

# Think manager, think male? Impact of gender in sport administration hiring

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The "glass ceiling" for women administrators in college athletics may be cracked, but is not completely broken, according to a new study co-authored by a North Carolina State University researcher.

Results of the study, which surveyed athletic administrators at universities across the country to determine how, and if, [gender roles](#) made a difference in hiring practices, may disappoint those who think double standards for women have been relegated to the past.

Dr. Heidi Grappendorf, assistant professor of parks, recreation and tourism management at NC State, and colleagues surveyed 276 athletic administrators at Division I universities to have them evaluate fictitious vignettes of male or female candidates for intercollegiate athletics positions such as athletic director, compliance director or life-skills director. They then ranked the candidates' attributes and the likelihood of hiring them for the respective positions.

The research found that female candidates for the athletic director position, despite having the same background as their male counterparts, were viewed as less feminine. However, if the same female candidates applied for life skills positions – positions which are predominately held by women in real-life athletic administration – they were viewed as more feminine.

Meanwhile, males were more likely to be chosen for athletic director positions, even with the exact same background and attributes as female

candidates.

Researchers believe the study lends support to the notion that men tend to be hired in management roles not just for their skills and experience, but because of the perceived view that management roles require masculinity.

"It seems like there is, unfortunately, a 'catch-22' for women in management roles – particularly in sports," Grappendorf explains. "The assumption has been that masculine attributes like aggressiveness and competitiveness are needed for management-level positions, yet women who display those attributes are still not given the same opportunities as men. Even worse, if they do happen to be hired, [women](#) are often looked down upon by colleagues for having those masculine qualities."

Similar research has been conducted in business settings, but this research is the first of its kind conducted in the sports industry, which continues to be male-dominated. The research, which is published in the *Journal for Sport Management*, was conducted along with lead author Dr. Laura Burton from the University of Connecticut and co-author Dr. Angela Henderson from the University of Northern Colorado.

Provided by North Carolina State University

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