

(Peer Reviewed Article)**Breaking Down Barriers: An Investigation into the Lack of Female Head Coaches in NCAA Affiliated Institutions**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the rationales behind the gender disparity between male and female head coaches at the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) affiliated institutions. Intercollegiate female athletic participation is at an all-time high. Yet, more women find male coaches coaching their sports. This study aimed to determine what hinders women from pursuing and obtaining head coaching positions at the collegiate level in either gender sports. Interviews were conducted in two different phases with two groups of NCAA Division-I female coaches ($n = 22$ and 8 , respectively) in the southeast United States. The findings addressed the barriers and challenges faced by female coaches while trying to be a head coach and their thoughts for pursuing coaching opportunities in men's sports. As past studies had identified, negative stereotypes and misconceptions about female coaches clearly affect respondents' perceptions about pursuing a head coaching position. Networking was highly valued as a critical factor for obtaining and keeping positions. Researchers believed with more female role-model coaches being hired by the professional leagues, this trend would inspire more women to strive for leadership and coaching positions in the sports world.

Introduction

An all-time high female participation rate in intercollegiate and high school athletics has been reached in the last three years (Sage, Eitzen, & Beal, 2019). The growth of female athletic participation has been a constant surge since the implementation of the Title IX legislation in 1972. This legislation enacts numerous regulations to support gender equality in education and public works setting. Title IX has garnered for itself the most attention and impact in high school and college athletics. Before this legislation was enacted, college and universities typically offered about an average of 2.5 female sports (Acosta & Carpenter 2014). Fifty years later, the average number of women's sports offered throughout college campus is 8.13. This number represented more than 240,000 female athletes (about 43% of total amount of athletes) competing across universities in the United States (Sage et al, 2019). The amount of growth seen in women's collegiate athletics is substantial. However, specific statistics that have declined drastically as opposed to the female athletic participation are the number and growth of female athletic coaches. The influx of new administrative and coaching opportunities in collegiate athletics were well publicized and witnessed, somehow women seem to be left behind for those employment opportunities. In 2014, there were 13,963 female professionals working throughout intercollegiate athletics. The number accounted for 4,154 head coaches, 7,503 assistant coaches, and 239 athletic directors (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). More specifically, these numbers reflected that over 77% of

all athletic director positions were held by men. Less than 44% of those athletic teams have a female head coach (Burton 2014; Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). It was believed that the number of female coaches in female sports would continue to drop (Blom, Abrell, Wilson, Lape, Halbrook, & Judge, 2011). Ironically, before Title IX was introduced in 1972, over 90% of collegiate women's athletic teams were led by a female head coach (Stark, 2017).

The recent social movement, "Me Too," has inspired and empowered a lot of women to pursue a career in various professional fields often dominated by males (i.e., politics, business, military, and high-tech industries) and fight for gender equity (i.e., equal pay for female workers) and women's rights (i.e., compensation for maternity leave). Yet in the field of collegiate athletics, the lack of female administrators and coaches remains to be an ongoing unsolved issue. Particularly, female coaches not only have limited spots to coach female teams, they are not given the chance to lead the men's athletic teams at all. With the increase of female sport participation, it is logical to assume many females would love to engage a career in athletic administration and coaching. Becoming a coach is usually a common step to enter the field of collegiate athletic administration. Evidently, female candidates' coaching opportunities have been significantly taken by their male counterparts. Women can be inspired to become politicians, soldiers, business professionals, and many other professions. Yet, it seems it is impossible for them to even get the chance to coach sports on the male teams. Although there are currently 10 coaches and two female assistant coaches in the National Basketball Association and National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division-I men's basketball (Greene, 2019), Becky Hammon and Katie Stowers are just sporadic exceptional individuals propagandized by media as iconic female coaches for elite men's professional sports. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding about two issues: (1) why female coaches continue to lose the head coaching position to males? And (2) why female coaches are not able to obtain coaching positions in male sports? The researchers would investigate the perceived stereotypes and underlying reasons that contributed to the lack of female head coaches in collegiate athletic setting. In addition, the researchers would address the common barriers that female coaches may need to overcome to obtain head coaching positions. The findings of this study could offer insight to a successful pathway that female coaching candidates could take to combat the aforementioned problems, and ultimately help women breakthrough the glass ceiling of head position hiring in the male-dominant sports. We need to clear the obstacles and misconceptions that hinder women from pursuing a successful sports career. Thus, more gender-neutral processes can be developed to help females obtain more coaching and administrative positions.

Literature Review

Scholars have provided three key rationales for contributing to the low number of female head coaches in either gender (male or female) of collegiate athletics. They include: (1) the stigma of women not belonging to the male dominated athletic field, (2) social constraints and negative stereotypes associated with female coaches, and (3) the myth that females were incapable of coaching (Acosta & Carpenter 2014). The researchers would address each of these concepts in detail in the following paragraphs.

The stigma of females not belonging to the male dominated athletics

Historically, men have predominant control in coaching and administrative roles in athletics. When individuals turn on the TV to watch sports, most of the time the programs will likely cover male sports and they would see male coaches guiding the teams. Some may ask why this phenomenon keeps occurring. According to Kanter (1977) and Fryklund (2019), the theory of homologous reproduction can be used to explain the hiring in collegiate athletics. This theory indicates that a male-centered athletic department would systematically replicate itself by hiring similar types of individuals to maintain existing environment and culture. The existing dominant male leaders would use exclusion and demarcation to prevent the females and other minority candidates from obtaining positions of control. It is easy to see that the sports world is primarily ran by men because the sports administrators simply adopt “the good ole boys” mentality to hire new coaches and staffs.

What was the point to even introduce Title IX, if it did not help provide more resources and job opportunities for females in administration and coaching? Ever since Title IX was implemented, the ratios of female administrators and coaches at collegiate level have steadily declined. Colleges and universities often combine men’s and women’s programs under one department and leave only one athletic director in charge of all athletics. According to National Collegiate Athletic Association’s report (NCAA’s), only 20% of all NCAA athletic directors are female, and there are only 3% of male sports coached by a female (Stark, 2017). The number of female coaches in youth sports is also significantly underrepresented. According to the report of Sports and Fitness Industry Association, among 6.5 million adults who coach youth leagues only 27% are female (Flanagan, 2017).

Unfortunately, with fewer and fewer female head coaches in athletics, this triggers a reaction with fewer and fewer role models for young girls who wish to pursue a coaching career. Few visible women coaches mean that there is a lack of role models to inspire the next generation (Auerbach, 2013; Magowan, 2015). There is a growing form of sexism that makes things even tougher for females to even go into the coaching profession. This form of stereotype starts to impact the young female athletes in their early sports career.

Social constraints and negative stereotypes associated with female coaches

Gender roles define how individuals are expected to act, dress, speak and conduct themselves based on their chosen gender (Planned Parenthood, 2018). Traditionally, our society holds a view that women are expected to dress in a feminine fashion, be polite, accommodating, submissive, and nurture the kids. Men are expected to be the bread winner by being strong, aggressive, and bold. The “role congruity theory” states that there is prejudice against females in certain types of leadership positions because leadership positions are more stereotypically linked to men. The theory shows that gender roles are related to men and women and that certain positions are viewed more as appropriate depending on the sex resulting in a male bias within male dominated fields (Burton, 2014). The different persona presented by males and females is a major reason that females are being held back from certain occupational positions in a male dominant society.

Gender stereotypes are defined as the widely accepted judgement or biases toward a person, or group of people with a specific gender (Planned Parenthood, 2018). They often lead to unfair or

unequal treatment of women, known as sexism. Gender stereotypes can be broken down into descriptive and prescriptive components (Koenig 2018). Descriptive components describe the acts and behaviors that women and men usually carry out. Prescriptive components are beliefs that lay out what men and women should do. Negative prescriptive stereotypes address undesirable conducts or behaviors that one sex should avoid engaging in or carrying out (Koenig 2018). Studies have shown backlashes can result as people engaged in conducts defined by prescriptive stereotypes (Rudman and Glick, 2010). When female coaches try to demonstrate strong leadership or devote excessive long hours to their job without focusing on taking their family, often time a reaction of anger and moral outrage may surface. People become put off when they perceive those female coaches as being tough, overbearing and neglecting their family responsibilities (Bradford & Keshock, 2009). It is quite common to see women hold themselves back for athletic jobs due to family challenges and organizational barriers (Mazerolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 015). Because dominant female coaches can easily violate prescriptive stereotypes and upset the public, therefore they are less likely to get hired for head coaching positions (Rudman Moss-Racusin, Glick, & Phelan, 2012).

Female athletic coaches, especially at the collegiate level, often violate the norms of typical gender stereotypes. Many female coaches need to be dominant, aggressive, and competitive in order to secure their job, yet these stereotypical male traits may make them unpopular (Welch & Sigelman, 2007). For athletes at the youth level, the coach's gender and leadership style can leave a lasting impression on boys and girls. Parents across the country may not even be aware of how social stereotypes are affecting these young athletes. For instance, one mother was vetoed by her children as a coach, because she is their mother. Her kids do not even want her to cheer on the field (Flanagan, 2017). Research has shown that men and women can have similar resumes, but the violation of certain positive prescriptive stereotypes can stir up public prejudice toward female candidates (Gill 2004). Female coaches labeled as masculine, strong willed, or a workaholic would have a hard time securing a top leadership role.

Common misconceptions about female coaches

There are many misconceptions and myths throughout the sport's community regarding female coaches. Many of these misconceptions are created based on gender stereotypes and perceived gender roles. These untrue assumptions can really hurt women's chances for pursuing head coaching positions. One of the most prevalent misconceptions found in past studies is that females are incapable of coaching male athletes and their sports. Male athletes have doubt about a female coach's coaching style. Often, female coaches are perceived to be easy going and less intense (Murray, Lord, & Lorimer, 2018). Several female coaches of men's sports have expressed that they need to give a strong first impression and "portray an unshakable presence" in front of male athletes (Kamphoff, 2010). However, they did not feel it necessary to express the same attitude while coaching female athletes (Blom, et al. 2011). The reality is that coaches must adapt the appropriate coaching styles to meet the needs of their athletes whether being tough and demanding or soft and caring.

Some might attribute a female's inability to coach male athletes because they have not played the sport before or have not played the sport at the professional level (Hensley & Chen, 2019). For

example, it may be difficult for females to coach football, because they do not play football on men's teams. Ironically, the same argument can be made for male coaches who coach female softball. Besides, many successful male coaches of professional leagues or elite collegiate programs did not play the sport they coach at the elite level. Playing experience alone does not make someone a great coach. Therefore, denying female's coaching opportunities due to their lack of playing experience in male sports should be disputed (Walker & Bopp 2010).

Another common misconception about female head coaches is that they lack knowledge of the game compared to their male counterparts. There are tons of heartbreaking stories about females being forced out of their jobs. There is a stigma that females are not as good as or as strong of coaches as their male counterparts. (Benbow, 2015; Hensley & Chen, 2019). Welch & Sigelman, 2007). Many also pointed out that male athletes may not respect female coaches' authority and question their knowledge of the games (Kalin & Waldron 2015). Women have long been underrepresented in coaching professions. Historically, men have held coaching positions in athletics for a long period of time, thus it gives athletes a false sense about male coaches' confidence and superior knowledge (Frey, Czech, Kent, & Johnson, 2006). Kelsey Martinez's tenure as the first ever-female strength and conditioning coach in the National Football League clearly illustrates this point. She had to work extra hard to prove her ability, but was released quickly because she was critically scrutinized (Gehlken, 2019). The aforementioned assumptions often lead to a preference of male coaches over female coaches by athletes. In fact, many male athletes have never experienced a female coach throughout their playing career. It is unrealistic for men to assume females cannot coach, because they literally have not worked with female coaches before.

Another huge misconception is that the equal amount of job opportunities is available to women for pursuing coaching careers like men. In fact, women have less than a half of the opportunities that men do. There were only 2-3% of female coaches in male sports at the collegiate level. The cross-over effect in athletics (men crossing over to coach female sports) has decreased the odds of women getting head coaching positions in women's sports due to the increase of male applicants (Blom, et al., 2011). The cross-over phenomenon is not interchangeable for women, and therefore leaves less opportunity for female coaches.

Methodology

Participants and Procedures

In order to address the female coaches' experiences and perceptions about being a head coach of collegiate athletic sport, this study took a two-step process to collect thoughts and feedback from collegiate female coaches and administrators. The initial step took place between early February and mid-March of 2019. The researchers reached out to 55 female coaches and administrators of 13 mid-size NCAA Division-I institutions in southeast and mid-west region via emails and phone calls. Twenty-two participants responded to our invitation to conduct the guided interview. All of them were current head coaches, assistant coaches or current administrators with former head coaching experience. Although none of the participants are coaching a male sport right now, a few administrators do oversee both male and female sports. Participants' ages range from 31-52.

During the initial process, each participant was interviewed either on the phone or face-to-face for her responses to a series of survey questions concerning elements such as: stereotypes associated with female coaches; and possible professional challenges encountered by female coaches. Participants were guided to express their agreement to a series of identical Questions (or statements). They could agree, disagree, or remain neutral to the issue. Researchers ensured that participants were given adequate time to thoroughly think through questions and make notes if so desired. They could also address each of the questions with additional open-ended comments.

Later, eight of the twenty-two participants voluntarily agreed to do the in-depth interview with the researchers. Additional qualitative information was collected during the 20-minute in-depth interview with eight voluntary coaches. They shared their coaching experience and provided suggestions and views on how fellow female coaches may pursue a head coaching position in a male driven athletic environment. The phone interviews were conducted in the month of April. Notes were taken by the researchers periodically throughout each step of the interview process. The second phase interviews were also recorded, so researchers could refer to original conversations to examine the accuracy of responses. Among those female coaches, four were head coaches and four were assistant coaches. Their respective coaching sports include women's basketball, women's lacrosse, women's golf, women's volleyball, and softball.

Instrumentation

Participants of this study were guided by the researchers through a semi-structured initial interview process with each participant aware of the purpose of the study. Participants were asked to express their agreement on ten statements (or issues) (please see Table 1 and 2 for details). Those statements were composed based on the review of past literature (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Baker, 2014; Bradford, & Keshock, 2009; Kalin & Waldron, 2015; Welch & Sigelman, 2007). They were created to explore female coaches' perceptions on gender stereotypes experienced in their work, general environment in athletics, and their ambition for pursuing a head coaching job in men's sports.

For the in-depth interview, interview questions ($n = 9$) were broken down into three sections (see Appendix 1). The first part of the interview was about the participant's individual sport experience and playing history. Participants got to share their prior athletic experience and the significance of their role models in coaching. The second section of the interview was devoted to their transition process in coaching and barriers they had faced in their pursuit of a coaching job. In the final section, participants were asked to discuss their thoughts on why females do not hold more coaching positions in athletics.

Results

A total of twenty-two respondents participated in the initial interview. The data was collected in a one and a half-month period. After analyzing the participants' general responses and additional comments, the researchers used two tables (Table 1 and 2) to quantitatively illustrate the

participants' responses toward the ten designated questions. Table 2 focused on personal experience as to whether participants had dealt with it or not. Table 3 explored participants' agreement toward six fixed statements related to gender stereotypes associated with female coaches in athletics. The results showed 21 out of 22 participants (95.45%) had dealt with gender stereotypes as an athletic coach at some point throughout their career. Seventeen of 22 participants (77.3%) claimed they were stereotyped by their male administrators. Sixteen participants (63.63%) stated that they had been told they did not present enough leadership qualities at their job. Four participants had heard from the male ADs saying their program was looking for someone with "stronger" qualities. Two participants were blatantly told that hiring departments were not considering women for the position at all. The ADs simply did not believe that the athletes would respond to a female coach. Overall, a high majority of participants (18 out of 22; 81.8%) claimed they felt they were more (or equally) qualified for the position, yet the institution still hired a male candidate.

For these female coaches, 63.63% of them felt they were treated differently from their male counterparts on a day-to-day basis. Five participants shared they had been disrespected by other fellow coaches due to their gender or had been questioned for their coaching skills and knowledge. Several female coaches also perceived their supervisors used double standards to judge and evaluate their performance. The overall answers to these questions are astounding, since many of the participants clearly experienced stereotyping or discrimination in their career.

Table 1. Participants' perceptions on gender hiring

Statement	Yes	No
Have you ever dealt with stereotyping in your current position?	95.45%	4.55%
Have you ever thought about you would hold your current position?	0%	100%
Has a man ever been chosen for a position over you, which you felt you are more qualified for?	81.81%	18.19%
Have you ever been chosen for a position over a man, which you felt he was more qualified?	13.63%	86.37%

Table 2. Participants' agreement to guided statements

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I have been stereotyped for not having enough leadership qualities.	63.63%	27.27%	9.10%
I felt the male colleagues who I work with are treated differently.	63.63%	22.72%	13.65%
I felt women's opportunity for being a head coach have been threatened.	36.37%	31.81%	31.81%
Athletes are more likely to respond to male coaches (men in power).	40.90%	31.81%	27.27%
I have been considered as soft spoken and caring.	81.81%	18.18%	0.0%
I have considered to be a head coach of men's team (or an administrator of men's athletics).	45.46%	27.27%	27.27%

Of the eight participants who participated in the in-depth interview, all of them were currently coaching the female sport they had played in college. Seven coaches (87.5%) stated that they had a strong female role model in their athletic careers. The female role model identified by everyone

interviewed has one similar characteristic. All the role models are participants' former playing coach. The researchers analyzed eight participants' various responses and summarized them into four factors: (1) negative stereotypes, (2) misconceptions of male counterparts, (3) family duties, and (4) lack of networking. These four factors are viewed as the primary barriers and challenges for women pursuing or maintaining a head coaching position in collegiate athletics. Seven coaches further expressed they were hesitant to pursue head coaching positions due to the negative stereotypes associated with female coaches. Three coaches indicated family obligations were another obstacle for women to maintain a head coaching job. For more time will need to be devoted to game analyses, public speaking engagement, and recruiting. They would need to sacrifice more family time during the season to deal with the coaching duties. It was not a surprise for the participants to believe that male athletes were more likely to buy-in to male coaches' instructions and ideas. All the coaches expressed this assumption and stated their credibility often being challenged. Three coaches even believed that it was a waste of time for them to apply for the job, if the position had been historically held by a male coach. In fact, seven of the eight coaches who were involved in the in-depth interview really had no interest in coaching a male sport. They seemed to believe their primary focus should be to contribute to the growth of female athletics first. Whether they were interested in men's athletic coaching jobs or not, all participants agreed the lack of effective networking would hamper their chance for advancing to head coaching role.

Discussion

The results of this study showed that the participants' perceptions about stereotypes and job difficulties associated with female coaches were similar to the viewpoints presented in the past studies. The use of open-ended responses was intended to yield more different types of comments from various interviewees. Interestingly, many of these participants who were involved in the second phase interview still reiterated similar thoughts and experiences while reflecting their coaching journey. A high majority of the participants had experienced some sort of gender discrimination and stereotyping during their career or within their current position.

All eight coaches of the second phase interview had a former coach as the strong role model. As Imeson (2017) stated, the guidance of athletes' female mentor had a significant impact on female athletes' desire to remain in a coaching capacity, when they finished their playing career. Female role models have definitely posed a significant effect on the desire to remain in the sport for the participants of this study. They all expressed, without having a decent playing career and working hard to learn from their role model (mentor), they would not get a chance to land a coaching job in collegiate athletics. It is absolutely ridiculous to question their knowledge of the sport, motivation, and work ethics. It is extremely rare to find female coaches at the collegiate level without a background as an athlete. In men's college basketball (or professional basketball), we are quite sure having elite playing experience is not a mandatory qualification to be on a coaching staff. For example, the head coach of Texas Tech, the 2019 NCAA Tournament Finalist, was a student manager for Indiana back in his college days. For female candidates to have a chance to coach in college sports, their former experience and qualification must be far more exemplary in order for them to beat male candidates for the position. Some participants expressed their performance had always been evaluated critically. Evidences had shown female coaches were quick to be judged and had less margin for any error (Gehlken, 2019).

Having a strong professional network was an essential component that all participants valued for successfully obtaining a collegiate coaching position. Many of our twenty-two participants (in the first phrase of interview) and all eight coaches of the second phrase interview begin their journey as a graduate or volunteer assistant. These positions are regularly held by former student-athletes right after their graduation. Nearly all participants of this study ended up working for a former coach. This practice serves as a great opportunity for newly retired collegiate players to begin their coaching career. Creating a prolific network through one's playing experience will increase the probability for landing a coaching job. Often, female coaches started from these non-salaried or low-paid positions to get their foot in the door and gradually cultivated their coaching techniques and advanced their coaching rank. A study had shown when the position of AD in the athletic department was held by a female, there was a higher percentage of female head coaches than when the AD position was being held by a male (Acosta & Carpenter 2014). However, even under a female athletic director, the percentage of female head coaches on staff was still under 50%. Researchers believe it is important to point out the large gender disparity in AD and head coaching positions throughout the collegiate athletics. When there are not enough female ADs to help female coaching candidates to build their professional network, it makes networking more difficult and unrealistic for a newly graduated young female candidate.

On responses to Question 6 and 9 of the second phrase interview, negative stereotypes and misconceptions associated with female coaches were viewed as main reasons that affect female coaches' decisions in staying in their profession. Seven of eight participants indicated colleagues' unkind words and attitude as main reasons that discourage women to pursue a coaching position or stay in coaching. Their supervisor and colleagues often did not respect their ability for holding the job or trust them during the critical/competitive game situation for giving instruction. One participant indicated a misconception floating around women's college basketball. Many believe female head coaches need to have a male coach on the bench to draw up plays in late game scenarios. A common misconception like this can hurt female coaches' confidence and make ADs distrust well qualified female coaches.

Another participant vividly remembered the story shared by Carol Hutchins, the head softball coach at The University of Michigan, in the 2017 NCAA Champion Magazine. Numerous athletic directors of other institutions solicited names of potential head coaches from Coach Hutchins. Every time that she brought up names of female coaches, those directors would reject her suggestions. The general excuses included those ladies did not apply, they did not seem to be interested in the job, they might not be tough enough, or they were probably not ready for the call. Coach Hutchins was frustrated by these responses. She was quite sure that Jim Harbaugh (Michigan's Head football coach) did not apply for the Michigan job, either, but the university went out and got him anyway. All she expects is that more schools would go out and hire a good female coach. Female coaches are just as capable of handling coaching and administrative duties as their male counterparts. The problem seems to stem from the male athletic administrators (ADs) simply not wanting to hire females in top coaching or administrative positions.

The majority of participants of the second phase interview do not consider the family duties as main barriers in pursuing a head coaching position. The researchers did not go deeper to discover why participants felt this way. We assumed this small group of samples might have strong support from

their family members. Since several interviewees of this small group were experienced head coaches already, they probably understood how to better handle family responsibilities with better time management and prioritization. Researchers sincerely hope that more educational workshops and administrative support in the department can be provided to help future female coaching candidates properly handle familial duties. There is no reason for female coaches to sacrifice their career aspirations due to the family commitment. Unfortunately, many successful female professionals seemed to have dealt with this issue before.

Noted that the presence of male coaches in female sports varied at different levels among sports, few participants perceived that women's basketball and softball had more male presence and dominance than the women's lacrosse. The women's lacrosse coaches felt that many women's lacrosse programs were run by women. Although males do play the sport of lacrosse, for certain reasons, there is no tendency of men trying to pursue a coaching job in women's lacrosse. Researchers found it was unique to learn about female coaches' perception about the gender cross-over effect on coaching in collegiate athletics. Only about 46% of 22 respondents were interested in pursuing a coaching job in men's sports. Over two third of the majority did not feel that male coaches' occupancy of head coaching positions in female sports was a concern (nearly 32% of participants hold a neutral position on this issue). We assume more women would want to try and pursue those positions in men's sports in order to promote gender equity in hiring or empowering women from a social standpoint. Participants told us they were either not interested at jobs in men's athletics or would focus on improving the number of coaches in women's sports. While looking at the largely unequal distribution of male and female coaches in sports, this may be a prominent cause of the cross-over effect. There were rarely female coaches in men's athletics because women do not want to coach men at all. However, coaching in the men's sports can really open up a coach's financial advancement. It may also create a strong social movement by having more female coaches to coach men's sports, because these examples symbolize the actual breaking through of the gender barrier. We had witnessed several 2020 Super Bowl commercials illustrating this theme. The researchers believe the remaining burden for the future professionals was to educate and convince the public that women are capable of coaching men. We need to understand their low desire for coaching of men's sports was truly about lack of interest, not about fear of not being accepted.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it appears that female candidates still struggle with different types of stereotyping in collegiate athletics today. Our results showed stereotypes, misconceptions, and lack of networking can have detrimental effect on female candidates when they pursue a collegiate coaching career. By no means are we attempting to blame the male dominance and control as the sole cause of the decrease of female coaches in collegiate athletics. However, if the athletic programs across the nation continue to operate in the systematic fashion as seen in the Review of Literature, it certainly makes it more difficult for women to be hired into those leadership positions.

One of the researchers can testify, with years being coached by both men and women, female coaches usually left a bigger impact on leadership influence than male coaches did. Leadership is not something that is transferred from generation to generation, it is something that is earned

through hard work and determination (Baker, 2014). Women will continue to rise through the ranks in collegiate athletics because they are worthy of holding the leadership role and capable of helping others develop and grow. As one of the interviewees mentioned, enough women realize coaching as a viable job opportunity, because they might not have a female role model along the way to guide them (Auerbach, 2013). The researchers believe more professional leagues will promote and share the successful stories of the inspirational female figures in sports (i.e., Becky Hammon, Sarah Thomas, Jen Welter, and Katie Stower) through mass media (Springer, 2015). More female coaches being hired by the professional leagues should inspire more future female athletes to seek opportunities in coaching professions, and gradually change the hiring culture of the collegiate athletics as well (Grautski, 2017).

Men have been gaining more and more coaching roles in youth leagues for many years. In general, men are more driven with work, while the society expects professional women to maintain a balance work-life relationship. With more men involved in coaching at various levels (i.e., youth leagues, travel leagues, interscholastic athletics, and collegiate athletics), athletes starting at a young age would begin to get accustomed to women not being the one coaching. This phenomenon can affect the way boys and girls view the adult female coaches. The researchers believe it is vital to have more women coaches coaching in youth sports in order to effectively alter the misconceptions about the female coaches.

One of the main limitations of the study was the small number of individuals responding to the survey. It was really difficult to solicit qualitative responses from a great amount (greater than 100) of female college coaches due to a limited time frame. In addition, many participants may share similar kind of athletic environment, since they mainly worked under a similar size of athletic department within two mid-major conferences. It would be ideal for the further researchers to expand the participant pool to schools of major conferences. Perhaps different results of perceived barriers and willingness for pursuing a head coaching job can be obtained.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Second Phase In-Depth Interview Questions

Section 1. Individual sport experience and playing history
1. Your past playing experience:
2. Your coaching experience:
3. What made you pursue coaching?
4. Did you have strong female role models throughout your athletic career? (Coaches, administrators, etc.)
Section 2. Barriers related to the profession
5. Was the transition from a player into a (head) coach easy for you?
6. What were the greatest difficulties you found in pursuing a head coaching position?
7. Do you think these challenges may be different for men candidates who are pursuing the same position?
Section 3. Perceptions about pursuing a head coaching job
8. Would you ever pursue a coaching position in a male sport? Why or why not?
9. In your opinion, what is the main reason(s) as to why women don't hold more coaching positions in athletics?

