, 2000, p. 31). The researchers attempted to ensure authenticity by recording the interviews and creating complete transcripts of their responses (McCracken, 1988). Collecting data over the course of interviews helps to ensure consistency with each participant's responses (Seidman, 2005). The researchers established categories and placed participant interview responses into broad classifications, which eventually lead to themes. Finally, the researchers incorporated member checking by reviewing the subsequent analysis with participants and asking them to verify the accuracy of the researchers’ interpretations.

Transferability, or external validity, represents the degree to which the findings apply or “transfer” beyond the present study and its participants. Transferability techniques include the use of thick description, whereby “the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard” (Denzin, 2001, p. 83). The researchers intend to present and publish the research findings, giving other researchers the opportunity to review the conclusions drawn or to replicate this study with other participants.

Dependability, or reliability, reflects the quality of the data collection, data analysis, and theory generation processes. Dependability can be strengthened via external auditing, or working with peers familiar with the study’s conceptual framework. These research peers can examine the interview transcripts, data analysis documents, field journals, and comments from member checking.

Confirmability reflects whether the researcher considered subjectivity within the context of the trustworthiness of the findings. Confirmability becomes a measure of how well the study's findings are supported by the data collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researchers helped establish confirmability by limiting bias and premature conclusions. The researchers also made a conscious effort to remain neutral in their verbal and non-verbal responses during the interviews.

Results and Discussion

Participants

The ten participants in this study all fit the criteria of having worked a minimum of five years in the Paralympic Movement. All of the participants were between 32-59 years of age. Eight of the ten were White and two were Asian. As an international sample was desired, in terms of geographic representation, four women were from North America, two from Europe, two from Asia, and two from Australia. A well-educated group, all ten had earned bachelor’s degrees, five had Masters degrees, and one had a doctorate. Nine of the ten indicated they had participated in organized sport, and three were former Paralympic athletes themselves.

Emergent Themes

After analyzing the participants’ response to the questions listed above, three distinct themes emerged: (a) social identity, (b) underrepresentation of women, and (c) work-family conflict. Each of these will be addressed in the following sections.

Theme 1: Social identity. Social identity influences the self-concept of affiliation, attachment, identification, and action to reflect “multiple selves” (Laverie & Arnett, 2000, p. 227). People can enhance their social identities via associations and affiliations with organizations (Underwood et al., 2001). Many women in this study identified themselves as being part of Paralympic Movement and its cause related aspects and other women identified themselves according to their Paralympic job titles. This is consistent with the thought that the concept of self considers multiple identities and draws connections between one’s self and one’s role in society (Laverie & Arnett, 2000).

For example, RD stated, “This is where my heart is and where my passion is – to work with the Paralympics” and MR concurred that the “Paralympic Movement is my passion. It is my blood and soul. Paralympics is (sic) everything for me.” LM commented, “I would love to continue to be part of Paralympic Movement. It’s a good group and I feel like I can have an impact there.” AC stated “I think the Paralympic Movement probably really complements my strengths as a professional and I think that also relates directly to my gender and my experience as a woman. And I also really enjoy working with the people who are drawn to and work in the Paralympic movement.”

Theme 2: Underrepresentation of women. A number of authors suggest that females are vastly under-represented in the upper echelons of sport organizations (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Hancock, 2012; Hums, Barr, & Döll-Tepper, 1998; Hums, Moorman, & Nakazawa, 1998; Itoh, Hums, Bower, & Moorman, 2013; Inglis, Danylchuk, & Pastore, 1996, 2000; Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). International Organizations of Sport for the Disabled (ISODs), and any other relevant sports organizations belonging to the Paralympic Movement, set a goal that women should make up 30% of their decision-making

structures by 2009 (IPC, 2009). Despite the fact that most organizations failed to achieve this target by the fixed deadline, the number of female representatives in each organization increased. According to the IPC Women in Sport Committee (2008), the percentage of women in leadership positions as of 2008 was as follows: 19% of positions within all IPC decision making, 29% of IPC Standing Committees and Councils, and 10% of the leadership positions within the IPC Governing Board and National Paralympic Committees' leadership structures.

Participants in this study indicated that one of the challenges of being a woman working in the Paralympic Movement is underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. This is in concert with what many other previous researchers on women's leadership in sport found.

The women in this study clearly articulated the lack of women in leadership roles in the Paralympic Movement. AC pointed out, "If you look at the IPC governing board level, the IPC General Assembly, we could use a lot more women participating as the delegates from their nations. We want the governing board, as an example, to have parity of representation of women and men. And right now there are three women (out of 15 members) serving on the governing board.... I'd like to see a woman be president of the IPC." LM added, "I would like to see more women presidents of National Paralympic Committees around the world. I would like to see, I know we're getting closer in terms of equity of events within the confines of the Games, but I would like to see us being better."

AC added her thoughts,

Let's look at the Paralympic Movement at the grassroots level as opposed to the Paralympic Movement maybe from the IPC governing board level. Because when I'm working at the grassroots level there are many more women leaders in those positions, you know running the Paralympic sport clubs, in communities running the youth sport teams and programs in communities. That really feels like home for so many reasons, because we have such a shared experience. Then if you look at the IPC governing board level, the IPC General Assembly, we could use a lot more women participating as the delegates from their nations. We want the governing board, as an example, to have parity of representation of women and men. And right now there are three women serving on the governing board. And I think two of us are going to be returning and running again. So encouraging other women to run, we're challenged by the fact that the national Paralympic Committees have their own structures. Usually they have democratic elections and the Secretary General and the President are elected to serve on the National Paralympic Committee. And those two are typically the people who come to the IPC General Assembly and engage at that level. So if those two people are men they're not likely to nominate a woman to run for the governing board because

they view themselves as the most qualified person to run for the governing board.

Theme 3: Work-family conflict. Dixon and Bruening (2005) defined work-family conflict as "a type of inter-role conflict wherein at least some work and family responsibilities are not compatible and have resultant effects on each domain" (p. 228). In addition, especially in male-dominated circumstances, gender stereotyping and apparent gender discrimination may become obstacles for women, and those obstacles must be overcome in order for women to persist in their leadership career (Eagly & Carli, 20007).

Participants in this study who had children stated the difficulty of work-family conflict. Other common issues connected to work-family conflict included planning children around the Paralympic Games cycle and organizational environmental considerations involving childcare and a family friendly environment.

AM stated this very clearly when she said, "You live your life in four year cycles. For women it is particularly challenging as well. As an athlete I kind of grew up that way, but having a child and going back to work has to be fit in that time. It's funny when I got pregnant, my friend told me that 'it is perfect timing for Rio.'" JL continued, "It was not as nearly easy as I had expected it going to be after (becoming a mother). There is no policy allowing breast feeding or supporting breast-feeding. They (my organization) were not flexible for a year, when I really needed the time as a Mom." ND added, "I can see myself staying until 2020, which is in seven years time and then I'll probably change again and change to a different type of organization probably." Finally, MR reflected how, "There is culture in Asia. When you are married, you have lots of blocks. Especially, husband, family, kids will never allow you to continue or do what you want in life. So, I chose my husband who understands I need to pursue my career. I do not have a child, that's my commitment."

On the other hand some women stated that, thanks to childcare systems in their countries, they could manage work-life balance. KL stated that "I'm on the right track but I do have to say that the organization I work for is extremely supportive of females in the workplace. Obviously they've given me the opportunity to be have my position which is amazing and I'm really looking forward to taking on the challenge. But from a personal point of view I'm a mother of a one year old which makes life fun at times. For myself along with those other girls who are in middle management and are also mothers, the flexibility of the working hours we are given is amazing. We wouldn't get this anywhere else I don't believe. They know that the girls they've got working for them are worth keeping and they have knowledge that's worth maintaining so they're really flexible and know that we'll do the right thing by the organization, I guess, by doing things like working from home and four day weeks and so on.

Implications

The study results provide insight into the career challenges and work climate for women working in Paralympic sport. Both practitioners and researchers can benefit from reading these results.

This information can prove to be useful to officials in the Paralympic Movement, and in particular to the IPC Women in Sport Committee, in meeting the IPC's goal of increasing women's participation in leadership positions. While some Paralympic sport organizations are meeting the IPC's goals for women's representation in leadership positions, others are not. Hearing the voices of women working in the Movement and their concerns could help drive policy considerations which could create more female-friendly work environments.

The results also provide researchers an insight into the status of the careers of women in leadership positions in a segment of the sport industry that has not yet been explored. As the Paralympic Movement is international in nature, this work provides a starting place for looking at women's careers in cross-cultural sport settings. Working with areas of the world where women's lives and inputs are simply less valued than men's creates systemic barriers. When it is challenging for women to move up in their native national organizations, their opportunities to represent on an international level are negatively impacted. Another area of inquiry could examine the retention of women through career phases in sport management by addressing the question, "Why do some women step up and some women step off?" A further area for study is the gender-disability intersection in sport. Some authors have examined this, but not from the administrative perspective (Burton et al., 2009; Burton et al., 2011; Grappendorf et al., 2004; Grappendorf et al., 2008). A final question is "Are women welcomed in sport for people with disabilities?" Since women are often seen as outsiders in the clubhouse of sport, as are people with disabilities, perhaps sport managers for organizations which work with a primarily underserved population (people with disabilities) could find ways be more open to diversifying their workforces and welcoming women.

Conclusion

Women are increasing their presence in the sport industry, although progress continues to be slow. The Paralympic Movement continues to grow on both national and international levels. Women can offer vibrant insights and talents to the Paralympic Movement and the sport industry in general. The voices of the women in this study offer an insider's perspective on the lives and careers of women working in management positions in this international segment of the sport industry.

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