



of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance

## **AAHPERD RESEARCH GRANT PROGRAM AWARD 2003**

### **Understanding Head Coaching Behavior Among Female NCAA Assistant Coaches**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The decline in the proportion of females from the ranks of college coaching has been well documented and researched in the literature. However, a dearth of studies exist that identify career and work-related factors from assistant coaches of women's teams which, if identified, may indicate reasons for this decline. The importance in studying the women's team assistant coach lies in the fact that females comprise many of the assistant coaching positions (56.4%), and they arguably constitute the greatest potential pool of candidates for head coaching positions -- a group in which females occupy a minority of positions (44%) (Acosta & Carpenter, 2002). It is equally important to study females in assistant coaching positions since a study completed by Sagas, Cunningham, and Ashley (2000) indicated that (a) female assistant coaches were less active in applying for head coaching positions than males and (b) that they have less desire to do so in the future.

The purpose of this study was to use the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) to examine the extent to which attitudes, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control impact the decision among female assistant coaches of women's teams to pursue a head coaching position. The investigators also aimed to establish the most important factors (or belief-based indicators) in predicting the intention to become a head coach.

A researcher-developed questionnaire was sent to 2,070 assistant coaches from the four largest women's team sports: softball, basketball, soccer, and volleyball. A total of 466 female assistant coaches submitted usable responses to the questionnaire. Results indicated that the Theory of Planned Behavior was an excellent predictor of head coaching intentions, even after controlling for age, previous applications, occupational tenure, sport, education, and division coached.

A number of the belief-based measures (or underlying factors) were also significantly related to head coaching intentions. Specifically, almost all of the normative belief variables (former coaches, friends, family, coaching peers, former players, and current head coach) were positively and meaningfully correlated with head coaching intentions. Three of the attitude variables were also positively and meaningfully correlated with intentions (philosophy, developing new skills, and decision making latitude). However, none of the behavioral control belief based variables were related to intentions. These results have produced a theoretical understanding of head coaching intentions among female coaches. Furthermore, the significant belief based measures have provided supporting paths toward intentions that need to be maximized in practice.

The meaningful underlying beliefs associated with the attitudes of the coaches all related to the positive aspects of the game itself. Further, the lack of findings from many of the negative strains associated with coaching (e.g., stress, work family conflict, pressure to win) was not the reason for the lack of intentions. Finally, the perceived confidence variables associated with head coaching (e.g., enough education, enough experience) were not related to intentions, and thus the female coaches' motivations were not being shaped by these self confidence factors. In conclusion, female assistant coaches appear very confident in their abilities and situations to pursue and become a head coach.

#### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

One of the published articles based on this study is as follows:

Sagas, M., Cunningham, G., & Pastore, D. (2006). Predicting head coaching intentions of male and female assistant coaches: An application of the Theory of Planned Behavior. *Sex Roles*, 54, 695-705.