

March 2019

## **"Moving One Seat Over": Division I Women's Basketball Female Assistant Coaches' Views of Head Coaching**

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“MOVING ONE SEAT OVER”: DIVISION I WOMEN’S BASKETBALL  
FEMALE ASSISTANT COACHES’ VIEWS OF HEAD COACHING

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science

in

The Department of Kinesiology

by  
Caitlin Kriesel-Bigler  
B.A., Hendrix College, 2016  
May 2019

## **Acknowledgements**

There are many people to thank for their assistance with this thesis. I would first like to express my appreciation to Dr. Alex Garn for his guidance and encouragement in writing this thesis. His mentorship has been exceptional during the past two years, both as an instructor in the classroom and supervisor of this project. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Melinda Solmon and Dr. Elizabeth Webster, for their excellent advice and feedback.

I also thank my family and friends who have supported and encouraged me every day throughout this process. I would not be here today without all of you.

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## **Abstract**

At the time Title IX passed in 1972, over 90% of women's athletic teams were coached by women. By 2014, that percentage had dropped to 43%. This study used in-depth interviews with four female Division I assistant basketball coaches with varying years of experience to explore their experiences and attitudes towards becoming head coaches. The interviews revealed five major themes: (a) The Power of Same-Sex Role Models; (b) Gender Differences and Whether They Matter; (c) Title IX Collateral Damage: "It's Nothing but the Money"; (d) Gender-Related Obstacles; and (e) Preparation for "Moving Over One Seat." The findings reveal that the development of additional strategies for helping women pursuing head coaching positions within women's, as well as men's, athletics are needed and will be important for creating gender equity in the field. Three main conclusions were drawn from the interviews with female assistant coaches: 1) It is vital to increase the numbers of women in leadership positions in athletics, 2) gender is highly relevant to coaching and thus it is vital for institutions to address gender issues rather than to ignore them, and 3) institutions need to re-consider their hiring policies and practices in order to get more women into leadership positions.

## **Introduction**

Title IX has produced positive changes for women in athletics. Consistent with this view, evidence suggests that the law, passed in 1972, played an important role in increasing the number of girls and women who participated in high school and collegiate sports (Gavora, 2002). Ironically, however, the passage of Title IX was followed by a four-decade decline in the percentage of women's collegiate teams that were coached by women. In 1972, when Title IX was enacted, women coached more than 90% of collegiate women's teams, but as coaching opportunities became more pervasive, men (rather than women) began to fill those roles. Acosta and Carpenter (2014) documented the patterns of coaching through longitudinal studies from 1972 until today. In 1978, schools were required to comply with Title IX, and already by that time, only 58% of women's collegiate teams employed a female head coach. The extreme decline in female head coaches continues today; data from 2014 show that 43.4 % of women's teams are coached by women (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). The percentage of men's athletic teams coached by men has not, in contrast, changed substantially over time. Acosta and Carpenter (2014) reported that only 2.0% of men's teams are coached by females. Overall, only 1 in 4.5 Division I collegiate teams is coached by a woman (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014).

In contrast to the longitudinal changes in head coaching positions, assistant coaching has seen few changes in women's representation. Division I schools have the most paid female assistant coaches of women's teams at 3077, which is an increase of 124 coaches since 2012 (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). Thus, there are many women in the pipeline for head coaching positions. Indeed, female assistant coaches are the largest prospective pool of potential head coaches of female athletic teams, especially at the Division I level. It is important therefore, to understand these women's views and experiences concerning coaching. Gaining insight into

assistant coaches' perspectives may help identify factors that affect their future career decisions, especially their intent to pursue head coaching jobs. Most existing research on gender and coaching has, however, focused on head coaching roles, whereas little research has focused on assistant coaches. In the current study, I interview four Division I female assistant coaches of women's basketball teams to explore their a) experiences working in collegiate athletics, b) attitudes towards becoming a head coach, c) perceptions of possible barriers to becoming head coaches, and d) ideas concerning effective strategies for creating gender equity in Division I athletics.

## **Declines in Female Head Coaches: Reasons for Concern**

There are many reasons that have led to the reduction of women in head coaching roles. For example, it is important for female athletes, especially college-aged women who are developing as young adults and taking on new roles, to have female role models in leadership. Women have fewer role models of leadership in traditionally masculine domains (e.g., business, science and technology, politics, and sports) than do their male peers (Epstein, 1970). The lack of leadership modeling appears to harm girls' and women's performance in traditionally masculine domains. For example, Latu, Masr, Lammers, and Bombari (2013) asked women to perform the stressful task of giving a public speech and randomly assigned them to perform the task in room that included female role models, male role models, or no models (control condition). The results showed that the women performed significantly better when there were pictures of highly successful women role models (e.g., Hillary Clinton) in the room than in the other conditions (male role models or no models at all). The women talked for longer during their speech and rated their performance more positively than the women in the other conditions (Latu et al., 2013). The results suggest that the presence of a strong female role model, such as a female head coach, could have a positive impact on female athletes' behavior and performance. Indeed, Acosta and Carpenter (2014) suggested that Division I athletics is a highly masculine and a highly competitive domain for female athletes, therefore, having female role models available to them is extremely important.

In addition to affecting girls' and women's performance, evidence suggests that role models are important for shaping individuals' career aspirations. For example, Everhart and Chelladurai (1998) found that female athletes (players) with female head coaches were more interested in the coaching field than female athletes with male head coaches. In addition, female



basketball players who had played for a female coach sometime in their career thought that the discrimination they might face in the coaching field would be less of a barrier to their career goals than female players who had never had a female coach (Lirigg, DiBrezza, & Smith, 1994). In sum, the presence of female head coaches acting as a role model for young female athletes appears important for promote the coaching field as a viable career option.

A second reason to be concerned about the low numbers of women in head coaching posts is that their under-representation is likely to reduce gender equity broadly within the field of athletics. Title IX increased participation of girls and women in high school and collegiate athletics and caused head coaching positions of women's athletics to become more desirable as visibility for women's athletics rose, the prestige of these job increased, and higher pay was introduced (Welch & Sigelman, 2007). Obviously, these changes were positive; however, the increases in status and prestige also seemed to have a negative side effect: head coaching positions were often filled by males rather than females. As noted above, the percentage of female head coaches dropped from 90% to 43% across the last four decades (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). Men experienced increases in opportunities to coach women's teams but the reverse was not true for women, who still rarely coach men's teams. Thus, women continue to be concentrated in the lower status and prestige roles in college athletics compared to men.

The decreasing number of women with head coaching experience means, in turn, that the pool of women who pursue top tier sport administrative jobs, such as athletic director and assistant athletic director, is also decreasing. If women are not given equal opportunities to head coach, it undermines their ability to move to higher-level jobs. In 2014, only 22% of athletic directors in college athletics in the United States were female (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). Interestingly, the gender of the athletic director impacts the number of female coaches working

in athletic programs; the percentage of female coaches is 53.4% for schools with female athletic directors versus 44.4% for schools with male athletic directors (Acosta & Carpenter, 2006). In sum, it is less likely that a female coach will be hired when the athletic director is a male rather than female, and male athletic directors outnumber female athletic directors 5 to 1 (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014).

To create a more equal representation of women and men in Division I collegiate coaching, changes are clearly needed. Knowing which aspects of collegiate culture (e.g., hiring practices, mentorship, training) should be targeted for change requires understanding the factors that affect women's interest in, and ability to obtain, head coaching jobs. Thus, it is important to understand the views and experiences of women currently working as assistant coaches in collegiate sports. By conducting in-depth interviews with female assistant women basketball coaches working in Division I women's basketball, I expect to generate new insights into the experiences and views that both serve to support and undermine women's interest in moving to head coaching positions. As noted earlier, female assistant coaches constitute the single largest pool of potential applicants for head coaching positions for women's Division I women's basketball, making them a particularly important group of study (Sagas, Cunningham, & Ashley, 2000).

Qualitative research seems especially useful for understanding women's experiences in coaching because of the complexity and depth of the topic. Previous work by Kamphoff, Armentrout, and Driska (2010) and Bruening and Dickson (2008) employed qualitative methods to interview female head coaches of Division I teams and both studies produced rich information about their experiences as head coaches and how being women in the field of collegiate athletics has shaped their coaching careers. Overall, this study will explore female assistant coaches'

experiences working as an assistant in Division I athletics, attitudes toward becoming a head coach, barriers they face or expect to face in pursuing head coaching jobs, and the strategies that they believed would support women's movement from assistant to head coach positions and help college basketball coaching become more inclusive and equitable for women.

## **Women's Interest in Head Coaching Jobs**

Many researchers have investigated the reasons for women's underrepresentation in leadership roles in college athletics. In this section, I review past literature relating to two main topics connected to my research project: 1) women's head coaching intentions, and 2) common barriers women face in obtaining head coaching positions.

Research suggests that intentions to become a head coach are different for women and men. Cunningham et al. (2003) found that female assistant coaches report less desire to pursue coaching than their male counterparts. Similarly, Sagas et al. (2000) reported that male assistant coaches have greater intentions to become head coaches than female assistants. Thus, it appears that one reason that more men than women serve as head coaches of women's collegiate teams is that women are less interested in obtaining such jobs than are men. Rather than assume that women's lower levels of interest is fixed and inevitable (as a result, for example, of biological sex differences), it is important to examine the factors that shape individuals', especially women's, interest in head coaching as a career.

There are many possible reasons for the differing coaching intentions of men and women. One possibility is that female assistant coaches have different values and priorities than their male colleagues. As has been found in other fields (e.g., science careers; Diekmann & Steinberg, 2013), women may prioritize time with family more than men (Polachek, 1981), and men may prioritize money and power more than women. These factors that may lead women (but not men) to prefer assistant coaching roles that demand less travel and come with lower salaries and fewer opportunities for advancement (Welch & Sigelman, 2007).

A second possible reason for women's lower aspirations concerns self-perceptions of their abilities. Some evidence suggests that self-efficacy is an important predictor of

occupational aspirations in many fields (Lent et al., 2003). The link between self-efficacy and aspirations has also been found for coaching. For example, Moran-Miller and Flores (2011) gave 210 female NCAA student athletes a survey concerning their interest in coaching. They reported that the participants' coaching self-efficacy was positively related coaching interests. There is also evidence of sex differences in coaching self-efficacy. Sagas et al. (2000) reported that female assistant coaches reported lower self-efficacy in the domain of coaching than male assistants. Women's lower coaching self-efficacy may affect their perceptions of readiness for becoming head coaches. For example, women may believe that they need more years of experience or more accolades before pursuing head coaching positions than do men, and thus that they fail to apply for such posts at the same rates as men. It is also possible, however, that rather than opting out of head coaching, female assistant coaches are prevented from attaining head coaching jobs by external barriers related to their gender.

Research suggests that, although opportunities for women participating in athletics have improved dramatically since 1972, female coaches continue to face many barriers in collegiate athletics. Lack of financial incentives for women in coaching (Pastore, 1991), lack of institutional support related to work-family conflict (Dixon & Bruening, 2007), and discriminatory hiring processes (Lovett & Lowry, 1994) are a few obstacles women in athletics face. Furthermore, Kerr and Marshall (2007) argued that the ideology of sport, which is rooted in agentic masculinity, leads women to be perceived as outsiders and may reduce their own sense of belonging. Resources and prestige are also discussed frequently in the literature relating to barriers for women pursuing coaching positions (LaVoi, 2017).

It is important to explore female assistant coaches' own perspectives and experiences of gender and athletics to gain a better understanding of the role of these and other factors in

women's careers in coaching. Female assistant coaches are especially important group of study because they constitute the largest pool of prospective applicants for female head coaching positions (Sagas et al., 2000). Qualitative research seems especially useful for understanding women's experiences in coaching because it allows for flexible and detailed explorations of factors that affect women's views (Bruening and Dickson, 2008; Kamphoff, Armentrout and Drisk, 2010).

### **Conceptual Framework for Examining Female Assistant Coaches Views**

The causes of sex differences in leadership positions in male dominated fields (e.g., science and technology, politics, athletics) are complex and multi-faceted. Many theoretical frameworks have been usefully employed by previous researchers in documenting the factors that contribute to women's under-representation in leadership positions. Social cognitive career theory, social role theory, and belongingness theory are three broad theoretical frameworks that I used to frame this study and develop interview questions for Division I assistant female basketball coaches.

### **Social Cognitive Career Theory**

One major theoretical foundation for this research is Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). SCCT is derived from Bandura's (1986) broader, social cognitive theory and it has been perhaps the most dominant theory of vocational development for the past two decades. SCCT explains the processes whereby individuals develop and establish career interests; it posits that career interests arise from individuals' self-efficacy beliefs and their expectations of success and failure for work outcomes.

As I described earlier, some research suggests that low self-efficacy plays a role in women's underrepresentation in head coaching positions. For example, Cunningham, Doherty,

and Gregg (2007) found that female assistant coaches had lower self-efficacy, vocational interest, and lower intentions to become head coaches, than male assistant coaches. Thus, I sought to explore views and intentions of female assistants about becoming head coaches, and I included a focus on women's self-efficacy and expectations of success.

### **Social Role Theory**

A second major theoretical foundation for this research study is Social Role Theory (Eagly 1987; Eagly & Karau, 2002). This framework argues that women and men often have different values, which can lead to different career choices and the pursuit of different work goals. The theory posits that gender differences in values arise originally from the historical assignment of men and women into the roles of breadwinner and caregiver, respectively (Eagly 1987; Eagly & Karau, 2002). Eagly and her colleagues (Eagly 1987; Eagly & Karau, 2002) argued that men and women adjusted to these roles by developing different skills, interests, and values: women developed communal goals and behaviors (e.g., personal relationships, caretaking, and helping) and men developed agentic goals and behaviors (e.g., obtaining power and resources).

Some research suggests that sex differences in values shape career goals. Past research suggest that women show lower levels of interest than do men in careers that require long hours away from home and family. For example, most individuals perceive science careers as “family unfriendly” and, as a result, women are less interested in those types of careers than men (Diekmann & Steinberg, 2013). Many researchers have characterized sports as a field in which workers spend long hours and travel extensively. For example, Bruening and Dixon (2007) wrote of the sports workplace that, “Those who work long hours (particularly when those hours are visible to supervisors and co-workers) and travel constantly for competition and recruiting have

been viewed as ideal workers." It is possible, therefore, that women perceive coaching as incompatible with their valuing of family time.

At the same time, research has shown that the largest gender difference in goal orientation is that women prefer helping people, whereas men prefer working with objects (Konrad, Ritchie, Lieb, & Corrigan, 2000). Women desire to work with people appears to lead them to develop different occupational interests than men (Konrad, Ritchie, Lieb, & Corrigan, 2000)). Head coaching is an interesting career because it combines communal qualities (e.g. working with a staff and team of players) and agentic qualities (e.g. power and prestige). Thus, in my interviews, I will explore assistant coaches' personal goals and values related to the unique position of head coach.

### **Belongingness Theory**

A third theoretical foundation for this research concerns belongingness. This framework stems from social psychology and is a more recent and less well-developed theory but appears useful for explaining why individuals from stigmatized groups fail to engage in domains in which they are underrepresented. The theory is based on the idea that need to belong—the need to form interpersonal attachments—is a fundamental human attribute (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Research in social psychology has found that individuals' sense of the extent with which they are a valued member within some context, titled "belongingness," is a powerful predictor of their success and retention (Walton & Cohen, 2007). For example, Goode, Rattan, and Dweck (2012) found that college women's sense of belong in math predicted their desire to pursue math careers in the future.

Belongingness theory and research is consistent with the findings from Inglis, Danylchuk, and Pastore's (1996) study examining factors that affect coaching retention for men and women.



The researchers found three factors that were linked to retention of women in intercollegiate athletics: (a) work balance and conditions (discussed above), (b) recognition and collegial support, and (c) inclusivity. (Ingus, Danylchuk, & Pastore, 1996). Recognition and collegial support refers to the extent that colleagues have similar interests as oneself, recognize one's contributions in the field, and have an understanding of the work one does. It also deals with the prestige, status, and public recognition of one's position (Pastore, 1991). Inclusivity is related to having a work environment that is: a) accepting of all sexual orientations, b) is free from sexual harassment and racial discrimination, c) has equal representation of men and women, and d) supports individual differences in the workplace. Pastore (1991) noted that when these work experiences are fulfilled, the retention of coaches is maximized. Both of these broad factors (recognition and inclusivity) are likely to contribute to an individuals' sense of belonging in the domain of head coaching.

### **Present Study**

The primary goal of the present study is to explore possible reasons for the underrepresentation of women in head coaching positions by conducting in-depth interviews with female assistant coaches in Division I women's basketball programs. I use a) social cognitive career theory, b) social role theory, and c) belongingness theory as a framework for examining assistant female coaches' view of, and desire to pursue, head coaching positions. Therefore, questions were aimed at exploring female assistant coaches' a) experiences in coaching and how the job aligns with their lifestyle and goals, b) attitudes, intentions, and confidence (coaching efficacy) in becoming head coaches, c) barriers such as work conditions and inclusivity of Division I programs and d) strategies moving forward to help establish a more equal representation of women in head coaching. The literature on this topic has neglected

female assistant coaches' views and experiences related to gender and their interest in pursuing head coaching positions (LaVoi, 2017). By obtaining their perspectives on the subject of their experience as an assistant coach and the role of head coaching, a greater understanding of women's attitudes toward becoming a head coach, their experience of working in collegiate athletics, and their views concerning the barriers that they currently face, or might encounter in the future, and their perception of institutional strategies that might help to move women into head coaching in the future can be gained.

## **Method**

### **Qualitative Design**

The aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of women's perceptions of their experiences as assistant coaches in Division I women's basketball and obtain insight into possible reasons for women's underrepresentation in head coaching positions by employing an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith, 2004). Van Manen (1990) stated that a primary goal of a phenomenological approach is to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of everyday experiences. IPA was developed in psychology with the goal of understanding individuals' lived experience in the world. The role of researcher in this methodology is to interpret participants' experiences in a systemic way, while also giving attention to individual cases (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005; Smith & Osborn, 2003). IPA is useful when trying to understand interviewees' personal perceptions of their social world and also when the topic is context dependent and dynamic (Smith & Osborn, 2003). By using IPA, I will examine each individual case separately and then seek themes and patterns across cases, paying close attention to the text, and interpreting participants' perceptions of what it's like to be a female coach in Division I athletics. This study builds on the relatively small body of research on female assistant coaches' experiences and their pursuit in becoming head coaches. The complex nature of coaching and gender is examined using open-ended questions about the nature of the job and whether and, if so, how being a woman has affected female assistant coaches' experiences and interest in becoming a head coach in the future.

### **Participants and Setting**

The participants in this study were female Division I assistant coaches ( $N = 4$ ) from three different Division I women's basketball conferences in the United States, who ranged from

having two years' experience in the field, to the most experienced having forty years' experience. Details about each individual participant can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Overview of Participants

<b>Participant label</b>	<b>Years of Experience as Assistant Coach</b>	<b>Race</b>
Participant 1	2	Caucasian
Participant 2	5	African American
Participant 3	12	African American
Participant 4	40	Caucasian

The most experienced assistant coach has more than 40 years of experience in the field. The least experienced assistant coach is in her second year in the field. The two coaches in between have 5 and 12 years of experience, respectively, in the field of coaching. The participants currently coach in the Southeastern Conference, the Sun Belt Conference, and the Big South Conference. The inclusion of assistant coaches with varying lengths of experience in coaching strengthens the study by allowing for the detection of possible changes over time in the treatment of gender within collegiate basketball. For example, the study includes coaches who experiences in athletics spans the time that Title IX was enacted to today. Two sampling strategies were used to obtain participants for this study: homogeneous purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling was used to obtain participants with specific characteristics to ensure information-rich cases that are specific to my topic of interest (Creswell, 2000). Individuals were recruited if they (a) had been or are currently employed as an assistant basketball coach, (b) identify as female, (c) work with a Division I women's basketball programs, and (d) have had at

least two years of experience working as an assistant coach. In addition to homogeneous, purposive sampling, I used snowball sampling, asking participants after the interview whether they know any other female assistant coaches that might be willing to participate (Miles & Huberman 1994).

The interviews were conducted during November and December of 2018. The interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes in length. Each interview was audio recorded for later transcription.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My role in this project is one as an insider; I was a collegiate basketball player and I have worked within the job that is the topic of the study (i.e., assistant coach of a women's collegiate basketball team). Furthermore, I have a previous relationship with two of the interviewees that extends beyond their participation in this study.

My personal relationship with the participants and insider status produced advantages as well as challenges in data collection process. The interviewees know and have a positive relationship with me, and were especially comfortable talking about their experiences, and their answers to my questions were lengthy, rich in detail, and candid. At the same time, it is possible that interviewees may have failed to disclose some aspects of their thoughts concerning sensitive topics such as gender discrimination in their place of employment because they feared that my insider status will allow me to identify people or situations that they do not want to disclose.

Use of IPA requires the researcher to systematically analyze and interpret participants' responses, and thus it is vital that researchers are aware of potential sources of bias that stem from their own lived experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2003). I am aware that my current position and past experiences have contributed to my subjective views of collegiate athletics, coaching,

and gender issues. Most notably, I am an advocate for women's involvement in all levels of athletics and I am aware, as a result of research in the field, that women are underrepresented in head coaching and sometimes experience gender discrimination. In using an interpretative nature of phenomenology research design, I sought to be conscious of, minimize, and be fully transparent about, the ways in which my own lived experiences and perceptions of the role of gender in collegiate coaching affect my interpretation of the participants' responses, thereby increasing the validity of the research findings.

### **Data Collection**

I obtained permission to conduct the study from the Institutional Review Board at Louisiana State University (see Appendix A). Prior to data collection, I provided an overview of the study to all participants and got their informed consent to participate in the study. An in-depth narrative approach is often used in the context of social worlds and cultural milieu, through personal narratives about certain events or periods of time (Chamberlayne et al. 2000). This approach typically involves multiple interview sessions and interviewees are given a free rein to shape their own narratives (Richie & Lewis, 2003). Four female assistant coaches in this study were interviewed over the span of two months, in detail. Each participant answered 10 to 12 questions in a semi-structured interview format about their experiences, attitudes, barriers for women in coaching, and strategies in creating more opportunities for women in leadership positions in head coaching.

Data was collected using individual semi-structured interviews and recorded for transcription. The use of semi-structured interviews has several advantages. Using a core set of identical, structured questions allowed me to focus on certain areas of interest, maximizing the likely of obtaining of information relevant to them (Turner, 2010) and allowed me to compare

responses to the same questions across participants. At the same time, the semi-structured interviews made use of open-ended questions, which allowed participants the flexibility to discuss topics and experiences that I did anticipate would be important (Turner, 2010), and to talk about issues in greater depth and detail than other formats. The interview guide consisted of four subsets of questions relating to: a) experiences, b) attitudes, c) barriers, and d) strategies. Each subset will include 4-6 questions (see Appendix B for full interview guide).

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted using an IPA approach. I followed the data analysis procedures described by Smith and Osborn (2003). The first step in my data analysis was to listen to the audio recording of each interview and transcribe them verbatim. The interview and transcription process was done over the span of two months (December and January, 2018). In the second step, I became familiar with participants responses, by reading and re-reading each interview transcript multiple times. The four interview transcripts from participants totaled forty pages of text. I then made notes in the margins of the transcripts concerning line-by-line labels, examining each interview separately. I used these initial labels to create emergent themes in the data, and listed these emergent themes in another margin. The third step involved creating clusters of emergent themes by making connections across themes to form higher-order themes. I returned to the transcripts and identified quotes from participants that connected to both emergent and higher-order themes to support and ensure validity of the analysis (i.e., confirm that themes captured the content of participants' responses). I then condensed my labels, emergent themes, and superordinate themes into a table. The final step in the data analysis

process was to condense the higher-order themes and quotes into a single master table that integrated and summarized the patterns and themes identified across cases with evidence in the form of participant quotes.

### **Data Credibility**

To ensure data credibility, I had an outside source review and give feedback on the themes that I created for each case. Specifically, the external reviewer assessed whether the identified themes captured the participants' voices and are well established in the transcripts. I also conducted two types of member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). First, I sent each participant an email that includes their transcripts, asking them to review the text to ensure that it reflected their intentions, and invite them to make any changes or elaborate on any questions. Second, a final round of member checks was done; participants were sent the themes derived from the data analysis to review and provide feedback. Conducting member checks is important because it gives participants a voice in the process by giving them the opportunity to view their transcripts and the final themes formed during the data analysis (Cresswell & Miller, 2000). It also decreasing the chances of misrepresentation of the participants data (Krefting, 1990). The participants responded to my member checks and had no changes, questions, or concerns with the chart or their interview transcripts.



## **Results and Discussion**

Five themes emerged from interviews with female assistant coaches concerning their experiences, views, and attitudes related to head coaching. The first theme, titled *The Power of Same-Sex Role Models*, concerns the importance of female role models. The second theme, titled *Gender Differences and Whether They Matter*, concerns perceptions of whether, when, and how males and females differ in athletics and whether those gender differences matter for coaching. The third theme, titled *Title IX Collateral Damage: “It’s Nothing but the Money,”* concerns reasons for the shift in large numbers of men coaching of women's teams. The fourth theme, *Gender-Related Obstacles*, concerns the obstacles of gender bias and family-work conflict for women becoming head coaching jobs. The fifth theme, titled *Preparation for “Moving One Seat Over,”* concerns perceptions of the requirements for moving into head coaching positions. The themes with illustrative quotes appear in Appendix C.

### **The Power of Same-Sex Role Models**

All four assistant coaches reported that the presence of other women in their field was a powerful, positive impact on their path in sports. This finding was expected; past research has highlighted the importance of having female role models for young women, especially during transitional life periods, and having an example of woman who has succeeded in the face of gender barriers (Lockwood, 2006). Participant 2 (5 years of experience ) reflected on her first female head coach for a travel basketball team saying, “Looking back, I can see that was pretty impactful. It just means a lot to see yourself reflected in a coach or leadership positions in general.” More specifically, all four of the assistant coaches spoke about a female head coach that they played under at one time in their life, and many spoke about their college head coach, which aligns with the research by Everhart and Challadurai (1998) who found that female

athletes who played for female head coaches were more interested in the coaching field than female athletes who had male head coaches. Participant 1 (2 years of experience) reflected on her college head coach, saying, “She is, you know, a strong female mentor for me. She always has, and she always will be. Uh, there’s multiple times where I would sit and would come into her office as a player and talk about things that were not basketball. She always, um, showed me that she cared about me more than just a player.” Her statement suggests the lasting impact that having a same-sex head coach can have on young female athletes.

Importantly, the presence of same-sex models for female athletes and coaches has changed over time. Although female head coaches are outnumbered by male head coaches, they are nonetheless much more common today than in the past. The most experienced coach in this study (Participant 4, 40 years of experience) spoke about her experience growing up during the 1970’s when “there wasn’t a lot of female basketball role models at that time, except in high school.” She implied that the absence was difficult in that she was forging a path alone. Even this coach, however, reported using the few women that were in the field as inspiration. She stated, “I had some really good upperclassmen that I could look up to that had a lot of success, but um not anybody on a national scale.”

Interestingly, it was not only the gender of the models that seemed important; race, too, was mentioned in the interviews. Two assistant coaches in the study were African American (Participant 2, 5 years of experience and Participant 3, 12 years of experience) and they spoke about the importance of having role models who were not only women, but also African Americans, in leadership positions. This is captured in the statement of Participant 3 who talked about a role model that she had in middle school: “it was a black female who played Division 3 at a local school where I’m from.” She stated, “looking back that was pretty impactful. It just

means a lot to see yourself reflected in a coach or leadership positions in general.” These responses are consistent with the acknowledgement in many fields (law, psychology) that intersectionality is important for understanding individuals' lived experiences (Jean-Marie, Williams, & Sherman, 2009).

### **Gender Differences and Whether They Matter**

The assistant coaches made many key comparisons between male and female coaches and suggested that men and women have different values, coaching philosophies, and practices when it comes to pursuing job positions. They also discussed whether gender plays a role in coaching and whether gender differences should matter when hiring coaches.

**Gender differences in prioritizing relationships.** Two assistant coaches spoke about their personal experience of having both male and female head coaches in the past. Participant 1 (2 years of experience) stated, “The guy coach in high school never asked me how I was feeling. The female coach, our relationship was relationship driven and that, I’d say, you’d find that with the majority of people who were coached by men.” Participant 2 (5 years of experience) similarly emphasized that women are “relationally driven.” She commented, “A lot of times with guys, you don’t have that connection and they can be really, really good coaches in terms of X’s and O’s, but when you talk about the holistic experience, I don’t think it’s the same at all.”

The finding that women are perceived as more relationship-driven is consistent with Social Role Theory (Eagly 1987; Eagly et al. 2000), which argues that women have differing values and behaviors than men. Specifically, the theory posits that women having more communal goals and strive to help others, whereas men have more agentic goals, strive for more power and prestige (Konrad, Ritchie, Lieb, & Corrigan, 2000). Some authors have suggested, however, that sex differences in the qualities that people bring to their jobs are decreasing.

Recent research has suggested that men and women are becoming more similar in their goals and behaviors. For example, young women may be becoming more similar to men in valuing prestige, challenge, and power (Konrad, Ritchie, Lieb, & Corrigan, 2000), and, as a result, the career aspirations of young female and male college may become more similar (Astin, et al., 1997). However, the assistant coaches in this study, including the youngest ones, seemed to value relationships with their players themselves. Furthermore, it is not necessarily the case that having female coaches become more like male coaches will be good for athletics. Some writers have argued that individuals with communal goals are especially effective leaders (Fine, 2008). This topic will be an interesting one for future research as more young women become head coaches and pursue leadership positions.

**Gender differences in confidence.** One of the most often mentioned gender differences concerned the behavior of men and women pursuing jobs in athletics. All four assistant coaches mentioned that men are more confident in their coaching skills and ability to land coaching jobs, within both men's and women's athletics, than are women. Participant 1 (2 years of experience) said,

It's across the board, I think, that men will apply for whatever job, whether... they have the qualifications or if they don't have the qualifications. However, females, I think they dissect it. They are like, 'uh I don't have that, or I don't have this, maybe I'm not, maybe I'm not what they are looking for.' I think we question that while...men don't.

Participant 2 (5 years of experience) commented, "A lot of guys have the mentality that eventually it's going to happen...More so than women, they are willing to take less or nothing for a year or two because they understand I am eventually [going to] advance; whereas women are like, 'oh no, I'm not sure.'"

The coaches' perception that women lack confidence and therefore often fail to apply for heading coaching jobs is consistent with Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Social Cognitive Career theorists posit that feelings of self-efficacy and positive expectancies for success are important factors in shaping career goals. These findings are also consistent with research by Sagas et al. (2000) who reported that female assistant coaches report lower coaching self-efficacy than male assistant coaches. This confidence gap may impact the length of time that wait before applying to head coach jobs and, in turn, the numbers of women and men applying to head coaching positions. That is, women's lack of confidence in their skills may lead them to spend more years as assistant coaches. Participant 2 (5 years of experience) suggested that, “maybe there is a bigger pool now of men [than women] on the women’s side.” She went on to question, “how many women are going for some of these head coaching jobs?” and stated, “I don’t think the number is as high that we can complain that men are getting these jobs.”

**Do gender differences matter?** Although the assistant coaches mentioned many differences between male and female coaches, they also often contradicted themselves. That is, they sometimes stated that gender both did and didn't matter in coaching. For example, Participant 2 (5 years of experience) stated, “I am coaching basketball; gender doesn’t matter, which is true. But if you view coaching, especially college basketball, then it does matter if it’s a guy or if it’s a girl.” In another example, Participant 1 (2 years of experience) stated that she is “pro-female, female coaching, um, females...I am pro whoever is best for the job to coach.” In other words, the coaches unanimously spoke in favor of women being hired to coach female collegiate basketball teams, but yet they also wanted the coaches who are hired to be the most qualified for the job (regardless of gender). Participant 3 (12 years of experience) with the

problem this way, “I’m not saying that there aren’t good male coaches. Like I do. Like I don’t think like gender can say 'oh she’s a better coach or he’s a better coach,' but I do have a problem with there are not enough of us as females coaching females.” Clearly, the assistant coaches believed that gender was relevant to coaching, but they were ambivalent about the meaning of gender differences for coaching (e.g., are female better at coaching women than men?) and their implications (should women be preferentially hired for women's college athletic teams?).

### **Title IX Collateral Damage: “It’s Nothing but the Money”**

Another theme that emerged from the interviews concerned the role of money and salaries in increasing the numbers of male head coaches of women's teams. The passage of Title IX in 1972 drastically increased opportunities for women in to participate in sport programs. The expansion of women's athletics ultimately led to the increase of salaries for women’s athletics head coaching positions (Welch & Sigelman, 2007), which led to an increase in interest from male candidates. Participant 4 (40 years of experience) had witnessed these changes. She stated that, “She [Pat Summit] got paid like you know \$9,000 her first year at Tennessee for being the coach...Men were not going to touch that...They valued their time way too much than to take a women’s job and make that kind of money. So, when Title IX started, well then, you know, it forced schools to put more money into the programs.”

Interestingly, all four of the assistant coaches knew this history of Title IX, even those who were too young to have seen the change themselves. Participant 2 (5 years of experience) mentioned that “the profession has become more lucrative and, you know, the guys have slid over...” Men have increased their interest in coaching women’s athletics because of the increase in salaries and prestige of the position. As women’s basketball continues to grow, and salaries continue to increase, the number of men pursuing jobs on the women’s side is likely to continue

to increase. The coaches' theories about the role of salary in drawing men to coaching women's collegiate teams is supported by both Social Role Theory (Eagly 1987; Eagly et al. 2000) and empirical research (Diekmann, 2013). As noted earlier, Eagly and her colleagues have argued that men value power and resources (e.g., money) more than women, and some studies show that career prestige and financial success are valued more strongly by men than women (Ceci et al. 2009). For example, men's valuing of status and pay seemed to explain their greater interest in careers in science and technology than women. Similarly, men's greater valuing of status and pay relative to women may lead to greater interest in careers in heading coaching (Hakin, 2006; Guadagno and Cialdini, 2007).

The nature of the assistant coaches' comments suggested both resentment and respect for male coaches of women's DI basketball teams. For example, Participant 4 (40 years of experience) indicated that she had a lot of respect for men who started coaching in women's sports in the years shortly before and after Title IX. She stated, "I do admire, there were a lot of men that got into women's basketball early, early, and really before the salaries were great, and those are the guys I really respect, and you know they stayed in the women's game." Participant 3 (12 years of experience) indicated anger when thinking about men coaching on the women's side. In response to being asked about reasons for the increase in male head coaches of female teams, she replied, "I don't mind answering it at all because it actually angers me -- the fact that, as a former women's basketball player and now a coach, that our game is being taken over by males. Negative responses to male coaches was clearest in the response of Participant 4 (40 years of experience) to the question concerning the reasons for men's increasing presence in women's basketball teams: "Well you really don't think it's because they [men] all of a sudden really value the sport of women's basketball? I'll tell you right now it's nothing but money. Nothing

but money.” In other words, the assistant coaches generally worried that men who pursued head coaching jobs in women’s athletics did so solely because of the increase in salaries.

### **Gender-Related Obstacles**

All of the assistant coaches described gender barriers and obstacles to becoming head coaches. Two main categories of barriers emerged: (a) gender discrimination in collegiate athletics and (b) the perception of conflict between women's family desires and job demands.

**Gender discrimination.** The assistant coaches described several types of gender-related bias. Participant 3 (12 years of experience) mentioned feeling pressure to prove her talent because she is judge negatively by her male colleagues. She stated, "Sometimes our counterparts, the male side...they are out to prove that you don’t know as much. Just because you played, that doesn’t mean that I don’t know this.” That is, this coach reported the presence of male colleagues who doubted her expertise and want to undermine her.

Another form of gender bias concerned opportunities to head coach after being let go by an institution. Participant 4 (40 years of experience) stated, “when a female gets a shot at being a head coach, they are probably not going to get another one, whereas male coaches are a little bit more, they forgive them a little bit easier, you know. They recycle them, where women are not as forgiven as easily.” That is, the coach suggested that it is harder for women to get hired at another university after leaving or being let go from an institution than their male counterparts.

A third form of differential gender treatment that was mentioned by the assistant coaches concerned coaching salaries. This finding is consistent with research by Pastore (1991), who reported that lack of financial incentives for women in coaching is a common obstacle for women in coaching. Participant 4 (40 years of experience) , speaking from personal experience working in the field, stated:



I'm not going to call any names, but I, through experience, [saw]... a coach's won back-to-back sweet sixteen's, got to the tournament every time, and her pay is extremely different from the male coach who was hired the very next year, who hasn't done anything, has proven, hasn't done anything.

A fourth form of gender-biased treatment concerned the stigma against coaches who are also mothers. Participant 2 (5 years of experience) worried about whether she would be judged negatively by potential employers if she opted to become a mother. She stated, "Are they [employers] going to want, you know, a coach who has a family? Are they going to think that because she has a family, she cannot get on the road and recruit because she has those things?"

One perpetrator of bias was noted by each of the coaches: male athletic directors. Each of the assistant coaches stated that the prevalence of male athletic directors is a barrier for women trying to get hired as head coaches. As of 2014, only 22% of athletic directors in college athletics in the United States were female (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). Participant 3 (12 years of experience) stated, "it's even harder now to go into an interview and, you know, you're up against a male that may not have as much experience as you but, because they call it the 'good ole boys club' so to speak, they may get the in." Several of the coaches reported that male athletic directors engage in gender-biased hiring because they prefer to hire someone they know, or they are more comfortable with, over a woman who may have the same qualifications for the job. This is captured in the statement by the most experienced coach (Participant 4) that "when they are in a hiring position, ...there's a lot of men who are more comfortable hiring men and uh they are more familiar with how men think. They are more familiar with how the operate, and I think that, that is a little bit of a hindrance."

The finding that each coach mentioned the existence of some form of gender bias is consistent with research by Kerr and Marshall (2007), who argued that the ideology of sport is rooted in agentic masculinity. It is also consistent with Belongingness Theory (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This theory emphasizes the importance of feeling supported and included for individuals to stay and thrive in their chosen occupations. Each of the assistant coaches perceived that men and women were not equally welcomed and supported in coaching, and these perceptions are likely to undermine women's persistence in coaching. Low feelings of belongingness lead women to lose motivation and drop out of traditionally masculine fields (Pastore, 1996). There are likely to additional negative consequences of perceiving gender bias to permeate the field. For example, Schmitt, Branscombe, Kobrynowicz, and Owen (2002) reported that college-age women (but not men) who perceived more pervasive gender discrimination showed impaired psychological well-being, including lower levels of life satisfaction and personal self-esteem, and higher levels of anxiety and depression.

As might be expected, years in the field was related to reports of gender barriers. The assistant coaches with more years of experience in the field listed more barriers than those coaches with less experience. It is also interesting that, although the coaches believed that gender discrimination occurs in the field, most did not think that they were *themselves* victims of biased treatment. Participant 4 (40 years of experience) stated:

I was very fortunate uh to get in at a very early age and so being a female fortunately for me it never hindered me in any way...I don't know if I was just always at the right spot, you know in the right place at the right time or whatever, but I cannot say that being a female has [been a hindrance].

Research has found women frequently perceive other women, but not themselves, to be the victim of discrimination (Taylor et al. 1990; Crosby, 1984) This seems to be true, in part, because discrimination is difficult to detect in that requires clear comparison information (Nier & Gaertner, 2012). It seems unlikely that the highly experienced coach (with over 40 years in the field) never experienced negative treatment based on her gender. Her failure to perceive herself as a victim of gender discrimination may, however, have been contributed to her persistence and success in the field.

**Job-family conflict.** Another theme to emerge from the interviews concerned barriers related to women's family values. All of the assistant coaches were clear in stating that the job of head coaching conflicts in multiple, impactful ways with their family and personal values. Assistant coaches all mentioned the demanding nature of coaching positions and the added pressure for a woman trying to have a family. Participant 4 (40 years of experience) stated:

Can I have a family and have children? As a mother, as a female, it's different. Uh in most cases, where you know, a mother just by nature tends to feel a little more responsible for the nurturing end of raising a child. And so, I think it's a little more difficult for a female, uh, to juggle that.

This quote demonstrates the individual's explicit awareness that being a head coach will be more difficult if she opts to have a family. The theme that coaching and motherhood conflict with each other was echoed by Participant 3 (12 years of experience) :

As a female um there's so many things you want to do. You want to have a family. You want to get married. You know you want to have kids. You want to do those things but it's a lot of times as if almost your schedule doesn't allow it...If I do get pregnant or if I do get married, um I am going to have to choose?

These quotes are consistent with Social Role Theory and research indicating that valuing of family is an obstacle for women in male-dominated fields (Bruening & Dixon, 2008). As these quotes suggest, it appears that some women abandon their interests in fields such as science, engineering, medicine, and coaching because they want to have a family and recognize that the burden will fall more strongly on them than male partners. Furthermore, the consequences for failing to handle the conflict were perceived as serious, including "divorce" or being "single forever."

### **Preparation for "Moving One Seat Over"**

A fifth theme that emerged from the interviews concerns the requirements and preparation related to moving from assistant to head coaching jobs. Women talked a great deal about two broad requirements: the need for self-promotion and the necessity of acquiring a diverse and complex set of skills and expertise in order to be successful in a head coaching position.

**Self-promotion.** In response to questions concerning getting more women into head coaching jobs, every coach mentioned the importance of women promoting themselves or "selling yourself" as an assistant coach. There was a heavy emphasis on the individual to get herself into a position to get hired. Participant 3 (12 years of experience) stated, you "have to make a name for yourself." Although the assistant coaches mentioned a variety of institutional support (e.g., coaching clinics, coaching symposiums, and the Women's Basketball Coaching Association; WBCA) programs, they viewed these programs are largely ineffective. Instead, they viewed the factors of "who you know" in coaching and self-promotion as more effective. This is captured in the comment by Participant 1 (2 years of experience) who stated, "I mean, you have all of your professional development to try and bring in athletic directors to speak to assistant

coaches. And, you know, I have been a part of a lot of those symposiums and things like that. But at the end of the day— to me— that’s not where it’s at.” Participant 4 (40 years of experience) mentioned that, if you are not good at selling yourself and don’t have “a head coach that can sell you, um then you may have to hire, may have to spend some money to, to get somebody to get your name out there.” Multiple coaches mentioned the impact that search firms or hiring an agent could have to get your name on the radar of athletic directors.

The assistant coaches' emphasis on the importance of women's individual effort at self-promotion was unexpected, and somewhat concerning. The need to promote oneself places a great burden on the individual (rather than a collective effort) and seems to call for skills that women sometimes lack: a willing to brag about one's skills and use relationship for instrumental (i.e., to get hired) rather than affiliative reasons. Although women could be encouraged to hire search firms or personal agents to help get their name out there, this strategy requires financial resources that many women do not have. Providing more opportunities and spaces for female coaches to get together and network may be a more effective strategy. One example of such an effort is the WBCA coaching convention at the annual NCAA Final-Four tournament. The convention provides opportunities to network at the tournament, but more opportunities should be available throughout the year. For example, a newer program titled, “Women Leaders in College Sports,” is a leadership organization that “develops, advances, and connects women working in college sports” ([Womenleadersincollegesports.org](http://Womenleadersincollegesports.org)). They take a pro-active role in advancing women into leadership positions in college sports. More programs such as this one should be developed and promoted for women in sports, so that more women are aware of and use networking resources.

**“Moving one seat over.”** All of the assistant coaches spoke in detail about the diverse skills that are required to be a successful head coach. These skills differ significantly from those required of assistant coaches. The coaches clearly saw head coaching as a highly challenging job, with multiple facets. Participant 3 (12 years of experience) noted:

You need to know how to handle the media. You need to be able to communicate. You need to be able to speak. You need to have connections with boosters. It’s so many things behind the scenes that you have to understand and know how to do.

The coaches also spoke about the high level of responsibility that comes with the head coaching position. Participant 4 (40 years of experience) commented:

When you are a head coach, you have to worry about your assistants, your support staff, your players, your boosters...You are managing a lot of people, the media, um it’s just amazing you know moving one chair over, scooting one chair over on that bench, uh, the tremendous amount of responsibility that you incur.

In sum, the assistant coaches perceived head coaching to be extremely difficult because it requires many skills (i.e. public speaking, basketball knowledge, fundraising) and high levels of accountability and pressure. “Moving one seat over”, from the assistant chair to the head coaches chair is, undoubtedly a tough move to make for any coach. The assistant coaches' view of the job of head coaching as highly demanding is realistic and reasonable. That is, the experience of being assistant coaches seemed to give these women an accurate close-up view of the nature of head coaching. Having realistic expectations of the job is probably positive and helpful, so that women don't have unrealistic expectation about the job. At the same time, this thinking could be detrimental for women in the field because they are too pessimistic about their ability to become prepared for the job. That is, views of the job as excessively demanding and challenging could

potentially discourage assistant coaches from pursuing head coaching positions. That is why it is crucial for women to feel empowered and confident enough to apply and pursue this demanding position.

### **Variations in Coaches' Responding Across Years of Experience**

Assistant coaches with varied years of experience (i.e., 2-40) were recruited to participate in the study to examine possible variations in responses to the interview questions. Overall, the coaches provided remarkably similar responses. For example, all four assistants perceived conflict between the job demands of coaching and their family values, suggesting that gender role conflict for women in coaching is not diminishing over time. All four assistants also reported that Title IX led to salary increases on the women's side, which led more men to pursue coaching positions in women's athletics. The assistants were also similarly knowledgeable about the ways in the head coaching jobs differ from the assistant coaching jobs (e.g., skills and responsibilities necessary to lead a program). Thus, it appears that female assistant coaches quickly learn about the demands of head coaching and the competition for such jobs that they will face from men.

The biggest discrepancy in answers between more and less experienced assistant coaches concerned gender-related obstacles that women face in collegiate athletics. The more experienced assistants gave more concrete examples of gender discrimination in the field than the less experienced coaches. It is possible that the less experienced coaches are more naive than the more experienced coaches in thinking that gender discrimination is a thing of the past. The less experienced coaches may come to perceive more gender discrimination as they spend more years in their jobs. On the other hand, it is possible that collegiate athletics is becoming more

egalitarian and thus the more experienced coaches higher perceptions of gender discrimination reflects their experiences in past.



## **Conclusions**

The underrepresentation of women head coaches of women's athletic teams is a complex and multi-faceted issue in collegiate athletics. The primary goal of this study was to interview female assistant coaches with a range of years of experience in Division I women's basketball about their views and experiences as assistant coaches, with the goal of better understanding the factors related to their interests and barriers in becoming head coaches. The assistant coaches talked eagerly and extensively about their perspectives on women and head coaching. The diversity of the coaches in terms of race and years of experience in the field was also beneficial, providing rich and varying views of the role gender in coaching. At the same time, there was a good deal of agreement across the interviewees. From these areas of agreement, I drew three primary conclusions.

One clear conclusion is that it is vital to increase the numbers of women in leadership positions in athletics. Consistent with psychological theories and research (Bandura, 1986), the interviews indicated that the presence of other women in the field was helpful for inspiring assistant coaches who are women. Overall, women have fewer role models across many domains, especially masculine dominated domains (e.g., science, business, engineering) than their male peers (Epstein, 1970). Athletics is another domain that is highly male dominated, and the presence of a strong female role model can be especially salient for women and impactful for encouraging them to participate in sports and pursue a career path in coaching. In other words, it is important for women to have access to female players and coaches at all levels and thus new efforts are needed to increase women's pursuit of head coaching positions.

A second conclusion is that gender is relevant to coaching and thus it is vital for institutions to address gender issues rather than to ignore them. Gender is relevant to coaching in

two primary ways. First, as the assistant coaches pointed out and empirical evidence supports), there many sex differences that affect coaching efficacy, including women's greater tendency to focus on relationships relative to men. Division I college basketball is extremely demanding and an intimate relationship between players and coaches exist. This fact may explain why some of the assistant coaches in this study preferred a woman head coach as a player. Gender differences also exist in the confidence and willingness of coaches to apply and pursue head coaching positions. Women must now compete with many men who apply for head coaching positions in women's athletics, and it is vital that women develop the same connections, skill sets, and confidence to go after jobs, as do men. Second, gender is relevant to coaching in that gender discrimination and gender-related role conflict. The assistant coaches all mentioned forms of gender bias in athletics. which, according to research, are associated with negative consequences (e.g., reduced feelings of belongingness). Furthermore, they all agreed that the job of coaching is extremely difficult for women who want to or have a family. This highlights the importance of institutions acknowledging gender issues and providing supports for women in coaching (e.g., day-care on campus and a family friendly environments).

The third conclusion is that institutions need to re-consider their hiring policies and practices in order to get more women into leadership positions. Division I athletics is dominated by male athletic directors and there is a need for more gender equality at the top. More women need to be considered as candidates for head coaching jobs and other administrative positions. Women are unrepresented in higher administration in collegiate athletics, and when women do hold leadership positions, such as the Senior Women's Administrator (SWA), they have minimal responsibilities and power in the department. Thus, one strategy may be giving more power to the Senior Women's Administrator (SWA) position. This position was meant to ensure

representation of women in management in college athletics, but the position reports to the athletic director. I believe that the NCAA and individual universities could delegate more responsibilities and duties to SWAs, especially in decisions related to hiring in the athletic department. Furthermore, search committees for head coaching jobs could be required to submit short lists of candidates that include one or more women, thereby increasing the likelihood that women are considered for head coaching jobs. Research by Acosta and Carpenter (2014) found that there is a higher percentage of female coaches when there is a female athletic director in Division I programs (Female AD= 46.8% female coaches, Male AD= 43.0% female coaches). Another area that needs consideration is the transparency of hiring policies and practice within athletic departments. For example, there are clear rules and regulations for hiring in most position in higher education, including procedures for communicating job openings and qualifications and search committee practices (e.g., interviews). There needs to be the same amount of transparency in the hiring of head coaches in athletics.

More research is needed, however, on the factors that hinder and support women's careers in athletics. Additional research on female assistant coaches may be especially valuable because they are the largest pool of potential head coaches. Another interesting direction for future research is study the experiences of women coaching on the men's side of athletics, especially as more women enter the field and hold leadership roles in men's sports. Such research may help to identify strategies to get more women into head coaching jobs and increase gender equity in collegiate athletics.

This study adds to the literature on female assistant coaches' experiences coaching and their views of head coaching. It reveals valuable information on the role gender plays in coaching. However, the study has several notable limitations. The sample of coaches interviewed

was small and all worked as coaches of Division I women's basketball teams. Thus, caution should be used in generalizing these results of this study to female assistant coaches of other sports (e.g., soccer, volleyball) and other Divisions, as their experiences and attitudes may differ in relation to head coaching. In addition, it is possible that the coaches were reluctant to discuss some aspects of their gender-related experiences because the topic was uncomfortable or troubling.

I suggest follow-up qualitative study of diverse female assistant coaches' experiences working in collegiate athletics to further gain a deeper understanding of women's experiences working in collegiate athletics, barriers they face in coaching, and their attitudes and views of the head coaching role to determine whether other women report similar experiences. For example, I recommend asking similar questions to female assistant coaches within Divisions II and III collegiate athletics and to female assistant coaches of other sports. Such research is likely to yield insights that will help to promote gender equity in collegiate coaching.

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## Appendix A. IRB Form

### ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST



**TO:** Caitlin Kriesel-Bigler  
Kinesiology

**FROM:** Dennis Landin  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

**DATE:** November 26, 2018

**RE:** IRB# E11377

**TITLE:** Socialized to Assist but Not to Lead? Division I Women's Basketball Female Assistant Coaches' Views of Head Coaching

Institutional Review Board  
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair  
130 David Boyd Hall  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
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[lsu.edu/research](http://lsu.edu/research)

**New Protocol/Modification/Continuation:** New Protocol

**Review Date:** 11/21/2018

**Approved**   X   **Disapproved** \_\_\_\_\_

**Approval Date:** 11/21/2018 **Approval Expiration Date:** 11/20/2021

**Exemption Category/Paragraph:** 2b

**Signed Consent Waived?:** No

**Re-review frequency:** (three years unless otherwise stated)

**LSU Proposal Number** (if applicable):

**By:** Dennis Landin, Chairman 

#### PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –

##### Continuing approval is **CONDITIONAL** on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects\*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE: When emailing more than one recipient, make sure you use bcc. Approvals will automatically be closed by the IRB on the expiration date unless the PI requests a continuation.**

\* All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>

## **Appendix B. Interview Guide**

To start off I wanted to ask a general question about coaching, can you tell me why you decided to get into the field of coaching? Or what draws you to want to be a coach?

### **Subset #1- Experiences**

1. Do you feel that being female in coaching has in anyway (positively or negatively) affected your personal experience or job as an assistant coach?  
Follow up: Do you think that it would affect your experience as a head coach? If so, how?
2. Did you have a female head coach growing up? Did they have any influence on why you wanted to become a head coach? If yes, how?
3. How has your experience assistant coaching shaped your views toward becoming a head coach? Difference?
4. What draws you to—or stops you from-- wanting to become a head coach? How is it different than an assisting role?

### **Subset 2 – Attitudes**

5. What skills do you think you need to acquire before pursuing a head coaching position?  
Follow ups:
  - a) What experience do you need to have before becoming a head coach?
  - b) Do you already have these skills and do you think you've accumulated enough experience to be a head coach? If not, which skill do you think that you still need to acquire and how long do you think that might take to acquire them?
  - c) How long does it typically take to gain the necessary experiences and skills?
6. Do you feel the demands and job of head coaching are compatible with your personal values, family values, and life responsibilities? Why or why not?
7. Do you think that the demands or nature of head coaching position are possible reasons that some women do not pursue head coaching jobs? Why or why not?
8. How do you feel when you think about women's collegiate teams being coached by more men than women? (Only 43% of all collegiate women's teams are coaches by women)
  - a) Do you think the gender of a coach matters in any way?

### **Subset 3 – Barriers**

9. After Title IX was enacted, fewer women and more men obtained head coaching positions in college athletics, in Division I basketball and other collegiate sports. Why do you think this has happened?
10. What barriers, if any, do you think women face in coaching? Have any personally faced any barriers? Can you give an example of someone you know who has?
11. What are some reasons you think fewer women pursue head coaching positions than men (although there are more women who are paid assistant coaches than male assistant coaches)?
12. Why do you think that very few women coach men's teams? And do you think there will be at time when more women are coaching men's athletic teams? Why or why not?

**Subset 4—Strategies**

13. What strategies do you think can be implemented or started to improve the climate and include more women in head coaching positions in Division I women's basketball?  
Follow up: Do you think there are sufficient strategies already in place?
14. Where should these strategies stem from? Or be implemented? For example, do you think they should be initiatives from individual institution, or organizations, like the NCAA, or WBCA? (skip if needed)

### Appendix C. Higher-Order Theme Chart

Five Higher-Order Themes	Participant Quotes
I: The Power of Same-Sex Role Models	<p>"She was my travel coach up until maybe 10<sup>th</sup>, and so she had a big impact." "[She] taught me the fundamentals at a higher level than just rec league. Looking back, I can see that was pretty impactful. It just means a lot to see yourself reflected in a coach or leadership positions in general." [P02]</p> <p>"I will say that probably growing up that all of my role models were females... starting out with my mom...then watching my aunts, and then I was a big fan of women's basketball so watching that." [P03]</p>
II: Gender Differences and Whether They Matter	<p><u><i>Gender Differences in Prioritizing Relationships</i></u></p> <p>"The guy coach in high school never asked me how I was feeling. The female coach our relationship was relationship driven and that, I'd say, you'd find that with the majority of people who were coached by men, just because that is the nature of the beast, however, I am pro female coaching." [P01]</p> <p>"A lot of times with guys, you don't have that connection and they can be really, really good coaches in terms of X's and O's, but when you talk about the holistic experience, I don't think it's the same at all." [P02]</p>

(chart cont'd.)

Five Higher-Order Themes	Participant Quotes
	<p><u><i>Gender Differences in Confidence</i></u></p> <p>“It’s across the board, I think, that men will apply for whatever job, whether... they have the qualifications or if they don’t have the qualifications. However, females, I think they dissect it. They are like, ‘uh I don’t have that, or I don’t have this, maybe I’m not, maybe I’m not what they are looking for.’ I think we question that while...men don’t.” [P01]</p> <p><u><i>Do Gender Differences Matter?</i></u></p> <p>“Some may think basketball is basketball. I am coaching basketball; gender doesn’t matter, which is true. But if you view coaching, especially college basketball, then it does matter if it’s a guy or if it’s a girl. Girls can learn important lessons from a guy on staff and we have a guy on staff...My preference would be more of a female lead” [P02]</p>
III. Title IX Collateral Damage: “It’s Nothing but the Money”	<p>“I think more guys have become interested because of the money...” [P02]</p> <p>“Because of Title IX but also because more of an interest you know in women’s sports, so the more it, you know they affect each other, the more interest, then the more people are going to pay, the more athletic directors are going to pay, so you know one helps the other, more interest, the better the salary, the better the salary, more interest.”</p>

(chart cont’d)

Five Higher-Order Themes	Participant Quotes
IV. Gender-Related Obstacles	<p><u><i>Gender Discrimination: General</i></u></p> <p>"Are they [employers] going to want, you know, a coach who has a family? Are they going to think that because she has a family, she cannot get on the road and recruit because she has those things?" [P02]</p> <p>"I think another area that I have seen is that women getting a second chance. ...When a female gets a shot at being a head coach, they are probably not going to get another one, whereas male coaches are a little but more, they forgive them a little bit easier. You know, they recycle them, where women are not as forgiven as easily." [P04]</p>
V. Preparation for "Moving One Seat Over"	<p><u><i>Self-Promotion</i></u></p> <p>"You have to make a name for yourself. You got to be at a university that is winning. You have to make sure you have the right agent, um, to represent you. You got to have all those things in place for yourself because nobody is going to give it to you." [P03]</p> <p><u><i>Challenges of Head Coaching</i></u></p> <p>"Everything is not glitz and glamour. You need to know how to handle the media. You need to be able to communicate. You need to be able to speak. You need to have connections with boosters. It's so many things behind the scenes that you have to understand and know how to do." [P03]</p>

## Vita

Caitlin Kriesel-Bigler was born in Austin Texas and graduated from Hendrix College with a bachelor's degree in Psychology. She was a four-year starter and two-year captain for the Hendrix Women's basketball team. After graduating from Hendrix College, she worked as an assistant coach at Thomas College before deciding to pursue a master's degree in Kinesiology at Louisiana State University (LSU). At LSU, she began to be interested in gender equity in collegiate coaching. Upon completion of her master's degree, she will continue to pursue a career in coaching collegiate women's basketball.