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APPLIED RESEARCH IN COACHING AND ATHLETICS ANNUAL

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Men Who Coach Women

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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 levels, the need for qualified individuals to coach women's sports continues to grow. As colleges and universities continue to create opportunities for women, coaching collegiate female teams has become equally competitive to coaching male athletes in terms of pay, benefits, compensation packages, and national attention (Samariniotis, Aicher, & Grappendorf, 2016). Despite the fact 57% of female collegiate athletic teams are coached by male coaches, there is a gap in the literature regarding this population (LaVoi, 2013). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of male coaches that coach female athletes. Specifically, this study strived to answer the following research questions: why do male coaches coach female athletes, and how do male coaches

handle social and physical boundaries while working with female athletes? Analysis of semi-structured interview data revealed six major themes that influenced male coaches of female sport: first, the male coaches have spent the majority of their high-level coaching experience with women's athletics, report high levels of satisfaction, and feel there are greater opportunities for job growth and development in women's athletics, and last, they recognize the need to be cognizant of physical and social distance, display different coaching and feedback language, and develop relationships and trust differently with their female athletes. 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 universities, coaches, and collegiate athletes to better understand the experiences of this very specific, unexplored population.

Introduction

Over the last several decades coaching has become a more competitive, commonly accepted, and long-term profession at the collegiate and professional level. Before Title IX became a federal law, about 90% of the coaches instructing female teams were women (Samariniotis et al., 2016). In the post-Title IX era there has been a dramatic decrease (52%) in the number of women coaching female athletes, with LaVoi (2013) reporting that only 38% of collegiate coaches are women.

Due to the increase in sport-related opportunities for female athletics at the collegiate level, the need for qualified coaches has significantly increased. Male interest in coaching women's sports has increased due to that fact

that coaching compensation and benefits has become competitive with male sports (Morris, Arthur-Banning, & McDowell, 2014). 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 men's volleyball programs within the NCAA membership, in comparison to more than 900 women's volleyball teams (Morris, Arthur-Banning, & McDowell, 2014). As a result, men have an opportunity to compete for jobs that are often filled by women.

There were 209,472 female student-athletes in the NCAA, more than 83,000 at the Division I level, and 20 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 questions of why, what, and how. Therefore, the purpose of this study was 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 do male coaches handle social and physical boundaries while working with female athletes?

Literature Review

COACHING OPPORTUNITY

The hiring of women to coach female athletes has been declining since the passing of Title IX more than 45 years ago (Lapchick, Marfatia, Bloom & Sylverain, 2017). There appear to be several hypotheses regarding why the amount of female coaches has decreased. Stangl & Kane (1991) explained that before Title IX there were limited opportunities for women to participate in sport. Thus, to provide female students sport participation opportunities, female physical educators volunteered to serve as coaches (Lovett & Lowery, 1995). It can be inferred that once those positions became somewhat equivocal to coaching male athletes in terms of pay, benefits, compensation packages, and national attention, men began to seek out opportunities coaching female athletes (Lovett & Lowery, 1995; Morris et al., 2014; Samariniotis et al., 2016). Pastore's (1991) study found that female coaches "enter the profession to remain in competitive athletics and would leave the profession to spend more time with friends and family" (p. 128). Kamphoff, Amertrout, and Driska (2010) believe that work-life balance and lack of support often cost women coaching opportunities. Furthermore, the Kamphoff et al. (2010) study demonstrated that female coaches are often stereotyped and put into gender roles; thus, being perceived to be the spouse of the head coach or some sort of caregiver (i.e. athletic trainer, team manager) as opposed to the actual coach. LaVoi (2013) noted that female coaches are judged differently than their male counterparts, which makes it less desirable for women to coach in the spotlight because of the way that society perceives them. Other scholars have pointed out that because sport

is so male dominated, women are often viewed as less qualified by male stakeholders, making it difficult for women to gain access and ultimately employment in such coveted positions (Lovett & Lowery, 1995). Lastly, since athletic events are gaining more public attention through television and social media, changing societal standards that allow women to break the "glass ceiling" have become more difficult (Tingle, Warner, & Sartore-Baldwin, 2014).

COACHING PERCEPTION

Although 60% of female athletic teams are coached by male coaches (Lapchick et al., 2017) little is known about the men who coach this population of athletes. There also is limited research regarding female athletes' perceptions of their male coaches. Ironically, the research regarding gender preference when it comes to coaching appears to be inconsistent. Several studies have found that the majority of female student-athletes did not have a preference regarding the gender of their coach (Magnusen & Rhea, 2009). Sabock and Kleinfelter (1987) noted that in a sample of female basketball athletes, the majority of the sample preferred a male coach. Other studies have indicated that female athletes preferred to be coached by male coaches (Lirgg, Dibrezzo, & Smith, 1994).

Research also has focused on the communication between coaches and female athletes. In a study of elite female soccer athletes, the participants reported that they were more satisfied with their female coaches because they were better communicators (Fasting & Pfister, 2000). Female athletes indicated that they did not like the masculine coaching style of their male coaches, feeling that their male coaches did not take them seriously (Fasting & Pfister, 2000). Haselwood, Joyner, Burke and Geyerman (2005)

found that male and female coaches had similar communication competence scores; however, female coaches are more likely to share their personal lives with their athletes. Unlike the results of the Fasting & Pfister (2000) study, the Haselwood et al. (2005) study found that female athletes felt that male coaches were better communicators in that male coaches tended to be more direct. Fehr (2017) determined that female coaches are more accepting and understanding of a female athlete's wants and needs. Frey et al. (2006) found that female athletes felt that male coaches were more organized while their female counterparts were described as relatable, encouraging, and positive. However, Frey et al. (2006) also discovered that female athletes found female coaches to be less organized and lacked attention to detail. A coaches' verbal aggression has been found to decrease athlete motivation and female athletes detect higher levels of verbal aggression when compared to their male counterparts (Bekiari & Sympas, 2015).

Although there is a vast amount of athletic coaching literature, there is a huge gap in the literature regarding male coaches that coach female athletes. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of male coaches that coach female athletes. Specifically, (RQ1) why do male coaches coach female athletes and (RQ2) how do male coaches handle social and physical boundaries while working with female athletes?

Method

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured interviews were the primary methodology for this study. A semi-structured interview is used as a means to collect qualitative data by creating a setting

and situation that provides a respondent the opportunity to talk about their opinions on specific subject matter (Creswell, 2007). Due to time and budgetary limitations and for the convenience of the participants, interviews were conducted via Skype. Skype has played a role in qualitative inquiry data collation and is similar to face-to-face interviews (Hooley, Welend, & Marriott, 2012; Janghorban, Roudsari & Taghipour, 2014). In fact, studies have shown that participants tend to feel an increase in anonymity with using Skype, creating a platform for more genuine and honest responses when compared to traditional face-to-face interviews (Janghorban et al., 2014).

PROCEDURE

Upon receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, e-mails explaining the purpose of this study were sent to 25 NCAA Division I male coaches seeking participation. Ten coaches responded and were provided a consent form via e-mail. After the informed consent form was signed and returned to the primary researcher, interviews were scheduled. With permission from each participant, the Skype interview was recorded using a digital recorder and transcribed.

Data Analysis

Upon reading the interview transcripts, open coding was used to identify and separate the themes that emerged from the data (Creswell, 2007). Initially, open coding permitted us (the researchers) to place the information into categories based upon similar characteristics (Creswell, 2007). Steadily, the researchers decreased the categories into themes with maximum variation between themes and

within themes (Creswell, 2007). Utilizing open coding assisted the researchers in recognizing unanticipated themes and allowed themes to emerge from the data (Merriam, 2009). Trustworthiness was established through several approaches: pilot study, bracketing interview and member checking.

Results

DEMOGRAPHICS

The data was collected from a group of 10 NCAA Division I collegiate male coaches.

Table 1
Demographic Information

Interviewee	Sport	Age	Coaching Title
Coach 1	Volleyball	35	Head Coach
Coach 2	Swim/Dive	38	Head Coach
Coach 3	Basketball	43	Associate Head Coach
Coach 4	Volleyball	28	Assistant Coach
Coach 5	Softball	51	Associate Head Coach
Coach 6	Swim/Dive	44	Assistant Coach
Coach 7	Softball	33	Assistant Coach
Coach 8	Cross Country/ Track & Field	37	Associate Head Coach
Coach 9	Water Polo	57	Assistant Coach
Coach 10	Rowing	28	Assistant Coach

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

Three themes appeared throughout the data: experience, satisfaction, and opportunity.

EXPERIENCE

The first theme stemmed from the coaching experience of each participant. A majority of the coaches had experience working with male athletes, but it was limited or a circumstance of their sport of choice. Coach 7 started his career in women's sports through a work-study program while he was in college. He was required to work with the softball team and 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 only worked with female teams. Coach 4 was a former collegiate player in the sport he currently coaches. Coach 4 recalls, "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." 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 team.

Coaches 1, 3, and 4 transitioned into their positions through volunteer work, work-study, or recruitment. Coaches 1 and 4 have professional and collegiate experience, respectively, as former athletes. Coach 4 stated that injury forced him into school and coaching: "When I stopped playing professionally, I pursued my Degree. During that time, I volunteered with a women's team. Since then, I have coached boys and girls for two years,

and the last 14 years have been spent coaching women only." Coach 1's transition differed from that of Coach 4 because he played professionally and pursued coaching, while Coach 4's career ended due to injury and he was recruited. Coach 3's athletic goals were unmet by not making the men's team, so he was asked to be a part of a highly successful women's basketball team. Coach 3 still wanted to be part of a team and, "When I didn't make the team, the Junior Varsity girls' team asked me to manage them." Regardless of what path they took, becoming women's coaches occurred through proximity and happenstance, yet they found it to be a very rewarding experience.

Like Coach 3, Coach 8 was recruited but he "originally worked in mortgage and lending but was asked to coach a co-ed team." What may have been their primary job turned into a change in career path that was far more rewarding than what they originally envisioned for themselves.

Other participants cited external issues leading to their becoming women's coaches. Coaches working at smaller colleges are often underpaid and overworked, and in some cases, they are required to teach classes. Supplementing their income by working with a women's team offers insight into the differences in coaching men and women's teams, as well as meets their immediate need for added income. Coach 5 shifted from one sport to another for monetary benefits. He "was coaching football and needed money when a job opened working with softball and swimming and diving at the small college where I work. So, I started coaching all of those sports. I did it originally for the money. I had no experience or background in the two other sports." Coach 5's experience is not uncommon for people in today's athletics milieu.

SATISFACTION

The second theme emphasized the high levels of satisfaction 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 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." When each coach was asked if they feel satisfied coaching a female sport, a majority of them responded with similar sentiments as Coach 1: "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." As Coach 5 stated, "We make the choices that govern our own lives and I choose to coach women."

Transitioning from participation on men's teams or previous experience coaching strictly men's teams may prove difficult for those uncomfortable with the different gender dynamic. However, Coach 1 offers insight into his view, stating, "I was curious being a player myself, and having coached boys before I had no idea what to expect. I originally was sure in my head that I wanted to coach boys because it was what my experience had been in the past. But, when I started, I realized that coaching girls was my preference because they were more coachable, you can teach them more, and they respect you more." Coach 3 bolsters Coach 1's view, indicating, "It's fantastic. In my mind I feel satisfied in my role as a coach. It doesn't matter that they are women because I just love coaching in general." Being open to understanding the change in gender

dynamic and willing to discard preconceived notions of coaching women's teams shows not only that coaches can successfully coach both genders, but it also has led to coaches whose intentions were to ultimately coach males being more satisfied with their decision to coach women.

Coach 7 offers a unique perspective, having experienced the old guard of women's coaches being skeptical of his motivations to coach a women's team. Coach 7 explained, "The tougher part, especially as a young male, is that it's always the idea of why would you do this? Why coach girls? But I would say that some of it is more of a backlash from the older female coaches. But for me it's more about loving the sport, so I don't understand why gender is an aspect." Luckily, he found himself satisfied in his role without needing the support of his female counterparts. Regardless of the circumstances influencing their transition to women's athletics, there was a universal theme among the coaches of being satisfied serving as a women's coach and most intended to continue coaching women.

OPPORTUNITY

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 men's teams. A majority of the coaches responded that men have more easily accessible opportunities for coaching jobs than women. Coach 6 recognized that 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, "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. Coach 6 continued: "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 also were 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 stated, "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 one can say they wouldn't get hired?" Coach 6 responded, "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."

Coach 2 believed opportunities for men to coach women's teams were higher due to more men wanting to be coaches than women. Coach 2 noted that, "I think it's just more opportunity because it happens more. There is also this plethora of men who have a desire to coach that maybe isn't there on the women's side. I think if women were attempting more often to coach both sides, male and female, they would be."

Research Question 2:

How do male coaches handle social and physical boundaries while working with female athletes?

The interviewees indicated that coaches for women's teams must be able to have the ability to separate themselves from their players. It is vital to their careers to remain professional, an even more important requirement when the coach is the opposite gender. When dealing with social and physical boundaries while working with women, 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.

DISTANCE

All coaches said that to some degree 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. Coach 3 believed, "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. If a situation needed to be handled privately, then another female coach or administrator would be 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 stated that "administration and the athletics 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."

Coaches also indicated the need to treat male and female athletes equally. When asked if he had to be more conscious of boundaries, Coach 7 responded, "I think it would be the same boundaries I would have if I worked with males." Coach 10 added, "I would say you have to be as conscious with male athletes as with female athletes. You just have to be more conscious as a male working with females due to national stories you hear about coaches having inappropriate boundaries and/or relationships."

Interestingly, though most participants were hyper-vigilant of their boundaries and the need for professionalism, others indicated they do not think about it and feel being hyper-vigilant is detrimental to the team dynamic. Coach 3 responded, "If it's something you have to think about, then there is something wrong with the team dynamic." Coach 5 said, "It's not a problem for me because I don't think about it. It becomes a problem when you're not being conscious of it." Coach 5's response brings to light a more organic approach to their interaction with women's teams. Their subjective response to boundaries is to ensure they are maintained, while also avoiding making it awkward between coach and athlete.

LANGUAGE

The coaches stated that using appropriate language is critical when dealing with female athletes. The coaches felt 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 indicated, "Sometimes I intentionally and unintentionally adjust my coaching style when working with female athletes. I'm more likely to censor my vocabulary as well as when and what type of feedback I give." The interviewees 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.

There was a general consensus among the participants that they intentionally change their coaching styles to better work with female athletes. Coach 6 feels that, "When I'm with women only, it's very much of this is what we're doing, why we're going to do it, do you have any questions? Working with males, I take a more militant approach." Stronger lines of communication can develop as a result of a more feedback-oriented approach. Coach 8 agreed with this: "I allow my athletes to give a lot of feedback. I created a female-only training group due to co-ed workouts being dominated by male athletes. I wanted to find a way to get more consistent feedback from them, and it creates an idea of trust without judgment."

Maturation as a coach also influences how they work with female athletes. When asked whether coaches intentionally or unintentionally changed their coaching style, Coach 3 responded, "I've grown and changed in my coaching style because of maturity on my part." Self-awareness by coaches is valuable in working with any

athletes, but is necessary due to the different gender dynamic. Coach 1 noted, "I have to adapt a little differently every year because we have a different group, and I've found ways to be more effective the longer I've coached." Tying in with the aforementioned experience category, growth, maturation, and self-awareness positively affect their level of comfort working with women's teams and has had a reciprocal relationship in that female athletes tend to perform best with those coaching styles. Being cognizant of their maturation process and their interactions with female athletes influences how coaches communicate and respond when addressing trivial and/or major concerns.

Coaches' maturation concomitantly influences the manner in which they interact with their athletes. Coach 1 indicated, "I'm careful not to cross lines and/or limits. I'm more gentle with them because they respond better when I approach them in that manner." As Coach 3 stated, his delicacy in handling issues such as athletic attire influence how he coaches, indicating,

"When I want to show them something, I show them by using another teammate." This is an effective approach to avoid mixed messages and ensure proper boundaries are maintained."

RELATIONSHIPS/TRUST

The last issue that coaches emphasized focused on the physical and social relationships with their female athletes. Some of the coaches believe the creation of a family-oriented environment is extremely important to the success of their athletics programs, as well as the development of the player/coach relationship with each student-athlete. Other interviewees felt it most important to establish trust with

their players and at the same time develop their players into successful student-athletes. In reference to sensitive topics, Coach 2 explained, "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 trust can most often be found when coaches allow themselves to be vulnerable but still on a professional level with their athletes. Coach 6 said, "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 maintain an appropriate physical and social relationship with their players in order to provide a positive learning and competitive environment for all student-athletes.

Once the relationship has been solidified and trust is commonplace, coaches indicated their experience with female athletes was far better than with males. Coach 8 stated, "Once you know they care about you, they will go to bat for you, they'll defend you, and they'll work harder for you." Developing reciprocal relationships positively influences the dynamic of teams, which usually leads to greater success as a team and longstanding relationships with coaches. "I've coached over 400-500 women, and I'm still connected to them in some way. It hasn't been the same with the men I've worked with," stated Coach 6.

Another consensus among the coaches was the rewarding feeling they had working with and being a role

model for young women. Establishing a nurturing, family-oriented dynamic encourages teammates to care for the whole, not just individual accomplishments. They better understand the concept of winning as a team. "They gauge their success largely on their standing within the team, how their effort is viewed by their teammates. If processed correctly, it can be very positive," added Coach 10. He continued, "They want to do a good job for you. Males, on the other hand, have issues with maturity and egos."

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to better understand the experiences of male coaches that coach female athletes. The number of women coaching female sports teams has decreased significantly over the last four decades as a higher percentage of men have entered the work force as coaches for female athletics programs (Lapchick et al., 2017; LaVoi, 2013). Due to the increase in the number of female athletics programs offered at the collegiate level, men have been afforded more opportunities to be successful coaching men or women (Lovett & Lowery, 1995; Morris et al., 2014; Samariniotis et al., 2016). Scholars have inferred that once male coaches realized that coaching women's sports could be a lucrative career, men began to seek out opportunities coaching female athletes (Lovett & Lowery, 1995; Morris et al., 2014; Samariniotis et al., 2016). Thus, it also 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 from men's. The desire for men to work with women's teams comes not only from a rise in funding and local and

national exposure, but also an enjoyment factor that is part of the culture that exists in women's athletics programs.

A high level of satisfaction and longstanding careers working with female collegiate athletes molded the experiences and perspectives of the interviewees. Most importantly, the coaches learned how to teach specific interactive skills, different coaching methods, and how to develop lifelong relationships with their student-athletes. Haselwood et al. (2005) said female coaches scored higher regarding self-disclosure; however, the male coaches in this study really seemed to bond with their athletes. The interviewees learned important lessons by working with female athletes, which shaped their viewpoints and helped to 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 some coaches believed women are more capable of handling pressure and stress than are 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. Other coaching research also has noted the importance of communication between the coach and the athlete (Bekiari & Sympas, 2015; Frey, Czech, Kent & Johnson, 2006; Haselwood et al., 2005; Fasting & Pfister, 2000). However, unlike literature that showed male coaches lacked in communication ability (Fasting & Pfister, 2000), the participants appear to align with previous work that praises the communication abilities of male coaches (Frey, 2006; Haselwood et al., 2005). The Frey et al. (2006) qualitative study found that female athletes felt male coaches were found to be more intimidating, demanding,

and critical. However, the coaches in this study appeared to be positive and nurturing.

When dealing with social and physical boundaries while working with women, all of the coaches emphasized the importance of distance, language, and relationships. Their feelings appeared to mimic the stigma regarding male coaches and sexual abuse (Johansson & Larsson, 2016). Furthermore, Haselwood et al. (2005) found that men scored low regarding self-disclosure. This appeared to be true in this study as the coaches primarily spoke of language and distance as a way to ensure professionalism.

According to Brown et al. (2013), as competitive athletics became a possibility for women, society worried that competition would masculinize women physically and compromise their femininity. The current study's 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 and in fact not stereotypical at all. The coach stated that by participating in sports programs the women evolved as better athletes while displaying stronger, 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. He went on to say that all of those assumptions have been proven false because every female athlete he has worked with simply wants to be looked at as an athlete first and a female second. His personal experi-

ences show that femininity is not a determining factor of how women expect to be viewed as a competitive athlete.

Frey et al. (2006) found 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. This study contradicts Fehr's (2017) 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, compassion, consistency, and positive feedback with his female athletes, which parleyed into stronger trust between coach and athlete. 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 meet the needs of their student-athletes.

Mazerolle & Eason (2016) state 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. Coach 6 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. Coach 6's position appears to be similar to that of Kamphoff et al. (2010), who believed that work-life balance often costs women coaching opportunities.

According to Graham & Dixon (2017), 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," stated Coach 6. Some of the other male coaches affirmed 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. 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.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This research provides a 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 athletics administrative professions. Further study also will help eliminate biases as to why more women are not applying for or being hired for these positions. 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 women's teams, but also to understand how they interact with their athletes.

Limitations

To ensure an adequate sample size, both male head coaches and assistant coaches were interviewed. Collectively, the interviewees coached six different female sports; however, some were co-ed. 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 (i.e. water polo, volleyball), the collegiate level is the top level for men and women, with the exception of the Olympics. This directly influenced the desire of the coach to work with female athletes because there are limited coaching opportunities.

Researcher positionality also is a limitation. The interviewer is a former female Division I athlete that played for a male coach. Since the main researcher was female, some of the coaches continuously tried to censor themselves or were worried about being "politically correct" in their response. Although actions such as scripted questions and maintaining a uniform interview style were taken to eliminate bias, it was difficult to eliminate all biases.

Future Research

The research pertaining to coaches, their experiences, and how they create successful programs is very limited. The research conducted in this study will serve as groundwork for future exploration on coaches and their philosophies, and potentially help eliminate gender stereotypes in athletics. Future research could look into why gender is a factor in hiring practices, how female coaches perceive male coaches, perceptions of female athletes who play for male coaches, women who coach male teams, and what

experiences and coaching philosophies are used by collegiate female coaches. Research on these topics will illuminate characteristics that appear to set male coaches apart, eliminate potential biases and assumptions, and ultimately, help close the gap between male and female coaches working in women's sports.

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