Men Who Coach Women

Shannel Blackshear

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville
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by

Shannel Blackshear
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Dr. Sarah Stokowski
Thesis Director

______________________________

Dr. Merry Moiseichik
Committee Member

Dr. Amanda Sullivan
Committee Member
Abstract

Although Title IX helped to shape athletics in educational settings, the legislation also transformed the world of coaching. Due to the growing demand for competitive female athletics at the collegiate level, the need for qualified individuals to coach women’s sports continues to grow. As colleges and universities continue to create women’s athletic opportunities, coaching collegiate female teams has become equally competitive to coaching male athletes in terms of pay, benefits, compensation packages, and national attention (Welch & Sigelman, 2007). Despite the fact that 57% (Pilon, 2015), of female collegiate athletic teams are coached by male coaches, there is a gap in the literature regarding this population. Informed by the social ideology theory (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007), the purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of male coaches that coach female athletes. Specifically: (RQ1) why do male coaches coach female athletes, and (RQ2) how male coaches handle social and physical boundaries while working with female athletes? Semi-structured interviews revealed six major themes that extensively influence male coaches of female sports: majority, if not all, of coaching experience at a high level is with women’s athletics, high levels of satisfaction, opportunities for growth and development, physical and social distance, language, and the development of relationships and trust. This study serves as a contribution to the limited data pertaining to male coaches working with female athletes. The results of this study will help stakeholders to better understand the experiences of this very specific, unexplored population.
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Chapter I. Introduction

The word “coach” was not directly related to the world of sport until the 1880’s, 50 years after it was used by Oxford University as a slang term for tutor (Morrison, 2010). According to Morrison (2010), “coaching is a true methodology which concentrates on directing, instructing, and training either an individual or a group of people with the only aim to attain certain goals and objectives.” The history of coaching is actually strongly based in corporations and technological advancements workplace rather than the sports arena.

Over the last several decades coaching has become a more competitive, commonly accepted, and long-term profession at the collegiate and professional level. The world of sport is, and always has been, dominated by men from the level of player all the way to franchise owners. With the official passing of Title IX in 1972, there was a great deal of excitement, anticipation, confusion, and dislike surrounding the promise of gender based equality. When Title IX first passed as a federal law about 90% of the coaches instructing female teams were women (Welch & Sigelman, 2007). It can be inferred that women wanted to participate in sports, but women’s athletics lacked social support and financial backing; therefore, female coaches often were the first choice to coach female teams.

By 2012, only 42.9% of collegiate coaches, at every level, were women, a 47% decrease over a forty year period (Pilon, 2015). Although Title IX helped to shape and improve athletics in educational settings, the legislation also transformed the world of coaching. Due to the growing demand for competitive female athletics at the collegiate level, the need for qualified coaches to guide them through the process grew significantly. When coaching collegiate female teams became equally competitive in pay, benefits, compensation packages, and national attention, similar to that of their male counterparts in men’s athletics, an interesting phenomenon
began to occur (Welch & Sigelman, 2007). As universities placed an emphasis on women’s athletic programs, new lucrative coaching opportunities became attractive for men. Although Title IX does not mention women specifically, institutions began cutting men’s teams and offering a larger variety of sports for women. For example, there are less than 100 current men’s college volleyball programs within the NCAA membership, in comparison to more than 900 women’s volleyball teams. As a result, men have an overall advantage in this specific profession because they can realistically compete for jobs that are often filled by both men and women.

There were 209,472 female student-athletes in the NCAA, over 83,000 at the Division I level, and twenty different women’s championship sports programs in the 2014-2015 academic year (Irick, 2015). With all of these opportunities to coach female teams, at the Division I level alone, the significant gap between male and female coaches in women’s sports raises the question of why, what, and how. First, why are men being hired for these positions decidedly more than women? Second, what seems to make them more qualified or desirable for these positions? Lastly, how do men find themselves in women’s athletics; what has led them there? The best way to answer that would be through research and study, especially since there is little to no research that has been done specifically on coaches, let alone male coaches of female teams.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of male coaches that coach female athletes. This study will add to the body of knowledge and increase the overall understanding of why a higher percentage of men continue to be hired as coaches of female sports instead of women. Men currently coach the majority of female athletic programs at the collegiate level and this study hopes to answer the following research questions: (RQ1) why do
male coaches coach female athletes, and (RQ2) how male coaches handle social and physical boundaries while working with female athletes? This study will serve as a starting block for future research pertaining to male coaches and their relationships and experiences with female athletes in collegiate athletics. Additionally, further research needs to be conducted regarding the shift in the greater number of male coaches coaching female athletic programs compared to female coaches and what has caused male coaches to be more desirable in the selection process.

**Theory**

Social ideology is a collection of attitudes and beliefs that are mutually dependent on one another because they are organized with a dominating societal theme in mind (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). It is these attitudes and beliefs that lead to the formation of expectations and stereotypes that help to arrange and reinforce social structures and categories of individuals and groups (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). These ideologies are what led to social hierarchies in general and within these hierarchies are the expectations and regulations for gender and sex-role stereotypes. Gendered stereotypes are fixed sets of beliefs about personal characteristics of men and women and often lead to attributes that include individual traits, role behaviors, and occupational preferences (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007, p.247). With these ideas in mind, the acceptance and larger numbers of males coaching female sports in comparison to their female counterparts, or men coaching male athletes, establishes a reason to question how it became acceptable and common for men to coach women.

**Chapter II. Review of the Literature**

**The NCAA**

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) was officially founded in 1906. It is important to note that the NCAA did not sponsor women’s athletics until the early 1980’s. The
organization development was a result of collegiate sports needing a governing body to manage and develop rules and regulations (Smith, 2000). Originally, the student body and athletes were the governing forces that monitored college athletics. The concerns for safety and fairness eventually left university faculty members with no choice but to demand a regulating body to help control sporting events. This became especially important because the rising rates of commercialism were leading to higher college acceptance rates, which meant an increase in viewing demand for college athletics.

Before the NCAA was officially named it was known as the Intercollegiate Athletic Association (IAA). The IAA was formed as a result of the efforts of New York University’s Chancellor, Henry MacCracken (Smith, 2000). The Chancellor called for a national meeting with the biggest collegiate football programs in the United States. The meeting was meant to determine if football could be regulated and develop ways to make it safer. He believed that if the game of football could not be monitored then it should be disbanded at the intercollegiate level (Smith, 2000). As a result of this meeting, and subsequent encouragement from President Theodore Roosevelt and the White House, an effort was made to change the rules of football through the newly formed Rules Committee. A concerted effort was made to develop and implement new regulations and monitoring of collegiate football.

During the 1920’s, a spike in the public’s interest towards collegiate athletic programs stemmed from high athletic success rates and the growing entertainment value that these teams provided. A demand for higher education, from a wider and more diversified group of people, was also a contributing factor to the large growth and interest for collegiate athletics (Smith, 2000). These rates of change for education developed when the government’s support of returning veterans after World War II eventually led to commercialization (Smith, 2000). With
more people attending college, universities began to use collegiate athletics as a way to adapt to these growing rates. Athletic programs were an unavoidable eventuality with the high student interest rates for sport participation. This meant creating new programs or expanding current programs to accommodate the new influx of people now attending the schools.

With pressing demands for these universities to accommodate its ever expanding student body and development of athletic programs, came the increase in commercialism, rule violations, and high rates of gambling (Smith, 2000). With participation and fan interest rates on the rise can the need to find a way to maintain safety and fairness but use this interest as an advantage. The NCAA soon became involved and focused on putting a stop to rule violations, especially gambling, and turn a profit. This led to the eventual creation of the Committee of Infractions, which is now known as the Compliance Department at each university. The Compliance Department oversees athletic programs through rule enforcement, violation reports, and accountability for current participating collegiate student-athletes.

Institutions with a larger fan base had major advantages in recruiting athletes, additional funding, and greater educational opportunities, etc., while schools with fewer fans and smaller funding were at a disadvantage. In the 1970’s, through the NCAA, schools were assigned to a specific division based on their size and competitive capacity (Smith, 2000). At first, this decision was met with controversy because with the new divisions came regulations that specifically targeted coaches, athletes, and administrators to uphold NCAA rules.

**History of Women in Sport**

**Pre-Title IX**

By 1900, women made up 40 percent of American collegiate students (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998). Along with the acceptance of women into higher education came the need
for their physical education and the educators who could lead it (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998). However, at this time period, allowing women to participate in higher education was still in the experimental phase because it was believed that women would not be able to handle the intellectual strain that college would put on them (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998). Women’s physical education was meant to balance and/or release that mental strain while still allowing women to maintain their femininity.

Around 1891, James Naismith created basketball and at the time it was highly revered by women looking for physical activity. The benefits it provided women was a chance to participate in recreational activities without being outdoors, which meant protection from outside elements as well as public scrutiny (Cain, 2001). Changes to the rules were made immediately in order to make accommodations for female participants; five person teams became six, the court was split into three divisions, and two players from each team were assigned a division and could not leave that division (Cain, 2001). The participants were not allowed to dribble the ball more than once and most importantly; physical contact was strictly prohibited (Cain, 2001).

Based on gendered stereotypes rooted in society at that time justifications were made to explain why adjustments were made for female participation in basketball. Some of the justifications included reducing the space covered during play because of the clothing women wore, the changes allowed for fairness and more participation, and competition was limited to prevent physical exertion. At the time, many administrators and Physical Education teachers believed that competition would develop unnecessary stress as well as violate the normative gendered ideas of what it meant to be feminine and womanly; any type of public attention solely focused on a woman was viewed negatively (Smith, 2000).
During the next few decades, female sports program at the collegiate level remained virtually nonexistent. By 1966, an organization called the Division for Girls and Women in Sport worked diligently to pass a statement that made it desirable for females to participate in collegiate athletic programs. The group continued to fight for women to be allowed to participate in college athletics and a few years later a schedule of national championships in track and field, swimming, badminton, volleyball and gymnastics were announced. However, during this time period another struggle for power was happening between the NCAA and women’s athletics. The “NCAA was pushing for the formation of the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) as an institutional membership organization” (Wu, 1999). In the early 1970’s, when the passing of Title IX was becoming realistic, the NCAA attempted to try and be more involved in women’s athletics by affiliating themselves with the AIAW (Wu, 1999).

Unfortunately for the NCAA, women were not interested in sports participation as a means to turn a profit, before the passing of Title IX, so the NCAA was rejected by the female participants losing their opportunity for control (Wu, 1999).

After about two years of the NCAA attempting to team up with women’s athletics and failing, came the passing of Title IX. It would forever change the face of women’s athletics and eventually allow women to fight for inclusion and fairness in any federally funded education system, which included collegiate athletics. “However, Title IX proved to be a double-edged sword because it gave the NCAA legal justification to administer programs for women, thus destroying the separate female establishment” (Wu, 1999). This legal justification also allowed the NCAA to use women’s athletics for profit, which is exactly what female sports participants were trying to avoid. For them, sports participation, especially at the collegiate level, was about
enjoyment and higher education opportunities more than anything and that dream was destroyed a little when the NCAA took over.

**Title IX**

When Congress passed Title IX, the collegiate sports world started the process of changing into the huge phenomenon it is today. Title IX was created to prevent and eliminate gender discrimination amongst educational institutions that received federal funding and is regulated and enforced by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (Cain, 2001). It is important to understand that Title IX is mistaken as the amendment that was created to equalize athletic participation. However, most individuals are not aware that Title IX was actually created to prevent “federally funded educational institutions from discriminating against students or employees based on sex” (Cain, 2001). As a result, all educational institutions from the elementary to university level were required to provide fair and equal treatment to both males and females in all areas, which included athletic participation (Cain, 2001). One of the main purposes of Title IX is to provide women with a solid legal foundation and support if experiencing, or if they believe they are experiencing, discrimination based on gender (Bass, Schaeperkoetter, & Bunds, 2015).

When the legislation first passed many people supported Title IX but there were a significant number of individuals who were in opposition to the implementation of the legislation. In particular, the NCAA was opposed to the development and application of Title IX for two reasons, their political power and financial assets. The committee members feared that it would mean less money for their current male teams, especially football, because it was one of their main revenue producers. Not only was the NCAA concerned about losing and sharing scholarship money with female collegiate teams but were also fearful of having to share funds
that were generated by collegiate male sports with the soon to be formed collegiate female sports teams. It would take more than a decade for the NCAA to determine that a single organization was needed to oversee sports programs for both males and females when it finally took over the governance of female sports programs from the AIAW.

It is important to note that Title IX is not just a set of standards, rules, and regulations that provides females with the legal backing and assurance that they will be equally and fairly treated in collegiate athletics. It is also a representation of equality for women and girls living in a male dominated world. At the time that Title IX was enacted, it served as a stepping-stone for the changing standards and expectations of what it meant to be a woman. Women were suddenly working outside of the home and earning their own money demanding equal pay as their male coworkers. They were demanding to receive equal educational opportunities and scholarships that were generally available to only men.

Schools were given six years by Congress to comply with meeting the requirements of Title IX. The passing of the legislation changed college athletics forever and provided women new opportunities to receive an education by participating in sports programs at the collegiate level. However, there were still many barriers to overcome and the fight for enforcement of equality for females in collegiate sports was a long and complicated road.

**Title IX- Fighting for Enforcement**

Unfortunately, there were many problems with the original passing of Title IX such as not specifying how to implement the legislation. Additionally, it made no specific mention of sports. However, a clause in the legislation forced universities to offer equal programs to both women and men, which included not only educational but collegiate athletic opportunities as well. The full impact of the legislation was not known until 1975 when the final rules were
provided advising institutions that they had three years to implement women’s athletic programs equally and fairly.

Title IX would be regulated through the passing and adoption of specific regulations in 1975 by the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) that pertained to women and their inclusion in collegiate athletics. The regulations had ten specific factors that must be taken into consideration when determining if an institution was compliant with the Title IX mandates of equal opportunity (Yasser, 1997). Out of the ten factors the first is the most important because it specifically highlights and ensures that female athletes have the right and legal ability to maintain a certain standard of equality in sporting opportunities and participation (Yasser, 1997).

Once the ten main standards were set, the Office of Civil Rights of HEW issued a policy interpretation in order to clarify Title IX’s regulation mandates. It set a standard in three areas that educational institutions must provide in order to meet equal athletic opportunities for women; 1.) equivalent awarding of scholarships 2.) provide fair and equal participation opportunities in sports (number of opportunities as well as the “accommodation of both males and females in selection of sports and level of competition”); and 3.) treatment and benefits need to be provided and given equally (Yasser, 1997). These three areas are the key components that make up the standard of regulations for equality in collegiate sports.

Despite the official passing of Title IX in 1972, there was a significant resistance to making actual the changes and creating equal opportunities for female athletes at many universities. Many individuals were looking for ways to limit or force changes to the Title IX legislation such as Senator John Tower and the Tower Amendment in 1974. The Tower Amendment proposed, “revenue-generating sports would not be factored into Title IX
compliance” (Bass et al., 2015). Tower’s argument was that since sports such as men’s football provided the strongest revenue source for many university athletic programs, taking revenue that was generated by the football program and using it for other athletic programs would hurt not only other male sports, but the up and coming female teams (Brake & Caitlin, 1996). The Tower Amendment was rejected but for many years after debates about football’s exemption from Title IX still continued.

Football lobbyists were that compliance with the mandates would potentially reduce squad sizes due to funding and that this would directly have an impact on the safety of the team members. They claimed that the fewer players that were on a football roster, the more overexposure would occur that would lead to a higher injury rate since football is so physical and violent in nature (Bass et al., 2015). However, a study was completed to determine if the theory was true and the results proved that reducing team numbers had no direct effect on the occurrence of injuries. Another attempt to limit and control the changes required by Title IX occurred when some universities tried to limit the number of female sports but made up for the lower number of teams by having extremely large squad sizes (Bass et al., 2015).

Direct violations of the mandates occurred when university athletic programs attempted to circumvent the requirements by only doing the bare minimum to include female athletic programs. As a result of the attempts by several universities to avoid meeting the Title IX requirements significant court cases were filed that aided in promoting fairness and equal opportunity in the future of women’s sports. Three important cases involving intercollegiate athletics are often used as landmark case law regarding Title IX court decisions; Cohen vs. Brown University, Roberts v. Colorado State University, and Favia v. Indiana University of Pennsylvania.
Those three court cases are just a few of the many suits against universities that were filed due to violations of Title IX. Many individuals were reluctant to fully accept the changes mandated by the legislation and this was further proven when Title IX was finally included in the NCAA’s constitution and bylaws in 1981, almost a decade after its official approval by Congress (Bass et al., 2015). While collegiate sports for women has improved significantly full equality has not been met. Men’s sports programs still receive more money in scholarships, head coach salaries, program budgets, and recruiting money than female sports programs. However, it is more difficult in recent years to find violations because compliance departments now oversee collegiate athletics at each university. Their purpose and function is to ensure fairness, equality, and safety for all student-athletes. The battle for equality in men and women’s athletics is something that will probably continue to be a debate for as long as sports are offered at the university level. Since athletics are now a huge commercial and financial asset to many universities, it does not appear that collegiate athletics will be discontinued anytime in the future.

It is also important to note that although Title IX states that schools will lose federal funding for not complying no school has ever lost federal funding for not complying with the legislation.

The Meaning of College Sport Participation for Men and Women

Femininity vs. Masculinity

Female sport participation was highly discouraged, especially at a competitive level because of the perceived negative affects it would have on women physically and socially. Many people questioned that athletic competition and physical activity would masculinize the socially acceptable identity of women and their femininity (Colker & Widom, 1980). Nelson (1998) defines femininity as small, not imposing, not competitive, not aggressive, beautiful, and vulnerable (Paloian, 2016). As women were branching out in different areas such as work and
family, the definition of what a woman was, by society’s standards, slowly began to evolve into something much different.

The evolution of women and their ascribed roles into a male dominated society began to challenge the meaning of femininity and masculinity. With the increase in women working and still managing their family life, the rising rates of women dominating the work force at public schools, and wide spread urbanization led to fear and confusion (Messner, 1988). Many women felt that if they could be successful in the work force they could certainly compete in collegiate athletics. As participation in sports and the growth in educational opportunities increased for females, mass confusion and resistance occurred. According to research, understanding of masculine socialization is regularly conveyed within prominent societal settings such as schools and athletics (J. Steinfeldt, Wong, Hagan, Hoag, & M. Steinfeldt, 2011, p. 312). A woman competing as an athlete, especially at a higher level, completely challenges the concept of masculinity and femininity by definition.

Sports participation has always been used by men to validate and reaffirm their masculinity as part of culture in the United States. It is why men like Tom Brady, Derek Jeter, and David Beckham, who compete in highly “masculine sports” (sports that require speed power, and strength), are idolized for their athletic ability as much as their masculinity (Paloian, 2016). As female participation in sports became more socially acceptable, the need for men to maintain their masculinity in athletics became even more prominent.

Competitive female sports programs are now more widely accepted with many sporting events being nationally televised and followed by very large audiences. However, even though female athletics are on the rise, there are still very limited options for competitive athletic participation after college, especially compared to men. For instance, there are very few
professional female teams in any sport after college in the United States and most of those pay extremely meager wages in comparison to the male professional teams. Men have the opportunity to use competitive athletics as a legitimate career that will give them financial stability well above the average means of most people (Messner, 1988). For women, using competitive athletics as a stable career choice is almost nonexistent.

While female athletes have opportunities to make money at a professional level it usually comes through different means than those of male athletes. Along with societies’ evolving standards of beauty and femininity came the opportunity for athletic women to make money. The female athletic body, strong and lithe, has become the more idealistic body form in society, which is why it soon was viewed as a marketable item (Messner, 1988). Usually the women who get the most notoriety in sport have to not only be extremely talented, as in one of the best in the country or world, but they need to be attractive physically. Many women, who have managed to make a substantial amount of money in sports, have done so as a result of their physical presentation on top of being extremely athletic. This again ties into society and culture focusing on what is deemed to be the more important qualities and attributes of women, their femininity and physical appeal.

Along with marketing the female athletic body, came more gendered stereotypes that questioned the femininity of female athletes. Being a female athlete and trying to maintain femininity is one of the toughest societal norms and expectations to navigate. According to Messner (1988), society has, in a way, forced women to choose whether they want to be an athlete or to be feminine. Often societal norms will categorize female sports and their athletes as more masculine than the average woman. Often stigmatizing them as being physically unattractive, manly, or homosexual. Athletes such as Serena Williams, Mia Hamm, and Gina
Carano encounter extreme difficulty in their careers with trying to balance maintaining a feminine image and the more masculine physical qualities that are associated with their sports (Paloian, 2016). Athletic women have to tread a line of “acceptable femininity” while participating in athletic events because while athletics can be empowering, it can be disempowering (Paloian, 2016). In order to find acceptance as a woman in society in the United States, female athletes have to find a way to balance their femininity and athleticism inside and outside of competition (Paloian, 2016).

Women who participate in sports, especially at a competitive level, have to find a way to navigate societal norms and expectations that will constantly question their femininity, sexual orientation, and physical appearance. Females will likely have to continuously defend themselves or choose to avoid athletics as a whole in order to meet the expectations of society. It is a complicated and arbitrary set of expectations that men do not have to navigate at the same level, which is proven when men choose to not participate in sports but can gain the same masculine validation by being avid sports fans. Competitive female athletes have to make sure they are talented, but not talented enough to challenge a man, while maintaining an appealing physical standard if they want to fit into the standards and expectations of the culture in the United States.

**Coaches**

When many former collegiate or professional athletes are asked about their experiences in sports and their athletic achievements, oftentimes their answers center around their family members and perhaps a former coach that previously coached them at some point in their athletic endeavors. A coach can be the most influential individual in the life of an athlete and with the level of admiration that our culture in the United States shows to sports programs and coaches
those individuals can be viewed as some of the most important people in society. Not every child plays a sport, especially at a competitive level, but more often than not children are involved in some type of sporting activity at some point in their lives. The impact that a coach can have on the life of an athlete can be a motivating factor that determines if an individual enjoys the sport enough to continue playing in the future.

Depending on the gender of the participant as well as the sport(s) they participate in, there are general levels of idealism about what and who a coach is supposed to be. A coach is often viewed as a man with a large physical stature or someone with a strong and confident presence, who loves the game that they are coaching. Oftentimes coaches are expected to be pillars of the community as well as individuals who love and care for the athletes that play for them. The impact that a coach can have on an athlete’s life is so strong that athletes often turn to them when in need of advice or support. A coach is usually viewed as an individual who is trustworthy, dedicated, and committed to not only the physical challenges of the athlete but to the personal growth of that individual.

**Coaching Experience**

Being a male in the world of coaching is a completely different experience than it is for a female. According to Sartore & Cunningham (2007), men are often associated with stereotypes that describe them as being strong, confident, assertive, and independent. These are all attributes that society deems necessary to have success when in positions of power. Coaching at a higher level such as college, professional, Olympic, etc., are often considered positions that are highly desirable. Societal norms and structures usually center around the wants and needs of men therefore positions that are in high demand as well as being publicized are going to push for men to have these positions over women. Therefore, it is more difficult for women to move into
coaching positions and as research shows there are higher levels of opportunity for men to coach both male and female sports in comparison to women.

Sports and sporting organizations are historically and strongly rooted in hegemonic masculinity, so jobs within athletics are important in the reinforcement of masculine societal standards (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). Coaching positions often become powerfully masculinizing because there is the opportunity for coaches to be publicly displayed in front of millions of people on national television and through other electronic and print media. Since athletic events are gaining much more public attention, it makes changing societal standards that allow women to break the “glass ceiling” even more difficult. The need for sporting events to be televised or placed on social media sites places an even higher level of expectation and scrutiny for women who currently coach at the collegiate level. Various studies show that female coaches are judged differently than their male counterparts, which makes it less desirable for women to coach in the spot light because of the way that society perceives women differently than men.

**Athlete’s Perceptions of Coaches**

Research shows that men dominate the world of sports and coaching. Since coaching a competitive female team has become a more desirable career path, men have an even greater opportunity to be selected to coach in a female sports program. These opportunities lead to jobs as athletic directors, owners and team managers of professional sports, and educational administrators. This means that men have an even greater opportunity for a career in the sports field as a coach or in some type of athletic profession.

As a result of this gender-segregated norm, it is hard for women to enter the sporting world as athletes but it is even more difficult for them to have a career beyond college. For example, in international sport competition the higher the athlete is on the performance level
scale the more likely they are to have a male coach (Fasting & Pfister, 2000). There has been research that proves that boys and men tend to display a more negative attitude towards female coaches than their female counterparts, while girls were neutral in their attitudes toward male and female coaches (Fasting & Pfister, 2000). Much of this negative attitude towards female coaches is due in part to societal gendered norms about what is and is not acceptable and what men excel at in comparison to women regarding sports activities.

For many years, the public judged female coaches based on the societal standard norm as to what it meant to be a strong male versus a weak female. Many studies have shown that the societal norm is not accurate regarding how coaches are viewed by athletes. The players based their experiences with either a female or male coach on how the coach treated that individual not on the gender of the coach. Elite male and female soccer players in Germany, Norway, Sweden, and the United States all had differing but similar viewpoints of their coaches. Both the male and female teams experienced having either a female or a male coach at some point in their athletic career with some having more exposure to one gender more than the other. Overall, it was stated that female coaches tended to be more accepting and understanding of the mental state of their players, which made them easier to have a personal relationship with (Fasting & Pfister, 2000). Male coaches tended to be more challenging and demanding in a physical sense so they often received a high level of respect because the athletes felt they were being pushed to their potential even though they were more mentally exhausted (Fasting & Pfister, 2000). These were all general opinions of the athletes based on their own personal experiences but typically fit into what is expected of men and women in our society. Based on the results of the studies, one can conclude that female coaches are more nurturing and care about the welling being of athletes while male coaches demand physicality from their players.
Female participants often preferred women coaches whereas the male participants preferred male coaches or were neutral in their opinions (Fasting & Pfister, 2000). This is believed to be strongly based on the fact that the females often played for a more female based coaching staff and the male study group had the same experience with male coaches dominating their playing experience. The results of this study prove that athletes prefer either gender based on the level of respect provided by the coach. This leads back to the idea that differences, preferences, capabilities, and opportunities in sports (especially coaching) have more to do with gendered norms and expectations then realistic proven facts.

**What it Means to Be a Coach in College Athletics**

Athletic coaches have a very difficult job with long working hours and it can be stressful to always meet the demands and expectations of the public or university administrators. The more competitive a sports team is the more time a coach will spend at the office in order to have a winning record. One of the most difficult aspects of choosing coaching as a career is based on the performance, behavior, and representation of the athletes and the coaches who work directly for you, which can determine if you keep your position at the university. This can be a major challenge to a coach because he or she is placing the future of their career partially in the hands of other individuals. Collegiate coaches deal with young adults who are in the process of learning how to be mature, how to fit into society, and how to deal with the consequences for their behavior. Sometimes this can be a very difficult process and this is only a small fraction of what a coach’s job requires them to do on a daily basis. Coaches are also expected to travel constantly for competitions, recruiting session, and meetings with players and other coaches as well as representing the university in a professional manner. The job of a coach is not as simple as many
people believe because there are many facets to the job and their responsibilities don’t just involve practice times and game days.

In the collegiate sports world working excessive hours has become a sign of hard work, commitment, and motivation to the success of a sports program as well as advancement in the work place (Bruening & Dixon, 2007). This means that the constant traveling and the longer than normal work days has become the norm and there is an unspoken expectation when accepting a coaching job especially a head coaching job. The grueling expectations of being the best in the corporate world has led to questions regarding the reality of females working as head coaches in a male dominated field. However, studies in the corporate world show that women are better communicators, have a stronger business ethic, and show more patience than their male counterparts, which are important skills for coaches.

Both male and female coaches will experience similar pressures in the work force because ultimately the expectation from the university is that the sports team needs to be a highly competitive program. Much of the research shows that women struggle a little more than men to maintain longevity as a successful coach, especially a head coach, once they have a family. However, this is not necessarily due to a maternal instinct to be at home with their children or significant other so much as the fact that their spouse or partner are likely to have a job of their own to help support the family financially. This results in the children spending a significant amount of time with another childcare provider while their parents are at work (Bruening & Dixon, 2007). A male coach does not struggle as much with their home and family life because generally men are paid significantly more than women and can provide financially for their family. This leaves the male coach with the option to have the partner stay home to raise their children without having to depend on another outside source (Bruening & Dixon, 2007). The life
of a college coach can be difficult and requires an excessive amount of time and commitment, especially for those who want to be competitive. However, for most coaches the results of a successful career are very rewarding and fulfilling.

Chapter III. Methods

Semi-Structured Interviews

The data in this study was collected through semi-structured interviews via Skype. A semi-structured interview is used as a means to collect qualitative data by creating a setting and situation that allows a respondent the framework as well as opportunity to talk about their opinions on a specific subject matter (Newton, 2010). The semi-structured interviewing allowed the interviewer to interpret and understand the respondent’s point of view and opinions instead of making generalizations about the individual’s behavior. This type of interview provided a more interactive and discussion-based interview rather than a black and white question and answer system.

Semi-structured interviews are also called focused interviews since the interviewer is allowed to develop and structure questions that keep the interview focused around the purpose as well as the main topic of the research. According to research, it is important to know that there are some limits and/or factors that can directly affect this type of research. Each interviewee will respond differently to certain situations or to certain individuals, which means that some of the subjects may give answers based on how they perceive the interviewer. This means that sex, age, and ethnicity of the interviewer may have had an impact on how in-depth the answers were from the subjects (Newton, 2010). Newton (2010) deems it important to make it explicitly clear at the beginning of the interview what the purpose of the interview is as well as the topics that will be discussed as a way to put the interviewing subject at ease and to help build rapport (p. 5). This
was an important aspect of the interview since the research focused directly on male coaches, who currently coach female athletes, especially since the interviewer was a female and a former student-athlete. The researcher established a judgement free environment to ensure that each interviewee related to the process and answered each interview question. This structure allowed the interviewer to gain a deeper and more accurate representation of each interviewee.

**Participants**

For the purposes of this study, 10 NCAA male coaches of female collegiate sports were selected as the subjects for the interview. Only about 43% of female collegiate sports teams are coached by women (Pilon, 2015). With a higher percentage of males coaching female athletes (57%), in comparison to women, the researcher had a larger sample of participants to choose from. Due to the number of potential men coaching female teams, the interviewer also found larger numbers of willing participants. This was essential to gathering information for the study because some of the coaches that were contacted declined the opportunity to participate.

**Procedure**

Snowball sampling was used to select and to contact participants for the research study. Snowball sampling involves finding a few base, and key, participants that meet the criteria of the research and asking them participate in the study (Merriam, 2009). The researcher obtained the number of interviewees needed to conduct the research based on the recommendations of some of the research participants. Also, subjects were more willing to respond and participate in the study when they were prompted by a recommendation from an interviewee rather than the interviewer who was unknown to any of the participants.

After approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), emails were sent to coaches seeking participants to be involved in the study. Once a coach agreed to participate they were
asked to contact other male coaches about participating in the study to try and help generate responses. They were provided a consent form and an interview date via Skype was scheduled. Skype is classified as a form of Synchronous interviewing, which involves “text-base chat rooms, instant messenger protocols, and videoconferencing” (Janghorban, Taghipour, & Roudsari, 2014). Since Skype has a web camera feature, the interaction compared to a face-to-face interview, and allowed the researcher to pick up on nonverbal and social cues. This was an ideal form of communication to use as it provided the interviewer more flexibility in scheduling appointments with the participants, which increased response rates and a greater willingness for to participate in the study.

Each interview was recorded and transcribed for later review. The interviewer used open coding to examine the responses of the participants. Open coding allowed the primary interviewer to break down the gathered information into smaller segments. The researcher examined and compared the data and an analysis of the similarities and differences were identified and recorded.

**Trustworthiness**

There were three main segments used to establish trustworthiness in the research: pilot study, member checking, and a research group.

**Pilot Study**

The pilot study assisted the researcher in preparing for the interviews to determine if there were any weaknesses or flaws in the study. By conducting a pilot study, it also allowed the interviewer to make revisions of questions and procedures prior to conducting the actual interviews. The test was completed using participants that had similar interests to the actual research participants in order to ensure the research questions were valid.
Member Checking

Member checking is the process in which the interviewer has the participant check data/information gathered to make sure there was no misunderstanding of the information given (Harper & Cole, 2012). In order to ensure accuracy of the data collected, the researcher restated and summarized the information gathered from each participant immediately following each question. This allowed the interviewees to agree or disagree with the summary or interpretation of the data by the researcher. This also provided the interviewer the opportunity to determine the credibility and validity of the responses of the interviewee. This step was important in assuring the researcher that information was not lost in translation since the interviews were semi-structured and based on individual experiences as well as the researcher’s interpretation of the information.

Research Group

A research group, also known as a focus group, is a team of several individuals that meet to study a topic of common interest along with the conducting researcher (Morgan & Spanish, 1984). The researcher used a focus group to assist in interpreting information and data collected from each interview. Different perspectives were offered by the team members regarding the gathered information. Open discussion and additional insight were encouraged during the meetings regarding the subject matter. The members of the research group were provided a copy of each interview electronically and asked to individually code the data. Once each member had reviewed the information, the team met to review and discuss the results to identify similarities as well as differences for each interviewee.

Chapter IV. Results

Demographics
The data was collected from a group of 10 NCAA Division I collegiate male coaches ranging in age, ethnic, and family backgrounds. All participants coached competitive athletic teams at the high school and collegiate level for eight years or more. Their ages range from 28 to 57 years and all were head coaches, associate-head coaches, or assistant coaches with head coaching experience. Three of the 10 participants were single while the other seven were married; six of those seven had two or more children. The ten coaches interviewed represented six different sports; basketball, volleyball, swimming & diving, softball, water polo, rowing, & cross country/track & field. A few of the coaches were in a unique situation because their sports were co-ed so they coached both men and women. About half of the coaches previously competed in a sports program at the collegiate level, while the other half went immediately into coaching prior to or during college. All participants obtained a Bachelor’s Degree, most degrees were in Education, while only four of them had or were in the process of finishing a Master’s Degree.

**Research Question 1: Why do male coaches coach female athletes?**

**Experience**

The first noticeable theme that occurred during the interviews stemmed directly from the coaching experience that each participant had in coaching athletics. A majority of the coaches had experience working with male athletes but it was limited or a circumstance of their sport of choice. For instance, Coach 2, Coach 6, and Coach 8 work with sports such as swimming and diving and cross-country/track and field, which include both male and female athletes on the team. Coach 2, “with swimming it is a little different because primarily everyone trains together from a young age. We don’t really differentiate between men and women as they are always looked at as one team.”
Coach 7 started his career in female sports programs through a work study program while he was in college. He was required to work with the softball team where he eventually started offering advice to the athletes since he had a background in baseball. When one of the coaches left the team, he moved into a student volunteer role and from that point on had only worked with female teams. Coach 4 was a former collegiate player in the sport he currently coaches. “I had a career ending injury in college, started working at a restaurant when a customer asked me to coach their daughter’s travel team. I started coaching the team, eventually moved on to a high school team, and it spiraled.” Each coach took a different path into collegiate athletics but for the most part they have spent a majority, if not all, of their careers coaching a female sports team.

Satisfaction

The second theme emphasized the extremely high levels of satisfaction that the coaches had experienced in their careers and a majority of them contributed it to working with female athletes. They enjoyed their jobs more because of the type of environment that seemed to naturally develop working with female athletes. Coach 9 described that the biggest benefits of coaching female athletes was that, “the females truly care for each other and are more nurturing of one another. It’s different on men’s teams as it just isn’t the same level of concern for each other. Females have more of a fun environment because there is always dancing and laughter.” When each coach was asked if they feel satisfied coaching a female sport, a majority of them responded with similar sentiments as this coach, “Absolutely, it’s no question that this is where I want to be. It may not have been where I always thought I’d be but I wouldn’t change it.” Another coach stated, “we make the choices that govern our own lives and I choose to coach women.”

Opportunity
The coaches provided similar responses with minor variations regarding the question about opportunities in the work force. Each coach was asked his opinion about job accessibility and coaching opportunities for men as well as why he believed more women are not coaching male teams. A majority of the coaches responded that men do have more accessible opportunities for coaching jobs than women have available to them across the board. However, the coaches felt that they are at more of a disadvantage when applying for positions in their particular sport. According to one of the interviewees, “it’s something I recognize in the coaching industry but it isn’t something I feel I’m taking advantage of.” Coach 6 recognized that across the board he has more opportunities simply because he could confidently say he has expertise in working with both men and women at a competitive level but stated that, “if I were a female with the same qualifications I would have even more opportunities as a coach in my sport.” They felt that while women are being hired at much lower rates than men, they are actually more sought after for the positions. “While there are significantly more men than women in the coaching field there is a trend now to have more women coaching women’s teams, which kind of makes me the odd man out.”

The participants were also asked to explain why they believed more women are not applying for coaching opportunities in men’s collegiate athletics. A majority of the participants stated that women do not apply for coaching positions in men’s sports so they feel that female coaches are not taking advantage of positions available to them. Coach 5, “I just don’t think they go for the jobs. I don’t ever hear of women applying for jobs in football or baseball and since they aren’t applying for those positions how can one say they wouldn’t get hired?” Only one of the coaches provided a different perspective regarding the question of why women are not applying for positions to coach male sports teams. He felt that women do not apply for those
positions based on family commitments and time requirements, which are hindrances for female coaches in not choosing a career as a men’s athletic team coach. Coach 6, “part of it has to do with paying your dues, which comes with collegiate coaching. You need to have an established history of being willing to scratch and claw for the best job, a willingness to move and relocate and that’s harder for women because of their family life.”

Research Question 2: How male coaches handle social and physical boundaries while working with female athletes?

Distance

The interviewees indicated that coaches for female sports teams must be able to have the ability to separate themselves from their players. It is vital to their careers to remain professional and is an even more important requirement when the coach is the opposite gender of their athletes. Some respondents indicated that when they were searching for coaching jobs at the collegiate level, one of the main reasons administrators gave for not hiring them was because as a younger coach they were too close in age to that of the athletes. Coach 4, “I actually was able to find work as a coach at the national level before the collegiate level because administrators were wary of me being male and so close in age to the girls I would work with.” When dealing with social and physical boundaries while working with female athletes, all of the coaches emphasized the importance of distance, language, relationships, and trust. Respondents believed that these were important elements in maintaining not only their jobs but developing strong and competitive teams.

All of the male coaches said that in some degree that they are very conscious of the need to maintain a physical distance when working with their athletes. The interviewees indicated they were either extremely careful of any physical touching, especially in sports such as swimming
where the attire has high levels of exposure, or to make sure that it was in an appropriate setting and place. Coach 3 believes “there is a general level of professionalism that should be maintained when working with others whether they are co-workers or athletes and it doesn’t matter if the athletes are male or female. I stick to pats on the shoulder, hugs if the moment calls for it or high fives.”

The coaches who had coached for several years mentioned that physical and social boundaries were less of a worry for them because they had families and were in a completely different age category than their athletes. However, all interviewees no matter their age, sport, or family structure, refused to meet with an athlete in a one-on-one private setting. All coaches maintain an open door policy unless the situation needs to be handled privately then another female coach or administrative employee is brought into the meeting. Respondents advised that maintaining a physical distance and being conscious of individual and private settings are required by administrative policies. Coach 4 states that “administration and the athletic department definitely make sure to train you in what is appropriate and what isn’t appropriate to try and maintain boundaries and protect coaches and the school.”

**Language**

The coaches stated that using appropriate language is critical when dealing with female athletes. The coaches felt that it is important to use a lower tone of voice and that feedback must be presented to female athletes in a more positive and sensitive nature. Coach 10, “sometimes I intentionally and unintentionally adjust my coaching style when working with female athletes. I’m more likely to sensor my vocabulary as well as when and what type of feedback I give them.” The interviewees also indicated that it is important to give constructive feedback at the right moment but in an appropriate manner. They emphasized the need to frame the feedback in
a positive and uplifting manner while making sure that the athletes fully understand the adjustments that need to be made with their behavior or performance.

This need to sensor language or focus on what type of feedback, when in the presence of a female, and how it is perceived was demonstrated during the interview. With the main researcher being a female some of the coaches continuously tried to sensor themselves or were worried about being “politically correct” in their response. For some of them, it took several reminders during the interview that it was a judgement free zone where they were allowed to express themselves freely without backlash or fear of offending the researcher.

Relationships/Trust

The last issue that the coaches emphasized focused on the physical and social relationships with their female athletes. Some of the coaches believed the creation of a family-based environment was extremely important to the success of their athletic programs as well as the development of the player/coach relationship with each student-athlete. Other interviewees felt that it was most important to establish trust with their players and at the same time develop their players into successful student-athletes. For instance, the swimming & diving coaches emphasized the need to establish a strong, trusting relationship between them and their female athletes. With the uniform being a swimsuit and extremely revealing, the coach discussed the importance of making an athlete feel comfortable and developing a trust. “So on day one with a new team we won’t be having a conversation about if I think the suit fits correctly or not because that trust isn’t there.” He later explained, “part of this is because unfortunately swimming & diving is only in the news for the Olympics or because a coach had an inappropriate relationship with their athlete.”
Most of the respondents felt that this trust can most often be found when coaches allow themselves to be vulnerable, still on a professional level, with their athletes. Coach 6, “you have to have an ability to connect on a personal level that is based on something other than the sport itself, show them that you are a person outside of just being their coach.” Although both styles of coaching are successful, the interviewees stated that it is important that all coaches, male or female, maintain an appropriate physical and social relationship with their players in order to provide a positive learning and competitive environment for all student-athletes.

Chapter V. Discussion/Conclusion

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of male coaches that coach female athletes. This study will add to the body of knowledge and increase the overall understanding of why a higher percentage of men continue to be hired as coaches of female sports instead of women. Men currently coach the majority of female athletic programs at the collegiate level and this study hopes to answer the following research questions: (RQ1) why do male coaches coach female athletes, and (RQ2) how male coaches handle social and physical boundaries while working with female athletes? This study will serve as a starting block for future research pertaining to male coaches and their relationships and experiences with female athletes in collegiate athletics. Additionally, further research needs to be conducted regarding the shift in the greater number of male coaches coaching female athletic programs compared to female coaches and what has caused male coaches to be more desirable in the selection process.

The number of women coaching female sports teams has decreased significantly over the last four decades. However, a higher percentage of men have entered the work force as coaches for female athletic programs. Due to the increase in the number of female sports programs...
offered at the collegiate level, men have been afforded more opportunities to be successful as a coach for either a male or female sports program. With this increase in opportunity in female athletics being a more recent phenomena, it was surprising to find that a majority of the participants actually started out or have spent a majority of their careers in women’s athletics instead of transitioning over from men’s. The desire for men to work with female athletic teams comes from not only a rise in funding and local and national exposure but there is also an enjoyment factor that is part of the culture that exists in women’s athletic programs.

A high level of satisfaction and long-standing careers working with female collegiate athletes molded the experiences and perspectives of the interviewees. The opportunity and experience to work with both male and female sports programs was a tremendous professional experience for the coaches as they learned the importance of discipline, how to gain mutual respect between players and coaches, how to teach specific interactive skill sets, and how to positively influence their athletes. Most importantly, the coaches learned different coaching methods as well as how to develop lifelong relationships with their student-athletes. The interviewees learned important lessons by working with female athletes, which shaped their viewpoints and helped determine the future of their coaching careers. Several coaches expressed strong feelings about making the decision to coach female athletes because of their high levels of competitiveness and the coaches believed, in many ways, women are more capable of handling pressure and stress compared to male athletes.

The interviewees stated that communication between coaches and players is essential in establishing social and physical boundaries between male coaches and their female athletes. They indicated that men and women think and handle situations very differently. They felt male coaches needed to learn how to handle those differences in order to be successful coaching
female student-athletes. As shown in previous research by Fasting & Pfister (2000), female coaches were better at developing stronger personal relationships with their athletes while male coaches were better at physically challenging and being demanding which gave them higher levels of respect. This data surprisingly supported what every coach interviewed stated, in one way or another, was important for them to have successful relationships with their athletes, especially since they were of men.

By focusing on the positive rather than the negative aspects of an issue, male coaches will encourage their athletes to be successful. Male coaches should always remain professional because they are in a position of power and can easily influence their players. Appropriate boundaries should be established and interactions with female players should always be above reproach. Establish individual goals and expectations for each player to maintain consistency. Lastly, earn the players trust through consistent and transparent communication.

**Previous Literature**

According to Colker & Widom (1980), research shows that as competitive athletics became a possibility for women, people questioned what competition would do to the physical and social identity of female participants. Society, in general, believed that higher levels of athletic competition along with the demanding physicality would masculinize women physically and compromise their femininity (Colker & Widom, 1980). The study participants were able to contradict those stereotypes and assumptions. When Coach 6 started working with female collegiate athletes, “he assumed the women would be stereotypically unfeminine.” Shortly after he started coaching, he realized that his female athletes were highly feminine. The coach stated that by participating in sports programs the women evolved as better athletes while displaying stronger and shapelier bodies and at the same time maintaining their femininity.
Coach 7 stated that people tend to make the assumption that coaching female athletes is far different than coaching male athletes and that females are not as competitive as males. The public assumes that women need to be coddled and that they cannot be coached in the same manner or at the same level as men. The coach went on to say that all of those assumptions have been proven to be false because every woman athlete he has worked with simply wants to be looked at as an athlete first and a female second. He indicated that, “the players just want to be coached.” His personal experiences show that femininity is not a determining factor of how women expect to be viewed as a competitive athlete. Female athletes want to be treated fairly, which is to be judged as a competitive athlete.

Fasting & Pfister (2000) stated that female coaches tend to be more accepting and understanding of their player’s mental state, which should make it easier to have a personal relationship with each other. The research study contradicts Fasting & Pfister’s claim that female coaches are more accepting and understanding of a female athlete’s wants and needs. Coach 8 specifically focuses on strong communication, listening skills, understanding and compassion, consistency, and positive feedback with his female athletes. The interviewee has found that by developing a strong relationship of understanding and trust between he and the athlete he has positive results. None of the coaches use gender specific coaching styles and philosophies rather they focus more on what produces positive results and adjust their coaching style to the needs of each student-athlete.

Working in collegiate sports requires an excessive and high level of commitment due to the long work hours, travel commitments, and competitive nature of the position. Bruening & Dixon’s (2007) research states that in the collegiate sports world working long, excessive hours has become a sign of hard work, commitment, and motivation for the success of sports programs
as well as advancement in the work place; it is the expectation not the exception. Coach 6 specifically attributes these demanding requirements to the lack of females working as coaches of male teams at high levels of competition. He stated that coaches need to pay their dues through a willingness to relocate for career advancements or new opportunities and to fight for the best paying and competitive jobs available as the strongest factors why women do not apply or are not qualified for these positions. Coaching as a profession is one of the most unstable career paths that a person can choose because of high rates of relocation and dedication to long hours of work.

According to Bruening & Dixon (2007), women struggle significantly more than men to maintain longevity as a successful coach, especially a head coach, once they have a family. The time and dedication it takes to be a successful coach at a competitive level takes away from time with their families and it is not a sacrifice that many are willing to make long-term. “I think that many women don’t have the credentials that make them qualified for these jobs because they have families they want to focus on and when administrators are hiring someone it unfortunately is a factor they have to take into consideration.” Some of the other coaches stated that it was much easier for them to transition into coaching positions because their wives or significant others were apt to stay at home once they chose to start a family providing them with the opportunity to be more dedicated in their role as a coach. This provides male coaches with the option to continue working because his partner often stays home to raise their children (Bruening & Dixon, 2007). In this instance, the research correlates directly with the interviewee’s personal experiences with having families, working in college athletics, and why more women are not coaching male teams.

**Theoretical Framework**
Social ideology is a collection of attitudes and beliefs that are mutually dependent on one another because they are organized with a dominating societal theme in mind (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). The attitudes and beliefs often lead to gendered stereotypes that structure societal beliefs about personal attributes of men and women (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). These attributes help to develop individual traits, role behaviors, and occupational preferences (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). Much of the theoretical framework was supported but also questionable when it came to the research participants. While a few had preconceived assumptions about their female athletes when they first started coaching, many of the participants had no assumptions or simply did not know what to expect. They either did not know what to expect or they had spent their entire athletic coaching careers working with female athletes so they knew nothing else. Stereotypes that people often associate with women, sensitive, soft, emotional, etc., were either nonexistent or minor factors in their statements about females. The coaches did not feel they had to change who they were in order to relate to their athletes because of gender but rather approached each individual as a member of the team. Every coach stated this is the approach they use in dealing with student-athletes and that it is an important part of their coaching philosophy whether they are coaching male or female athletes.

None of the coaches felt that gendered stereotypes were a strong or influencing factor in their decision to coach female athletes. All of the interviewees chose to coach sports because it is what they love doing. Coaching female athletes is a highly gratifying experience for each of the interviewees and they feel that they have developed long-standing relationships with many athletes while at the same time improving as individuals, husbands, fathers, and coaches.

**Practical Implications**
This research provides a small contribution to the limited data and information that is available pertaining to coaching and specifically male coaches of female teams. It is important that the research continue because men dominate the field of athletics and more data is needed to determine why women are underrepresented in the coaching and athletic administrative professions. Further study will also help eliminate biases as to why more women are not applying for or being hired for these positions. While only 42.9% of female collegiate teams are coached by a woman, additional research is needed to either support or deny if stereotypes, social roles, discriminatory hiring practices, or other factors are contributing to the decline of female coaches. It is not only important to understand the experiences of male coaches for female athletic teams, but also to understand how they interact with their athletes. Men make up a majority of coaches for female teams so this study will also serve to help those athletes understand their coaches and their experiences a little better.

Limitations

In order to find a large enough sample for the research study, head coaches as well as assistant coaches were used. The interviewees also worked with six different types of female sports teams, some co-ed, which may have a greater influence on their experiences and overall viewpoint of female athletics. If all of the research participants were from the same sport there is a possibility that more of the findings would have been similar. Also, for some of the sports the participants coached, such as water polo and volleyball, the collegiate level is the top level for men and women in this sport; with the exception of the Olympics. This directly influenced the desire of the coach to work with female athletes because there is limited availability to coach men’s sports in that field. As Coach 9 stated, “the great thing on the female side of our sport is
that it is Division I and we have double the amount of scholarships that the men’s team has available to them. There are more women’s teams, and it’s on more solid footing.”

As the primary researcher and a former female Division I athlete that played for a male coach, it was difficult to completely eliminate any biases. The research participant’s answers may not have aligned with the opinions and experiences of the primary researcher, which may have influenced how the research was analyzed and written. Also, being a female may have influenced the responses that each participant gave to specific questions. The participants may have unknowingly, or knowingly, structured their language, answers, and opinions based on the gender of the researcher.

Conducting the interview through Skype provided a convenience and flexibility, which may have made more participants willing to respond. However, by conducting the interviews through Skype it gives the participants the ability to do the interview in whatever environment they want. However, if the surrounding area is disruptive it could affect the interviewer’s concentration and therefore their ability to gather data. More importantly it also gives the participants an easy way to withdraw if they begin to get uncomfortable with questions since they would only need to click a button to disconnect. This could increase high rates of absenteeism as well as rescheduling (Janghorban et al., 2014).

**Future Research**

This study is one of the first, if not the first of its kind. The research pertaining to coaches, their experiences, and how they create successful programs is very limited. There were 209,472 female student-athletes in the NCAA, over 83,000 at the Division I level, and twenty different women’s championship sports programs in the 2014-2015 academic year (Iruck, 2015). Future research is limitless and the research conducted in this study will serve as groundwork for
future exploration on coaches, their philosophies, and potentially helping to eliminate gender stereotypes in athletics. The next stage would be to look into why Athletic Directors are hiring men more, how female coaches perceive male coaches, interview female athletes that play for male coaches, women who coach male teams, and what the experiences and coaching philosophies are like for collegiate female coaches. Developing research on these topics will help to understand what it is that seems to set male coaches apart, eliminate potential biases and assumptions, and potentially help to close the gap between male and female coaches working in women’s sports.
References


Appendix

Appendix A

IRB Project Number

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
PROTOCOL FORM

The University Institutional Review Board recommends policies and monitors their implementation, on the use of human beings as subjects for physical, mental, and social experimentation, in and out of class. Protocols for the use of human subjects in research and in class experiments, whether funded internally or externally, must be approved by the (IRB) or in accordance with IRB policies and procedures prior to the implementation of the human subject protocol. Violation of procedures and approved protocols can result in the loss of funding from the sponsoring agency or the University of Arkansas and may be interpreted as scientific misconduct. (see Faculty Handbook)

Supply the information requested in items 1-14 as appropriate. Type entries in the spaces provided using additional pages as needed. In accordance with college/departmental policy, submit the original and one copy of this completed protocol form and all attached materials to the appropriate Human Subjects Committee. In the absence of an IRB-authorized Human Subjects Committee, submit the original of this completed protocol form and all attached materials to the IRB, Attn: Compliance Officer, MLKG 109, 575-2208. Completed form and additional materials may be emailed to irb@uark.edu. The fully signed signature page may be scanned and submitted with the protocol, by FAX (575-6527) or via campus mail.

1. Title of Project: Men Who Coach Women

2. (Students must have a faculty member supervise the research. The faculty member must sign this form and all researchers and the faculty advisor should provide a campus phone number.)

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<td>Shannel Blackshear</td>
<td><a href="mailto:smblackes@uark.edu">smblackes@uark.edu</a></td>
<td>(520) 227-3594</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty Advisor</td>
<td>Sarah Stokowski, PhD</td>
<td><a href="mailto:strko@uark.edu">strko@uark.edu</a></td>
<td>(479) 575-4111</td>
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3. Researcher(s) status. Check all that apply.

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<th>Undergraduate Student(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. Project type

| Faculty Research | Thesis / Dissertation-- YES | Class Project | Independent Study / |
| Staff Research   | M.A.T. Research             | Honors Project | Educ. Spec. Project |

5. Is the project receiving extramural funding? (Extramural funding is funding from an external research sponsor.)

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NO Yes. Specify the source of funds

6. Brief description of the purpose of proposed research and all procedures involving people. Be specific. Use additional pages if needed. (Do not submit thesis or dissertation proposals. Proposals for extramural funding must be submitted in full.)

Purpose of research: With the rise in popularity of collegiate athletics, male and female sports, has come the demand for coaches. The increase in funding, recruitment, and media has also driven up the value of being a coach for a female athletic team. This has led to a significant increase in men seeking jobs coaching female sports, when it used to be completely female dominated, as viable options for careers. The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of male coaches that coach female athletes.

Procedures involving people: The proposed study will consist of semi-structured interviews either in-person or through Skype (see Appendix B for a list of the questions that will be used as a guide for the semi-structured interview). Each person will be male and recruited via email by recommendation (see Appendix C). All participants will be asked to sign an informed consent statement explaining their rights as a participant in the study as well as given a copy (see Appendix A). Participants will not be offered any compensation for their participation in the study.

7. Estimated number of participants (complete all that apply)

_____ Children under 14 _____ Children 14-17 _____ UA students (18yrs and older) _____ 5-12 Adult non-students

8. Anticipated dates for contact with participants:

First Contact __March 2016___ Last Contact __April 2016___

9. Informed Consent procedures: The following information must be included in any procedure: identification of researcher, institutional affiliation and contact information; identification of Compliance Officer and contact information; purpose of the research, expected duration of the subject's participation, description of procedures; risks and/or benefits; how confidentiality will be ensured; that participation is voluntary and that refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. See Policies and Procedures Governing Research with Human Subjects, section 5.0 Requirements for Consent.

YES—Signed informed consent will be obtained. Attach copy of form.
Modified informed consent will be obtained. Attach copy of form.
Other method (e.g., implied consent). Please explain on attached sheet.
Not applicable to this project. Please explain on attached sheet.

10. Confidentiality of Data: All data collected that can be associated with a subject/respondent must remain confidential. Describe the methods to be used to ensure the confidentiality of data obtained.

Each interview (with the permission of the participants) will be recorded using computer based screen recording (if through Skype Technology) or a digital voice recorder to ensure accuracy and then will be transcribed verbatim. Each participant will be given an alias during the interviewing process to protect their identity. Upon
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Completion of the interview transcription, the recording will be deleted to continue to maintain confidentiality. All transcripts, data, and signed consent forms will be kept in a private and secured area.

11. Risks and/or Benefits:

Risks: Will participants in the research be exposed to more than minimal risk? [ ] Yes [ ] No Minimal risk is defined as risks of harm not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. Describe any such risks or discomforts associated with the study and precautions that will be taken to minimize them.

Potential risks to the participant is extremely minimal. The deleting of the recorded interviews, once transcribed, and assigned alias is to help ensure that the participants identity is kept confidential and in tact. These precautions are being taken to ensure there will be no repercussions to their personal and professional life. Some of the participants may be uncomfortable answering some of the questions candidly because it may bring up questions or memories that may make them uncomfortable. These potential risks come from touching on sensitive topics that directly involve the participants. To minimize risk, the participants will be reminded of their right to opt out of any question and/or discontinue the interview as a whole at any time, particularly if they are experiencing excessive discomfort, turmoil, anxiety, or stress.

Benefits: Other than the contribution of new knowledge, describe the benefits of this research, especially any benefits to those participating.

The proposed study has the potential to benefit the profession of coaching as a whole. It can allow people to understand the strengths and weaknesses that come with coaching, and coaching a sport of a different gender. It can also allow for more understanding of why men are able to cross over more efficiently between girls/boys when coaching sport.

12. Check all of the following that apply to the proposed research. Supply the requested information below or on attached sheets.

A. Deception of or withholding information from participants. Justify the use of deception or the withholding of information. Describe the debriefing procedure: how and when will the subject be informed of the deception and/or the information withheld?
B. Medical clearance necessary prior to participation. Describe the procedures and note the safety precautions to be taken.
C. Samples (blood, tissue, etc.) from participants. Describe the procedures and note the safety precautions to be taken.
D. Administration of substances (foods, drugs, etc.) to participants. Describe the procedures and note the safety precautions to be taken.
E. Physical exercise or conditioning for subjects. Describe the procedures and note the safety precautions to be taken.
F. Research involving children. How will informed consent from parents or legally authorized representatives as well as from subjects be obtained?

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G. Research involving pregnant women or fetuses. How will informed consent be obtained from both parents of the fetus?
H. Research involving participants in institutions (cognitive impairments, prisoners, etc.). Specify agencies or institutions involved. Attach letters of approval. Letters must be on letterhead with original signature; electronic transmission is acceptable.
I. Research approved by an IRB at another institution. Specify agencies or institutions involved. Attach letters of approval. Letters must be on letterhead with original signature; electronic transmission is acceptable.
J. Research that must be approved by another institution or agency. Specify agencies or institutions involved. Attach letters of approval. Letters must be on letterhead with original signature; electronic transmission is acceptable.

13. Checklist for Attachments

The following are attached:

YES- Consent form (if applicable) or
YES- Letter to participants, written instructions, and/or script of oral protocols indicating clearly the information in item #9.
Letter(s) of approval from cooperating institution(s) and/or other IRB approvals (if applicable)
YES- Data collection instruments

14. Signatures

I/we agree to provide the proper surveillance of this project to ensure that the rights and welfare of the human subjects/respondents are protected. I/we will report any adverse reactions to the committee. Additions to or changes in research procedures after the project has been approved will be submitted to the committee for review. I/we agree to request renewal of approval for any project when subject/respondent contact continues more than one year.

Principal Researcher ________________________________ Date 3/9/10
Co-Researcher ________________________________ Date
Co-Researcher ________________________________ Date
Co-Researcher ________________________________ Date
Faculty Advisor ________________________________ Date 3/9/10

PROTOCOL APPROVAL FORM
(To be returned to IRB Program Manager with copy of completed protocol form and attachments)

Human Subjects Committee Use Only (In absence of IRB-authorized Human Subjects Committee, send protocol to IRB.)
IRB Project Number

Recommended Review Status

9 Human Subjects Committee can approve as exempt because this research fits in the following category of research as described in section 9.02 of the IRB policies and procedures (Cite reasons for exempt status):

Printed Name and Signature of the HSC Chair ____________________________ Date ______

Expeditied Review by a designated member of the IRB because this research fits in the following category of research as described in section 9.03 of the IRB policies and procedures (Cite reasons for expedited status):

Printed Name and Signature of the HSC Chair ____________________________ Date ______

Requires Full Review by the IRB because this research fits in the following category of research as described in section 9.04 of the IRB policies and procedures (Cite reasons for full status):

Printed Name and Signature of the HSC Chair ____________________________ Date ______

IRB/RSCP Use Only

Project Number ____________________________ Received RSCP ______

Sent to: __________________________________________ Date: ________

Final Status

9 Approved as Exempt under section 9.02 of the IRB Policies and Procedures (Cite reasons for exemption):

________________________________________________________

9 Approved as Expedited under Section 9.03 of the IRB Policies and Procedures because (Cite reasons for expedited status):

________________________________________________________

Printed Name and Signature: ______________________________________ Date

IRB (for the Committee)
RSSP Project Number

9 Approved by Full review under Section 9.04 of the IRB as meeting requirements of the IRB Policies and Procedures.

Printed Name and Signature: _______________________________ Date __________________

IRB Chairperson

Appendix A: Informed Consent
The Department of Health, Human Performance and Recreation at the University of Arkansas, support the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that participation is completely voluntary and that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Your relationship with the investigator will not be affected in any way if you refuse to participate.

I am conducting this study to better understand male coaches who coach female athletes at the collegiate level. This will entail your participation in one semi-structured interview. The interviews are expected to take anywhere from 30-60 minutes, depending on the extent at which you choose to disclose information. You must be at least 18 years old to participate.

The interviews include questions about personal experiences in regards to your coaching career. Some of the questions may evoke uncomfortable emotion or cause embarrassment. If you do not wish to answer a specific question, you may opt to skip to the next question. If at any time you do not wish to continue, you may choose to end the interview without penalty.

Participation may have the potential to benefit others up and coming or currently within your profession. I believe information obtained from this study will help gain a better understanding of social and professional issues which may help higher education institutions, collegiate athletic departments, coaching staffs, administrators, and all other professionals associated with intercollegiate athletics to understand better coaches, the meaning of their professions, as well as the difficulties that are associated outside of the actual sport itself.

The information obtained through the recorded interviews will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and the University of Arkansas policy. In order to ensure confidentiality, the following steps will be taken: participants will be given an alias during the interview so that responses will be recorded anonymously, the recordings will be deleted upon transcription, and all transcriptions, consent forms, and information will be stored in a private and undisclosed location to ensure confidentiality.

Your participation is solicited, although strictly voluntary. If you would like additional information concerning this study before or after it is complete, please feel free to contact us by phone or email. At the conclusion of this study, you will have the right to request feedback about the results. You may contact us by email or phone.

If you have any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant, you may contact:
The University of Arkansas Research Compliance:
Phone: 479-575-2208
Email: irb@uark.edu
Mail: RO Windwalker, CIP
Institutional Review Board Coordinator
Research Compliance
University of Arkansas
109 MLKG Building
Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201

If you have any other questions about the research, please contact any of the researchers below:
RSSP Project Number

Sincerely,

Shannel Blackshear, BS, Investigator
Department of Health, Human Performance and Recreation
University of Arkansas
Fayetteville, AR 72701
(479) 575-4111

Sarah Stokowski, PhD, Faculty Advisor
Department of Health, Human Performance and Recreation
University of Arkansas
Fayetteville, AR 72701
(479) 575-4111

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature: ___________________________ Date: ____________

Investigator's signature: __________________________ Date: ____________
IRB Project Number

Appendix B: Interview Protocol
Interview Questions:
Demographic Questions:

What is your gender?
What sport do you coach?
What is your current institution?
How long have you been a coach?
How old are you?
What is your educational background?
What is your family background?

RQ1: How did you become a coach for a female sport?
1. What are some assumptions you had about coaching women when you first started?
   a. Which assumptions were accurate and which were not?
2. Do you ever have to defend your choice to coach a women’s team?
3. Do you feel satisfied coaching a women’s sport?
   a. Is women’s athletics where you always wanted to be?
2. Do you feel you have more access to job opportunities, in the coaching profession, since men have the
   ability to coach on either side (male and female) for most sports teams?
3. Why do you think there aren’t more women coaching men’s teams?
   a. Why is it highly controversial and publicized when they do (especially at a higher level)?

RQ2: Philosophically, how do you approach coaching female athletes?
1. Have you ever coached a male sports team?
   a. (If yes) What were similarities and differences you noticed between your male and female
      teams (physically, socially, athletically)?
2. Intentionally, or not, do you feel your coaching style has changed because your athletes are women?
3. Have you ever worked under a female head coach?
   a. (If yes) What differences and similarities did you notice between their
      coaching philosophy and yours?
5. What are the 5 important things you feel a male coach of a female team needs to know
   and/or have?

RQ3: How do male coaches deal with physical and social boundaries when coaching female athletes?
1. Do you think you have to be more conscious of these boundaries because you are a male
   working with women?
   a. Boundaries such as pregnancy, personal meetings, personal space, etc.
2. Do you think your athletes respond to you differently because you are male?
3. What do you feel are the biggest benefits of coaching women?
4. What do you feel are the worst/hardest aspects of coaching women?
Appendix C: Recruitment E-mail

Dear Coach,

Researchers at the University for Arkansas are interested in learning about your experience as a male coach that coaches female athletes.

This is a voluntary research study with interview(s) that may take between 30 and 60 minutes to complete. Each interview (with the permission of the participants) will be recorded using a digital voice recorder to ensure accuracy and will be transcribed verbatim. The information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University of Arkansas policy. In order to ensure confidentiality, the following steps will be taken: participants will be asked to provide pseudonyms during the interview to help protect their identity, the recordings will be deleted upon completion of transcription, the transcripts will be stored on a password protected computer, and themes from data as well as data analysis will also be kept on a password protected computer. You may choose to discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

Please feel free to forward this email to fellow coaches who may be interested in learning more about this study. If you have additional questions about the study or interested in participating, please contact me. Thanks for your time.

Best Wishes,

Shannel Blackshear
Department of Health, Human Performance and Recreation
University of Arkansas
Fayetteville, AR 72701
(479) 575-4111
smblacks@uark.edu
Appendix B

MEMORANDUM

TO: Shannel Blackshear
Sarah Stokowski

FROM: Ro Windwalker
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 15-03-519
Protocol Title: Men Who Coach Women
Review Type: ☒ EXEMPT ☐ EXPEDITED ☐ FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 03/21/2016 Expiration Date: 03/20/2017

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (https://vprod.uark.edu/units/recc/index.php). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

This protocol has been approved for 12 participants. If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

109 MLKG • 1 University of Arkansas • Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201 • (479) 575-2208 • Fax (479) 575-6527 • Email irb@uark.edu
The University of Arkansas is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution.