

Examining Women's Coaching Desires: Perspectives from Assistant Women's Basketball Division I Coaches

Glenna Bower, University of Southern Indiana

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The increase of women within intercollegiate sport has dramatically improved since Title IX with female athletes increasing from 16,000 in 1968 to over 180,000 in 2010 (Acosta and Carpenter, 2010). Although the number of sports participants has increased, the percentage of female coaches of women's teams has continued to decline over time (Acosta & Carpenter, 2010). Basketball is one sport that has experienced a decline in female head coaches of female teams. The representation of females among the coaching ranks of women's intercollegiate athletic basketball teams is at an all time low. Among all NCAA basketball divisions (I, II, III), female coaches of women's basketball teams have declined from 79.4% in 1977 to 60.8% in 2010 (Acosta & Carpenter, 2010). The overall decline among divisions show very little variation with Division I decreasing from 72.2% in 1992 to 57.0% in 2010; Division II 51.4% in 1992 to 47.5% in 2010; and Division III 63.9% to 54.8% in 2010. The overall decline of female coaches of women's basketball teams among all divisions has been tracked since 1977 and clearly show a 19.5% decline (Acosta & Carpenter, 2010). In addition, Division I is the lowest with a 15.2% decline and therefore is of most interest to the researchers.

The research on female assistant coaches of women's teams needs to be examined to help understand this decline in female head coaches. Studies have identified reasons why women desire to become a head coach of women's teams including salary increase, control of time/schedule, the challenge, career advancement, recognition and prestige (Sagas & Cunningham, 2004). Other researchers have also identified reasons why women do not aspire to become a head coach which include too much pressure to win, less stress as an assistant coach, loyalty to current coach or team, content with their current situation, lack of job security, lack self-confidence, work and career-related variables, presence of an old boys network (Hums, Bower, & Grappendorf, 2007; Sartore & Cunningham, 2007;) and lack of female mentors (Bower, 2009, 2010). However, all of these studies have focused on multiple sports. Limited studies have focused on factors that influence the coaching desires of female assistant basketball coaches to aspire to become a head coach of women's basketball teams. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the coaching desires of assistant female basketball coaches to become or not to become head basketball coaches.

Approximately 650 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I female assistant basketball coaches from 325 universities were asked to participate in the study. Following recommendations by Dillman (2000), a letter, and a modified version of the Profile of Mentors in Sport survey (Bower, 2007) were mailed to all participants. All non-respondents were mailed a postcard two weeks following the first mailing. Two weeks later an additional postcard were sent to all remaining non-respondents. The researchers utilized SPSS 18.0 to calculate the means and standard deviations for the demographics. The qualitative data was analyzed using Wolcott's (1994) four-step approach. The data were organized by utilizing HyperResearch 2.8. The qualitative responses from the participants were read and reread. The constant comparative analysis was used "to identify similarities and differences among the data through coding and sorting into appropriate categories" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, pg. 273). Finally, the researchers coded the data looking for themes that emerged through intensive analysis and categorization of the data.

The qualitative responses led to some interesting themes towards factors influencing the decision of female assistant basketball coaches of women's teams to desire to become a head coach. The desirable factors cultivated into four themes which included the following: (a) the ability to mentor; (b) the job itself; (c) promotional opportunity; and (d) self-efficacy. The ability to mentor was the only theme that was different from previous studies on reasons why assistant coaches desire to become a head coach. This finding is significant considering there is a limited amount of female mentors in head coaching positions which could help women advance within leadership position in sport (Bower, 2010). The lack of female mentors provided a new and upcoming assistant coach the lack of guidance in assigning challenging assignments, establishing networks, and providing exposure and visibility specifically for women. The results of this study seem promising because women desired to become a head coach to mentor young women. If this theme continues there may be an increase in women desiring to become head coaches.