THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC PREPARATION FOR JOB TASKS AND JOB SATISFACTION OF ATHLETIC TRAINERS IN THE PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL SETTING

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In its current form, sports management education is a pre-professional academic concentration that, founded upon research-based understandings, provides students with standardized training as preparation for entry into the sport industry (Jamieson, 1987). The standardization of sports management education is exemplified by the curriculum standards of the Commission on Sport Management Accreditation (COSMA), which provides standardized criteria for the development and evaluation of such curricula at both the undergraduate and graduate levels (Commission on Sport Management Accreditation, 2008). As such, sports management education appears to fit in the conceptual framework for the study of preservice professional academic programs as developed by Stark, Lowther, Hagerty, and Orczyk (1986).

Once graduates enter the industry, they are considered professionals and must meet an expected standard of performance and service that is held by the general public as well as those expectations of the hiring organization (Fogarty & Dirsmith, 2001). These performance norms drive pre-service professional preparation programs to deliver standardized and general information that is transferable to many different settings. This allows sport organizations to hire professionals academically prepared to work in many different settings in the industry (Fogarty & Dirsmith, 2001).

Pre-service professional preparation academic curricula often contain field experience components that may be beneficial in allowing the student to apply theory to practice. College internships are designed to provide a bridge to close a gap that exists between academic coursework and practical relevance (Wesley & Bickel, 2005). COSMA
curriculum guidelines for undergraduates and masters students have such requirements (Commission on Sport Management Accreditation, 2008). As Stratta (2004) noted, field experiences such as internships are vital for successful entry into the sport industry.

While a sports management curriculum provides graduates with the technical information necessary for job competence in a variety of settings, it may fall short of completely preparing a person for work in any one particular setting. At issue is the lack of congruence between how a job setting is portrayed by academicians and the realities of the setting (Nicholson & Arnold, 1991). Further, new employees in many industries often experience difficulty in adjusting to life as an employee in a professional setting. Whenever an employee enters a new job setting, sensory overload, shock of the reality of the job, and unfamiliar behavioral cues all can combine to create decreased job satisfaction and/or new employee turnover (Louis, 1980).

**STUDY PURPOSE**

The purpose of this study was to assess the perceptions of preparation held by one group of administrators in sport: athletic trainers (ATs), specifically those ATs employed in professional baseball. This study was an attempt to apply socialization theory from other industries to the sport setting. Of importance in this investigation is the impact of perceptions of preparation held by the respondent group and the impact of those perceptions on respondents’ job satisfaction.

The findings of this study may aid in the continual development of pre-professional academic preparation of certified athletic trainers and shed more light on the academic preparation of students entering the sport industry. In particular, this study may be useful in the development of curricula that provides a more realistic preview of a job in sports management.

**STUDY RATIONALE**

Prior to the current study, no study examined the relationship between academic preparation and job satisfaction in sport management. Further, no studies related to job satisfaction have been conducted in the professional sport setting. As such, we intend to fill a specific and important void in the sport management literature.

Specifically, the rationale for using this group to study experiences for new employees in sports management/administration are:

1. According to Parks and Quartermar (2003), sports management is defined as “Any combination of skills related to planning, organizing, directing, controlling, budgeting, leading, and evaluating within the context of an organization or department whose primary product or service is related to sport and/or physical activity” (p. 15). While it may appear that ATs primary responsibilities are the care and prevention of athletic injuries, the Board
of Certification, Inc. (2004) identifies Organization and Administration as one of the 6 primary domains of practice.

2. Furthermore, ATs in professional baseball have a substantial amount of responsibility related to team and player travel, meal money distribution, insurance administration, and budgeting.

3. Abney and Staurowsky (2003) classify ATs as first-line college sport administrators, much like compliance officers, media relations management, marketing managers, et cetera. They point out that “the organization and administration domain requires ATs to be competent in managerial tasks such as planning, writing policies, and procedures, compliance with standards, management of finances and personnel, and maintenance of records (p. 287).

Framed within Holton’s (1996) taxonomy of new employee development the present study attempted to assess the study population’s relationships between perceptions of professional ration from their academic training, perceptions of professional preparation derived from relevant internships, job satisfaction, career longevity, and demographic factors such as age, ethnicity, and level of baseball at which they are employed.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**Organizational Socialization**

A graduate’s adjustment to the work setting is a process of adjusting behaviors from the patterns and experiences established during academic preparation (Adkins, 1995). The period of adjustment is considered the employee’s socialization into their new work organization. This process is termed organizational socialization and refers to experiences and tactics that lead the newcomer to learn “the ropes” of their role, acquire organization-specific skills, and gain social and relationship knowledge within the work setting (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). It is a process in which new employees’ transition “from being organizational outsiders to being insiders” (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007, p. 707). Hebdon (1986) referred this socialization as a “transmission of culture” (p. 56). It is basically a process of learning and change for the employee (Holton, 1996).

According to Van Maanen (1978), it should be assumed that when an organization hires a new employee, 1) People in job transition are in a state of heightened anxiety, 2) Any person crossing organizational boundaries is looking for clues on how to proceed and make meaning of their workplace, and 3) An organization’s stability and productivity depend largely on how new-comers come to perform their job tasks. Van Maanen (1978) contended that these assumptions support human resource practices that foster new employee socialization because the success of the
organization was too important to leave the process to chance.

Bauer et al. (2007) stated that socialization tactics are increasingly important because of increased employee mobility. They noted that 25% of workers are currently undergoing workplace socialization and that individuals change jobs 10.2 times over 20 years. The costs of turnover to the organization (recruiting, staffing, training) and the costs of turnover to employees (insurance and medical coverage changes) make employee retention an important factor for sport organizations and their employees (Cunningham, Fink, & Sagas, 2005). According to Holton and Russell (1999), understanding new employee experiences means assessing, among other things, pre-employment activities affecting anticipation of the setting (including training).

Louis (1980) found that newcomers in the workplace are met with the “contrast” (p. 236) of a new setting. This contrast is change that is person-specific, not indigenous to the organization (i.e., practices such as therapy, evaluation, motivation, time-to-return, etc.) and generate a need for understanding roles and expectations, and a need for a means of interpretation of the variability of the setting (Louis, 1980).

Research into organizational socialization overall has been fragmented (Bauer et al., 2007). Taormina (2004) noted that early research focused on trying to conceptualize it, followed by various attempts to model the concept, and more recently investigating the process of socialization from a longitudinal perspective.

An example of longitudinal assessment in organizational socialization relevant to the current study is Nicholson and Arnold’s (1991) longitudinal study of recent college graduates’ experiences in their early entry into work at a large corporation. The authors found the newcomers had invalid expectations of their job content, and that socialization did occur, but at different rates for different job categories. The results indicate that socialization within an organization is sub-culture specific. This may have implications for athletic administrators. First, what socialization processes that work for one area or setting (sport, division, etc.) may not work for another. Second, an organization must offer socialization and training experiences that develop newcomers and inspire job satisfaction and commitment.

Organizational socialization research specific to the field of sports management is limited. Various studies have been related to organizational socialization by focusing on internships and mentoring. Southall, Nagel, LeGrande, and Han (2003) created a meta-discrete learning model that approached the area of experiential learning in discrete activities that are self-contained and separate from the on-campus educational setting as a mechanism for overcoming some of the negative outcomes of newcomer experience.

Stratta (2004) assessed the concerns of students during the sport management internship. The students’ responses showed important factors to be devel-
opment of the professional self, including exposure to significant challenges; and development of professional relationships, including networking. Other studies have been related to perceived outcomes for the employee. Cunningham et al. (2005) looked at the effects of diversity on job satisfaction and organizational turnover of intercollegiate athletics coaches. They found that coaches’ organizational commitment was affected by their own race as well as by the racial diversity of their job setting. They noted that persons are attracted to organizations, and vice versa, based on similarities in attitudes and values. If, however, once the person is in the organization and does not perceive a fit with the environment, then it is likely he or she will leave.

Scott (1997) provided an overview of the concept of organizational culture in intercollegiate athletic organizations. He noted that organizational culture in college athletic departments is not easily uncovered through external observation. This makes it difficult for outsiders and newcomers to understand organizational factors such as the business environment, values, heroes, rites and rituals, and cultural network.

Pitney, Ilesley, and Rintala (2002) examined the professional socialization of ATs in the NCAA Division I context. The authors sought, through qualitative analysis, to assess ATs perceptions of their professional socialization process experiences. Mentoring, orientations, staff development programs all were identified as experiences that were helpful in the socialization process. The post-academic socialization generally occurred in stages where the AT transitioned from his/her schooling to their professional life. In this stage they experienced uncertainty about their role, uncertainty about their tasks, overwhelming by the volume of work. As the authors noted, “Despite the formal preparation necessary to enter the collegiate setting, ATCs were not completely prepared for what they experienced” (p. 66). The next stage of the post-academic socialization was termed “role evolution” (p. 66), where they sensed stabilization of their role as an AT. They developed more involved relationships with the athletes in their care. They attempted to understand their own mission as an AT. Finally, the respondents stabilized their existence as an AT in their current role, refocused their role in the position to accommodate the needs of the organization, or left the organization. The overall findings of the study showed that the professional socialization of ATs was described as “informal”, “unstructured”, “learning on the run”, and “learning by doing” (p. 69). The authors noted that this is likely to create uncertainty and a need for personal adjustment in newcomer ATs.

In another study of AT socialization, Pitney (2006) investigated organizational influences and quality-of-life issues during the socialization of ATs working in the NCAA Division I setting. The author sought, through qualitative analysis, to assess the perceptions that NCAA Division I ATs hold of the influences of the employment organization, as well as factors of quality-of-life on
their socialization into their jobs. Findings included an influence of organizational bureaucracy, high work volume, and low administrative support on respondents' perception of the quality of their lives.

Pitney et al. (2002) found that ATs described this period of professional socialization as informal, unstructured, learning on the run, and learning by doing. This created role uncertainty and a need for personal adjustments. Based upon this, it may be more appropriate to consider the workplace environment to be an active component in the adjustment and socialization made by new employees, not just the context in which adjustment takes place (Grosjean, 2004).

Holton (1996) sought to develop a model of new employee development that encompassed major domain areas that were derived from relevant research in the area. His taxonomy included four domains: individual issues, people issues, organizational factors, and a work task domain.

The people domain consists of issues related to the different types of social learning that occur when a new employee enters the organization. This includes managing impressions and forming relationships. The organizational domain includes the culture of the organization. Organizational culture drives the evolution of organizational roles, processes, informal systems, goals and values. Role conflict, overload, and ambiguity can create stress and inhibit job learning. As Morrison and Brantner (1996) found, role complexity, lack of job challenge, self-efficacy, and organization climate, all were related to job learning enhancement or hindrance.

The individual domain consisted of newcomer attitudes and expectations of the job. Important in this domain is the notion of the "expectation gap" (Holton & Russell, 1999, p. 238). This concept suggests that there is a strong correlation between met expectations and job attitudes. Met expectations have an impact on other socialization activities, such as role definition and discovering what the organization expects of an employee. This gap between expectations and realities are related to the lack of a realistic job previews. These previews are strongly correlated with met or unmet job expectations which, in turn, are correlated with turnover and job attitude (Holton & Russell, 1999).

The work task domain includes three main elements: 1) Work Savvy - Understanding how to apply knowledge and skills to the job and acquiring generic professional skills such as communication, time management, etc. 2) Task Knowledge—Understanding basic tasks specific to the job. 3) Knowledge, Skills, & Abilities—Understanding what is necessary to perform the job specific tasks.

To create an overall model of new employee development factors, Holton integrated these domains into three areas where new employees have learning experiences: Their employment orientation, their job training, and their learning within the performance of their jobs.
JOB SATISFACTION

According to Spector (1985), the employee affective dimension of job satisfaction has been one of the most heavily researched subjects in human resource academic literature. He noted that job satisfaction is a reflection of an employee's attitudinal reaction to their job and has been found to be closely related to employee absenteeism and turnover. Locke (1975) stated that employee satisfaction is a result of the fit between the values of the employee and the condition of the job. Therefore, the only two ways to resolve a lack of such fit it to either change the job or change the employee (ie: withdrawal from the job).

Spector (1985) determined that while job satisfaction had been studied extensively, a valid tool for measuring the construct in human service (those who interact with their clients/customers on a face-to-face basis) had not been developed. Using factors from previous literature and designed to more accurately assess the satisfaction of human service employees, Spector developed the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS). The JSS employs 36 items to measure nine different facets of job satisfaction and has been used in numerous studies with consistent reliability outcomes.

The Spector (1985) JSS has been used once previously in the sports setting. Barrett, Gillentine, Lamberth, and Daughtrey (2002) assessed both global job satisfaction and nine sub-facets of job satisfaction of college ATs in the Southeastern Conference and compared satisfaction scores by gender, age salary, experience, education level, ethnicity, and job title. Overall, ATs had a higher mean satisfaction score than the mean of all Americans (Barrett et al., 2002), denoting overall job satisfaction. Head ATs had higher scores than assistants. ATs with higher pay had higher scores than those with lower pay. Gender was not a significant factor with satisfaction scores.

ADOPTING SOCIALIZATION THEORY IN SPORT MANAGEMENT

The Holton (1996) model of new employee development provides a mechanism through which sport management graduates' experiences and outcomes as employees in the sport industry may be assessed. Theoretically, the Holton model links the socialization factors of the employee, the work, the organization, and the people within the organization and integrates those factors throughout the overall job preparation of the prospective sport manager, including job task training, orientation, and on-the-job learning. While Holton looked at orientation from a human resources perspective, it may be useful to approach orientation in terms of the internship a sport management student may perform. Both provide information about the job setting that is not included in professional preparation. It may also be useful to look at job training as the professional preparation the student receives in his/her academic program. Both are designed to provide knowledge and skills necessary to complete job tasks.
Based upon the theoretical framework developed by Holton (1996), the following research questions were asked:

Q1: What is the relationship between the perceptions of academic preparation for technical and administrative duties held by ATs in professional baseball and their overall level job satisfaction?

Q2: What is the relationship between the perceptions of academic preparation for technical and administrative duties held by ATs in professional baseball and their level job satisfaction as related to nine different sub-facets of satisfaction?

Q3: How do demographic characteristics of age, ethnicity, and number of years in professional baseball interact with perceptions of academic preparation for technical and administrative duties held by ATs in professional baseball and their level job satisfaction as related to nine different sub-facets of satisfaction?

METHODS

Sample

This study involved the administration of an online questionnaire from May through August, 2008. A request for participation was sent to 275 Professional Baseball ATs. Participants’ e-mail addresses were purchased from the National Athletic Trainers’ Association (NATA) professional baseball mailing list. In accordance with Dillman’s (2000) Tailored Design Method follow-up e-mail reminders were sent three times to non-respondents.

201 (73%) members of the accessible population began the survey. 180 (65%) participants completed the entire survey. Of those completing the survey, 178 (98.9%) were male and the overall mean age was 34.57 years (SD = 8.12 years). The self-reported race/ethnicity of the ATs was 81.1% Caucasian, 9.4% Hispanic, 3.3% Asian, and 1.7% African American with remaining 4.5% selecting other. The mean number of years employed in professional baseball excluding their internship was 10.26 (SD = 8.71 years).

Instruments

The primary measures were the 36-item Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) (Spector, 1985) and a perception of job duty preparation scale that was specifically designed for this investigation. The JSS was selected because it has been used in examination of other allied health professions and human service employees.

The JSS contains following subscales: Pay (α for present sample = .79), Promotion (α = .81), Supervision (α = .81), Fringe Benefits (α = .80), Contingent Rewards or performance based rewards (α = .83), Operating Procedures (α = .56), Coworkers (α = .73), Nature of Work (α = .83), and Communication (α = .82). Each of the 36 items was followed by a six-point response scale ranging from Disagree Very Much to Agree Very Much. Since the reliability of the Operating Conditions measure was fairly low the
variable was dropped from subsequent analyses.

The instrument used to assess perceptions of preparation for technical and administrative work tasks was developed for this study using two documents published by the governing and national certification bodies for athletic training: 1) The National Athletic Trainers’ Association (2006) Athletic Training Educational Competencies, which outlines the required knowledge and skills implemented in undergraduate education programs; and 2) the Board of Certification, Inc. (2004), Role Delineation Study which outlines specifically the scope of practice for ATs.

Each perception was measured using the question stem “After completing an athletic training education program I felt confident in my skills related to...” which was followed by seven general athletic training practice domains and rated on a six-point Likert scale that ranged from “disagree very much” to “agree very much”. The general athletic training practice domains included prevention, clinical evaluation, immediate care, treatment, rehabilitation, and reconditioning of injuries and organization /administration. The internal consistency of the resultant scores as measured by Cronbach’s α was .87.

Analyses

Descriptive statistics were calculated for each subscale of the JSS (Spector, 1985) and the perceptions of preparation items. To investigate the research questions, nine multiple regressions were performed with each JSS subscales as the dependent variable and demographic characteristics, including respondent’s age, whether they had had an internship in baseball, race (minority or majority status) and years in professional baseball; and their mean score on the perceptions of preparation for work tasks scale as the independent variables. The categorical variables of internship and race were dummy-variable coded as described in Cohen, Cohen, West and Aiken (2002). The standardized beta coefficients for these effects should be interpreted as the y-intercept of the group coded as “1” relative to the reference group. When scores were missing cases were deleted listwise.

Results

The descriptive statistics for the ATs JSS subscales and total scale along with perceptions of preparation for work tasks are reported in Table 1. Table 2 reports the standardized betas and their associated t values and p-values along with R² for each multiple regression. The R² for each analysis is a measure of effect size in terms of proportion of variance accounted for and can be interpreted using Cohen’s (1988) taxonomy of effect size with R² of .01, .09 and .25 considered “small”, “medium”, and “large” effect sizes, respectively.
### Table 1

Mean (Standard Deviations) and Correlations of Satisfaction, Professional Preparation, and Demographic Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Pay</td>
<td>5.99 (1.14)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Promotion</td>
<td>.45**</td>
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<td>3. Supervision</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td></td>
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<td>4. Fringe Benefits</td>
<td>.53**</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Contingent Rewards</td>
<td>.51**</td>
<td>.60**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.50**</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Operating Procedures</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.44**</td>
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<td>7. Coworkers</td>
<td>.43**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
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<td>8. Nature of Work</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.53**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.54**</td>
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<td>9. Communication</td>
<td>.59**</td>
<td>.57**</td>
<td>.47**</td>
<td>.59**</td>
<td>.68**</td>
<td>.42**</td>
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<td>.41**</td>
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<td>10. Total Satisfaction</td>
<td>.70**</td>
<td>.63**</td>
<td>.64**</td>
<td>.85**</td>
<td>.59**</td>
<td>.64**</td>
<td>.67**</td>
<td>.85**</td>
<td>.43**</td>
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<td>11. Academic Preparation</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>.28**</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Age</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>-.24**</td>
<td>-.14*</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Years in Baseball</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>-.23**</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.94**</td>
<td>.26 (0.73)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

Note: Means (standard deviations) are reported on diagonal and correlations are on the off diagonal.

*p < .05  **p < .01

### Table 2

Regressions of Satisfaction Dimensions on Demographics and Perceptions of Academic Preparation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity (0-white)</th>
<th>.03</th>
<th>.00</th>
<th>.02</th>
<th>.14*</th>
<th>.15*</th>
<th>.18*</th>
<th>.10</th>
<th>.15*</th>
<th>.0</th>
<th>.64</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internship (0=no*)</td>
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<td>.06</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.0</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Baseball</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.45*</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td>-.43*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td>-.31</td>
<td>-.36</td>
<td>-.33</td>
<td>-.50*</td>
<td>-.28</td>
<td>-.43*</td>
<td>-.58**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>.27*</td>
<td>.24*</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>.25*</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>.28*</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>.50*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R² .08* .08* .06* .08* .09* .12* .11* .10* .2

Note: Standardized Beta Coefficients Reported

*p < .05  **p < .01
Satisfaction with Pay

The regression was statistically significant $F(5, 173) = 3.28, p = .007$ and $R^2 = .08$. The demographic characteristics were non-significant predictors. The beta for Perceptions of Preparation was statistically significant, standardized $\beta = .27, t = 3.75$ and $p < .001$. This suggests that as the ATs perception of training increases so does satisfaction with pay.

Satisfaction with Promotion Opportunities

Similar to satisfaction with pay, the regression for satisfaction with promotion opportunities was statistically significant $F(5, 170) = 3.26, p = .008$ and $R^2 = .08$. Again, perception of preparation was a significant predictor, $\beta = .14, t = 2.00$ and $p = .04$. The other predictors were not statistically significant.

Satisfaction with Supervision

The regression for satisfaction with supervision was statistically significant $F(5, 173) = 2.44, p = .03$ and $R^2 = .06$. The demographic characteristics were non-significant and perception of preparation was a significant predictor, $\beta = .21, t = 2.80$ and $p = .006$.

Satisfaction with Fringe Benefits

The regression for satisfaction with fringe benefits was statistically significant $F(5, 173) = 3.37, p = .006$ and $R^2 = .08$. Race (majority status) was statistically significant $(\beta = .14, t = 1.96$ and $p = .05)$ with Caucasian ATs reporting lower satisfaction with fringe benefits relative to minority ATs. In addition, perception of preparation was a significant predictor, $\beta = .25, t = 3.39$ and $p = .001$.

Satisfaction with Contingent Rewards

The overall regression was statistically significant for satisfaction with contingent rewards $F(5, 174) = 3.49, p = .005$ and $R^2 = .09$. The beta for race (majority status) was statistically significant $(\beta = .15, t = 2.11$ and $p = .001)$ which indicates Caucasians were generally less satisfied with their contingent rewards relative to minorities. Perception of preparation was also a positive predictor $\beta = .23, t = 3.16$ and $p = .002$.

Satisfaction with Nature of Work

The regression for satisfaction with nature of work was statistically significant $F(5, 172) = 4.80, p < .001$ and $R^2 = .12$. Contrary to the previous dimensions of satisfaction, several demographic characteristics were statistically significant predictors of satisfaction with nature of work. Race (majority status) was a positive predictor with Caucasians reporting lower satisfaction, $\beta = .18, t = 2.52$ and $p = .01$. Years in baseball was a positive predictor, $\beta = .45, t = 2.13$ and $p = .03$. Participants' age was a negative predictor $\beta = -.50, t = -2.30$ and $p = .02$, this suggests that older ATs tend report less enjoyment with their job tasks. Furthermore, Perceptions of Preparation was a significant positive
predictor of satisfaction with nature of work, $\beta = .28$, $t = 3.89$ and $p < .001$.

**Satisfaction with Coworkers**

The regression was statistically significant $F(5, 174) = 4.30$, $p < .001$ and $R^2 = .11$. Perceptions of Preparation was a positive predictor, $\beta = .28$, $t = 3.97$ and $p < .001$.

**Satisfaction with Communications**

The regression was statistically significant $F(5, 172) = 4.02$, $p < .002$ and $R^2 = .10$. Relative to minority ATs, Caucasian ATs were less satisfied with $\beta = .15$, $t = 2.08$ and $p = .03$. The age of the ATs was a negative predictor of satisfaction with communication with $\beta = -.43$, $t = -2.00$ and $p = .04$. Perceptions of Preparation was a positive predictor, $\beta = .26$, $t = 3.60$ and $p < .001$.

**Total Satisfaction**

The regression was statistically significant $F(5, 174) = 2.40$, $p < .001$ and $R^2 = .12$. Age was a marginally significant negative predictor of total satisfaction with $\beta = -.38$, $t = -1.76$ and $p = .07$. Perceptions of Preparation was a positive predictor for the overall level of job satisfaction, $\beta = .30$, $t = 4.21$ and $p < .001$.

**DISCUSSION**

**Global Job Satisfaction and Perception of Preparation**

The results of the current study offer information into how academic preparation, as perceived by one sector of the sports administration profession, may be related to the satisfaction of individuals within that specific sector. The analyses in this study indicate that job satisfaction as a global measure, as well as with nine sub-facets of job satisfaction, are associated with how well ATs in professional baseball perceive they have been prepared to conduct their technical and administrative duties.

Considering existing literature related to job satisfaction, the findings of this study are not surprising. First, as Locke (1975) noted, productivity is a precursor of job satisfaction. This may be based upon the employee's intrinsic satisfaction derived from being able to be effective on the job. Thus, a person who is better prepared for a job would be more efficacious in their duties and, subsequently, more satisfied in that position.

The perceived fit between the values of the employee and the employer has been shown to be related to job satisfaction (Locke, 1975). This can be enhanced by realistic employee expectations of the job and job setting. In a meta-analysis of job expectation research, Wanous, Poland, Premack, and Shannon Davis (1992) found that there was a particularly strong relationship between job satisfaction and employee commitment to the organization. According to Holton (1996), human resource development research shows consistent evidence that met expectations have a significant affect upon other socialization activities, such as role clarity and discovering organizational expectations of its employees.

In the present research, it is possible that those ATs who had better academic
preparation also had a better preview into the nature of their job duties and the culture of the industry. This may be reflective of the nature of athletic training preparation programs. These programs may not all contain the specific content necessary to meet the needs of the baseball setting. As Kalleberg (2008) stated, often a structural and systematic basis for mismatches exists within an industry and should not be discounted as problems with an employee’s personality. They are issues that may stem from a lack of structural connection between the industry and prospective employees. This lack of a connection is not likely to resolve itself and must be met head-on in order to find solutions that benefit both employers and employees.

The consistent relationship between perceptions of academic preparation and job satisfaction may also be explained by the Bauer et al. (2007) model of newcomer adjustment. In that model, antecedents include information seeking, where employees seek to find what is necessary to be successful in the job setting and to reduce their own uncertainty. This creates a predictable environment for the employee. Antecedents are then mediated by organizational tactics such as training and mentoring. Outcomes in this model include job performance, turnover, and job satisfaction. In the current study, it may be inferred that the better the (perceived) academic preparation an AT received, the more predictable the environment they find the environment in which they work. This may then create a more positive job attitude outcome.

Support for this explanation may be found in a longitudinal assessment of organizational entry and exit by Holton and Russell (1999). In their study, the authors assessed several different effects of organizational entry, including: individual readiness, organizational tactics, individual tactics, perceived job characteristics, learning, expectations, and coping responses as each related to turnover and job attitudes. Factors such as individual readiness, individual learning tactics and organizational fit were significant predictors of turnover. Similarly, Johnston, Wetherill, High, and Greenebaum (2002) found that new public school teachers reported that their university education failed to prepare them for the real world of teaching.

Sub-facets of Job Satisfaction

While “research supports the idea that global measures of job satisfaction include more information than do measures of satisfaction facets” (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2005, p. 120) there may also be relevance to several of the relationships found between perceptions of professional preparation and sub-facets of job satisfaction, including organizational fringe benefits, job performance-based rewards, the nature of work, and organizational communication.

In this study, satisfaction with the fringe benefits was related to years in baseball. This seems intuitive as the longer a person is in a career, the better
they may be in finding what fringe benefits may be available to them. Further, the longer a person is in a career, the more they may understand the value of the benefits offered to them as compared to other job settings. For example a minor league AT may be able to supplement their income during their “off-season” while continuing to receive benefits (i.e. health, retirement, etc) from their baseball employer. What is less intuitive was the finding that lower satisfaction with fringe benefits was found with Caucasian ATs. There is no research that has addressed this measure as it relates to ethnicity. What this finding may suggest is that the culture of baseball may be one in which minorities can gain benefits that are either attractive to them or that may not be found in other settings. In other words, the setting typically includes athletes, coaches, and management personnel that are from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This diversity may create an environment where athletic trainers who are not Caucasian are better able to be successful at deriving the full benefits that are available.

A similar finding was seen in satisfaction with contingent rewards, where Caucasian ATs were less satisfied with this aspect of their job than those of minority status. Again, baseball may be an industry in which rewards for performance may have specific attractiveness or availability for minority ATs that are not found in other industries.

There were several demographic factors that were shown to be predictive of satisfaction with the nature of work for ATs in professional baseball. As with fringe benefits and contingent rewards, Caucasian respondents had a lower satisfaction with the nature of work than did those of minority status. This may be due to the same factors associated with fringe benefits and contingent rewards or it may be reflective of the culture of professional athletics which includes more minority participants (players) than many other industries. This culture may make the work of an AT in baseball more enjoyable for minorities. Also of interest in the analysis of satisfaction with the nature of work are the findings that while age was a negative predictor of satisfaction, years in baseball was a positive predictor of satisfaction.

Finally, both age and majority ethnicity status were negative predictors of satisfaction with the communications in the work setting. The age factor in this analysis is difficult to explain, however the fact that minorities find the communications more satisfying may also be related to the factors mentioned above. In total, the factors related to minority status speak favorably for the work setting for these ATs.

**Recommendations**

Much of what was discovered in this study suggests that athletic training education (and perhaps all sports management preparation programs) must address the specific requirements of individual job settings. As Pitney et al. (2002) noted in their study of newcomers in the field, "Undergraduate student
athletic trainers may well be served if they are educated about initial entry into a professional role and how to better use informal learning situations during their initial socializing events" (p. 68).

While it is understood that professional preparation academic programs must provide instruction that is general enough to be useful and relevant across many settings, it is evident that the specifics of particular job settings may necessitate curriculum adaptations and field experiences that address those specifics. In the case of the professional baseball setting, job duties, responsibilities, and roles are different than most other settings in sport. ATs, especially those in the minor leagues must also serve as equipment managers, traveling secretaries, bursars, and medical coordinators. Rarely do athletic training education programs directly and thoroughly address these duties, therefore the surprises new ATs experience in the setting may be a source of great stress. Thus, sports administration programs should carefully plan field experiences within the academic program to expose students to a wide variety of setting specific demands. Further, students should be encouraged to participate in volunteer and internship opportunities in the particular work setting they desire to enter.

Prince, Boshuiszen, van der Vleuten, and Scherpier (2005), in an assessment of medical students' perceptions of academic preparation for the clinical phase of their medical training, conducted interviews and focus group encounters with medical students in clinical settings. Among responses, students stated that they felt uncertain how to behave, had limited knowledge of expectations, difficulty applying the theoretical knowledge in a practical setting, and stress from a drastic increase in workload. The authors termed this the "shock of practice" (p. 705).

As sports management professional preparation academic programs grow and evolve, they must take into consideration the specific needs of certain settings and develop curricula and field experiences that meet those needs.

It is important to note that caution must be used in generalizing the results of this study to other populations in sport management. The independent variables were derived specifically from specific athletic training competencies and may not be relevant to fields outside athletic training. It is suggested that similar studies with other specific job tasks be conducted to further substantiate the use of socialization theories in sport management. It should also be noted that there may be other factors beyond those used in this study that may lead to greater job satisfaction for persons in sport management positions. Further research in this area of job socialization should focus on the factors that may affect employees in different settings.

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