

# Selecting a Career Path in Intercollegiate Athletics: How Practical Experience, Classroom Experience, and Gender Norms are Associated with a Student's Decision.



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## Abstract

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There is no clear career path for many practitioners in the intercollegiate athletic sport industry. With the diverse career options in the field of intercollegiate athletics, the need to develop a model to help both academics and practitioners set students up for success in the industry is apparent. In this paper, a conceptual model will be proposed that will address how practical experiences, classroom experiences, and perceived gender roles intricately influence a student's decision when selecting a career path in intercollegiate athletics. The conceptual model proposed in this manuscript applies social role theory to careers in intercollegiate sport. Future research can test the model to determine specific gender roles that are associated with career choice.

*Keywords: gender roles; careers; college athletics*

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## 1.Introduction

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There is no clear career path for many practitioners in the intercollegiate athletic sport industry. The diversity of such career paths is highlighted by research of the attempted application of Holland's Vocational Theory (Pierce & Johnson, 2017). The purpose of Holland's Vocational Theory is an attempt to understand how individuals place themselves into career paths in which they can use their skill sets. The premise is when an individual chooses to work in an environment in which he or she can apply his or her skills, the individual can be his or her most successful and happy. Although Holland's Vocational Theory has been found applicable to many career fields, its application to intercollegiate athletics was unsuccessful (Pierce & Johnson, 2017). This finding indicates that the many departments of intercollegiate athletics have separate and distinct disciplines, and prospective employees have different reasons for entering these various departments. For example, there are entry level positions in academic advising, athletic training, equipment management, facility management, life skills, and sport information. With the vast amount of opportunities available, one might question how undergraduate students coming out of a sport management discipline makes the decision to select their career within the intercollegiate sport landscape.

In this paper, a conceptual model will be proposed that will address how practical experiences, classroom experiences, and gender play an intricate role into the rationale behind career choice. The paper will first include a review of current literature supporting the inclusion of a student's

practical and classroom experience in the field. Then the paper will summarize a review of literature supporting the implications of gender norms. At the end, a conceptual model will be proposed that hypothesizes the association of classroom experience, practical experience and learned gender norms with career selection in intercollegiate athletics.

## 2.Review of Literature

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### 2.1 Classroom and Practical Experience's Association on Careers in Intercollegiate Athletics

The researchers hypothesize the experiences undergraduates have in the classroom, as well as practical opportunities, play a role in determining the specific career path they choose. The relevance of the courses included in a sport management program's curriculum have been discussed in the research. For example, students reported they found Sport Management and Introduction to the Sport Industry courses to be most relevant to prepare them for success, while Sport Facilities Management and History of Sport in America as the two courses they felt prepared them the least for success (Deluca & Braunstein-Minkove, 2016). Additionally, students report a lack of business classes offered in the curriculum (Leberman & Shaw, 2012). As students notice the benefit of some courses in the curriculum, it is important to consider the classroom experience students have as they begin to select their career paths post-graduation. These reports from students indicate support for inclusion of the classroom experience within a model leading to a student's career path in intercollegiate athletics.

However, beyond the classroom experience, the researchers hypothesize the importance in understanding the sport industry has become saturated and competitive with many graduates entering a field with few job opportunities (Hawzen, 2018). In this current climate, practical experiences could prove useful and even necessary for students. For example, experienced-based learning involves giving students the opportunity to go out into the field and learn hands on, so they know they are prepared to enter the job market (DeLuca & Braunstein-Minkove, 2016). Practical experience through experience-based learning can impact career path choice, separate from experiences students might have exclusively in the classroom.

Early research has shown that education involving a learning experience component is the most beneficial for adult learners. The term andragogy is defined as the art and science of helping adults learn (Rachal, 2002). The andragogy theory states the teacher is not all knowing and relies on the experience of learners (McGrath, 2009). The theory indicates there is a need for a practical experience beyond the classroom only experience for students, and both of these experiences can be uniquely associated with a student's career path in intercollegiate athletics.

As students are the future of the sport industry, it is important to understand their needs and what practices can help them be the most successful in the field. Internships (DeLuca & Braunstein-Minkove, 2016; Surujlal & Mji, 2011), case studies (Johnson, Judge, & Wanless, 2013), and professional engagement (Kornspan & Duve,

2013) have been highlighted in previous literature as practical experiences students might partake in during their undergraduate careers, and these experiences may be associated with their career selection in intercollegiate athletics.

Based on a cursory review of sport management program curricula, an internship is typically a required part of the program. Students and practitioners have both reported the importance of an internship during their undergraduate career (DeLuca & Braunstein-Minkove, 2016; Surujlal & Mji, 2011). While internships have proven important, the timing of the internship can also determine success, as industry professionals base hiring decisions off of the student's ability and desire to learn and be successful (Surujlal & Mji, 2011). Students should have basic skills and an understanding of expectations of working in the sport industry prior to applying for internships. The knowledge needed prior to internships further supports the need for the classroom experience to be a separate part of the conceptual model, as both classroom and practical experiences can impact career choice. Internships can help students get hands-on experience in the field, but there have been some noted downsides to internships. These have included students concluding the internship with lack of career goals (DeLuca & Braunstein-Minkove, 2016). This finding complements the common critique of internships, in that they are a potential exploitation of students, who are just trying to get experience in the field. When students do not have career goals, or are not given true job duties during their internship experience, the experience could negatively

impact their decision to enter a particular career path in intercollegiate athletics.

Case study competitions have also been suggested to give students practical experience. Students that have previously participated in case study competitions reported finding the experience to be practical and an opportunity to build their resume (Johnson, Judge, & Wanless, 2013). There can be many benefits to case study competitions, and it can be useful to include these factors as they may be associated with a student's chosen career path in intercollegiate athletics. For example, if a student participates in a case study regarding facility upgrades, the student might be influenced to take a career path in facility management.

Another example of a practical learning experience that can be associated with a student's career path is professional engagement. Two common professional engagement activities are attendance at professional conferences and networking. Research shows networking can be crucial for sport management students, because professionals in the sport industry are hiring who they know (Kornspan & Duve, 2013). This apparent advantage of professional development supports the need for practical experiences to be a part of an undergraduate student's career decision within the intercollegiate athletic landscape.

Bringing networking experience into the classroom can include inviting guest speakers and site visits to different facilities. Kornspan and Duve (2013) recommend students should have the opportunity to attend as many career fairs and conferences as possible during their education to meet and converse with industry professionals.

Sport management clubs have been growing in sport management programs. These clubs are a great opportunity for sport management faculty to offer networking opportunities (Kornspan & Duve, 2013).

In all categories of practical experience – internships, case studies, and professional engagement – it becomes apparent how these experiences can be associated with an undergraduate's choice of career path in intercollegiate athletics. To expand upon the importance of practical and classroom experience, the following section discusses the inclusion of these experiences with perceived gender norms and how gender norms can be associated with a student's choice in career path in intercollegiate athletics.

## *2.2 Applying Social Role Theory to a Student's Career Path in Intercollegiate Athletics*

As social role theory surmises, individuals will fall into their distinct social roles. Therefore, men tend to follow roles that are perceived to be more masculine, whereas women tend to follow roles that are perceived to be more feminine (Madsen, 2016). In summary, social role theory defines gender roles as, "those shared expectations about appropriate conduct that apply to individuals solely on the basis of their socially identified sex" (Eagly & Wood, 1988, p. 4). Although social role theory suggests men and women will follow their perceived path to serving their gender role, it is important to understand how this theory relates to career paths in intercollegiate athletics. For example, previous research regarding student-athletes found athletes that participated in football and men's basketball were viewed as more masculine,

whereas athletes that participated in cheerleading were perceived as more feminine (Harrison & Lynch, 2005). As this result confirming gender norms was found in individual sports, it is important to advance this awareness to the employees working in athletic departments. Understanding which positions are viewed as masculine and which are viewed as feminine is important, as Vianden and Gregg (2017) found students in undergraduate programs acknowledged the fact that there was a different perception of females working in the sport industry in comparison to males. Unfortunately, female students also claim the industry is run like a “boys’ club” before even starting their first day as a full-time employee (Leberman & Shaw, 2012). The conceptual model proposed in this paper will address how there is a gender socialization component that plays a role in the decision-making process for students beyond classroom and practical experience.

The following section will apply social role theory to career paths in intercollegiate athletics and discuss how social role theory might play a role in the decision-making process for students choosing their career paths in intercollegiate athletics.

### 2.3 Social Role Theory

With the social norms that are present in adolescents through college, a student will develop perceived social roles that are expected of their gender. Social role theory can be used to explain how men and women choose the career path they take in intercollegiate athletics. Looking at the *NCAA Sport Sponsorship, Participation, and Demographic Report* for the 2016–17 academic

year, it is noticeable how some positions within the NCAA structure are male dominated, whereas others are female dominated. For example, at the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) level, there were 667 female academic advisors in comparison to 401 males, 63 female equipment managers in comparison to 485 males, 114 female facility managers in comparison to 645 males, 22 female head athletic trainers in comparison to 143 males, 127 female life skill coordinators in comparison to 66 males, 40 female sport information directors in comparison to 173 males, and 144 female strength and conditioning coaches in comparison to 864 males. As noted by these demographics, there are significant discrepancies between males and females holding similar positions within the athletic department. The variances indicate there are outside factors influencing the decision for females and males to take different career paths within intercollegiate athletics. It is noted above that females heavily dominate the academic advisor and life skill positions, whereas males are dominating sport information, athletic training, equipment, and facility manager positions. With the gender differences presented in these roles, applying social role theory can explain the career choice decision making process as students enter the field of intercollegiate athletics.

For example, the leadership style both men and women have learned through their gender roles may differ. Eagly and Johnson (1990) found men were more likely to adopt a leadership style that is directive and autocratic, thereby contributing to the perception that men are more effective in leadership positions. This finding might indicate why males are able to advance further in ca-

reers in Division I athletics, as they are perceived to have a leadership style more in line with the mentality of intercollegiate athletics.

Additionally, Eagly and Crowley (1986) discovered men are more likely to help in a given situation as an opportunity to display acts of heroism. With the large audience of student-athletes, coaches, and spectators viewing athletic events, this social role might make the head position in an athletic department attractive for men. On the contrary, women are more likely to accept help from men, therefore potentially putting themselves in a position to be seen as a weaker candidate for advancement in comparison to their male peers. The *NCAA Sport Sponsorship, Participation, and Demographic Report* for the 2016–17 academic year suggests that males are more likely than females to advance in careers of Division I FBS intercollegiate athletics, with 600 males holding an assistant director of athletics position in comparison to only 263 females, and, additionally, 856 males holding an associate director of athletics position in comparison to a mere 299 females. The staggering gender differences among upper-level administration in intercollegiate athletics indicate there is some type of moderator between the advancement of employees in intercollegiate athletics. These differences in gender in upper-level administrators suggest social roles are present in not only the choice of career students make upon graduation from college, but also in promotion opportunities available.

Social roles have been identified in previous intercollegiate athletic research, as women athletes have reported viewing careers in athletics as masculine, thereby leading them to conclude

those career paths to be unrealistic (Madsen, 2016). This perspective is an example of how women might feel pressure from gendered social roles, which influence their career choices and prevent their advancement in intercollegiate athletics, since they might already have a preconceived idea about how they should behave socially in the male dominated industry.

#### *2.4 Gender Norms formed in Undergraduate Sport Management Courses*

With the proposal that gender norms are associated with career selection for students entering career paths in intercollegiate athletics, it is important to understand the different gender norms that exist within a student's undergraduate career. A recent study reported instances of incivility and sexual harassment between female sport management faculty and students (Taylor, Smith, Rode, & Hardin, 2017). This type of behavior exhibited by males in undergraduate sport management programs might be seen as an attempt to fit into the perceived social roles of intercollegiate athletics and the "boys' club" culture. The perceived "boys' club" culture has been reported as a factor impeding the advancement of women in intercollegiate athletics (Schneider, Stier, Henry, & Wilding, 2010). It appears as if little education to alter these norms and understanding the role all students could play in advancing the future of the sport industry is occurring in undergraduate sport programs. As previous research has reported, the majority of male students believe they need to be in a leadership or hiring role prior to supporting the cause for diversity (Vianden & Gregg, 2017). The uncertainty of how to advocate for women in



the workplace without ruffling feathers on their way up the chain of command in the industry proves there are outside factors influencing career advancement within intercollegiate athletics, specifically as it relates to gender norms.

An additional deterrent to females entering the sport industry in certain capacities may be from the lack of encouragement from faculty in their sport management undergraduate programs. Previous literature has shown faculty see males as a better fit in certain aspects of the sport industry (Dwyer & Gellock, 2018). The lack of encouragement from professors could further confirm social roles to female and male students, resulting in males feeling encouraged to apply for certain positions in the sport industry, and females not feeling as confident in applying to the same positions.

In recent research, one female interviewed in a study said she felt intimidated because she was the only female in her class (Fowler-Harris, Grapendorf, Veraldo, & Aicher, 2014). Additionally, it has been reported female students experience a “chilly climate” and negative gender stereotyping in sport management programs with regard to their male peers (Fowler-Harris et al., 2014). The intimidation based on gender further advocates the role gender norms play in undergraduate education.

### *2.5 Gender Norms for Current Industry Positions in Intercollegiate Athletics*

Prior to hiring, there is already a predetermined congruence between the job requirements and gender stereotypes (Dwyer & Gellock, 2018). This finding further highlights how social

role theory plays a part in career choice and advancement in intercollegiate athletics. However, although this research did not include which positions these roles will include, it is important to analyze the unique departments within intercollegiate athletics to determine which are perceived as more feminine or more masculine. This clarification will help piece together the conceptual model presented that social roles moderate the career path students take in intercollegiate athletics.

**Sport information directors.** As noted by the *NCAA Sport Sponsorship, Participation, and Demographic Report* for the 2016–17 academic year, the role of the sport information director is heavily male dominated. As described in previous research, the role of the sport information director (SID) is to be most involved in public relations (Stoldt, Miller, & Comfort, 2001). The role of sport information directors can vary by campus, but the majority of athletic directors talk to their SIDs daily, if not weekly, and include SIDs in meetings, where the athletic directors indicate the SIDs have major contributions (Stoldt et al., 2001). The public relation opportunity that SIDs enjoy gives them the opportunity to make the impression of a public display of heroism. As Eagly and Crowley (1986) found, men are more likely to help out in public settings, as they can be seen as a hero in the setting. Men might find this a more appealing career, and therefore follow the social roles as outlined in the social role theory to fit into this position.

Additionally, Eagly and Karau (2002) found men are perceived to be more effective in leadership positions. As the SID role is perceived as a

member of the senior leadership team in many athletic departments, this might persuade a male to apply for this position, as there would be a great deal of leadership opportunity. Additionally, there might be more career advancement opportunities for males, as a male SID might be perceived as having a more effective leadership style. Eagly and Johnson (1990) reported that men are more likely to adopt a leadership style that is more directive in comparison to women. As a SID is involved in the senior leadership team, and that team, as previously noted, will involve many male assistant and associate athletic directors, a male SID might be seen as a better fit for the leadership style of the group.

One interesting note about the SID position is that athletic directors' rate SIDs low on their ability to mediate conflict (Stoldt et al., 2001). As this is a common weakness of SIDs, it seems as if athletic directors do not value this characteristic as important in the position. Females tend to follow a more democratic leadership style, thus potentially making them a better fit to deal with mediating conflict (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). As social role theory surmises, female students might not see themselves in positions where they are not able to effectively mediate conflict with peers. This characteristic of the position could prevent female students from wanting to pursue this path after graduation, leading to the position being more male dominated in the higher levels of the NCAA structure.

**Academic advisors.** Unlike sport information directors, the *NCAA Sport Sponsorship, Participation, and Demographic Report* for the 2016-17 academic year suggests the role of academic

advisors is heavily female dominated. Women have acknowledged that they want to stay in roles in intercollegiate athletics that include working directly with student-athletes and have reported feeling the opportunity to directly work with students could be lost if they were to advance to more senior-level or administrative roles (Hancock & Hums, 2016). This value placed on helping student-athletes could be seen as a motherly role and give the perception that women are fulfilling their predetermined social role by working with students. Research on the roles of athletic academic advisors indicates there are a wide range of functions to the position to include mentoring and supporting student-athletes, but that many athletic academic advisors go above and beyond their job roles and descriptions at the institution (Vaughn & Smith, 2018).

**Life skills coordinators.** Similar to academic advisors, the *NCAA Sport Sponsorship, Participation, and Demographic Report* for the 2016-17 academic year indicates the role of life skills coordinators is also female dominated. As defined by the NCAA Division II Model Athletic Department document:

Life skills programming should effectively engage the community in preparing student-athletes for successes both concurrent with their athletics careers and after their collegiate experiences. A model Division II athletics program will assist student-athletes in developing, identifying and applying transferable skills such as citizenship and leadership in their careers and in their community. (p. 3)

As such, in the majority of athletic departments,



there is an employee on staff designated as the life skills coordinator to ensure this programming exists on campus to prepare student-athletes for success. Previous literature suggests women are more suited for the life skills position because of preconceived stereotypes (Welty Peachey, Zhou, Damon, & Burton, 2015). Similar to academic advisors, the life skills coordinator position might be seen as a nurturing position that keeps the coordinator close to the development of student-athletes, indicating through social role theory why this position might be perceived as more female dominated. Females are more likely to want to have the connection to student-athletes, and this position would ensure there is always heavy student-athlete involvement.

**Athletic trainers.** Like sport information directors, the *Sport Sponsorship, Participation, and Demographic Report* for the 2016-17 academic year reveals the role of athletic trainers is heavily male dominated. Research from Barrett, Pike, and Mazerolle (2018) found female athletic trainers identified gender discrimination leading to the underrepresentation of women holding leadership positions in the athletic training room. As burnout is often a phrase used in connection with employment as an athletic trainer in intercollegiate athletics, it is important to identify the personality traits that can help athletic trainers avoid burnout, thus creating longevity in the career. Barrett, Eason, Lazar, and Mazerolle (2016) reported that extraversion and agreeableness are negatively correlated with burnout. Similar to SIDs, these personality types might lend themselves to more masculine job candidates, as they may be more likely to help out in public settings and be seen as

a hero in the setting. Always being friendly and open to requests from coaches could give athletic trainers the opportunity to look like a hero just by showing up for an early or late-night practice.

A previous study from Caswell, Ambegaonkar, and Caswell (2010) also indicated similar findings among athletic training students, which state that athletic training students displayed higher levels of extraversion in comparison to the norm. The high level of extraversion found in the personality traits of athletic training students indicates social norms that exist for this position are apparent even prior to the student entering the workplace, indicating there is a moderating factor that might be associated with the job selection in this field.

**Facility managers.** Like athletic trainers and sport information directors, the *Sport Sponsorship, Participation, and Demographic Report* for the 2016-17 academic year indicates the role of facility managers in intercollegiate athletics is male dominated. Case and Branch (2003) identified that budget prep was the most important competency of upper level sport facility management. Previous research from Grappendorf, Pent, Burton, and Henderson (2008) found men might be seen as a better fit for these positions because they have a perceived higher level of ability to make financial decisions. The perception indicates that men are more likely to fit the social role connected with this position, especially as it relates to the importance placed on the financial piece of the job. For lower level and entry level employees, it is important that facility managers are knowledgeable with and are able to use maintenance equipment and understand how to over-

see custodial care. These job functions are tied to the perceived role of a male employee, leading to the determination that males would seek and fill roles in these positions in intercollegiate athletic departments.

**Equipment managers.** Following a similar trend, the role of equipment managers also tends to be heavily male dominated according to the *Sport Sponsorship, Participation, and Demographic Report* for the 2016-17 academic year. In the equipment manager position, there is a fraternity atmosphere; Dellenger (2018) described the recruitment process for equipment managers with the LSU football program:

Everyone starts as a volunteer trainee, for a year or two, before a spot opens on the student staff of 13. Each of the 13 receives some scholarship money, all based on experience, and the four head student managers are getting a full ride. This place is like a fraternity, an institution Jeff Boss founded in 1980 and something String fellow continued after Boss succumbed to cancer in 2003. The annual new group of trainees is referred to by some as a “pledge class,” and each rookie gets a thick, three-ring binder labeled as an equipment manager’s handbook”. (p. 1)

The fraternity environment lends itself to a more male dominated position, indicating the social roles for the position would follow male gender norms.

### *2.6 Proposal for Student Career Selection in Intercollegiate Athletics*

The sections above indicate support for so-

cial norms to be included in a conceptual model that suggests how both practical and classroom experience are associated with a career path for undergraduate students selecting a career in intercollegiate athletics. In this proposed conceptual model, the researchers hypothesize the undergraduate student might choose a career path, regardless of social norms, if he or she has had the classroom or practical experience in or related to a specific area within the intercollegiate athletics field (Deluca & Braunstein-Minkove, 2016; Johnson, Judge, & Wanless, 2013; Kornspan & Duve, 2013; Surujlal & Mji, 2011). However, learned gender norms through classroom and practical experiences have shown to positively or negatively influence a student’s decision to enter a chosen career path within intercollegiate athletics (Dwyer & Gellock, 2018; Taylor, Smith, Rode, & Hardin, 2017; Madsen, 2016; Fowler-Harris et al., 2014; Leberman & Shaw, 2012; Schneider, Stier, Henry, & Wilding, 2010). The researchers hypothesize that these learned gender norms will be associated with career choice in intercollegiate athletics.

As mentioned previously, with the vastly different roles within an intercollegiate athletic department, it is important to determine factors that are associated with the career path undergraduate students plan to take. With the careers outlined in this paper, the conceptual model in Figure 1 is proposed to show how social role theory and gender norms are associated with a student’s decision to take an entry level position within intercollegiate athletics. In the proposed model, the researchers hypothesize students come into sport management programs with learned gender

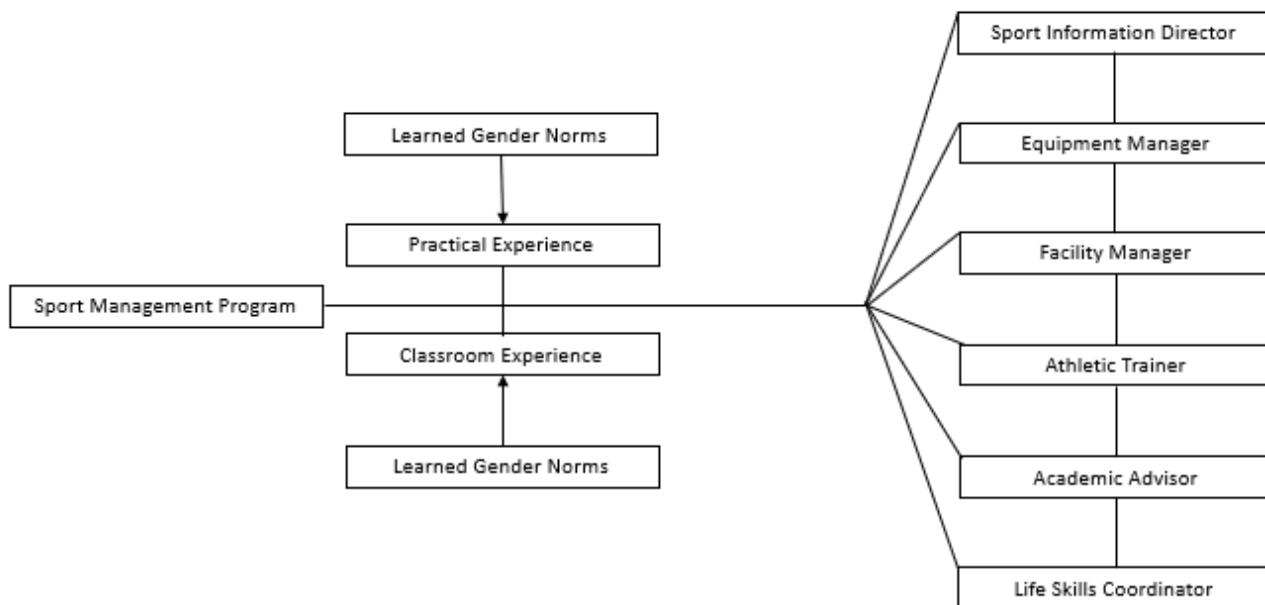
norms developed through adolescence, but these norms will continue through undergraduate education. However, prior to selecting a career path within intercollegiate athletics, the researchers hypothesize learned gender norms will be associated with an undergraduate student's career choice. Following male gender roles, the student will select a career path related to sport information directors, equipment managers, or facility managers. However, if a student would prefer to follow a female gender role path, the student will enter into a career path related to academic advising or life skills.

Understanding career choice is not as clear cut as following perceived gender roles. The researchers hypothesize it is important to include the individual experiences of the undergraduate

in the model as well as the gender norm the student experiences as the gender norm may directly associate with the career selection. For example, looking at *the NCAA Sport Sponsorship, Participation, and Demographic Report* for the 2016-17 academic year, there are some positions in intercollegiate athletics that are more male or female dominated compared to others. However, there are at least some females or males that have entered into a position that would otherwise have not followed their perceived gender norms. Students choosing to enter career paths in intercollegiate athletics that may differ with their social identity indicate how classroom and practical experiences are an intricate piece of the proposed conceptual model.

An example of how a student could progress

**Figure 1.** Classroom Experience, Practical Experience and Learned Gender Norms Associated with Career Selection in Intercollegiate Athletic



though the proposed conceptual model is a student participating in a case study competition related to facility updates. To begin, the female student might have had a great practical experience during the case study competition and met a professional that offered the student an internship opportunity in facility management at a university. During the student's internship, she experienced the intercollegiate athletic "boys' club" culture and decided that she could not see herself working in that environment, even though she still enjoyed intercollegiate athletics. The student found during her internship that the more female populated department in the athletic department was academic advisement, and she saw the opportunity to work with student-athletes. This would lead the student through the model leading to a career path with more female norms. On the contrary, if the student enjoyed her internship experience and found that the culture of that particular facility department did not follow the perceived gender norms of the "boys' club" culture, then the student will continue a career path in athletic facilities, regardless of gender norms.

### **3. Conclusion**

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Although there are many factors influencing a student's career selection post his or her undergraduate career, the conceptual model presented in this paper hypothesizes learned gender norms, practical experiences, and classroom experiences are associated with a student's career choice within the intercollegiate athletic department. Although the career field of intercollegiate athletics was identified as diverse by Pierce and Johnson (2017), there is support showing how individual

students can have different practical or classroom experiences that can cause them to deviate from the perceived gender norms associated with certain positions within the athletic department. The goal of this proposed conceptual model is to provide a starting point for faculty and practitioners to begin to understand the factors present in the decision-making process for students choosing to enter the field of intercollegiate athletics.

The support behind the inclusion of the practical experience piece indicates the role practitioners in the field already have in influencing the industry's next young professionals. With the understanding of how gender norms are highly influencing career paths within intercollegiate athletics, practitioners should challenge themselves to ensure students completing practical experiences with them feel comfortable in the working environment and do not fall victim to the "boys' club" culture. Although most of the literature reviewed underlined the "boys' club" culture as it relates to the female experience, it should be understood that both males and females can be made uncomfortable by the gender norms associated with a given position within the intercollegiate athletic field.

Secondly, with this conceptual model presented, faculty should be encouraged to promote a culture of inclusion within their classroom environments. As previous literature suggests, there is a sense of the "boys' club" mentality present in the undergraduate sport management classroom. The mentality can deter students from choosing to enter specific career paths in intercollegiate athletics. Faculty should try and address these perceived gender norms with the goal of one day

having the additional component of learned gender norms removed from the current model presented in this paper today. Intercollegiate athletics is a growing and diverse field, but it is also a field that has influence over culture as it is in the public eye. With the amount of attention placed on intercollegiate athletics and the attractiveness of the field of intercollegiate athletics, it is crucial for both current practitioners in the field as well as sport management faculty to work together to try and remove the gender norms present in current positions within the intercollegiate athletic department structure.

#### **4. Theoretical Implications**

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The conceptual model proposed in this manuscript applies social role theory to careers in intercollegiate athletics. With the gender differences present in careers in intercollegiate athletics, it is important to continue to use existing theories to understand how students select career paths in intercollegiate athletics. Practical and classroom experiences are suggested to be associated with career selection for undergraduate students, so research to further understand how each of these experiences are associated with a student's career selection can help curriculum design in sport management programs to ensure students are prepared for the career path they want to pursue in intercollegiate athletics. Although the experiences students have through classroom and practical activities are crucial, it is important to understand how learned gender norms impact a student's career selection.

Applying social role theory to career paths in

intercollegiate athletics is just the beginning to understanding how students select careers in intercollegiate athletics. Further research into how social role theory can be further applied to career advancement in intercollegiate athletics can help the field determine not only how students enter the field, but how they are able to find success and advance in their career. Additionally, the conceptual model presented in this paper grouped together all classroom experiences and all practical experiences. Further research can analyze the different types of classroom and practical experiences (e.g. attendance at conferences, networking, and case study participation) to have a better understanding of how the individual experiences might be associated with career choices more or less compared to others.

Understanding the underlying reasons students have for choosing career paths within intercollegiate athletics can help academics and practitioners better understand what is needed for these students to be successful. As students are the future leaders in the industry, it is important to continue to evaluate how students are selecting their career in intercollegiate athletics and make any necessary changes in student experiences to ensure they are able to enter the field of intercollegiate athletics ready to meet the demands of the job.

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