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Factors Contributing to Low Representation of Diverse Female Faculty in Athletic Training Education Programs

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Abstract: I examined the experiences of diverse female faculty in terms of their workplace marginalization and their interactions with mentors to understand factors that contribute to their low representation in athletic training education programs.

Keywords: diverse female faculty, marginalization, promotion & tenure, mentoring

Background and Purpose

Healthcare professions, like athletic training, are experiencing a rapid increase in diversity of professional membership. However, the percentage of diverse faculty in healthcare education programs does not reflect professional membership. For instance, as of 2013 the number of female faculty across African, Latina, Asian, and Native American (ALANA) Diasporas in athletic training education programs was significantly lower (3.3%) than the diversity among athletic training professional membership of 12.2 % in 2013 and 13.86% in 2017 (National Athletic Training Association, NATA, 2013; 2017).

There is little information about the career experiences of diverse female faculty in athletic training education programs. Despite increased student diversity in many health professions (Ryu, 2010), most athletic training education programs and their respective departments remain predominately White and most faculty are male. In other fields, scholars (e.g., McCabe, 2009) found that working in homologous environments had a negative impact on career advancement for ALANA Diasporas female faculty. Research in higher education (Patitu & Hinton, 2003), nursing (Mkandawire-Valhmu et al., 2010), and liberal arts (Griffin, Bennet, & Harris, 2013) provide evidence that female faculty across ALANA Diasporas were likely to experience marginalizing barriers to career advancement. Other researchers identified limited access to mentors was a disadvantage (Kameny et al., 2014). These barriers have been reported as contributing to the low retention and advancement rates of diverse female faculty in higher education.

The purpose of this study was to explore the career advancement and mentoring experiences of female faculty across ALANA Diasporas in athletic training education programs. This exploration identified factors that preserve low representation of diverse female faculty in athletic training education programs.

Conceptual Framework

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and mentoring research provided the conceptual framework for this study. CRT posits that racial discrimination is embedded in the structure of society and culture, influencing practices that negatively impact women and people across diverse identities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). Researchers (e.g., Gordon & Johnson, 2003) have used CRT to investigate workplace experiences of underrepresented faculty in higher education and found they experience discrimination and marginalization from White colleagues. Sue et al. (2007) classified these behaviors as microaggressions (e.g. microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations) and reported its pervasiveness.

Burden, Harrison, and Hodge (2005) interviewed African American kinesiology faculty at a predominantly White institution and found they regularly experienced microaggressions, which they perceived as barriers to career advancement. In a multi-case analysis (Griffin et al., 2013), both male and female African American faculty reported incurring microaggressions, including receiving ambiguous, inconsistent, and/or unrealistic expectations for tenure and promotion. Female faculty struggled with microinvalidations due to their intersectional gender and racial/ethnic identities.

Researchers have shown that mentors are effective resources for career advancement. However, some researchers have shown “low mentoring” (i.e., the presence of a mentoring relationship in which all protégé needs are not met) to be problematic for women and diverse individuals who work in White environments (McDonald & Westphal, 2013). Other studies (e.g. Chang, Longman, & Franco, 2014), pointed out the lack of diverse role models within the institution, different expectations and behaviors of mentors, and institutional culture limited diverse faculty’s access to fulfilling mentoring relationships.

Research Design

This qualitative study, I sought to explore: What are the career advancement experiences of female faculty across African, Latina, Asian, and Native American Diasporas working in athletic training education programs? And, how do female faculty across African, Latina, Asian, and Native American Diasporas use mentors to support their career advancement? National

Athletic Training Association Membership (NATA, 2013) data was used to identify and recruit female faculty across ALANA Diasporas in accredited athletic training education programs. Participants (N = 11) were athletic trainers and self-identified as African American (n = 3), Black/Hispanic (n = 1), Cuban (n = 1), Asian/multi-ethnic/Filipina (n = 1), Mexican American (n = 1), Japanese American (n = 1), Japanese (n = 1), Puerto Rican (n = 1), and biracial, specifically Black/White (n = 1). No participants identified as Native American. Most participants (n = 6) were between the ages of 30-45 years. They held all faculty ranks, including Senior Lecturer (n = 1), Assistant Professor (n = 8), Associate Professor (n = 1), and Full Professor (n = 1). Seven participants reported working with a mentor at the time of data collection.

I collected data in two phases. In Phase One, participants completed an online survey that focused on experiences of microaggressions in the workplace (Nadal, 2011; Lewis, 2013), mentoring relationships (Noe, 1988), and demographic information. I used Phase One survey responses to customize the Phase Two semi-structured interview questions for each participant. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed by a third-party transcription service. Data analysis involved initial open coding of transcriptions and refined by a constant comparative review to establish themes. A variety of methods were used to maximize trustworthiness, including peer-review of the coding and theme development processes, and member checking involving sharing coding with individual participants to confirm accurate representation of their experiences.

Findings

Three themes in the data highlight the challenges female faculty across African, Latina, and Asian (ALA) Diasporas as they pursued career advancement.

Difficulties balancing and meeting job expectations

Participants experienced difficulties balancing and meeting job expectations in teaching, service, and research. Teaching demands varied across participants, but all were challenging. One African American woman mentioned she taught “a 12-hour load.” A Mexican American woman stated “hav[ing] new preps every year” and “I had done 13 class preps in eight years.” Three participants served as clinical education coordinators, which includes substantial clinical administrative responsibilities, but they did not receive a course release. Heavy or revolving course loads demanded significant time to prepare making it difficult to meet teaching expectations.

Institutional service is a common expectation of faculty; yet female faculty across diverse identities reported expectations of their extra service was another challenge to balance. For

women serving as clinical coordinators, their institutions viewed their administrative duties as service, but refused to accommodate this extensive work with course release time or clerical support. A Mexican American participant explained that Mexican women should be accommodating, which she admitted to displaying, but found in her department she was consistently asked to serve despite the strain it placed on her time for other work and her mental health.

At larger institutions, productive research is a major requirement for promotion and tenure. Female faculty who worked in research intensive institutions experienced challenges accessing resources for productive research. As participants were often the “only” diverse person in their department, they found collaborating challenging. One African American participant explained her isolation made it difficult to establish collaborative relationships. Another African American participant stated, “they [department colleagues] expect the quality of my work [scholarship] to be inferior”. Given one Cuban participant’s department colleagues’ research is dissimilar from her own she stated, “there’s not too much [collaboration].” Accessing shared research lab space was another challenge. One junior faculty (Multi-ethnic/Filipina) had “limited accessibility” to lab space compared to tenured faculty. In other cases, female faculty reported not having personnel to conduct their research because graduate students preferred to work with tenured White male faculty.

For faculty in higher education, excellence in teaching, service, and productive research, are expectations for promotion and tenure. However, female faculty across ALA Diasporas experienced challenges, associated with their gender and racial/ethnic identities, to meet work expectations.

Workplace marginalization

On the survey, participants reported being marginalized (i.e., experiencing microaggressions, microinvalidations, and silencing behaviors, from departmental colleagues) one to two times in the past 6 months at work. However, during the interview, female faculty admitted they experienced workplace marginalizing behaviors more than they reported on the survey.

Female faculty who held African and Latina Diaspora identities were more likely to incur marginalization than participants who identified as Asian. For example, a woman who identified as African American stated, “I know people...have these feelings that the quality of my work might be inferior.” She added, “I have to work harder or present things better [than White peers] or say something fabulous to be taken seriously.” The participants who identified as Mexican American and Bi-racially Black/Latina reported their colleagues did not listen to their requests for help to balance their work. And in the cases of Puerto Rican and Multi-

race/ethnic women, their needs of protection from harassment were invalidated and not granted. During study recruitment, a Cuban female faculty expressed fears about retaliation if she took part in this study. At the start of the interview she did not admit to being marginalized, but later she provided examples of microassaults incurred at work.

Female faculty who identified as Japanese-born, Japanese American, and Multi-ethnic/Filipina did not explicitly describe being marginalized by colleagues. However, the Multi-ethnic/Filipina and Japanese-born women acknowledged witnessing microaggressions directed toward colleagues of other racial and ethnic groups. The Multi-ethnic/Filipina woman shared, "I definitely feel like there is racial tension...but I don't ever particularly feel like it's specifically directed toward myself." Another woman (Japanese-born) explained she rarely experiences racism, "I can kind of blend myself...into the culture." This woman mentioned that to "fit in" she did not highlight her culture when speaking with colleagues or students. A Japanese American woman detailed how she was not comfortable speaking up in meetings and relied on her White colleagues to speak for her.

In sum, female faculty across African, Latina, and Asian Diasporas in athletic training education experienced various microaggressions. Marginalization of faculty with intersectional identities has been reported and explored in other fields in higher education (e.g., nursing). These investigations point to marginalization as a contributing factor for the poor promotion and tenure rates of underrepresented intersectional faculty in higher education.

Mentors not meeting needs

In their current position, seven participants indicated working with a mentor. Women not working with a mentor stated that they would have benefited from a workplace mentoring relationship. Participants with mentors described having different mentoring relationships (e.g., informal, formal, male, female, within department, outside their department). As indicated in the survey, participants valued their mentors for supportive behaviors, such as good listening skills (83.3%), concern for individual competence (66.7%), and respect toward the participant (66.6%). Participants also valued the informational advice and feedback they received from mentors to address female faculty concerns about competence.

Although female faculty acknowledged the benefits of working with a mentor, they also shared that mentors did not meet all their needs. Those who reported having mentors within their departments indicated their mentors were White and most often male. These participants described their mentors as helpful but not emotionally supportive. One mentor was described as uninviting; he would answer the woman's job-related questions, but he did not show interest in her well-being or career advancement. Another female faculty shared she and her mentor

disagreed on the value of teaching versus research; as a renowned researcher, he trivialized her requests for support to improve her teaching. She also worried their differences would prevent him from advocating for her promotion and tenure.

Female faculty across African, Latina, and Asian Diasporas working with White mentors indicated their mentors did not acknowledge or discuss their intersectional identity, nor did mentors provide female faculty with informational or emotional support linked to their intersectionality. Two participants had African American mentors, but neither mentor worked within the participants' department. These women reported their mentors acknowledged their intersectional identity and extended support for intersectional barriers associated with meeting job expectations for promotion and tenure. In addition, a Multi-ethnic/Filipina participant described her White female mentor as "her voice" in meetings because the mentor feared the Multi-ethnic/Filipina faculty's comments would negatively impact her promotion and tenure. Although this was perceived as a valuable mentoring behavior, it perpetuated silencing. In summary, participants valued the informational advice they received from mentors to meet promotion and tenure expectations; however, mentors failed to address female faculty emotional needs associated with their intersectional identity.

Conclusion

These findings suggest that the intersectional identity (i.e., gender and race/ethnicity) of female faculty across African American, Latina, and Asian Diasporas played a role in workplace experiences that impacted their meeting tenure and promotion expectations. Difficulties balancing and meeting job expectations, workplace marginalization, and mentors who do not provide emotional support can inhibit career advancement of ALA female faculty within athletic training education. These conclusions about barriers to career advancement for ALA female faculty in higher education are consistent with other researchers (e.g., Burden, Harrison, & Hodge, 2005; Chen & Hune, 2011; Oliva, Rodriguez, Alanis, & Cerecer, 2013). Another contributing factor to the low representation of ALA female faculty in athletic training education is that mentors and department chairs often fail to mitigate challenges associated with being marginalized. Under these circumstances, female faculty whose identity is not reflective of the White male majority may leave those positions, or not achieve promotion and tenure because of the challenges associated with their intersectional identity. In both cases, the outcome results in the continued low rates of diverse female faculty in athletic training education.

Limitations

A key limitation of this study was the differences among participants' racial and ethnic identities, which spanned African, Latina, and Asian Diasporas. All participants experienced being marginalized due to their intersectional identity. However, across racial and ethnic groups there was a dissimilarity in marginalizing experiences. Cultural differences and related stereotypes of women in these groups held by departmental peers challenges the transferability of findings to diverse female faculty who did not participate in the study.

Implications for Future Research

I recommend future researchers use qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the experiences of ALA female athletic training faculty in terms of their intersectional identity, role balance, marginalization, and mentoring. To understand the role of mentors and department chairs, researchers should further explore the social relationships between these individuals and diverse female faculty. Using a dyad design on cross-cultural faculty mentoring would illuminate challenges to successful mentoring relationships.

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