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## Alarminglly Low Number of Women Coaches in College Basketball

Fletcher Brown  
*University of Southern Maine*

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Alarming Low Number of Women Coaches in College Basketball

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE

LEADERSHIP STUDIES

BY

Fletcher Brown

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2020

FINAL APPROVAL FORM

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE

MASTER IN LEADERSHIP STUDIES

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We hereby recommend that the thesis of Fletcher Brown entitled *Alarmingly Low  
Number of Women Coaches in College Basketball*

be accepted in

partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master in Leadership Studies.

\_\_\_\_\_ Thesis Advisor (signature)

\_\_\_\_\_ Second Reader (signature)

Accepted

\_\_\_\_\_ Director (signature)

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I want to finally thank all of the female basketball coaches in the world, defying the odds and inspiring others.

### **Abstract**

This research aimed to clarify the state of women in coaching in the U.S. The findings point at the very low number of women in positions of coaching and leadership at the highest levels of basketball in the United States, which include NCAA Division 1, the NBA and the WNBA. Women coached just over 50% of NCAA Division 1 collegiate basketball women's teams; and with over 350 Division 1 teams, it is sad to see only about half of those women's teams being coached by women. Out of the 30 NBA teams with an average of five or six coaches per team, there is only one woman among NBA coaching staffs. In addition, in the WNBA, only half of the Head Coaches are women, which does not say much when it is only a 12-team league that lasts three months. This qualitative phenomenology design research utilized interview method in order to clarify the state of women in coaching. This study may benefit athletic directors at the Higher Ed system and other policy makers focused on issues of diversity and equal representation of women at all leadership levels. This study may also benefit women who seek to become coaches as they will have a better idea of the obstacles they will be facing.

*Keywords:* women coaches, basketball, NCAA, WNBA

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The sport of basketball is slowly but surely taking over soccer as the world's most popular game. Basketball can be found in the urban jungle of New York City, all the way to the isolated desert regions of Australia. Nowhere in the world is basketball more popular than in the United States, where it can be found on the most rural farmlands of Indiana, to the beach neighboring the Pacific Ocean in Los Angeles. People from all walks of life play basketball, and basketball is increasing in popularity due to its connection, from coast to coast, with fashion, music, and social media. Although basketball was invented in 1892, it can be considered the perfect game for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century due to its fast pace, exciting action and its ability to connect people with a variety of interests and backgrounds (Simmons, 2009).

More specifically, the game is immensely popular amongst women in the United States. Women have been playing basketball almost since the invention of the game. In 1892, Senda Berenson, a teacher at Smith College, began teaching basketball to over 400 physical education students, in order to change up the curriculum from the normal calisthenics that the students were getting tired with constantly doing. It would be unfair to say that basketball is a male dominated sport. It would be unfathomable to think about how the sport of basketball has developed without the inclusion of women. Some of the game's greatest and most accomplished players and coaches have been women. Even the winningest Division 1 college basketball coach of all time, male or female, with 1,098 total wins is Pat Summit, a woman head coach at the University of Tennessee.

### **Research Problem**

The lack of women coaches at the highest levels of basketball is a complex problem, with a variety of reasons dating back many years including legalities surrounding Title IX, a lack of women athletic directors, fear and discrimination among lesbian coaches, a lack of mentors, a lack of networking opportunities, and perceived gender biases.

### **Research Statement**

The purpose of this research is to explore perceptions of gender parity at the highest levels of basketball in the United States including the NCAA Division 1 level, and the WNBA.

### **Research Question**

Why are there not more women coaching at the highest levels of basketball? More specifically, what obstacles prevent women from coaching at the highest levels of basketball in the United States?

### **Significance of Research**

Defining reasons why there are a lack of prominent female figures in the world of collegiate and professional basketball coaching.



## Chapter II: Review of Literature

If women have been playing basketball just about as long as basketball has been around, then why are there not more women in positions of leadership in basketball? Why are there not more female coaches at the highest levels of basketball? The popularity of women playing the sport of basketball has risen dramatically in the last 20 or so years due to the creation of an American professional basketball league for women, the WNBA, and the collegiate game getting more notoriety on television and in the media. However, the trend shows that the number of women coaches has been steadily decreasing in the Title IX era. During the 2017-2018 season, women coached just over half of NCAA Division 1 collegiate basketball women's teams. Moreover, with over 350 Division 1 teams, many are discouraged to see only 201 women's teams having women as the head coach. Out of the 30 NBA teams with an average of five or six coaches per team, there were only two women among NBA coaching staffs in the 2017-2018 season. In addition, in the WNBA, only half of the head coaches are women, which is only 50% of the total coaches in the league when it is only a 12-team league that lasts three months. Lastly, out of the over 350 NCAA Division 1 Men's Basketball teams in the 2017-2018 season, there were zero women on any of those coaching staffs.

According to Rachel Stark, who did a study for the NCAA's *Champion Magazine* on the decline of women coaches in women's athletics, before Title IX, the 1972 federal gender equity law was enacted, women made up over 90% of coaches for women's collegiate sports (Stark, 2017). Since that 1972 law was created, the number of female coaches in NCAA women's sports has declined to around 40%. Women's basketball as a sport has a majority of its coaches be women with 56% of head coaches being women in

2017, unfortunately, that number is down from 63% in 2008. Although it is true that the opportunity for women to play collegiate sports has grown, and the volume of women's sports at the college level has increased since 1972, the percentages still do not show an overall increase in head women's coaches coaching women's sports compared to the pre Title IX era.

Title IX is often associated with athletics because it opened the door for girls to participate in sports. Title IX did create never before seen opportunities for girls and women to compete in athletics. However, Title IX was much more than that. Title IX paved the way for an incredible amount of equality and equity towards women in the workplace as well. Title IX gave women the freedom and the right to earn everything that a man can earn in this world. Geno Auriemma, perhaps the best women's college basketball coach in today's game, and perhaps of all time, thinks that for all the good Title IX did, it might have backfired when it came to women coaches. In a *New York Times* article by Jere Longman entitled, "Number of Women Coaching in College Has Plummeted in Title IX Era," Auriemma stated that Title IX gave women the opportunity to pursue other professions with more ease (Longman, 2017). Auriemma was also quoted in an additional article with *USA Today*, "Geno Auriemma on decline of women's coaches: 'Not as many women want to coach'" by Lindsay Jones, that women are choosing to have a more "normal life" away from the pressure and strain of collegiate coaching. Before Title IX, many head coaches at the college level were physical education teachers that stayed overtime and coached for free. More equity in the workplace allowed women to go out and pursue other more lucrative careers. Although this point is valid, there is more to this problem than the legalities of Title IX. With

basketball being one of the most popular sports in the world, if not the most popular, and incredibly popular in the United States, the job of being a coach is much more appealing than simply teaching, or being in law enforcement or being in the medical field. This is due to the potential to travel the world and the country, make a large salary, and work on national television. There has to be more behind the issue of women not being head coaches. Although the job of being a high level basketball head coach can be stressful, it is lucrative and rewarding. The top coaches and best teams get to be on national television, make at least six figures if not more, and travel the country. It is a dream that one would think more young women would want to pursue.

In her study, Rachel Stark breaks down a variety of other factors including the demand of the job and the strain on mothers, which attest to Auriemma's aforementioned point. However, in that same article, Stanford Women's basketball Head Coach, two time NCAA Division 1 National Champion, and Olympic gold medal winning coach, Tara VanDerveer, said it is not for a lack of interest, but it is because women do not get recycled in the coaching profession as much as men do; as men who lose their coaching jobs get hired elsewhere rapidly. This was the case with her men's team equivalent at Stanford, Johnny Dawkins, who got fired from Stanford but was hired at Central Florida only eight days later. This issue brings up the other determining factors pertaining to the lack of gender parity in basketball coaching including a lack of women athletic directors, fear and discrimination among lesbian coaches, a lack of mentors, a lack of networking opportunities, and what scholars identify as a perceived gender biases.

In the case of a lack of women athletic directors, one would think that since Title IX, there would be more women athletic directors in schools ranging from the high

school level to the Division 1 University level and everywhere in between. Although this is true, a 1991 study conducted by Jane Stangl found that homologous reproduction is extremely common amongst athletic directors in the United States. Homologous reproduction is essentially the hiring of someone in your own model. This idea of homologous reproduction was conceptualized around the research on why there is a decline of women coaches in women's sports. As explained in Jane Stangl's work, this theory is about male coaches, male athletic directors, and other male school administrators, who were in place before Title IX, continuing to hire new male coaches and athletic directors. This creates a domino effect that never allows a woman to enter this realm or break in to the profession.

The next theory against the hiring of women coaches is the fear and discrimination against lesbian coaches. A stereotype surrounds women coaches, probably from the 1950's, that woman coaches are disgruntled physical education teachers who act like "tomboys." (Johnson, 2017). Moreover, although the world is progressing socially and culturally, many Americans still have conservative views when it comes to the gay and lesbian community. These fears are magnified when it comes to working with someone who might be considered gay or lesbian. In a bombshell of an article published in the *Chicago Tribune* by Shannon Ryan, Ryan tells the story of Courtney Graham, assistant women's basketball coach at Drake University, who was forced to resign shortly after bringing her girlfriend to a home game while the girlfriend sat in the family and friends section. This article opened the door for discussion around the topic of discrimination of lesbian coaches in athletics and basketball specifically. In the article, many coaches shared their views on the issue and former Portland State Coach

Sherri Murrell was quoted as saying, “The world is changing, but it seems like there's this cloud that continues to hang over sports and coaching, especially for women coaches.”

As of 2017, there was only one publicly lesbian Division 1 head women’s basketball coach, Stephanie White, the head coach at Vanderbilt who was previously a head coach in the WNBA. Most coaches agree that the issue is split between a generational divide, older generations do not agree with lesbian coaches overseeing basketball programs. The article also states that many coaches, and players for that matter, did not feel comfortable coming out and felt forced to resign after coming out or going public with the fact that they were expecting a child, but were married to another woman. Countless coaches have filed lawsuits around the fact that their duties had been reduced or they began to feel ostracized when they were suspected of being lesbian. Almost all of them were settled out of court. It is a sad state of mind to be in, one would think that most coaches and athletic administrators would judge players and coaches on their athletic ability, leadership traits and character, but that is still not entirely the case.

As mentioned earlier, women coaches feel there is a strong lack of networking opportunities for women; in the world of coaching basketball, networking is everything. If we look back at the case of Johnny Dawkins, who was fired from Stanford but hired at Central Florida eight days later, it does not take much thought to figure out Dawkins must have known someone at Central Florida. Also, to boost Dawkins resume, he played for and worked with Mike Krzyzewski, one of the most legendary basketball coaches of all time. Dawkins is part of the Krzyzewski “Coaching Tree” which allows Dawkins to use Krzyzewski as a very valuable reference. Krzyzewski has amassed more wins than any other men’s college basketball coach in history.

Val Ackerman, the commissioner of the Big East Conference, said in a 2018 article by Barbara Barker, “What bothers me is the men seem to have two career paths — they can coach men or women’s basketball — while the women only seem to have one, and that’s to coach women. People assume that the only job women can do is coach women’s teams” (Barker, 2018). The Big East Conference is made up of ten basketball teams, with only one woman coach, Carolyn Kieger, the Head Coach at Marquette University, who shared the Big East Conference Championship with a Big East record of 15-3 during the 2017-2018 season.

There also has not been a woman who has successfully crossed over to coaching men yet. Therefore, there is no role model for other women to begin applying for positions on men’s basketball program staffs. Nicole Auerbach noted that there are a lack of female role models coaching women, and coaching basketball at all. In addition, with men virtually having the option of coaching both, Auerbach stated, “More female coaches have felt pressure to stay in the women’s game.”

Furthermore, there will always be gender biases, hence why there are only two women coaching in the NBA, six head coaching in the WNBA, and fewer and fewer woman coaching Division 1 basketball. In this patriarchal society, men still unfortunately reign supreme and women will continue to struggle to get the credit they deserve. Even when countless women have broken barriers and achieved so much. Whether that is culturally, socially, politically or in the game of basketball. To back up this point, for some reason, those who coach men’s basketball programs at the Division 1 level make more than those who coach women’s basketball programs. AthleticDirectorsU.com provided some statistics on the salaries of the “Power 5” basketball conference head

coach salaries for both men and women. The “Power 5” conferences are the historically highest earning conferences and traditionally the conferences that win the most championships amongst Division 1. The conferences consist of the Atlantic Coast Conference, the Southeastern Conference, the Big-12, the Big-10, and the Pacific-12. The average salary for a men’s basketball coach in these “Power 5” conferences was \$2,560,615. The average salary for the head women’s basketball coaches was \$643,679; not even a million dollars. The highest paid Division 1 college basketball coach among men’s programs was Mike Kryzewski, of Duke University, who made nine million dollars during the 2017-2018 season. The highest paid women’s basketball coach at the Division 1 level is actually a man, Geno Auriemma of the University of Connecticut who made 2.4 million dollars in 2017-2018.

The disparity of women coaches, compared to men coaches is not in any way morally or ethically okay, but they could be considered justified due to what scholars believe are perceived gender biases. It can be considered difficult to change a person’s mind if they have been taught one way since they were young or if they have been thinking one way for a long time. It is even harder to change a system that is not designed for certain folks to break in and succeed. The most mind boggling thing that does not add up is that women have enjoyed overwhelming amounts of success in the game of basketball both playing and coaching. As stated earlier, Pat Summit is the winningest Division 1 college basketball coach of all time, male or female. Tara VanDerveer has coached the United States to an Olympic Gold medal yet women still do not get the respect they deserve in basketball coaching. Sports, and basketball specifically, should be a place where a person is judged strictly on their production. Players and coaches alike

should be valued and measured by their statistics and their ability to win games. It is also very easy to judge a person on production in the sports world because wins, losses and points scored, are all recorded and kept as statistics.



### **Chapter III: Methods**

This is a qualitative study where I used interview methodology to solicit perspectives of both male and female coaches, and male and female athletic directors on the issue of women coaches in amateur collegiate basketball. In order to conduct this type of research project, once proper certification was received, I conducted interviews with people whom I saw as qualified to speak on the subject of women coaches in high level college basketball. The interview method allowed me to gain qualitative information about people's experiences, views and feelings surrounding this subject.

The types of questions asked pertained to opinions on Title IX, if they believed there is a gender bias in the profession of coaching basketball, the difference in obstacles that are faced between men and women in obtaining coaching jobs and the difference in obstacles between men and women in retaining coaching jobs. In addition, a question I asked pertained to the interview subjects' opinions on why they believe so few women coach men, at the college level. Once I corresponded with them, a phone conversation worked best because it was not convenient to travel or meet face to face with so many people, considering they are spread across the country.

Following the interviews, I analyzed the collected data and searched for common themes amongst the responses the interview subjects gave. After analyzing my data I could make conclusions on what sort of trends there are in regards to this issue.

In terms of ethical considerations, although it is tempting to reveal who I did interviews with, and as much as I feel it would give extra credibility to my project, I will not reveal who I interviewed. When it comes to my own personal opinion, I remained objective throughout, and I have made a concerted effort to stay unbiased.

I feel this topic is very important for our society, and more so in my field of work as a collegiate athletics coach. I do feel this topic branches out outside the realm of college athletics and can be found interesting and relevant by a variety of different groups. I think this topic is a human rights issue and deals with the mistreatment of women, and the inequity, along with the inequality women face in the work place. I think the world of college sports is a microcosm of our larger world when it comes to this issue. In a nutshell, I believe that the issues women face trying to work and live in this patriarchal society, are the exact same issues they face in the world of collegiate athletics. To figure out what the issues are with this particular topic, are to figure out what the issues are with our larger society. This research has the potential to help so many people, both involved in sports and not.

### **Sample**

I interviewed high level female coaches as well as male coaches to get both genders perspective on the issue. Interviewing coaches of both men's as well as women's basketball gave me additional perspective on the matter. I interviewed both male and female athletic directors to gain insight on whether or not they think there is a perceived gender bias in the basketball coaching profession as well as to obtain their opinion on homologous reproduction. Trying to cast a large net would be ideal. For this sort of project I wanted to have a large sample size. I wanted at least one person, of each gender, who was around and working in athletics before Title IX, and since Title IX. Ideally I would have liked a number of coaches and athletic directors, both male and female who fit into each category; the pre Title IX era and the post Title IX era. My main method of

reaching out was through email, for those people who I do not know personally, otherwise a phone call from my own personal networking worked.

### **Demographic and Background Data**

Interview subjects were chosen based on their qualifications of being a college basketball coach or university athletic director. A diverse group of interview candidates were selected including male and female coaches of men's and women's collegiate basketball.

All interview candidates worked at the Division 1 level except one who coaches at the Division III level. The majority of the coaches interviewed have worked their way up from lower levels including Division III and Division II. This was helpful in obtaining information regarding the setbacks and obstacles in becoming a head college basketball coach. No other background data outside of gender was taken into consideration such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, location, age or religious beliefs as this study focuses specifically on gender.

No professional coaches accepted an invitation to be interviewed.

### **Researchers Perspective**

My connection to this topic goes past just a mild interest in basketball, in coaching, or in the study of gender bias and equal rights, I am a male college basketball coach of a women's team. Although I might have a preexisting opinion on the matter due to my job, I did my best to keep bias and my own feelings separate from my work on this project and allowed my research to speak for itself. I will not allow my own feelings to interfere with the findings.

## **Chapter IV: Findings and Discussion**

The results of the interview process, unsurprisingly, found the review of literature on the subject matter to be strikingly accurate. Multiple coaches, both male and female, at multiple levels across the college basketball landscape, who coach both men's and women's basketball, echoed much of what was found in the review of the literature. Gathering information from experts in the field, including journalists and other scholarly articles, that matched what was found in gathering first person accounts on the idea was encouraging and helped answer the question of why there are a lack of women coaching women's basketball. Through this research, both of the literature and through the interview process, an accurate assessment of the situation was found. There were four connections found between the review of literature and the interview data including the theme of homologous reproduction, the salary and lifestyle of a coach and a lack of female role models in the world of coaching.

### **Homologous Reproduction**

Homologous reproduction was a major contributing factor to the lack of women coaches in the profession, based on previous findings. This issue was brought up frequently throughout the interview process and was proven to be an issue through the literature research as well. A highly respected male women's basketball coach in the Pac-12 conference said a leading cause to the lack of women coaching women has to do with the idea that many athletic directors hire people who look like themselves.

I am a white middle-aged man, who was hired to do this job by a white middle aged man. It is difficult for women to climb the ladder to gain positions of administration in athletic departments because the fifteen or twenty years that it takes to earn those

positions, they often times choose to raise a family instead. Therefore, the opportunity for women to be in positions of power and hiring others is simply not there.

A female women's basketball coach in the Colonial Athletic Conference mentioned that at both Division I institutions she has worked at and been a head coach, both of her athletic directors were white males. She said,

I'm very proud to be one of the faces of women's basketball and would love to be in a position to hire more women, but I'm not. I would try and be an AD myself, but I love the game too much. I'd rather be around the game than behind a desk doing paperwork all day. Maybe more women feel like I do when it comes to that aspect of the job, but it is a shame because women are obviously just as qualified as men to be a coach, but have yet to receive the same recognition when it comes to being an AD.

Another female head women's basketball coach at a small Division III university in Maine said,

My athletic director is a white man, older-ish. I have been at this school a lot longer than he has. Most NCAA institutions have Senior Woman Administrator positions that serve as assistant athletic directors, but I know that they also serve in other roles such as a coach or a trainer or other job on the campus not with athletics. It would be difficult to say that they have a lot of say in decision making for jobs. That role was probably created for Title IX equality purposes. The senior woman administrator is always a woman but might have other jobs on campus, where the athletic director is usually a man and his sole duty is to serve athletics.

A female women's basketball coach at the Division I level in the America East conference noted,

If you look around college sports, at any level, there are so few women athletic directors, it is rare to see someone who looks like me as an athletic director. It takes a very strong female candidate to earn a head coaching position at the college level. Thinking back to all of the places that I have worked and the place I played and where people on my staff have worked and played, all the athletic directors are of the same mold.

This finding supports previous research by Jane Stangl (1991) which states that homologous reproduction is common in college athletics. A domino effect was created seeing as that many athletic directors were hired in the pre-Title IX era, more and more older white male athletic directors continued to be hired, never allowing a lot of opportunity for women to gain these positions.

These accounts lead me to believe that coaches in the profession are aware of the fact that athletic directors, the people hiring coaches, are mostly male and mostly white. The fact that their race or ethnicity was mentioned a lot is the subject of different research, but the fact that these coaches know that women are being slighted or not given a fair opportunity for jobs is scary. However, as sad as it may sound, the fact that they know and now I know that this is a contributing factor to a lack of women coaching women is a step in the right direction. The first step to solving any problem is identifying the solution or at minimum identifying the issue.

### **Lifestyle of a College Basketball Coach**

Another key contributing factor mentioned among interview subjects was the lifestyle of the job, combined with a lack of pay at lower levels. The lack of pay was something that was not surprising to hear from my perspective as I experience that first

hand in my job as a lower level college coach, but was surprising because it did not come up in my initial research as much as the lifestyle of the job did.

The male coach in the Pac-12 mentioned, “A lot of women, for as much as they love the game, do not want to take time away from raising a family. I guess it is not in their nature. Being a basketball coach means having a lot of late nights and early mornings and a ton of time spent on the road. It would be impossible to do that if you had young kids at home.” I found this to be a valid point. He continued, “The stress of the job, when it is not going well, can be a lot to handle and most women I know probably would not want to put themselves through that. They would rather be around their family.”

A male assistant coach of a men’s basketball team in the Big East conference, at the time of the interview, who recently accepted a head men’s basketball coach position elsewhere said, “My first coaching job I made \$2,400 dollars for the season as a college coach. It takes a lot of time to work your way up to the Division I level. If there is a young woman who is willing to prioritize her career over having a family than she can do it but I have not met many women willing to make that sacrifice, there are only so many Pat Summitt types.” This coach continued saying, “Coaching is not a job that people do for the money, they do it for the love of the game and for the love of kids. And although women do love the game and do love to see kids be successful, there are not as many women who are willing to put that over having their own family and raising their own kids. I have not met as many women as I have men that are okay with cutting their teeth on the lower levels of this job for the years it takes to get to wear you can live comfortably.” He finished by stating, “Coaching at the lower levels requires a ton of

dedication, you have to love it, and love doing it for the kids, not the money. It is a lot of time spent driving vans, washing uniforms, doing the dirty work, doing everything yourself, the amount of time sacrificed is too much for a lot of people, male or female. Just not everyone is cut out for this. At the Division 1 level, at the place I'm at we have people for those things, the coach's just worry about coaching. It took me over twenty years to get here though. That is time that a lot of people aren't willing to give, and that is okay.”

This research data alludes to the fact that the lifestyle of a college coach is not very appealing for those who are not coaching at the highest levels. There was no concrete evidence found through review of literature that described the lifestyle of a college basketball coach, and certainly not of the lifestyle of a college basketball coach outside of the professional or Division 1 levels; as these levels are not in the public eye as much, despite the combined Division II and Division III institutions offering basketball at the varsity level outnumbering those at solely Division 1.

It was refreshing to hear the perspective of those on the inside, who allowed me to hear and learn more about the profession from someone who lived it and rose through the ranks of the profession. This perspective was valuable to me as these people understand what it takes to reach the highest levels, albeit coaching men or women. They were able to break down exactly the lifestyle as well as the obstacles a young coach faces in the profession.

### **Lack of Female Role Models**

The statements of these coaches brought up another small piece of new information that was found in smaller amounts in the research of the literature on the



topic. The Pac-12 coach said, “There are some prominent women coaches who girls can see on TV, but there are only four or five. For the most part, all of the coaches they see in the NBA or on televised college games are men. Since there are not as many women coaches, there are not as many role models for young girls to want to be coaches.”

Young woman who want to be coaches, are interested in coaching on either the men’s or women’s side need to see that this can be a viable and rewarding career option for them. They need to know that if they have a passion for coaching, a passion for the game of basketball, and a passion for teaching young people, then they can be a college basketball coach. However, as it currently stands, there are not enough women getting the attention, or respect, on a large scale that they deserve. As a result, young women do not see being a college basketball coach as something they want to do in their future. As mentioned in the interview findings, certainly not for a woman who would want to coach men.

I found this statement from the interview subject to be true. However, the question remains of why exactly this is the case. Is the lack of female coaches in the world of coaching either men or women a byproduct of a lack of role models or is a lack of role models the cause for less women in the basketball coaching profession? This sort of debate is similar to the age old question, which came first, the chicken or the egg? Without positive female role models in the coaching world for the many years before Title IX, how did these few prominent female coaches get in and achieve success? And without a ton of current role models, what does that say about the future of female coaches in women’s basketball?

The few young women who did stand out and become positive role models for young women, such as Pat Summitt and Tara Van Derveer most likely had to overcome a tremendous amount of adversity and institutionalized prejudice and gender bias.

This research matches the findings of Auerbach (2013) that noted female coaches do not have appropriate role models, especially in coaching men's basketball, and men have the option of coaching either men or women, as opposed to women who feel pressured into coaching only women.

The interview with this male women's basketball coach concluded with him noting that there should certainly be more women coaching women, but more women coaching men as well. "Coaches take these teenage boys who have been around mom and grandma for 18 years and we put them in a totally new environment and expect them to adjust right away without any female figure or motherly figure in their lives? There is only one woman on a men's basketball staff in the entire country, which needs to change."

A reference from Krzyzewski, for those who are lucky to have one due to networking, a coach with over 1,000 total coaching wins, can allow people like Johnny Dawkins to automatically get priority for a coaching job even over a more qualified but lesser known candidate. This is simply because Krzyzewski is a very famous and wildly successful coach. Although there have been some famous women coaches, such as Summitt and VanDerveer, the opportunities for women to create the same coaching trees and networking opportunities do not appear to be as prominent as they have been with men because women struggle to gain as much success and notoriety as men in the coaching field, because there is such a lack of women in coaching in the first place.

Secondly, the lack of women athletic directors creates a domino effect where if a woman head coach is never hired, there is less possibility for a woman assistant, and the chance that the assistant can one day become a head coach elsewhere never exists.

Research showed there are only two women on NBA coaching staffs, six women head coaches in the WNBA, which is only 50% of the entire league, and one woman on an NCAA Division 1 Men's Basketball staff. Not only was this interview subject aware of the disparity, they addressed it as an issue. Once again, identifying the problem is a great first step in working towards finding a solution.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There were a number of limitations in this study, with the most glaring being in the interview process, where the inability to gain perspective from a professional coach hurt the overall process and the seeking of an answer to the research question and research problem. The inability to obtain an interview with an NBA or WNBA coach created a lack of knowledge on any perceived gender biases, theories on homologous reproduction, and the lifestyle choices of a professional coach that might hinder interest from a woman; as stated by other interview subjects. This creates the idea that a professional level basketball coach might be able to excel regardless of those obstacles or the obstacles as stated in the research. This also creates a potential theory that these obstacles do not exist in the professional realm of basketball, where they clearly are a factor in the amateur ranks. However, it is the author's belief that this is not the case.

Other limitations include lack of quantitative research data. Although this is a qualitative approach to research, having some more quantitative data of any form related to the research subject matter would have been helpful. The argument for this would have

been that the profession of college basketball coaching has a high turnover rate, according to the author's experience. It is tougher to find data on this claim than any other sort of data on the research topic which goes to show that finding data on things such as number of female coaches in the profession is hard to discover due to the nature of the job being one where hundreds of coaches change positions each season throughout college basketball.

Additionally, in a related topic, there is no one single data base that allows a user to find information on who coaches are and where they are coaching. Somebody would have to search through thousands of university athletic websites one by one to figure out who is coaching at each individual school. Secondly, with such high turnover in the position, and coaches getting hired and fired every day, no matter the time of year, a truly accurate account would be extremely difficult to figure out.

### **Future Research**

Future research should incorporate two very vital elements into a deeper dive on this subject matter. The first being an up-to-date review of literature as there is a constant flow of new material on this topic coming out all of the time. There is high turnover in the world of coaching, both at the amateur and professional level, therefore, new literature is coming out all of the time. Secondly, researchers should have a wider scope, cast a larger net when it comes to obtaining first-hand accounts from coaches. More interview subjects should be found from people who were coaching in the pre Title IX era as well as more athletic directors.

### **Conclusion**

Women are just as fit to be leaders as men. Women are also just as fit to be successful basketball coaches as men are. However, women face a number of obstacles in trying to not only obtain coaching positions, but be successful in them. Based on research through a review of literature on the subject matter, as well as interviews with college coaches and athletic directors, these obstacles include homologous reproduction, gender bias, sexual orientation bias, a lack of role models, and discouraging lifestyle that comes with being a basketball coach.

The aim of this research was to figure out exactly why there was such a lack of women coaches in the world of basketball, considering the number of young women and girls playing the game of basketball has been growing exponentially since Title IX and since the inception of the WNBA, an American professional league specifically for women. Although no one specific answer to the research question was given, and no one specific solution was identified, a number of causes were discovered. The first step in solving any problem is to identify the issues surrounding it, and to identify potential fixes and solutions, even if they are not tangible or attainable at the moment. Through the review of literature and the interviews with qualified individuals, potential solutions were found.

The world is driven by leaders, and the world could certainly use more leaders. With the game of basketball becoming more and more popular by the day, to a wider variety of demographics all across the globe, the need for powerful women in positions of leadership in the game of basketball is at an all-time high. The solutions discovered in this research will hopefully inspire women to become those needed leaders. The issues and obstacles addressed throughout this research should provide a map to these women and the insight from the literature and more importantly the interview data can give

women the courage needed to take on this task. The goal of this research is to empower women to seek out these coaching positions and inspire the next generation to do the same; the more prominent role models women have, the better.

A change in the culture, or a sudden influx in female coaches will not happen overnight, but slowly and surely a change can happen.

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## Appendix

### Interview Subject Questions

1. What is your name?
2. What is your position?
3. Where do you work?
4. Where do you coach? Where are you an athletic administrator?
5. At what level, either amateur or professional do you coach/ are an administrator?
6. What obstacles did you face in obtaining this position?
7. Tell me about the obstacles that young women face as rising professionals in general?
8. Do you think women face more obstacles than men do in obtaining coaching positions?
9. Do you think Title IX has helped develop gender equality in athletics?  
Specifically in coaching?
10. What sort of obstacles do women face specifically in the coaching profession?
11. Do you think there is a true gender bias against women becoming coaches, or is it a perceived bias?
12. Do you think there are unspoken biases against woman who consider themselves to be lesbian or of the LGBTQ community in the coaching profession?
13. Do you believe in the idea that athletic directors hire people who look like themselves?
14. Why do you think there are so few women coaches coaching women?

15. Why do you think there are so few women coaching men? Nancy Lieberman, Edniesha Curry, Bernadette Mattox, Becky Hammon, Jenny Boucek.