Diversity Training in Intercollegiate Athletics

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The purpose of this study was to examine the prevalence, antecedents, and outcomes of diversity training in intercollegiate athletics. Data were collected from senior level administrators and aggregated to the department level for NCAA Division I (n = 239), Division II (n = 205), and Division III (n = 231) athletic departments. Only 53% of the athletic departments offered training. Logistic regression indicated that gender diversity, sexual orientation diversity, divisional affiliation, and the presence of a proactive diversity culture were all predictive of whether the department offered training. Additional analysis indicated that sensitivity to individual needs and understanding different cultures were the topics most covered in the training. Finally, the motivation for training (either compliance- or effectiveness-based) and the degree to which the training was systematically integrated were predictive of transfer of training, with the latter variable holding the strongest association. Implications, limitations, and future directions are discussed.

Managers and human resource personnel are increasingly using diversity training, or the “formal efforts to enable development of awareness, knowledge, and skills to effectively work with, work for, and manage diverse others in various contexts” (Bell, Connerley, & Cocchiara, 2009, p. 598), to achieve organizational objectives. As recently as 1988, diversity was not included among the top 40 topics covered in organizational training and development (Gordon, 1988); however, by 2005, two out of every three organizations used some form of diversity training in the workplace (Esen, 2005). And, while the pattern of findings are not always uniform (Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006; Paluck & Green, 2009), these programs are oftentimes endeavored because of the benefits associated with them. Specifically, research suggests that diversity training is associated with greater knowledge about and more positive attitudes toward diversity (Brief & Barsky, 2000; Finkel, Storaasli, Bandele, & Schaefer, 2003); improved worker morale (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1999); an understanding and awareness of people different from the self (Hill & Augoustinos, 2001; Kulik & Roberson, 2008); acquisition and use of diversity-related behaviors (Combs & Luthans, 2007; Kulik & Roberson, 2008); and organizational effectiveness (Bendick, Egan, & Lofhjelm, 2001), among others. Given these benefits, Bell et al. forcefully argued that diversity training should be mandatory in management education.

While certainly not as extensive as the management or organizational psychology literature, diversity training has received some attention in the sport management domain. Several scholars have advanced conceptual articles that promoted the benefits of diversity training for future and current sport organization employees (Burden, Hodge, O’Bryant, & Harrison, 2004; DeSensi, 1995), while others have demonstrated that athletic departments recognized for their diversity efforts frequently engage in diversity training (Cunningham & Singer, 2009). Two empirical examinations of the topic were identified (Fink, Burton, & Bruening, 2008; Parks & Roberton, 2002); in both cases, the researchers illustrated that diversity training aimed at sport management students resulted in positive diversity-related outcomes.

A review of this literature shows that while advancements have been made, most of the diversity training literature in sport is either conceptual in nature or has focused on students. Noticeably absent is empirical work investigating diversity training in sport organizations. The purpose of this study was to address this void. Specifically, in focusing on the intercollegiate athletics context, I examined (a) the prevalence of diversity training programs; (b) antecedents of offering diversity training; (c) topics covered during the training; and (d) factors associated with transfer of training, where transfer is defined as the degree to which knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired during the training are applied and maintained in the job environment (Burke & Baldwin, 1999; Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001). I introduce the conceptual framework in the following section and present an illustrative summary in Figure 1.
Conceptual Framework

**Antecedents of Training**

In the current study, I focused on three antecedents of diversity training: the athletic department’s size, employee diversity, and diversity culture. The size of an athletic department should be positively associated with the adoption of diversity training, and there are several reasons for this. Larger organizations generally have greater specialization and more sophisticated human resource systems in place; thus, large organizations are likely to have the requisite structure to offer such activities. They are also likely to have more financial resources that can be devoted to specialized training efforts, like those focusing on diversity (see Amis & Slack, 1996, for an overview of the size-structure relationship).

There is some empirical support for this position. Rynes and Rosen (1995), for instance, observed that as the size of the organization increased, so too did the likelihood that it offered diversity training. Similarly, data from the Human Rights Campaign (2009) illustrate that larger organizations are more likely to adopt diversity-related policies than are their smaller counterparts.

Specifically, Fortune 100 companies, relative to Fortune 500 and Fortune 1000 companies, are more likely to have nondiscriminatory policies directed toward sexual orientation (94%, 88%, and 69%, respectively), to have nondiscriminatory policies directed toward gender identity (60%, 35%, and 21%, respectively), and to provide partner benefits (83%, 57%, and 39%, respectively). While the Human Rights Campaign data do not speak specifically to diversity training, they do show that organizational size is positively associated with diversity-related initiatives.

I expect a similar pattern among NCAA Division I, II, and III athletic departments. On average, Division I departments are the largest in the NCAA in terms of personnel employed, sports offered, and overall budget (Fulks, 2008). Given the aforementioned influence of size on employee specialization and human resource sophistication (see Amis & Slack, 1996), these differences should also correspond to differences in the adoption of diversity training. Consequently, I hypothesized:

Hypothesis 1: Athletic department size will be positively associated with the adoption of diversity training, such that Division I athletic departments...
Employee diversity might also affect the adoption of diversity training. Women, racial minorities, and sexual minorities (i.e., persons who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender; LGBT) often express more positive attitudes toward diversity initiatives than do their counterparts (Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Lev-Arey, 2006). This could be due to several factors. First, people who have experienced prejudice and discrimination in the workplace are more likely to favor diversity training (Wiethoff, 2004) and other diversity initiatives (Martins & Parson, 2007). Thus, as women, racial minorities, and sexual minorities are all more likely to experience prejudice than are their counterparts, their endorsement of diversity training might differ too. Second, increased employee diversity is associated with corresponding increases in sensitivity to the concerns of persons who have not traditionally held power (Alderfer, Alderfer, Bell, & Jones, 1992), and diversity training has the potential to address these injustices (e.g., Fink et al., 2003).

Third, persons who traditionally hold power in sport organizations (i.e., White, heterosexual men) sometimes report feeling blamed for diversity-related shortcomings (Kidder, Lankau, Chrobot-Mason, Mollica, & Friedman, 2004). As people generally seek to maintain positive views of the self and other in-group members (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), it is unlikely that these persons would purposefully offer programs that (at least perceptually) potentially cast them in a negative light. Thus, as the proportion of White, heterosexual men increases—or put another way, as employee diversity decreases—the likelihood that the athletic department would offer diversity training would seemingly decline. In drawing from this collective literature, I predicted:

Hypothesis 2: Gender diversity (H2a), racial diversity (H2b), and sexual orientation diversity (H2c) will be positively associated with the adoption of diversity training.

Finally, diversity culture might also influence whether an athletic department provides diversity training. In drawing from Schein (1990), an organizational culture of diversity reflects the pattern of diversity-related assumptions, values, and beliefs that shape employee activities and provide them a template for what is considered valid and appropriate (see also Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999). As Fink and Pastore (1999) note, organizations with a strong, proactive culture of diversity (a) have a broad perspective of diversity, encompassing surface- and deep-level differences; (b) value employee differences and how they can contribute to people’s learning and understanding; (c) integrate diversity and inclusion principles throughout the organizational system; (d) have diverse leadership teams; and (e) actively work to realize the benefits of diversity. Subsequent research has indicated that proactive organizational cultures are associated with a host of positive outcomes, including employee diversity, the attraction and retention of talented workers, a diverse fan base, and objective measures of organizational effectiveness (Cunningham, 2009a, 2011; Fink, Pastore, & Riemer, 2001, 2003).

There are several reasons to suspect that diversity culture should be associated with the adoption of diversity training. For instance, organizations that make diversity a priority are likely to have diversity training (Rynes & Rosen, 1995), presumably because of the link between training and achieving diversity-related objectives. Furthermore, researchers frequently identify support from top leaders as a requisite condition for both offering training and conducting it effectively (Bendick et al., 2001; Koonce, 2001; Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1999). As Koonce noted, for diversity initiatives, such as training, to succeed, “they require enthusiastic support and involvement of a company’s CEO and top leadership team, who must clearly enunciate the importance of diversity as a business value and goal” (p. 27). Both top leadership support for diversity and making diversity a priority are likely to be seen in organizations with a proactive diversity culture. As such, I hypothesized:

Hypothesis 3: A proactive diversity culture will be positively associated with the adoption of diversity training.

Training Content

A second purpose of the study was to examine the content covered among those athletic departments that offered training. There are certainly cases where sport organizations offer generic, “cookie cutter” diversity training programs. Ideally, however, the organization would conduct a needs analysis beforehand (Arthur, Bennett, Edens, & Bell, 2003; Bendick et al., 2001; Cocchiara, Connerley, & Bell, 2010; Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1999). Salas and Cannon-Bowers (2001) note that these analyses “outline the systemwide components of the organization that may affect the delivery of a training program” (p. 475). Furthermore, the needs analysis helps trainers to tailor the contents of the training to the specific needs in the organization (Koonce, 2001). When organizations do not conduct such an assessment, they run the risk of including information not relevant to that particular audience. As an expert in Wentling and Palma-Rivas’s (1999) study indicated, “If organizations do not conduct needs assessment, training may focus on issues that are not real problems in the organization, which may result in waste of resources without achieving desired results” (p. 222). Thus, to the degree that athletic departments conduct a needs analysis beforehand, the content of the diversity training should signal the prevalent diversity-related issues facing these entities (see also Shaw, 2007, for an alternative perspective concerning needs analysis).

The specific content of diversity training programs is conceivably endless, with topics including legal understanding, cultural awareness, bias reduction, and so on. An analysis of the literature (Bendick et al., 2001; Kulik...
& Roberson, 2008; Paluck & Green, 2009) suggests that organizations commonly cover six topics in diversity training, and as such, the discussion is restricted to these. The common topics include (a) discrimination in the workplace, (b) cultures of different groups, (c) reducing conflict between groups, (d) backlash against diversity, (e) sensitivity to individual needs, and (f) accommodations of special needs. As there is little literature to suggest which of these topics is covered most frequently, I developed the following research question:

Research Question: To what degree do athletic departments focus on (a) discrimination in the workplace, (b) cultures of different groups, (c) reducing conflict between groups, (d) backlash against diversity, (e) sensitivity to individual needs, and (f) accommodations of special needs during their diversity training?

Antecedents of Training Transfer

Diversity training does not end once the participants leave the training session. Instead, managers must take steps to ensure transfer of training, or the extent to which trainees apply and maintain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired during the training in the job environment (Burke & Baldwin, 1999; Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001). As Cocchiara et al. (2010) accurately note, “training programs cannot be considered effective if participants are unable to transfer what they have learned to their job” (p. 1096). In this study, I examine two antecedents of training transfer: motivation for training and training integration.

Researchers have identified several different motives for training, such as increasing productivity, improving customer relations, complying with antidiscrimination laws, fulfilling the obligations of a settlement, building leadership skills, and dealing with firm-specific diversity issues (Bell et al., 2009; Bendick et al., 2001; Cocchiara et al., 2010; Perry, Kulik, & Field, 2009). Examination of this literature suggests that the motivations can be coalesced into two general themes: effectiveness and compliance. Of the two, I argue that an effectiveness motivation will positively contribute to transfer of training. People are more likely to transfer their knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired during the training when they see the benefit in doing so and how it will help the organization (Burke & Baldwin, 1999; Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001). Thus, when engaged in training designed to improve customer relations, increase productivity, or improve workplace dynamics, all of which are reflective of the effectiveness motivation theme, trainees might be more apt to use the information in their work environment. The same is not necessarily the case for a compliance motivation, and in fact, such a motivation might actually decrease transfer. Compliance is based on external pressures for training, such as mandates from the university or the governing body (National Collegiate Athletic Association; NCAA). In this case, the motivation is externally situated, and the direct links from diversity training and organizational effectiveness might not be evident; as such, employees’ enthusiasm toward transferring the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to the work environment is likely to be low. Indeed, this reasoning is consistent with self-determination theory, which suggests that people’s determination to engage in behaviors, such as transfer of training, is likely to be higher when the motives for doing so are intrinsically valued rather than externally mandated (Deci & Ryan, 1985). As such, I hypothesized:

Hypothesis 4: An effectiveness motivation for diversity training will be positively associated with transfer of training.

Hypothesis 5: A compliance motivation for diversity training will be negatively associated with transfer of training.

The degree to which the training is integrated with other organizational initiatives should also affect transfer of training. That is, employees are more likely to transfer the training material into their work environment when it is also linked with the key elements in the department, such as the mission, strategic plan, hiring practices, and personnel decisions. As Cocchiara et al. (2010) note, “effective diversity training is systemically embedded throughout the organization” (p. 1096). Similarly, Wentling and Palma-Rivas (1999) argued that effective diversity training will be linked with an organization’s strategic goals and objectives (see also Koonce, 2001). Integrating the training in this manner demonstrates that diversity is instrumental in achieving the organization’s objectives, and because of this linkage, trainees are more likely to try to transfer the material to their work environment.

Absent such integration, trainees may not perceive the importance of the material nor will they be willing to integrate it into the work. Agars and Kottke (2004) suggested that when diversity is not systemically integrated, “organizations will remain stagnant” (p. 69), thereby suggesting that employees do not change their behaviors (see also Holvino, Ferdman, & Merrill-Sands, 2004). Though not specifically focused on diversity training, Cunningham (2009b) found evidence of this in his investigation of an athletic department embarking on diversity-related organizational change. He noted that although the athletic department had undertaken many diversity initiatives, “the initiatives were aimed at making changes to the peripheral aspects of the department without altering the fundamental strategy, mission, or ‘deep structure’…of the workplace” (p. 423), and as a result, the efforts were not as fruitful as they could have been. Collectively, this literature points to the primacy of ensuring that diversity training is integrated into the larger organizational system. Thus, I hypothesized:

Hypothesis 6: Training integration will be positively associated with transfer of training.
Method

Participants

Senior level administrators (N = 2151) from NCAA Division I (n = 780), Division II (n = 641), and Division III (n = 730) athletic departments participated in the study. For this study, I limited senior level administrators to include athletic directors, the senior woman administrator, associate athletic directors, and assistant athletic directors. The sample consisted of mostly men (n = 1234, 57.4%) and was primarily White (n = 1823, 84.8%), followed by African American (n = 196, 9.1%), Hispanic (n = 47, 2.2%), persons who listed “other” (n = 23, 1.1%), Asian (n = 17, 8%), Native American (n = 13, 6%), and persons who did not indicate their race (n = 32, 1.5%). The age range varied: 18–30 years (n = 384, 17.9%), 31–40 years (n = 582, 27.1%), 41–50 years (n = 544, 25.3%), 51–60 years (n = 498, 23.2%), 61 years and older (n = 116, 5.4%), and persons who did not list their age (n = 27, 1.2%). On average, the participants had worked 16.89 years (SD = 10.76) in intercollegiate athletics and 10.45 years (SD = 9.20) in their particular athletic department.

Measures

Participants completed a questionnaire which requested them to provide their demographic information and respond to questions related to the diversity training in the department. Items were either based on previous literature or developed specifically for the study. Before the administration of the questionnaire, two persons (an athletic administrator at the NCAA and an academic who conducted diversity research) examined it for content validity evidence.

Diversity Training. Participants were asked “does your athletic department offer some type of diversity training?” and responded by indicating “yes” or “no.”

Athletic Department Size. Athletic department membership was determined by consulting the NCAA listing, available at http://web1.ncaa.org/onlineDir/exec/divisionListing.

Employee Diversity. I assessed gender diversity by asking participants to indicate the proportion of women and men who worked in the athletic department. Responses options ranged from 1 (0–10%) to 10 (91–100%). I then computed the standard deviation of the two responses and used that value’s distance from zero (which would indicate complete diversity) as the final gender diversity score. As an example, an athletic department that has 51–60% women (value of 6) and 41–50% men (value of 5) would have a diversity score of -7.71 (i.e., 0–7.71). As another example, an athletic department with 91–100% men (value of 10) and 0–10% women (value of 1) would have a diversity score of -6.36 (i.e., 0–6.36). Thus, the larger value is reflective of greater gender diversity.

In a similar way, I measured racial diversity by asking participants to indicate the proportion of employees who were African American, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, White, and “Other.” Then, just as with gender diversity, I computed the standard deviation and took that value’s distance from zero as the diversity score. By way of example, a department with 0–10% African Americans (value of 1), 0–10% Asian Americans (value of 1), 0–10% Hispanics (value of 1), 71–80% Whites (value of 8), 0–10% Native Americans (value of 1), and 0–10% persons listed as “other” (value of 1) would have a diversity score of 2.86 (i.e., 0–2.86). This approach has been effectively used in past research (Cunningham, 2008, 2010, 2011).

Finally, I measured the sexual orientation diversity of the departmental workforce with a single-item adapted from Harrison and colleagues’ work (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998; Harrison, Price, Gavin, & Florey, 2002). The stem read: “As a whole, how different are members of your athletic department with respect to sexual orientation.” Participants responded on a 7-point scale from 1 (very similar) to 7 (very different). Harrison et al. (1998, 2002) demonstrated the sound psychometrics of this approach, and Cunningham (2010, 2011) recently used this measure in his research.

Diversity Culture. The degree to which the athletic department employs a proactive diversity culture was assessed using the vignette developed by Cunningham (2009a, 2010, 2011). This approach is considered as reliable and valid as using multi-item instruments while also meaningfully cutting down on the time commitment and mental fatigue involved with completing long questionnaires (Snow & Hrebiniak, 1980). In the first use of this instrument (Cunningham, 2009a), a panel of experts (including the lead author of the framework) examined the scale to provide content validity evidence.

In completing the questionnaire, administrators indicate “how similar your department is to the one in the scenario.” The vignette reads: “This department has flexible work hours and schedules, and attempts to make everyone feel as if they contribute to the department. Building and managing diversity is included in the department’s mission, and there are open lines of communication aimed at gleaning the advantages of diversity. Strategies, policies, and procedures are in place in order to capitalize on individual differences. The department also manages diversity by anticipating problems and initiating incentives to prevent problems.” Participants then rated how similar their department was to the one described in the vignette on a scale from 1 (very different) to 7 (very similar).

Training Content. Training content was measured by asking participants “to what degree were the following emphasized in the training?” Consistent with the literature reviewed (Bendick et al., 2001; Kulik & Roberson, 2008; Paluck & Green, 2009) and research question posed, responses options included “discrimination in the workplace,” “culture of different groups,” “reducing conflict between groups,” “backlash against diversity,”
Training Motivation. In drawing from previous research (Bell et al., 2009; Bendick et al., 2001; Cocchiara et al., 2010; Perry et al., 2009), I developed five items to assess the motivation for training. The stem read: “Diversity training in the department was motivated by,” and the items included “increased productivity,” “improved customer relations,” “improved workplace dynamics,” “compliance with university mandates,” and “compliance with NCAA mandates.” All items were anchored by a 7-point scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (to a great extent). Consistent with the notion that motivation is either effectiveness- or compliance-based, I used the first three items to measure effectiveness motivation (α = .74) and the last two items to measure compliance motivation (α = .76).

Training Integration. In drawing from past research (Cocchiara et al., 2010; Koonce, 2001; Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1999), I developed a measure to assess training integration. The stem read: “to what degree was the training connected with the following initiatives?” Response options included “mission statement,” “strategic plan,” “hiring practices,” and “personnel evaluation.” Responses were made on a 7-point scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (to a great extent), and the scale demonstrated good reliability (α = .82).

Transfer of Training. I measured transfer of training with three items based on Burke and Baldwin’s (1999) research. The stem read “please rate the outcomes of the training,” and response options included “people were expected to use the training in their everyday jobs,” “efforts were made to ensure that people applied what they had learned,” and “trainees forgot the material once it was completed” (reverse scored). The items were anchored by a 7-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The reliability was just adequate (α = .61), and I address this issue further in the Discussion.

Procedures

The sampling frame included the senior level administrators (n = 5260) at each of the NCAA Division I (n = 347 athletic departments, 2082 administrators), Division II (n = 296 athletic departments, 1387 administrators), and Division III (n = 448 athletic departments, 1791 administrators) athletic departments. Differences in the number of administrators per athletic department were a function of variations in the size of the departments. Following Dillman’s (2000) recommendations, I designed the study to ensure multiple contacts with each administrator. Specifically, all administrators were mailed a postcard alerting them to the study and indicating that they would receive a questionnaire packet in the coming week. One week later, they were each mailed a questionnaire packet, which included a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, a questionnaire, and a postage paid return envelope. I then sent another postcard one week later to encourage participation. Finally, one week after the second postcard, I sent another questionnaire packet, thanking those who had already returned theirs and encouraging participation among nonrespondents.

In all, 2151 persons responded (1304 after the first questionnaire packet, 847 after the second questionnaire packet), for an overall response rate of 40.9%. Some researchers suggest that response rates such as this are “good”, especially considering how sensitive the questionnaire material is (Berdahl & Aquino, 2009, p. 37 and p. 41). Nevertheless, I did take steps to check for possible nonresponse bias. Specifically, Rogelberg and Luong (1998) suggest that late responders have many of the same characteristics as nonrespondents, and as such, researchers can check for nonresponse bias by comparing early and late respondents. A multivariate analysis of variance indicated that early and late respondents did not differ in their ratings of the study variables, F(11, 880) = 1.20, p = .28. Thus, while I recognize that late responders “are not ‘pure’ nonrespondents” (Rogelberg & Luong, 1998, p. 63), the data do suggest that nonresponse is likely not a substantial concern (cf. Rogelberg & Stanton, 2007).

Results

Data Aggregation

While the data were collected from individuals, the hypotheses and research question were concerned with the athletic department, as a whole. Thus, it was first necessary to aggregate the data from the individual to the group level, a decision justified by the (a) the conceptual framework for the study; (b) eta-square values; and (c) for the most part, intraclass correlations, ICC(1). Departments were only included if at least two or more administrators responded—a necessary condition for aggregation (Dixon & Cunningham, 2006). Results are presented in Table 1. All eta-square values were greater than .46, well above the traditional cutoff of .20 (Florin, Giamartino, Kenny, & Wandersman, 1990). Furthermore, 9 of the 12 F tests used to compute ICC(1) values were significant, thereby suggesting that aggregation to the group level is largely supported (see Dixon & Cunningham, 2006). Given these findings, the data were aggregated from the individual (n = 2151) to the athletic department level (n = 675) level of analysis. The final sample included 239 Division I, 205 Division II, and 231 Division III athletic departments, or 61.8% of the NCAA.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

As previously mentioned, two external reviewers assessed the questionnaire for validity evidence based on test content. I was also interested in assessing validity evidence based on test structure, which I examined by conducting a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with all multi-item
scales used in the study (i.e., effectiveness motivation, compliance motivation, training integration, and transfer of training). Results of the analysis, using AMOS 16.0, indicated that the four factor model was a good fit to the data: $\chi^2 (df = 48, n = 2151) = 474.97$; comparative fit index (CFI) = .90; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA); (90% CI: .06, .07) = .06. I then compared the hypothesized model to two alternative models.

The first alternative model was a three-factor model in which the motivation items all loaded on a single factor. This model was a poor fit to the data: $\chi^2 (df = 51, n = 2151) = 941.49$; CFI = .78; RMSEA (90% CI: .09, .10) = .09. The chi-square difference test indicated that it was a significantly poorer fit than the hypothesized model: $\Delta \chi^2 (\Delta df = 3, n = 2151) = 466.52$, $p < .001$. In the second alternative model, all items loaded on a single factor. This model was also a poor fit to the data: $\chi^2 (df = 54, n = 2151) = 1590.24$; CFI = .61; RMSEA (90% CI: .11, .12) = .12. And, as with the first alternative model, the chi-square difference test indicated that it was a significantly poorer fit to the data than the hypothesized model: $\Delta \chi^2 (\Delta df = 6, n = 2151) = 1115.27$, $p < .001$. Collectively, these data point to the validity evidence based on test structure for the instruments used in the study.

**Descriptive Statistics**

Frequencies, means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations are presented in Table 2. Results indicate that 53% of all athletic departments offered diversity training. Chi-square analysis shows that Division I athletic departments were much more likely to offer training (73.2%) than were Division II (38.0%) or Division III (45.9%) athletic departments, $\chi^2 (df = 2, n = 2151) = 62.34$, $p < .001$. The number of coaches, gender diversity, racial diversity, sexual orientation diversity, and proactive diversity culture were all significantly associated with whether an athletic department offered training. In addition, both an effectiveness motivation and training integration were positively associated with transfer of training.

**Hypotheses and Research Question**

With the first set of hypotheses, I predicted that the size of the athletic department, as indicated by the divisional affiliation (H1), gender diversity (H2a), racial diversity (H2b), sexual orientation diversity (H2c), and proactive diversity culture (H3) would all be predictive of whether the athletic department offered diversity training. These were tested through logistic regression, and results are presented in Table 3. The model explained 19% ($p < .001$) of the variance and correctly predicted 66% of the athletic departments that offered training. Results indicate that Division I membership (B = 1.12, SE = .22, Wald = 26.97, $p < .001$), gender diversity (B = .12, SE = .07, Wald = 3.15, $p = .07$), sexual orientation diversity (B = .14, SE = .07, Wald = 3.62, $p < .05$), and a proactive diversity culture (B = .31, SE = .08, Wald = 14.73, $p < .001$) were all positively associated with an athletic department offering diversity training, though the effects of gender diversity were only marginally significant. Thus, hypotheses 1, 2a, 2c, and 3 were all supported. On the other hand, racial diversity was not associated with offering training, so hypothesis 2b was not supported.

The research question was concerned with the degree to which the athletic departments focus on (a) discrimination in the workplace, (b) cultures of different groups, (c) reducing conflict between groups, (d) backlash against diversity, (e) sensitivity to individual needs, and (f) accommodations of special needs during their diversity training. I examined this question in two ways. First, I compared the mean scores (see Table 2) to the midpoint of the scale (4) through a one-sample t test. Results indicate that the mean scores for five of the content areas were significantly greater than the midpoint of the scale: discrimination, $t (355) = 11.43$, $p < .001$;
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<td>7. TC: Discrimination</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. TC: Cultures</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.29</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. TC: Conflict</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.53</td>
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<td>10. TC: Backlash</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.39</td>
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<td>11. TC: Sensitivity</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.41</td>
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<td>12. TC: Accommodations</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.25</td>
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<td>13. Effectiveness motivation</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.24</td>
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<td>14. Compliance motivation</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.18</td>
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<td>15. Training integration</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Transfer of training</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.49</td>
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<td>M(%)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Notes. r > .11, p < .05. TC = training content.
cultural differences, $t(356) = 23.94, p < .001$; conflict, $t(356) = 11.67, p < .001$; sensitivity, $t(356) = 25.30, p < .001$; and accommodation, $t(356) = 8.69, p < .001$. On the other hand, the mean score for backlash was significantly less than the midpoint of the scale, $t(355) = -12.53, p < .001$.

I also computed paired-sample $t$ tests to assess differences in the mean scores among the variables. I used Bonferroni correction to account for family-wise error and reduced the critical value to $.003 (i.e., .05 / 15)$. Results indicate that athletic departments most emphasized sensitivity to individual needs ($M = 5.41, SD = 1.05$) and different cultures ($M = 5.37, SD = 1.08$). The mean scores for these points of emphasis did not vary from each other but were significantly higher than the other mean scores. The least emphasized topic was backlash toward diversity ($M = 3.15, SD = 1.28$).

Finally, hypotheses 4–6 were concerned with the antecedents of transfer of training. I tested these hypotheses by way of a hierarchical regression analysis, in which Division I status and Division II status served as the controls, effectiveness motivation, compliance motivation, and training integration served as the independent variables, and transfer of training served as the dependent variable (see Table 4). The controls accounted for 2% ($p < .05$) of the variance. After accounting for these effects, the hypothesized antecedents accounted for an additional 26% ($p < .001$) unique variance, a large portion of variance explained. Results indicated that effectiveness motivation ($\beta = .10, p < .05$) and training integration ($\beta = .49, p < .001$) were both positively associated with transfer of training, while compliance motivation held a negative association ($\beta = -.13, p < .01$). Thus, hypotheses 4 (effectiveness motivation), 5 (compliance motivation), and 6 (training integration) were all supported. Subsequent analyses indicated that the 95% confidence intervals for training integration did not overlap with those of the other antecedents, thereby indicating that its effects on transfer of training were statistically the strongest.

**Discussion**

Despite the host of potential benefits associated with diversity training and its prevalence in corporate America, the topic has received relatively little attention among sport management scholars. As such, the purpose of this study was to examine the prevalence, antecedents, and outcomes of diversity training in NCAA athletic departments—the first such analysis identified in the literature. Results suggest that only 53% of the athletic departments offered training, a proportion substantially less than that reported among other organizations (Esen, 2005). The figures were highest among Division I universities, where approximately 3 out of 4 departments offered such programs, but substantially lower among Division II (38.0%) and Division III (45.9%) athletic departments. These figures suggest that, at least with respect to educational and development efforts, most intercollegiate athletics departments lag behind other business sectors in their diversity efforts.

**Table 3 Results of Logistic Regression Predicting Offering Diversity Training**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>Exp (B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Division I</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>26.97**</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division II</td>
<td>-.41</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>3.81*</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender diversity</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>3.15†</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial diversity</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual orientation diversity</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>3.62*</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive culture</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>14.73**</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes. Nagelkerke $R^2 = .19$. †$p < .10$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .001$.*

**Table 4 Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Transfer of Training**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Division I</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division II</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.28 26***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.*
In addition to identifying the prevalence of diversity training, another objective of the study was to examine the antecedents of training. Results suggest that athletic department size, as indicated by divisional status, was strongly associated with the adoption of diversity training. Subsequent analyses, drawing from the data from the Equity in Athletic Report (http://www.opr.gov/athletics/) confirm that Division I athletic departments, relative to others, are not only larger in terms of the number of teams and athletes, but also have larger operating budgets. These findings are supportive of the notion that larger athletic departments have greater resources and personnel that can be devoted to diversity training (Rynes & Rosen, 2005; see also Amis & Slack, 1996). Or, put another way, the relative lack of training among Division II and III athletic departments might be due to budget restrictions, in which case diversity training might be perceived as a luxury expense that can be cut when the budget is restricted.

The diversity of the workplace, in terms of both employee diversity and the diversity culture, was also positively associated with the adoption of diversity training. The influence of employee diversity could be a function of people who differ from the typical majority being more supportive of diversity and diversity initiatives than majority members (Martins & Parsons, 2007; Wiethoff, 2004). Thus, in the case of the current study, as the proportion of persons who are LGBT and women increased, so too did the likelihood that the athletic department offered diversity training. Interestingly, though racial diversity held a significant bivariate association with the adoption of diversity training, it was not significant from a multivariate perspective. This finding is contrary to the conceptual framework and the reason for the lack of significance is not immediately clear. Future research is needed to further explore this association.

Furthermore, organizations with a proactive diversity culture of diversity were more likely to offer training. Indeed, training, development, and other socialization techniques can help reinforce a culture (Schein, 1990), emphasizing to employees the importance of diversity and inclusion. From a different perspective, Rynes and Rosen (1995) found that organizations that made diversity a priority, such as athletic departments with a proactive diversity culture, were also likely to offer training. Indeed, training is just one element to which organizational leaders can attend to reinforce the importance of diversity; others include focusing on the mission, strategy, and goals (Agars & Kottke, 2004; Cunningham, 2009b; Holvino et al., 2004). These points are discussed in greater depth later in the discussion.

Another objective of the study was to identify the prominent themes covered in the training. Results indicate that two topics were covered more frequently that the others: sensitivity to individual needs and learning about different cultures. Thus, there was a focus on developing an awareness of and learning about people different from the self. This learning can provide a source of understanding and growth so critical in many diverse workplaces (Ely & Thomas, 2001). Interestingly, relatively little attention was paid to backlash against diversity plans. Diversity initiatives are frequently viewed in a negative light by persons in the typical majority (Harrison et al., 2006), and such negative responses can limit the effectiveness of such programs (Hite & McDonald, 2006; Lindsay, 1994). While this backlash ought not to serve as the primary focus of the training, addressing it, discussing why it exists, and devising strategies for overcoming such resistance seem prudent, particularly when considering that support from majority members is important to ensuring diversity’s success (Thomas, 1996).

A final aim of the study was to examine transfer of training and its antecedents. Cocchiara et al. (2010; see also Roberson et al., 2009) note that empirical assessments of transfer of diversity training are largely absent from the literature, so this analysis offers particularly unique insights. Results indicate that while the motivations for training significantly impacted transfer, training integration held the strongest association with transfer. That is, people were most likely to implement the knowledge, skills, and attitudes learned during the diversity training in their work environment when the training was also linked with the core elements of the department, such as the mission, strategic plan, hiring practices, and personnel evaluation. These findings support other conceptual (Agars & Kottke, 2004; Cocchiara et al., 2010; Holvino et al., 2004; Koonce, 2001) and empirical (Bendick et al., 2001; Cunningham, 2009b; Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1999) work illustrating the importance of linking diversity initiatives with broader organizational initiatives.

Implications

Findings from the study have the potential to impact practice, perhaps most directly in relation to transfer of training. Just because employees attend diversity training does not necessarily mean that they will implement the knowledge, skills, and attitudes into their work environment. Instead, sport managers need to consciously and intentionally link diversity training with the primary elements of organization. This means that managers and diversity trainers should clearly elucidate how the training impacts the organization’s mission, strategic aims, hiring, and personnel evaluation, among other organizational elements. They should also articulate how using what was learned will help the organization achieve its primary objectives. In doing so, trainees will be more likely to transfer the training to their work environment, and consequently, create a more diverse and inclusive workplace.

The findings are also of use to senior level administrators. As previously noted, results from this study indicate that many athletic departments do not offer diversity training, particularly at the Division II and III levels. However, there are a host of benefits associated with doing so, including improved employee attitudes toward diversity (Brief & Barsky, 2000; Finkel et al., 2003) and enhanced organizational effectiveness (Bendick et al.,
2001), among others. Thus, in offering diversity training, these administrators potentially have an opportunity to realize performance improvements their competitors do not by offering training programs. What’s more, the benefits of the training, and other diversity-related initiatives, are likely to be best realized when coupled with a diverse workforce (see Cunningham, 2008, 2009a, 2011; Doherty & Chelladura, 1999).

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite the contributions of the study, there are potential limitations. The first of these is the 40.9% response rate. While potentially lower than what ideally would be achieved, this response rate is typical for studies dealing with sensitive issues (Berdahl & Aquino, 2009), and subsequent analyses indicated that nonresponse bias is likely not a substantial concern. These fears are further allayed when considering that 61.8% of all NCAA athletic departments were included in the study. There are also three potential limitations with the instrument. First, I did not offer an operational definition of diversity training, and thus, it is possible that administrators’ interpretations of what that term entails could vary. Second, I used single-item measures to assess the training content, a practice sometimes criticized. It is of note, however, that the items were adapted directly from Bendick et al.’s work, and other researchers have demonstrated the efficacy of using single-item scales to measure unidimensional constructs, as was done in this study (see de Boer et al., 2004; Wanous, Reichers, & Hudy, 1997). Finally, the reliability estimate for training transfer was .61, a lower value than traditionally recommended. Subsequent analyses revealed that deletion of the third item in the scale would raise the reliability coefficient to .71. I chose not to make such a scale revision for three reasons. First, while low, a reliability of .61 is acceptable for the beginning stages of scale development (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham, 2006). Second, there was a lack of theoretical rationale for deleting the item—a critical part of scale revision. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the pattern of findings was the same when the three-item and two-item versions of the scale were used.

Finally, there are several opportunities for future research. Additional investigations of sport contexts beyond intercollegiate athletics are needed. Second, there is some question as to the link between diversity training and various measures of organizational effectiveness (Kalev et al., 2006; Kulik & Roberson, 2008). There are several potential reasons for these equivocal results, including the need for and use of a needs analysis to deliver training relevant for the specific workplace. Nevertheless, there is a need to further examine these possibilities and to understand when and under what conditions training is associated with improved performance. Finally, future researchers should also examine other factors that contribute to the decision to offer diversity training. Given the possible benefits of these educational efforts, such an understanding would be very beneficial.

References


