Peace Under Pressure:

Portraits of Christian Leadership in College Basketball Coaches

A Dissertation Presented for the

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Degree

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to God, who continues to bless me in unexpected and undeserved ways, to my wife, daughter, and family who have done so much to help make this possible and inspire me every day, and to all the Christian coaches making a positive impact in the world. “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few,” Matthew 9:37.

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ABSTRACT

NCAA Division I college basketball coaching is a high-stakes, high-reward profession. This study is based on three premises: (a) there is increasing pressure on college basketball coaches to win immediately and win consistently; (b) coaches are expected to maintain their integrity; (c) the pressure to win immediately and win consistently can influence some coaches to compromise their integrity. Given that context, the purpose of this study was to investigate and illuminate the lived experience of Christian head men's and women's basketball coaches at public, NCAA Division I institutions. This study was guided by two guiding research questions: (a) What is the lived experience of both men's and women's head basketball coaches at public, NCAA, DI institutions who self-identify as Christian?; (b) How does their religion influence the coaches' leadership style?

This study was a qualitative inquiry in the interpretivist, or constructivist paradigm. The research design included the methodology of portraiture. Sources of data for analysis from the four participants included qualitative content analysis of team media guides, official team websites and newspapers, interviews, and observations of a gameday practice and an actual game. In portraiture, the researcher's voice is not muted, but transparently integrated into the final grand composition (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

The findings demonstrated that (a) the four participants placed importance on their religious communities, despite frequent moves and hectic schedules; (b) their Christian faith provided them a broader perspective than just winning and losing that mitigated the high-pressure demands of the job; (c) that the coaches demonstrated a heart of service for their players and communities, which was rooted in their faith. As a group, the coaches' leadership style was

placed in the theoretical framework of legacy leadership. Legacy leadership is an extension of transformational and servant leadership with an intentional focus on leader reproduction. Implications for scholars include the potential for interdisciplinary research in the overlapping areas of religion, leadership, and coaching science. Practical implications include the need for athletic administrators and coaches to accommodate workplace spirituality of all types, including Christianity.

Keywords: Coaching; Legacy leadership; Portraiture; Workplace spirituality; Christianity; Respectful pluralism

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Atlantic Coast Conference
AIA	Athletes in Action
AME	African Methodist Episcopal Church
AME Zion	African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
DI	Division I
ESV	English Standard Version
FCA	Fellowship of Christian Athletes
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
LSS	Leadership Scale for Sport
NABC	National Association of Basketball Coaches
NAIA	National Association for Intercollegiate Athletics
NASPE	National Association for Sport and Education
NBA	National Basketball Association
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association
NCACE	National Council for Accreditation of Coaching Education
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NOC	Nation of Coaches
SEC	Southeastern Conference
WBCA	Women's Basketball Coaches Association
WNBA	Women's National Basketball Association

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Sport, religion, and leadership are three prominent topics in American culture today. This study began at the convergence of these three areas, as seen through the leadership of Christian coaches in the high-stakes world of college basketball. First, I provide a narrative vignette laced with contextual facts and statistics to demonstrate the passion and the pressure of modern college basketball. Then, I detail the specifics of the problem this research addresses, in short, that those passions and pressures have corrupted intercollegiate athletics to the point that sport leadership is in crisis. Next, I furnish a statement of purpose that expounds how this study intends to address the problem through investigating the socio-cultural influence of Christianity on the leadership style of very specific subset of leaders: National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) Division I (DI), head men's and women's basketball coaches at public institutions. Guiding research questions and methodological considerations are then disclosed. Finally, I address the significance of this topic and the manner in which it is studied.

The Championship Game

"10…9…8...7…" The delirious crowd counts the time down like it was New Year's Eve in Times Square. But just imagine if half of the Times Square crowd didn't want the New Year to come? What if half of the crowd was rooting for last year? For this is most certainly not a unified New Year's Eve crowd, nor is this Times Square. This is a championship basketball game, and there will be a clear division between winners and losers when the clock strikes zero.

"…6…5…4…" A Championship Dream personified slips by the defeated coaches and players like a stranger in a crowd, but not without unloading a stiff shoulder to the losers' sternum, knocking the last gasp of "what-might-have-been" from their lungs. On the other bench,

a dream fulfilled brightens the winners' expressions like a child's toy rearing to battery-powered life on Christmas morning.

"…3…2…" as the last seconds tick off the clock, each coaching staff begins their ritualistic journey to the traditional, postgame handshake. One staff hugs each other with tears of joy on their way to midcourt, the other side fights back the pain of "almost" and "what if."

"…1…0…" and the final horn sounds the death knell of a long season's journey. The victors revel in euphoric celebration on the court while the members of the losing team freeze in detached disbelief or thrash in the throes of inconsolable grief. Either way, emotions run high.

"BOOM!" Just after the game clock strikes zero, confetti cannons fire a salvo of twisting, twirling paper upon the court in a meandering dance from above the soon-to-be-sold court below. For this is the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) Division I (DI) Basketball Tournament. The Women's Final Four and the Men's Final Four are the monikers for the last two games of the three-week long, single-elimination basketball tournaments, also known as "The Big Dance" and part of "March Madness." In this cauldron of competition, spiced with passion and pageantry, the inextricably linked forces of money and media multiply the innate pressure of athletic competition. No one feels this heightened pressure more directly than the head coaches.

The NCAA is the most prominent governing body in collegiate sports, overseeing an $11 billion empire for all sports in 2012-2013 (Peter & Berkowitz, 2014). The Men's Final Four, which is the NCAA's primary revenue generator, and the Women's Final Four both have grown into a sprawling, festival-like experience with concerts and attractions for fans across the host city, in addition to the actual games. Both have become mega-events by any measure, including

intense media coverage, immense financial aspects, and enormous popular interest (Davis, 2009; Packer & Lazenby, 1987). Similar to other sports mega-events like the Super Bowl, the Olympic Games, or the World Cup, "cities vigorously compete to host the Final Four because a perception exists that the event provides a financial windfall in the short run through exporting a sports service and in the long run through image enhancement" (Matheson & Baade, 2004, p. 138).

The magnitude of this money and attention amplifies the pressure on the participants. Instead of a fierce competition witnessed primarily by friends, family, and fellow students, the 2014 men's and women's NCAA championships games garnered over 21 million television viewers for the men's final and 4 million viewers for the women's final (Keveny, 2014). To put this in perspective, America's former favorite pastime of baseball only drew 15.5 million viewers for the final game of the 2012 World Series (Carter, 2013).

The massive media rights fees required to reach those viewers has climbed from $5.2 million in 1979 (Davis, 2009) to a staggering $10.8 billion over 14 years, just for the men's tournament alone (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2010). That package does not include the long regular season stretching from November to March, but solely the three week long, post-season tournament. There is also a separate $500 million television contract over 12 years that includes the women's basketball tournament and international rights to the men's tournament, among 24 total NCAA championships (Shaw, 2011).

At the conclusion of the NCAA championship games, millions of viewers watch the winners celebrate, as NCAA representatives dutifully pass out "official" championship t-shirts and hats to the winning players and coaches; souvenirs that just happen to be for sale on the non-profit NCAA's website. Toothy grins abound as one by one, every last winning player, coach,

student manager, and support staff member ascends a ladder for the ceremonial cutting down of the nets.

The losing team and coaches make their way through the hurtling onrush of photographers and videographers, just released from their baseline banishment during the game. In a frenzied quest to immortalize the emotion of the moment, the media captures the victors' reactions and occasionally the vanquished. Ah, the vanquished. They slowly slink along the NCAA-mandated blue carpet into the bowels of the massive stadium. While the event was once played in smaller on-campus and regional arenas, since 2009 the NCAA has required at least 70,000 seats to host the men's Final Four in response to massive fan interest (NBC Sports, n.d.).

Eventually, both head coaches end up standing before their teams, one coach brimming with pride and the other's pride wounded. The winning coaches might receive contract-mandated bonuses as high as six-figures for the championships. As a "hot commodity," their names will be publicly bandied about for open head coaching jobs at other colleges or in the National Basketball Association (NBA), jobs which will either pay them more money if they take them or will leverage a raise from their current employer. The winning coaches might even write a book about their championship season or their leadership in general, and take high-paying corporate speaking engagements, capitalizing on their national spotlight. For just two examples, Pat Summit (1998) wrote *Raise the Roof: The Inspiring Story of the Tennessee Lady Vols' Undefeated 1997-98 Season* with Sally Jenkins immediately after that championship, and the University of Kentucky's John Calipari wrote a more general leadership focused book, *Players First: Coaching from the Inside Out* (2014), after their 2012 NCAA Championship.

Conversely, the losing coach will face the fierce scrutiny of every game decision in print, on the radio, on television, and on the Internet. Reaching either Final Four was once thought to earn coaches an imaginary "lifetime contract." However, today's sports world is no longer just seeking the "instant gratification" of quick success, but instead seeks both instant *and* consistent gratification, giving even this grand accomplishment a limited shelf life. Former North Carolina State University head men's basketball coach Jim Valvano's book with sports writer Curry Kirkpatrick (1992), *Valvano: They gave me a lifetime contract and declared me dead,* noted this reality in the title. However, to be fair, Valvano was not fired for losing, he was fired for a string of unethical behaviors by his players and those surrounding his program, and was ultimately held accountable as both the athletic director and head coach (Jacobs, 1990).

The stark reality of the high-risk, high-reward nature of coaching at this level is especially pronounced on the men's side of the game. For example, in 2005 Bruce Weber was named the Naismith National Coach of the Year in leading the University of Illinois to the Men's NCAA Championship game ("Naismith" n.d.). Yet, by the 2011-2012 season, the Weber-led run to the Final Four had lost its luster and he was let go after a 17-15 season ("Bruce Weber," n.d.), which was only his second season out of nine at Illinois where he failed to win 20 games. Weber's firing sparked outrage from the media,

> Good is not enough in college sports anymore. Close gets you fired. Being a nice guy and following the rules buys you, at most, an extra year. College sports look more and more like pro sports, with multimillion-dollar salaries, pro-style arenas and win-yesterday mentalities. (Rosenberg, 2012, para. 2)

Even worse, John Brady led Louisiana State University to their first Men's Final Four in 20 years in 2006, yet didn't even make it to the end of the 2007-2008 season before getting fired. Far from a hasty decision from some bean counter of an Athletic Director, LSU's A.D. was former LSU baseball coach, Skip Bertman. He explained, "The ultimate reason John was fired was not attendance. They just didn't win enough games" (Associated Press, 2008). This is just another example of the professionalization of college sports, for that type of coaching turnover is common in the NBA. In one prominent NBA example, Coach George Karl led the Denver Nuggets to a franchise record for wins and was also named NBA Coach of the Year in May 2013, and yet he was fired by June. Likewise, Avery Johnson was named the NBA's Coach of the Month in November 2012, but was fired in December, prodding the Associated Press (2012) to quip, "Coach of the month in November, out of a job by New Year's" (para. 1).

This is not to say the NCAA coaches were not under pressure before the media explosion. For example, even in 1960, "Doggie" Julian wrote "I coach basketball because I like to eat, my family likes to eat, and I know the only way I can keep the whole gang eating is to win some games" (p. ix). However, the urgency with which fans and university administrations want to win has increased, further straining the tenuous placement of high-stakes athletics under the guise of higher education. Hums and MacLean (2013) noted that the popularity of intercollegiate athletics is "both unquestionable and at the same time paradoxical" (p. 176) due to the potential conflicting interests of academics and athletics.

Coaches of women's teams are not immune to this pressure either, as high turnover rates indicate. Wilson & Wilson (2012) found that in 2012-2013 basketball season, women had a 61% turnover rate in DI I head basketball coaching positions and men had a 39% turnover rate. That

equated to 121 total head coaching changes in just one season. This high turnover is an example of the ever-increasing pressure that NCAA DI coaches are under to win, win immediately, win big, and win consistently.

However, in return for high risk the coaches also receive high rewards. For example, upon researching the salaries of the coaches in the 2014 Men's Big Dance, Peter and Berkowitz (2014) found that the average annual compensation was a staggering $1.8 million per coach. This included a high compensation package of over $9 million for Duke University's Mike Krzyzewski, better known as Coach K. This is significant because Coach K would have never survived as a head coach in today's climate when he was starting out, just ask former Holy Cross Head Men's Basketball Coach Sean Kearney.

Despite being given a four-year contract in 2009, Sean Kearney was fired after one season by the College of Holy Cross, a Roman Catholic, Jesuit institution in Massachusetts. At the time, Holy Cross director of athletics Dick Regan explained:

> It was a matter of sitting down and assessing 9-22, why we were 9-22 and more importantly, what was the prospect for next year? Reflecting on it, we just came to the conclusion that if we want to have things turn out much better next year, we really have to think about doing something different. (Toland, 2010)

Compare that with Coach K's experience. Krzyzewski is now the current all-time leader in men's basketball DI coaching wins, but Coach K's first DI head coaching job was at the U.S. Military Academy, a small school much like Holy Cross. Yet, in 1980 after a *losing* season in which he only won nine games, the same amount of games that got Sean Kearney fired after one season, Krzyzewski got a *better* job in a *better* conference, at Duke University of the ultra-

competitive Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC). In fact, three of Krzyzewski's five seasons as head coach at Army ended with a losing record, yet not only was he not fired, but he also landed a better job. Furthermore, he also lost more games than he won in two of his first three years at Duke. If you're scoring at home that's five losing seasons in his first eight years, but Coach K kept his job and went on to become arguably the most respected coach in basketball with four national championships and four gold medals coaching Team USA in international competition ("Career Coaching Record," n.d.).

The point in comparing these two coaches is that it is extremely unlikely that a coach could have the record Coach K had early in his career and survive today at Duke, or even at Holy Cross. Speaking of the expectation at elite programs, Hall-of-fame Coach Bob Knight (2002) lamented, "the expectations at Indiana, Kentucky, Duke, or North Carolina are usually so high they're ludicrous" (p. 32). However, just think what Duke and Team USA would have missed out on if Coach K had been fired in the quick-trigger manner many coaches face today. The fact is, coaches know that they are on a short rope, and as a result, can make short-term decisions in the name of pursuing wins that may go against their belief system, whether it is Christianity or some other religion or moral code.

Returning to our opening championship game vignette, imagine that you are the head coach of either one of those teams after that championship basketball game. You are the one standing before your basketball family in the locker room. Everyone is looking to you for leadership in this moment.

What do you do? What do you say to this team of players you might have known for nearly a decade, since at this level you might have started evaluating them as early as eighth

grade? What do you say to this team you have watched come together and play with "their souls on fire," as Hall-of Famer "Phog" Allen (1934, p. 332) described his players?

Do you address this game in particular, or focus on the season as a whole? Do you chastise a player who performed poorly, praise a player who did well, or both? Do you comment on the officiating, the playing surface, the game time, the crowd, or anything else outside of your control? In the coming months, how do you go about recruiting the next batch of players within NCAA rules? How do you train and prepare the returning players within NCAA rules? Do you model the behavior you expect from your athletes in a time of adversity? If so, what behavior is that and from where did that conception of how to act come?

After you speak to your team in the locker room during the NCAA-mandated "cooling off period," you make your way down the corridor to the press conference stage, with television cameras documenting every joyous or dejected step, as the case may be. You sit in front of the NCAA backdrop and behind your NCAA-made name placard, while being sure not to bring or drink any non-NCAA-authorized beverages. You then address the media in a televised press conference rehashing every detail of the night.

The increased media coverage of the Final Four, such as these televised, postgame press conferences has multiplied the pressure of the games. When Quinn Buckner was asked how the Final Four had changed since his team won it all in 1976 he responded, "This is night and day, based upon the way that it's covered…wall-to-wall coverage. It's very different, and I gotta believe it's very difficult on young people just because of the way they are bombarded by the many influences" (National Collegiate Athletic Association, n.d.). While Buckner didn't mention coaches specifically, there is no doubt that they are under that same bombardment.

Yet, the 696 combined men's and women's teams all feel this pressure in some form. Only two of those 696 teams will end the season as NCAA champions, one men's and one women's champion. That leaves 694 coaches to face the inquest of a diverse group of stakeholders, including local and national media pundits, anonymous message board posters, radio show callers, administration, alumni, and fans. How you handle this context swirling with the pressure of media, money, popular interest, and competition is a clear reflection of your leadership style as a coach.

In addition, the golden publicity of the media coverage and the resulting revenue, serves as a beacon drawing aspiring college and universities into DI. This is especially true for smaller budgeted schools that cannot afford to compete in football. The NCAA currently has three divisions with different institutional rules for each. Division I was created in 1973 in an attempt to "level the playing field" by grouping universities and colleges with a similar financial commitment to athletics (Covell & Barr, 2010). Since that time, the number of DI programs has skyrocketed for both men and women to 351 men's (ESPN, n.d.a) and 345 women's team (ESPN, n.d.b) by 2013. However, this growth is not unique to NCAA DI as basketball remains the most popular team sport for both boys and girls at the high school level with over 17,000 teams for each gender and nearly one million total players (National Federation of High Schools, 2013). Simply put: more teams, more interest, more coverage, and more money equals more pressure.

The continual growth of the number of DI teams reflects what is commonly referred to as the "Gonzaga effect" (Withers, 2002). In 1999, Gonzaga, a very small school that was struggling financially, made an underdog run to the Elite 8 of the men's NCAA Tournament, which led to a

revitalization of the institution. Julie McCulloh, the head of admissions explained, “Basketball has allowed us to tell our story to more people” (Robinson, 2013, para. 11). For educational institutions, the hope is that success in the Big Dance will raise the profile and prestige of their university, drive more donations to the university, increase the quality and quantity of student applications, create higher revenues for the university through marketing sponsorship packages and merchandizing, create higher revenues for their conference and then the member institutions through media rights packages, and earn greater shares of the NCAA tournament revenues by advancing in the Big Dance, which earns the respective conference a larger share of tournament revenue that is then passed on to the conference members.

Finally, at the conclusion of the hypothetical championship game example, the last locker room speech and postgame press conference of the season place the coaches’ leadership styles in the spotlight by how they handle success or adversity. However, their leadership shapes their basketball programs long before such a high-profile moment. To wit, Betty Block (2014) highlighted the broad nature of sport leadership when she argued, “Each game, performance, or interview as either an athlete or a coach reveals a person’s true nature in one way or another. Additionally, whether the coach likes it or not he is leading in those situations” (p. 239). Exploring more deeply into this leadership, and the socio-culture influences on it, is the charge of this study.

Statement of the Problem

Research into sport leadership, that examines a broader perspective than just on the field results and interactions, is sorely lacking. This is a glaring oversight given the examples of unethical behavior from some coaches, and is a symptom of a larger, well-documented crisis of

integrity in intercollegiate athletics. In a broad indictment of modern competitive sport, Hancock and Hums (2015) contend that "Nearly every segment of the sport industry has encountered and addressed the unsavory and questionable behavior of players, coaches and administrators. Money, or a bottom-line approach, has significantly influenced the decision-making process in sport" (p.108). This money driven pressure is exacerbated by invasive media coverage and insatiable popular interest. Combine the financial pressures with the inherent pressure of elite level competition and it is little surprise that some coaches are compelled to act unethically in attempts to gain a competitive advantage.

Yet, we expect more from our coaches. The National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) is the professional organization for coaches of men's basketball teams. In the NABC Code of Ethics, Principle 1 states, "Coaches are accountable to the highest standard of honesty and integrity. All practices should be consistent with the rules of the game and the educational purposes of the institution" (NABC, 1987). Likewise, the professional organization for coaches of women's basketball teams, the Women's Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA), also has a Code of Ethics (2010). It states, "The success of the Code rests upon the coaches' ability to embrace and endorse ethical behavior that prioritizes the education and well-being of the student-athletes they serve, and demonstrate honesty and respect toward colleagues" (p. 1-2). The National Association for Accreditation of Coaching Education (NCACE) also lists "Philosophy and Ethics" as the first of its eight domains (2006).

Leading a DI basketball program as head coach is about much more than the coaching decisions surrounding tactics, techniques, strategies, skills, or schemes; it also involves the leadership of 20-40 players, coaching staff, and support staff members from disparate

backgrounds with occasionally conflicting individual goals and dreams. In addition to this direct leadership, elite coaches can also provide indirect leadership of a worldwide fan base. The broad range of leadership skills required of a NCAA DI head coach is demonstrated in official job postings. For example, the Pac-12 Conference's University of Oregon explicitly listed "leadership" in both the "qualifications" and "responsibilities" section of the official job posting for head women's basketball coach. After type of degree (bachelor's), years of DI experience (five), and experience with "elite basketball athletes," the fourth sentence of the "qualifications" section stated, "Demonstrated successful leadership experience required" (University of Oregon, n.d.).

Furthermore, the leadership requirement of a head DI coach is reiterated in the fourth sentence of Oregon's 22 qualifications: "Provides leadership and instruction in the personal and athletic development of student-athletes, to include counseling team members in academic, disciplinary and personal matters, when appropriate" (University of Oregon, n.d.). In fact, the official job posting lists 22 different bullet points to illuminate what the leadership entails, but never does it specifically mention the unspoken expectation of winning. The closest the job description gets to winning is, "Develops and implements strategies for motivating student-athletes to perform at maximum levels as both individuals and a team" (University of Oregon, n.d.).

Lest one think that Oregon doesn't care about winning, please consider why the Oregon head women's basketball coaching position was even open in the first place. Paul Westhead, the former head coach and the only coach in basketball history to have won both an NBA and a Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) championship, did not have his contract

renewed after a 15-14 season and a 65-90 overall record in five years. This demonstrates that winning is a requirement, even if it is not explicitly listed in the official job description.

Coaches have long recognized the reality of these pressures. In a poignant example, Indiana State Head Men's Basketball Coach Royce Waltman shared his frustration with the state of college coaching upon his firing in 2007:

> 'If you get fired for cheating, you can get hired right back again,' he said. 'If you get fired for losing, it's like you've got leprosy, so young coaches need to bear that in mind. Cheating and not graduating players will not get you into trouble, but that damn losing… (Thamel, 2010, para. 3)

As a result of this pervasive attitude and the long history of scandals in sports, scholars such as Laura Burton and Jon Peachey (2013) have called for an examination of how leadership is taught and studied within sports. Furthermore, Burton and Peachey specifically called for more servant leadership in sport, which shares many key principles with several religions including Christianity. Servant leadership will be examined more deeply in Chapter 2.

There are many examples of coaches writing about their Christian faith, either as a major focus of the work or as a smaller portion of the book. Some examples of those works with a major focus on their faith, from diverse levels of coaching, include high school football's Randy Allen (2006), college football's Bobby Bowden (2010), and professional football's Tony Dungy (2007). There are also memoirs and autobiographies that mention Christian faith more in passing, such as professional baseball's Tommy Lasorda (Plaschke, 2007), professional football's Bum Phillips (2010), college basketball's Pat Summitt (2013) and John Wooden (1988).

Yet, much of the work on sports leadership completely ignores, or gives minimal attention to religion and/or spirituality. For example, Borland, Kane, and Burton's upcoming release (2015), *Sport Leadership in the 21st Century*, provided an excellent overview of the many aspects of sport leadership, but not once in its 18 chapters does it mention religion or spirituality, not even in the section on cultural competencies, nor in the discussions of servant leadership. In my opinion, this is a great oversight that needs more attention.

Yet another opportunity for scholarly analysis is to extend the look at the intersection of religion and/or spirituality and sport leadership through the lens of workplace issues. College coaching is certainly a workplace, laden with the same religion and spirituality workplace issues of any other modern American workplace. These issues range from discrimination and distrust to inclusion and mutual respect. Douglas Hicks (2003) pointed out that the research and literature in leadership, organizational culture, human resource management, and even religious studies have overlooked the importance of religious beliefs and practices at work. This omission reflects a general reluctance to discuss issues of religion or spirituality at all, and as was already noted, occurs in sport research as well. However, as Hicks pointed out, it is both inaccurate and morally problematic to assume that employees' religious and spiritual beliefs can or should remain private, as if it was as simple as removing a coat and leaving it in the parking lot. Noted sociologist of religion Robert Bellah (2006) commented that "It is of the very essence of Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—that they simply cannot be confined to the private sphere without violating their integrity (p. 2). This is another reason why coaches with deeply held religious convictions should learn how to integrate those convictions which being respectful of those who do not share their worldview.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the socio-cultural influence of a Christian background and beliefs on the leadership style of men's and women's head basketball coaches at public, NCAA, DI institutions. Wade Gilbert and Pierre Trudel (2004) defined coaching science as "research on the coaching, learning, and instructional processes directed by coaches" (p. 389). These topics began receiving more attention in the 1970s (Abraham & Collins, 1998; Kahan, 1999; Trudel & Gilbert, 1995). However, despite the recent growth of studies in the sociology of coaching, and despite the multitude of works on religion and/or spirituality, leadership, or coaching individually or in concert with one other area, there is no known research into the intersection of all three areas, as in this study.

In response to criticism of coaching science's lack of organization and impact on coaching practice, Gilbet and Trudel (2004) completed an exhaustive meta-analysis of coaching science research from 1970-2001 that categorized 610 journal articles written in English into four broad categories: behavior, thoughts, characteristics, and career development. This study intentionally examines the first two categories of behavior and thoughts, or in other words, what these particular Christian coaches do and why they do it.

Guiding Research Questions

- What is the lived experience of both men's and women's head basketball coaches at public, NCAA, DI institutions who self-identify as Christian?
- How does their religion influence the coaches' leadership style?

Methodology

A detailed justification of the methods of data collection and data analysis is provided in Chapter 3. However, I will now provide a brief overview. This study is a qualitative inquiry in the interpretivist, or constructivist paradigm. The research design includes the methodology of portraiture, which seeks to capture the essence of the participant through an intentional search for what is good, but with an acknowledgement of what is not (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983). Sources of data for analysis included qualitative content analysis of team media guides, official team websites and newspapers, interviews, and observations of a gameday practice and an actual game. Notably, in portraiture, the researcher's voice is not muted but transparently integrated into the final grand composition (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

Importantly, Merriam (2009) stated that when choosing a research design, researchers should "consider whether the design is a comfortable match with your worldview, personality, and skills" (p. 1). I believe that my relevant experiences as a Christian, a coach of 18 years, a writer, and a researcher have developed my worldview, research, and writing skills to make portraiture a good fit in this case.

Significance

This study provides a novel investigation at the intersection of three major aspects of American life: religion/spirituality, leadership, and sport. While there has been a growing body of literature on religion and sport in general (Allen-Collinson & Brown, 2012; Deardorff II & White, 2008; Higgs, 1995; Hoffman, 2010; Kelly, 2012; Krattenmaker, 2010; Lixey, Hubenthal, Mieth, & Muller, 2012; Macdonald & Kirk, 1999; Sing, 2004) there has not been scholarly discussion of religion and/or spirituality in sport as a workplace, which is extremely relevant and

significant in our global, pluralistic world. This study also addressed significant legal and moral issues relating to both coaches and players incorporating their religious and/or spiritual beliefs into their sport in public institutions. Though this study focused on Christian coaches, the findings should generate discussions relating to other religious traditions and spiritual beliefs and open avenues for future research.

Also, while there is a significant body of literature reflecting the overlap in coaching and leadership from a practitioner's point of view, this study aimed to bridge the scholar-practitioner gap. In addition, though Gilbert and Trudel (2004) noted that despite a rise in the number of coaching science journal articles that use qualitative methods from 1970-2001, there remains a need for studies with a multifocal approach "by combining behavioral analysis with an examination of other coaching aspects (i.e., thoughts and characteristics)" (p. 395). This multifocal approach is incorporated in the interpretive triangulation of data sources in portraiture, including interviews, observations, and document analysis.

Furthermore, Jones, Armour, and Potrac (2002) argued that the social and cultural aspects of the coaching process have not received enough attention. Importantly, Knowles, Borrie, and Telfer (2005) suggested that elite level coaches are lacking reflection in their practice, and this study's emphasis on reflection can be instructive to others. Finally, this study made a significant contribution to the field by taking a socio-cultural look into the influence of Christianity on the leadership style of the participants. The resulting stories displayed the lived experience of these coaches attempting to "walk the walk" of their faith, not merely "talk the talk," in the midst of a high-pressure work environment. Maintaining their value system despite the pressure to cheat for an advantage is a dilemma that faces leaders in countless industries and organizations, as the

1990s Asian financial crisis and recent global financial crisis demonstrates (Verhezen & Morse, 2010).

Another significant contribution of this study is its potential importance in coaching education and professional development. Lacking any standard coaching education program for certification or licensure in America (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004), college basketball coaches' leadership styles are greatly influenced by socio-cultural factors such as their past experiences as players and assistant coaches (Lemyre, Trudel, & Durand-Bush, 2007), and perhaps their religious and/or spiritual background and beliefs. For Christian coaches, they must also negotiate the potential conflict of the surface incongruence between the cold competition of elite athletics predicated on defeating an opponent and a religious tradition that includes loving your neighbor and even your enemy (Deardorff & White, 2008; Hoffman, 2010; Mieth, 2012;). Handling all of these pressures and resulting stress is a key component of elite coaching (Frey, 2007; Olusoga, Butt, Hays, & Maynard, 2009; Richman, 1992; Wang & Ramsey, 1998), and of college basketball coaches in particular (Kelley & Gill, 1993).

Finally, representing the lived experiences of the coaches in the study through the narratives of portraiture methodology not only reflects Jesus's own use of stories as communication tools in the Bible, but also is intended to connect with a modern audience not restricted to academia. Perhaps this broad audience was a good target, as Schmalzbauer (2003) noted that within the academic mainstream, there have been "boundaries separating faith and scholarship, theology and history, and legitimate and illegitimate knowledge in American higher education" (p. 146). These are boundaries that need not stand, and this study intentionally crossed them.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 has established the intense pressure NCAA DI basketball coaches are under to win, that coaches' are expected to behave ethically and maintain their integrity, and the potentially corrupting influence of that pressure, which requires strong leadership to overcome. The broad backdrop of religion was raised with a particular focus on leadership in a coaching context. Each of these topics individually are significant aspects of American culture in and of themselves, however, their intersection provides a unique and powerful insight into their potential socio-cultural influence on coaches' leadership style. Furthermore, the legal and moral issue of religion and spirituality in the workplace of sport were introduced as a significant gap in the literature.

Chapter 2 will provide a more thorough synthesis of related research in a review of literature. Particular attention will be paid to the historical development and current issues of religion and/or spirituality in sport, leadership theory, and coaching science through a socio-cultural lens. Chapter 3 will provide an in-depth explanation of the methodology used, including the research design, participant selection criteria, procedural details for data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, and the trustworthiness of the data. Chapter 4 will provide a general introduction to set up the portraits of the four coaches and then each coach's portrait. Chapter 5 concludes the study with a discussion of the portraits in light of the review of literature.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study examined the influence of Christian faith on the leadership style of two men's and two women's head basketball coaches at public, NCAA DI institutions, each of whom self-identified as Christian. Rather than include a list of operational definitions that are removed from the context of the study, this review of literature provides the operational definitions of key terms from this study's stated purpose, such as socio-cultural influence, Christianity, and leadership style, within their historical and sociological context.

The method of portraiture, which is described in detail in Chapter 3, usually does not contain literature reviews, although they can be done external to the portraits, which are provided in Chapter 4 (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Consistent with the theoretical perspective and research methods of this project as a whole, I will interject my personal experiences into the literature review as they relate to the study. While this practice may be unusual to those accustomed to reading literature reviews that purport to be detached, emotionless, value-free analyses of previous scholarship, including my voice is intended to provide a more vibrant background for the portraits of Chapter 4. First, I will give a general overview of the theoretical framework of the study, then examine the issues of religion and spirituality in general and in the workplace, followed by the intertwined concepts of coaching and leadership in intercollegiate athletics. Though I will primarily focus on one of the issues at a time, there will be significant overlap. For the Christian coach who integrates his or her faith into their leadership, in fact, there *must* be overlap.

Theoretical Framework

Sociology is the study of society through its institutions and interpersonal relationships. At its best, sociology can promote tolerance and inclusion through systematic application of research methods of a phenomenon situated within a theoretical perspective (Kendall, 2010). These theoretical perspectives seek to describe, explain, and even predict social events (Kendall, 2010; Ritzer, 2010). Sociological investigation surges past what is assumed and taken for granted to gain insight into everyday living. Relative to this study, Christianity's privileged place in American history, as the most common and most influential religious orientation (Mechikoff, 2014), makes it easy to gloss over assumed realities that might not be accurate at the individual level. To this point, Alan Sears & James Cairns (2010) contended that, "theoretical thinking requires that we relentlessly hunt for the actual causes of the phenomena we experience, even if we think we already know the answer" (p. 16). In this study, despite my 18 years in coaching, 6 years in DI basketball, and Christian faith I sought to "relentlessly hunt" for the lived experience of these four Christian coaches, and not assume that my background provided the answers.

However, at its worst, sociological analysis can appear impractical, overly abstract, and too reliant on academic theorizing divorced from reality. As Sears and Cairns (2010) explained, "Theory has a bad reputation. It can seem rather useless and is often hard to understand. Indeed, the words, 'in theory' are often used to describe idealized thinking that does not fit with reality" (p. 1). Another criticism of social theories is that they, ironically, like the phenomenon and social situations they investigate, reflect the political nature of humanity and its tendency to privilege certain groups over others. George Ritzer (2010) laid out four examples of this privilege: mainstream theories have often come from those in leadership positions in the field, from

culturally accepted political orientations, that are empirically testable, and that are from scholars from the demographic majority to the exclusion of cultural minorities.

Noted sociologist C. Wright Mills wrote a scathing rebuke of obtuse sociological work, claiming it served to "neither enlarge our understanding nor make our experiences more sensible" (1959/2000, p. 33). Rather, Mills suggested that sociological study must be conducted with a "sociological imagination." Mills claimed that a sociological imagination "enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and external career of a variety of individuals" (p. 5). For Mills, incorporating study of the biography of the participants was crucial to understanding the historical context. In fact, Mills claimed, "No social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history, and of their intersections within a society has completed its intellectual journey" (p. 6). In Chapter 4 of this study, the biographies of the participants are included in the analysis of the historical context.

Despite the potential to cloud their lenses with superfluous language and overly abstract thinking, social theories can help us understand how a particular aspect of our lives, in this case college sports, reflects the larger culture, acts as a change agent within the culture, or both. Ron Woods (2011) argued that applying these theories "forces us to examine all aspects of the sport experience, including the seat of power within sport, the values that are embraced, and the interaction of the various groups involved" (p. 20). This study focuses on a very specific subset of the overall sport experience, but still examines the power of the coaches and the NCAA, the Christian values that may or may not influence their leadership style, and considers the interaction of various groups including coaches, players, administrators, and game officials.

Specific to the sociology of sport, no single theoretical perspective or theorist dominates the research (Giulianotti, 2004). For example, Woods (2011) and Jay Coakley (2007) provided an overview of social theories for the study of sport includes functionalist, conflict, critical, feminist, interactionist, and figurational theories. Demonstrating similar diversity, Giulianotti's *Sport and Modern Social Theorists* (2004) includes discussions of Adorno, Baudrillard, Bourdieu, Durkheim, Elias, Foucault, Freud, Giddens, Goffman, Gramsci, Habermas, C.L.R. James, Marx, Merton, Mills, and Weber. Finally, *The Sociology of Sports Coaching* features some overlap with Giulianotti's work in its application of Blau, Bourdieu, Foucault, Giddens, Goffman, Habermas, Hochschild, Luhman, and Wenger to coaching (Jones, Potrac, Cushion, & Ronglan, 2011). These three examples are provided as examples of the diverse theorists and theories that are in sports research today.

This diversity of theories and perspectives tempts some to combine aspects of different theories into an analysis. Such blending of theories is reflective of the blending of the major social institutions in our society, such as family, education, media, religion, and sport (Bryant & McElroy, 1997). Mark Nagel and Richard Southall (2011) suggested that accepting a multiple theoretical perspective might allow scholars to simultaneously study the negative social implications of the existing economic and political power structure in sport, while also recognizing that there are examples of sport that is "egalitarian and inclusive" (p. 25). Stanley Eitzen (2009) also noted that this duality of sport, the reality of negative outcomes and positive outcomes for both individuals and society, reflects the dual nature of other human institutions.

Furthermore, Ritzer (1992) argued that understanding today's social theories requires some "familiarity" with other theories throughout history. To that end, I will now briefly give

some examples of prominent macro-level social theories and their application to sport and the coaches in this study. A macro-level analysis considers entire societies, social structures, and social systems (Kendall, 2010). Functionalism and conflict theory are two well-known theoretical perspectives with a macro-level analysis. Functionalism posits that shared values and social processes minimize differences and maintain stability in a society (Coakley, 2007; Kendall, 2010; Nagel & Southall, 2011; Woods, 2011). Applied to sport, functionalist theory tends to maintain that sport brings the nation together by promoting shared American values, such as hard work, and supports a belief in sport as a meritocracy, the belief in the ability of that hard work will allow a person of any economic or ethnic background to succeed. This belief in the American Dream, the idea that anyone can prosper through the sweat of his or her brow and the focus of his or her mind, is a common refrain in intercollegiate athletics. As the NCAA (n.d.c) claimed, "Our goal is to further strengthen our culture of personal responsibility and individual accountability" and "We embrace our role in providing student-athletes the skills for what comes next in life" (n.d.a).

Conversely, conflict theory emphasizes the inequalities that privilege one social group over another through economic and power differentials (Kendall, 2010; Nagel & Southall, 2011; Woods, 2011). These economic and power differentials allow certain groups to reap financial benefits and political power by the exploitation of labor (Nagel & Southall, 2011). This political economy is driven and maintained by ingrained institutions like media, business, educational institutions, and even sport. Nagel and Southall contended that those in power are not held to the same standards of behavior using college basketball as an example: "coaches often argue with referees, use foul language in public, and yell at their players…while such actions by coaches

may be criticized, they are more often excused as necessary elements of coaching and often helpful in maintaining player discipline" (p. 21). Furthermore, conflict theory highlights that people at lower levels of organizational hierarchies have little or no voice (Woods, 2011), such as players in the NCAA.

However, since the focus of this study is on the lived experience of four individual coaches, it is appropriate to consider a theoretical perspective that employs a micro-level analysis rather than the macro-level analyses previously discussed. Bryant and McElroy (1997) explained micro-level analysis in the sport setting as an approach that "concentrate(s) on the personal meaning attached to sport and exercise by those experiencing it" (p. 7). In this study, the micro-level approach focused on the meanings as experienced by the coaches.

As a result of a dissatisfaction with macro-level perspectives that discounted the individual's agency and considered the individual passive and constrained by society, the mid-twentieth century brought as series of new perspectives that considered the micro-level much more important (Adler, Adler, & Fontana, 1987; Ritzer, 2010). Everyday life sociology is an umbrella term for various micro-level, or "bottom up," approaches such as symbolic interactionism, dramaturgy, labeling theory, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and existential sociology (Adler, Adler, & Fontana, 1987). One prominent example is the symbolic interactionist perspective. This theory focuses on the social relationships of individuals in their day-to-day lives and their behavior in groups (Kendall, 2010). However, this perspective is not just focused on the individuals' words or actions, but "emphasizes the importance of personal definitions of social situations and the corresponding social interaction" (Bryant & McElroy, 1997, p. 21). This concept of a personal definition is crucial to this study of self-identified

Christian coaches. In fact, it is the examination of the integration, or lack of integration, of the coaches' Christian faith into their leadership that drove the study.

Influence

Before discussing socio-cultural influences, as the study's purpose states, I will provide an operational definition of what those influences entail and what I mean by "influence" and "socio-cultural." Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defined "influence" as "the act or power of producing an effect without apparent exertion of force or direct exercise of command." While this definition clearly states that the influence is not coercive, it fails to name what the "effect" is. Oxford (n.d.) defined influence as "The capacity to have an effect on the character, development, or behavior of someone or something, or the effect itself" (Influence). Combining aspects of both of these definitions provides the operational definition of influence for this study: an effect on others' thoughts and/or actions without the application of authority or force. The idea of not resorting to a position of authority for coercion is a crucial aspect of legacy leadership theory that is offered later as a framework for understanding the coaches' leadership style.

In basketball parlance, a defender seeks to "influence" an offensive player into a certain area of the court based on the principles of the defense being played. For example, if the defense is trapping, or double-teaming, the offensive player when they have the ball in the corner of the court, then the defense will try to "influence" the player in possession of the ball to dribble or pass the basketball to the corner of the court by taking away other directions and options. Despite what coaches often yell, "Force her baseline!", a defender cannot "force" the offense to do anything, they can only influence. Likewise, the influences on coaching leadership in this study

are not forced upon the coaches' decision-making, but perhaps help steer their decision-making in a particular direction.

Socio-cultural Analysis

Having established the operational definition of influence, I will now examine the "socio-cultural" factors of influence. The concept of socio-cultural influence has a long history in academic work and is common in sport research today. Woods (2011) contended that, despite their variate names in the last half-century, the subdisciplines of what we now call kinesiology have three domains: biophysical, psychosocial, and sociocultural. Woods explained that the sociocultural domain "focuses on physical activity from the perspectives of the sciences of history, philosophy, and sociology" (p. 12).

Diana Kendall (2010) defined society as "a large social grouping that shares the same geographical territory and is subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations" (p. 44). Applying this definition to the present study, the coaches involved were (a) all from the same geographic territory, the United States. Though there are geographical differences across regions of the country, the transient nature of college coaching makes the national societal grouping more relevant; (b) were subject to the same political authority, the NCAA; (c) faced dominant cultural expectations (e.g., pressure to win and Christian morals). Furthermore, Kendall also differentiated society from culture, "Whereas a society is composed of people, culture is composed of ideas, behavior, and material possessions. Society and culture are interdependent; neither could exist without the other" (p. 44). In Chapter 1, I introduced some details of the intercollegiate athletics culture that was studied in this project, and I continue that discussion later in this chapter.

Analyzing the socio-cultural influence of Christian faith on coaches requires *verstehen*. Translated to English as "understanding" or "insight," Max Weber is among the scholars who incorporated the German concept of *verstehen* into sociological thought (Kendall, 2010). This understanding results from careful analysis of "the relationship between individual mental processes and the larger cultural-context" (Ritzer, 2010, p. 36). This intentional inclusion of the larger cultural context, Ritzer explained, is an advantage over emotionless, positivistic methods "because subjects are fellow human beings, the social scientist can gain an understanding of what goes on in the subjects' minds and why they do what they do" (p. 36). Mills' concept of sociological imagination, which was discussed earlier in this chapter, is an extension of this idea.

Christianity

The coaches in this study self-identified as Christians, meaning there was neither a criteria of "Christian-ness" that they had to meet, such as a "statement of faith" or any other doctrine with which to agree. They simply asserted that they were Christians, based on their own understanding of what that entailed. This was an intentional research design decision in an attempt to not focus on or privilege one of the many forms of Christianity. De Souza (2012) noted that due to Christianity's global reach, over 2000 year history, and sheer number of adherents as the world's largest religion, "General descriptions (of Christianity) can have limited value. The obvious central and essential element in Christianity is Jesus Christ…the particular forms, features, and role of Christ vary considerably" (p. 209). This short discussion of Christianity will be supplemented through the portraits of the coaches' lived experiences in Chapter 4. However, it is appropriate to examine the broader headings of "religion" and "spirituality" and their relationship to each other when considering Christianity in this study, as

despite variations in Christian belief and practice, it is clearly an organized religion with spiritual aspects.

Religiosity. The coaches in this study self-identified their religious affiliation with Christianity, and I made no attempt to quantify or qualify their faith practices, or to evaluate their commitment to their espoused identity. In academia, one way to measure an individual's commitment to his or her religious faith is by measuring religiosity. Religiosity has been variously defined as "beliefs and practices related to a supernatural agent" (Sedikides, 2010), "the degree of involvement in some or all facets of religion" (Zuckerman, Silverman, & Hall, 2013), and "an individual's religious orientation, namely, intrinsic (i.e., looking to religion for spiritual development, guidance, and meaning) and extrinsic (i.e., using religion primarily for personal or social gain)" (Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010). While studies measuring religiosity can be insightful, this review of literature is focused on qualitative work and this will not discuss religiosity further.

Religion. Even the three definitions of religiosity offered above demonstrate the need to pin down the slippery terms of religion and spirituality. These two terms are commonly used when describing an individual's personal experiences relating to their religious journey. These terms are important whether a person considers themselves religious, spiritual, or both. However, the contested nature and nebulous relationship of the terms religion and spirituality in sociology makes attempts to define them controversial (Cusack, 2012; Hamilton, 2001; Phipps & Benefiel, 2013). Moreover, attempting to define them *prior* to a study has also been a major point of contention among scholars. In fact, Malcolm Hamilton (2001) summarized a common argument of sociologists by writing that one can only define the terms after extensive investigation and not

prior. This is another reason that I did not give the participants a definition of Christianity prior to the study.

In this research, the understandings of religion and spirituality will come more from the participants themselves than from an outside definition that is imposed upon them. However, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experience and perspectives it is useful to examine common definitions of religion and spirituality. Though I consider religion and spirituality two sides of the same coin, I will begin by looking at religion specifically, and then flip the coin over to focus on spirituality.

However, before I supply several definitions of religion, I will enumerate three common aspects that unite the various definitions: beliefs, practices, and community. These three constructs are the architecture on which I build the coaches' portraits in Chapter 4. Carole Cusack (2012) described religion as "a system of beliefs and practices relevant to sacred things, which acts to focus a community or group upon those values and actions that it holds to be transcendent" (p. 325). In Cusack's version, those three key constructs (beliefs, practices, and community) quickly emerge. In other words, what we think (beliefs) and what we do (practices), are experienced in the shared understanding of a community, such as an individual church or small group Bible study.

Richard Hecht and Vincent Biondo (2012) claimed two different ways of defining religion (a) traditional organized religions of the world, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism; (b) a "complex system of symbols and meanings, which may exist apart from religious traditions. These symbols and meanings may incorporate values and ethics, ways of self and social understanding" (pp. viii-iv). This definition appears to be

intentionally vague and as broad as possible, to the point of becoming impractical. For example, I would argue that Hecht and Biondo's first category of religion gives no explanation of what these traditional organized religions entail in an attempt to be inclusive, and that their second category could be more appropriately considered "spirituality" due to the intentional separation from religion and the inclusion of individuality. This shows the difficulty in defining these two terms as mutually exclusive constructs.

Froma Walsh (2013) provided yet another definition of religion as "organized, institutionalized faith systems, with shared traditions, beliefs, practices, and communities" (p. 189). Walsh's definition emphasized the historical, institutional traditions in way that our other definitions have not. This accentuation can be used to distinguish religion from spirituality, which is not bound by tradition in most understandings of the term. The importance of tradition in religion is underscored by Ralph Piedmont and Teresa Wilkins' (2013) definition as "beliefs, practices, relationships, or experiences involving the sacred that are explicitly and historically rooted in established institutionalized systems" (p. 180). However, even if we concede that religion refers to traditional organized religions, or "established institutionalized systems," then we must also be cognizant that "all roads do not lead to Rome, and despite the wishful thinking of many, all religions do not believe the same thing. To be sure, there is a lot of shared belief among the world's religions" (Miller & Ewest, 2013, p. 69). Hamilton (2001) further supported the diversity in religion by arguing that religion "can no longer be equated with familiar mainstream church and denominational forces but takes on a plurality of guises that render the boundaries between religion and non-religion bewilderingly fuzzy" (p. 13). Yet, bringing this fuzz into focus is our task at hand.

Kendall (2010) delivered a detailed definition that unites many of the aspects of our previously discussed definitions: "Religion is a social institution composed of a unified system of beliefs, symbols, and rituals, based on some sacred or supernatural realm, that guides human behavior, gives meaning to life, and unites believers into a community" (p. 408). This definition includes the touchstones of beliefs, practices, sacred, transcendence, and community. However, perhaps the most inclusive definition of religion, that can arguably still be separated from spirituality, is Harold Koenig's (2008) definition: "a system of beliefs and practices observed by a community, supported by rituals that acknowledge, worship, communicate with, or approach the Sacred, the Divine, God (in Western cultures), or Ultimate Truth, Reality, or nirvana (in Eastern cultures)" (p. 11). Koenig's definition includes the key constructs of beliefs, practices, and community placed within the cultural context of transcendence, but with an intentional cross-cultural inclusivity. In light of the more common Western-centric, less-inclusive definitions, the more general terms "faith" or "spiritual" are often used for "those who see themselves as 'spiritual but not religious, agnostic, or atheistic'" (Neal, 2013, p. 3). Instead of having to retreat to those more general terms, Koenig's definition allows for more room under the banner of religion while still opening the opportunity for a distinct definition of spirituality, which I will turn my attention to now.

Spirituality. Spirituality is generally considered more encompassing than religion, yet defining spirituality has also proven vexing due to its variation of understandings with religion, culture, and time (Lindeman, Blomquist, & Takada, 2012). For example, the definition of spirituality can change considerably if one believes that they can be religious but not spiritual or vice versa. There are ardent supporters of the overlap of these terms, such as those who think

religion without spirituality is meaningless, but others make just as passionate an argument for their mutual exclusivity. In fact, Kelly Phipps and Margaret Benefiel (2013) explained that previous research regarding religion and spirituality has contained "a number of juxtapositions including mutually exclusive, overlapping, synonymous, religion nested within spirituality, spirituality nested within religion, and contextually determined" (p. 34). However, if forced to differentiate spirituality from religion, spirituality is often defined by a greater emphasis on the individual, and the resulting increased flexibility in beliefs and practices than in religion's traditional group or community settings. This de-emphasis of group tradition is also seen in Kate Loewenthal's (2013) definition of spirituality: "beliefs, practices, relationships, or experiences having to do with the sacred that are not necessarily linked to established institutional systems" (p. 239). While Loewenthal gingerly marked the separation from "established institutional systems," or traditional organized religion, it remains a clear differentiation. Shafranske and Cummings (2013) supported contrasting the individual versus group aspects of the terms when they claimed that spirituality is "more individualistic expressions of connectedness with the sacred instead of more traditional, institutionalized forms" (p. 25). As these examples show, this idea that spirituality allows more freedom for individual interpretation than in religion is common in the literature.

Furthermore, to critics, religion's traditional roots make it appear stuck in the past and increasingly irrelevant in a rapidly changing world. Larry Culliford (2010) explained the practical benefits of spirituality through his claim that it "helps make sense of the important things" (p. 9). Culliford continued to argue that spirituality has more of a holistic conception than religion by linking intensely personal experience with the universal. However, it is important to

note that these spiritual connections are not in light of traditional doctrines or beliefs, but rather based on an individual feeling of connectedness to a transcendent entity of the individual's creation or perception. Furthermore, the holistic nature of spirituality is conceived as emanating from the individual, set within the universal experience. Conversely, religion tends to flip that model with the universal taking precedence over the individual. However, Culliford further explained that the distinction between religion and spirituality was intended not to be offensive to those who considered themselves religious as "spirituality could be described as the 'active ingredient' of religion" (p. 39), once again blurring the line between the two.

Piedmont and Wilkins (2013) defined spirituality as "a fundamental, inherent quality of the individual. Such a construct is referred to as a motive. Motives are nonspecific affect forces that drive, direct, and select behavior" (p. 180). Piedmont and Wilkins' explanation of motive as driven by "affect forces" accentuates the individualistic nature of spirituality. This stands in direct contrast with the communal, tradition-laden foundation of religious beliefs that motivate action.

Spirituality has also been "associated with a host of positive traits and outcomes. These include, for example, less suicidal ideation; lower rates of heart disease, stroke, and mortality; lower alcohol abuse; and less hopelessness, emotional distress, and depressive symptoms" (Lindeman, Blomquist, & Takada, 2012, p.167). However, the difficulty in defining it has made it hard to determine if the positive results are directly related to spirituality or to some other psychological construct. In fact, Koenig (2008) argued that there is no clear method of distinguishing spiritual but not religious people from religious but not spiritual, and Baker (2003) was one of the many who claimed even defining spirituality is difficult.

However, Phipps and Benefiel (2013) contended that seeing the terms as overlapping is good for researchers by allowing for flexibility in research design and analysis through the separation or unity of these terms as appropriate for the situation. For the purposes of this study, the religion and spirituality of Christianity will be based on the participants' perspectives. The reliance on participants is due, in part, to the difficulty in separating religion and spirituality and also because people of different race, class, and gender may experience them differently (Kendall, 2010). Importantly, this study focused on those who identify themselves as Christian, whether they consider themselves religious, spiritual, or both.

Religion and Spirituality in the Workplace

After the Enlightenment, religious thought became increasingly discarded and discounted in favor of provable, scientific facts, especially in public affairs and the workplace (Mechikoff, 2014). However, Piedmont and Wilkins (2013) argued that religion and the workplace are not mutually exclusive: "spirituality and religiousness constitute fundamental aspects of who we are as people. The prevalence of these constructs in all societies across the historical record, and their impact on every facet of society, demonstrates that value and importance of these variables" (p. 173). Historically, the Europeans that founded the United States clearly considered religion and spirituality fundamental to their identity (Mechikoff, 2014). In fact, many were fleeing religious persecution Europe and felt so strongly in their convictions that they were willing to risk their lives, and leave everything they had ever known for the possibility of openly living their lives in a manner consistent with their religious beliefs (Woods, 2011). This included their work life, and in that tradition the concept of a "calling" was paramount (Lambert, 2009). Lake Lambert agreed with Martin Luther's argument that a calling or vocation was not just for the

religious hierarchy, but was for all Christians, "and so the Christian life should be seen as living out one's calling in the everyday world of work, family, community, and church" (p. 6).

Darrow Miller (2002) explained a calling as a "biblical worldview (that) provides a framework for work being sacred, for labor having dignity … it becomes the sphere through which, not merely in which, a Christian serves Christ and his kingdom" (p. 9). Kaiser (1966) explained that in the Hebrew Bible, what Christians know as the Old Testament, "work penetrated the entire fabric of Hebrew social life, for the Hebrews are a working people…Work was an essential duty to be carried out by the just and obedient servant in his relation to God" (p. 47). Likewise, Kaiser noted that in the New Testament, "the Gospel develops in an atmosphere of work, as the Savior Himself, the 'Carpenter's Son,' calls to Him hard working fisherman and moves among the countless children of toil who welcome His message with simplicity and faith" (p. 65). However, views of religion and work integration can vary widely by religious tradition, even within Christianity (Neubert & Dougherty, 2013). If one is to truly "live out" their calling today it could raise some issues in our modern, pluralistic society, with its priority on the secular and broadly understood spirituality rather than traditional organized religion.

Whereas, at one time, pluralism in America might have referred to a plurality of Christian denominations (Lambert, 2009), changes in U.S. immigration policy and globalization heightened by technological advances have resulted in a new religious plurality that reflects "the tremendous increase in religious and spiritual diversity (that) has transformed all aspects of American public life, including the workplace" (Hicks, 2003, p. 16). These changes to America led to increased study and discussion of religions and spirituality other than the traditionally privileged Christianity. This included Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, New Agers, and

Wiccans, among others. Importantly, Judi Neal (2013) noted that there is currently a shift from individual perspectives on religion and/or spirituality in the workplace to broader institutional and societal lenses.

Defining the terms "religion" and "spirituality" specific to the workplace is not an easy task. Hicks (2003) claimed that spirituality resists definition because "offering a definition could imply the very kind of dogmatic rigidity that spirituality is meant to transcend" (p. 53). Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2010) noted the difficulty in defining workplace spirituality is the result of the difficulty in defining spirituality in general, as was discussed earlier. In fact, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz cited 14 different definitions of spirituality before offering their own definition of workplace spirituality as "aspects of the workplace, either in the individual, the group, or the organization, that promote individual feelings of satisfaction and transcendence" (p. 13). Dennis Duchon and Donde Ashmos Plowman (2005) defined spirituality in the workplace as where "people view themselves as having an inner life that is nourished by meaningful work and takes place in the context of a community" (p. 816). Interestingly, Duchon and Plowman brought the idea of community back into their definition, which is a commonly held aspect of religion.

Lambert's succinct juxtaposition of spirituality and religion noted that, "spirituality is supposedly free, universal, and open, while religion is dogmatic, particular, and proselytizing" (p. 16). This common dichotomy of spirituality and religion has led religion to be discouraged in the workplace and spirituality to be encouraged (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010; Hicks, 2003; Lambert, 2009). It is easy to see the overlap of religion and spirituality from this discussion, despite the common insistence on their distinctiveness. As a result of the overlap, there is a

lingering distrust between proponents of religion and spirituality, so effectively explained by Neal (2013):

> The spirituality-focused camp was concerned that if religion was allowed into the dialogue, that proselytizing and conflict would not be far behind. The religion-focused camp felt that the "spiritual but not religious" emphasis left out centuries of human wisdom and tradition that could have a great deal of value for the workplace and for society, and that the focus on spirituality was too light-weight and, worst of all, "airy-fairy." (p. 10)

Religious plurality in the workplace

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 accelerated and intensified the discussion of non-Christian religions and spirituality in America (Hicks, 2003). This international tragedy also placed a spotlight on religious, especially Muslim, extremists. On one hand, 9/11 gave those in the spiritual-but-not-religious crowd more reasons to shy away from organized religions that might persuade extremists to commit suicide attacks, but on the other hand it also motivated the religious-and-spiritual to seek to reclaim their religion/spirituality and clearly delineate those perversions of their faith as outside of their religious reasoning. In response to the challenge of an inclusive workplace open to this diversity, Hicks offered the term "respectful pluralism" as "resisting company-sponsored religion and spirituality while allowing employees to bring their own religions to work" (p. 2). Applying the concept of bringing your religion and/or spirituality to work is an idea that I will explore further in the religious identity and coaches section.

Some scholars, such as David Wells (1993), while not addressing sport directly, lamented the loss of particular cultural characteristics resulting from globalization by claiming "a

civilization that is global in its nature is stripped of all the particularities of any one culture. It belongs to no particular time, place, or people" (p. 89). On the contrary, Nagel and Southall (2011) noted the benefits of applying globalization theory specifically to sport and note that the "global-local nexus (is) characterized by a complex and ever-changing dynamic between change and continuity, difference and sameness, universality and particularity" (p. 72). Andrei Markovits and Lars Rensmann (2010) argued that despite the lack of college sports outside of the United States, these sports remain under the influence of globalization while maintaining localized traditions that are commonly know as glocalization, and specifically cited the men's NCAA basketball tournament as an example. Nagel and Southall (2011) explained that glocalization "theorizes the relationship arising form both cultural and commercial forces; both being relational and complimentary to each other in various situations" (p. 73).

Richard Giulianotti and Roland Robertson (2013) are among the latest to point out that sport is one of the primary conduits of globalization throughout the world and has been for nearly 150 years. In addition to taking our sports to the world, the reciprocal forces of globalization have also impacted American collegiate sports, and thereby, the workplace of college coaching. Applying globalization solely to the migration of professional basketball players, Eitzen (2009) found that whereas in 1994 the top ten NBA draft picks were American, by 2007 there were 83 international players on NBA rosters. This trend has only continued. An examination of the official roster of the San Antonio Spurs, posted online by the NBA, revealed nine internationals out of fifteen total players. The Spurs have won five NBA Championships since 1999 and are the reigning NBA champions. Similarly, in addition to reflecting the growing religious and ethnic diversity of the country in general, American college sports have also

attracted a large number of international athletes, further increasing the ethnic and religious diversity of the player population and accentuating the need for a cultural competency that includes religious and spiritual beliefs.

Religion and spirituality in the coaching context. In the opening chapter, I established that college basketball coaching is a workplace with large financial implications and pressures. As a workplace it faces the same issues relating to religion and spirituality of any other workplace. Furthermore, I have noted that NCAA DI head basketball coaches have broad leadership responsibilities beyond the playing floor (University of Oregon, n.d.), and an ethical duty to act with integrity (NABC, 1987; NCACE, 2006; WBCA, 2010). Hicks (2003) pointed out that the research and literature in leadership, organizational culture, human resource management, and even religious studies have overlooked the importance of religious beliefs and practices at work. I contend that this is certainly the case in coaching related literature, as well. Furthermore, Hicks noted that the "voluminous literature on religion, spirituality, and leadership tends to be a-contextual" (p. 26). This makes the context-sensitive, qualitative method of portraiture, which is explained in Chapter 3, employed in this study especially appropriate.

Given this background, it is easy to understand the lack of serious exploration of this topic for coaches. Some, like the Freedom From Religion Foundation, applaud the lack of information as reflecting a proper, secular atmosphere in public and believe that personal religious and spiritual beliefs should remain private. However, as mentioned in Chapter 1, Hicks (2003) noted that it is inaccurate and morally problematic to assume that those employees' (or coaches') religious and spiritual beliefs can or should remain private.

Program culture, core values, and faith. Many coaches recognize the importance of establishing a culture based on core values in their program. In a basketball context, Indiana University Head Men's Coach Tom Crean defined core values as "the guiding principles for everything that is done within a program. Effective leaders find ways to keep their core values at the forefront at all times" (Crean & Prim, 2007, p. 68). Crean listed his program's core values as integrity, respect, responsibility, unselfishness, loyalty, and tenacity.

In the time since Crean published those core values he has become publicly committed to his Christian faith, earning both praise and scorn. In 2013, he was awarded the John Lotz "Barnabas" Award, given by the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) "to honor a basketball coach who best exhibits a commitment to Christ, integrity and encouragement to others and lives a balanced life" (FCA, 2013, para. 2). FCA staff Perry Hunter discussed Crean's growth in his faith:

> 'You can see the transformation in his life (over the past two years),' Hunter said. 'You have a guy with a huge platform, who was a positive guy but knew he had some flaws, and you can see him changing into a man who, like all of us still has some flaws, but is making an effort to make a difference for Jesus Christ.' (as quoted in FCA, para. 6)

Yet, Crean's open discussion of his faith, primarily through Twitter, has drawn criticism from those who feel he should keep his beliefs to himself or that he should not promote Christianity above other worldviews (Morris, 2012).

Establishing core values are a key facet of building a program's culture. Duke University and USA Basketball Head Men's Coach Mike Krzyzewski (2000) wrote, "Every year, we create a brand new culture for Duke basketball…how we grow that culture—how we develop

communication, how we care for our people—means everything" (p. 52). For Krzyzewski, his program's culture is also built upon core values, "There are five fundamental qualities that make every team great: communication, trust, collective responsibility, caring, and pride" (p. 64). He continued by giving a powerful metaphor for those five core values, "I like to think of each as a separate finger on the fist. Any one individually is important. But all of them together are unbeatable" (p.64). In describing how he led USA Basketball back to a Gold medal in 2008, Krzyzewski (2009) again cited communication and trust as core values, or what he termed vital standards, in rebuilding the culture of USA Basketball.

Krzyzewski's Catholic faith has also been an important part of his life. Hines-Brigger (n.d.) noted that Krzyzewski places his mother's rosary in his shirt pocket before every game, and shared Krzyzewski's reflection on his faith: "I was really fortunate to have parents and an extended family that believed in God and were able to impart that belief to me and the other youngsters in my family. And they did that through Catholic education" (para. 4-5).

Former University of North Carolina Head Men's Coach Dean Smith (2004) wrote, "My basketball philosophy boils down to six words: Play hard, play together, play smart" (p. 20). Describing his leadership more broadly, Smith wrote "honesty, integrity, not playing favorites, recruiting the right people, effective practice and training, and caring are the foundation that any organization would be wise to have in place. The most important thing in leadership is truly caring" (p.3).

Part of Smith's caring was for off-the-court issues as well. Informed by his Baptist faith, Smith helped integrate a Chapel Hill restaurant in the late 1950s. Tomlinson (2014) shared that Smith went with his pastor and a Black theology student to the premier dining establishment in

town; “Dean was just an assistant coach then, but the managers knew him -- the Tar Heels ate team meals there. None of the staff said a word. The three men sat down and ate dinner” (Last Year section, para. 2). In 1966, Smith also recruited Charlie Scott, Carolina’s first Black scholarship athlete (para. 3).

Hall-of-fame coach Pat Riley put his core values in decidedly religious terms, calling them a “Core Covenant.” Citing the Declaration of Independence as an example of a Core Covenant, Riley wrote, “Every team that wants to move toward significance and greatness has to decide what truths it will hold to be self-evident and to get those values circulating through the organization” (p. 58)

In 2001, Riley’s former assistant and then New York Knicks Head Coach, Jeff Van Gundy, suggested that Christian pregame chapel services were a distraction for his players, and criticized player-led, postgame prayers at midcourt (Sortal, 2001). Riley, however, had a team chaplain as coach of the Miami Heat, saying he didn’t mind such Christian practices in his players “as long as it doesn't interfere with winning or the pre-game meeting. ‘I just don't want them to be late,’ Riley said, ‘and I don't want them to love the opponent too much’" (Perkins, 2002, para. 21-22).

Pat Summitt (1998) wrote an entire book about her program’s core values, which she called the Definite Dozen. I will summarize Summitt’s core values through key words from her Definite Dozen: responsibility, loyalty, communication, discipline, hard work, work smart, unselfish, attitude, competitor, change. In the book, Summitt also talked about her Christian roots, “We went to Mount Carmel (her church) every Sunday morning and on a lot of weekday evenings, too. I was married there. So it’s pretty hard to shake my faith in the church” (p. 177).

When I was a graduate assistant at the University of Tennessee, we played the University of Wisconsin, coached by Dick Bennett. As I opened the *2000 Wisconsin Men's Basketball Media Guide,* Bennett's five biblically-based core values stood out to me on page one: humility, passion, unity, servant attitude, and thankfulness. Bennett had chosen these values as a reflection of his faith, even though he always coached at "public universities where outward expression of religious values was not appropriate. Yet Bennett found a way through values-based coaching to live his faith" (Millard & Cebula, 2012, p. 6).

It is important to note that Bennett's core values were not just on a wall or shared in private with his team, but were intentionally shared with a diverse audience through the media guide. Buysse and Embser-Herbert (2004) noted, "unlike many game programs, the media guides tend to be thicker, slicker portrayals of the images the institution wishes to present about itself and its athletes" (p. 67). I would argue that the guide is a window into the culture a coach is trying to create, especially since the universities produces their own guides. For this reason, media guides were included in the sources of data that were analyzed using qualitatively content analysis. More details of the analysis process are provided in chapter 3.

Media guides were originally intended to promote athletic programs to the media by providing detailed information on the program and the people in it, and have been in existence since at least the 1930s (Cherner, Kushlis, Rupp, O'Toole, & Bennett, 2005). However, similar to most aspects of intercollegiate athletics, media guides had grown into massive, expensive books that were over 600 pages in some cases (Cherner, et al., 2005). Furthermore, "the audience for media guides has expanded to include entities like donors, prospective donors, corporations, or community leaders; and the purpose of the publication is primarily for public relations and

recruiting, which has spurred an arms race of publishing in-depth, hard cover versions" (Buysse & Wolter, 2013, p. 5). As a result, the NCAA stepped in limited the media guides' size to 208 pages, though not everyone was happy about it. Chern, et al., (2005) quoted Michigan State assistant athletics director John Lewandowski as complaining,

> I found it very comical when a spokesperson for the NCAA said, "It's all about leveling the playing field for recruiting,"…You want to level the playing field, limit stadium capacity to 50,000. You can't do that, just like you can't legislate tradition. (p. 8)

Whether one agrees with Lewandowski's reasoning or not, it is clear the guides played a large role in recruiting. The guides were a glossy, graphic intensive way for the coach to present their program in an era before blazing speed Internet downloads and high-end, flash animated websites were the standard, and Coach Bennett is an example of a coach whose faith influenced that presentation.

Tony Dungy is arguably the most prominent contemporary Christian coach. Dungy was also the first African-American coach to win a Super Bowl, which he did with the Indianapolis Colts. The opening of Dungy's (2009) book, *Uncommon: Finding Your Path to Significance*, has a heading titled, "Develop Your Core." The core values he discussed in those four chapters were: character; honesty and integrity; humility and stewardship; and courage.

However, there was a time where it was often criticized for his leadership style influenced by his Christian values. "Too soft. Not tough enough. Not enough discipline," a local sportswriter recounted the criticisms when Dungy was the head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers (Prisco, 1998). Though the article never explicitly connects the dots between Dungy's alleged softness and his faith, it gives you a pen and a map:

> ‘Tony is a very nice guy, but he's not standing up on his chair telling you what he's going to do,’ said Bucs General Manager Rich McKay. ‘He's not pounding his chest telling me how good he is. His strength is more his family and faith, and he's very friendly and open.’ (as quoted in Prisco)

The core values that these, and other, coaches are espousing often overlap with religious values. Woods (2011) noted that the Protestant values of “hard work, self-discipline, and striving for success… are widely considered to be all-American and the very foundation of the nation. Athletic coaches in America endorse those values beyond all others” (p. 277). Steven Overman (2011) has also written extensively about the overlap in Protestant values and sport. Upon a comparison, the earlier examples of coaches’ core values demonstrated Woods point about the overlap with Protestant values. Setting these core values is a key task of a leader, crucial to establishing the culture within a program. Relative to this study, these core values are an area in which Christianity can influence a coach’s leadership.

Winning, losing, and money. Yet another aspect of a program’s culture is how the coaches handle winning and losing, which is not a new dilemma. As far back as 1903, prominent sports journalist Caspar Whitney argued, “Sport is fast ceasing to be sport in America, because of the craze for winning which dominates” (p. 630). Whitney further noted that this craze for winning led colleges to hire professional (full-time) coaches and to take liberties with academic admissions and course loads. Ronald Smith (1988) wrote, “the premium placed upon winning by institutions was extremely high prior to the advent of professional coaches, but it intensified when an individual’s coaching career was dependent principally upon turning out winners” (p. 147). When Smith mentioned “pro coaches,” he even is referring to coaches that are paid solely

to coach at the intercollegiate level, and not coaches in professional sports leagues. Furthermore, Smith pointed out,

> The pro coach so dominated the athletic program among leading colleges that he was, at times, paid more than the highest salaried professor, and he was becoming as visible s the college president on the college campus. The saga of the professional coach does much to explode the myth that there was ever a lengthy period when the amateur spirit pervaded college athletics. (p. 147)

This issue has only increased over the last century. In 2013, Fischer-Baum analyzed data to find out who was the high paid public employee in each state, noting that a coach was the highest paid public employee in 39 of the 50 states.

So how does a Christian coach, who may be under real or perceived pressure to win games immediately and consistently handle the contradiction of a heart of service with a profession of competition? Christian teachings in the Bible include such thoughts as prioritizing one's religion over other things (Matthew 6:33), God's blessing upon the meek (Matthew 5:5) and the merciful (Matthew 5:7), and even to love your enemies (Matthew 5:44).

Negotiating this dilemma of handling the pressure to win, but living by Christian principles can be daunting and requires strong leadership. Reed (2010) highlighted that, "lamentably, the Church in Western societies is low to equip its people for Christian witness in their working lives and support them when the going gets tough" (p. 11). Handling winning and losing is an example of where a coach's religious beliefs can influence his or her leadership.

Religious identity and coaches. Michael Novak (1994) pointed out that "Sports bring out in every ideal form of gentleness and tenderness so intense that is no misnomer to call it love;

and coaches commonly speak to their supposed macho males like golden-tongued preachers of love, brotherhood, comradeship" (p. 46). For the Christian coach, this love could be a reflection of God's love for us in John 3:16, or the Great Commandment of Matthew 22:36-40 to love God and to love our neighbor. Asking a Christian coach to silence this belief is problematic as, for many people, their religious identity is integral to their overall identity (Hicks, 2003). In fact, the attempt to separate their religious belief from their identity is a futile task (Hicks; Lambert, 2009). In the last 15-20 years the calls have been increasing to allow workers to incorporate their religious and/or spiritual identity at work (Hicks; Lambert). In fact, the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding's *2013 Survey of American Workers and Religion* reported that "when companies adopt proactive policies that acknowledge and accommodate various religious and non-religious beliefs, employees report improved morale, and this gives companies a powerful point of differentiation for attracting and retaining top global talent" (p. 3).

Since coaches constantly seek a competitive advantage that can lead to more wins for their teams, just as the business leader seeks a competitive advantage to fuel larger profits, one might expect coaches to soak up the spirituality literature that is "framed in terms of creating a work environment that is conducive to high morale and, in turn, high productivity" (Hicks, 2003, p. 44). In fact, one criticism of the religion and spirituality at work movement is the commoditization of beliefs solely for the end result on the bottom line, or in our case, in the win-loss column. In other words, if the organization includes religious and/or spiritual expression at work solely to get more production out of the employee then it misses the point of those beliefs.

Another reason for the increased acceptability of religion and spirituality at work is the fact that people do not have the time to spend in traditional religious communities or in

individual spiritual practices outside of work (Hicks, 2003; Lambert, 2009). Hall of fame Rutgers Head Women's Coach C. Vivian Stringer (2008) wrote of the loneliness of the coaching profession from the perspective of a long-time coach in her memoir. The lack of time to devote to these religious and/or spiritual needs does not minimize the need itself, and may result in these concerns arising at work. In addition, coaches are notorious for the pride they take in workaholic behaviors. Even Christian coaches, like Super Bowl champion football coach Joe Gibbs (2012), wrote of sleeping in his office during the season so he could work more, yet also later authored *The Game Plan for Life Bible, NIV* where he adds commentary to the Scriptures. I am suggesting, as a coach who has done it, that if you are sleeping in your office during the season then your life is out of balance.

The time pressure that coaches feel is not unique, as Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2010) argued, "most of our waking hours, and certainly our ours of greatest effort, are spent at work" (p. vx). One parachurch ministry, Coaches Outreach (n.d.), based in Dallas, Texas, focuses solely on coaches and their families, and one of the stated reasons they do so is due to the lack of time coaches have to find a spiritual home coupled with a very transient lifestyle where they may pick up and move every other year. The lack of time and lack of roots, family or friends in the area can lead to a disconnect, even if they have strong religious backgrounds and beliefs. C. Vivian Stringer (2008) wrote about searching for a church after she changed jobs,

> Like music, I think that religion is one of the greatest gifts you can give your children. God is a friend that you can always count on, even when it seems like you have no others. I hadn't yet been able to provide that for my kids, and I felt a sense of urgency about it. (p. 207)

All of this leads us in the direction of some framing questions of the current study. How does religious identity impact coaches who identify as Christian in their professional role? Is it a good idea, or even possible, for coaches to attempt to compartmentalize their lives to the point that their religious identity has no impact on their coaching and leadership styles? Many scholars would say that this is neither possible nor advisable. For example, Wells (1993) argued that all Christians have a theology whether they acknowledge it or not:

> We all have our theologies, for we all have a way of putting things together in our own minds that, if we are Christian, has as a shape that arises from our knowledge of God and his Word. We might not be conscious of this process. Indeed, we frequently are not. But at the very least we organize our perceptions into some sort of pattern that seems to make sense to us. The question at issue, then, is not *whether* we will have a theology but whether it will be a good one or not, and more particularly, whether we will learn to bring all of our thoughts into obedience to Christ or not. (p. 3)

Coach Consideration of Player Religious Identity. Neal (2013) noted that there is "an increasingly holistic view of the relationship between the human being and the workplace" (p. 5), which includes employees' religious and spiritual beliefs. Coaches, as leaders, must establish a culture that is open to individual religious and spiritual expression for the well being of their players. This does not include favoring one set of beliefs over another, or pushing the coaches' individual faith or lack thereof. To push their individual faiths would be both inappropriate and perhaps illegal in public institutions, and while it may be legal in private institutions, should be carefully considered. For a practical model, I will return once again to Hicks' (2003) concept of "respectful pluralism" that is "not aligned with any explicitly religious, spiritual, or other

comprehensive worldview" (p. 184) while being open to the individual to express his or her religion or spirituality.

While most would agree with this at public institutions based on legal reasons, some might argue that coaches at private colleges or universities can openly profess their personal or institutional belief because they have the ability to recruit a player whose beliefs are consistent with the institution and/or coach's and that the recruit can be clearly informed of the program culture during the recruiting process. However, what if a player, even if they at one time shared the coach/institution's beliefs, changes their perspective or struggles with their beliefs?

One extremely relevant study by Alyssa Bryant and Helen Astin (2008) surveyed over 3,000 college students and reported that spiritual struggles are relatively common in college students' lives. This is not a new phenomenon; as far back as 1909 John Mott pointed out that young people in college "are more or less unsettled in religious matters (p. 73). Furthermore, they noted that these spiritual struggles were positively associated with psychological distress (i.e., feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and stressed or anxious), poorer physical health, and exhibit less confidence. While this study did not identify athletes in particular, one could extrapolate that college student-athletes face the same struggles. In addition, Bryant and Astin found that "students demonstrating marked levels of religious engagement (i.e., attending religious services, reading sacred texts, joining a religious organization on campus, etc.) show lower levels of spiritual struggle than do students who are less engaged" (p. 14), and that being separated from previous religious support structures can increase spiritual struggle. In their conclusion, Bryant and Astin argued that it is not solely the responsibility of religious organizations to help students deal with these struggles, but "globally across the campus…so that

students do not have to artificially compartmentalize their struggle from other aspects of their lives" (p. 24). This is where the basketball coaching and support staff can come in, if they are open to the idea. Having a program culture that denies all religious and spiritual expression, or one that pushes one in particular can cause unnecessary stress on the student-athlete. This is important in light of the ethical concerns, noted by Martinkova and Parry (2011), that coaches have two primary duties and responsibilities: non-maleficence, including avoiding the psychological impact of stress, and benevolence, including protecting personal identity. Null (2008) explained the dilemma facing coaches and clergy very well:

> Put God and sports together, many coaches suspect, and the security or religious faith will at the very least dampen, if not destroy, the athlete's driving inner need to win. Put sports and God together, many clergy fear, and believers will be condemning themselves to the Sisyphean task of serving two masters. (p. 314)

Furthermore, Macdonald and Kirk (1999) claimed that collegiate student-athletes might face conflicts between their religious beliefs and the "jock culture" with its attendant "celebration of mesomorphy (relating to a muscular or sturdy body build), anti-intellectualism, sexism, homophobia, competitiveness and binge drinking" (as cited in Allen-Collinson & Brown, 2012, p. 8). Helping players come to terms with these conflicts is another area that the coach can offer assistance by setting a positive counter-example and providing the space and support to deal with the issues, which may include the players' religious and/or spiritual beliefs. Just as coaches should not be expected to check their religious or spiritual beliefs at the door, neither should their players. Hicks (2003) argued, "the commitment to treat workers as whole

persons, and not merely as inputs to a production process, can lead to genuine and beneficial progress toward creating a humane workplace" (p. 47).

Fear of lawsuits is one factor that prevents employers (and coaches) from incorporating religion and/or spirituality in the workplace (Neal, 2013). However, Hicks (2003) argued that employers should take this risk based on moral and legal grounds. According to Hicks, the keys to an effective, legal accommodation program in a workplace is treating everyone, regardless of beliefs, with equal dignity and respect, establishing the voluntary nature of any religious and/or spiritual behaviors, and preventing any type of religious and/or spiritual coercion. The limiting factors on Hicks "presumption of inclusion" for religious and/or spiritual expression are non-degradation of individuals, groups, or coworkers and non-coercion of subordinate employees.

Another continuing issue in American sport is the legal dilemma surrounding religion in publicly supported intercollegiate and interscholastic athletics. At the turn of the century *Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe* went all the way to the Supreme Court where they ruled 6-3 against amplified pregame prayers at football games. Steven Fitschen (2001), President of the National Legal Foundation, argued that the decision ignored years of Establishment Clause precedent. For a very recent example, earlier this year a high school in Michigan banned student led prayers after football games following complaints despite the legal protections afforded student-led prayer (Kidd, 2013). In the 1990s, the NCAA's ban on kneeling in prayer after scoring a touchdown was eventually reversed, but the NCAA recently banned religious messages on uniforms- many believe in response to Heisman Trophy winning quarterback Tim Tebow writing Bible references on his eye black (DiRocco, 2010). Glenwood (2013) wrote that the legal challenges are the result of the conservative, slow-to-change culture of school athletics.

Another issue regarding the convergence of religion, spirituality and sport is the role of sport chaplains. Also related to the previous discussion of legal issues, Dzikus, Hardin, and Waller (2012) examined the roles and responsibilities of collegiate sport chaplains at two public universities and the resulting Establishment Clause ramifications. Previously, Dzikus, Waller, and Hardin (2011) surveyed collegiate sport chaplains to understand their training, professional affiliations, and their own perceptions of the profession and found limited diversity in their sample. Interestingly, Gamble, Hill, and Parker (2013) found that sport chaplains and sport psychologists in English Premiership soccer had overlapping roles.

In conclusion, this section has argued that NCAA DI college basketball coaching is a workplace facing enormous pressure to win and produce revenue; this pressure can result in questionable ethical decision-making that may conflict with a Christian belief system; allowing coaches to express their religious and/or spiritual identity can make handling the stress of their job easier; creating an inclusive environment is a key leadership task of a coach; and accounting for players' religious and/or spiritual identity is important to their performance, but more importantly their well-being.

Leadership Theory

Now that socio-cultural influence, Christianity, religion, and spirituality have been discussed, leadership style is the next operational definition needed for this study's purpose. However, leadership itself must first be defined. Don Page and Paul Wong (2000) argued that, historically, the academic world long ignored the subject of leadership, partly due the difficulty in defining it and measuring its results. That oversight has been rectified with a bewildering number of competing leadership theories, including authentic, behavioral, contingency,

environmental, great man theory, legacy, participative, spiritual, trait, servant, situational, transactional, and transformational leadership. In addition to the theoretical debate, even reaching a consensus definition of leadership has been problematic. Alan Bryman (2013) expressed concern that the lack of a common definition of leadership can lead discussions to "very easily become bogged down in a definitional quagmire, providing the reader with an unattractive introduction to a promising area" (p. 1). However, Bryman did conclude that the common elements of leadership definitions "imply that leadership involves a social influence process in which a person steers members of the group towards a goal" (p. 1).

Those who feel Bryman's definition is not explicit enough may fall into the category Ulrich (2014) described as seeking "a holy grail of leadership, an explicit list of those characteristics of leaders that guarantee success" (p. 31). In reality, leadership is highly contextual and what works for one leader at one point in time might not even work for that same leader in a different situation. The social nature of leadership is a key foundation for this investigation into the influence of Christian faith on coaches' leadership style. Next, I will briefly discuss two relevant modern leadership theories.

Servant Leadership. Servant leadership, in particular, is very relevant to sports (Andrew, Kim, Stoll, & Todd, 2008; Burton & Peachey, 2013). Robert Greenleaf (1970) first introduced the concept of servant leadership, though Valeri (2007) pointed out its reliance on established philosophies dating back at least 2500 years. After examining the extensive literature base, Page and Wong (2000) defined a servant leader as someone "whose primary purpose for leading others is to serve others by investing in their development and well being for the benefit of accomplishing tasks and goals for the common good" (p. 2). Servant leadership begins with

the attitude and motivation of the leader, but far from taking a servile attitude, "servant leaders motivate followers through investing in them and empowering them to do their best" (Page & Wong, 2000, p. 2). Servant leadership is particularly useful in any discussion involving Christianity due to the accounts of Jesus' insistence on serving others, despite his deity. The February 2014 issue of *The International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching* devoted 16 articles to comparing former UCLA head men's basketball coach John Wooden and leadership guru Steven Covey of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* fame as servant leaders.

Legacy Leadership. Legacy leadership theory can be considered an extension of servant leadership due to its focus on not only serving the follower, but also intentionally reproducing leaders. The Christian foundation of this theory is clear, as two of the only writings on the theory are based on Moses (Wildavsky, 1984) and the Apostle Paul (Whittington, Pitts, Kageler, and Goodwin, 2005).

However, it was recently used in another context. Wilson and Dzikus (2013) applied the principles of this theory to a professional organization by examining how the organization sought to reproduce leaders through their organizational culture, investment in new professionals, and leadership development opportunities. It is likely that the paucity of research employing this framework is due to its close relation to, and subsequent envelopment by, the much more popular servant leadership.

In addition, there are also competing understandings of just what legacy leadership is. In 2008, Jeannine Sandstrom and Lee Smith created a new legacy leadership model and applied it to business. In their version, "legacy leadership is not a leadership style—it is a life system and a way of *being*, not just *doing*" (p. 25). They include five leadership practices that are based on

core values, collaboration, motivation, community, and accountability. Sandstrom and Smith come from an executive coaching background and, thus, their interpretation of legacy leadership is directed towards their clients.

This study will apply Whittington, Pitts, Kageler, and Goodwin's (2005) excellent framework as a better fit for the research purpose. Whittington et al., explained, "the legacy of the leader's influence is perpetuated through the follower's incorporation of legacy principles into their lives as they become leaders" (p. 749). These legacy principles are akin to core values, and were described as authentic and sincere. This effect on followers is described as "changed lives" (Whittington et al., p. 749). This is similar to servant leadership, in that a legacy leader puts the needs of their follower's first. Whittington et al., also provide clear motives, methods, and measures of legacy leaders.

As this study is on Christian coaches, an example of legacy leadership from Christian teachings is appropriate. In John 13:14-17, an often cited example of a leader with a servant's heart, Jesus surprises his disciples by washing their feet, despite his position of authority over them:

> Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. (New International Version)

In this example Jesus demonstrates the characteristics of a legacy leader: Jesus served His followers out of pure motive, set an example worthy of imitation, and intentionally sought to reproduce similar leaders through influence rather than exerting his authority.

Coaches have a unique opportunity to impact their players. During the season, coaches are often with their players more than any other significant figures in a player's life, including his or her parents, teachers, or religious leader. This is a tremendous opportunity for and places much responsibility on the coach to use that time as a positive leader.

Leadership style. Leadership style is the last operational definition from the study's research purpose. Sociologically speaking, there are three major leadership styles: authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire (Kendall, 2010). Authoritarian leaders take firm control of group decisions. Democratic leaders interact with the group to encourage dialogue and build consensus. Laissez-faire, or hands off, leaders encourage individuals in the group to make their own decisions (Kendall). In other words, leadership style can be operationally defined as how leaders actually go about the process of leading their followers. However, a leader is not locked into one particular style and, in fact, can demonstrate all of the styles, depending on the context of the particular situation.

Leadership style in the sports context has received lukewarm interest, despite an interminable procession of leadership books by coaches in the popular press (Billick, 2001; Calipari, 2014; Fulmer & Sentell, 1997; Saban, 2005). This is party due to the fact that the terms leadership and coaching are often used interchangeably and so in coaching research, the later is employed instead of the former (Laios, Theodorakis, & Gargalianos, 2003; Vella, Oades, & Crowe, 2010). Wildman (2006) referenced 11 different quantitative assessments that had been

developed specific to sport. Due to the qualitative design of the present study, I will not go into detail about these quantitative assessments. However, one prominent example, from Chelladurai and Sellah (1980), is given as a reference point. Their Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS) has 40 questions designed to measure five specific leadership styles (a) instruction; (b) democratic; (c) autocratic; (d) social support; and (e) positive feedback. Since its development, the LSS has been used in three primary ways, (a) athlete preference for a specific leader behavior; (b) athletes' perceptions of their coaches' behavior; (c) coaches' perceptions of their own behaviors (Chelladurai, 1990).

In a commentary on a study of soccer coach Anson Dorrance, Hanin (2012) wrote that, "leadership style is appropriate if it fits the players and coaches' references and the demands of the specific situation at hand. Usually, successful coaches can be effective and exercise different leadership styles – autocratic, democratic, or even laissez-faire (leaderless)" (p. 453). Hanin also noted that any of these leadership styles could be effective in team sports, which is highly relevant to the current study of coaches in the team sport of basketball.

This idea that multiple leadership styles could be effective was confirmed in Lee, Kim, & Kang's (2013) study of team handball players. They found that "both transactional and transformational leadership styles significantly predicted players' organizational citizenship behavior" (p. 327). However, relatively few studies have explicitly examined the influences on leadership style in coaching, as this study does.

Intersection of Coaching, Leadership, and Social Theory

There is a young but growing body of literature on the ethics, philosophy, and sociology of coaching (Anderson, 2010; Giulianotti, 2004; Giulianotti, 2005; Hardman & Jones, 2011;

Jones, 2000; Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2002; Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2004; Jones, Harris, & Miles, 2009; Jones, Potrac, Cushion, & Ronglan, 2011; Walls & Bassham, 2008). However, despite the close relationship of leadership and sports coaching, both coaching education and coaching research has focused more on tactics, technical skills, and training methods through methodological approaches that prioritize quantitative empirical methods than leadership style (Cassidy, Jones, & Potrac, 2009; Cross & Lyle, 1999; Hardman & Jones, 2011; McMorris & Hale, 2006).

Yet, the American Sport Education Program's Rainer Martens concisely argued, "coaching also is leadership" in his coaching education textbook (2004, p. vii). Similarly, Brian Culp (2014) minced no words in his proclamation that "coaches are leaders" (p. 111) in his study of the effect of studying Coach John Wooden on future coaches' dispositions on social justice. Hanin (2012) separated coaching from leadership thusly, "Coaching is based on game skills and qualities important for playing, whereas leadership skills are about the personal impact of the coach on individual players and the team" (p. 453).

In addition, most leadership research, in the coaching context and otherwise, has not contained an in-depth consideration of background or socio-cultural influences (Cassidy, Jones, & Potrac, 2009; Jones, Potrac, Cushion, & Ronglan, 2011), instead focusing on easily quantifiable predictors (Atwater & Yammarino, 1993; Chen, Chen, & Chen, 2010; Esfahani, N., & Soflu, 2013; Mumford, O'Connor, Clifton, Connelly, & Zaccaro, 1993) or even historiometric analysis (Ligon, Harris, & Hunter, 2012; Lilienfeld, Waldman, Landfield, Watts, Rubenzer, & Faschingbauer, 2012). Thus, illuminating the socio-cultural influence of religion on coaching

leadership styles would adds to the sociology of coaching, leadership, and religion literature as well as provide practical implications for each.

Intercollegiate Coaching. The historical development of basketball coaching itself provides a window into the machine that powers the current conceptions of the profession. A good starting point is to ask whether coaching matters? NCAA Champion, and Hall-of-fame Coach Everett Dean's thoughts are worthy of quoting at length:

> The coaching profession is unique among professions. We are not only building teams and programs, but we are, more importantly, building men and women and at the same time developing a great winning spirit, a will to win that permeates other fields and professions, and this contribution enhances our profession. Today and tomorrow our country needs this desire, this winning spirit. (Dean, 2002, p. 41)

One way to spread these ideals is through professional organizations. Founded in 1927, The National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) began at a time when separate organizations for men and women's interests were common. As a result, the Women's Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA) was not founded until 1981 (WBCA, n.d.).

Hickox (2002) detailed the history of the NABC, noting that it was primarily formed in response to coaches' opinions on the game being overlooked, as evidenced by drastic rules changes. Among the NABC's founding goals were to "dignify the coaching profession," "to elevate the game to its proper plane in the scheme of education," and "to maintain even to a greater degree the standards of sportsmanship" (Hickox, p. 21). This was well before the current salary and media explosion and reflects a clear intention to promote the sport as a piece of the broader educational institutional mission and to reinforce societal values. In fact, Edwards (2002)

detailed that in 1932, the NABC even adopted a Coaches Code that again stressed supporting the educational mission and behaving in a positive manner. Relevant to this study, the Code also contained these caveats:

- I believe in the exercise of all the patience, tolerance, and diplomacy at my command in my relationships with all players, co-workers, game officials, and spectators.
- I believe that the proper administration of this sport offers an effective laboratory method to develop, in its adherents, high ideals of sportsmanship; qualities of self-control; desires for clean, healthful living; and respect for wise discipline and authority.
- I believe that these admirable characteristics, properly instilled in me through teaching and demonstration, will have a long carryover and will aid each one connected with the sport to become a better citizen. (as cited in Edwards, 2002, p. 28)

The remnants of these principles are still seen in the coaching literature for even the youngest level of basketball. For example, the American Sport Education Program (ASEP)'s 2001 edition of *Coaching Youth Basketball*, lists "character development" as one of the seven primary responsibilities of a coach (p. 3). Bill Kuchar, a legendary high school boys' basketball coach in New Jersey, also compared the educational and long-term nature of coaching as teaching:

> Coaching is a form of teaching. What you're teaching is irrelevant. Whether it's basketball, biology, or basket weaving, the goal is to convey a lesson to your pupils. This

is what sums teaching up in a nutshell- giving life-long lessons and relating them to the material being taught. (Kuchar & Kuchar, 2005, p. 99)

On the contrary, in *Basketball: The NBA Coaches Handbook* (1996), Giorgio Gandolfi and Gerald Couzens make no mention of the higher calling of sports and focus purely on tactical strategies. College basketball falls uncomfortably in the middle as a sport that generates tremendous revenue and attention, like the NBA, yet still strives to teach values as part of a larger educational mission. In fact, according to the NCAA, "Student-athlete success on the field, in the classroom and in life is at the heart of our mission" (What We Do, n.d.).

NCAA DI athletics. Chapter 1 provided a snap shot of the vast pressure to win in NCAA DI basketball as result of hyper-commercialization, pervasive media coverage, insatiable fan interest, and the nature of competition itself. The resulting crisis of integrity in NCAA DI sports as a whole will now be placed in the historical and social context in which it developed. This atmosphere of controversy is not new to the NCAA, as the NCAA was born amid crisis and resides there still today.

The competition, commercialization, and cheating begins. Smith (2000) explicated that the major issues of pre-NCAA athletics are "the same issues that we face today: the extreme pressure to win, which is compounded by the commercialization of sport, and the need for regulations and regulatory body to ensure fairness and safety" (p. 12). Even the very first intercollegiate athletics competition in America, generally considered an 1852 regatta between Harvard and Yale (Mechikoff, 2014), demonstrated the need for sort of oversight.

In a foreboding example of commercialization, this first boat race was not held on a nearby river to the Harvard or Yale campuses, but instead far down the Elkins Railroad Line who

sponsored the competition (Smith, 2000). By placing the competition down the line Elkins could leverage the popular interest in athletics to raise awareness of their railway. This is similar to modern football bowl games that bear the name of corporate sponsors, or what the NCAA's "corporate champions and partners" program (NCAA, 2014). In addition to this early commercialization, the temptation to seek an unfair advantage proved too strong for Harvard who used a coxswain who was not a student (Smith). Of course, at this time there was no governing body such as the NCAA to establish rules or enforce regulations, and there would not be one for another half-century.

Governing bodies. Governing bodies in intercollegiate athletics are voluntary associations created with three primary purposes (a) to ensure fair competition; (b) to protect the athlete experience; and (c) to handle administrative duties. These primary purposes often overlap under the banner of protecting amateurism and can include areas such as restrictions on athlete recruiting and initial academic eligibility before athletes get to campus, and continuing academic eligibility for athletes, playing rules, limits on games and practices once they are on campus. Other regulated aspects with an eye toward fairness include limits on the number of coaches and the number of scholarships, what the NCAA terms a "grant-in-aid."

The NCAA includes over 1,200 institutions and is the oldest, most well known, and most lucrative governing body in American intercollegiate athletics. However, it should be noted that there are several smaller governing bodies including the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), the National Christian College Association (NCCA), and the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA). NCCA institutions often have dual membership in the NCAA, but the other organizations are mutually exclusive (Woods, 2011). However, detailed

discussion of these other governing bodies is outside of the scope of this study and is noted just to establish the NCAA's primacy in the American sports world.

On their website, the NCAA promoted itself as being:

> Dedicated to safeguarding the well being of student-athletes and equipping them with the skills to succeed on the playing field, in the classroom and throughout life. We support learning through sports by integrating athletics and higher education to enrich the college experience of student-athletes. (NCAA, n.d. Who we are)

This "enrichment" of the college experience features very strict rules on "extra benefits" that would prohibit any monetary enrichment, but does include the NCAA's efforts to "help more than 450,000 student-athletes develop their leadership, confidence, discipline and teamwork through college sports" (NCAA, n.d. Who we are, para. 3).

NCAA history. As America approached the 20th century, many began to publically question highly commercialized athletics' role in academia, including university presidents from Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Smith, 2000). However, it would take another strikingly similar concern to contemporary times, player safety, that fueled the formation of the governing body that would become the NCAA to provide oversight of college sports. Today, concussions and the potential for traumatic brain injuries are a major concern of both professional and amateur athletics (Holt, 2014; Marar, McIlvain, Fields, & Comstock, 2012). Recently, there have several rule changes in the name of player safety, including how concussions are diagnosed and rules governing when a player can return to competition (Kilcoyne, Dickens, Svoboda, Owens, Cameron, Sullivan, & Rue, 2013). In football this includes attempting to lessen the number and severity of violent collisions on kickoffs by changing the

spot of the kickoff and banning “wedges” of players. In basketball there has been a repeated “point of emphasis,” in NCAA terms, on eliminating rough play in basketball.

However, despite their seriousness, these contemporary concerns pale in comparison to the 18 deaths and over a hundred major injuries college football players suffered in 1905 alone. This crisis famously spurred President Theodore Roosevelt to convene a meeting of leaders to seek a way to improve player safety and regulate the games (Smith, 2000). The result was the founding of the Intercollegiate Athletic Association in 1906, later renamed the National Collegiate Athletics Association in 1910 (Smith).

Unfortunately, the shift from “student control of athletics to faculty oversight, from faculty oversight to the creation of conferences, and, ultimately, to the development of a national entity for governance purposes” (Smith, 2000, p. 13) did not assuage sporting controversies. In 1929, a leading voice on education in America, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Education, chided intercollegiate athletics for their rampant and blatant commercialism.

Woods (2011) astutely noted that, historically, NCAA sports have flourished in regions where there is little competition from professional sports for fans, media coverage, or revenue. This especially includes geographically isolated, land-grant institutions that prospered without local “competition from professional teams, university football teams became almost like a religion in the regions” (Woods, 2011, p. 129). This quasi-religious fervor for college sports has influenced many administrators, coaches, players, and fans to make unethical decisions in the name of victories and revenue generation for their idolatrous athletic programs. Quite often those unethical decisions revolve around the lifeblood of any collegiate athletics program: recruiting.

Attracting the next crop of talented players to one's program is the key to success. This recruitment is done via "permissible" and "impermissible" methods. The NCAA uses these terms and not the commonly erroneously used "legal" or "illegal." Using impermissible inducements in recruiting like offering money, jobs, or other preferential treatment to gain an advantage has always been an issue. Eventually, wild excesses in recruiting sparked a prominent, but failed, attempt at reform, known as the "Sanity Code." As part of this 1948 code, the NCAA created a Constitutional Compliance Committee to enforce this code intended to reign in recruiting (Smith, 2000).

In 1973, the NCAA subdivided its membership into three divisions for competition and legislative purposes: Division I, Division II (DII), and Division III (DIII) (NCAA, n.d. Divisional Differences and the History of Multidivision Classification). A major difference in the divisions is that DIII members are not allowed to give any athletic scholarships. Both DII and DI schools can offer athletic scholarships, but DI institutions have higher initial academic eligibility requirements, must offer more sports, and have more scholarships to offer. Recruiting players locally, nationally, and globally fills these scholarships. The fourth coach in the study discussed why he has enjoyed recruiting and coaching international players throughout his long career due to, in his experience, their greater work ethic and unselfishness than American players.

*Television Money***.** By the 1950s, the NCAA secured its first, million-dollar television contract for college football. There was a slow but steady growth in television contracts until the 1980s. However, after the Magic Johnson vs. Larry Bird duel on the 1979 NCAA men's championship electrified the nation, the television contracts for basketball grew exponentially. For example, in 1979 the contract stood at $5.2 million for one season, but after the Magic-Bird

duel grew to $48 million over three years by 1982 (Davis, 2009). By 2010, the television contract had exploded into a $10.8 billion over 14-year bonanza (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2010). This massive growth in revenue also engendered a corresponding growth in institutions' desire for a share of that revenue (Smith, 2000).

In 1981 *NCAA v. Board of Regents*, high-profile member institutions sued the NCAA seeking the opportunity to realize more revenue and negotiate their own television contracts for football. The U.S. Supreme Court courts ruled in favor of the member institutions in 1984, holding the NCAA in violation of the Sherman Anti-trust Act, allowed conferences and schools to negotiate their own television deals, and opened the door the media saturated environment we seen today. For example, in the last half-decade conferences like the Pac-12, Big 10, and SEC have launched their own television networks, which would not have been possible prior to this ruling. In addition, while Notre Dame had its own television contract with NBC, the University of Texas took that to the next level by creating an entire network, the Longhorn Network. Its creation was a major impetus behind the defection of four institutions from, and near destruction of, the Big 12 Conference because Texas refused to share revenues from the network.

These television contracts are an example of the crisis of commercialization facing intercollegiate athletics today. Recently, high-profile members of DI—the ACC, the Big 12, the Big Ten, the Pac-12, and the SEC—have threatened to form their own division if they are not given more autonomy (Associated Press, 2014). These growing threats are the result of a frustration with the NCAA's organizational structure that allows the majority of smaller-budget members to block reforms sought by large-budget members.

The discrepancies in the financial situations of institutions within DI are startling. For example, for the 2013-2014 fiscal year the ACC distributed a record $291.7 million to its membership, the SEC $292.8 million, and the Big 12 $230 million (Adelson, 2014), that is over $20 million per school just from conference revenues. Compare that with Savannah State University, a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) whose entire athletics department budget was $4.5 million. Schlabach (2014) highlighted that "by comparison, the University of Georgia will pay its 10 on-field football coaches about $6.4 million this year. UGA has an overall athletics budget of more than $93 million, with nearly $16 million dedicated solely to football" (para. 9).

Programs from the upper level of DI use those big budgets to play games across the country. Personally, in my six years of experience in DI basketball, despite being at two schools in the southeastern United States, we played games as far away as Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. The NCAA also allows teams to travel overseas, out of season to compete against foreign teams once every four years. Aside from the cultural experience and team bonding, coaches also like the overseas trips because they are allowed ten extra practice sessions prior to departing, usually in the late summer. Some coaches feel that these extra practices can also give them a competitive advantage on their opponents who are not traveling overseas and thus not enjoying the ten, full-squad practices. Opportunities for this type of travel, both domestically and internationally, are much less common in DII and DIII.

However, the charter flights, police escorts, and exotic trips can also feed into the players' sense of entitlement that coaches lament. Several of the coaches in the study mentioned that players become spoiled by travel and free gear even before they set foot on campus through

the elite travel-ball circuit, like the Nike sponsored East Youth Basketball League, or Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) National tournaments.

Current controversies. The NCAA's formation was in response to serious issues in intercollegiate athletics, and serious issues remain. For over 100 years, the NCAA has managed to stamp out the voices calling for massive reform and has offered piece meal changes at a glacial pace. However, the exponential growth in revenues of the elite DI schools is the spark that may explode the NCAA's tinderbox throne.

The tenuous placement of high-stakes athletics in institutions of higher education is peculiar to the United States, yet college sports' popularity cannot be denied. Mary Hums and Joanne MacLean (2013) noted that the popularity of intercollegiate athletics is "both unquestionable and at the same time paradoxical" (p. 176) due to the potential conflicting interests of academics and athletics. This paradox is currently under renewed scrutiny, and even mutiny, from all angles: former players, current players, the media, scholars, and even the NCAA membership itself. I will very briefly introduce some of the major concerns from former and current players to establish the setting in which the coaches in the study lead their basketball programs.

An example of former players attacking the NCAA is *O'Bannon v. NCAA*. In the lawsuit, former UCLA star basketball player Ed O'Bannon has sued the NCAA, the Collegiate Licensing Company (CLC), which handles trademark licensing, and video game maker Electronic Arts (EA) for the use of player likenesses in video games without any financial consideration to those players. By comparison, EA paid the NFL Players' Union nearly $35 million per year for the use of player likenesses of National Football League (NFL) players (Brighton, 2010). In addition, the

CLC's website notes that "Since its inception, CLC has paid its collegiate partners more than $1 billion in royalties" (CLC, n.d., para. 4), yet the college players have received nothing.

This lack of remuneration is based on the amateur status required of NCAA athletes, which prevents athletes from taking control over any profiting from their likeness (Brighton, 2010). A key aspect of this case is that the NCAA has the rights to athlete's likeness not only while they are competing in the NCAA, but in perpetuity (Gadit, 2012). Electronic Arts recently settled their part of the case with the former players for $40 million, the NCAA settled the video games part of the lawsuit for $20 million, and the remaining complaint is headed to a much-anticipated June 2014 trial date (Terlep, 2014).

In addition to former players like O'Bannon challenging the NCAA, current players like During the 2014 Men's Final Four, star guard Shabazz Napier was asked about the National Labor Relations Board ruling that Northwestern University football players qualified as employees and therefore could vote to unionize. Napier said he felt more like a student-athlete than an employee and expressed gratitude for his scholarship, but also added,

> Sometimes, there's hungry nights where I'm not able to eat, but I still gotta play up to my capabilities. I don't see myself as so much of an employee, but when you see your jersey getting sold, it may not have your last name on it, but when you see your jersey getting sold, to some credit, you feel like you want something in return … There are hungry nights when I go to bed and I'm starving. (McDonald, 2014, para. 8)

The fact that Napier could claim he did not have enough food was a public relations nightmare for the NCAA, especially given that the interview was part of the media coverage for the Final Four with it's multi-billion dollar television contract. In addition, shortly after the

season, as a result of the championship, his head coach would get an annual raise of roughly $1.2 million to $2.8 million for 2014-2015 (Amore, 2014). This only served to highlight the fact that the coaches are richly rewarded financially as result of their labor but the players are not.

Furthermore, the NCAA had already received recent backlash after the University of Oklahoma self-reported the NCAA violation of three football players receiving "pasta in excess of the permissible amount allowed" at a graduation banquet requiring a $3.83 donation to the charity of their choice for reinstatement (Aber, 2014, para. 25). After the Napier comments became a national story, the NCAA changed the rule surprisingly quickly, announcing unlimited meals and snacks for DI athletes (Hosick, 2014).

To critics, "pasta gate," despite the rule change, was emblematic of the NCAA's hypocrisy of claiming to have the athletes' best interests in mind, but limiting their food while raking in billions of dollars from their free labor. It is morally problematic for coaches to be earning millions of dollars, conferences to be earning hundreds of millions of dollars, and the NCAA to be earning billions of dollars when the players who provide the product claim to go to bed hungry. Robert McCormick and Amy McCormick (2006) disputed the NCAA's logic in denying athletes more than their scholarship stating, "only one group of persons is denied the full financial fruit of the bountiful enterprise known as college sports—the players themselves. Ironically, these are the very individuals who create the product and its attendant riches" (p. 76).

Establishing the broader backdrop of controversy facing NCAA DI is crucial to understanding the professional context and how these dilemmas may weigh on a coaches' conscience and impact their leadership style. Unfortunately, the many other criticisms and

sociological analyses of the NCAA must be passed over in order to focus on the coaching aspect of NCAA DI basketball.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Establishing the philosophical assumptions underpinning one's research are critical tasks, for this shapes what questions are asked and how the answers are analyzed (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). This requires establishing the researcher's ontology, or nature of reality, and epistemology, or nature of knowledge, emotion, and justified belief (Block, 2014; Merriam, 2009). Positivist research assumes that reality is governed by an objective universe, independent of human influence or perceptions (Hatch, 2002). From a positivist perspective, reality, or truth, is simply waiting for the researcher to come find it, like a cosmic Easter egg hunt that uses controlled, scientific experiments that isolate variables to find and learn about the nature of the Easter eggs. On the other hand, this research study is an interpretive or constructivist study, meaning that it assumes that reality is socially constructed, as opposed to a single, universal, observable reality (Merriam, 2009). From an interpretivist perspective, multiple realities of an experience exist because each person experiences it from their own vantage point (Hatch, 2002). As Merriam (2009) noted, "researchers do not 'find' knowledge, they construct it" (p. 8-9). In addition, the researchers co-construct this reality with the participants, and should not attempt to remove themselves from the study (Hatch, 2002). This co-construction does not mean that the researcher and the participants' involvement is equal, but rather acknowledges that the participants are involved and are not a lifeless variable solely dependent on an experimental treatment. Furthermore, Corrine Glesne (2011) argued that by involving the perspectives of several members of the same social group, in this case Christian basketball coaches, cultural patterns of thought and action for that group are revealed (p. 8).

Historically, coaching researchers have not agreed on an epistemology for their discipline, but there have been recent attempts to come to a consensus (Abraham & Collins, 2011; Grecie & Collins, 2013; Jones, 2012; Jones, Edwards, & Filho, 2014; North, 2013). The growing calls for an interpretive epistemology has been an issue for some scholars stuck in a positivist ontology (Jones, Edwards, & Filho, 2014). This chasm between epistemologies was explained well by North (2013), "Psychological approaches informed by scientism, and sociological approaches informed by interpretivism, present a dichotomized view of coaching practice" (p. 278).

However, the social nature of coaching makes the interpretivist epistemology more appropriate when studying coaching behaviors and influences. Jones, Edwards, and Filho (2014) argued that, "if we accept that coaching is relational (that is, it occurs between people and not only in the mind of the individual), the positivist paradigm as a founding ontology for it, where behaviors occur from a sequential chain of cause and effect, can only be rejected" (p. 11-12). Likewise, since leadership is a social process "embedded in experience" (Block, 2014), understanding it "requires the vantage point of multiple perspectives" (Shriberg, Shriberg, & Kumari, 2005) that the interpretivist paradigm embraces.

Statement of Purpose

As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to examine the socio-cultural influence of a Christian background and beliefs on the leadership style of men's and women's head basketball coaches at public, NCAA, DI institutions. In response to criticism of coaching science's lack of organization and impact on coaching practice, Gilbet and Trudel's completed an exhaustive meta-analysis of coaching science research from 1970-2001 that categorized 610

journal articles written in English into four broad categories: behavior, thoughts, characteristics, and career development. This study intentionally examines the first two categories of behavior and thoughts, or in other words, what these particular Christian coaches do and why they do it by examining their lived experience. For clarity, I will also repeat the guiding research questions that were also provided in Chapter 1.

Guiding Research Questions

- What is the lived experience of both men's and women's head basketball coaches at public, NCAA, DI institutions who self-identify as Christian?
- How does their religion influence the coaches' leadership style?

Methodological Justification

Qualitative research, despite many forms, at its core is about the lived experiences of people in natural settings with an emphasis on the context and underlying meanings (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2009). One key to this is "to capture the perspectives that actors use as a basis for their actions in specific social settings" (Hatch, p. 7). In this case, the perspective was Christian, leadership style was the action, and the social setting was a DI basketball program. Many scholars and armchair pundits alike have noted that taking the time to reflect on our experiences is becoming a lost art. In fact, theologians Carl Anderson and Jose Granados (2009) contended that, "It isn't enough, then, to let our experiences wash over us. We need to plumb their depth" (p. 20).

While I considered performing a quantitative survey in order to include more participants, qualitative methods were a better fit to "plumb the depth" in this study due to the emphasis on the stories of the participants (Glesne, 2011; Hatch, 2002; & Merriam, 2009).

Furthermore, Hicks (2003) lamented that the "voluminous literature on religion, spirituality, and leadership tends to be a-contextual" (p. 26). This makes the context-sensitive method of portraiture especially appropriate. The interpretive stories, or portraits, of the coaches in this study offer an insight into "the lived experiences of real people in real settings" that Hatch argued is the crux of qualitative study (p. 7). The coaches in this study are certainly real people in real settings with a narrative that has the potential to reach a broad audience due to their high profile.

Portraiture

This study employed the qualitative methods of portraiture that were pioneered by Harvard professor Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot. Lawrence-Lightfoot used several metaphors to describe portraiture, including putting a puzzle together, sewing a quilt, weaving a tapestry, and even human archaeology, but she most prominently used that of an artist painting a portrait of a subject. Interestingly, Lawrence-Lightfoot did not have an artist's background that informed the development of portraiture, but rather had been the subject of a painted portrait. Inspired by two very different experiences of having her portrait painted, Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) developed a form of inquiry that to "would combine science and art; that would be concerned with composition and design as well as description; that would depict motion and stopped time, history, and anticipated future" (p. 6).

Lawrence-Lightfoot was not ignoring the rigorous methods of social science, but did seek to add the goal of expressing the findings derived from those methods in a more artful way that was intended for a larger audience than just other social scientists. In portraiture, this is accomplished by creating a written portrait of the participant's experience that is based on data

primarily gathered from common qualitative methods, such as interviews, observations, and document analysis. The findings are then represented in a final portrait that is created, with the participants' feedback, as a "grand composition" based in the data, but communicated with the careful attention to aesthetic details of fine literature.

Lawrence-Lightfoot made it a point to note that there is a historic precedent of joining art and science, spanning over two centuries. Furthermore, she sought that same union of art and science to "capture the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of human experience and organizational life…placed in social and cultural context and shaped through dialogue between the portraitist and the subject, each one negotiating the discourse and shaping the evolving image" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. xv). The value placed on this "dialogue" between the researcher and the participant is representative of the interpretivist paradigm of research, and is also a form of member checking. Member checking is simply verifying if the participants agree with the researcher's analysis at that point in the study (Hatch, 2002), and is explained in more detail in this chapter's later discussion of credibility and trustworthiness. Furthermore, as Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) explained, "both the artist and the social scientist attempt to get close to real life. But neither art nor science can present total reality; so the reader/viewer/audience must be satisfied with the selection and composition of social reality" (p. 380). Again, this recognition of a social reality is consistent with the interpretivist notion of multiple realities existing within the same situation.

Yet, these are bold goals, and remind me of the late computer mogul Steve Jobs, who at about the same time as Lawrence-Lightfoot was codifying her concept of portraiture, famously sought to add style to the rigid and decidedly unstylish computers of the 1980s and 1990s. Jobs'

biographer quoted Jobs' thoughts about adding art and beauty to computers, "I read something that one of my heroes, Edwin Land of Polaroid, said about the importance of people who could stand at the intersection of humanities and sciences, and I decided that's what I wanted to do" (Isaacson, 2012, p. 100-101). Whereas Jobs was using this synergy of art and science to create products *for* real life, portraiture seeks create representations *of* real life.

Portraiture shares many ontological and epistemological similarities with Critical Race Theory, case study methodology, and narrative analysis, and phenomenology (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Gatzambide-Fernandez, Cairns, Kawashima, Menna, & VanderDussen, 2011; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). However, there are key differences as well. For example, whereas in phenomenology the researcher attempts to acknowledge and set aside their individual biases and perspective by completing a "bracketing" interview, in portraiture the perspective and biases of the researcher are intentionally woven into their interpretive analysis. Given that I spent six years in a DI basketball program—three years at the mid-major level and three years at the major college level—my experience can supplement the context of the participants and should not be removed or discounted.

Another key distinction between portraiture and other types of qualitative research is that others "listen *to* a story while portraitists listen *for* a story" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 13) to capture the essence of the participant through a "haunting paradox of a moment in time and timelessness" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005). The resulting narrative "is not meant to be generalized or replicated. Its purpose is to communicate a meaning that can have an effect on the understandings, attitudes, and actions of its viewers" (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003, p. 877). Likewise, Gatzambide-Fernandez, Cairns, Kawashima, Menna, and VanderDussen (2011) noted

that portraiture is not a deductive testing of previously established theories, but rather an inductive exploration of participants' lived experience situated in a particular context. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) lauded portraiture for its freedom from the shackles of rigid theoretical frameworks and strict methodological requirements while searching for the good in a person or situation.

This intentional search for what is right and good is another key difference between portraiture and other methods which Lawrence-Lightfoot felt tended "to describe pathology rather than health" (1983, p. 10). This does not mean that weaknesses were ignored, for in portraiture, they are actually sought and assumed to be present. In fact, the four coaches in this study were very open and honest about sharing weaknesses, and I intentionally attempted to give them the opportunity to do so.

Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983, 1997, 2005) argued that far from glossing over weaknesses, it is the presence of the negative counterpoints of struggles that help illuminate the successes and goodness of a situation. Importantly, Lawrence-Lightfoot also emphasized that this goodness is only understood through a thorough investigation into the context of the personal and institutional history, the structures, relationships, ideology, goals, motivation, will, and overall ethos. In this study, the triumphs and the struggles of each coach's story were found through the combined use of many aspects of traditional ethnography, including semi-structured interviews, observations, field notes with descriptive and analytic notes, and qualitative content analysis, but over a much shorter time period than traditional ethnography.

Gaztambide-Fernández, Cairns, Kawashima, Menna, & VanderDussen (2011) argued that portraiture meets the "three dimensions that are at the heart of the methodological challenges of

qualitative research: building relationships, negotiating boundaries, and constructing representations" (p. 3). By addressing these three dimensions, portraiture was the best method to represent the findings from my research questions. Importantly, Merriam (2009) stated that when choosing a research design, researchers should "consider whether the design is a comfortable match with your worldview, personality, and skills" (p. 1). I believe that my relevant experiences as a Christian, a coach of 18 years, a writer, and a researcher have shaped my worldview and research skills to make portraiture a good fit in this case.

Reflexivity Statement

My interest in the topic of this study is born out of my own experience. As a football and basketball coach for 18 years at various levels, including an inner-city youth league, a private middle school, three public high schools, and two NCAA Division I colleges, I have a keen appreciation for and interest in the leadership styles of coaches. Throughout my life I have read countless leadership books, including many from coaches, attended numerous leadership conferences, and when considering a career move into educational administration even passed the tests my state required to be a building level (principal) or system level (superintendent) leader. Finally, I grew up in Greensboro, North Carolina, the home to one of the five campuses on three continents of the renowned Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), whose mission is "to advance the understanding, practice, and development of leadership for the betterment of society worldwide" (McCauley & Van Velsor, 2004, p. 523). Not only was the CCL in my hometown, but its campus is also located on the banks of Lake Higgins, a municipal reservoir for Greensboro, meaning that for me, the study of leadership was literally in the water.

I have also learned from my experience as follower under leaders of disparate backgrounds and contexts. In my high school and college playing careers, I had five different head coaches in three different team sports, each unique. As an assistant coach, I worked for six different head coaches. It was instructive to work with these head coaches whose range of experience as a head coach varied from one year to nearly thirty. As a high school teacher, I had nine different principals in twelve years, exposing me to a variety of leadership styles. As a result, I feel like I have a broad foundation for leadership research.

The intersection of coaching and leadership has also long been a passion for me. In fact, the mission statement for my teams during the 10 years I was a high school varsity head coach from 2002-2012 was "Building servant-leaders for life in the community, the classroom, and on the court through trust, love, and commitment." We called community, classroom, and the court, the three C's, and everything we did was based on serving in those areas in ways based on our core values: trust, love, and commitment. My passion for leadership in sport led me to create a leadership academy for all athletes at one of the high schools in which I taught and coached, and in 2011 to start two websites for coaches that share positive and encouraging information for coaches.

Furthermore, my journey in my Christian faith is a key part of my experience as well. I was raised a "cultural Christian," as I went to church with my family because that's just what we did on Sunday. My parents both were Christians and provided a nurturing environment for me growing up. In fact, when I saw adversity in their lives, I witnessed them both appearing to strengthen in their faith. However, I had little connection to the people in the church, rarely read the Bible, and did not participate in other religious practices such as prayer with any

intentionality or regularity. As a result, when adversity hit my life I had a limited foundation and completely turned from God. I like to describe it this way, I wasn't a Paul, but I sure was a Peter, meaning that I did not persecute Christians as Paul did before his conversion, nor did I spread the Gospel as Paul did after his conversion. However, I did twice publically deny Christ, as Peter did three times in all four Gospels of the Bible. In my mid-twenties, I committed to my Christian faith (it was more of a commitment than a recommitment), then got married, and was later baptized on the same day as my wife. There was no defining moment that prompted this commitment to my faith, but rather a long series of investments in me by people who cared, including my wife, Georgia. I am happy to say that the first place Georgia and I ever went together, other than the master's class in the sociology of sport where we met, was to church. At the time "foam dancing" was popular at one local nightclub. Just as it sounds, foam would rain down on the dance floor full of college students. My roommates used to joke that they didn't want to have to tell their future kids that they met their mother foam dancing, and I agreed.

My faith journey relates to this study because it had a direct effect on my leadership as a coach. For example, early in my head-coaching career I was determined to outwork anyone. I would occasionally sleep in my office, which had one of those fluorescent light bulbs in the ceiling that stays on for safety sake, even when you turn the lights out. So, I would climb up on a chair to rotate the long, skinny, fluorescent light bulb until it went out. We did things "the right way." We served the community in various ways, we emphasized, monitored, and publically rewarded academic achievement, we acted respectfully on the court, we went to the state playoffs for the first time in school history, yet something was missing.

After a few years as a head coach I asked myself, “If I say I am a Christian, how is my coaching any different from someone who is not?” I had no answer, because it was no different. I had completely compartmentalized my faith. This compartmentalization meant that what I did on Sunday, or what I read in the Bible, or what I believed about my faith was set-aside in other areas of my life. It had little or no influence, and certainly no intentional integration into my leadership. Anderson and Granados (2009) referred to Pope John Paul II’s admonition that separating faith and everyday life is one of the biggest temptations facing modern man. After asking myself that question, I was determined to integrate my faith into my coaching, while being respectful of others’ beliefs or non-beliefs. I began by simply telling the parents at our preseason parents meeting that I was a Christian and that would help explain why I coached and led the way I did. I also told the parents that their son did not have to share my beliefs to play for me, that I would not push my beliefs on their son, and that I would respect all other beliefs or non-beliefs. I had great relationships with players of all backgrounds including Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Mormonism. However, providing them the background of my decision-making completely changed my experience as a coach and my players experience for the better.

I came to this study as a man who has enjoyed sports his entire life, yet no longer ignores the ills that plague sports. This does not mean that I have turned my back on sports, just that I do not gloss over their imperfections as I once did. I played whatever sport was in season growing up, and every member of my family was interested in sports, from my grandparents to my brother. In addition, several coaches had a profound impact on my life. My high school football coach, the late Charlie Griffin, my college basketball coach, Jerry Wainwright, and Davidson

College's Bob McKillop, whose camps I worked for years as a young coach, did more to shape the person that I am than anyone other than my parents.

However, this is not to say that all of my experiences with sport have been positive. I have also experienced embarrassing failures on the fields of play, and had one coach in high school whose negativity and public humiliation of me and others made me want to coach so that I could do the opposite. Sadly, I have seen unethical behavior from players, coaches, administrators, and boosters both on my teams and opponents.

Thus, as I interviewed the coaches in this study, observed their practices, and analyzed relevant documents, I did so as a researcher who acknowledges the vast potential for sport, religion, and leadership to impact people. I believe, based on both my personal experiences and my critical academic study, that sport can have either a positive impact or a negative impact. This impact can range from a profound impact with immediate, life-altering results, to a minimal or no perceivable impact. I was curious how the Christian faith would move that scale for the coaches in this study.

Research Design

This study employed criterion-based sample selection (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Merriam, 2009) of NCAA DI head men's and women's basketball coaches. The following were the participant selection criteria: (a) they must be a current head men's or women's basketball coaches at a public, NCAA DI institution; (b) they must be a self-identified Christian, meaning there was no statement of faith or doctrine to agree with in order to participate. The participants simply responded to the call for Christian coaches. Also, I did not seek out specific coaches because of their Christian faith; (c) I used purposeful sampling to achieve a diversity of levels of

DI coaches, as indicated by conference affiliation, races and ethnicities of the coaches, sex of the coaches, and gender of team coached.

The number of desired participants was set at four to allow for multiple perspectives from several categories of the purposeful sample. Many qualitative designs do not seek a certain number of participants, but rather collect data until reaching saturation or redundancy, defined as when no new information is being obtained (Merriam, 2009). However, the number of participants in this study was not intended to reach a point of saturation, for in portraiture each individual's story is paramount.

While qualitative research does not seek to generalize results to a broader population (Creswell, 2014; Glesne, 2011; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2009) having more than one coach in each category provided more depth to the analysis. For example, having four total participants allowed there to be two participants in each of the following categories: female coaches, male coaches, women's basketball team head coaches, men's basketball team head coaches, two coaches of color, two Caucasian coaches, two coaches at high-major DI institutions and two coaches at non-high-major conferences. High-major, or sometimes just called major, conferences have generally been considered the six elite conferences that had automatic qualifier status in college football's Bowl Championship (BCS): The ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Big East, Pac-12, and SEC (Seebruck & Savage, 2014). However, with the recent changes in conference alignments and the replacement of the BCS with a college football playoff, I have added a newly created conference, the American Athletic Conference (AAC) to the list of high-major conferences.

Head coaches, as opposed to assistant coaches, were chosen because they face much greater pressure than assistant coaches as the leader of the program. Public institutions only,

were chosen because of the legal restrictions on religion in the U.S. Constitution's "Establishment Clause" and the legal freedoms provided by the "Free Exercise Clause."

Procedures. This study employed qualitative content analysis, interviews, observations, field notes, and reflexive journaling, each of which will be discussed here. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) noted that, as in any research study, those employing portraiture "engage in acts (implicit and explicit) of social transformation…and in the process, we face ethical dilemmas and a great moral responsibility" (p. 11). Therefore, every consideration was made to meet the standards of the University of Tennessee's Institutional Review Board (IRB). After the IRB approved the study, an email was sent to leading professional organizations for basketball coaches including: National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) for men's collegiate basketball coaches and the Women's Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA) for women's collegiate basketball coaches. The NABC approved the research and agreed to allow me to use their organizational name in recruiting participants, but would not forward the invitation to participate (Appendix A) to their membership given the study's specialized focus. The WBCA responded that they could not assist me in the study, but did suggest that I contact the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA). This was disappointing especially because of my intention to include female coaches and also coaches of women's teams who historically have been underrepresented in sport research.

Next, parachurch ministry organizations with known ties to college basketball were contacted via email, including Athletes in Action (AIA), the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), and Nations of Coaches (NOC). Each organization was asked to send the invitation to participate to their membership. None of the organizations would send the invitation to

participate to their membership, but did identify a pool of potential participants that they believed to meet the criteria. All of the coaches that the parachurch organizations suggested were contacted via email with the invitation to participate. Of these coaches, seven consented to participate after receiving the informed consent form (Appendix B) per the IRB. Potential participants that respond were screened to make sure they meet the criteria before proceeding further.

Though I only sought four participants, I began the study with all seven who originally consented in case some participants withdrew from the study. The four participants in Chapter 4 were chosen to provide the most diverse sample. Participants were informed at least four times that they had the option of choosing a pseudonym to protect their identity and to ask the researcher to strip potential identifying information from the data: during the first interview, during the follow up interview, during member checking of the interview transcripts, and during member checking of the portrait draft. Member checking is explained in more detail in this chapter's later discussion of credibility and trustworthiness.

All four participants who completed the study chose to use their real name and not a pseudonym. In her study of high schools, the creator of portraiture, Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, did not use pseudonyms for the principals or the names of the high schools in what she admitted was "a significant departure from the classic traditions of social science" (1983, p. 21). Due to the somewhat unique sample of her study, and the great importance of following ethical procedures, Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1983) excellent justification of using the real names is worthy of quoting at length:

Not only did I want to honor these schools, applaud their efforts and acclaim their successes; I also recognized that it was important for readers to be able to place the high schools in context—visualize the terrain, the community, the neighborhood streets, and the people. As a form that is partly shaped by aesthetic considerations, portraiture is to some extent a visual medium, full of powerful imagery. If I were to mask details of context or provide misleading descriptors, for example, I would begin to compromise the portrait. If I merely chose to change the institutions' names, without making any contextual transformations, the schools would be immediately identifiable to all those who were either knowledgeable or curious. The decision to use the high schools' and leaders' real names, therefore, reflected the school people's generosity and confidence, my wish to publically applaud their efforts, and my decision to portray the settings in vivid, exacting detail. (p. 22)

Data collection. The sources of data for this study were qualitative document analyses of team media guides and/or websites, semi-structured interviews, field observations, and reflexive journaling.

Qualitative content analysis (QCA). QCA was used with various textual data forms in this study, including media guides, official team websites, newspaper articles, and tweets. Of the many definitions of QCA, Schreier (2012) has probably the most practical, "a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative material. It is done by classifying material as instances of the categories of a coding frame" (p. 1). A code, according to Saldana (2013), is a "word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute" (p. 3).

While there is much flexibility in QCA, steps need to be taken to ensure quality work, or what is known as trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is strengthened through a transparent, thorough process that is observant of the researcher's background to create defensible inferences (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Watt, 2007). In this study, I felt that descriptive coding was the best choice due to the familiarity I had with the coaching context, and that descriptive coding is appropriate in studies with a variety of data forms, such as this study (Saldana, 2013).

One of the key benefits of QCA is the ability to go beyond the manifest content to the latent content (Berg 1998). Manifest content includes the surface, obvious components, but latent content goes beyond the surface to the relationship aspect and involves a deeper interpretation of underlying meaning (Berg; Graneheim, & Lundman, 2004). Put another way, manifest could be considered the content and latent meaning could be the context (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). For example, the passage "our financial situation makes recruiting challenging," could be descriptively coded as "challenges" (or finances, or recruiting) based on the manifest content. However, a second passage "I've had three athletic directors in four years" might also be descriptively coded as "challenges" based on the researcher's interpretation of the latent meaning of the content. Especially in the case of latent content, McNamara (2003) notes that the texts are "polysemic- i.e. open to multiple meanings to different readers" (p. 5). However, this is consistent with interpretive research; a different researcher could arrive at a different interpretation of the same data.

Once a coach consented to participate, a qualitative content analysis (QCA) was performed on the team's online media guide, if available, and/or the official team website. Online media guides were available for three of the four coaches who completed the study. The

purpose of the QCA was three-fold (a) to gain demographic information of the coach; (b) to extract details of the coach's basketball biography with particular attention to influences, successes, and struggles; (c) to get a sense of the historical context of the institution, the conference affiliation, and the basketball program. Obtaining this information prior to the first interview allowed me to save time by eliminating questions whose answers could be easily obtained from the documents. Given that this study took place during the competitive season, when the coaches were so strapped for time due to travel schedules, media obligations, and recruiting needs, this allowed me to have more time for deeper questions in the interviews. Also, as each coaching situation is different, even within Division I, the QCA allowed me to get a sense of the essence of the challenges the coaches faced at their particular institutions at that particular time.

Semi-structured interviews. After a QCA was performed on the team media guide and/or official team website, I developed a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix C). A semi-structured interview can be likened to a pre-GPS cross-country road trip, it has a general destination in mind, but no one is quite sure of how exactly what roads we'll take to get there. Semi-structured interviews are situated between the highly structured standardized interview, in which the interviewer is seemingly irrelevant but for asking the pre-determined questions in their pre-determined order, and the very informal interview, in which open-ended questions and a lack of any predetermined direction prevail (Merriam, 2009). Glesne (2011) explained that "the intent of such interviewing is to capture the unseen that was, is, will be, or should be; how respondents think or feel about something; and how they explain or account for something" (p. 134). This emphasis on the thoughts, emotions, and rationalizations of the participants is a great fit for the

purpose of this study to express the lived experience of the coaches and examine the influence of their Christian faith on their leadership style. To do so required me to find out what the coaches were thinking, how they felt about it, and how they thought through integrating, or not integrating, their faith into their leadership.

However, I willfully separated leadership questions from faith questions because I did not want to lead our conversation in a direction it would not naturally take, and I wanted to build rapport and trust. If they mentioned their faith when discussing their leadership then I would follow up with questions to investigate that connection for them. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) emphasized that, in portraiture, the quality of the interview is dependent on the relationship between the researcher and the participant.

The QCA informed the interview guide in such a way that they coaches could tell I was prepared and knew their background. They do not have time to waste, given the demands of their job, and this clear preparation also helped in establishing rapport. Furthermore, the fact that I was able to share my background, which was so similar as a Christian and long-time coach, also helped build the relationship.

Relative to portraiture, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) further explained that "the quality and complexity of the relationship will be shaped by both temporal and temperamental dimensions," or time and frequency (p. 138). This can be taken two ways relative to this study. On one hand, to build any relationship you need interaction. On the other, these coaches are always so busy and were in the middle of their competitive season, so too large of a time or frequency of time would be intolerable to them.

The coaches in this study were interviewed twice, once before the observation of their gameday shootaround and game, and once after. The interviews ranged in length from just over thirty minutes to just under an hour. In my experience interviewing college coaches the last three years for my website's podcast, I have found that at the 20-minute mark most coaches get uncomfortable due to their busy schedule, so the fact that every interview lasted over 30 minutes, and several close to an hour, spoke to the significance of the topic.

Observations. In this study, I observed both a gameday shootaround and an actual game. A gameday shootaround is a practice of varying intensity and length on the day of a game. Some coaches have intense, full-scale practices, whereas others have light-hearted, short skill-focused sessions. Most coaches consider them vital to keeping their players focused on the task at hand in that particular game. This is much different from football where it is normal to have a week to prepare for a game. In college basketball, a team might play three or more games in a week drastically shortening preparation time, but not the pressure to perform. Shootarounds also gave me a chance to get up close and personal with the coaches and their teams. There is rarely anyone else in the arena during a shootaround, just the traveling party of the visitor (e.g., radio crew, sports information director, athletic trainer, student managers, players, and coaches). This allowed me to see the coaches interact with their players and coaching staffs in a non-public setting, providing great insight into their leadership style. Then later that day, I was able to observe a game from the media seating area of each arena. This allowed me to observe the coaches' interactions with players, their coaching staff, game officials, and the media in a public setting when they are under the pressure to perform. I also observed any postgame press

conferences, or, in the case that there was not one, talked to the coach myself after the game about what had transpired.

While we all observe our surroundings every day, Merriam (2009) argued that, "observation is a research tool when it is systematic, when it addresses a specific research question, and when it is subject to the checks and balances in producing trustworthy results" (p. 118). Taking these three requirements into consideration, first, my observations were systematic. For each participant, I examined their schedule for a game after our initial interview and around mid-season that was within an eight-hour drive. Based on my experience in coaching, I felt that a mid-season game would give the best insight into a typical day in the life of this team. Early in the season, a coach may be still trying to impose their will on the team of how they want the team to play. Late in the season, if the team is performing poorly then this can change the dynamic of practices and games with a loss of emotion and energy, though all coaches guard against this. In mid-season, however, the culture of the team is established and large preseason goals are still attainable improving motivation and energy. In addition, the coach will have a better handle on how to motivate each individual on the team by this point in the season and, likewise, the players will know what to expect from the coach.

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) wrote that there is no substitute for seeing the context in which the participants are engaged first-hand. While portraiture is informed by the methods of ethnography, such as observations and interview, it does not require years in the field common to ethnography. Merriam (2009) also noted that observations could help triangulate emerging findings when used in conjunction with interviews and qualitative content analysis.

Triangulation in qualitative research is another form of establishing trustworthiness of the findings, a concept discussed earlier.

Furthermore, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) identified five key observations that help explicate the context (a) the physical setting; (b) the researcher's perch or perspective; (c) the history, culture, and ideology of the place; (d) any central metaphors and symbols that shape the narrative; (e) the actor's role in shaping and defining the context. It is these observations that lead to the follow-up, semi-structured interview guide. Also, a key to establishing these five observations is taking effective field notes.

Field notes. Field notes can be taken by hand or on a computer, but their purpose is to make sure you record the details of the day with enough description to "enable you, a year later, to visualize the moment, the person, the setting, the day" (Glesne, 2011, p. 73). In this study, I took field notes by hand at gameday shootaround observations to minimize distractions. I took detailed descriptive notes of the physical setting, the coaches' interactions with people, the players' responses to their coaches' instruction, how long certain drills lasted, and notes on the ebb and flow of the game.

In addition to descriptive notes, I also took analytic notes during stoppages in game action and after the shootaround or game completed. Glesne (2011) described analytic notes as "the time to write down feelings, work out problems, jot down ideas and impressions, clarify earlier interpretations, speculate about what is going on" (p. 76). These were crucial in looking for the repetitive refrains that demonstrate the essence of the situation.

Data analysis. Credibility considers how well data processes address the intended purpose (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). In this study, the intended purpose was expressing the

lived experience of the coaches and interpreting the influences of their faith on their leadership style. In other words, did the study use the most appropriate method(s) for data analysis? In addition, is that analysis trustworthy? As previously mentioned, triangulation is one method of establishing trustworthiness and credibility. Denzin (1978) provided four types of triangulation, only one of which is required, and two of them apply to this study: the use of multiple methods, (i.e., qualitative content analysis, interviews, and observations), and the use of multiple sources of data (i.e., team media guides, official team websites, newspaper articles, interviews, and observations).

Additionally, another common method of establishing credibility and trustworthiness is through member checking, also known as respondent validation. It simply means to seek the feedback of the participants on the emerging themes (Merriam, 2009). In this study, the participants' feedback was solicited on several occasions. First, within each interview I would check with the participant to make sure I was getting their point. Second, either I or another transcriptionist who had signed a confidentiality statement (Appendix D) transcribed each interview verbatim. The transcription was then emailed to the participant who was asked to clarify any comments they thought needed clarification, correct any factual errors, or add any missing information. Third, a draft of the participants' portrait was emailed to the coach so that they could again verify the factual information and provide feedback on the emerging themes that I had identified. Three of the four coaches provided feedback, with only two factual errors to correct in total. Overall, the coaches were enthusiastic in their evaluation of the portraits. The one coach who did not respond to the draft of their portrait had provided in-depth feedback

earlier in the study, and was supported by the QCA and observation. Therefore, I am confident in the findings of that coach even though they did not comment on the final portrait.

According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), there are five modes of synthesis, convergence, and contrast in the data analysis that helps create the aesthetic whole, or grand narrative (a) repetitive refrains; (b) resonant metaphors- poetic and symbolic; (c) cultural and institutional rituals; (d) triangulation; and (e) construct themes and reveal patterns. Repetitive refrains are thoughts and phrases that appear in several different parts of the investigation and are closely related to triangulation. Resonant metaphors are the artistic flair that gives the portrait life. They may come directly from the participants themselves, or be fashioned by the portraitist. Cultural and institutional rituals are a key part of the context that helps shape the participants' attitudes and behaviors. Each of these is explicated in detail within the portraits in Chapter 4.

Presentation of Findings. Portraiture seeks to "capture the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of human experience and organizational life…placed in social and cultural context and shaped through dialogue between the portraitist and the subject, each one negotiating the discourse and shaping the evolving image" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. xv). Whereas in quantitative research, the researcher's voice is all but eliminated, and in some qualitative methods, such as phenomenology, the researcher's voice is bracketed out of the study, in portraiture, "voice is the research instrument, echoing the *self* of the portraitist" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 85). However, the portraitists' voice must never overshadow the participants, is used in support of their story, and represents the careful relationship that has been built between researcher and participant (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis).

The final portrait should have sufficient resonance to achieve authenticity and sufficient coherence to produce an aesthetic whole (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). This is accomplished through a detailed physical and social description of the setting, a historical synopsis of the particular context, and an explanation of emergent themes as seen through observation, interviews, and document analysis. The length of the final portrait varies depending on the amount of time spent in the context. In Lawrence-Lightfoot's original 1983 study of high schools the portraits of the schools ranged from 30 to 50 pages.

Judging the Quality of the Study

Kilbourn (1999) claimed that a quality dissertation should employ the self-conscious method, explained as an awareness of the connections between epistemology, method, and meaning. Kilbourn also noted that this should "go beyond glib nods to the horrors of positivism or the abuses of narrative. The author should explicitly demonstrate an awareness of his or her role as a write with a biography" (p. 28). Maria Piantanida and Noreen Garman (2009) built upon the Kilbourn's self-conscious method by providing the following criterion for judging interpretive dissertations:

- Providing explicit rationales for conceptual and methodological decision within the conventions of one's research genre.
- Make visible one's process for thinking through the interconnected facets of the inquiry.
- Understanding the epistemological and ontological implications of one's decisions.
- Providing a persuasive logic-of-justification. (p. 80)

By logic-of-justification, Piantanida and Garman referenced Smith and Heshuius's (1986) explanation that the "focus here is not on (research) techniques but on the elaboration of logical issues and, ultimately, on the justifications that inform practice" (p. 8).

Specific to portraiture, Dixon (2005) posited that researchers are able to "explore the complexities of participants' lives through conducting lived research that seeks to forefront the perspectives, voices, and experiences of the researcher and the participant, the portraitist and the subject" (Dixon, 2005). Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) went into more detail by providing five essential elements of portraiture: context, voice, relationship, emergent themes, and the aesthetic whole. I have summarized the details of these five essentials that Lawrence-Lightfoot's (2005) gave in a reflective piece about portraiture:

- Context. Includes physical, temporal, historical, and cultural details.
- Voice. Includes the transparent, autobiographical voice of the researcher in understandable language.
- Relationship. Includes an evolving connection between the researcher and participant that is collaborative and dialectic.
- Emergent Themes. Includes resonant metaphors and often paradoxical thoughts.
- Aesthetic Whole. Includes a grand composition that blends the rigor of social science with the aesthetics of literature.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Given Never Earned:

Nikki Caldwell, Louisiana State University Head Women's Basketball Coach

Overview

"My staff and my team, they know I am a God fearing woman, but I don't have to go out and tell them that, you know. Through our works, let it speak."

A Welcomed Intruder: A Shootaround Observation.

Have you ever been interrupted while working at your job, such as someone barging into your office? What if the interruption happened as you were preparing for an important professional moment only hours away, such as a meeting with a big potential client, or a big event that was months in the making? How would you react, given that you were expected to produce big results later that day? What if that event was also being televised, carried live on the radio, streaming on the Internet, and over ten thousand people were going to watch it in person? This was the situation that LSU Head Women's Basketball Coach Nikki Caldwell's faced upon being interrupted as she prepared her team during a for a crucial road basketball game at the University of Tennessee. However, just calling this game "crucial" really does it a disservice. In reality, the build up to this game had more layers than a celebrity wedding cake. Caldwell's reaction to the interruption of her team's preparation at a gameday shootaround, or light practice, provided an arresting insight into her leadership of the Lady Tigers.

Just after the celebration of the New Year, LSU journeyed up from the bayous of Louisiana to the edge of the Great Smoky Mountains for the opening game of the 2013-2014

SEC season against the vaunted Tennessee Lady Vols. LSU brought high expectations into the season, fueled by the previous year's Sweet 16 appearance in just Caldwell's second season at the helm. However, knocking off the Lady Vols, a perennial power, on the Tennessee's home floor would be a "statement game" for the Lady Tigers, and Caldwell, despite any "coachspeak" to the contrary. One example of coachspeak is the notorious way coaches downplay the significance of any one game in particular, despite the media and fans' insistence that some games are more important than others. However, to interested observers outside of the LSU basketball program, this game had been circled since the schedule came out.

You have to understand that, for LSU, this was not just *any* opponent, this opponent was the Lady Vols: the eight-time NCAA champions, annually the NCAA's attendance leader (UT, n.d.), a fierce conference rival, and arguably one of the most dominant sports teams from *any* sport at *any* time. Far from resting on their impressive history, the current edition of Lady Vols basketball rolled into this game with a record of 11-1 and a number 5 national ranking, while LSU was sporting a 10-2 record and number 16 national ranking (University of Tennessee, 2014). This was the kind of game you wrote home to momma about, or texted home about, as the case may be today.

LSU's athletic program is proud one, boasting numerous SEC and national championships. In fact, the first page of this year's LSU Women's Basketball Media Guide intentionally seeks to overwhelm the reader with 28 different numerical accomplishments, including 5 straight Final Four appearances from 2004-2008, 3 SEC regular season championships, 2 SEC tournament titles, 2 national players of the year, and 819 wins with a 68%

winning percentage (Martin, 2013). Yet, the program was on hard times when they called Caldwell back to the SEC as LSU's head coach in April 2011.

Retracing the tumultuous coaching turnover at LSU, even in the midst of five straight Women's Final Four appearances, helps reveal what Caldwell was walking into when, in 2011, she left her head coaching job at UCLA for Baton Rouge. In 2004, the Lady Tiger's legendary and beloved coach, Sue Gunter, retired amid serious health concerns after 22 seasons as the third-winningest coach in women's basketball history. Gunter passed the coaching torch to Pokey Chatman, an esteemed former LSU player and assistant coach, who led the team to the Women's Final Four. Near the end of Chatman's third very successful season as head coach, she resigned under a cloud of controversy and has since moved on to the WNBA. Veteran assistant coach Bob Starkey finished out Chatman's last season with a fourth Women's Final Four berth in a row. In 2007, another coaching legend rolled in to town, Hall of famer Van Chancellor. Chancellor, whose impressive resume includes four WNBA titles and an Olympic Gold Medal, led the Lady Tigers to the last of their five straight Women's Final Fours in his first season. However, after four years, Chancellor resigned under pressure when the Lady Tigers missed the NCAA Tournament for the first time in 13 seasons (Guilbeau, 2011).

Coaching changes are never easy on players, but the instability after Gunter's retirement had also worn on LSU fans who were hungry for a return to the glory days and a consistent leader they could count on. Caldwell took her first LSU team to the NCAA tournament despite being short-handed and her second team to the Sweet 16, LSU's first since 2008. Caldwell did not shy away from big expectations, telling the crowd in her 2011 introductory press conference,

"There is no exception to not getting to the Final Four. We definitely want to make that the destination for us every year that we take the floor" (Hotard, 2011).

While the Women's Final Four was the hopeful destination at the end of the season, that January night's destination was a game with the Lady Vols in UT's cavernous Thompson-Boling Arena (TBA). TBA is the second largest on-campus arena in the country behind Syracuse's Carrier Dome (UT, n.d.). Tennessee proponents happily point out that the Carrier Dome was primarily constructed for football as a way of justifying why TBA is *only* the second-largest on-campus arena. Built in 1987 with a capacity of over 24,000, UT's basketball home was designed to be slightly bigger than their rival's arena, Kentucky's Rupp Arena. While TBA's seating capacity has since been reduced by the addition of luxury suites—because you gotta pay the bills, you know, and luxury suites generate more revenue—it is still an imposing, NBA-caliber arena featuring the latest technology, lighting, and scoreboards.

Just before noon, on a cold January morning, I sat on the front row of that grandiose arena watching LSU prepare for the Lady Vols game. The court was surrounded by all-black seats, making the hardwood, playing floor seem to suddenly emerge from the darkness, like a theater set emerges from behind thick black stage curtains. The reflection of the bright overhead lights off of the hardwood's transparent, yet shiny, protective wood sealant, gave the court an ethereal glow. By way of comparison, the arena is as tall as a 12-story building from playing floor to roof (UT, n.d.). When the arena is full of roaring fans, it is deafeningly loud, but when it is primarily empty of fans, a single person's voice can slice from one side of the lower bowl seats to the other.

At shootarounds, there is usually no one in the arena except for people closely associated with the team: players, coaches, athletic trainers, student managers, a sports information director (SID), and maybe the radio broadcast crew. This emptiness is by design, as coaches do not want any distractions or spies. Clad in various types of predominantly purple and gold athletic gear, the LSU players and coaches were going about their business of preparing for the night's game when an interruptive cry rang out.

"Nikkk-eee!" the elderly couple shouted in warm unison to Caldwell. The man sported a Lady Vols hat with its distinctive color combination of a light shade of orange, white, and Columbia blue, and the woman wore what looked like a custom made Lady Vols sweater that had clearly been made by the loving hands of a big fan. I could only assume that the sweater was saved for a game day tradition because it was less than seven hours before the 7:00pm tipoff.

Potential distractions like this are exactly the reason most coaching staffs have someone assigned to check the credentials of such interlopers, such as the elderly couple and me, and to run off unauthorized visitors. For me, the intrusion of the couple's outcry was partly startling and partly amusing as I sat observing the shootaround from the front row of the permanent seats behind the scorer's table, with permission of course.

"Nikki!" the couple shouted again. Yet, no one moved to remove the couple, despite the fact that they were interrupting shootaround and despite the fact that they were wearing clothes *in support of LSU's opponent*. No one but me seemed alarmed by their presence as the couple shouted from the edge of the permanent seats to Caldwell.

In my 18 years of coaching, including three as a graduate assistant with the Tennessee men's team from 1999-2002, I had only witnessed anything remotely similar one time. In our

shootaround before a game at Syracuse, a man wandered halfway down the steps from the concourse to shout obscenities, and tell us how bad Syracuse was going to beat us, among other niceties. Our head coach, Jerry Green, stormed in the direction of the man returning expletive fire in a manner that momentarily shocked most of us, then served to unite us in the old-as-time mantra of us-against-the-world. Every coach has played that us-against-the-world card at some time, but in this case Green didn't have to pull the card out, the shouting man had figuratively dropped it for us as he scurried back into the darkness of the concourse to escape Green's salvo. So this was the only context I had for someone coming into practice and why I was so surprised by the non-reaction of *everyone* in the LSU program. The couple that I saw calling out to Caldwell were not disrespectful hecklers, but they were a distraction nonetheless.

Aside from the unusual nature of someone coming into their shootaround, I also expected that Caldwell and the LSU contingent might be on edge given the importance of that night's game. I've already established that this was a big game because of the opponent and because of the high expectations of athletic success at LSU, but those are just surface layers of the night's plot. Digging deeper into Caldwell's background displays the profound personal connections she has to the people and institutions of east Tennessee.

All opposing coaches competing in the Lady Vols' home arena already face the psychological pressure of playing a traditional powerhouse without adding people shouting during their shootaround. This pressure is applied from both above their heads through banners and below their feet with court markings, as I will explain. High in the rafters, the eight massive national championship banners, the numerous SEC regular season and tournament championship banners, the NCAA tournament appearance banners, and the massive retired number banners of

some of the greatest players, and coach, in women's basketball history gently sway, ever so slightly, in the air-conditioned breeze.

If you are an opposing coach or player you might try to keep your focus on your own team instead your opponent. Perhaps you avert your eyes from the banners hanging above, only to see that the court beneath your feet also reminds you of your opponent's tradition through the court's honorary name: "The Summitt." This honor is in homage to legendary former Lady Vols Head Coach Pat Summitt who reluctantly retired a year and half earlier due to early-onset dementia, Alzheimer's type, as the all-time winningest coach in NCAA basketball history, men's or women's. Considered much more than just a basketball coach, Summitt is also revered for her impact on the women's game in general and now also for her courageous leadership role in the fight against Alzheimer's Disease.

Coach Summitt's presence at Lady Vol games is still large and imposing for opponents. Symbolically, a large replica of her signature is affixed in white paint just below the bright orange, slightly arched, "Tennessee" that is painted across midcourt. In a further display of symbolic presence, one of those massive banners hanging from the rafters includes Summitt's record of 1098 wins versus just 208 losses and 8 national championships. Finally, Summitt still attends all home games, and is perched just a few rows up from the game action.

All of this is impressive and meaningful to basketball aficionados, as all head coaches are, but especially for Caldwell. In another layer of intrigue, and perhaps pressure, Caldwell has a special appreciation for Coach Summitt and the Tennessee tradition because she is a former Lady Vol herself. Caldwell won national championships as both a player and an assistant coach

for the Lady Vols under Coach Summitt. Caldwell spoke glowingly of Coach Summitt's influence on her life in our first interview:

> *If you look at our profession, the torch is being passed, if you will, coming from a program like Tennessee, and obviously Coach Summitt is no longer coaching, but so many of us came under her leadership and so we feel an obligation to carry that on.*

However, for Caldwell, part of carrying on Summitt's legacy on this night will be trying to best Summitt's old team in front of her. Surely, Caldwell did not need any more distractions at shootaround.

In yet another layer of emotion and pressure, Caldwell's close personal friend, Holly Warlick, now coaches the Lady Vols. Warlick is a former Lady Vol all-time great player herself, was an assistant coach when Caldwell played at UT, and served alongside Caldwell as an assistant coach at UT. Their shared basketball heritage makes their styles very similar, and every coach wants to have something up their sleeve. Caldwell explained how those with connections to Summit, that they both "have a tendency to take on coach's tendencies. We may not have that stare, but we have that drive and competitive spirit. We still believe in defending and rebounding. Her footprint is still stamped on that program" (Rabalais, 2012).

The previous season a sportswriter noted that Caldwell and Warlick talk often during the season, "Nikki Caldwell updating Holly Warlick on the latest developments of her daughter Justice, Warlick filling in Caldwell about her newest puppy. Closer friends neither one has in college basketball. Fiercer competitors neither one will face" (Rabalais, 2013a). However, their bond runs far deeper than small talk about family. Not only is their friendship another example of Caldwell's close ties to the women's basketball community, but they also both share a

commitment to community service and began a charity together, Champions for a Cause. The organization website lists the mission as "to advance and support the cause of charitable organizations who advocate and act to better the quality of life and health for individuals at risk or in need" (n.d.). Among the work of their charity are annual long-haul ride motorcycle rides that have raised over $300,000 to benefit the fight against breast cancer (Martin, 2013).

Many coaches play their friends or their alma mater during a season, but one would be hard-pressed to find deeper connections that are shared by Caldwell and UT. This makes the story a common topic of media coverage. For example, Baton Rouge sportswriter Scott Rabalais (2013a) quoted Caldwell discussing what both she and Warlick learned from Pat Summitt about playing friends:

> 'Pat was friends with a lot of people in the women's game, but when it was time to throw the ball up it became business,' Caldwell said. 'It's never personal. You kind of take that mentality against people who are dear to you. I look at Holly as family. There's nothing I wouldn't do for her and vice versa. I just look at it as an opportunity to play against a great team' (para 4)

Yet, even the "Game Notes" written by her own LSU Sports Information Department (2014) pointed out that Caldwell was 0-4 in her career against Tennessee as a head coach and 0-3 at LSU. Everyone knew that Caldwell's record against UT would be highlighted every time they played until Caldwell's team got a win in the series. For most coaches, this would only add to the pressure of the moment, but Caldwell seems clearly unfazed in her words before the game and more importantly by her actions at shootaround.

In still another layer of pressure, not only was the game between the #16 LSU Lady Tigers and the #5 Lady Vols a battle of ranked teams, it was also being carried live on television and the Internet, and it was the conference opener. Non-conference games are important, but they are essentially preparation for the brutal SEC conference season. It is the conference season that usually determines if you make the NCAA tournament and your seeding if you get in. You might also note that there are no banners hanging in the arena for non-conference wins. In short, this game is the beginning of a pressure-filled conference season. No more tune-up games and no more "cupcakes," a common term for overmatched nonconference opponents. This was the real deal. Later in the season, Caldwell would describe conference games this way, "You don't look at anybody's record prior to a game. You don't look at the standings or where you're ranked. It's a different level of competition in this conference" (Barreca, 2014).

The clamor from the couple calling to Caldwell at that shootaround was startling to me because, to most coaches, team functions such as practices, shootarounds, games, meetings, and pregame meals are sacred times that are to be tightly controlled to eliminate distractions. Distractions, the thinking goes, can make players uncomfortable, stressed, and cause them to lose their focus, thereby leading to poor performance. In the field of Sport Psychology, the importance of preparing athletes for their "performance environment" is well documented. Wrisberg (2007) noted that spectators present an added mental demand on athletes, and therefore coaches should attempt to prepare them for this. Some coaches attempt to prepare their athletes by intentionally adding spectators or distractions. In that case, they are trying to positively use the concept of habituation, where exposing players to external stimuli such as spectators at practice can help athletes handle the stimuli more efficiently in the future games (Wrisberg).

Other coaches place great value on an almost sterile practice environment as a means of creating consistency and reducing uncertainty. Burton and Raedeke (2008) cited reducing uncertainty as a critical component of stress management termed "competitive engineering" (p. 173). Since NCAA DI coaches are primarily judged by the performance of their teams on the court, many maniacally attempt to control the environment surrounding their players. In fact, Martens (2004) named "logistics manager" and "event and contest manager" as two of the seven types of managerial roles coaches play (p. 415).

Coaches know that during the actual games they cannot make shots or passes, nor get rebounds or defensive stops, that they have to cede the majority of the control to the players on the floor. But what they can control, most control mightily: from the pregame menus, to meeting room temperatures, to detailed "practice plans" that account for every second of time and equipment, to the travel itineraries, just to name a few. Routines and rituals become important and any deviations are limited. In fact, on the practice plans of my college coach, which were posted before every practice for us to see, our warmup routine was simply named "Ritual."

To recap the scenario again, if you are LSU Head Coach Nikki Caldwell: you have been hired to revitalize a proud women's basketball program where competing for championships is the expectation; you are playing one of if not the best sports program of all-time; you are playing them on the road facing what will be the largest crowd you see all season; you are playing against a team you have never beaten as a head coach; you are playing your alma mater in front of your mentor; your close personal friend is the opposing head coach; you are playing them live on national media, in your conference opener, before your family and friends and two people wearing the colors of your opponent come-a-shoutin' into your sanctum and you don't bat an

eye. But more importantly, neither do your players or your staff because of your leadership and the role model you feel so strongly that you have the responsibility to be.

"Oh, heyyy!" Caldwell responded to the shouting couple with a brilliant smile of recognition. She quickly made her way around the massive scorer's table, soon to be emblazoned with rotating ads, over to the couple and shared a warm embrace, intimate conversation. After seeing her reaction to them I was almost expecting them to start taking selfies, but, alas, no pictures were take, just a brief but clearly affectionate conversation during shootaround before a huge game; no biggie.

When the couple first shouted for Caldwell, I thought that maybe they were just big Lady Vol fans, happy to see a former Lady Vol, and there really isn't any other kind of Lady Vol fan than "big." Coach Caldwell later told me that the gentleman calling her name had coached her when she was young. Caldwell's interaction with her former coach was touching because it seemed so unusually normal. In the high-pressure world of college basketball, the normal can be unusual. And to greet an old friend during shootaround as if they were the most important thing going on in her life at that moment is unusual in the world of high-pressure college basketball, even if it may seem like a fairly normal reaction to the rest of the world.

The way she handled them reminded me of the way my mentor and college basketball coach, Jerry Wainwright, made it a point to treat guests with respect, especially coaches. Looking back, this is something that I also tried to do with my teams. I wonder if any of the LSU players have picked up on how Caldwell treated these and other visitors. My guess is that they have, even if they don't know it. Her reception of these visitors resonates as a great example of

her leadership style in action. It's one thing to say you keep the game in its proper perspective, but it's quite another to demonstrate it consistently with your actions.

Caldwell was loose and relaxed at the shootaround without being unfocused. Finding that delicate balance with their teams has troubled many a coach, especially so for my teams at the high school level. Even at the college level I have seen teams that are so unfocused that they get little out of the shootaround, which leads to a lack of focus and discipline during games causing them to seriously underperform.

On this day, LSU seemed to strike the right balance: they got some shots up in an unstructured time period, which players love; they got shots up in structured time, which helps prepare them for the game; they covered their defensive principles for how they would guard the UT offense in a period that was business-like without being overbearing; and they reviewed what aspects of their offense they thought would be effective against the Lady Vol defense. It was especially telling that when one player, who seemed to always do the opposite of what she was supposed to, messed up Caldwell did not embarrass the player or make a scene, but clearly coached her on the side and by talking to her discretely as she walked across the court. Since I had not seen LSU play that year I thought that player must be trouble, and she was- for the Lady Vols. Later than night, she played a great game and was a difference maker in the final outcome.

During the game, there were wild runs in both teams' favor. During those wild runs, there was never a sense of panic when the momentum was against Caldwell, or of satisfaction in her expression or body language when things were going her way. In fact, one of her assistant coaches wore her emotions on her sleeve to a much greater degree. When I asked her about handling the pressure of her position as a DI head coach and big games such as these, she such

gave a thorough and poignant answer that it is worth sharing in its entirety, with some commentary interjected. In the first part of the quote, Caldwell shows her humility by not elevating the pressure of the game above the pressures that people might face in their everyday lives:

> *I think there is pressure in everything that we do whether you are a coach or a school bus driver and you have to get the kids to and from school safely, but for me, yes, there is an expectation the university has of us but you've got make sure your expectations line up and synchronize with one another in in taking on this role. In coming to LSU, my expectations and their expectations were the same: we want to bring the spirit of competitive greatness back to these student athletes, we want them to graduate, and along the way we want to make sure to be positive role models within our community and, really, let's be there for others. To me, if you can get that lined up then you don't feel the pressures as much although they are sitting there because there are certain expectations.*

My college coach used to say, "Everyone has butterflies in their stomach. The trick is to get them to fly in formation." Caldwell does not dismiss the pressure or the butterflies, but stresses the importance of maintaining a proper perspective, which puts those butterflies in formation. She goes on to explain more about this perspective here:

> *I mean, obviously, they don't want us to be having losing seasons. I think if you change your focus on what really matters in life, and that's developing your student athletes to be great people and great ambassadors for your program, then really try to get the right*

people on your team, on your bus, then that's all really that your administration can ask of you.

In that part of the quote, Caldwell delineates her leadership beliefs by emphasizing making her player "better people" and "ambassadors" by underscoring her commitment to graduation and community service. Yet, she knows that the harsh reality is that the "competitive greatness" she seeks to build must eventually result in some wins.

Caldwell continued her eloquent answer by noting the importance of a good attitude and preparation while drawing on her experience in the basketball community at Tennessee:

Then, so one of the biggest pressures I think that anybody has is really the pressure of how you going to come to today? Am I going to be a person with a bad attitude, a person that doesn't care? You can cancel out pressure through your preparation and so the more organized we are then when you are going into battle and you know you have worked hard you are not going to feel that pressure as much. I think that is something I learned a long time ago, especially being at Tennessee. You look at Tennessee and historically they have had the toughest schedule in the country and that was pressure everyday to come in and play some of the best teams in the country. Well, I'm like how did we go into those games? Did we feel the pressure? No, 'cause we felt as though whomever we faced we have out-worked them in practice we have done things nobody else does. We are up at 6 am doing our conditioning; we are doing our weight training; we are practicing at an elite level. I think that is a way you can help cancel that out (pressure) is through your preparation and through your feelings. And we talk about this, to where is your tank? Where is your preparation tank at? Is it on full? Have you

watched all the film that you needed? Did you have an unbelievable practice and did you do extra? Because if you go into a game with your tank filled then you may have those butterflies and things but through the repetition and everything you have done you will be able to get through that.

Caldwell's time as part of the Tennessee basketball community has clearly deeply impacted her beliefs and she is passing these same lessons on as a legacy to her players. Early in her tenure at LSU, Scott Hotard (2011) quoted one of her players describing Caldwell's style this way, "I think she wants to bring the fun atmosphere," senior forward LaSondra Barrett said. "But also, kicking butt at the same time." Indeed.

After hearing her thoughts on pressure is it any surprise that this is how she responded to the couple's shouts that day at shootaround? I wanted to know more about Caldwell's background and the communities that shaped her leadership: church, family, and basketball.

Three Communities of Influence: Church, Family, & Basketball

"Remember your upbringing. Remember your faith and it will get you through everything… It's through your faith that got us through, and got me through, that stressful week where we lost. It's also through our faith that got us through to that Sweet 16."

Beginnings in a Secret City

In order to understand the present, I will return to the beginning. It was in Oak Ridge, Tennessee that the foundations of Caldwell's leadership and her Christian faith were laid. Though born in Atlanta, Georgia, she went to high school in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Oak Ridge is a mere 25 miles from Knoxville, home to the University of Tennessee's campus and

Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) headquarters. The region is well known for their passionate support of UT athletics, and unlike women's sports in many areas at the time, the Lady Vols received tremendous attention. If you are a history buff you may know of how this rural area became home to the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), which former director Alvin W. Weinberg called "one of the world's most powerful environmental laboratories, equipped to address economic, climatological, ecological, and energy aspects of global climate change (as quoted in Johnson, 1994, p. x). However, Oak Ridge is probably better known for its role in winning the Second World War.

The town is nestled between the Cumberland Plateau to the west and Great Smoky Mountains to the east, which are both visible on a clear day. Nearby, the Clinch River flows to feed the popular Watts Bar Lake. In 1942, the U.S. government chose 59,000 acres of this quaint, peaceful farming valley as a federal reserve to host one of the three sites assisting in developing the atomic bomb intended to end World War II, the Manhattan Project (Johnson, 1994). Chosen for its proximity to rail lines, safe distance from the coast and any potential enemy attacks, the surrounding ridges would keep Oak Ridge's secret (Olwell, 2004). Longtime local residents were given just a few weeks notice to vacate their property to make way for thousands of imported workers and their families from across the country, swelling the local population from around 3,000 to over 75,000 in less than three years (Olwell, 2004). Many of the workers weren't even told what they would be doing and would live behind high security fences and checkpoints to protect America's secret facility (Johnson, 1994; Olwell, 2004). After the war, the ORNL continued it's scientific mission, but the population dropped from its high of 75,000 during WWII to just over 27,000 by the 1990 US Census (Walsh, 1991) when Caldwell was starring for

the local high school basketball team. Caldwell led the Oak Ridge High School Lady Wildcats to a 105-6 record, a state championship and a #3 national ranking (Jennings, 1993) under the leadership of another strong female leader, Coach Jill Prudden (Jennings, 1998). She then signed an athletic scholarship with the local Lady Vols, thrilling her supportive extended family.

Church Family

It was here, in Oak Ridge's Spurgeon Chapel, that her family and church family made her faith a way of life. Hers was a smaller church, full of relatives, that needed everyone to put their talents to work. She had nowhere to hide, even in those moments of her youth that she might have wanted to. The fact that Caldwell's church family included a network of multi-generational family relations, in addition to the others in her church, made this was an even more powerful influence in her life. Caldwell described this blended church family this way:

> *Everybody knew everybody and everybody knew 'that's Josephine's grandmomma' and 'that's her great-grand daughter' and when we were going off to college I remember our minister saying, 'Sister Caldwell's daughter is going off to the University of Tennessee,' and that's how I grew up. So you embrace who you are and what's inside of you and you use it.*

It was clear that, for Caldwell, the church in its entirety helped raise her and direct her, and everyone had a role.

> *We went to the same church that my great grandmother had been going to. So, everybody knew our family in that regard, and I was in the choir. My sister was. My cousins were. I couldn't sing though. (laughs) I think that was just our way of being part of the church, was, you know, you had your kids' choir group. And we were wanting to see the kids*

there, so, there you go. And I was, "Why can't we not be in a choir?" when I think back, because I cannot sing a lick. But in a small church, you'd get up and we would come in from our respective homes, and we would go and, obviously, as a kid growing up we participated in the plays, the choir, any recital. Getting up there and speaking in front of the group, even when I was in high school and leaving off to go to college. And it was a very friendly and family and small-knit church. And it was a church that afterwards, you talked to everybody and then everybody in my family- because my aunts, my uncles, my cousins and everybody would go to my grandmother's house and we'd eat dinner…And so that whole day was about your faith and your family.

I asked her at what age did she know she was a committed Christian and she explained that it was a way of life that had almost always been a part of her:

When I was eight, nine years old. I mean, it was our treatment of each other and our family and friends…So, I do think it was at a very, very early age that we were committed. And we didn't-- I don't know if we knew we were committed. We just lived a certain way. And then I think that showed our commitment and how we lived our life and how we went about as kids. Because I don't think that you sit idly by when people are being picked on and things like that, I remember I was that type of kid that would stand up for someone else. I remember I almost was like, I had to take up for my younger sister when my cousin, he may try to bully her or just trying to do whatever. I just remember being that type of kid. And befriending. I was the tall kid growing up. I was very active in sports since I was six years old and I would have a different variety of friends. From all

walks of life, and you know, all nationalities. I was just open to just being that type of kid. It carried with me through my adult life as well.

Today, this "living a certain way" means continue to stand up for others, and passing this responsibility on to her players, through the leadership of her basketball program.

African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Spurgeon Chapel, the church of Caldwell's youth, is an AME Zion church. I will briefly take up some historical background about the AME Zion denomination to shed light on its influence on Caldwell and also because ignoring the unique contribution of Black churches to the religious experience in America "runs the risk of a seriously distorted picture of what American religion is like" (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). In addition, whereas some coaches in the study, like me, had changed denominations during their lifetime and expressed no particular attachment to the denomination of their youth, Caldwell was clearly impacted by hers.

Attracted to Methodism's emphasis on social justice, the AME Zion church is one of several Black Methodist denominations that that began in the deepest darkness of racial oppression in 18th and 19th century America (African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, n.d.; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Newman, 2008). At the time Caldwell was singing in the choir growing up, it was the second largest Black Methodist denomination with over 1.2 million members (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Today's AME Zion church website quotes retired former senior Bishop Cecil Bishop as explaining, "We have a holistic approach and a holistic gospel. We don't feel that we live in a kind of compartmentalized sense, but that life is a complete whole" (n.d.). This holistic nature is quite evident in Caldwell. She is not a Christian coach; she is a Christian who coaches, a Christian who is a mom, and a Christian who serves her

community. Her faith is integrated into everything she does and not compartmentalized into just a day or two per week.

Taking church with you. For many coaches, even those who profess a strong faith, the difficulties of the profession can take a great toll. The high frequency of jobs changes requiring moves to different states, coupled with frequent travel for games and recruiting can make it difficult to stay connected a local church. I asked Caldwell if staying connected to her faith was difficult for her as she went from Tennessee to Virginia, back to Tennessee, out to UCLA, and finally to LSU in her coaching career and she responded:

> *It was- yes and no. It was a finding a church home and visiting different places up in the church with some of our students over the years. We started a Bible study at UCLA, so we've participated. I know when I was even at Tennessee, it was not always easy for me to drive all the way to Oak Ridge, and so I found different churches and hopped around in Knoxville a little bit, which was a 20 to 30 minute drive from my hometown.*
>
> *I do feel there's a tug, if you will, because on Sundays, it's difficult. It's not difficult, but it's not easy either. You have shootaround. You have pre-game. And then you have a game. And so, you know, Sundays is difficult. The other thing that is difficult is when you are only home three Sundays in two months because your travel schedule for your team doesn't allow you to be home. For me, it's taking church with me. Taking church on the road. Knowing my relationship that I have with my Savior, and making sure that I'm taking the time and taking the moment to always be in church, even when we're flying. Especially having a family, always staying prayerful and fearful, because I*

> *am a definitely a God fearing woman. You've got to kind of figure how can you bring your upbringing with you and take it on the road, if that makes sense.*

This brings up a debate regarding sports and the Sabbath that has been stirring for centuries. Caldwell mentions the fact that they regularly have games on Sundays. Should she object to this as a Christian or view it as just a necessary trade off for her public platform as a DI head coach? Caldwell definitively believes in the power of her platform. In fact, in encouraging a Christian to pursue college coaching she explicitly told me she would tell them, "*if you want to go into coaching, use it as a platform."*

However, it is important to note that Caldwell agrees that thinking of coaching as a platform does not mean to use it to force your beliefs on others. I specifically asked her how she handled players or staff members with other religious and/or spiritual beliefs and she replied:

> *I respect their beliefs. I do have that, players and on staff (who aren't Christian). But they also have shown that they respect the Lord's Prayer that we give before the game every game, us coming together when we have team dinners, and while holding hands and we pray. They're respectful of my belief and most of our kids' beliefs, so we're very respectful of theirs too.*

First time head coach. Caldwell specifically mentioned that when she moved across the country to Los Angeles for the head coaching job at UCLA she was lonely, with no local contacts or church. She was swamped with the transition from assistant to head coach as she jumped into her first head coaching job. Much like becoming a parent for the first time, you might think you know what it's going to be like, but you do not really know until you go through it. Caldwell discussed the difference in being an assistant and the head coach:

I think it has (changed her leadership) in the way that there is a different level of responsibility that you feel because you know you're at the helm, if you will, and you're pretty much the face of the program. I do believe that sitting one seat over there is a lot more meetings (laughs) and a lot more other things that pull you away from just, "Okay I am an assistant and I just scout and I just recruit." You have to do the community service, the media relations, the marketing side of it, and making sure that you have set the foundation for how you want your program to be run. (And) the relationships that you have to foster not only within your team and within your staff, but also with the athletic trainer and your academic advisor. It's a lot of other variables that pull you, so I think you have to wear many, many hats when you sit one seat over.

When Caldwell discussed the transition to head coach for her, it was clear she did not have to create a new set of beliefs to put into practice. This is a further example of the consistency and holistic nature of her leadership influenced by her Christian faith. For example, her commitment to serving others and her sense of responsibility was a constant repetitive refrain:

I would say that the foundation of being a leader whether you are an assistant or head coach is pretty much built on, for me, it has been built on being of service and really representing something bigger than yourself. I don't think that wavers in being a leader that you know that you are an extension of the program, the university, the state of Louisiana and there is a certain way that you must behave and that there is a certain way you carry yourself and so that doesn't change.

When I asked her if any of her teams as an assistant or head coach had ever had a team chaplain she said only one, but "*I thought it was great to be able to come to the office and again hold the Bible study and allow us to have some spiritual guidance, I think that was just unbelievable."* However, UCLA did not have a chaplain so she started her own Bible study, first for her coaches and then for other athletic department employees who wanted to participate. She described it this way:

> *And then we had reached out to some other people within the department. It was something that we did once a week. During the day, like during lunch time. And we kind of bounced around, so everybody could meet. Then it wasn't just one person always standing or talking in front of the group. And it wasn't basketball, it was life related you know- things that you're feeling, topics that were going on within you right now and how do we bring that all together in fellowship.*

Faith today. Confidence, especially in athletics, shares a very thin border with arrogance. Caldwell, however, is clearly confident in herself and her faith without appearing arrogant or judgmental. This is quite evident in one of our conversations:

> *You don't have to go out and put your belief on anybody, but the way you carry yourself verbally (and) nonverbally, it should come through that way. My staff and my team, they know I am a God fearing woman, but I don't have to go out and tell them that. Through our works let it speak.*

This belief shows the influence of James 2:26: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also (New American Standard Bible). However, Caldwell is not trying to "earn" her way into heaven through her works. Caldwell agrees that it is through faith

that we are saved and not by our own works, or "earning" it. God's grace and mercy are freely given to us. This idea is seen many times in the Bible, including Hebrews 11:6, Romans 3:28, Matthew 15:8-9, Titus 1:16, James 1:22, and Galatians 5:25. Ephesians 2:8-10 puts it this way, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (NIV). Whereas Caldwell's team slogan, which adorns the cover of this year's media guide, is "Earned Never Given" Caldwell and all Christians' salvation is "Given Never Earned."

I asked Caldwell what practices or routines were important to her faith today. She proceeded to give a wonderful example of how her faith influences her leadership:

> *I would say prayer is big, but I read a lot of—when I was searching for leadership and books—and, you know, I've read everything from Coach Summitt to Mike Krzyzewski and (John) Maxwell had stuck with me quite a bit. I'll do my devotional, but I'll also, without putting my faith on the team, I will reference to Maxwell and passages a lot. Even in speaking to the team before practices, and speaking to the team before a game. There's a lot in the Bible, that can be translated, I hope, to help our team. Whether it's referencing and doing acronyms that are associated with—where I may take a passage and associate it with an acronym. And then, that acronym I will put it on the board, before the game, and we will talk about those acronyms, or what that acronym means, and how it reflects. And it will be applied to our team and what we have to do that day…but it starts from a passage. So, I carry that with me everyday and I talk to my team in that way.*

One of the interesting aspects of this is that she commonly uses acronyms with her team that are not faith based as well. For example, when talking about the struggles her team had this season she said:

> *I think when you have a team like ours, one of the things that we had been, I don´t think plagued with, was consistent leadership. It was in, it was out, it was good, it was not so good and so just talking about that "AOL account," accountability, ownership, leadership.*

I wonder if her players are old enough to even know the more common meaning of AOL from the 1990s, America Online. The way she shared it without hesitation made me believe it was something she had discussed with her team often.

As for judgment, Caldwell is leaving that to God. When I asked her about how she would handle players who did not share her beliefs or even were openly against them she said:

> *My goal is to empower our student athletes. I want them to be the best that they can be, on and off the basketball court, and I want everybody to represent themselves in a professional manner, whether it's personally, socially, financially, anything ending in "-ly"…That's my personal opinion and that's what I going to preach to my daughter. Is that you accept everyone for who they are. I'm not here to pass judgment...I'm here to hopefully empower them to make the right decisions and be productive citizens.*

The above quote, once again, shows Caldwell's long-term perspective of leadership. She hopes to impact her players far beyond the playing floor and long after their basketball career is over.

Caldwell's faith was called on during this season, in particular. Aside from the normal time demands and responsibilities of being a DI head coach, the team also suffered through

injures and a late season losing streak. Caldwell again put her leadership in a broader perspective when she admitted the demands on coaches, but also suggested that young coaches can handle these demands by holding to the Christian faith of their youth in both good times and bad:

> *I just think as a coach, we're always being pulled in many different ways. Just don't lose that you once were in a choir at a church. Don't lose that you stand up there embarrass yourself in the play, that you had recitals. Remember that. Remember your upbringing. Remember your faith and it will get you through everything. It will get you through those tough days when you think that, 'My team is this. My team in that. We can't do anything. We can't box out.' It's through your faith (in Jesus Christ) that got us through, and got me through that stressful week where we lost. It's also through our faith that got us through to that Sweet 16. Stay true to your relationship and walk, you know, I would just say walk in the light, there's no reason even when things aren't going well, to have your head down. I say walk in the light because always lift your head up high and just look up, like 'this is amazing thank you,' and always give thanks.*

Family

A mother's influence. Caldwell's mother, Jean, has had an enormous influence on her. In the media guide for her senior season at UT she called her mom "her number one fan" (Jennings, 1993, p. 24). She clearly felt supported and loved by her mother in our conversations as well. In fact, when I initially asked Caldwell to describe her leadership, she immediately credited her mom for developing her as a leader:

> *I think my mom saw it in me at an early age. I didn't understand really what it meant to be a leader (but) being the oldest sibling she always held me accountable for my younger*

sister. And so when I think back about my childhood, I feel like my mom was grooming me (laughs) at an early age to take on responsibility for not only my actions but the actions of others and my sister in particular.

This quote is representative of the deeply ingrained sense of responsibility Caldwell feels to those around her. Caldwell later laughed as she recalled one bit of scriptural wisdom that her mother drilled into her:

I remember her always saying when I was growing up, 'What you do in the dark will always come to the light.' That is kind of like my mom (laughs). And so, she'd be right there on that shoulder and you can hear her saying that.

The essence of this quote is seen several times in both the Old and New Testaments, including Job 12:22, Ecclesiastes 12:14, and Matthew 10:26. 1 Corinthians 4:5 states it this way, "Therefore don't judge anything prematurely, before the Lord comes, who will both bring to light what is hidden in darkness and reveal the intentions of the hearts. And then praise will come to each one from God" (Holman Christian Standard Bible).

The key phrase that Caldwell could hear her mom saying even when she wasn't there is reminiscent of her coaching philosophy. For example, I asked Caldwell if she had any core values or slogans that she tried to ingrain into her team and she responded:

Yeah, you do. You look at each team and you may start with a slogan you know 'earned never given,' things like that. But I think it is things on a daily basis that we always continue to talk about, 'not cheating the game,' which means don't cheat yourself. So in everything that we do we were trying to push them to the limit. Like, just for instance, in sprint work- a down and back. 'Well, we know a down and back you can run it in twelve

> *seconds but let's run it in ten seconds.' 'Yes, we are going to do a box out drill and it's two on one' or 'Well, we are going to make it three on two' and where you gotta do just the extra.*

Just as Caldwell could hear her mom in her head saying "What you do in the dark will always come to the light," I'd be willing to bet that Caldwell's players can hear some of her favorite phrases, like "don't cheat the game" or "earned never given" even when Caldwell is not around too.

Motherhood's influence. Nikki Caldwell became a mom for the first time in 2011 with the birth of her daughter, Justice. Later the local newspaper wrote,

> She hopes like all parents, she is being a good mother to her young daughter as she balances her job with being present for Justice's big first moments. She is certain being a mother is helping her be a better coach. 'She makes me a better woman and a better coach.' (Rabalais, 2013b)

When she speaks about her daughter it rings as key reverberation of her leadership and faith. I asked Caldwell specifically if becoming a mother had changed her leadership and her tone of voice instantly changed from the energetic uplifter that I had come to know to a tender, reflective tone:

> *I thought I had purpose, but my purpose, it's all about her, and you know this, there is nothing like the love of your child. It's…it is… it can literally take your breath away. And it is, I never understood that type of love until I had Justice and I think…I want to make her world and the people who are around her, who are gonna influence her, I want to make it better. I want to make it better for her. I don't want to make it easier because I do*

think you need some struggles in your life. I want to make sure she has better opportunities than what I did. I want to continue to expose her to as much as we possibly can. It has made me more driven, more passionate, more determined to be the best mom that I can be, because I say I'm the mom to 18, 19 year olds, but I'm really the mom to a two year old, and every decision that I make, I think of her, I think of our family and I say, "Will Justice be proud?"

Again we see the repetitive refrain of responsibility in this quote as Caldwell says, "*I want to make her world and the people who are around her, who are gonna influence her, I want to make it better."* Caldwell had already been trying to make the world a better place through her commitment to the community, but becoming a mother has added a new motivation.

As she concluded her thought, she gave an insight into her faith with this:

And so, and she's such, kids, two-year-olds, babies, we are so blessed to be able to walk and be able to wake up everyday with a gift from God, and I have an angel in my presence that I can see every single day. And I can hold her, and I can touch her, and she is my angel.

The local press has also covered Caldwell's thoughts on her growing family. In this quote from *The Advocate's* blog she explains how she coaches and leads as a mom would lead her own children, "in a sense of doing the right things, playing this game a certain way, making sure you're representing the program. It's the same things you tell your child when they're out. It's about us as a family" (Rabalais, 2013b). This once again blurs the lines between the communities of her family and basketball family. In these examples with her daughter we see again the sense

of responsibility Caldwell feels not only to her daughter directly, but to the world she lives in through her leadership as a basketball coach.

Basketball Family

Previously, I presented examples Caldwell's deep respect for the women's basketball community has previously been shown through her comments about Pat Summitt and Holly Warlick. Caldwell also regularly praises former LSU Coach Sue Gunter. In discussing Summit and Gunter's impact on the game Caldwell said, "I've been able to reap the benefits of their struggles to get this game to where it is today" (Rabalais, 2013a). In addition, she also worked as an assistant coach for another legend for three seasons: former University of Virginia coach Debbie Ryan. Ryan won over 700 games en route to seven Conference Coach of the Year awards and one National Coach of the Year award. Caldwell regularly extolled the influence of the people like Coach Ryan and the broader basketball community on her, and also demonstrated the close relationship of her basketball family to her natural family.

> *I have been around a lot of great people so I definitely think that has a lot to do with shaping who I am as a person, and I have a great team behind me with my family but more importantly within the women's basketball community that I call upon that I seek advice from that I lean on, if you will. So I am making good decisions not only for my immediate team, but for the future of my program.*

In her postgame comments after the win at Tennessee, Caldwell again gave praise to Coach Summitt while also mentioning another crucial ingredient in her leadership: her staff.

> *I think the one thing is – and I told the team about this in our pregame speech about greatness – I've been fortunate to be part of the Tennessee program as a player and as a*

coach. Obviously, Coach Summitt means the world to me. I said through us, Tasha Butts, one of my assistant coaches and Tony Perotti another assistant coach – we all came through the Tennessee family. That's a part of them too. We talked about that – what that means to come into this arena and play in this environment. But more importantly to have the respect for Coach Summitt, and what she's meant to the women's game for us to even be in this situation when you have 15,000-plus fans here. They're touched by her through us.

According to the *2013-2014 LSU Women's Media Guide,* The LSU Athletic Department staff features a heavy LSU alumni background including 7 of 10 in the Sports Information Department, 3 of 4 in the TV/Interactive area, and 7 of 10 in Senior Athletics Administration (Martin, 2013). I suspect this is true in large part because these LSU graduates understand the culture of the university and have an appreciation for the manner in which business is accomplished there. Likewise, Caldwell understands that she cannot implement the vision for her program alone and two of her three assistant coaches are also Tennessee alums. She knows they share a leadership philosophy heavily influenced by Coach Summitt. When I asked Caldwell what she looked for when assembling a coaching staff she said:

I am looking for people who, one I think your coaching staff you look for honest people who have great integrity and I look for people who you may not be twenty or thirty years into it, but you have a hunger and starvation for the game and love for being a teacher not being a teacher of just X's and O's but a life coach, so to speak. I look for people who share the same vision and are ultimately and where are they now because only one team is going to win a national championship but they can have so many other small

> *championships along the way. Whether it's that degree or they become you know just become better people. I mean, that is a championship in and of itself. So putting together a staff that doesn't mind doing the thankless job and understanding there is no job too big or too small for them to do.*

Caldwell surrounds herself with others who believe in her vision for the program.

In the current media guide bio there is a bolded quote from her initial press conference upon her hiring at LSU, "Winning championships doesn't happen overnight. You have to have great leadership, team cohesion, and a relentless desire to never quit" (Martin, 2013, p. 8). However, by the second sentence of her official bio her leadership is highlighted, "Caldwell carries a dynamic personality with steadfast leadership and an unwavering commitment to excellence on and off the court," which includes their impact on the court, in the classroom, and in the community (Martin, p. 8).

It was this attitude that helped her twice earn the Gloria Ray Leadership Award during her playing career (Jennings, 1998). However, Caldwell's heart is to be a role model for people of all backgrounds. When discussing the diversity of her program she told me,

> *I love that I have a diverse staff; male, White male, Black male, female, Black, Portuguese. My team is diverse, Spanish, Japanese, Danish. Hopefully we can bring in some other kids internationally, then I have Louisiana, which is another (laughs) their dialect is a little different, but you know, we come from all over, Nigeria, so it's—I love the diversity of our team, and our staff.*

Caldwell's ability to unite her diverse team and diverse staff is evidenced through three primary examples of her leadership in action: service to others, her sense of responsibility, and her toughness.

Leadership in Action

Service to others. While she never used the word "calling" to describe her position, she clearly feels that she has a purpose greater than just winning basketball games and responsibility to the people in her program and beyond. When I first asked her for her thoughts on leadership, after crediting her influences, she leapt upon the themes of both service and responsibility to others. As already displayed several times in this piece, Caldwell's leadership strongly bears the influence of her faith in her profound commitment to serving others both an individual and with her team.

Individually, serving others is part of who Caldwell is, not just something she does. In addition to the three communities of influence discussed earlier, Caldwell also enjoys reading about leadership. She noted that great leaders share an important quality of serving others, "*The more that you are (serving others), to me then that's me living. I couldn't see myself not do the Champions for a Cause or being a part of trying to find a cure for Cancer."* To Caldwell, serving *is* living.

As the leader of her basketball program, Caldwell both sets the example of service and involves her team. The current media guide highlights her commitment to serving others in several ways, including pictures, text, and headers. My point being that if you are considering playing for the Lady Tigers you are going to see the media guide as a window into the program. It will highlight what matters to the program. After even a casual perusal of the 2013-2014 LSU

Women's Basketball Media Guide it is plain that this is not the obligatory passing mention of community service for a photo opportunity. After mentioning her success on the court, her coaching ability and her recruiting ability, in just the second paragraph of her media guide bio it states, "She has been a leader off the court in the Baton Rouge community, helping the Lady Tigers connect with the city of Baton Rouge while donating their time and efforts to making a difference" (Martin, 2013, p. 78). Two pages later there is a callout section with a bold heading of "Community Driven" juxtaposed with "Winning Tradition." It explains, "Caldwell has made a profound impact on the city of Baton Rouge with numerous public speaking engagements, community service projects and media appearances" (Martin, p. 80). However, these quotes come from the media guide is written by LSU employees paid to make the coach and the program look good, so what does the local newspaper have to say?

Within of five months of getting hired, before even coaching a practice or game, Caldwell had already wowed the LSU faithful with her positive energy and commitment to the community. Sportswriter Scott Hotard documented this feeling in a July 2011 newspaper article in *The Advocate* where he noted, "From the day LSU introduced her as its new women's basketball coach, Nikki Caldwell has been a girl about town" (para. 1). Hotard went on to detail some of her efforts including taking her team on a bike ride to the State Capitol to sit in on a special session, surprising a group of 50 principals in East Baton Rouge School System, volunteering at the Baton Rouge Advocacy Center's annual Celebrity Waiters fundraisers, hosting the annual Lady Tiger Lagniappe meet-and-greet, and talking at a Louisiana High School Coaches Association Coaches Clinic. In the same article LSU Senior Associate Athletic Director

Herb Vincent is quoted as saying, "She has breathed life into the program and hasn't even had her first practice yet" (para. 7).

It is common for a new coach to reach out to the community when they are first hired, but Caldwell has maintained a zealous politician's campaign schedule for her entire tenure but without the sleaze or phony talking points. These events are the reflection of deeply held convictions based on her faith. Some might expect Caldwell to slow down, especially after taking LSU back to the NCAA tournament all three years of their tenure including two straight Sweet 16 appearances, which LSU had not reached since 2008 prior to her arrival. However, Caldwell sees her success as just a way to magnify her platform.

In 2012, a blog devoted to LSU women's basketball on *The Advocate* website note the team's visit to Southside Gardens Retirement Home, the Louisiana School for the Deaf, and sponsored a family for the holidays through the Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. It quoted Caldwell as saying:

> We make sure our student-athletes don't take anything for granted. When we went to the Louisiana School for the Deaf, even though we put smiles on their faces, they put smiles on ours as well. That's something we should all be appreciative of. Our ability to make people smile and to make their day, we all have that in us (LSU media relations, 2012, para. 4).

Caldwell often mentioned her respect for diversity and welcomed staff and players of any faith, but also felt a responsibility to set a positive example for all.

And if you want to go into coaching, use it as a platform. Be heavily involved with your team. There are more people out there you can service, and we use that word a lot with our team.

It's one thing to do your community service in the offseason, early in the season before conference games, or during the holiday break when it won't "interfere" with your schedule. Don't get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with that. But what about in the midst of a streak where you lose seven out of eight games to finish the season, as LSU did? Would you still take the time to serve your community then? Even if it meant missing a practice? The Lady Tigers did. They still went to a local school, read to kids, and participated in a school assembly. They were not going to be solely defined by the scoreboard when it was against them or when it was for them.

Make no mistake, Caldwell passionately wanted to win and did everything she could think of to right the ship. By serving others, the Lady Tigers could gain the positive energy that comes from giving of oneself. Caldwell explained, *"I didn't want our spirits to be broken. I didn't want them to lose hope and lose sight because we were on that losing streak, but (know) that we were right there in turning it around."*

Turn it around, they did. In the first round of the NCAA tournament they set a school postseason scoring record in a 98-78 rout of Georgia Tech (Dunaway, 2014) before shocking second seeded West Virginia 76-67. They upset West Virginia despite not having their third-leading scorer in the game due to injury, losing their leading scorer to injury in the first half of this game, and trailing by seven with five minutes left in the game.

Responsibility. Caldwell consistently spoke of her sense of responsibility to lead the right way and to pass on her values to her players. Some of the following quotes have already been provided as part of a larger passage, but I want to highlight the many ways this repetitive refrain of "responsibility" emerged from our conversations. I also must emphasize that, to Caldwell, this responsibility is not a burden but rather is a blessing.

- She feels a responsibility to look out for others like her mother taught her: *"When I think back about my childhood, I feel like my mom was grooming me (laughs) at an early age to take on responsibility for not only my actions but the actions of others and my sister in particular."*
- She feels a responsibility to teach this to her players, *"One thing we are doing a lot more of is really trying to get our kids to understand the treatment of others."*
- She feels a responsibility to honor those in the basketball community. Speaking of Coach Summitt she said, "*So many of us came under her leadership and so we feel an obligation to carry that on*."
- She feels a responsibility as a minority, "*Being a minority in this profession I do feel like there is a responsibility, in that regard too, to be a role model for those who may not have one or need maybe another one in their lives I think there is that responsibility that I feel as well as a leader*."
- She feels a responsibility as a woman of color: "*We talk about being a woman and being a woman of color that I'm a double minority. But I don't look at it that way. I look at it as, okay, I was put on this earth and this is how God made me. I think whatever color I*

was going to be or male or female, I know what my spirit is. I do feel there's a responsibility, period, for all of us to always be embraceful of diversity."

- She feels a responsibility as the head of the program, "*There is a different level of responsibility that you feel because you know you're at the helm, if you will, and you're are pretty much the face of the program."*
- She feels a responsibility to be there for her players beyond the basketball court, *"Especially with women or young ladies there is so much other stuff that they deal with outside of just trying to perform on the basketball courts…Things may not be good at home or things may not be good in a personal relationship, you know. Just being there for them in that way"*
- She feels a responsibility to pass on the blessings in her life, *"There are many blessings that I have and so when you are in this role of a leader, you want to share what you have with so many: obviously those that I am directly in contact with on a daily basis but also indirectly."*

Caldwell is clearly comfortable in her role as a leader and accepts it with open arms. She sees herself not only as the leader of her team, but also as a leader for women and women of color. This is so important because research has repeatedly discussed that two of the main barriers to the entrance and advancement for coaches of color (Cunningham, Bruening, & Straub, 2006; Cunningham & Sagas, 2005), of women in sports leadership positions (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007; Walker & Bopp, 2010), and especially women of color (Borland & Bruening, 2010) is a lack of role models and mentors. Caldwell's thoughts echo another strong female coach of color, Hall of Famer C. Vivian Stringer who wrote of her Christian faith and her leadership in her 2008

book, *Standing Tall: A Memoir of Tragedy and Triumph*. In it, Stringer wrote that basketball "has always been a vehicle for me to instill values and self-respect in the girls I coach" (p. 2). She also wrote that it was coaching icon and Grambling football coach Eddie Robinson who in the early 1980s convinced her to "assume a greater stage, and to give America the opportunity to see a Black female in a head coaching position, calling the shots at a major school" (Stringer, pp. 124-125). Caldwell clearly relishes the opportunity to add another strong role model in the public eye.

Caldwell also feels a responsibility to her faith as well. In one interview with her I told her about an email that I received this year from a college student who dreamed of being a college basketball coach. However, he was concerned that he would have to compromise his faith in order to be successful in the high-pressure world of big-time athletics. His thinking reflected the common skepticism some express towards Christian coaches who assume that they have to cheat to be successful and must be hypocrites. Caldwell's response was firm:

> *First, I would say you know don't ever question who you are and what your beliefs are because they are yours and you own it. And then, whatever you decide, whatever occupation you decide to go into it's because of that faith, because of your Christian belief and understanding what your purpose is and his purpose if it is to be a college coach though his faith through whatever your beliefs are then your going to make it happen.*

This response was typical Caldwell: positive and encouraging. She continued with another key insight into her leadership: respect for differences and diversity while setting a powerful example:

Embrace who you are and what's inside of you and you use it. It does no good to be quiet, in a way. You don't have to go out and put your beliefs on anybody, but the way you carry yourself verbally, nonverbally it should come through that…my staff, my team, they know I am a God fearing woman, but I don't have to go out and tell them that. Through our works, let it speak.

Toughness. All of these examples about serving the community and the fact that Caldwell is now a mother might make some think she is not as tough as others or that maybe she has lost her competitive edge. In the athletic world, the opposite of toughness is being "soft." Being called soft is one of the worst insults you can hurl at an athlete or coach. My college coach once gave us a handout with life advice title "Some Advice from an Old Man to His Young Men." The first and last entries of the nearly twenty-point list were, "Do not be soft."

Softness is often implied about Christian athletes because some think, how could you play a sport where you need to dominate your opponent when you say your are living your life by the principles of Jesus? Jesus, who said that if someone slaps you to turn the other cheek in Matthew 5:39 and Luke 6:29. Jesus, who said if anyone sues you for your shirt to give them your cloak as well in Matthew 5:40 and Luke 6:29. Jesus, who said in Matthew 5:41 to carry a roman soldier's pack two miles when forced to carry it one by law? Some would interpret these prescribed reactions as softness, but it is the strength of one's resolve under adversity that demonstrates true strength.

Caldwell both demonstrates and demands toughness. On the cover of the media guide is an action shot of the head Lady Tiger in full-throated roar with a clenched fist. Toughness marks everything about Caldwell and her program. Their home arena is named for a Christian

basketball legend, “Pistol” Pete Maravich. The Pete Maravich Assembly Center is described as “one of the toughest road playing sites not only in the Southeastern Conference but in the nation” (Martin, 2013, p. 154).

It is a common practice in the basketball world to put the seniors on the cover of the media guide. Most teams include all of the seniors, even if they are not key contributors in games, to paradoxically reinforce the notion that the program is bigger than you by highlighting you. The three seniors on LSU’s 2013-2014 cover neither smile nor scowl; they just express an expression of seriousness, because you can’t be tough if you are not serious.

I say that to point out that in case you were starting to think all this positive attitude stuff from Caldwell is soft, just listen to how she continued her line of thinking about some tough love:

> *We have been kicked out of our locker room because we didn’t come together and really didn’t represent what it means to be an LSU student athlete here. We have stopped doing their laundry and let them bring their own practice gear because we didn’t appreciate what we had with being a Nike school and having managers. So I think the one thing I am really, we are doing a lot more of, is really trying to get our kids to understand the treatment of others and really I think it goes a long way. Making sure they understand that you’ve gotta be strong in your studies and there shouldn’t be a consequence attached to it.*

No, Coach Caldwell and her program certainly aren’t soft because she is compassionate or because she is a Christian. In fact, it is the exact opposite for which her teams are known. In describing her first season at LSU where she led an injury depleted team back the NCAA

tournament, to the SEC Tournament Championship Game, the Media Guide (2013) noted that "LSU took on Caldwell's persona – that of toughness and a relentless desire to quit" (p. 78). I asked her about this in our first interview and she immediately heartily agreed and excitedly launched into a story about what her team learned from training with Marines this last offseason which immediately led into her application of toughness to her team and are again worthy of quoting at length:

> *One of the things that stood out was 'your skill and your will' and you know we have skilled players and skill can get you so far but then your will is what puts you over the edge and we talked about having that relentless gut wrenching, you know, I have less quit in me than my opponent and I always tell them guys really your biggest opponent is not you know we got Jackson State tonight not Jackson State its not Tennessee on Thursday its not Tulane on Sunday our biggest opponent is ourselves and that's who we compete against everyday and so just having that desire to just be the best and the work ethic to match it but more importantly the attitude that you have to have and so if we can get them to believe in that because that is the core of who we are then they are going to play hard on defense their going to be tough on the boards they are going make the extra pass offensively. They're gonna run their cuts hard because they play in practice at that pace and they understand that's how you gotta do things in life. It's not what you run but how you run it, and if they running it with a passion and this aggressiveness and not being passive and weak and then typically your going to end up being successful or putting yourself in a better situation to be successful.*

This has not changed in her tenure. Upon her hiring at LSU she described toughness this way "We're really trying to get them to practice at an intensity that they are not accustomed to. The challenge for this team is for them to not only practice at this level of intensity of a team going after a national championship, but they also need to improve every day" (Hotard, 2011, para. 8).

Getting "It"

After a loss to the University of North Carolina men's basketball team this past season, Hall-of-fame Coach Mike Krzyzewski, also known as Coach K, went into a much discussed and replayed speech in his postgame comments to the press about how his team did not get "it." Coach K was speaking in a basketball context when he explained, "'It', you know. We didn't have 'it.' Whatever the hell that thing is. In the second half it wasn't in our huddle" (Duke University, 2014). He went on to try and explain that "it" was the intangible understanding and passion necessary above and beyond the surface level. Similarly, in this leadership and faith context, Caldwell gets it. She sees beyond the surface duties and responsibilities of a coach to the essential intangibles of leadership. As her mentor, Pat Summitt (2013) wrote in her most recent book, "Coaching isn't social work, but it's more than just a game- it's a heartfelt vocation" (p. 19). I can think of no higher compliment to Coach Caldwell than to say she gets "it," she "models "it," and she shares "it." The sociocultural influence of her Christian faith on her leadership is seen by her respect for the communities around her, service to others, a sense of responsibility, and toughness.

Of all the coaches I contacted or who participated in this study, Caldwell was the most openly enthusiastic about the project and needed no prodding whatsoever. She instantly seemed to understand the potential power of sharing the story of how her faith influences her leadership

and went out of her way to accommodate all of my requests, despite her hectic schedule. I had never met her before or spoken with her prior to our first phone interview, but she left me with goose bumps after that first conversation. I share this excerpt from that first interview not to inflate this study, but to show her enthusiasm for what we were trying to accomplish:

> *What you are doing is very powerful and you need to have I always say this, you gotta have a voice and your taking coaches and doing this research and your putting our voice out there but also your voice and the more people that can hear and know and feel what we are doing and why we are doing it… that's better than any championship we are ever going to win. So I look at this as a win-win, like we're not keeping score here but this is a championship right here.*

Suggesting that this study is "better than any championship we are ever going to win" is a bold statement that reflects her Christian values. Many coaches, including myself early in my career, would not sincerely make the same statement. Yet, Caldwell gets the message of 1 Corinthians 9:24 that eludes so many in the sports world today. This passage of Scripture, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize" (NIV), is often used by Christians in sports to motivate sports performance, but the author of Corinthians, the Apostle Paul, was actually using a sports metaphor to encourage people to know that the real prize was not from the athletic competition, not the championship, but rather the prize of Heaven.

Conclusion

Caldwell is a rising star in the coaching profession. I fully expect her success and influence to only continue to grow in the coming years. A striking figure, she is well known for

both her style and her substance. In December 2013, Kayla Reed wrote an entire article on Caldwell's stylish presence on the sideline in the Baton Rouge newspaper, *The Advocate*, titled "Winning Style." In it, Reed wrote, "Nikki Caldwell is breathing new life in women's basketball at LSU, and she is looking extremely good doing it" (para. 1). Far from being a sexist reduction of Caldwell to her appearance, this is just another example of her larger than life, yet not overwhelming presence. How many coaches dance for charity, a la the TV show *Dancing With the Stars*, during their season no less, yet also ride motorcycles onto the basketball court in their preseason fan festival, and then ride motorcycles across the country to raise money for charity? This should not be surprising given that Caldwell's bloodlines combine a model, her mother, and a NFL linebacker, her uncle (Jennings, 2007).

Caldwell maintains the appearance of the former national champion, elite athlete that she is while still exuding the grace and charm that would make you want her on your team. She seems like the kind of nice southern lady who could whup you good, then clean you up, comfort you and send you on your way all at the same time. Her wonderful way with people, exemplifies the best of the public relations major she was. She explained I this way, "*my personality definitely helps shape how I go about being of service to others. I feel that I am a very optimistic, positive person."* Throughout the study Caldwell issued a clear repetitive refrain of the obligation, the duty, and the responsibility she feels to pass on these beliefs through her example to her players, staff and fans. For example, she expressed this feeling of responsibility to me very early in our first conversation:

> *I live everyday grateful to first wake up in the morning. So, there are many blessings that I have and so when you are in this role of leader you want to share what you have with so*

many and obviously those that I am in direct contact with on a daily basis but also indirectly.

It appears LSU Vice Chancellor and Director of Athletics Joe Alleva was right when on her hiring he said,

> She's a star, she's a role model and she has the priorities of the young student athletes in her heart and in her mind. She wants to make them better, not just as basketball players but as people, and that's what this is all about (as quoted in Martin, 2013. p. 78).

This is not to say there were not trials and tribulations. This is no prosperity gospel piece where the Christian is instantly rewarded with success for their faith. Most teams and coaches experience highs and lows both within games and also within seasons. I witnessed her teams experience both of these this season as she led the Lady Tigers through devastating injuries to key players and a prolonged slump to a remarkable finish that captivated their fans. It is her consistency through the highs and lows that reflect the sociocultural influence of her Christian faith on her leadership and give her peace under pressure.

In the Right Spot:

Kellie Harper, Missouri State University Head Women's Basketball Coach

Overview

"As coaches, we're competitive by nature, and sometimes you just forget that there's more to it than the wins and losses. I think I rely on my faith to keep me grounded."

Is bigger, better? In America the thinking has usually been, "Yes." Right from our nation's very founding there has been a push for bigger and better. On a macro level, we

expanded from 13 colonies to 50 states. On a more personal level, new single-family American houses have expanded from an average of 1,660 square feet in 1973 to 2,392 square feet by 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In intercollegiate athletics, a record number of institutions have joined the highest level of the NCAA, Division I. The number of DI schools with women's basketball teams had grown to over 350 by 2013-2014. Most players and coaches want to play and coach at the highest level, thinking that bigger is better, but that is not always the case.

Kellie Harper has seen the good and the bad of both big and small basketball and feels that God has led her right where she is supposed to be. "*I know for a fact that God wanted me in Springfield*," she told me as she explained how she ended up as the Head Women's Basketball Coach at Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri. Despite her strong conviction that God has directed her path to Missouri State she also claimed that, "*I'm not the most outspoken about my faith. Not for any reason. If anybody asks me, I have no problem discussing it."*

Harper just finished her 10th season as a DI head coach, but just her first at Missouri State. With an enrollment of over 23,000 students, Missouri State is the second largest university in the state. Driven by a public affairs mission, according to the Missouri State University website, their "purpose is to develop fully educated persons with a focus on ethical leadership, cultural competence and community engagement" (n.d., para. 1).

Harper's Lady Bears compete in the Missouri Valley Conference (MVC), a very good conference but not a major conference. Athletic expenses are one way to quantify the difference in member institutions of different conferences. Schnaars, Upton, Mosemak, & DeRamus (2012) reported the following athletics expenses figures from 2011 for Harper's last three jobs beginning with her current position: Missouri State, just over $13.5 million; North Carolina State

(NC State), just over $60.5 million; and Western Carolina (WCU), just over $8.5 million. Missouri State, while committing more resources than her first job at WCU, seriously lags behind her previous employer. However, that does not mean Missouri State is a worse job than the others.

Though the Missouri State University name is relatively new, it was formerly known as Southwest Missouri State University, the women's basketball tradition is not. The inside cover of the media guide proclaims that over the last 20 years, the Lady Bears are fourth in the nation in average attendance on their way to a 306-71 home record (Adamson, 2013). The Lady Bears' claim as one of the preeminent women's basketball programs is based on "racking up 21 Missouri Valley Conference titles, seventeen 20+ win seasons, and 13 NCAA Tournament berths, including three Sweet 16 appearances and trips to the Final Four in 1992 and 2001" (Adamson, p. 12). However, the program had fallen on hard times and had not been to the Women's NCAA Tournament since 2006 when they called upon a well-known name in women's basketball circles, Kellie Jolly Harper, to be the seventh head coach in school history in April 2013.

The sociocultural influence of Harper's Christian faith is subtle but persistent, like a watermark ingrained on a piece of parchment paper, it adds to the beauty of her experience while staying in the background. Born of a small town Methodist upbringing, Harper's faith is the foundation of her leadership by giving her a perspective of her role beyond the scoreboard, *"As coaches, we're competitive by nature, and sometimes you just forget that there´s more to it than the wins and losses. I think I rely on my faith to keep me grounded during those times."* As

in the other portraits, however, the influence of her Christian faith cannot be isolated and extracted. It must be viewed in the context of the other communities of influence in her life.

Of the communities of influence on Harper is her basketball family, which overlaps with her blood family in a more profound way than most. Both of Harper's parents played college basketball, both of her brothers followed her into coaching, and even her husband, Jon, is on her coaching staff. Harper explained the blending of communities with her husband this way, "We don't have a personal life and a professional life, we have a life" (Robinson, 2010, Basketball lifers, para. 8). The people in her basketball community also profoundly influenced that life.

Harper was quick to cite the many coaches who influenced her, from AAU to college. She also knew that she wanted to be a basketball coach since she was in high school and paid closer attention to their leadership than others might have. She won three national championships playing for arguably the greatest college basketball coach ever, Pat Summitt. Much like Summitt and her mother, Harper is not outspoken about her faith but obliges when asked to do so. She welcomes players and staff members of differing beliefs, "*I think they just need to feel that I will love them. That's what I do. I love my players, I will take care of my players. I'm not here to judge them."* She has been called "no screamer in practice but a tactician, a teacher, a thinker," which I would agree with after observing a Lady Bear shootaround and game (Booher, 2014, para. 25). "*I'm not a person who leads by fear,"* she explained to me in an interview.

One of the most fascinating aspects of this study was Harper's complete and absolute transparency about her struggles and successes. She very openly shared many aspects of her faith practices including prayer, Bible reading, church attendance, as well as her leadership beliefs and practices. Let me explain why I was so impressed with how she let her guard down so freely.

Since 2011, I have run a free website with podcasts to encourage basketball coaches. In the podcasts I primarily interview college basketball coaches, and in early episodes I asked the coaches to share how they learned from a mistake. I quickly learned that this was not something these coaches wanted to talk about. It seemed that they had an image to maintain and didn't want to admit making mistakes. Harper, however, freely pulled back the curtain on her thoughts and feelings. This was even more impressive because we weren't just talking about basketball here, but a potentially controversial subject: Christian faith. However, she knows that admitting mistakes and sharing struggles is a sign of strength and not of weakness.

Harper, like all of the coaches in the study, made sure to point out that they were still growing in their faith and didn't claim to have everything figured out. This is good because neither do I. Harper, like many Christians find comfort in Romans 3:23 which states, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" and shares the Christian belief that we do not have to be perfect because Jesus atones for our sins. Romans 3:24 explained this, "and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (NIV).

Harper put it this way:

> *I look at is as I'm an example and I have to live my life to show that and I'm in a position where there are a lot of people looking at me. I don't think that'd a bad thing. I'm not perfect, but I try to be a good person and I think people can see that in me, again, that I'm trying. I'm not perfect by any means. There are things that I struggle with, but I do believe people realize that I'm trying to be the best I can be.*

In addition, the influence of Harper's faith is clearly seen in how she came to be the head coach at Missouri State and her understanding of how that came to happen.

All Roads Lead to Springfield.

"I really do truly believe God sent me there. I 100% believe that
I was the person that needed to come in to that program when they hired me.
I also believe that I did what I was supposed to do and then I needed to move on."

Bouncing back. While Harper has spent a great deal of time at the top of the college basketball mountain, she has also lived the harsh reality of being knocked off that mountain top, and relied on her faith to help her through it. Harper is such a positive person that she never even mentioned her experience at North Carolina State University (NC State) until I asked her, and even then she went out of her way to be positive about the enterprise.

Harper was named the head coach at NC State in Raleigh, North Carolina at the young age of 31. NC State is a charter member of one of the premier conferences in the country, the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC). While the ACC may be better known for its men's basketball, the women's game has a long history of success also. The fictional "Tobacco Road" runs through Raleigh and also features the prominent programs of the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill and Duke University in Durham. As many young coaches do, I used to work college basketball camps all summer long to gain experience, make contacts, and make a little money. I remember one year in particular that two coaches from up north were working NC State's camp with me when they were devastated to learn that there was no actual Tobacco Road. The moniker is just a nickname for the region based on the state's history of tobacco farming, as my great-grandparents did.

Regardless of what road it sits on, there is no doubt that the NC State job was a big-time job that faced big-time problems. At her NC State introductory press conference she impressed observers by boldly using Carolina and Duke as measuring sticks (Robinson, 2009). The Wolfpack women featured a strong tradition that included 20 NCAA tournaments, 9 conference titles, and one Women's Final Four under Hall of Fame Coach Kay Yow (Compton, 2013). However, as local sportswriter Luke DeCock (2009) pointed out, at that time the Wolfpack had slipped from the conference elite. Harper brought a sparkling pedigree as both a player and as a head coach to match her enthusiasm.

There are several factors that go into evaluating a coaching job, but probably one of the most important questions is, "Can you win there?" because if you can't win there you likely won't keep your job there. This is not as simple a question as it may seem, for there are many factors that go into determining an answer. Some of the factors include the level of support from the administration, the financial resources, the facilities, the recruiting base, media exposure, conference affiliation, and expectations. While some people may weight them differently, all would include this base of factors influencing success in their evaluation of a job.

In Harper's defense, I cannot imagine a new head coach facing a more difficult set of circumstances than she did at NC State. I will not go over the details of those circumstances and let me point out that Harper never mentioned any of them in our conversations—She never made excuses or complained. However, without getting into the minutiae, her teams were not able to do enough to keep her job under her new athletic director, Debbie Yow- Kay Yow's sister. She was dismissed from her job after a second round loss in the Women's National Invitational Tournament (WNIT), the tournament below the NCAA Tournament by which she was measured.

I asked her how she handled being let go and her response demonstrated the influence of her faith:

> *It required a lot of perspective. It was tough. It was really tough, and I knew it was gonna be. So it was something I knew what I was getting into, but things just continued to be difficult, and I tried that. I learned a lot of lessons there. I tried to be a good person and a strong Christian through good and bad while I was there. And I think I influenced a lot of people because of that, even though it was hard. I learned a lot and I think it made me—I don't want to say it made me a better person—It probably made me a better basketball coach, and definitely gave me some different ways to look at things, in terms of how to manage it, dealing with team players…I said this before, I really do truly believe God sent me there. I 100% believe that I was the person that needed to come in to that program when they hired me. I also believe that I did what I was supposed to do and then I needed to move on. So it may not have been how I thought it was going to go, but I think it was what was needed for a lot of those players. And I think it was what was needed for a lot of those people there. I was just the transition person, and I'm okay with that.*

To truly understand the power of Harper's words you need to know that there was neither a hint of bitterness, nor false humility in her answer. Having been through a difficult coaching situation myself where an unsupportive and even combative administration left me struggling with bitterness, I marveled at her attitude. You also have to understand that this was not something that happened many years ago, it was a fresh wound of only about 10 months. In addition, Harper had always been successful on the basketball court: as a high school player at White County High School, as a player in AAU travel ball, as a player at the University of Tennessee,

as an assistant coach at Auburn and UT-Chattanooga, and as a head coach at Western Carolina. Simply put, this was new territory for her. One could easily understand if she harbored any resentment or directed any anger at NC State, yet there was none. This was emblematic of her leadership, clearly trusting in God's plan for her and always positive.

A Quick Renaissance

Harper's trust in God's plan for life was even more evident in where her career took her next: Missouri State University. Losing your job can be jarring for anyone, but especially for coaches who so often closely tie their identity to their profession.

> *Well, it's really funny, because the day that I was basically let go at NC State, I thought that I was going to spend two weeks in my pajamas (laughs). I thought that I was going to have some time off, and I was going to be able to just be at my house and do nothing.*

Many coaches need some time to decompress after any season, much less after being let go. I remember after the disappointing end of one season where I felt like I could not get my motor going again. However, my loving wife graciously offered to jumper cables to shock me out of the recliner, though I'm not sure the cables would have reached to the car battery in the garage. Harper, however, would not be spending any time wallowing in self-pity.

> *The next morning - I kid you not - at 6:30am I had call from an AD. I had probably eight phone calls within 48 hours from different schools calling me. That's a good thing, I'm not saying that's a bad thing, but I had no idea that was about to happen. (laughs) I really thought that I was just going to be sitting around for a while. But I was so busy in those 48 hours trying to talk to people, return phone calls, just start getting an idea of what my options were going to be, and things that I would actually be interested in. And*

the way my contract was written, they (NC State) were still going to pay me for a year. And if I didn't find anything that I was excited about, I was going to take a year-- I didn't know what I was going to do, but I was going to do something else for a year. I didn't want to do that. I wanted to find something that was a fit.

That "fit" is a term used often in college athletics. Players want to go play for a coach whose style of play fits their skills and abilities. Coaches want to recruit athletes who are a fit for the academic requirements of the university. Administrators want to hire coaches who are a fit for the university's stance on athletics. For example, some administrators allow or encourage coaches to "take a chance" on a kid with a checkered past, either legally or academically, whereas other administrators would not allow that. Harper provided an behind the scenes account of how she ended up at Missouri State and why she felt it was a good fit for her:

So I got some phone calls and everything was materializing, and then I got a call from a mutual friend, and said, 'Hey, did you know Missouri State is open?' And I said, 'Yes.' And she said, 'Are you interested?' And I said, 'Yes, that is a really good program.' She said, 'Well, I told them you're it. You're who they need to hire.' I was like, 'Wow. Thank you.' She said, 'I just want you to talk to them.'

Then this person was telling me-- she was trying to sell me on Missouri State. And I'm sitting there going, 'You don't have to sell me on Missouri State, I know Missouri State.' But this person was selling me on the AD, and said it was somebody I wanted to work for. And she knew me well enough to tell me that we would fit really well, the administration at Missouri State and I would fit really well. So pretty quick, I think the next morning or that evening I can't remember. I think it was the next morning, I was

able to talk to the athletic director. After one conversation we set up a meeting to meet one another. Not on campus, but a neutral site. And I met the president as well during that time. That was pretty much it; it was very quick. Once the ball started rolling it was very quick.

The first time I ever went to campus was when I was flying in to sign my contract and have the press conference. I'd never been to Springfield, Missouri, so it took a lot of trust into my friends and into my research. I feel like I'm a pretty good judge of character, immediate judge of character. Sometimes I've been wrong, but for the most part it doesn't take me too long to size someone up. I felt great about the athletic director and president from the moment I met them, and it's been everything I could've hoped for.

You can see from her comments, and those of the people around her, how critical the administration is to evaluating a job. If you do not have a supportive administration it can turn a good job into a bad one in a hurry. Aside from the administration, she also needed to evaluate the program itself. The program's well-known tradition is why Harper was able to tell her friend, *"You don't have to sell me on Missouri State, I know Missouri State."* It appears the fans thought she was a good fit as well, with over 800 new season tickets being sold after her hiring (Potoczny, 2013).

Despite being in a smaller conference than the ACC, Missouri State has a national history. I've already mentioned the past successes of the program: all the wins, conference titles, and NCAA berths; the high attendance; and the two Final Four trips. However, just because they may have won there in the past does not mean you can win there in the future- especially in Women's basketball.

Since the NCAA refused to sponsor a women's basketball tournament for decades, the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) created their own (Hult & Trekell, 1991). The lack of resources being invested into women's athletics meant that smaller schools could compete on a national level. In fact, the first three AIAW championships were won by tiny Immaculata College from 1972-1974. Even more to the point, only one of the first nine AIAW national champions were from what we would consider a major conference today, UCLA in 1978. Interestingly, Byrne's (2013) study of the Immaculata program found that the sheer pleasure of competition was a common theme in his interviews of former players and coaches, certainly not a financial windfall from winning.

When the NCAA finally began sponsoring a women's basketball championship in 1982 the winner was Louisiana Tech over Cheyney State, neither in a major conference and one was what we now call a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). HBCU's have lacked the funding of the major conference schools, but at this time they were able to compete. As an example of the current financial disparity, Durkin (2012) pointed out that Texas' budget of more than $134 million in 2011 paid head football coach Mack Brown more than HBCU Mississippi Valley State's entire athletics budget of $4 million. Teams that were not in major conferences were able to challenge for national championships on a regular basis until 2001. These teams included schools like Long Beach State, Old Dominion, and Western Kentucky. Success of teams from smaller conferences was much more common in the women's game than the men's until the end of that era in 2001 with the Southwest Missouri State Lady Bears second and final run to the Women's Final Four. Of course Southwest Missouri State is now known as Missouri

State, and since their 2001 run, *every* Women's Final Four team has been from a major conference.

This is why it is so important for the coach and the administration to be on the same page as far as expectations. If Missouri State is expecting Final Fours right away, then there is the potential for a problem. However, to their credit, both the administration and the Springfield community seem to have realistic expectations- a key indicator of a good job. In fact, even before the first season had concluded the local sports editor felt compelled to praise Harper's leadership:

> The overall mindset seems improved, especially on defense. Oh, and notable recruits are en route. Granted, three more weekends remain on the schedule and the overall record could get swamped under .500 before it's all said and done. But let's just go ahead and say it — this season has been a success, for the Lady Bears and first-year coach Kellie Harper. (Booher, 2014, para. 1-3)

The article went on to praise her staff, defense, and mental toughness on the road. I asked Harper about this sentiment in our postseason interview and she was not buying it. When I told her that others were calling the season a success she replied, "*It's hard for me to say it was a success, I think I'm just too competitive to say that.*" However, she did feel like important progress had been made as she continued her analysis of the season:

> *I was disappointed that we didn't get some wins. I'd love to play three or four games over. Don't get me wrong, I knew we weren't going to go undefeated, but I felt like we could have won a few more games. That would have made a big difference in our record*

and how we finished. I do think we succeeded in changing some things culturally with the team.

The culture of a program, how the players think and behave, is crucial to sustained success, and the culture comes from the people. Men's college basketball all-time's wins leader Mike Krzyzewski (2009) wrote "leaders get caught up too early in what the mission will be….But your team's people are the ones who are going to accomplish the mission" (p. 14). Dean Smith (2004), who retired as the men's all-time college basketball wins leader, wrote that all great leaders have "knowledge of the importance of recruiting good people who wish to improve their personal skills and believe in the companies' or teams' philosophy" (p. 4).

Harper also talked about her program's evolving culture,

We just had a post-season wrap-up meeting yesterday and we talked about-- there were a couple of things we talked about, and I said I think you got better at this: talking about tone, and how they reacted to one another…And they said 'Oh, coach. We're way better than we were last year.' And so, I think we addressed issues and we improved in some areas, which I think is really good for our future- to establish some things culturally for our future. So I think there's been some positives. It was definitely a roller coaster season, and I think we were able to come through it really unscathed in terms of we didn't have breakdowns, we didn't have players that became disrespectful. I think there were a lot of positives, but by no means all we really wanted to either. Things that we wanted to do better and there are things that we can do better, but I think we are on the right path. So in terms of getting this thing pointed in the right direction, I think that was a success.

Harper knows the importance of this culture to sustained success because she has experienced as a player at Tennessee and as the head coach at Western Carolina. In another conversation she explained it this way:

> *I know when I was at Western Carolina, and I was there for five years, we really had that culture established- our players stepped on the court every single day ready to win- no matter what. And there's no doubt that we were successful because of that.*

I asked Harper is she had any core values or slogans that she used to drive establishing that new culture. She responded:

> *I don't have it on paper and I haven't used this in quite a while, but we used to say 'Dream it. Believe it. Do it.' And, the culture that we're trying to establish is a winning culture. That may sound, well everyone wants a winning culture, but I think, for us, it's important that whatever you do you try to succeed in the classroom as well as on the court. I think high achievers are high achievers no matter what they do, and we're trying to be the best so we look the part. You know, we're thanking the waitresses at dinner, but we're always striving and we never settle. So, there on the bus after a loss there's a difference between a loss and a win. Our bus sounds very different when we win and when we lose. I think it's important for these players to understand there's a difference and because of that, that's the culture that we create.*

A Divine Deception

It was not just fit that brought Harper to Springfield, MO; she feels that the Lord kept a little surprise from her to help her make her decision: that she was pregnant with her first child. I share her extended recounting of the days before and after taking the Missouri State job to

provide another behind-the-scenes insight into the hectic lives of college coaches. She concludes her story by tying it back to her faith:

> *On Wednesday morning I flew to Kansas City, met with the AD and met with the president. And Thursday morning I flew back to Raleigh. Thursday night or Friday morning - one of the two - we flew to New Orleans for the Final Four. So we were there, I knew I was getting the job, I am in New Orleans and I need to get all my stuff ready to accept the job. We were working on contracts, I'm trying to start talking to coaches as assistants so I can get my staff put together. While I was in New Orleans, I was extremely tired. Extremely tired. I remember Jon (her husband and assistant coach) was going out to dinner one night, it was 6pm, and I said 'I can't. I have to go to bed.' I went to bed at 6pm that night. (laughs)*
>
> *I had a little bit of a cold or allergies, and I thought that was what was going on. Then I thought 'Well, I've been so stressed just trying to get everything prepared for my new job,' then I'm flying straight from the Final Four - I'm flying straight there, straight to Springfield - I've got press conferences I have to prepare for. Flew up to Springfield, I'm exhausted. I don't even have a voice hardly in the press conference. I'd lost my voice and didn't get much sleep that night, just worn out. I had a press conference on Wednesday. On Thursday we're driving around looking at homes with a realtor. Or maybe that was Friday, I can't remember exactly. I'm in the back seat of the car trying to take naps in between houses. (laughs) So we fly home, we fly to Raleigh on Friday. I'm there on Saturday. A real dear friend of mine lost his mother, so I had to drive to Cullowhee. That's four and a half hours. We drove to Cullowhee. On the way home…I*

started realizing some things and I got back home and I found out I was pregnant. So I found out I was pregnant four or five days after the press conference.

Now, you talked about your faith. I had an opportunity to take a job near my hometown, closer to my hometown. And had I known that I was pregnant, I might would have taken that job just to have our child closer to our family - his mother, my mother. But I've said this numerous times, I know for a fact that God wanted me in Springfield because he waited until I had that job (laughs) before I found out I was pregnant. And I have a lot of faith that I'm in the right spot because of that.

My wife went into labor with our first child the night of our school's Thanksgiving tournament, the Titan Turkey Classic, in November 2011. Having a child quickly changes your priorities and I can understand how being closer to family would have been appealing to Harper had she known she was pregnant when she was evaluating jobs.

I asked Harper if they had been trying to have kids and she explained:

We were not, not trying. Every year I would go visit my doctor who would say, 'Do you want to have kids?' I would say, 'I don't know.' We were so happy. We love our life the way it was, we were so happy. It always felt like someday we would. Well someday-- we were married 14 years before we had him, and we just were enjoying life and we decided if we were going to have kids then we needed to have kids. We didn't know if we needed to or didn't need to, and so we said, 'Alright, here it is God. If you want us to have kids you'll let us have a kid. If you don't want us to have kids, we won't have kids. No problem.' And so we weren't like, 'Oh my gosh, we're trying to have a kid.' But we weren't not trying to have a

kid. We weren't trying to prevent it, I guess. So that's where we were. And that happened, we made that decision in the fall, and then I got pregnant in March.

Being a new mom is tough enough, but doing it in a high-stress, high-profile position like Harper is in, is a significant challenge.

Blended Communities of Influence

Faith and family. Some people are "raised in the church," others come to religion later. Harper grew up in a small-town Methodist church in Sparta, Tennessee, though her mom had been raised Baptist. Sparta is located in a triangle just shy of 100 miles each from Nashville to its west, Knoxville to its east, and Chattanooga to its south. Legend has it that Sparta lost the vote to become the state capitol of Tennessee to Nashville by one vote (Williams, n.d.). By 1990, Sparta's population was just 4,681 while Nashville's was nearly 350,000 (Walsh, 1991). Nashville may have the state capitol, but Sparta claims "renown as one of the nation's top resonators of the bluegrass roots movement" (Welcome to Bluegrass, USA, n.d.). As the husband of a mandolin player, I can appreciate that claim.

In explaining how small the church was Harper said:

I was related to half the people there. Many times in our Sunday school it was me, my brother who's three years younger, and my brother who's 11 years younger than me. Sometimes we were the only three kids in Sunday school. So it was a small church.

The small size of the church meant there was ample opportunity to get involved and church activities were a way of life:

> *My dad was our superintendent, so he had a lot of leadership duties in the church. He did a little bit of life speaking, and so growing up you just went to church. That's what you did. You went to Sunday school and church in our small town.*

Despite their high activity level in the church, their religious beliefs were not something that was spoken of regularly outside of church activities in her household, which happens to mirror my own Methodist upbringing. Harper explained:

> *It wasn't something that was talked about a lot. I think a lot of it was just presumed, or understood. Very similar to, my parents did not freely say 'I love you.' They didn't have to, but they just didn't verbalize it. We didn't verbalize it back to our parents, so a lot of things were just understood.*

The sense of their religious beliefs being "understood," is another way of saying it was a part of the culture. Harper's respect for the authority of her parents is seen in this discussion as well:

> *I know my mom used to say numerous times, 'God is the number one thing in your life.' She said that numerous times. So she says it, and that's what it is, and then you don't have to talk about it, and say it again and again.*

Harper also cited her mom as a strong spiritual guide in her life, "*Not because my mom is a genius about the Bible, but she's my mom and I respect who she is as a person. She's also a strong Christian.*" This culture of strong faith without the "need" for a lot of discussion can be seen in Harper's leadership even today. She explained it this way:

> *I'm not the most outspoken about my faith—not for any reason. If anybody asks me I have no problem discussing it. I think part of that is probably because I work at a public institution, and since I'm so cautious about it.*

Harper fondly remembered getting baptized when she was about 12 years old. The exact method of baptism is a point of contention among many Christian denominations, but suffice to say that she wanted to make a public profession of her faith. Harper remembered the story this way:

> *I do remember when my cousin got baptized at a different church, and my parents talked to me. They told that me she got baptized, and they said, 'Is that something that you think you would want to do?' And I said yeah. And we didn't have the—I don't know how to say it other than to just say—the education for me to know that I needed to do that early on. So when my cousin got baptized, my parents talked to me about it. I said 'Yes, I want to be baptized. That's something I want to do.' I remember saying that I wanted to do that, and the preacher that we had at the time, he was being transferred, because that's what we do at the Methodist Church, transfer our preachers around (laughs). He was being transferred, and he was our long-time preacher. When we realized that he was being transferred, I wanted him to baptize me. So that sped me up in terms of really becoming a Christian officially and getting baptized.*

Methodism. The Methodist Church began as a lay movement based on the Christian teachings of two Church of England missionaries, John and Charles Wesley, who first arrived in America in 1736 (The United Methodist Church, n.d.). Campbell (2011) noted that John Wesley "encouraged what he called a *catholic spirit*, a willingness to be open to, and to work closely with, those with whom he differed significantly on matters of worship and teachings not affecting the essence of Christian beliefs" (p. viii, italics in original). Methodism grew rapidly in the nineteenth-century to the point that by 2006 and Frank (2006) noted that "only 138 out of

3,141 counties in the U.S. lack a United Methodist Church" (p. 28). Some argue that this growth was fed by the fact that their "tradition and polity it is set up to invite people to Christian faith and life, to provide them the disciplines of Christian discipleship, and to send them into their communities as catalysts of a living and just society" (Frank, p. 34). This is often seen in action through a historical focus on social justice and empowerment of women.

Spiritual guidance. When I asked Harper whom she would call on for spiritual guidance she immediately mentioned several family members. In addition to her mom, she was also very complimentary of an aunt, and it seemed the more she talked about her aunt the more even Harper realized her influence:

> *I have great family resources…one of my mom's sisters is one of the strongest Christians I know. She is amazing. She sends me a daily thought for the day, and I would say four days out of the week, it's a Bible verse. I do look forward to those every day. She is amazing in her outlook, in life, and the real meaning of what being a Christian is. If I had a spiritual question she would be the first person I would call, no doubt about it, hands down. She's just amazing. I really look up to her.*

Beyond her aunt, she also has an uncle who is a Church of Christ preacher.

> *I know we have some philosophical differences, but he is very sharp when it comes to his knowledge of the Bible. He will tell me that he remembers what side of the page the verse is on. And he's read the Bible through and through numerous, numerous, numerous times. When I was in high school, he use to say, 'You should read the Bible, you should read the Bible.' He's one of the reasons I started to try to get through it at one*

point. Couldn't get all the way through. My attention got drawn somewhere else. But I respect his knowledge a lot, he's a really, really talented preacher.

As for her players, when I asked her where she would direct a player with a spiritual question she answered:

The first person I would send them to is one of our current players. She is very involved in FCA. She leads team Bible study. I don't know if they still do it, but they were doing a team Bible study on a weekly basis. And she's really close with the leaders of FCA on our campus, whom I know. That would be another person that I would recommend that they go to. But the two people on campus that I would recommend, one is teammate and then the other is an FCA leader.

Interestingly, given Harper's background and Christian faith, none of Harper's teams as a head coach have ever had a team chaplain. She did mention that someone emailed her about it at Missouri State, but I "*don't really know what that looks like in the structure of a team. What they're duties would be, what they would want to be for our team…But I'm not opposed to it.*"

A young life matures after Young Life. As another example of Harper's transparency and honesty she recounted one part of her maturation process as a Christian in particular. I asked her if she had been involved in any parachurch organizations in high school, like Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA). They did not have FCA at her school but they did have the parachurch group Young Life. Young Life is a non-denominational, parachurch ministry founded in 1941 by Jim Rayburn "with an emphasis on showing kids that faith in God can be not only fun, but exhilarating and life-changing" (Young Life, n.d., para. 3). They usually involve a club meeting a member's home. Today, nearly 2 million kids participate in their various ministries. Charry

(2001) explained the prolific growth of the various parachurch organizations devoted to high school and college-age students results from the groups' assumption that today's youth will not make it to church, therefore church must be taken to them; "they stress wholesome fun, sports, and warm mentoring relationships tied to Bible study and a personal relationship with Jesus" (p. 453).

Harper's transparency is evident in her experience in Young Life:

We had Young Life that I did a little bit during my senior year of high school. I remember growing up, and all the people that would go to Young Life, I remember thinking about them that it was hypocritical. Those people aren't good people, and they're going to this Young Life. And that was-- since I have changed my views on things I've matured, and have a different understanding. But I remember thinking, 'Well, I don't have to do that because I'm a Christian. I'm a good person, and I'm not like them.' The older I got, the more I realized that that's not what being a Christian is. It's not being a good person. It's you're okay with who you are, and you know you're not perfect. And I think it's great for everybody to participate in something like Young Life, or go to church, no matter what kind of background you have.

Finding a church home. People who move around the country often have more difficulty finding a new local church at each stop along the way. Harper is already on her fifth coaching stop in four different states. I asked her if it was hard for her and her husband to get involved in a local church and she said

Yes, sometimes. Well, probably not involved as much as I would like. We do move around so much, and when we first get to wherever we're going it takes a little while to get settled

in and then to find a church. My husband and I, he became a Methodist and we joined a church together. I don't even remember which place we joined the church first. But after we got married, we started going to church together when we were in town. We could go a couple months in a row and not ever be in town on a Sunday, whether that's during the season or recruiting or during the off-season when we're traveling with family. So when we're in town, we'll go to church.

Harper's transparency is on display again as she continued:

Now, we didn't get overly involved in church, because we missed so much. I know it's not a good reason or a good excuse, but because of that we've never really gone to Sunday School since we've been married or do a whole lot of things outside of Sunday service, the traditional Sunday service.

Yet, when they have been able to find church home she clearly thought it was an important part of their lives, as seen when she finished her thought:

We loved the church that we went to when we were at Western Carolina, (in) Cullowhee, North Carolina. Loved, loved, loved that church. And we did a few things extra with that church. I say extra, whether it's cleanup, or dinner or something. When we played sports with that church. That's definitely the church we've been the most comfortable with, but that's also we were there for five years, so we probably went to that church for a good four years, probably a little bit longer. So it is hard—I think that's an accurate statement—to put roots down, you're up rooted so easily. And with our schedule you're not there on weekends. It's important to John and I that when we are in town that we're there, and we make an effort to keep a church in our life.

Devotions and devotionals.

Because coaches travel so much for games and recruiting many self-directed Christian groups tend to spring up, whether they be formal or informal. Harper finds these comforting and beneficial when she is able to attend.

When I was at NC State, we had a group devotional we would have every week. Unfortunately I couldn't always attend just due to the scheduling. It would be at lunch on a Tuesday or something. And so since I was in town, I would go, and it was coaches and staff in the athletic department.

They have one here at Missouri State. I've not attended it yet. I don't know if part of that is scheduling, and then part of it is I'm not as familiar with everyone around there yet.

In addition to the numerous responsibilities of being a DI head basketball coach, Harper is also a proud new mother, which has been known to take a lot of time.

And then I'll have spells again, where I'll take some time, and I'll have a daily devotional. I have a couple different books I've read. I'm not doing that right now. Again, sometimes I'll do it, sometimes I won't. I haven't done it since I've had my son. I do pray for my son a lot, but in terms of the devotionals, I've done on and off daily devotionals.

Basketball Community of Influence

Harper's basketball influences, again, blend several communities. She was quick to credit her coaches for their influence on her. Her family played a large role in this as both of Harper's parents played college basketball, and her dad was particularly involved as a coach:

> *I was blessed from an early age to have great coaches growing up. Even when I was in elementary and middle school I had great coaches. A lot of people can't say that they had great coaches all the way through, and yeah, I did play for my dad, but I only played for him, like, one year in AAU and he was an assistant high school coach. But, he was basically my coach all my life. He was the one that took me to the gym and taught me everything.*

She also credited her travel ball coaches like Bobby Gore from Livingston, Tennessee and Rick Insell, who is now the head coach at Middle Tennessee State University. Point guards often share a special bond with their coaches because they have to be the coach on the court. Harper shares that bond to this day with her college coach, Pat Summitt:

> *She probably had as much influence on my style as anybody, not because I'm trying to be her, and I do not coach like Pat; I can't be her. But I loved her poise and the way she attacked all the situations that were stressful. I believe that we have similarities when we get in those situations.*

This quality of poise under pressure is something that Harper mentioned often, and I observed first-hand in her game at Southern Illinois.

I asked Harper about how being a great player influenced her coaching and after first denying her playing abilities talked of her long-time passion for coaching:

> *Well, I mean, there were greater players on my team than myself (laughs) so I may not be the best to qualify that. I was a successful player, and I think a lot of my success was because I had a great understanding of the game. And, I knew when I was in high school that I wanted to coach basketball. I thought I wanted to coach high school, and then I got*

to college and loved it so much that I decided I wanted to try and coach in college. I had an opportunity to learn from some great people, but I had a pretty good understanding of the game because I was around it so much growing up that it was really second nature for me.

Summitt (1998) has written of her faith in her books, including in *Reach for the Summit,* where she wrote, "I believe in God. I spent so much time as a child…sitting in our old wooden pew at Mount Carmel United Methodist Church… We went to Mount Carmel every Sunday morning and on a lot of weekday evenings, too" (p. 177). Interestingly, when I asked Harper if she Summitt's faith publicly, Harper said she did not.

Quite honestly, I didn't. I think she was very careful in that. I think that there was a reason for that. Maybe (that is) one reason is that you don't see mine publicly displayed as much. Maybe I got that from her, but I didn't see it a lot.

Though Harper's mother and mentor might not have talked about their faith much, they did set powerful examples for her of living out their faith. Perhaps part of this reticence to speak out until called upon reflects the influence of Methodism itself whose founding father, John Wesley, wrote in 1777 "Be particularly careful in speaking of yourself. You may not, indeed, deny the work of God; but speak of it when you are called thereto, in the most inoffensive manner possible" (Wesley, 2007/1872, p. vii).

However, Harper is not afraid to use her faith to comfort a player in a time of need. For example, when a player faces a serious injury she shares her belief in God's plan for all of our lives by telling them, "*I don't know why this happened, and we're not going to know here, but God has a plan. There's a reason things happen. He may be using you in a different way."* She

hopes this Christian perspective can bring a Christian player some peace of mind in difficult circumstances.

However, Harper realizes that she cannot implement her vision for her basketball program alone. To this point, I asked her about the importance of her coaching staff.

> *First of all, I think it's important that you hire people who can bring something you can't. For me, I know what my strengths are and I want to hire somebody who has different strengths than me. That's just important, and, you know, I'm confident with my ability but also I'm very knowledgeable of where I could be better. And, so I think just having that knowledge, and also just understanding that it's okay to admit that you do have weaknesses- everybody does. So, for me I wanted to hire somebody that is going to complement me as well as their character. I love what I do, and if I hire somebody that I don't want to be around- that's going to ruin it for me. And I'm pretty greedy; I want to keep enjoying what I do.*

Leadership Today

Harper's leadership featured three repetitive refrains. First, she has a perspective grounded in her faith beyond just winning. Second, this perspective gives her poise under pressure. Third, she is relentlessly positive.

In the high-pressure world of college basketball, it is easy to lose perspective. Harper discussed some of the pressures and time commitments of the job:

> *I think you have to juggle so much stuff. You know, you've got P.R. commitments, depending on what school you're at it could be, gosh, it could be a lot. For us, that's a ton here. I think, now you're expected to win quickly and sometimes to do things the right*

way, to really establish the culture it's a process, it takes some time. You know, that instant gratification is not just young kids- the fans want instant gratification, and I think that can be a hurdle. I think recruiting is a hurdle for any coach. Rules change, coaches change their philosophies, as money is involved recruiting is more and more important, and then you have folks out there who are willing to slide a little bit around the rules and once you slide a little bit it's easier to keep going in that direction. So, you know, I think one of the challenges that we have is to continue being successful in recruiting while doing it the right way, maintaining integrity, you know, keeping the rules intact.

Harper's faith makes it easier for her to maintain her integrity by reminding her of a big picture perspective in her leadership.

The fact that some coaches choose to intentionally break rules in search of a competitive advantage can be difficult for a competitive Christian coach to accept and may cause them to be tempted to violate their principles. Harper discussed this frustration:

It, at times, will be very frustrating. I think that, it's hard sometimes when you know that you're in a disadvantage in certain situations because you're not going to cheat. It's frustrating, but at the end of the day you just have to remind yourself that you can sleep at night, and who knows if your counterparts can. And also, it is a game, you know, sometimes we forget that. Obviously it's our job but it's a game. You can do it the right way and win, although it may be hard at times, but you can do it. I think, just understanding that you're going to be frustrated is the biggest piece of advice I would give somebody.

In addition to the pressures and frustrations coaches face are the inevitable ups and downs that come with sports. Harper honestly discussed her faith in good and bad times and the struggle we all face to be consistent:

> *I think probably some of the toughest times that I had, that's when I did rely on my faith even more. There's no doubt about it. I try to remind myself when things are going great, you still need that faith. But whether it was personnel issues or just an unsuccessful season; or if you weren't sure of your future with the team; or if you had big decisions to make, whether it was for a positive or negative reason; I think those were the times that I was searching and praying more frequently. Also, I think those were the times that I needed my faith to keep things in perspective. To keep me realizing there's a bigger thing in life than basketball, a bigger thing in life than winning and losing. As coaches, we're competitive by nature, and sometimes you just forget that there´s more to it than the wins and losses. I think I rely on my faith to keep me grounded during those times.*

Like all effective leaders, Harper continues to grow, which adds to her perspective. I asked her how her leadership had changed over her ten years as a head coach and she discussed the difference in being the head coach versus and assistant.

> *I think you're always growing in different areas. I'm probably more patient. I've dealt with a lot more things now than I did as a first-year head coach, or as an assistant, or as a player. I'm more experienced and there's no doubt that all those experiences help you, and they allow you to grow.*

Many have pointed out how different it is making *suggestions* as an assistant coach, to making *decisions* as the head coach. For me, this was a huge difference that I struggled with early in my head coaching career. Harper continued to touch on that:

> *It's just hard to explain. As an assistant you think 'these are the things I want to do when I'm a head coach' and 'these are the things I don't want to do when I'm a head coach' and then you become a head coach and the first thing you do is some of the things that you didn't want to do, but at the same time you are still developing your thoughts and your philosophy even as an assistant coach.*

The fast-changing nature of our society makes maintaining a broad perspective even more difficult today. Technological advances of social media, for example, have added an entire new layer of issues for coaches to deal with. For example, in the relatively early days of Facebook I had a player miss a morning practice. When I asked the team if anyone knew where he was as we huddled before practices they all looked at each other with a knowing look. No one wanted to say it, but finally someone said, "He posted on Facebook that he was going to quit." After practice, when I went to look I saw that he had indeed posted that, but even more significant he immediately got feedback from countless friends encouraging him to quit. The infamous "Peanut Gallery" or what football coach Bill Curry (2006) has called "the fellowship of the miserable" was now online.

Harper discussed the challenges of coaching today's generation:

> *I definitely think the motivational tactics are challenging. I don't think you can motivate the same way you even motivated five years ago. Really, it changed that quick with the instant gratification generation. These kids have not had to work for anything. If they*

need a piece of information they get Google. They don't have to work. I think it's just something you have to realize that you can't treat them maybe like you were treated.

With that being said, I asked her how does she reach today's athletes?

For me, I think that these kids have to know that you care about them, and maybe going and putting your arm around them after they've struggled instead of being aggressive with them after they've struggled. Another thing, it may not be exactly a tactic, but realizing that these kids are different and you can't treat them the same. I believe that you treat players fairly, but I also believe that because they're not the same; you have to do different things with them.

I'll give you and example, I had a player one year that missed study hall and so we ran her. That did nothing to her; she could run all day. But another time when she missed study hall we gave her additional study hall hours; that cleared it up. We didn't have any issues after that. And then we had players who all you had to do to motivate them was threaten them with running. So, they're different and I think you can be fair, but you have to treat them as individuals.

In Harper's eyes, with this broader perspective comes responsibility to set a good example for those around her. She discussed what her faith gives her:

Well, I think one it gives you perspective. Although I take losses very, very, very hard, I think that because of that you realize that there are things out there greater than what you're doing—maybe out there that are more important than what you're doing. Also, I look at is as I'm an example and I have to live my life to show that and I'm in a position where there are a lot of people looking at me. I don't think that'd a bad thing. I'm not

perfect, but I try to be a good person and I think people can see that in me, again that I'm trying. I'm not perfect by any means. There are things that I struggle with, but I do believe people realize that I'm trying to be the best I can be.

However, Harper does not push her perspective on others, much like her college basketball coach. I asked her if she intentionally tried to integrate her faith into her coaching or if it occurs naturally:

Well, I think it happens naturally. I think I'm intentional about a few things. Obviously, I think it's important for our players to know that I'm a Christian. But I also think it's important that they don't feel threatened or pushed into anything.

Recruits or their families ask Harper about her faith quite often, which was interesting to me given that she doesn't openly share it often. In recruiting it is crucial to get to know everything you can about a player to see if they are a fit for your institution, their potential teammates, and your coaching style. To this point, Harper likes to know her recruits' faith background if they bring it up, *"It does not mean that we are or are not going to recruit them…I think it's important for me to know the type the person that we have.*" And what if they are Christians? "*I think they're not perfect, but at least I know the backgrounds that they have, and know how they've grown up."* And what if they are not Christian?

I'm not here to judge, and it's not my job. I need to recruit good people, and I need to recruit people that fit in to our program. And they can look very different. They can look very many ways. I have had very diverse teams, very diverse players before. I think it's important that they, whomever they are, that they feel comfortable being themselves. I think that's important. One thing that I do not want to get into is discussing with players,

I don't think they have to hear my opinion on lifestyle. I think they just need to feel that I will love them. That's what I do. I love my players; I will take care of my players. I'm not here to judge them.

Relentlessly positive with a broad perspective. Once they are on campus as part of the program, Harper stressed the importance of developing positive relationships with the players, which reflects Summitt's (1998) principle to "develop and demonstrate loyalty" (p. 45). Harper gave an example of the type of thing she might do to try and deepen those relationships and loyalty:

First and foremost, I try to spend time with them. You know, when we're on road trips unless I have some other duty that comes up with recruiting or I need to work on a scouting report, I go to dinner with them. That may not sound like a big deal, but just being around them I think is important. We had a Christmas party, we had a team dinner at the house on Monday. I think they need to see the human side of coaches and our players are allowed to do that.

Talking about what she expects at practice she said, *"I want them to have fun. I want to see smiles on their faces."*

Her Christian perspective also colors the way she disciplines players. She feels that she has been offered grace and mercy by God and should do the same for her players when possible. This does not mean that things always worked out wonderfully, as she explained:

Only a couple of times in my head coaching career have I ever suspended a kid. I just feel like a punishment for breaking a rule is fair. I don't think that kicking them off the team for breaking the rule-- I just think that's something I try to avoid. Everybody makes

mistakes. And I feel like if I give up on a kid after a mistake, then I didn't help them. Now, unfortunately that's kicked me in the butt a few times. I've tried to help kids become better people and I just wasn't able to do it. I showed them a lot of compassion and could not ever get them to go on the right path. And sometimes I've given players too much ground.

Though she admitted that sometimes tough love is in order. In one situation, Harper told a player whom she had tired to work with unsuccessfully to completely change her mind and attitude or transfer. This was no hollow threat,

'You have to tell me by Tuesday.' At 11:59pm on Tuesday she called me that night and said, 'Coach, you're the only person I want to play for.' After that, that player, she was amazing. In terms of who she was as a person, she changed. And so it wasn't the compassion—I know it was part of it, leading up to it—it wasn't the compassion and the grace, so to speak, that I gave her. It was the having a finality to our relationship that changed her.

However, one of the painful lessons of a caring coach is that you can't help every player turn herself around. She gave an example of one player she could not reach:

I should have just discharged from the team, probably multiple times. I knew that she had a tough life. I knew some personal things about her that no one else knew. And because of that, I felt like I had a responsibility to help her and get her through, no matter what. I couldn't do it. I couldn't get her there. I could not change her. That didn't keep me from trying, but she was beyond what I could do in a team setting. But I've learned I can't help everybody. It's a hard lesson to learn.

A Day in the Life of the Lead Lady Bear

Carbondale Chamber of Commerce: Shootaround observation. For my observations of all of the coaches in the study, I wanted to observe a shootaround and a practice around or just after midseason. This way the teams would be firmly established in their routines, player roles would be more clearly developed, and coaches would have a better handle on just how their team operates. Once a coach agreed to enter the study I looked at their schedule for their game closest to my home in Knoxville, TN. However, nature was not to cooperate with Missouri State. The game I had arranged to attend was snowed out so I had to reschedule the next time the Lady Bears came within an eight-hour drive. This turned out to be a late season game against the Southern Illinois University (SIU) Salukis in Carbondale, IL. I'm sure Carbondale is a lovely town in the summer, but it's highly unlikely there are any pictures from any Feb. 27th's on the Chamber of Commerce website. On the day I was there it seemed like everyone I passed was wearing a toboggan, or knit hat if you're not from the south, in his or her car. I understand bundling up outside, but people were bundled up in their cars. It was cold and bleak, much like both the Lady Bears and the Salukis' seasons had turned.

After winning five games in a row, Missouri State had suffered a critical injury to their best player and had dropped their last four games to fall to 12-14 overall. Harper told me in our conversation at shootaround that the injury has forced her to change her team's focus to attention to detail of the little things that they can do with the team they have now. She also said that they are spending less time going over scouting reports because "*we're just trying to get better and make sure that our culture is the way we need it before the end of the year.*"

Of course, every door to the arena that I tried that morning was locked as the cutting wind ruthlessly directed me around the mid-20th century style bowled arena. The white arched dome reminded me of the Astrodome with its pre-luxury box arena design. Southern Illinois had tried their best to liven the drab concrete up with four large banners surrounding the court: "Salukis in the NBA," "1967 NIT Champions," "Women's Basketball," and "Salukis in the Sweet 16." The Saluki mascot was one of the most recognizable in college sports for its uniqueness and they played it to full effect on the playing floor paint job, the signage, and the merchandise in the concourse team shop.

I was the only person in the arena that morning as I walked by the school pep band's instruments already out on the risers including a very tempting drum set. Little did I know, the crowd would not be much bigger that evening. At 11:14am someone rolled a rack of basketballs out in preparation for the Lady Bears' shootaround. At 12:10 the team began arriving and peeled off their gray team warmups on the benches and in the first row of the bleachers. Kellie Harper made her way in and was enthusiastic from the start. She seemed happy to introduce me to her coaching staff, almost as if to say, "See, I told you this guy really wants to observe us" in a friendly, locker room banter kind of way. By 12:19 assistant coach Jackie Stiles, the second all-time leading scorer in women's DI history, was leading the team in ball-handling drills as a warmup. Hiring Stiles was an absolute coup for Harper's staff. First of all, she has tremendous experience to draw upon, and secondly she is public relations windfall that is beloved by the Lady Bears fans. Harper described Stiles upon her hiring: "She is one of the most energetic people I've ever worked with. She loves Lady Bear basketball and has a passion for it" (Potoczny, 2013, para. 15). Stiles shared the excitement, "Words can't describe how excited I am

to be coaching at my alma mater. It's a dream come true because I love the school and community so much" ("Notable," 2013, para. 3).

The shootaround continued not unlike most others with some skill work as Harper bounced back and forth between both ends, occasionally giving instruction or encouragement. The atmosphere was about what you would expect for a team coming off losing their best player, in the midst of a losing streak, on the road against a lowly opponent: workmanlike but not electric. The electricity came when they got to the scout defense part of the shootaround. This is where the team reviews the opponent's plays and how to defend them. Since coaches cannot make shots for their teams they make sure they can try to stop the other team from getting theirs. Nothing gives an assistant coach more glee than to know what the other team is going to run before they run it, tell his or her own team what they are going to run, and then have their team defend it properly. On the flip side, nothing is more frustrating than to know what they other team is going to run before they run it, tell your team what they are going to run, and them score anyway.

My point is that the energy level in shootaround picked up, but not only because of the scout, but rather because of who was the scout team. At 12:36pm Harper instructed everyone to go one end of the court as Harper, the three assistant coaches and a manager huddled together. Then I saw something I had never seen before, the four coaches and one manager became the scout team running SIU's plays against the Lady Bear players. I've seen many, many scout teams, and as a walk-on player I was on many, many scout teams, but I had never seen a head coach at the college level on a scout team.

This was not full speed, mind you, but it was not a walk-through either. As is typical of Harper's personality, there was no sense of I-can't-believe-I'm-doing-this in her body language, but rather an excitement. Of course, most coaches deep down would rather play than coach, so this was fun for her. I told her I had never seen that before after the shootaround and she explained, *"Sometimes I do it just because in that certain position I can see how they would guard me and I can see if it would work or not. Most of the time, I just do it because it's easy."*

This was leading by example in more ways than one. Not only was she jumping in and physically participating, which players love, but she was also showing mental participation because at the DI level there is usually an assistant coach that has been assigned that scout and Harper listened intently to that coach. She stood with the other four as the coach with the scout held up a manila folder with the play drawn on it like my high school football team did with our scout team plays.

After the shootaround, Harper would describe it as "*very typical*." She then explained the atmosphere that day:

> *I like our shootarounds to be relaxed. I like the players to be smiling and enjoy it, but when we went to our scout team I though they were pretty focused. They did what they needed to do. So I like having that balance, especially on game day. I like having it anyway. I like our players having fun. I like our players to come to practice with big smiles on their faces, but especially on game day. I don't want them uptight.*

Harper's thoughts echoed what she had told weeks before in an interview when I asked what I would see in the shootaround:

First of all, I want our players to be loose, especially at that practice- not goofing off but loose. I want them to have fun. I want to see smiles on their faces. It's also important that we're focused. We'll probably get a lot of shots up. It's not going to be the most intense practice the day before a game, but we want them to be focused. My whole deal is you walk in there and see a happy bunch of girls, enjoying what they're doing, comprehending what their coaches are telling them, and then when we get to the point that we are working on the scouting report that you'd be able to see that they're understanding and paying attention to what we're doing. That's all pretty high aspirations (laughs).

Those aspirations may have been high, but she was remarkably accurate in what I saw. Her Lady Bears certainly didn't appear uptight, but whether that would that carry over into the night's contest was the key question.

Poise on the sideline: Gameday observation. I really had no idea what to expect as far as the crowd went. SIU also featured a first-year head coach who had been at the highest level in Cindy Stein. Stein had spent the previous 12 seasons as head coach of the Big 12's University of Missouri. As I walked into SIU Arena before the game, there were more white and maroon championship banners hanging from the ceiling that people in the 8,339 seats. "It's early," I thought, though the pep band's instruments were still laid out on the baseline risers in lonely anticipation of the main event.

By the time the public address announcer welcomed the crowd to the game twenty minutes before tip off I counted seven people in the stands, not including the 27 pep band members. The official attendance would be listed at 457 on the final stat sheet. I point this out

not to mock SIU, but to emphasize that this was the kind of game where you had to generate your own energy much like an early morning AAU game or a high school holiday tournament game.

Ironically, SIU was participating in the "We Back Pat" initiative in support of Harper's college coach, Pat Summit, by selling wrist bands in the lobby to support Alzheimer's research and playing a video prior to the game on the scoreboard. Though the Salukis had struggled in losing their last seven games. Six of their losses on the season had come by less than ten points, including two on jumpers with less than two seconds remaining (Lock, 2014).

When I was coaching I looked at games in three ways: games you should win, games you could win, and games you might win if they other team gets food poisoning or something. To me, this game fit in the "should win" category and I don't think I was alone in that expectation after talking to game personnel before the game. That sounds good, unless your team doesn't play well. In which case, the pressure on the team that "should win" increases exponentially and can lead to overcompensating for their poor play causing a downward spiral of morale and performance. To use an airplane analogy, it takes a steady leader to pull the "should win" team out of that spiral and regain altitude without stalling the engine by pulling up too hard. Harper was a steady pilot in this game, showing the poise she so valued from Coach Summitt.

I was seated on the scorer's table two seats down from the Missouri State bench, just on the other side of the Lady Bear radio announcer. The Missouri State coaching staff was seated in the middle of the players. Many coaches do this so that players are on either side of the coaching staff to keep every player relatively close to a staff member, versus putting the coaching staff at one end of the bench and thereby relegating a player to the stereotypical end of the bench, far

from the coaching staff. Harper sat in the middle of her staff, which was in the middle of her players. By the third possession she was on her feet for the rest of the night, after a very questionable call by the officials. She was incredulous of the call but respectful in her questions to the official. In a prior conversation we had discussed handling officials:

> *I've had two technicals in however many years, that's not very many. So, I'm not a screamer and a yeller. I do not cuss. I don't cuss our players. I don't cuss officials. That keeps me out of a lot of trouble because they just don't hear that kind of language from me.*

It was a tough start to the game for Harper's team. The Salukis jumped all over her Lady Bears, sprinting to an 18-7 lead less than five minutes into the game. After the same Saluki player hit her third three-pointer in just over four minutes of game action, Harper exploded out of her crouch in front of her assistant coaches, and threw her hands together in frustrated timeout signal. Harper appeared upset, but she did not make a scene. After the game, she would say, "*I had to challenge them and from then on I thought it was fun.*" Interestingly, her challenge was not the result of giving up three quick threes, but because "*I thought our bench to start the game was just low energy.*" Harper is always positive and she expects everyone in the program to be as well.

After fighting back to tie the game at 26, SIU goes on a 10-1 run when a Missouri State player is clearly fouled—hit in the nose on a strip attempt—but no foul is called. One unique aspect of the college game is that there are "media timeouts" throughout the game where on any dead ball after a certain time marker, such as under 8:00 minutes, the teams are sent to their benches as if a team called a timeout. As the player collapsed on the floor, the ball rolled out of

bounds triggering a media timeout, which allowed Harper to walk out on the floor to check on her player. On the way back to her bench she intentionally walked by the officials huddled together and says, "No foul? Wow!" visibly angry. This is a case where she had to speak up in defense of her player no matter what. Again, she was not disrespectful but she made her point. When I had asked her about handling officials in an earlier interview she explained it this way:

> *Oh, well, I guess that depends on who you ask. My assistant coach, my husband, would say that I don't handle them enough (laughs). He thinks I ought to get after them even more. I think the older I get the more comfortable I get being on the aggressive side. They're human; they're going to make mistakes. And, so if I see something, a lot of times, instead of screaming and yelling, I'll call them over and say, 'Will you look for this? Will you look for this? Will you look for this?' I feel like they would appreciate that more than just being yelled at, but at the same time it's part of the game. There's an art to it. There are some coaches out there who understand how to work officials to the point where it's beneficial to their team. You know, I don't want to yell at officials because I don't like yelling. But at the same time, my team deserves for me to do all I can to help them.*

I never saw anything different about Harper's interactions with her husband at shootaround or the game than any other head and assistant coach. To her point about him wanting her to get on the officials more, late in the first half I did see him prodding her and she barked out "*Watch that hand check first!"* to the officials.

Having a spouse as an assistant coach is a highly unusual arrangement, and one that receives a good bit of attention. In 2010, Robinson detailed their work relationship, which Kellie Harper explained this way:

> I would get some people that come up to me and say, 'I would love to work with my husband,' Harper said. 'Then I get people that come and say, "Oh girl, there's no way that I could work with my husband." Everyone's different. That's what we try to tell people, it works for us. It works for our staff. And it works for our team.

After a wild first half, the Lady Bears headed to the locker room on the short end of a high scoring slugfest, 45-41.

The second half can best be summed up by the opening turn of events. The very enthusiastic SIU pep band had been doing a great job of creating atmosphere in the nearly empty dome throughout the night. However, in an apparent tradition that I can easily imagine being started by a jocular pep band member in an afro wig and extra, extra large sunglasses, the pep band sings "99 Bottles of Beer on the Wall" until SIU scores to start the second half. On this night they got through quite a few bottles of beer before SIU got on the scoreboard. It was all downhill from there for the Salukis as the Lady Bears run away with a 93-76 victory in the last 11 minutes.

On the bright side for SIU, they were led by "Double-Double Dyana," Dyana Pierre. Pierre, a 6'2" sophomore, was a beast in every positive sense of the athletic term. She dominated the paint on her way to 27 points and 18 rebounds. When asked about Pierre in her postgame radio interview Harper said, "*That girl is really good. Whew- just, not a whole lot you can do with her.*" As the interviewer pressed on about Pierre's huge night, Harper, in typical fashion very subtly redirected the conversation into a positive one,

She was impressive. Fortunately for us, our defense took them out of their flow to get her the ball, they still got it to her and she still got offensive boards there, but it wasn't in rhythm. If we had stayed man on her we would have given up 40 points. (laughs)

Even when the Lady Bears struggled early, in a game they should win, Harper never lost her composure. She pointed out her team's poise in her postgame interview as well:

At times, it was probably a really fun basketball game to watch because there was a lot of scoring. If you like defense (laughs) at times, it probably wasn't a fun game to watch. But, again, just really proud of our players to maintain poise. We were down 11 points and I told them don't panic because I knew the way the game could swing, and it could swing in a drastic way, so the deal was to get some stops and stop their momentum.

In an earlier interview she had mentioned how she had admired her college coach's poise as a player so I was not surprised by this comment after the game:

I'm not a panicker by nature. But Pat Summit was always so poised in critical moments and I recognized that as a player. She never panicked, and therefore she expressed confidence and therefore her players fed off of that- we had confidence. That's what I've always tried to do to our teams- just to try to give them my poise and my confidence so that they understand everything's ok and we've got everything controlled- whether we do or not (laughs).

Harper patiently and pleasantly answered all of my questions after the game, there was no other press, and then went to hold her baby boy who was waiting with his grandmother on the baseline.

Conclusion

It is easy to see why Kellie Harper is successful on the recruiting trail: she is honest and engaging, self-deprecating yet confident. She was consistently positive and poised in all situations that I observed, and she was also not afraid to jump in and lead by example. While she had spoken freely of her faith when I asked her, I saw no outward signs of religion in her public interactions with her team or her public comments. As mentioned before, this reflected the influence of her parents, her mentor, and her religious tradition of Methodism. I also found it very interesting that Harper mentioned wanting to speak with particular players about religion because she thought it might help them, but that she did not because of her position in a public institution. This is the type of self-regulation that critics do not believe Christians are capable of maintain, and there is no way for me to prove or disprove it through this study—I can only relate what I observed, what I read, and what I saw.

A Servant Leader with Cajun Swagger:

Billy Kennedy, Texas A&M University Head Men's Basketball Coach

Overview

"I think it's about investing in people around you. Just try to build them into being all that they can be, and also they can use their God-given gifts to share and serve others. That's what I try to do. Be a servant leader."

From their nearly 59,000 students, to a football stadium soon to hold over 100,000, the slogan "everything's bigger in Texas" certainly applies to Texas A&M University in College Station. Founded in 1872, the maroon and white Aggies also have one of the most passionate fan

bases in college sports. As a former A&M assistant basketball coach, current Head Men's Basketball Coach Billy Kennedy noted the sports atmosphere upon his hiring as their 21st head coach in 2011: "I couldn't wait to get back to Aggieland…Even though I was there for only a short time, I could tell Aggieland is a special place. Aggies have great pride and passion for their school and their athletic programs" (Quisenberry, 2013a, p. 6). This passion is reflected in the massive media coverage the Aggies receive and their commitment to facilities, but challenges remain.

Multitudinous local and regional media outlets feed the A&M fans' insatiable interest in anything Aggie. In fact, this season's basketball media guide lists seven newspapers, six television stations, three primary and 23 network radio stations, two wire services, and three magazines, while not even mentioning the many websites and blogs devoted to the Aggie faithful (Quisenberry, 2013a). In fact, 31 of A&M's 34 basketball games were televised live and the other three games were carried live via the Internet (Quisenberry). According to Kennedy, the high level of instant media coverage at this level increases the pressure on coaches:

> *At this level is pressure on every game, because everybody knows that every game we play - all our games are on TV, everybody sees, so mistakes that are made are more magnified than they are at the mid-range or low-range level. You can really mess up on the road and no one really knows about it and nobody really cares. Being at this level, when you lose games it's a big deal.*

Texas A&M's commitment to athletics facilities is profound, but not unusual at this level. Many critics have decried the national trend of new and more expensive athletic facilities as a "facilities arms race" (Goral, 2014). However, some schools justify these expenses by citing the

return on their investment through increased goodwill and revenue. Built in 1998, the A&M basketball facilities include the 12,989 seat Reed Arena, which is "complete with the amenities of a NBA arena and the atmosphere of a collegiate setting" (Quisenberry, 2013a, p. 14). However, beginning around the turn of the millennium, just having an elite arena was no longer enough, you needed a dedicated practice facility.

The Aggies met that competitive need by building the 68,000 square foot Cox-McFerrin Center in 2006. The facility was designed for far more than just practices by including "a foyer rotunda entrance, two practice gymnasiums, large locker room facilities, players' lounges, coaches' offices, a weight room, team meeting rooms, a training/medical room, and video rooms" (Quisenberry, 2013a, p. 14). For practical purposes, facilities such as this allow the teams to practice unimpeded when the main arena is occupied by concerts or other events. For recruiting purposes, facilities such as these are a showcase of a tangible commitment to the program.

Yet, this is an institution of higher learning, so yet another part of the arms race is to build academic support facilities just for student-athletes. Texas A&M calls their 24,550 square foot Alice and Erle Nye Academic Center "the premier center of its kind in the country…providing them with the competitive edge necessary to excel in their scholastic and career pursuits as they work toward their athletics goals" ("Nye Academic Center," n.d.). However, in reality, these facilities are not competitive advantages because nearly every school at this level has these facilities as well; it is more akin to "buying in" at poker or the cost of doing business.

Despite these excellent facilities, Kennedy is facing another major challenge at A&M: the

football monster. Texas has a well-documented love affair with football. At the pro level, Texas is home to the Dallas Cowboys, "America's Team," and the Houston Texans. H. G. Bissinger's seminal 1990 book about high school football in Texas, *Friday Night Lights*, has also been turned into a popular movie and a television series. Perhaps most controversially, in 2013 a new reality television show, *Friday Night Tykes*, chronicled an ultra-competitive football league for elementary aged kids near San Antonio. The NFL, USA Football, and members of Congress all expressed serious concerns about this latest example of the football culture in Texas being taken too far with 8 and 9 year olds (Mandell, 2014).

At the collegiate level, the importance of football in Texas culture is vividly on display at Texas A&M where the Aggies are in the midst of a $450 million football stadium project, "the largest stadium redevelopment in college football history" (Quisenberry, 2013a, p. 10). The Aggie faithful were recently fueled to a fever pitch by the exploits of Heisman Trophy winning quarterback Johnny Manziel and the move from the Big 12 Conference to the Southeastern Conference, a football powerhouse. An example of this football culture mindset in relation to basketball can be seen in an article in the local College Station newspaper at the conclusion of this year's football season:

> It's the time of year where the nation's attention slowly, maybe even reluctantly, turns to college basketball. Sure, fans still have the NFL playoffs, but that's only a weekend affair and only for a few more weeks. Fans might even grasp at straws and watch the Senior Bowl — that last, desperate breath of a dying college football season.

> Inevitably, fans turn their attention to college basketball. Yes, even Texas A&M fans. And if they haven't been paying attention, they might be pleasantly surprised. (Bloom, 2014, para. 1-2)

Some basketball coaches might resent this reality at Texas A&M, but Kennedy appreciates Aggie fans' football passion and hopes to continue to pleasantly surprise them; "*Well, I'm from the south and I love football, so I embrace and recognize the path, but it is difficult to just appreciate the popularity of football to basketball (at Texas A&M).*" I, on the other hand, disagree with that newspaper article's assertion that the football-first mentality is a "national" mindset. In fact, I grew up where basketball, not football, is king: North Carolina. For example, my hometown of Greensboro passed a bond in 1968 to expand our Coliseum to the second largest arena on the east coast behind New York City's iconic Madison Square Garden, and Greensboro didn't even have a major college basketball or professional basketball team. Greensboro's arena was built primarily for basketball tournaments like the ACC Tournament and even the 1974 NCAA Final Four. Where I'm from, we look forward to the beginning of basketball season with celebrations like "Midnight Madness" where at 12:01am teams start basketball practice the first second allowed by NCAA rules, often witnessed by thousands of adoring fans. But at Texas A&M, you just hope the fans jump on your basketball bandwagon after football season ends.

For Kennedy, who is already battling to gain the attention of his own football fans, the move to the SEC has also presented some challenges building interest. In recent years, major shifts in conference affiliation rocked college sports and demonstrated the crass commercialism that marks our time. Mandell (2012) called the numerous conference realignments a "mad cash

grab… (that) feels very much like the late 90s dotcom bubble or the mid-2000s housing bubble" (para. 13).

The tradition of conference affiliation means little in the current market. For example, after 60 years as a charter member of the prestigious Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), in the summer of 2014, the University of Maryland left the ACC for a bigger payday as one of the 14 members of Big 10 Conference. Predicting that their own fans would react negatively to the move, Maryland hired public relations consultants and had employees plant positive comments in online communities to counter the wave of discontent (Barker, 2013). Conversely, Texas A&M's move from the Big 12 to the SEC was entirely different and much better received, primarily because of football.

The Aggies' warmer reception was undoubtedly correlated to the SEC's being in the midst of winning seven straight football national championships while the Big 12 was on the verge of collapse. The Big 12 was wobbling towards insolvency due to institutions leaving the conference, the potential of others leaving, and the University of Texas creating its own TV network. Nebraska left for the Big 10, Colorado headed for what was then the Pac 10, and Missouri bolted for the SEC. Rather than be left standing when the music stopped, the Aggies also left the Big 12 Conference for the SEC before Kennedy's second season. While this has been a great move from a national spotlight standpoint, thanks primarily to the success of the A&M football team, there are fewer natural rivalries. Kennedy explained it this way, "Students, they don't know anybody that goes to Ole Miss. They have friends that go to Texas Tech, go to Baylor and Texas, so it's a different deal" ("Question & Answer," 2014, para. 14).

Yet, the SEC is also an excellent basketball league. In fact, since 1994 the SEC has won six men's basketball national championships, more than any other conference during that time. As the Texas A&M media guide points out, the NBA has drafted 42 SEC players in just the last six years alone (Quisenberry, 2013a). So Kennedy has the resources and facilities of an elite program under the shadow of a football-crazed mentality, but competes against formidable competition. Fellow SEC head coach Mark Fox, of the University of Georgia is facing a similar challenge. He described the challenge of trying to catch the more established programs in the league: "You are trying to catch [programs] that are not going to stumble…they are not going anywhere. They are not going backwards, so you are trying to catch people that are running full speed, and that process takes time" ("Kennedy says future bright," 2014, para. 6).

Traditionally, Texas A&M's men's basketball program had struggled with inconsistency until a run of success beginning in 2006. To put their struggles into perspective, consider that in the 102-year history of Aggie basketball they have only made 12 NCAA Tournament appearances. Yet, there was cause for optimism when Kennedy was hired because six of those twelve all-time NCAA Tournament appearances have come since 2006. Each of Kennedy's last two A&M teams have won 18 games, a feat that has only been topped 16 times in the 102 years of Aggie basketball, but they have not made the NCAA Tournament yet. As another example of the recent resurgence of the program, seven of those 16 seasons of 19 or more wins have come in the last 10 years.

However, coaching turnover almost always hurts the consistency of a program and Kennedy was the third head coach in the last six seasons when he was hired. Unfortunately, a series of setbacks on and off the court has kept the Aggies from the Big Dance in Kennedy's first

three years. Kennedy faced such a large rash of injuries, dismissals, transfers, and just plain bad luck after taking over the program that one local reporter called the team a "battered, leaky, rocking ship (going) through the murky waters of the SEC" (Bloom, 2014, para. 6).

Yet, Kennedy's confidence remains strong, "I've been through this. This is my fourth head coaching job and my third where it took at least four years where it turned" ("Question and answer," 2014, para. 30). More than just confident, Kennedy has a peace based in his Christian faith. Speaking of his faith in relation to his program Kennedy explained his trust in God's plan for him: "*So we're believing and if it works, it works, and if it doesn't, He's got another plan.*" As we have seen in the other portraits, Kennedy's faith provides him peace under pressure.

In the interviews for this study, we discussed what I had read about Coach Kennedy and his program and asked him to discuss his faith and his leadership. Though not coming across immediately, after speaking with him for a while, Kennedy's dry wit and honesty were refreshing. He is not like the bombastic coaches that form the stereotype of choice for the late night comedy sketches, or the sad headlines of a coach abusing his position of authority. His demeanor is not typical of most DI basketball coaches, on the surface he appears calm and stoic, his speech patterns can seem subdued and almost somber. A local sportswriter noted that the Aggie fans wished he would openly display more emotion, but then went on to detail his great sense of humor (Croome, 2014).

Underneath the calm exterior you can sense the simmering competitiveness. From my perspective, there was no lack of passion in Kennedy. Much to the contrary, it was more like the cool spaghetti western gunslinger who calmly dispatches the out of control hot head and nonchalantly returns to what he was doing. Since he is now coaching in Texas, this image seems

especially appropriate. With a nod to his Louisiana roots Zwerneman (2011), called this attitude his "Cajun swagger."

Dream Job

"I'm waiting for the part where I get to tell the full story and have a larger platform, hopefully, to glorify God. Because when people see what I went through, it's going to point to Him and give Him the glory."

Many people see coaches at the top of the profession and think it is all champagne and caviar, but for the majority of coaches it is a long hard grind to the top. Wilson and Wilson (2013) found that new DI head coaches in 2012-2013 had an average of over 15 years of college experience; not exactly an overnight sensation. To understand Kennedy's climb to an elite level job, I ask that you imagine walking in his shoes.

Imagine you are a Louisiana native who feels that coaching college basketball is more than a job, it a calling. "*God called me to do what I'm doing,"* you explain. Yet, this calling does not mean you had an easy road; "*Very few people want to take the road that I took. I had to go places that weren't productive schools, seven times in seven years."* In fact, that road to pay your dues and work your way up the coaching ladder as an assistant coach includes nine different colleges stretching from Miami to Wyoming. Then you start to climb the head-coaching ladder at tiny Centenary College of Louisiana in Shreveport. Coaching the Gentlemen, as their men's sports teams are known, is no easy task, but you turn them around earning you a chance at the slightly bigger Southeastern Louisiana, your alma mater. The experience building that program

helps you land the head job at tradition-rich Murray State University in basketball-crazed Kentucky. After rebuilding the program into a national story you finally get your shot at the big-time, after 27 years following your calling. In your introductory press conference at Texas A&M University you noted, "I've climbed the ladder a little bit different than a lot of people. This is a dream job for me. I don't want to go anywhere…I plan on retiring here" (Croome, 2011, para. 8). You won't be leaving for greener pastures at another job you assure the Aggie faithful.

Life is good. Basketball-wise, your experience of rebuilding three DI programs has prepared you to take over a major program near the zenith of its over 100-year history. You also happen to have been an assistant at this school for one season on your way up the coaching ladder, "I believe in this place and I'm very thankful to be here" (Croome, 2011, para. 18). You are on top of the world. In fact, you entertain the press conference crowd with this family fact, "I've got an older daughter who is 20 years old, and she was born here. Her name is Alexandra Marie. 'A' and 'M.' So I loved it here, obviously" (Croome, para. 22). The crowd eats it up and the press remarks how "comfortable" you seem in A&M maroon.

You thank the people for coming to the press conference and when explaining your philosophy say, "It's about developing people, about having relationships and doing special things" (Croome, 2011, para. 18). A major part of those relationships is your family. You have remarried and have four kids. Your wife shares your strong Christian faith and has only missed one game in 16 years. Your youngest child, a 6 year-old daughter, has only missed one game in her lifetime. Just trying to acknowledge them in your press conference brings tears to your eyes. Your wife tells the press that she tried not to make eye contact during the press conference

because she knows how long you've struggled to get to this moment, "I didn't look at him, and he tried not to look at me," your wife jokes to the press (Croome, 2011, para. 20).

Financially, the new job comes with an annual pay raise of over $1 million dollars from the previous year at Murray State. But you are not in it for the money; this is a calling. You firmly feel that *"God basically put a head coaching job in my lap and from there I kind of grew from it. My steps were ordered and he directed me towards basketball and coaching, basically the rest was history."* In this calling you say your role is to be a "servant leader." You explain this as "*investing in people around you. Just try to build them into being all that they can be, and also they can use their God-given gifts to share and serve others. That's what I try to do."*

Snapping back to reality, life was indeed good for Billy Kennedy when he took his "dream job" at Texas A&M in 2011: an elite job at a program coming off an unparalleled run of success in school history and that was relatively close to home. Fast forward to the present and the last three years have been especially challenging both personally and professionally. Things got off to a rocky start his first year, to say the least. One local newspaper said it was as if he "started behind the eight ball," when just before beginning practice in his first season at A&M Kennedy was diagnosed with the early stages of Parkinson's disease, his leading scorer got hurt in the first game, and a power forward broke an ankle ("Finally," 2014, para. 8).

In addition to the enormity of his medical diagnosis was the timing of the leave of absence it required: just before his first practices as head coach at Texas A&M. Though the team had gone through NCAA allowed workouts with Kennedy before his leave of absence, those first official, full-team practices are crucial to establishing the culture any coach wants to be successful. Having been a head coach for many teams, I cannot imagine how difficult this must

have been from a basketball standpoint, especially because his entire coaching staff was new to his system.

Kennedy knows that he cannot implement his vision alone. He highly values filling his coaching staff "*with people who understand who I am and who can play for me.*" In fact, speaking of the importance of a strong coaching staff, Kennedy told me "*That is really huge, and that's one of the things that's been the hardest thing. Me, transitioning here, I had a guy that was with me for 13 years who is now the head coach at Murray State (Steve Prohm).*" Though he was happy that Prohm was promoted to head coach at Murray State when he left, losing Prohm as his assistant meant Kennedy did not have that trusted lieutenant that could easily step in at A&M when he was out and carry on the program just as Kennedy would.

In August 2011, University of Tennessee Women's Basketball Head Coach and icon Pat Summitt revealed she had been diagnosed with early-onset dementia, Alzheimer's type. In the discussion of what would happen to the program it was the program's values that rose to prominence in quotes from two longtime assistant coaches:

> Whatever happens, the assistants will rely on the program's bedrock values as much as their boss might lean on them. 'They're part of who we are,' (Holly) Warlick said. (Dean) Lockwood thinks that they're strong enough to make who's implementing them rather insignificant.
>
> 'I trust the processes of what's going on here,' he said. "The processes are still very much in place. What we're doing, our day-to-day process is not going to change at all (Fleser, 2011).

Kennedy did not have any long-time assistants to run the program based on his values like

Summitt did.

Yet, despite this his faith comforted him. When I asked him if the medical diagnosis had impacted his faith he said,

> *Good question. It's the mornings that you spend invested in your faith that prepares you about the situations that come up like that. I never asked 'why,' or 'why me?' I did ask, 'Why at this time,' but I just delved into the word, deeper and deeper…You recognize that there are peaks and valleys in a lot of Christians' lives. What I mean is, I was at a mountain top experience where God gave me a great opportunity at Texas A&M and I was feeling great and everything is going good, then all of a sudden, the wind's taken out of your sails, and you're diagnosed with a disease, and you think you can manage it, and you go and you don't tell people. You just try to do the best you can and then get knocked down. I'm waiting for the part where I get to tell the full story and have a larger platform, hopefully, to glorify God. Because when people see what I went through, it's going to point to Him and give Him the glory. That's just part of our service here on earth.*
>
> *There's a verse that says that Jesus was a nailed to the cross, it's in John. It's in a couple different places. I've quoted it a few times in some different articles, where it says, 'This is the hour, why I've come, to glorify your name.' So that's what we're trying to do.*
>
> *I still don't know why. I have also learned that Job and said, 'Why? Why?' And he never got any answers. God does not owe us any answers, but we're here to glorify Him.*

Among Kennedy's biblical references in that quote is the obvious reference to the well-

known biblical figure of Job, from the book of the same name in the Old Testament. It tells the story of Job, a wealthy man who was "blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil" (Job 1:1, New King James Version), and "was the greatest of all the people of the East" (Job 1:3). However, Job loses his wealth, his health, and his family but refuses to curse God uttering the famous statement, "Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised" (Job 1:21, New International Version).

Job's perseverance in the midst of adversity is also referenced in the New Testament book of James: "We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful" (Job 5:11, NASB). Kennedy demonstrated the influence of his faith on his attitude by continuing to praise God during his own health trials and explicitly referencing Job.

Thankfully, Kennedy has responded well to treatment and is feeling great. Showing his dry wit, Kennedy even quipped to a reporter, "Right now I'm doing fine and just getting old like everyone else" (Croome, 2012, para. 3). But that doesn't stop opponents from using the condition to negatively recruit against him. I asked Kennedy how frustrating that must be and Kennedy's faith is clear in his answer:

> *It hasn't been frustrating at all, to be honest with you. We learned a long time ago in this profession and I've used the phrase, 'All's fair in love, war, and recruiting.' Saw that at an early age. I don't surely live that way, but I know that's what happens sometimes in our profession. I don't think it happens an awful lot, but I'm sure there are some that have made comments…When people see that I'm healthy and doing great by God's*

grace, everything's fine. It's not really an issue...I know God can handle that also. It's not going to faze our success one way or the other. It's not going to have an effect, I don't think.

This season, Kennedy's third in College Station, was again marked by adversity as the team battled to an 18-16 record and advanced to the second round of the College Basketball Insider's postseason tournament. Reporters openly began speculating about Kennedy's job status this season, but A&M Athletic Director Eric Hyman has expressed support for the way Kennedy runs his program saying, "I want to win, but I also want to win the right way" (as quoted in Zwerneman, 2014, para. 4). Kennedy himself acknowledged the challenges, but then quickly refocused on the future:

One of the more challenging seasons I have ever had. The injuries, the dismissal of a couple of players, losing a coach during the season, and just recently, making some other changes within our programs. It's been a challenging year, but we are really on the cusp of doing something special where those things needed to be done. We need to go through those things to give us the opportunity to do something special this next season.

Though he has gone through ups and downs like the rest of us, Kennedy is firm in his confidence to lead his program and firm in his faith that undergirds his leadership. Next, the communities that influenced Kennedy's faith will be discussed.

Communities of Influence

"I'm a product of somebody investing in me.

When I became a head coach, I wanted it to be more than about basketball."

Family and basketball. It is fairly common for current coaches to identify a coach in their life that made a lasting impact on them. This impact could be from a coach as a positive role model worth emulating or a negative role model who they did not want to imitate. For me, my high school football coach and college basketball coach were the two biggest positive influences on my life other than my parents. Unfortunately, I can also name negative examples from the coaches growing up. In fact, I distinctly remember thinking that one reason for me to go into coaching is to have one less coach like a negative one I had.

Kennedy also experienced both sides of this coaching role model equation. He mentioned both of them when I asked him about his influences:

> *My stepfather was a coach. Before he was my stepfather, he was my coach. He took me in and basically just loved me and cared for me in a way that at that time of my life I wasn't getting. I was fortunate enough to when I went off to college and didn't get that same kind of coaching, I recognized that I wanted to get into coaching and give back to what people had given to me - to what my stepfather had invested in me. Then I worked with some other head coaches. They just treated me really good. Benny Dees at The University of New Orleans and University of Wyoming probably had the biggest impact at a college level at just loving and trying to help me be the best I can possibly be.*

As we have seen in other portraits, this is another case of a coach's family blending with their basketball family. Kennedy's affection for how his stepfather impacted him was obvious in our conversations.

When I pressed Kennedy on what those men did to build that connection with him he answered:

> *Really, just the quality of time and just talking to me whether it's just going to get a hamburger somewhere or giving me a ride home after practice, just those type things. It's harder to do for whatever reason at this level than it was maybe at the mid-majors or than the other school that I've been at, so I've had to really be more intentional this past year.*

The difficulty in making time for to build relationships at this level reminds me of what one of my bosses, Buzz Peterson, told me when I asked him what he had learned from Pat Summitt. Peterson said she always pointed to his schedule and asked him where the time in his calendar was for his players. Coaches at this level have some many time commitments for media, speaking, appearances, recruiting, university functions, etc. that if they are not careful they can squeeze their players out of their schedule.

Clearly, Kennedy has been able to make this time in the past. The examples his coaches gave him of loving and caring for those under them with a sincere intention to help their players or assistants develop are evident in Kennedy's leadership. As an example of this, the current media guide provide this quote from one of Kennedy's former players, the NBA Houston Rockets' Isaiah Canaan:

> Coach Kennedy was one of the coaches that believed in me. I tried to give back to him as best I could by going out and playing as hard as I could. He showed me a lot and I learned so much from him. He helped me mature both as a basketball player and as a man and was really supportive spiritually off the court. (Quisenberry, 2013, p. 42)

Another example came from a current assistant coach, who also played for him. Speaking of his time playing for Kennedy, Amir Abdur-Rahim said "He helped shape me into the man I

am today" and speaking of his time working for Kennedy he said that his "respect and admiration for him is bigger than basketball. He really helped us (the coaching staff) grow in the profession" ("Abdur-Rahim visits," 2014).

Family and faith. Kennedy grew up outside of New Orleans, Louisiana, well known for its wild mix of religious and spiritual beliefs. Like many American Christians, Kennedy has attended churches of many different Christian denominations in his lifetime. In alphabetical order, his journey includes Assemblies of God, Catholic, Evangelical Free Will, non-denominational, and Southern Baptist churches. However, it was his mother's influence that made a great impact early in his life. He explained it to me this way:

> *I became a Christian when I was about thirteen and then I was baptized when I was 18 and basically rededicated my life when I was 30 years old. I've been around; I was raised Catholic for the first 12 or 13 years of my life. My Mother started going to a Baptist church and she became a Christian, accepted Christ and joined the Baptist church. I had an uncanny experience back in those days. I got scared to death, and didn't want to burn in hell, (so) I ran up the pew. To dig a little deeper, I became a high school senior (and) that's when I came back and I was baptized. I've been around it for quite a while and I'm thankful for it. Living the dream. Doing well. God has blessed me.*

Church home. As has been discussed in other portraits, it is often difficult for coaches to stay connected to local churches because they move so often and their frequent travel schedules when they are in one place. As was also mentioned, Kennedy once moved seven times in seven years for coaching jobs. However, he has made it a priority to find a church home along the way, as he explained here:

You know I've done that the last probably 18 or 19 years. I've been able to be a part of a church, be a part of a community, in Sunday school class, those kind of things and that's been a big support system for me where there are other people and accountability groups or just Bible studies and good Christians around me on a regular basis really the last sixteen years. That's been real important to me, it's believers, not just basketball guys, of different jobs in the community that I can lean on. It's been great for me. They pray for me and I pray for them. Being close together and it's been a big support system that I've got going now. Really since I've been a head coach and a couple years before I've been a head coach, for the last 18 years.

Research has often cited the enormous stress that elite level coaches are under, and has stated the importance of having a supportive social structure (Fletcher & Scott, 2010). However, the importance of a faith community as a social support system for coaches has been virtually ignored. For Kennedy, finding support in his faith communities was extremely important, especially in various Christian small groups.

Small Group Accountability. I asked Kennedy of there was a spiritual advisor on which he could call if needed. He responded that there were a number of people that he had a strong bond with primarily from being in small groups:

You know, I've got about six guys over the last eighteen years that I know I can call and rely on and relationships I've built in the different cities that I've lived in. Here in A&M there's probably three, four, maybe five guys, and then I've got a couple of guys from when I went to Shreveport, Louisiana; got a couple of guys from when I was at Southeastern Louisiana; from Kentucky you got three or four guys. I'm blessed that I got

> *a number of guys I can call and know what's going on in their lives and vice versa. It's quite special.*

Kennedy also pointed out that after recommitting himself to his faith he has either started or been in a men's group everywhere he has been.

College Station. Kennedy mentioned to me how welcoming the College Station community has been to him and his faith, calling it "*a special place*." Whereas he admitted that he has been told to be careful about what he says about his faith at other schools, at Texas A&M he feels comfortable to be himself. For example, the official team website produced a series of videos called "Open Gym" giving an inside look at the A&M basketball program. One episode featured a Bible study that the players started for themselves. When I asked Kennedy about the player-led Bible study he explained:

> *I can't take any kind of credit for that…I didn't recruit guys that were Christians. I recruited guys that could play…I just think that they have a Scripture of the week sometimes, or they share different things, or we have devotions every game, on the road, off the road… really two tremendous kids who're pouring into other guys. If they think they did it on their own, I don't provoke any of that. I just let God handle it. I just thank the Lord. I was really proud to see that happen.*

Kennedy especially appreciated the supportive, Christian environment when he was first dealing with the Parkinson's diagnosis. Kennedy expressed this in 2011, "Those who are praying for me, keep praying. I embrace the prayers, and I'm embracing what God is doing in my life in this situation" (Zwerneman, 2011, para. 4).

Integrating Faith and Leadership

"God wanted all of me and not just part of me. He got my attention and I surrendered totally to Him and made it (coaching) a ministry."

Kennedy's experience. Today, Kennedy's leadership is resolutely grounded in his Christian faith. He has a burning passion for the sport and for his role in leading his program.

> *I love basketball. I love what I do, love being around the players and the coaches, and I love the game. I just love being a part of it. God basically put a head coaching job in my lap and from there I kind of grew from it. My steps were ordered and he directed me towards basketball and coaching, basically the rest was history.*

This idea of a person's steps being ordered can be seen many times throughout the Bible, and clearly influenced Kennedy. I will share three examples of this idea from the Old Testament. Psalms 37:23 records one example: "The steps of a man are established by the Lord, and He delights in his way" (NASB). Proverbs 16:9 provides yet another example: "A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD determines his steps" (HCSB). Finally, Jeremiah 10:23 gives another example: "Lord, I know that people's lives are not their own; it is not for them to direct their steps." This influence of the Bible's teachings on Kennedy's view of his leadership are clear when his words are read in the context of these Scriptures.

In our conversation, Kennedy continued talking about his feeling on God's plans for him:

> *I could have easily been a football coach or a football player, but God had different plans for me. I would never think to question this. Jesus asked His disciples, He said, 'Follow me' so we follow Him. Let's take the risk, try, and go. That's what I'm saying,*

I've been blessed by His Grace to be able to surrender and follow him to the most part of my life.

To the Christian, Jesus' words "follow me" are not just for the fisherman who became his first disciples in Matthew 4:19, "Jesus called out to them, 'Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!' (New Living Translation). Rather, "follow me" is directed at all of us and has a sense of urgency in it. In Matthew 8:21-22 a man wanted to follow Jesus but not until after his father had died: "Another of his disciples said, 'Lord, first let me return home and bury my father.' But Jesus told him, 'Follow me now. Let the spiritually dead bury their own dead.'"

For the coach, this means to follow Jesus now, not after you win your championship, not after you establish your program, and not after you reach a larger platform of an elite program, but rather, right here, right now. In both Billy Kennedy's and my own experience, doing so influenced us to integrate our Christian faith into our leadership as a basketball coach.

This is not to imply that we did not struggle at times with integrating faith into our leadership. Kennedy told me that at around age 30 he realized "*that I wanted more, that God wanted all of me and not just part of me. He got my attention, and I surrendered totally to Him and made it* (coaching) *a ministry."* Kennedy explained that by making his coaching a ministry he was trying to use his example to demonstrate the love of Christ through his actions. It does not mean that he was openly preaching to his players or staff as a minister, but ministering to them as a servant leader.

Servant leadership. The influence of Kennedy's Christian faith on his leadership is undeniable when he discusses how and why he leads his basketball program. He explicitly models his leadership after Jesus Christ and seeks to be a servant leader. While servant

leadership as a theory was popularized by Robert Greenleaf (1970), Christian teaching have included this ethos for thousands of years. According to researchers, servant leaders are marked by an intentional focus on followers because of who the leader is and what they believe (Parris & Peachy, 2013; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). Kennedy unquestionably places intentional focus on his players because of who he is and what he believes.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, I willfully separated leadership questions from faith questions because I did not want to lead our conversation in a direction it would not naturally take. If the coach mentioned their faith when discussing their leadership, then I would follow up with questions to investigate that connection for them. Kennedy's response to "describe your leadership style" is quite revealing of the influence of his faith:

> *I think it's about investing in people around you. Just try to build them into being all that they can be, and also they can use their God-given gifts to share and serve others. That's what I try to do. Be a servant leader.*

I followed this up by asking Kennedy, "What does servant leadership mean to you?"

> *Just to be Christ-like, and to do what I can to help people be better people and grow in all areas, not just basketball. I talk to my guys about training themselves physically, spiritually, and mentally to be complete. I want them to be complete because if they're whole and they're complete, there's a good chance that they're going to be successful and that helps our team. It helps everybody.*

At this level of intercollegiate athletics, an extensive array of services are offered and provided to athletes under the umbrella of holistic care. This is in part because of increasing criticism of the NCAA as being exploitive of athletes, and in part out of a sense of responsibility

to do what is best of the athlete. For example, at one time there was a very small staff to support college athletes, usually just the coaching staff and an athletic trainer. However, in modern NCAA major DI programs the support staff has grown to encompass many areas important to an athlete's total development as a player and a person. Today, most think nothing of sending an athlete to a sport psychologist for mental training, to the strength and conditioning coach for physical training, to the team nutritionist for nutritional counseling, to the team trainers and doctors for medical evaluation and treatment, to the team academic liaison for support with their schoolwork, or to the CHAMPS/Like Skills coordinator for training in long-term life skills, but what of the athlete's spiritual development? Why is it controversial to provide the opportunity for spiritual guidance to athletes who desire it? Some critics are afraid that one particular religion would be pushed onto the athletes, and this is a valid concern. However, Kennedy has shown that he can integrate his Christian faith into his leadership without forcing it on others.

Admittedly, it is easy to just say that you do not force your religion on others, and Kennedy made it clear he does not, but quite another thing for your actions to back up your words. Kennedy's actions themselves and the words of non-Christians that he recruited, coached, and even an assistant coach corroborate Kennedy's belief in living out his own faith while respecting others to do the same. In our conversation during the past season he pointed out that he had a Muslim player, Amir Abdur-Rahim, who later coached under him and how close their relationship was. In another example, he had previously recruited Amir's older brother, Shareef Abdur-Rahim, to the University of California. Shareef became a NBA1st round draft pick and is now working in the front office of the NBA's Sacramento Kings. He described Kennedy this way:

> I was recruited by Coach Kennedy and I have remained close friends with him throughout. My younger brother (Amir) played for Billy at Southeastern Louisiana and then coached with him at Murray State before taking a job recently at Georgia Tech. His basketball success and coaching ability speaks for itself, but what has impressed me most is his consistency of being a good person all of these years. When I was recruited, it was about how you carry yourself, both on and off of the basketball court. It was about the total person, not just being a basketball player. He has remained the same, all of these years. I have a son who is nine and if he is fortunate enough to be considered as a Division I-caliber basketball player, I would want him to play for Coach Billy Kennedy. I know Billy would care for him and help develop the entire person. (Quisenberry, 2013, p. 42)

Well, the critic may scoff, Shareef Abdur-Rahim surely can't speak for his brother, Amir. In that case, Amir's actions speak loudly for themselves. As his older brother mentioned, after playing for Kennedy he later went to work for him at Murray State. It seems that Amir was comfortable with Kennedy despite their differing religious beliefs. Well, the critic continues, Amir just needed to break into coaching and was willing to take anything. However, this is refuted by the fact that after developing as a coach at several stops along the way, Amir just rejoined Kenney's staff at Texas A&M right after the season.

Before the story of hiring Abdur-Rahim broke Kennedy talked with me about the importance of his staff:

> *Someone I can trust and get a good feel for my system. Sometimes you've got to go through some things and come back and realize how important it is to have people that*

are on the same page with you in a lot of areas. That was the biggest thing. I think the guy we just hired (Amir Abdur-Rahim) *will be able to come in and really give.*

In the press, Kennedy explained why he was so happy about hiring Abdur-Rahim, "He's spent eight years with me as a player and a coach, so that familiarity with each other is going to help our program" ("Abdur-Rahim officially added," 2014).

In a radio interview, Abdur-Rahim had strong praise for Kennedy, calling him "one of the rare people in this sport. What I mean is a genuine, loyal person…He helped shape me into the man I am today….(my) admiration and respect for him is bigger than basketball" ("Abdur-Rahim visits," 2014).

Assembling a coaching staff is a crucial step in intercollegiate sports. However, Kennedy does not use his faith as litmus test to screen candidates:

I've never felt it's right to just hire a guy because he's a Christian or has similar beliefs as me. I want to hire guys who I think could get the job done, and who's going to be productive and help us win championships, and also character that I can trust. And then if they happen to be a Christian, then that's a great thing, but that's not always been the main priority for me. I know some other coaches feel differently about that. I respect that.

This respect for others does not diminish Kennedy's passion for his own Christian faith. In fact, he feels strongly demonstrating a sincere love for all magnifies the power of his example. I asked him how he would handle someone in his program who disagreed with his beliefs or were against his understanding of the Bible or Christianity:

We would love him. Be supportive of who he is and try to love him the right way. I believe what the Bible says and we're going to support what we believe the Bible says, but I'm

not going to love somebody any differently because they don't like the way I believe that God calls us to look at life.

Kennedy's thoughts here clearly reflect some of the major tenets of his Christian faith. In what is commonly known as "the Great Commandment" from the New Testament, Jesus is asked "'Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?' Jesus replied, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments'" (Matthew 22:35-40 NIV). Verse 37 is an allusion to the Old Testament Scripture of Deuteronomy 6:5, known as the Shema in Judaism, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (NJKV). This thinking, seen in both the Old and New Testament represents some core aspects of Christian beliefs.

However, Jesus also continued in Matthew 22:39 to show the Christian how to put their beliefs into practice, "love your neighbor as yourself." This is commonly known as the "Golden Rule." In Luke's account, Jesus is asked for clarification of who our "neighbor" is. Jesus replies with another foundational story, the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37.

In this parable Jesus tells of a man who is robbed, beaten, and then ignored on the side of the road by both a religious leader and then by a man of prominent social standing. However, a member of a hated people, a Samaritan, comes to the victim's aid.

Jesus then asks,

> ‘Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ ‘The one who showed mercy to him,’ he said. Then Jesus told him, ‘Go and do the same.’ (Luke 10: 36-37, HCSB)

Through the Great Commandment, the Golden Rule, and the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus demonstrates key foundations beliefs and practices for Christians. Loving your neighbor encompasses everyone, not just those who look like, act like, or believe like you. Kennedy demonstrates this love for his fellow man in his treatment of others.

Religious practices. In addition to his commitment to a local church and small groups, Kennedy has several other practices that are important to his faith. I asked him to describe what faith practices were important for him and he described a varied routine:

> *Every morning, at least five to six mornings a week, I spend 15 minutes to an hour reading the word, reading a book, or having prayer time. Then I try to get together with a friend. We used to meet once a week when we could meet. Everywhere I've been has been a little bit different. I've got two or three, actually four guys that we'll get together at different times. Then there's different men's groups that meet once a month.*
>
> *It's just a way of life now. It's something I know I need and surrender to. The things I learn that prepare me for my day, and prepare me for my stressful times with my players or staff, or those things you get a lot of right in the morning. I also like to watch the different preachers throughout the week, late at night, the ones on television. I follow TBN (Trinity Broadcasting Network). I have actually a couple of habits that I like to do.*

The most important pat of his quote to me was “it's just a way of life now.” This shows the level to which his faith has been integrated into his life and his leadership.

In fact, his faith is such a part of his life that the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) honored him in 2011 with the John Lotz "Barnabas" Award, which is presented to a basketball coach "who best exhibits a commitment to Christ, integrity, encouragement to others and lives a balanced life" (Quisenberry, 2013, p. 40). At the time, FCA President and CEO Les Steckel noted "Coach Kennedy embodies this award by encouraging his players all the time, on and off the court. The basketball world needs more Coach Kennedys'' (Strom, 2011).

I asked Kennedy about this award and he seemed somewhat reluctant to talk about it. I shared how I would tell the parents of my players at my preseason meeting that you didn't have to be Christian to play for me (I coached atheists, Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, and others) but that I wanted them to know that I was Christian so that they would know where I was coming from when I made decisions about the program. However, I realized that by identifying myself as a Christian I opened myself up to the heightened scrutiny of disgruntled parents looking to point out my mistakes that they deemed unchristian.

Kennedy said he understood my point and that he was:

> *Just humbled to receive it (the FCA Award). I think we were all trying to succeed across and we fall short all glory of God. We are all hypocrites to some degree, it's just we're not perfect. Once I recognized that a few years back it really allowed me to live my faith more and not worry about what people think because I know if I mess up I'm going to make mistakes... There's not a whole lot I can do about it, but trust in God to forgive me and let it go and just try to honor Him in everything that I do. Just be appreciative of His Grace because I know I'm not perfect. I know I mess up on a regular basis.*

Kennedy is drawing comfort from Romans 3:23-26 (HCSB):

> For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. They are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God presented Him as a propitiation through faith in His blood, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His restraint God passed over the sins previously committed. God presented Him to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be righteous and declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus.

As the passage explains, Kennedy, as a Christian, believes that Jesus Christ has taken the punishment for his and other believers' sins. It is also important to note that by identifying himself as a Christian Kennedy is not claiming to be better than others or to not have sinned, but rather is enthused by the belief that his is forgiven by God.

Struggles. This does not mean that Kennedy's faith journey has been easy. Like most of us, he has struggled at times. I shared with him my experience as a young head coach of compartmentalizing my faith to the point that it had absolutely no effect on my coaching. Though I led my program with integrity, I was more concerned with winning championships than letting my leadership honor God. After realizing that my actions were not matching up with my beliefs, I made an intentional effort to integrate my faith into my coaching and it drastically changed my experience, and that of my players, for the better. I will give an example of this in Chapter 5. Kennedy described his journey this way:

> *It was part of the process of growing spiritually. As an assistant coach I was just like what you were saying. On Sundays at church, I was at church and heard a good sermon, and it was good. And I went back to work Monday and was just like everybody else, coaching. My faith didn't follow me. I compartmentalized it, and then basically had one*

of those 'come to Jesus' experiences that it's more, that I wanted more, that God wanted all of me and not just part of me. He got my attention, and I surrendered totally to Him and made it a ministry.

Then I become a head coach in ministry, and unfortunately I had to go through some pains and lessons. Sometimes I'd surrender totally spiritually for about a year or two and then I had to go through a divorce that, again, it was a 'why.' I didn't understand why all of a sudden, now I'm doing everything right spiritually, and why this has happened to me. God provided support, with the group Promise Keepers movement at that time. From then on I've started a men's group everywhere I have been, or I've been a part of or joined a men's group. Been blessed ever since as a head coach. It's been a blessing. It's truly a family ministry. My wife gets about 15 women all over the country. They pray for their family and their kids. So we've got some unique things going.

Leadership Beliefs and Practices in Action

"Coaching today, I heard a coach say this, especially at this level, it's about crisis management. So it's not X's and O's. It's about dealing with things that come up and just trying to not let that have an effect on your team or on your recruiting or on your program."

According to the current media guide, "Kennedy's basketball philosophy starts with a rock-solid foundation of tough, in-your-face defense" (Quisenberry, 2013a, p. 6). Kennedy sees no conflict with his Christian beliefs and the toughness he desires from his teams.

There's a difference between weakness and softness and I think a lot of people God has blessed us with challenges and wants us to perform at our highest level within the rules of

what we're competing against. To be successful in basketball, you can't be soft, you've got to be tough, and you've got to be physical. I don't believe that by any means.

Sometimes I see questions (about Christians being soft) and I get very, I guess, judgmental. I see a player playing with a lot of fire, with a lot of energy, and a lot of assertiveness, and aggressiveness. They want everybody else to be a certain way, and maybe God is giving us different gifts, and different talents, and different personalities, and I say to just be you. Use the gifts and talents to honor yourself so. You've got to honor God. Jesus wasn't soft to surrender and go on the cross. That's not a mark of softness.

Kennedy could be talking about himself as much as his players here. As I mentioned before, he has a competitive fire inside of him that a casual observer might miss. Kennedy feels that he cannot try to put on a show of how others expect him to act, but must remain true to his God-given personality. His thought that "maybe God is giving us each different gifts" reflects his a passage from 1 Corinthians of Christian faith. In a team sport like basketball it is crucial to get players to buy into the team concept and accept that though their roles on the team may be different, they are all important. The passage is worth quoting despite its length because it discusses the importance of people having different gifts and talents in the church, which is analogous to having different gifts on a basketball team:

> Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

> Now if the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.
>
> The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!' On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.
>
> Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. (1 Corinthians 12:12-17, NIV)

In my own coaching career, I once tried to paraphrase this passage from Corinthians with my team in an attempt to make the point that every player was valuable and that every player brought unique gifts to the team. Unfortunately, I did not do a good job of communicating the message and one player came up to me after the team meeting and said, "Are you saying I'm the liver, Coach?" in a dejected tone of voice.

Getting players at this level, who have almost always been the standout player on their teams for their entire lives, to sacrifice personal statistics for the good of the team is a difficult battle. There is a culture of entitlement and an expectation of instant gratification in many of these high profile recruits that coaches at Kennedy's level must try to motivate. Recently, there has also been a groundswell of angst directed at the NCAA over perceived exploitation of athletes. NCAA rules prohibit athletes from being compensated above a full scholarship, but many feel that players should receive some piece of the massive revenue they generate for the NCAA and its member institutions.

Kennedy addressed the issue this way:

Well, first of all, they need to teach everybody who's on scholarship playing Division I needs to be thankful and grateful with what they have. That's part of the problem we have, besides the spirit of entitlement—they don't want to be thankful for what they have. Then on the others side of it, I do understand, especially at the BCS level, money is being made at the power conferences, where the kids that have a chance to be compensated in some form or fashion beyond just a college scholarship.

Whereas, at one time, it was more common for players to compete for the love of the game, today many players compete for what they can get out of the game: high school kids want a DI scholarship in a major conference, and college players want an NBA contract. Kennedy described it this way:

It's harder to motivate them to think about somebody else, and it's harder to motivate them to get them to work at a higher level, I think. So many of them are talented and been better than other players at this level, they're more talented and it's been easy for them.

Then all of a sudden we're coaching them and getting on them and demanding more of them, it's not going well, they don't know how to work through things. That's a challenge to coach and a challenge to get them to focus on the team and focus on winning and not themselves. Coaching today, I heard a coach say this, especially at this level, it's about crisis management. So it's not X's and O's. It's about dealing with things that come up and just trying to not let that have an effect on your team or on your recruiting or on your program. It's definitely harder at this level.

I loved that phrase about coaching being "crisis management" because it is so true, even at the high school level. I felt like I was spending much more time on crisis management than the strategies and tactics of coaching. For example, I had situations where kids were mad at another because they wouldn't pass them the ball, where kids wanted to play major DI basketball without major DI talent or ability, where a kid didn't like the offense because his AAU team did something different, where a kid's AAU team bought his mom a house so he could play at a different high school, where kids were facing serious mental health issues including suicidal thoughts, where kids wee having serious issues with their parents, where a kid had illegal drug and alcohol issues, and so on.

When I was at the DI level we had kids complain about the number of shots they were getting, complain about the position they were playing, get into fights in study hall, refuse to go to class at all, face paternity lawsuits, and we lost several players due to academic or illegal substance policies. Don't get me wrong, the overwhelming majority of the players I dealt with were fantastic to work with, committed students, and unselfish team players. However, as a great coach once told me, "It only takes one turd to ruin the brownie mix."

Like many coaches, Kennedy believes strongly in a family atmosphere in his program to try and combat any selfish tendencies. I asked him how he creates that atmosphere and without hesitation he mentioned the blending of his personal family with his basketball family:

> *They're around my family. I'm probably one of the most fortunate coaches in the country that my wife, my daughter now, they've only missed one game day—my wife—one game in the sixteen years, we've been married. And my daughter is nine and she's only missed one game since I've been a head coach. So they've (the players) been around my family, they come to my house, we eat team meals at my house, my staff's around on a regular basis - those kinds of things.*

Whatever Kennedy is doing to build that family atmosphere worked for freshman guard Shawn Smith. Smith noted that the team supported him when he was struggling in an article this season, and was quoted as saying:

> "It's a family atmosphere, and to have guys like that behind you, it shows a lot of a maturity from everybody on the team not just worrying about themselves. I had personal things going on and they were all picking me up and told me how much they need me and that I need to fight that stuff off and come out here and do what I do. ("Smith ready," 2014, para. 16)

Gameday Observation: Shootaround

In trying to arrange to observe Texas A&M's game day shootaround at the University of Tennessee I was reminded that schedules of DI basketball teams on the road can be fluid. In the days prior to the shootaround I knew I would be presenting at a professional conference in San Diego, California. However, I had scheduled my flight to be back in time for that afternoon's

shootaround with a few hours to spare. Then I got an email saying the shootaround had been moved to the morning meaning there was no way I could make it back in time. As I schemed and stewed on every possible scenario using planes, trains, and/or automobiles to get back to Knoxville in time I received another email. The shootaround had been moved again, in the middle of the two previous times, but should my flights land on time I would be able to make it.

I sprinted from baggage claim to my car in the very distant economy lot, somehow the economy not seeming like such a great benefit at that moment. I pulled into a parking lot near the University of Tennessee's Thompson-Boling Arena (TBA) and sprinted into the massive building that was described in more detail in the first portrait. When I worked at Tennessee as a men's basketball graduate assistant, TBA had a sterile, impersonal feel. However, after a major renovation, instead of the feel of a large airplane hangar it now had the amenities and look of a state-of-the-art NBA Arena.

I settled into my seat on the first row of the permanent seats behind the scorer's table, happy to be there just before the Aggies. At 10:45am the A&M radio crew were the first people in the building. "Are we hard-wired?" one of the radio crew asks me. I regretfully inform him that I don't know but do direct him to their location near the visitor's bench. "Do you know where the opposing film sets up?" an energetic Aggie asks me, equipment in hand. I direct him to the box where I started setting up equipment fifteen years earlier.

The team begins to stroll in and they wisely choose the larger, more comfortable donor seats to take their warmups off, rather than the smaller, less confortable chairs on the team bench. Tennessee, like many schools looking to squeeze out every possible ounce of revenue, had moved the press from opposite the team benches to the baseline. This freed the sideline seats

for high-dollar donors willing to contribute to get close to the action. The press never had seats like these; custom made, oversized, and comfortable.

If there's one thing I've learned about coaching it's that there will always be at least one player in long-sleeves under their practice jersey, with their practice jersey intentionally on backwards, and/or with an arm sleeve. I strongly believe that there is high correlation between a player on one of those three categories and a bad attitude, but I do not have any hard data to back that up. Since the others are self-explanatory, an arm-sleeve was popularized by the NBA's Allen Iverson, originally intended for medical purposes they are now common for aesthetic purposes. I even witnessed a wheelchair basketball game recently where one player displayed a bad attitude; can you guess which category he fit in? That's right, Mr. Arm-Sleeve.

Thankfully, there were no Aggies in need of the medically required arm compression via an arm-sleeve, but there was one player with his jersey on backwards. "I better keep an eye on him," I thought to myself. As is customary, a lean, energetic strength coach took over once the players were dressed. A&M's strength and conditioning coach is Darby Rich, and Kennedy is very high on him. Rich takes the players through a dynamic warmup that makes old school observers smirk. I once heard renegade football coach Mike Leach say, "I never saw a dog stretch before he chased a car," when he dismissed modern warmup routines. However, most coaches believe in a routine similar to Texas A&M's. Ed Breslin (2014) compared the choreographed walking, bending, and contorting to Monty Python's Ministry of Silly Walks routine.

Just then the SID comes up and asks me who I am. I assure him I'm not a spy and explain why I'm there and that I have Coach Kennedy's permission. The assistant coaches appear

distracted by the eight women's national championship banners hanging from the rafters. They point and comment to each other too far away for me to hear. Five managers huddle together at the game clock control. Five seems perhaps a little excessive, but as one head coach I worked for at this level used to say about our abundance of southern managers, "We've got more help than the President of the United States" in a high-pitched southern drawl.

Around 11:10am calls the team together and sends them to one baseline to do some full court drills that simultaneously works on transition offense, the conversion to defense in the full court as an assistant coach shouts instructions to them, and finally a transition to dummy offense. Before each group starts, Kennedy barks out the actions of his offense he wants to see. This is very similar to a drill I ran in my practices and it always makes me feel good to see something similar from a coach as respected as Kennedy.

Kennedy looks fit and focused as he directs practice. He uses a whistle to get his team's attention and control the action. Coaches disagree on this with some arguing that you can't use a whistle in a game so your team needs to get used to responding to your voice. However, Kennedy's voice does not appear to carry well and I have not seen him unleash a piercing whistle like Phil Jackson would do, so a whistle seems appropriate to me.

When I talked to him the week before this game the Aggies are coming off a rough stretch. They have had a series of tough losses, and even dismissed a player, who had been a highly-rated recruit, and his assistant coach father. Kennedy jokes that I can come observe shootaround, "*As long as you promise to pray for us the week before. We are reeling right now. We have our hands full.*"

Their opponent, Tennessee, is a highly regarded team with one of the most imposing frontcourts in college basketball, an All-SEC wing, and the home court advantage. On the other hand, Kennedy described A&M's status:

> *We lost a point guard. We don't have a point guard, and we're really, really, young and immature. We have our hands full. Start praying for a miracle. To get through this season, we're going to need some help with doing it.*

But coaches are notorious for "coachspeak" where they pump up an opponent and downplay their own team so I am expecting a good game.

If Kennedy is unsure of his team, he doesn't show it in shootaround. He runs a tight ship, barking out "What did I say?" to a player he thinks is not paying attention during the all important scout session. The scout part of shootaround is where coaches try to transmit what they have learned from studying hours and hours of video on the opponent into bite-sized pieces that the players can remember. In the day or days prior to this shootaround, depending on their schedule, the coaching staff gives the players written scouting reports and show them highlight tapes, or "edit tapes," of the opposing team's favorite players and sometimes players. Then they "walk through" the opposing teams favorite offensive actions and defenses and how they are going to guard them and exploit them respectively. By the time they get to the game day shootaround the players need to know the scout, and a lack of focus here cannot be tolerated. One basket can be the difference in winning and losing, and Kennedy intends to win.

The shootaround was workmanlike and efficient when Kennedy call out, "Let's go! Bring it in." The team jogs to the center jump circle at 12:11pm where Kennedy reemphasizes the main points from the day. Kennedy then head over to the television commentators for the night's

broadcast, Dave Neal and former Kentucky star Larry Conley. I wonder if he asked them to pray for the Aggies too.

Gameday Observation: Game Night Shocker

Both Texas A&M and Tennessee entered the game with identical 10-4 overall records and 1-0 in the SEC. However, as mentioned before, this was not supposed to be an even matchup. Tennessee was expected to reach the NCAA Tournament this season and possibly challenge for the league title, whereas A&M was treading water. However, A&M had rebounded nicely from a rough stretch, including a 61-41 home loss to North Texas, after which Kennedy said, "We've got to get a break at some point, and I believe it's coming" ("Finally A&M's Kennedy," 2014, para. 3). The Aggies had shown their resilience to win two in a row prior to arriving in Knoxville. Looking back on the season, Kennedy called this game part of "*the toughest part of our season."*

The previous year Tennessee had pulled out a four-overtime classic in College Station to take 5-1 all-time series lead (Quisenberry, 2014). According to the final stats, 18,709 people witnessed Texas A&M overcome a dreadful first half for a thrilling 57-56 victory on 6'8" sophomore Antwan Space's three-pointer with just over 4 seconds remaining.

Kennedy never seemed rattled despite trailing almost the entire game. In the first half, Tennessee controlled the game so much that the crowd was not really a factor and by the time the game was close enough to make the crowd uncomfortable they could not intimidate the Aggies. In fact, the Vols appeared was well on their way to their fifth victory in a row when the Aggies limped to an embarrassingly low 18 point first half and a 32-18 deficit. Even late in the game the

Vols held a six point lead with just over two minutes remaining. Despite this, at no point did Kennedy take his frustrations out on his players or the officials, as some coaches do.

Kennedy kept his composure, despite the adversity his team was under. In our earlier conversation I had asked him about how he handled officials and he espoused great respect for officials since he had officiated some himself. Even in discussing officials Kennedy's faith is displayed:

> *I'm a little bit different. I usually don't know who's officiating the games until I walk out there. I try not to have a predisposed attitude, going out there hot headed. Some guys in the past—we all know a hot head or two. I officiated in some high school games when I was in college and know it's a difficult job. Again, I'm definitely not trying to set myself as holier than thou, but I believe God's going to direct—we're going to win the games that He wants us to win. We're going to lose the games He wants us to lose, and we'll have to just deal with it. I don't even talk to the officials. I don't let them have an impact on the game although I know that they're having an effect on the outcome of the game. I haven't gotten a technical foul in a long time. I probably needed to a few times. Anyway, I try that approach.*

After the game, Kennedy was as stoic as a statue in the postgame press conference. Tradition holds that the coach give an opening statement where they can review what they think was important from the game. Kennedy was direct and to the point in his opening statement. If it had been televised with no audio and you couldn't read lips, I doubt you would have thought that A&M had won based on his expression or body language:

I'm really proud of our guys for hanging in and believing in each other. I thought we did a tremendous job guarding defensively. We were blessed, Antwan made a big shot and they missed some free throws, we missed some free throws, but our guys stuck together and kept believing and didn't quit.

I asked Kennedy what his message to the team was after such a great game. Just as a reminder, A&M had already lost a player and assistant coach to dismissal this season, and in this game had battled back from a huge deficit as an underdog on the road to go 2-0 in league play. This was an enormous win, but there was no sense of celebration or elation, just a calm steady reaction:

Just stick together. I thought the character of our team showed. I didn't play him (Space*) in the first half because I thought his practice habits needed to get better and he didn't pout. He came in the second half and his attitude was great and was ready to play. Jamal* (Jones), *the first half, missed some shots, didn't get frustrated or hang his head, he kept his head up and started attacking the basket. I thought the character of our team grew up a lot on this particular game.*

Let me reiterate, Kennedy had not played Space in the first half, the player who hit the game-winning shot, as a disciplinary measure *for poor practice habits*, not an off the court issue like being late to a team meeting, or missing class, or getting in some kind of trouble. To paraphrase Allen Iverson's infamous rant, "We talkin' 'bout practice…not a game, not a game, not a game. We talkin' 'bout practice" ("Original Allen Iverson," 2012). This spoke volumes about Kennedy's priorities and commitment to the values he believes in that he would sit a key

player in a conference road game to make a point that he hoped would have a positive effect on that player and the rest of the team.

And with that, Kennedy got up with a hint of a smile and headed to the locker room to celebrate with his team.

Conclusion

I had never met Billy Kennedy prior to this study and was not sure what to expect. Kennedy was personable and engaging in our conversations and often left me laughing at his quick wit. He is quick to praise others and humble. His firm confidence in his leadership appears to be based on two things: first, his deeply held Christian faith that is a way of life for him and second, a long track record of building basketball programs and doing it the right way. Despite the pressure of his position he is not changing. He will not change is demeanor to suit the fans or reporters who want a showman and he will not betray his Christian values in search of a quick fix for earthly success.

A Coaching Life:

Mike Jarvis, Florida Atlantic University Head Men's Basketball Coach

"You want people to say, 'Maybe he acts that way because he is a man of God and I want to be like him. And I want to be like Mike, 'you know what I mean? And if I can help one or two kids, then my coaching career has been a success."

Mid-Major Realities

"I sure wish we could take a direct flight," head coach Mike Jarvis thought as a chartered bus abruptly pulled into the Florida Atlantic University (FAU) parking lot on a pleasant south

Florida day. It was a few minutes after noon in late January and Boca Raton's mid-70's temperatures were the envy of a frigid nation. Jarvis' FAU Owls were departing for the middle leg of a three game stretch on the road, a stretch that would pull them out of Boca Raton's protected embrace between the Everglades and the Atlantic Ocean and thrust them into the cold of winter.

Four days earlier their schedule had taken them to play Florida International University (FIU) in Miami, requiring only an easy 45-minute bus ride. The second and third legs of the road trip were not that simple. The journey would take them to play at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, where I would observe them, and finally conclude against Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia. Despite the vast distance between these schools, all three of these games were all-important conference tilts. This was the result of FAU's inaugural membership in the newly reshuffled Conference USA (C-USA), whose 16 members now stretched from Texas to West Virginia to Florida and all points in between. Although they might dispute the term "mid-major," that is what this conference is. It is a notch below the power players in the college world, but still capable of exciting and successful teams.

As a DI head coach, Mike Jarvis did not have to handle the travel arrangements, but he certainly noticed the convoluted nature of their journey from Boca Raton to play the Charlotte 49ers. Jarvis was glad that they were not busing the entire trip of over 700 miles, which would take an estimated 10.5 hours. However, due to the budget restraints of a mid-major program, they could not charter a flight the way many major college programs, such as the one he used to run, would do. Jarvis had once been among the hottest names in coaching, with a legion of suitors wanting him to take their team to the "Promised Land" of the NCAA Tournament. In fact,

Jarvis delivered that Promised Land to three different DI schools before taking the reins at FAU, his resume speckled with numerous awards and championships to prove it. But after a fall from the top, he was let go by Big East Conference power St. John's University in 2003, his team now had a travel itinerary that was maybe not exactly from basketball hell but you could certainly see it from there.

There were no police escorts or charter flights on this FAU road trip. Instead, their travel itinerary had them loading the bus at 12:20pm to take the half-hour drive down the east coast of the Florida peninsula from their Boca Raton campus, through Pompano Beach, and to the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport. From there they caught a 3:05pm commercial flight to Baltimore-Washington International Airport, a trip of approximately 1,068 miles. After switching planes, they caught a 463-mile flight to Charlotte Douglas International Airport at 8:50pm. Once the team luggage was collected from the baggage claim, they loaded onto another chartered bus and headed for a team dinner at the local chapter of a national steakhouse chain. Back in the bus, the travel-weary Owls finally made it to their team hotel around 10:20pm to rest and recover from a 10-hour trip of over 1,500 miles.

Jarvis lamented the rigors of the game schedules and commercial travel in our last interview together:

> *Travel is tough, and the women have it even worse than we do. They play Wednesdays and Saturdays so they could basically miss school the whole week almost up to Monday. So kids miss a lot time. That's what I'm saying. You miss a lot of time, and you're spending time in airports and on buses, and it's tough.*

What the players needed now was some rest. For tomorrow held a 9:45am film session, a noon shootaround, and a 1:30pm study hall before the 7:00pm tip off in Charlotte's 9,105-seat Halton Arena. The 49ers had dropped their last two games to slide to 6th place tie in the 16-team C-USA. Jarvis' Owls had followed a huge win over Harvard, an excellent team that would go on to win the Ivy League championship and upset Cincinnati to advance in the NCAA Tournament, with a 9-point loss at FIU to drop to a tie for 7th place. However, it is still early in the conference season and stealing a game on the road would do wonders for the Owls confidence heading down the backstretch of the season.

A Coaching Life

The trajectory of a coach's life can be more like the ups and downs of the stock market than the steady, consistent rise to the top that all coaches hope for. Sports have always had a wonderful way of rewarding the patient and humbling the proud, for it is the hope that "our year will come" that motivates fans to stick with teams in the lean times. But when you're the coach, making "our year" *this year* is your charge *every* year. Do that, and you are rewarded with perhaps a better job and/or a bigger contract. The hot, young upstart makes a name for themself at a small school and then climbs to a larger conference, establishes themself as an elite coach at the highest level, settles into curmudgeonly veteran status, and rides into the sunset with perhaps a court named in their honor or some other testimony to their greatness. However, only the very fewest of the few leave the profession on top and on their own timing. For the majority of coaches, the climb is often interrupted; there are dry periods, maybe even a step back or down to a lower level. In fact, there is a saying in coaching that there are two kinds of coaches: those that have been fired and those that will be.

Mike Jarvis would go on to resign under pressure from FAU, effective at the end of the season, with two regular season games remaining. By his own admission, Jarvis has just about seen it all during his coaching career of over four decades. *"I've been at the top, I've been close to the bottom and I've certainly been in the middle,"* he noted with a chuckle. The people and places in his basketball life read like a who's who of the basketball universe, including such icons as Michael Jordan, Patrick Ewing, Red Auerbach, and Madison Square Garden. Jarvis began his coaching career as a college assistant before winning multiple state championships as a head high school coach in Massachusetts. He then began his DI head coaching career at little Boston University (BU) from 1985-1990, followed by moves to a higher-profile George Washington University (GW) in 1990-1998 and to the highest-profile St. John's University from 1998-2003. After four years out of coaching, Jarvis resurfaced at FAU from 2008-2014.

Jarvis' career includes exhilarating highs such as leading BU on three trips to postseason play in five years, leading GW to seven postseason trips in eight years, and leading New York City's famed St. John's program back to national prominence. His time with the Johnnies, an unofficial affectionate nickname for St. John's, included an Elite 8 appearance that came within one possession of the 1999 Final Four. "There was a time when any job opened up in college or the pros, my name would be mentioned," Jarvis reminisced (Rosa, 2012, para. 5). In fact, in 2000 he was even courted by none other than Michael Jordan, whom he coached in the 1981 McDonald's All-American Game, to become the head coach of the NBA's Washington Wizards. "Not too may people, I don't think, would have said no to Michael Jordan. But it wasn't the right time," he explained (Rosa, para. 12).

Jarvis has been inducted into several Halls of fame, won numerous conference championships in both the regular and postseason. However, he also felt the pains of the profession. For example, he knows the sting of being passed over for a job, "*I remember back in 1977, I should have got the head-job at Harvard University and they chose someone else.*" He knows the shock of being fired at St. John's just a few games into the season under a cloud of off the court issues involving his players. "The whole St. John's thing was a learning experience. It made me a much better, stronger person. I have learned things about me I never would have known," he noted upon his hiring at FAU (Nelson, 2008, para. 9). Reflecting on his time at St. John's Jarvis says that they were "the kings of New York for a while, but, you know, the problem with being a king is usually you end up being dethroned" (Rosa, para. 79). Most recently, Jarvis knows the ache of resigning from FAU, as the school's all-time wins leader, rather than be fired. Yet in all of these events, his faith provides him comfort in believing they are all part of God's plan for his life,

> *It seems like every time that there's been a huge, what would appear to be a huge disappointment, something better, usually, also in the sport has happened. I remember back in 1977, I should have got the head job at Harvard University and they chose someone else. So, I thought that maybe my basketball coaching career would never get really running and two years later I'm coaching Patrick Ewing at my high school, a job I wanted when I first came out of college. That was probably the most important job of my career because that's what put me in a position to be looked at as being a potential head college coach. So when I got that job (Cambridge Rindge and Latin School), my coaching*

career really began and I thought that by not getting the job (Harvard) that my coaching career had ended.

When we left New York and left St. John's, I didn't realize that I was going to be moving to Florida, and then I would be led to spend it for the church and being born again. So, it just seems like every time that I felt like maybe something was ending, something else better was beginning. I really believe that that's going to be the case in this case as well. It may not be in coaching. In all likelihood, it probably won't be.

However, Jarvis does not define himself by the results on the court, by his election as President of the National Association of Basketball Coaches, or by having been named National Coach of the Year by the Black Coaches Association (BCA). No, Jarvis does not define himself by the ecstatic highs or cruel lows of the coaching profession, he measures himself by a much different scale:

The way I look at it is that nobody's going to remember how many wins I had. Nobody's going to remember if I was in any Hall-of-fame, whether it was high school, whatever it was. Nobody's going to care. Nobody's going to remember that.

But what, hopefully, some people will remember is that I at least gave them an opportunity to make a choice, and hopefully they choose the Lord. And if I can help one or two kids, players or coaches realize it's more than just a game—it's really a game of eternal life we're playing. And so if I can do a better job at modeling that then I'm hoping people will say, 'I want to be like coach' or 'I've got a really good understanding now of why coach acts the way he does.' That's why my behavior, like everyone else's behavior is so important, and I'm working at it. It's a battle. Because you want people to

say, 'maybe he acts that way because he is a man of God and I want to be like him. And I want to be like Mike,' you know what I mean? And if I can help one or two kids then my coaching career has been a success.

If you think that quote is the revisionist history of someone trying to take the high road after resigning, you might reconsider. Jarvis expressed this to me in an interview prior to Christmas, when the season was still full of hope and long before any talk of resignations.

"Coach, what were the most meaningful milestones in your career?" I ask to try and get a better sense of what really mattered to Jarvis. His answer surprised me at the time, but not after getting to know him better:

I think, honestly, you talk about awards, and you talk about trophies, and you talk about…I might have mentioned this to you before, I don't know if I did or not, but probably the best thing that's ever happened to me in coaching, has been the fact that for 80% of my life or, whatever, 90% of my coaching life, I've been working side-by-side with my son.

That's the greatest thing that's happened for me, the most memorable, the most enjoyable, and really the first father and son team of color in Division I. We also were the last (laughs). I don't think there were any other Black father-son teams this year. I think we lasted the longest, out of all the father-son coaching teams, probably that ever coached. That was, to me, part of the greatest accomplishment of all, and also the most enjoyable just working with him everyday.

Having his son as an assistant coach made the eventual decision to resign at FAU doubly painful as both a competitor and a father. It was the competitor in him finally realized that "*the*

thing about coaching and coaches (laughs) is I think we really think we're miracle workers and that we can perform miracles or we can make something out of nothing, but the reality is sometimes you can't." Having tried to make something out of little as a head coach at two schools myself; I understand where he is coming from. When he explains the end of his time at FAU, Jarvis uses a stately, matter of fact, but not harsh, tone:

> *The reason why I chose to resign and not be fired (laughs) was so that I could finish the season, with my team where I belong, and that was on the bench. I wanted to have, my son (his long-time assistant coach) and I wanted for our last game to be coaching and not watching on television or listening to a radio. So, I chose to go the route I went, as opposed to being fired.*

He told the local press that he had recently watched the movie *Captain Phillips*, and

> 'This is my team — I am the captain of this ship,' Jarvis said. 'When the ship goes down, the captain grabs the steering wheel. I'm going to be where I'm supposed to be, which is on the bench when we end up going down for the last time.' (Kurtenbach, 2014, para. 10)

It was the father and leader in him that made him want to be sure to take care of his loyal, long-time assistants. Speaking of those two, Mike Jarvis II and Tim Kaine, he told me, "*I have to do everything in my power to make sure that they're coaching next year. Those guys have been trustworthy, those guys have shown great class. That's my main issue right now — to take care of them*."

Influences

The FAU official men's basketball website lists several influences on Jarvis' coaching career. In our first December conversation I rattle off several of them to Jarvis and ask, "Could

you talk about some of those influences?" Jarvis tellingly ignores all of the names I offer and responds, "*I would say that the greatest influence of all on my life was my mother*."

Jarvis is fiercely loyal to his family. His mother and his older brother, Richard, *"the guy who had to sacrifice his size and talent to work so that the family could survive,"* helped shape the values of hard work and family that mark his leadership today. Among other things, Jarvis is especially appreciative of the example his mom set:

> *First of all, she gave me the opportunity to play as a kid, to play sports, to not have to worry about the family finances, which we really had to worry about. Also, she taught me how to, through her example, how to work and how important it was to be able to provide and at the same time nurture your family. So my mom would be my biggest, biggest role model of all times.*

This idea of nurturing your family can be seen in the way Jarvis treats his own family today and the way he tries to build a sense of family in his basketball program. For example, Jarvis' statement, *"I do believe that as a leader my job is to try and develop a cohesive, effective team that really prides itself on being a family,"* echoes what he learned from his mom and brother.

That brother had a profound influence on Jarvis' life by serving "*as the substitute dad. And he also was the guy who had to sacrifice his size and talent to work so that the family could survive.*" This appreciation of hard work that Jarvis witnessed in his mom and brother is something that Jarvis sees missing from today's players:

> *The kids today are very different. I mean they've got all of, most of the things that we never even thought of. Everybody's got them, whether it's cell phones, iPads, whatever it*

is- they have access to things that we never, ever had- material things. I think for the most part, we as a society have not done a really great job at getting our kids to understand that no matter how much they have, they have to work.

As coaches today you find yourself spending so much time just trying to motivate your kids just to work hard. Years ago that was a given for most kids. I think we've raised a very selfish, self-centered- we live in a very selfish, self-centered world—more so today than ever before. Which means we live in a society where everybody wants things immediately and, you know, I just think that you watch as a coach, and I've worked with ESPN, we've become ESPN highlight center. In other words, to a lot of kids it's probably more important to be on the highlight reel than to win the game. And so winning does not have the same value that it once did. I mean, kids go now and they play in tournaments, and they have loser's brackets. We used to play and if we lost we went home. Winning was very much more important.

I think you have to learn what it takes to win and you have to learn how to win. And what it means when you don't win, not that you're going to win all the time, the fact is you can win even when you lose if you go out and perform at the very best of your ability and vice versa.

So, like I said, it's different. We live in a society where a lot of people believe that everybody is supposed to get a trophy, that's everybody's supposed to be told they're perfect- that they're the most wonderful things in the world. You know, that they're gifted and talented in areas when they're not. So, I think there's a lot of real honesty that's missing today.

Jarvis' brother and sister also influenced him by connecting Jarvis to basketball in various ways and helping shape his leadership as a coach:

He (Richard) not only encouraged me to play sports, but he took me where've I needed to go and introduced me to the Boston Celtics by being able to buy tickets and taking me to games. That's when I first started to watch and study, without even knowing it. I sort of caught a little bit of Red Auerbach, and then later in my life I was blessed that I worked with Satch Sanders, who was a former NBA 9-time World Champion with the Celtics and eventually became head coach of the Celtics. I worked with Satch for four years at Harvard University as his assistant. So, it's through my brother involving me, taking me over to the Garden, my love for basketball (grew) and the way Red Auerbach organized and ran his teams. I was able to, through my sister actually, who married a friend of Sanders, I was able to get the job at Harvard and then through him I was able to meet personally and get to become a really good friend and to have the opportunity to meet with Red Auerbach on a regular basis, and talk about coaching and leading.

Showing the influence of his faith, Jarvis points at that, to him, these connections are not by chance:

You know it just seems like God just made sure he put one spoke in place at a time for me so that before you know there was a wheel that was formed with all of these people or a web that was formed and through each of these people the next person appeared, and I feel really blessed to have had so many people that have influenced me in a positive way and enabled me to do what I do and what I love to do.

Another important spoke in that wheel was is his wife, Connie. Little did Jarvis know when he moved in next door to her in high school, that his new neighbor and soon-to-be high school sweetheart would become his family's spiritual rock. I wondered aloud what her faith background was,

African Methodist Episcopal, AME Church was her base. Strong Christian family and committed to Christ at a very young age, when she was a teenager. I think at a Billy Graham revival, in Boston and she taught Bible classes to the high school kids when she was, herself, in high school. She's been a strong believer for just her entire life.

The flame of his marriage still burns bright: "*We started dating in high school and went to each other's prom. Somehow I was smart enough to maintain a relationship and we ended up getting married and we've been married for 46 years now. She's supported me forever."*

*"*That's quite an accomplishment today," I answer back as man approaching his tenth wedding anniversary, "Congratulations."

"Like I said, I give her the glory and the credit," Jarvis laughed.

It was Connie who made sure they found a church to attend in their stops along his coaching career,

Well, I think I'm very fortunate that my coach, who happens to be my wife, has always made sure that wherever we've gone, we've identified and tried to find a church home—probably among the first things that we do. So with her help, I've usually found a very good, great church home. So, I guess I have really been blessed in that respect, make no mistake about it.

Faith

"I've always had faith and I've always believed in God, but it wasn't the same as it is now," Jarvis explains. The difference is that he considers himself a born-again Christian since he committed his life to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as his Lord and savior at age 59.

"What's your faith background? Did you grow up in church? What was your journey like?" I asked in rapid succession, eager to learn more about Jarvis's background.

> *Thanks to my mother I did grow up in church. She used to take us to church on Sundays. And then I think because of my love and respect for my mother I continued to go to church…but I didn't really hear, nor did I understand the gospel and what it really meant to be a Christian."*

Those seeds of Christian faith that his mother helped sow, would not fully bloom until he was much older:

> *That didn't happen until I moved to Florida 9 years ago. So, in the meantime, throughout my life I went to church. I would definitely consider myself a man of faith, raised my family mainly through the guidance of my wife who was a Christian. We raised our family in the church, but it was more like, ok, I knew I was supposed to do it but I don't know if I ever really knew why I was doing it, and why I should do it, and what the consequences would be if I didn't do it.*
>
> *I, like many, many people, believed that if I was a good person or a good enough person that if you asked me, like my pastor asked me, 'If you died today, where would you be tomorrow?' And I says, 'Well, I think I'd be in heaven.' And he said, 'Why do you think that?' And I told him, ' I'm a pretty good guy, I go to church, etc.' Then he had*

another opportunity, and this was my senior pastor that I met and became a member of his Bible study here in Florida, he's recently passed away. But then he had the opportunity again to go through the good news and the bad news and what it really meant to be a Christian. John 3:16 and so forth and so on, and it was at that time that I realized that it was time for me to become a true, bona fide Christian. And then the real works begins because, like I said, it's a battle. It's a constant, daily battle. Just because you become a Christian, you basically commit yourself to following the Lord doesn't mean that you're going to every day. In fact, it means that the devil is working even harder trying to get you to come to his team. So the battle, really, in a way is just beginning.

The verse Jarvis pointed out, "For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, NLT), is worthy of discussing in relation to its influence on him and sports. It is among the most well known verses in the entire Bible and, for many, the foundation on which Christianity rests.

It is interesting that when 2005 Heisman trophy winner Reggie Bush was among the many college football players who paid homage to their hometown by writing their area code on their eye black strips, few complained and the NCAA made no rules changes to prevent it. However, when 2007 Heisman trophy winner Tim Tebow began getting attention for writing Bible verses on his eye black strips, the NCAA was swift to react. Shortly after 92 million people googled "John 3:16" following Tebow writing the verse on his eye black strips in the 2009 BCS Championship Game, the NCAA banned all writing on eye black strips (Volin, 2010).

Given that background, is it any wonder Jarvis seemed agitated when I relayed to him the question a young man had asked me, "Can you be a Christian and a successful college coach?"

> *Yes, by all means, but it's tough. I would say to that young man to stay true to that and to really work even harder at being a Christian when you've become a college coach because it's very, very difficult. And it's difficult because a lot of the places that you work will try not to allow you to display your faith. So, you've got to be committed to that more than anything because we have a responsibility to share out faith—it's mandated. It's part of being a Christian but at the same time we're in a world and a society and a country that right now where the Christians are pretty much under attack and being more and more discouraged every day from being Christians and it's going to become more and more difficult for young coaches to even think that they can be a Christian and display their Christian faith and talk about their faith and even mention the name of Jesus. You know, we can say 'God' but heaven forbid you say 'Jesus.' Our society and country right now is doing an incredible job at trying to take Christ out of everything.*

For many Christians, the "*responsibility to share our faith*," that Jarvis mentioned is best summed up by what is known as the Great Commission. This passage from the Bible instructs Christians to "go an make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). This does not mean that Jarvis is intolerant of other beliefs. In fact, he noted coaching several Muslim players. *"It never became an issue,"* he explained. He does however, hope to show everyone the love of Christ and said that he had called upon his pastor in the past for guidance on how to handle those that may not share his beliefs. In a 2012 article, his pastor Tommy Kiedis, said he loved having Jarvis in his Friday morning small group and in the church,

> I love having Coach around…I appreciate him for a lot of reasons. He believes to his core in what he professes, but he'll be the first to tell you, 'I'm not perfect.' Jesus made a huge difference in his life. (Rosa, 2012, para. 68)

I found this to be very true of Jarvis as he was quick to point out his own flaws and struggles with his faith and his leadership. For example, I ask Jarvis, "What about habits in your life? Do you have a routine, as far as your faith goes?"

Jarvis' response is as transparent as it is common:

> *Yes. It's not 100%, but (laughs) just like you're trying to get your kids to practice and practice with purpose and to practice the right way. I know the right way for me, is to get up in the morning and before I do anything else, to get in the word. I try to do that. I don't always do it and obviously it bothers me when I don't but that's what I try to do. If I can get the day started that way and maybe take something, maybe a little nugget out of whatever I'm reading or out of Proverbs, then it certainly can help me during the day and I'm sure I got a lot of work to do. Make no mistake about it, I sure certainly hope the good Lord blesses me with enough time to really get it right.*

Like myself, and the other coaches in the study, Jarvis does not profess a strong allegiance to a particular denomination: "*Well, it is a Presbyterian church, denomination wise. That's the gist of it. But it's just a good Christian church that every week and every sermon you know you are going to get the Gospel. It's just a good Christian church that happens to be Presbyterian."*

It was through this church that the pivotal moment in his spiritual journey of his commitment to Christ occurred after getting fired at St. John's and moving to Boca Raton, Florida. Once again, something good came out of what he initially thought was bad

"If your faith had been then what it was now, would you have handled the St. John's situation any differently at all?," I ask.

With the tenderness of his 46-year marriage to Connie draped on his every word, Jarvis explains the impact of his "coach" on his faith journey:

> *The one constant for me has been the fact that my coach, my partner, is a strong believer and has been...I think she carried me. I have to be honest with you, she carried me during that time."*
>
> *I thought I was helping her and getting her out of New York and the craziness that went with that job. But as it turned out, she carried me. I think her faith was strong enough to carry me and yet she would keep telling me it's not going to be strong enough to get me in. (laughs) I can't do that on my own but I think she carried me far enough, until I finally got what I was supposed to get.*

Shootaround

"Excuse me," I ask a UNC Charlotte student, though since the late 90s the school has preferred to be called just "Charlotte." "Can you tell me where Halton Arena is?"

Oddly, I can find no signs on the Charlotte campus directing me to Halton Arena to observe the FAU noon shootaround. The student looks up from their smart phone, held out like a diving rod in front of them and with a "if it was a snake it would've bit you" look on her face said, "It's right behind you."

I strain to read the lettering on the building rectangular building with a bell tower that she points to. There are two problems now that make me doubt the student's direction: I've never seen a bell tower on an arena and it clearly says "Barnhart Student Activity Center" not "Halton Arena."

"It's *inside* Barnhart," the student explains, sensing my confusion.

"Thanks so much!" I shout as I hurry through the 30 degree cold to find an open door.

Opened in 1996, Halton is typical of multi-purpose designs of that era. The arena is just part of the facility which also includes recreational space for the student body, offices, and meeting space. Even the actual arena part has been designed with multipurpose function in mind; there are five full basketball courts available when the upper level bleachers are retracted.

About half an hour before the scheduled shootaround time, a strength coach works out a kid who appears to be around 10 years old on the main floor. The kid seems less interested in the training than the coach would like, but he's 10 and surely his parents don't want him to get behind. At 11:39am someone rolls out a rack of 10 Nike basketballs. Not only will this be a battle between schools, but also brands as FAU is an Adidas school. The logos on their navy warmups attest as much when they walk through the tunnel.

Jarvis is the first to enter, takes off his team coat to reveal what has become his trademark, a sweater vest over a long sleeve shirt. Showing the ridiculous nature of some media coverage today, a few reporters have mocked the attire, even blaming losses on "the curse of the sweater vest" (Hutton, 2012). This does not deter Jarvis. He is bouncy and energetic before they get started. He takes a few shots, the only coach I saw do this in this study, and works all corners of the court talking to players and coaches.

Jarvis has been known to recruit a lot of foreign players in his career. The media in New York City skewered him for it, accusing him of neglecting the hometown players. For his part, Jarvis lauds the foreign players for their attitude and work ethic. He is not alone in this, as the San Antonio Spurs are well known for constructing their five-time NBA champion teams around foreign players for much the same reasons.

"Is there a difference dealing with the international kids versus the American kids?," I ask.

> *Honestly, the biggest difference is a lot of those kids, one of the reasons I think I've had a lot of success with them and I probably need to recruit more of them is because they still have the work ethic that we used to have. They're usually my best students. They're usually my hardest workers. Very rarely are they not team players, and many of them come from families that are Christian families, so many of them already have a relationship with the Lord. Maybe those are the reasons why I've had pretty good success with them. The great thing about basketball is that it doesn't always have to be communicated with proper English language. It's a universal game that can be understood even if you don't understand language, and there's many things that can be taught through how you do things and what you do than by what you say.*

I am sitting on press row right on the sideline opposite of the team benches so I can hear the players and coaches banter as players get dressed and casually take some shots.

"Here's how you know if you have a soccer player or a basketball player," Jarvis tells his son and rolls a basketball all the way to the other end of the court at one of his foreign players.

Jarvis calls the player's name as the ball crosses midcourt. The player turns and sees the ball and in a split-second reaction, instinctually pops the ball up to his hand with his foot.

"See," Jarvis says. "Let me try again." This time he picks and American born player who was oblivious to the earlier experiment. He rolls another ball the length of the floor and calls the players name as it approaches. This player sees the ball and bends over to pick it up. The four or five players who are on to what's happening burst into laughter with Jarvis.

The player who picked up the ball has the classic, "Why is everyone laughing" expression on his face as he holds the ball up in the universal "do you want this?" motion.

"Don't worry" Jarvis says and walks towards the player to explain the experiment and let him in on the joke.

Jarvis' leading scorer is a crafty Argentinian who puts on a show later that night with his fundamental play.

"He's never out of control," a pro scout seated at the table next to me during the game later that night would shout with glee after one of his moves leaves the much more athletic Charlotte defenders scratching their heads.

The rest of the shootaround goes pretty standard: some skill work, some scout work defending Charlotte's plays, and then a review of a new defense they have just installed. This is where things get interesting. "23X" is the call for the new zone that requires players to trade spots, or X out, on certain ball rotations. The players and Jarvis quickly get frustrated. Jarvis' voice begins to rise in volume and frequency, as the players just don't seem to grasp what they are being asked to do. I see flashes of that temper that Jarvis admits he is working on, but nothing out of control or inappropriate- just a sense of frustration. Showing his sense of humor

and venting his frustration at the same time, Jarvis tells me after practice, *"Their attention span is that of a ant. Maybe not- ants are pretty attentive."*

Jarvis speaks of moments like this in our discussion about coaching young people today:

So I think that's a battle, you know, of controlling yourself and also trying to be as positive as you can but yet at the same time as honest as you need to be because I think there's a lot of folks, a lot of parents today who want to be the kids' friends. They tell them what they want to hear and as a result they are not really teaching them what they need to teach them. So, you know, there's a fine line and you still have to try and balance that and to be as encouraging as possible and that's something that can be very difficult for any coach.

FAU's new zone reminds me of the time my fantastic assistant coach, Jeremy Huckaby, helped me install a new zone just before our conference tournament. We were certain that it would neutralize the key players of our first opponent, but we were down 14-0 before I knew what had happened. With that frame of reference I whisper to myself, "Please don't run this tonight" to Jarvis' Owls. They don't. Jarvis is not in multiple halls of fame for nothing.

For Jarvis, he is just glad they had the chance to practice at all since they regularly don't get to due to the travel schedule.

Well, you know what? The reality is, it's like this. It was so bad that, for example, this year we, unlike the Ivy League, which I think got it right when you play games on Friday and Saturday- of course they can bus in between games and we can't. You play a Thursday game, so we took classes in the morning so that we wouldn't miss too many

classes, but what it meant was Wednesday became a travel day. So we wouldn't even get a chance to practice many times on Wednesday, the day before a game.

I remember talking with coach Floyd, out in Texas, El Paso, and he asked me, "How'd the practice go?" We played on a Thursday night. He wanted to know how Wednesday night's practice went, and when I told him that we didn't get in until Wednesday night and that we didn't get a chance to practice on Wednesdays, he couldn't believe it. And then we went out and beat 'em. So I don't know if he believed me or not.

Overall, at this shootaround Jarvis is encouraging to his players, engaging with me, and goes out of his way to make me feel welcome. He talks to me before, during, and after the shootaround and I genuinely enjoy his candid thoughts and responses to sensitive questions. I can't help but think of how different Jarvis is than what I expected based on my impression of him on television.

Television Memories

For me, Jarvis is different from all of the other coaches in the study in that he played a role in my childhood and my development as a coach. What I mean is, I vividly remember his George Washington teams' success and his authoritative sideline presence when I was playing in high school and later learning the coaching trade at a DI college. Though I never saw him coach in person, I remember the fire and the passion he displayed on television. Just as Pat Summitt is known for her famous stare that could melt steel, I remember Jarvis' own powerful stare with his head slightly tilted to the side. Like an actor's mask in ancient Greek theater, his expression seemed larger than life.

At that time, Jarvis' unique look included a strong jaw outlined by a jet-black beard, and later a thick goatee, beneath a piercing set of eyes and a bald head. I did not realize it growing up, but Jarvis was also sadly unique as a high profile, African-American coach. Minority coaches had far fewer opportunities in the 80s and 90s, but because I saw successful Black coaches I assumed the exception was the norm. Those exceptions to the common lack of opportunity facing coaches of color included many coaching greats I grew up admiring, like K.C. Jones leading the Boston Celtics to four straight NBA Finals and two championships, John Thompson leading Georgetown to three Final Fours and one national championship, Nolan Richardson leading Arkansas to three Final Fours and one national championship, and John Chaney leading five of his Temple teams to the Elite 8.

Jarvis, however, was all too aware of the embarrassingly low number of minority coaches and was an outspoken and successful member of the BCA. "*It's harder for a Black coach to get a good job and especially to get rehired*," Jarvis quietly tells me with a tinge of sadness, not resentment, during a break in FAU's gameday shootaround in Charlotte. I was sitting at midcourt behind the press table along the sideline opposite the team benches when Jarvis strolled over and half sits on top of the table, but with one leg still touching the ground, "*I hate that the BCA has fizzled out. They used to be such a strong voice for minority coaches, but no one has stepped up…"* his nostalgic thought trails off as he turns to stare into the empty green seats behind the baseline. He speaks not as an angry man but as the wise, 68 year-old grandfather of four that he is.

Jarvis is not alone in his analysis. Hill (2004) noted that in American football, Black head coaches get more difficult jobs that led to poor win-loss records. Lapchick's (2012) analysis

suggested that while college basketball had historically provided opportunity for African-American head coaches, only 18.6 percent of NCAA DI head coaches were African-American in the 2010-2011 season, and that this was the lowest figure since 1996-1996. Cunningham (2010) broadened the scope from football to all sports, in his argument that the underrepresentation of African Americans as DI head coaches in all sports is the result of complex "factors at the macro-level (i.e., institutionalized practices, political climate, stakeholder expectations), meso-level (i.e., prejudice on the part of decision makers, discrimination, leadership prototypes, organizational culture of diversity), and micro-level (i.e., head coaching expectations and intentions, occupational turnover expectations)" (p. 395).

This topic is personal for Jarvis beyond his own experience, "Deuce" or Mike, Jr., his son and assistant coach, is still waiting for his opportunity to become a head coach after over two decades in college coaching. Like any father, Jarvis wants more opportunities and a better life for Mike, Jr. When I ask Jarvis what leadership lessons he is trying to pass on to his staff he answers with a renewed energy and pride:

> *Well, first of all, the biggest responsibility of all as a coach and as a dad is to prepare my son, Michael, who is my associate head coach who's been with me since back in 1993 when Mike graduated from BU. He came to work with me as my assistant at George Washington, and we were the first Black father and son coaching team in the history of the NCAA Division I basketball, and other than a few years after St. John's when he went to work a couple years at Duke, we've been together for almost 20 years, and my biggest responsibility, really, as a coach and a Dad is to prepare Mike for what he wants to do, what he's been gifted to do, and that is to be a head Division I basketball coach. And so,*

what I'm trying to do with Mike is just make sure that he's aware of all the things that he is going to have to deal with and so he's prepared to deal with them because basketball and coaching has changed a lot over the years and it's much more difficult than ever to first of all get a job and then second of all to keep a job.

I want Mike to be aware of all the things that he has to do, and that includes how to deal with kids today. In fact, at times he's teaching me about you know, about the fact that kids today are different from him and the kids we used to coach. So, I guess one of the things I'm hopefully teaching my son is that you're never too old to learn, and I'm learning from him as well as him learning from me. I think that's the important thing for any head coach that's working with and trying to mentor and teach a younger coach is that he too can learn from them and to try to involve them in as many facets of the job as possible and to just make them aware of all the pitfalls that are out there, and the best way that they can survive and move on.

I remember seeing Jarvis' fiery sideline demeanor on television, and he quite transparently points out that controlling his tongue and temper are areas that he is working on, "*hopefully the day will come when I can be even more in control of my emotions and my tongue."* Those emotions have been known to occasionally get him into trouble with game officials in the past. He has been ejected both on the road while at St. John's, "I never ever get tossed out of a game because I've totally lost it. I know when it's going to happen" (Rubin, 2003, para. 5), and at home at FAU, "The one thing I am not going to comment on is the officiating" (Hutton, 2009, para. 6). I asked Jarvis about officials because coaches' reactions to them are a

very public display of leadership, though I do recognize that there are times a coach must stand up for his players and his team.

Jarvis explained how he now handles officials this way:

Well, first of all, after what you realize can't handle them, they handle you pretty much (laughs). But when you got really good teams, you don't even worry about them, because they're not a factor. When you're not that good, you worry about everything, and you probably spend more time worrying about them than you should, to be honest with you. If anything, I've probably spent more time worrying about them, than I probably needed to, over the years. As you go through this game, you realize that just like everything else, there's good ones and there's bad ones. You just hope that you get enough of the good ones but the problem is if your not in a good team in a one-bid league, specially unless it's a week night, your not going to get really great, really good officials. You have to learn how to deal with it and that's a very difficult thing to do. But they have so much effect on the game.

I witness his ability to control his emotions in the Charlotte game. On several occasions he clearly restrains himself after a series of extremely questionable calls in a very close game. In the sports world, "Questionable" is just a polite way of saying "Bad." A friend of mine's dad growing up was an official who would never criticize a blown call, he would just say, "it was in his field of vision." Well, from my vantage point on press row, those calls that went against the Owls are more than in the officials' field of vision, they are just plain wrong and I would not blame Jarvis for getting upset. However, there are no technical fouls on this night in Charlotte, just some disbelieving staring at the rafters and a spin to the opposite baseline with outstretched

arms in a pleading gesture like a child seeking a more pleasant answer from the other parent who just told them "no."

Questionable calls tend to be magnified in a coach's eyes when their team is having the tough-luck type of season Jarvis' Owls are, which I also sadly know from experience. "*That's my seven foot center over there, rehabbing,"* Jarvis laments to me at the Charlotte shootaround. Key injuries and a series of heart-breaking, close losses have marked the first half of their season. "*We've been in almost every game but the game at Duke,"* Jarvis says with the intensity of a competitor. "*But no one wins there,"* he adds as if to make himself feel better. However, Jarvis has in fact won at Duke. In 2000 his St. John's team broke #2 ranked Duke's 64 game winning-streak against unranked opponents on Bootsy Thornton's 18-foot jump shot for the 83-82 win. "The resiliency that our kids showed in the game is a reflection of who they are, their character, where they have come from and where they want to do," Jarvis said at the time (Associated Press, 2000, para. 13).

Among their close losses are even three of their "guarantee" games. A guarantee game is where a bigger school pays a guaranteed amount, upwards of $100,000 in extreme cases, to a small school to come play a game there. Critics call it buying wins for the bigger schools. Smaller schools call it an unfortunate reality that is necessary to meet their budget and fund other sports. This season, Jarvis' Owls nearly pulled upsets in three of their four guarantee games at major conference opponents Boston College (79-82), Maryland (62-66), and DePaul (70-81), but being that close without breaking through can be especially frustrating. According to ESPN research, these major programs have athletic department revenues in excess of $60,000,000 in 2013 ("The money", n.d.), nearly three times FAU's revenues over the same period.

"Are you really told that you have to schedule a certain number of guarantee games?," I ask Jarvis.

"*Yeah, you do because of your budget. You have to bring in 'x' amount revenue from the guaranteed games,"* Jarvis explains. While there is an argument that playing the bigger schools can help prepare you for your conference season, it would be nice of you could play them in your own arena instead of always on the road. The smaller schools don't have the budget to pay bigger teams to come play in their arena. Detailing the dilemma of guarantee games, Jarvis notes:

> *The reality is if you're a small school and it means you have to play guarantee games. For example, I had eight thousand dollars that I could buy games with. Well, you can't buy any games for eight thousand. You buy a couple of games against Division II or non-Division I teams. So, you're going to be playing three or four games that you really have very little, if any, chance of winning. Those schools aren't paying you to have you come and beat them. So the reality is you're going to be on the road, playing against teams that are better than you to begin with, and everything, including the officials, is going to be in their favor. But most programs at the lower Division I level, I mean, they have to play three, four, five games, Fang Mitchell (at Coppin State) has already played six money games. Which means he's basically 0-6 before he begins. That's the reality of coaching in the lower schools. And the coaches that take on those jobs they know it but, guess what; they don't have a whole lot of a choice.*

Dealing with the officials you are assigned or getting upset with players during games are two common temper traps for coaches. Early in my head coaching career I asked myself,

"Should my behavior as a Christian coach be any different than that of other coaches?" Jarvis talked about that struggle in his coaching:

> *Well, the biggest challenge facing any of us today, I think, is during the heat of battle, and I'm guilty of this still, I mean hopefully the day will come when I can be even more in control of my emotions and my tongue, and I find myself still slipping back into sin, I guess. But, you know, with my language it's a constant battle because it's so almost commonplace, you know, to speak like a non-Christian when I think that's probably still my biggest battle. I can get into the game and I find myself cussing sometimes and it's not necessary. But the difference now is I used to think it was totally fine before, now I know it's not.*

As the last line of that quote notes, Jarvis emphasized several times that before he became truly committed to his faith this was not a dilemma he thought much about, but now that he spends time reading the Bible and growing in his faith he sees the many verses about controlling your tongue. A small sampling of the many examples are Proverbs 15:1, 18:21 and 21:23 and Psalm 34:13, 39:1, and 141:3 of the Old Testament, as well as James 1:26 and 3:2-10, Colossians 4:6, and Ephesians 4:29 the New Testament. The sheer number of verses on this topic is hard to miss for anyone that is attempting to grow in their faith, as Jarvis is, and certainly have had an effect on his leadership.

Leadership Style

All of this begs the question, who or what influenced Jarvis' leadership? A leadership style he describes as trying to be an "*effective teacher*" and *"storyteller"* with a purpose greater than just winning: *"if I can help one or two kids then my coaching career has been a success."*

Jarvis hopes that his teaching through stories and his personal example leads his players to think, *"maybe he acts that way because he is a man of God and I want to be like him."* Jarvis' leadership is strongly influenced by his Christian faith.

"This is not your first rodeo," I begin my question. "You're a highly decorated coach. You've been all over, multiple Halls of Fame, NABC President, Coach of the Year, Father of the Year, your resume goes on forever," I continue- wanting him to know that I've done my research. I close the open-ended, foundational cornerstone of our first conversation with this, "So, at this point in your career, can you describe your leadership style?"

For some, leadership is just something you do and not something you articulate, but Jarvis pauses as he tries to put his philosophy into words:

> *(Laughs) Um, can I describe my leadership style? (exhales) My leadership style is, I try to lead by being the most effective teacher that I can, and try to give as many examples of how to do and how not to do things by my life experiences. Probably more than anything else, I think I'm becoming more of a storyteller these days, but I don't know if anybody's really listening. (laughs) To me, it's one of the best ways for me to try to lead and relate, and develop a team and a family. So I do believe that as a leader my job is to try and develop a cohesive, effective team that really prides itself on being a family.*

Later he adds, "*Your primary job (as a coach) is to try and train boys into men. That's the primary job and that is also the toughest job."*

Jarvis' point about the importance of learning was repeated through out conversations and was refreshing to hear from someone at this point in their career. This attitude reflects one of

legendary coach John Wooden's famous aphorisms: "It's what you learn after you know it all that counts."

Because he says he is still learning, and I know that my leadership style as a coach changed over my career, I ask him, "Coach, you've had such success at so many different stops, has your leadership style changed over the years?"

"I would say it's evolving. I hate to use that word (laughs) but I'd say it's growing, and I'd say that the longer I coach, obviously, the more experiences I have," Jarvis explains.

"So, I would say the change has been that through longevity, there's more things to share. And I think that really it's more about trying to share things that apply to situations and to specific cases and people."

Following up on one of Jarvis' earlier quotes, "*Probably more than anything else, I think I'm becoming more of a storyteller these days…To me, it's one of the best ways for me to try to lead and relate, and develop a team and a family,"* I ask him for an example of the kinds of stories he might use.

Showing the influence of his faith, Jarvis answers, *"I bring up stories from the Bible as often as I can remember them."* He then continues with the honesty that marked our conversations,

> *I sometimes get stories a little mixed up, but I'm getting better at that. Just recently, yesterday in fact, I was talking with the kids about the fact that God does extraordinary things with ordinary people and that you don't have to be the most talented player in the world to have a profound effect or role. And that sometimes God takes the average- he*

takes a person like Moses who felt like he couldn't speak, 'I can't do this' or David or whoever it is. I try to use examples from the Bible as often as I can.

The stories of Moses and David are two of the better-known stories in the Bible and have inspired generations. As an example of the power of David's story, Malcolm Gladwell (2013) recently wrote a best-selling book, *David and Goliath*, taking a new look at the famous underdog story.

Jarvis also uses traditional motivational techniques and slogan in his leadership.

We've got a couple this year we're using. I had a couple of former Marines that have a program called the A program that is into team building and leadership, and one of the slogans we have is 'one more' that whenever we think we've done enough, we'll try to do one more- whether it's one more sprint, or take one more shot, make one more defensive stop, make one more pass. So, one more is one of them, and the other one that we've used this year is if you're going to build a building you build it brick by brick, one brick at a time. So what we did was we had about 30 bricks painted red and blue and we've had every player and staff member sign a brick and then sort of build a little wall with the bricks with everybody's name on it so that it symbolizes that we're building it one brick at a time and that every brick is part of the building, part of the wall.

Game Night Observation

"Did you see the guy in the bikini top and the inflatable around his waist?" I overhear as I entered the media room in inner recesses of Halton Arena. It was "Beach Night" and some dedicated Charlotte students took advantage of the themed night to showcase the antics that make college crowds famous. It's funny when you see college kids do thing like that, but when

you see adults do the same thing at pro games, especially without a theme night invitation, it's just sad.

Jarvis begins the game in the fifth seat on the bench, right next to his son. He stays seated for most of the first 12 minutes or so but spends most of the rest of the game in motion- much like he was at shootaround a few hours earlier. It is a tight game throughout the first half, with neither team creating much separation.

There would be not technical on this night, after one particularly egregious call, Jarvis walks with both arms outstretched to the side, palms up, in silent protest. Early in the second half his leading scorer takes a very bad fadeaway shot—the kind of shot you see regularly in the NBA, but that drive college coaches mad. I can't hear what Jarvis says to him from my position on press row, but I do see him call the player over during a break in the action, sternly talk into his ear, pat him on the rear, and send him back on the court. On the very next possession, that same player scores by going strong to the basket instead of weakly fading away as before. I see the expression of satisfaction in having a player be coachable on Jarvis' face and then the frustration as he mutters something to his assistants. Based on my experience as a coach, I imagine him saying "Why doesn't he do that all the time?"

The beach clad student section goes berserk as the 49ers pulls ahead late in the second half. Jarvis' Owls are once again in another tight game with less than two minutes left when his leading scorer misses two free throws when they are down four. I see an assistant cover his mouth with his pad to keep the crowd from reading his lips, but the frustration is palpable.

This frustration turns to stone-faced denial when an Owl player steals the ball and misses an uncontested dunk with about a minute left in the game. FAU is forced to start fouling and the

49ers make their free throws in the final minute to pull away for a 62-53 win. Jarvis gives the Charlotte coach a warm embrace in the postgame handshake line and heads to the locker room.

I wait for Jarvis to emerge from the locker room, feeling bad for him. I've been a part of several seasons where you just can't seem to catch a break and it wears on you. My last year at Tennessee we lost many games on last second shots or final minute rallies and it was taxing on us all, but none as much as the head coach. "Just when you think you've seen it all" we would mutter after another heart-breaking loss in a new and unique fashion.

The players slowly file out, one every 30 seconds or so. The assistants slide by me in the hallway, but no Jarvis. I have just started thinking "I hope he is not too devastated" when he emerges from the door.

"I've got to go say hello to some people from my church that are here," Jarvis says in a pleasant, but subdued, tone that bears no mark of the tough loss. *"I'll be back in just a minute."*

In an earlier conversation he talked about the difference in media at his different coaching stops,

> *At St. John's, you'd have six beat writers that followed every move, waiting for you to take a bad step. At GW you had the Washington Post and the Washington Times. Both papers were really rooting for you. Even though you didn't have as many papers, you probably had as many articles written on us at that school. Whereas, at a school like Florida Atlantic, the publicity and in the media coverage is almost non-existent. If there were half a dozen articles written the whole year, you're lucky, even when you're beat. We would beat Harvard or win on the road and you wouldn't see anything in the newspaper. (laughs) It was almost like people were working hard to make sure there's*

nothing in the paper. So, on one end, it's nice that even when you were losing you didn't have to worry about reading about it, but it was also bad that when you won you didn't have to worry about reading about it either.

True to his word, Jarvis returns to talk to me about the game because, as he said, there are no beat writers here. *"We're still good enough to be in every game, but I'm still missing that one guy you can count on in the clutch,"* Jarvis tells me.

"Is that a microcosm of the season for you guys?," I ask.

"*This is how's it been for the last three years*," Jarvis replies. As he continues with a slight exaggeration the frustration has seeped into his tone of voice, *"Since I've been here, I bet you there's probably been a total of five games we haven't been in or had a chance to win. I mean total*."

"What was your message to the team after the game, Coach?"

We're going to be traveling all day tomorrow to Marshall. I hope everybody's healthy enough to go on Saturday. And I told the team it's about the journey. We've just got to try and continue to get better every day and I'm going to be as upbeat and positive as I can. I mean, I'm not going to sugarcoat anything. We have to make free throws. We have to get loose balls. But they have to want to do that.

Despite the injuries, the frustration, and the travel, Jarvis' Owls would go on to bounce back from this and beat Marshall at Marshall, 65-57 two days later.

Conclusion

Though I texted Jarvis when I heard about his resignation, I waited about a month after the season to do the wrapup interview. I was a little unsure of how to handle the delicate topic

and appreciated Jarvis' willingness to do the interview despite the circumstances. They were certainly not what either of us had envisioned when the study began. Our conversation started out this way:

"Can you talk about what's your feeling now after you've had a little bit of time to reflect on what's going on?"

Well, what I'm feeling now is I'm starting to, just trying to not only figure out, but trying to see what the good Lord wants me to do next and be ready for whatever that might be. I don't know exactly what it's going to be might be yet. I'm thinking, praying, and talking with my wife and son. We're focusing on him primarily right now. In terms of getting him squared away. We're helping him get on his way. Then, in the meantime, we'll see where everything leads us.

"Has your faith helped you in handling this?"

Yes. Without it, I don't know-- honestly, I don't know where I'd be or what I'd be thinking but when I responded to the many text, your texts, your e-mails and phone calls, it pretty much said the same thing and that is, God does not make mistakes and that He's got something—He's got another chapter in my life that's going to be better than any chapter that's taken place before. The beautiful thing is, it's just like the sports itself and I think once you're doing God's thing and become a Christian and you're born again, I think that you know the end result. It always makes it better knowing that, at the end of the game, you're going to win. So, once again the time we have left on this clock, no matter how long or how short it might be, when that clock hits zero, zero, zero, your real life is

just beginning. So, that will always be what's the same to me. I think what's the same to quite a few people.

Clearly, Jarvis is leaning on his faith to comfort through this time in his life. I found that the group text message he sent out the day after his resignation was announced was moving, and with his permission I will share it here:

"God is great! And yesterday confirmed that when family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances poured out their love on me and my family. Please rest assured (that) we are feeling great because we know who is in charge and that HE does not make mistakes. You heard that I was fired. The truth is, I agreed to resign at the end of April and will finish the season coaching with my team with the assistance of my son, Michael. Once again, thank you for your thoughts and prayers. You made my day! GOD loves you, and so do I. Coach Mike"

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter opens by reconsidering the three main premises that set the context for this investigation into the lived experience of Christian basketball coaches at public, NCAA DI institutions. Next, the research questions and the related findings are reviewed and expounded upon. Then, those findings are connected to the existing literature, confirming some previous works and challenging others. In the ensuing section, the limitations and delimitations of the study, the quality of the research, and reflections on the research process are addressed. Finally, I discuss the scholarly and practical implications.

Chapters 1 and 2 established the three main premises that set the context for this study: (a) there is increasing pressure on college basketball coaches to win immediately and win consistently; (b) coaches are expected to maintain their integrity; (c) the pressure to win immediately and win consistently can influence some coaches to compromise their integrity. Salient examples of the growing pressure include the increase in television rights fees, the increase in media attention, the increase in coaching salaries, and the high turnover in DI basketball coaching. This pressure can conflict with the expectation that coaches maintain their integrity by following NCAA rules, federal laws, and state laws. The importance of integrity and professional ethics in coaches is stressed by coaching education organizations and professional organizations for both coaches of men's and women's basketball teams.

The third premise of this study was that the pressure to win immediately and consistently can influence some coaches to compromise their integrity. The examples of Bruce Pearl and Dave Bliss support this premise. In 2011, Pearl received a 3-year ban, known as a "show-cause" penalty in NCAA terms, as a result of Pearl's lying to the NCAA and inducing others to do the

same, including his Tennessee coaching staff (NCAA Legislative Services Branch Database, n.d.b). This was in relation to Pearl hosting several high-profile recruits at his house in violation of NCAA rules. While many considered the original infraction minor, it was the attempted cover up that caused his downfall. In the previous six seasons, Pearl had led Tennessee to unprecedented success on the court, but the pressure to continue to win never relents. Signing these highly touted recruits was key to his team's continued success, and led to Pearl's poor decisions. Later, one of the recruits went on to stardom at Kansas and the other at Ohio State, proving Pearl's evaluation of their talent correct, but the pursuit of them cost Pearl his job.

In 2005, Baylor's Dave Bliss received a 10-year ban, in one of the worst scandals in NCAA history, involving "multiple, intentional and serious violations of NCAA rules" (NCAA Legislative Services Branch Database, n.d.a, para. 2). The violations included trying to cover up illegal payments made to players, recruiting violations, and most shockingly, one of his own players, Carlos Dotson, murdered a teammate, Patrick Dennehy (Prentice, 2012). Dotson plead guilty to murder and was sentenced to 35 years in prison (Associated Press, 2005). While Bliss did not have anything to do with the murder, he did try to plant a false story about the Dennehy being a drug dealer, in order to help cover up the other transgressions of his staff including illegal payments to players. Bliss had been a long-time head coach at several institutions, but was under increasing pressure in his fourth year at Baylor and had not been able to turn the program around as fast as he had hoped, leading him to the ill-fated decisions in the name of pursing wins. In addition, in Pearl and Bliss's cases, neither of their religious affiliations, Judaism and Christianity respectively, proved to be an inoculating factor against the pressure to win.

Given that context, this study investigated and illuminated the lived experience of Christian basketball coaches at public, NCAA DI institutions. This was accomplished through use of the study's two guiding research questions, first stated in Chapter 1: (a) What is the lived experience of both men's and women's head basketball coaches at public, NCAA, DI institutions who self-identify as Christian?; (b) How does their religion influence their leadership style?

Summary of Findings Related to Research Question 1

In response to the first research question, this research illuminated the lived experience of Christian basketball coaches at the college level. Merriam (2009) explained the term "lived experience" as "how people make sense of their lives and their experiences" (p. 23). Chapter 4 demonstrated how the coaches made sense of their lives as Christian coaches through the use of interviews, document analysis, and observations to craft a written portrait of their experiences. Looking at the four portraits, both individually and as a group, allows the construction of what Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) termed repetitive refrains, or emerging themes. When looking at all four coaches together three repetitive refrains exemplify their lived experience: peace, perspective, and responsibility. These coaches displayed peace under the pressure to win, were buttressed by a perspective larger than wins and losses, and were driven by a sense of responsibility to serve, all of which reflected the influence of their Christian faith. I will then give examples of the participants' lived experience through the framework three common ingredients of most definitions of religion: community, beliefs, and practices.

Peace. The most striking aspect of this study for me, especially for a coach with 18 years of coaching experience, was the absolute, unshakable, and undeniable inner peace that manifested itself through the participants' words and actions. This was such a repetitive refrain that it supplied the title of the study: peace under pressure.

First of all, as part of their common lived experience, the coaches recognized the pressure on them to win. For example, Nikki Caldwell admitted, *"I mean, obviously, they don't want us to be having losing seasons."* Kellie Harper noted, "*You're expected to win quickly"* due to the fact that *"instant gratification is not just (from) young kids, the fans want instant gratification."* The most senior of the four, Mike Jarvis, lamented, *"Coaching has changed a lot over the years, and it's much more difficult than ever to, first of all, get a job and then, second of all, to keep a job."* Billy Kennedy pointed to the media's role in the pressure on coaches, *"At this level is pressure on every game, because… all our games are on TV… Being at this level, when you lose games it's a big deal."* Jarvis also noted the pressure of the media: *"At St. John's you'd have six beat writers that followed every move, waiting for you to take a bad step."*

Second, despite this pressure, in all four of the game observations the coaches showed poise, even in the face of wild fluctuations in momentum. In Caldwell's case, I observed how composed she was on the sideline when her team built a large lead in the big, televised game against her alma mater, before a large crowd and her mentor. Yet, she also displayed that same poise when her team nearly gave up that entire lead and almost lost the game. Despite the implications of the game, which were discussed at length in her portrait, and despite both the good times and the bad times within that game, Caldwell was steady and rock-solid in all aspects, including her body language. This calm amid chaos would surface later in the season, as

well. Despite a tough string of losses at the end of the regular season, Caldwell maintained her composure as leader of the program, and LSU went to their second straight Sweet 16.

Most coaches feel that it is tougher to win on the road, and Harper's team was unexpectedly down, early in the road game I observed. They had also recently lost their best player to injury and were on a losing streak, making it understandable if frustration were to boil over in Harper's demeanor, words, or actions on the sideline. Yet, again, Harper stood calm, which she explained to me after the game, *"That's what I've always tried to do to our teams- just try to give them my poise and my confidence."*

Mike Jarvis knew that if his season didn't turn around, his six-year tenure at FAU would be over. Yet, despite a series of frustratingly close losses and another key injury in the days before the game, Jarvis was poised on the sideline in another disheartening loss, and even more so after the game, where there was no sign of the stereo typical coaches' tantrum. After talking with his team, he visited some people from his church in the crowd and then returned to talk to me in the hallway under the stands.

Billy Kennedy was also calm and collected on the sideline as his team pulled a major upset on the road. After watching his postgame press conference I was convinced he would be a great straight man in a comedy team. With absolutely no hint of elation from the win, yet no brooding either, Kennedy when he recounted the thrilling conclusion to the game in deadpan fashion, *"Antwan made a big shot (a clutch and unexpected three pointer in the closing seconds) and they missed some free throws, we missed some free throws, but our guys stuck together and kept believing and didn't quit."*

Perspective. A second repetitive refrain was, despite the pressure, the participants all held a perspective that was more broad than just wins and losses. Caldwell talked of coaching being a "platform" where she could model a heart of service rather than a focus on winning by changing *"your focus on what really matters in life, and that's developing your student-athletes to be great people and great ambassadors for you program."* To give her players a broader perspective she even cancelled a practice this season to do community service together. Caldwell also did not elevate herself or her role above others in society, noting *"I think there's pressure in everything that we do, whether you are a coach or a school bus driver and you have to get the kids to and from school safely."*

Harper noted that some coaches do not have this broader perspective, *"You have folks out there who are willing to slide a little bit around the (recruiting) rules, and once you slide a little bit it's easier to keep going in that direction."* Yet, for Harper, her frustration with those who cheat is balanced by her broader perspective, "*It's hard sometimes when you know that you're in a disadvantage in certain situations because you're not going to cheat. It's frustrating, but at the end of the day you just have to remind yourself that you can sleep at night, and who knows if your counterparts can.* Speaking of her faith, Harper admitted, "*I think, one, it gives you perspective. Although I take losses very, very, very hard, I think that because of that (faith) you realize that there are things out there greater than what you're doing—maybe out there that are more important than what you're doing."* That perspective helped Harper view her firing at NC State as part of God's plan for her, *"I really do truly believe God sent me there. I 100% believe that I was the person that needed to come in to that program when they hired me. I also believe that I did what I was supposed to do and then I needed to move on."*

Kennedy noted that his perspective on coaching was firmly rooted in his Christian faith, *"God wanted all of me and not just part of me. He got my attention and I surrendered totally to Him and made it (coaching) a ministry."* However, as his portrait in Chapter 4 showed, this does not mean he pushes his values on others, proven by his close relationship and recent hiring of a Muslim assistant coach who sings Kennedy's praises.

Jarvis' perspective is also colored by more than wins and losses, "*Nobody's going to remember how many wins I had. Nobody's going to remember if I was in any hall-of-fame, whether it was high school, whatever it was. Nobody's going to care. Nobody's going to remember that."* For Jarvis, it was more important to model good behavior and be a positive influence on his players. His Christian perspective also marks the way he handled his resignation under pressure at the end of this season,

> *God does not make mistakes and that He's got something—He's got another chapter in my life that's going to be better than any chapter that's taken place before. The beautiful thing is, it's just like the sports itself and I think once you're doing God's thing and become a Christian and you're born again, I think that you know the end result. It always makes it better knowing that, at the end of the game, you're going to win. So, once again the time we have left on this clock, no matter how long or how short it might be, when that clock hits zero, zero, zero, your real life is just beginning*

Responsibility. Another repetitive refrain from the coaches was responsibility. This was interpreted several ways: a responsibility to pass on the legacy of what others taught them; a responsibility to be authentic in their Christian faith and not cast it aside in their coaching role coupled with a responsibility to show love for those who do not share, or have a different interpretation of, their Christian faith; and a responsibility to set a good example for their player, staff, and fans.

This responsibility comes, in part, from a belief that God has directed them to the situation they are in now. For example, Harper noted, "I know for a fact that God wanted me in Springfield," and Kennedy claimed, "God called me to do what I'm doing." Jarvis pointed out that he felt God had placed influences in his life, *"I feel really blessed to have had so many people that have influenced me in a positive way and enabled me to do what I do, and what I love to do."* As a result, Jarvis felt a responsibility to give back to his players and staff.

Though the participants understood that they are expected to win, they did not let that pressure compromise their integrity thanks to their perspective. However, as Christian, they all shared a deep sense of responsibility to their faith. Next, to relate the participants' lived experience as a Christian, the repetitive refrains were placed in the framework of the three key components of sociological definitions of organized religion: community, beliefs, and practices.

Community. Community proved to be an important aspect of life for all of the coaches in the study. Communities help shape them as children, enhanced their growth as Christians, and supported them in times of adversity. In order to flesh out the coaches' understandings of their experiences, I narrowed the concept of community into three overlapping subcategories: communities of faith, family, and basketball influences. Because the focus of this study was the Christian aspect of the participants' lived experience, I will not repeat the examples of basketball influences or family here, save where they overlap. Those influences are provided in detail in Chapter 4, but it is worth noting again, that they both also impacted the participants' deep sense of responsibility.

Nikki Caldwell talked about the overlap of her community of faith and her family in her childhood church. In the following quote, Caldwell discussed how the mix of her family and her community of faith would extend from the Sunday services into the afternoon:

> *Afterwards you talked to everybody, and then everybody in my family, because my aunts, my uncles, my cousins and everybody, would go to my grandmother's house and we'd eat dinner… that whole day was about your faith and your family.*

Kellie Harper expressed the joy that she and her husband felt when they were invested in a church community, *"We loved the church that we went to when we were at Western Carolina, (in) Cullowhee, North Carolina. Loved, loved, loved that church.*

Mike Jarvis noted that while his current church was important to him through both attendance of service on Sunday and also small groups during the week, he was not beholden to denominational loyalty, "*It's just a good Christian church that every week and every sermon you*

know you are going to get the Gospel. It's just a good Christian church that happens to be Presbyterian."

Billy Kennedy spoke, with a deep tone of appreciation in his voice, on the positive effect small groups have had on his life and also his wife's:

> *I've started a men's group everywhere I have been, or I've been a part of or joined a men's group. Been blessed ever since as a head coach. It's been a blessing. It's truly a family ministry. My wife gets about 15 women all over the country. They pray for their family and their kids. So we've got some unique things going.*

In addition, the coaches were quick to point to fellow Christians that they considered spiritual advisors that they could turn to if needed. These spiritual advisors included members of the clergy, family members, or other Christian friends. When it came to their teams, however, only one of the four had a team chaplain, despite the coaches' openness to them and positive experiences with them in the past. Given that the coaches also recognized and respected the limitations on what they could say to a player about faith, this presents a potential dilemma for players facing spiritual issues.

Beliefs and practices. Obviously, all of the coaches in the study were Christian, so they shared the same basic belief in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, as understood by Romans 10:13: "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (New International Version). That belief influenced their religious practices in many areas, including prayer, church attendance, small group involvement, and attitudes towards serving others. However, all of the coaches were open and honest about their personal struggles with consistency in those religious practices. This is a dilemma that many, including me, face in their lives. However, they all

seemed more confident in sharing the consistency with which they treated others, especially their players. The coaches expressed a genuine love for their players and seeing them develop in all areas.

Nikki Caldwell was firm in her beliefs, yet she was quick to point out that she did not impose her faith on her players or coaches, "*You don't have to go out and put your belief on anybody, but the way you carry yourself verbally (and) nonverbally, it should come through that way."* As mentioned, church was an integral part of Caldwell's life growing up, and that has impacted her current beliefs and practices,

> *Remember your upbringing. Remember your faith and it will get you through everything… It's through your faith that got us through, and got me through, that stressful week where we lost. It's also through our faith that got us through to that Sweet 16.*

According to Caldwell, "remembering her faith" manifests itself most often in her life through reading the Bible, reading devotionals, and attending small group Bible studies.

Kellie Harper talked about the importance and the challenge of staying connected to a local church when coaches move so often and also frequently travel on the weekends:

> *It is hard—I think that's an accurate statement—to put roots down, you're up rooted so easily. And with our schedule you're not there on weekends. It's important to John (her husband) and I that when we are in town that we're there, and we make an effort to keep a church in our life.*

For Mike Jarvis, a recommitment to his faith, later in life, has made him passionate about his faith practices. One important practice to Jarvis is reading the Bible. Jarvis explained that he

likes to "*get up in the morning and before I do anything else, to get in the Word. I try to do that. I don't always do it and obviously it bothers me when I don't but that's what I try to do*." Church attendance and belonging to a small group that meets on Friday mornings are also very important to him. In fact, it was through a small group that Jarvis became "born again," in his words.

Billy Kennedy's beliefs could have easily been shaken when he was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease in 2011, but he has remained strong in his faith. Prayer, reading the Bible, church attendance, and small group Bible studies, were all important practices to Kennedy. His discussion of how his diagnosis impacted his faith was revealing of both his beliefs and his practices:

> *It's the mornings that you spend invested in your faith that prepares you about the situations that come up like that. I never asked 'why,' or 'why me?' I did ask, 'Why at this time,' but I just delved into the word, deeper and deeper….You recognize that there are peaks and valleys in a lot of Christians' lives. What I mean is, I was at a mountain top experience where God gave me a great opportunity at Texas A&M and I was feeling great and everything is going good, then all of a sudden, the wind's taken out of your sails, and you're diagnosed with a disease, and you think you can manage it, and you go and you don't tell people. You just try to do the best you can and then get knocked down. I'm waiting for the part where I get to tell the full story and have a larger platform, hopefully, to glorify God. Because when people see what I went through, it's going to point to Him and give Him the glory. That's just part of our service here on earth.*

In summary, every coach was adamant that you could maintain your Christian values despite the pressure of their position. Though one coach explicitly recognized that refusing to

break NCAA rules might put them at a disadvantage, they all clearly and passionately professed the importance of having a purpose greater than winning.

Summary of Findings Related to Research Question 2

This study's second research question focused more specifically on the influence of the coaches' Christian faith on their leadership styles. As opposed to quantitative instruments like the Leadership Scale for Sport, which measures five specific leadership styles (a) instruction; (b) democratic; (c) autocratic; (d) social support; and (e) positive feedback (Chelladurai & Sellah, 1980), this study focused on the influences on those styles, rather than the styles themselves. For example, providing support to a player who has made a mistake rather than publicly chastising them for it, is an example of one leadership style. The Christian concepts of mercy as seen in Luke 6:36, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (NASB), or the idea of the Golden Rule from Matthew 7:12, "So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets" (Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition), could influence a Christian coach to use that style.

The theory of legacy leadership helps elucidate the influences on leadership through its emphasis on leader intent. Whittington, Pitts, Kageler, and Goodwin (2005) described legacy leadership through three characteristics: motives, methods, and measures. I will now give examples of how these coaches fulfilled these characteristics and can be considered legacy leaders.

Legacy leadership motives: Pure motive. In reality, it is impossible to determine the motive of another. However, what a person says and does over a long period of time can give a good indication. Nikki Caldwell was clearly highly motivated to pass on her passion for service

to others, as shown may times in Chapter 4. Here is one example of that "pure motive" for Caldwell:

> *I feel like I've got to make a difference. I feel it's a responsibility that I have to the African-American community. We talk about being a woman and being a woman of color that I'm a double minority. But I don't look at it that way. I look at it as, okay, I was put on this earth and this is how God made me. I think whatever color I was going to be or male or female, I know what my spirit is.*

Legacy leadership motives: Authentic and sincere. Authenticity and sincerity are also hard to prove, but once again can be surmised from a pattern, a repetitive refrain, over time. In one example, Kellie Harper said, "*These kids have to know that you care about them, and maybe going and putting your arm around them after they've struggled instead of being aggressive with them after they've struggled (will show that).*"

A cynic might question Nikki Caldwell's many public acts of service as trying to draw attention to herself like the hypocrites in Matthew 6:5. However, Caldwell's consistent service to others over an extended period of time should not be considered attention seeking, especially when she intentionally tries to teach and encourage others to serve as well. In fact, this intentional reproduction of serving behavior is another mark of a legacy leader. Caldwell explained her "authentic and sincere" motivation this way,

> *I live everyday grateful to first wake up in the morning. So, there are many blessings that I have and so when you are in this role of leader you want to share what you have with so many and obviously those that I am in direct contact with on a daily basis but also indirectly.*

Caldwell's high profile acts of service are more like the example of putting a light on a stand in Mark 4:21 than the self-serving hypocrites.

Legacy leadership motives: Follower-centered, not self-centered. Coach Billy Kennedy clearly displayed a follower-centered leadership. In fact, he described his leadership style this way,

> *I think it's about investing in people around you. Just try to build them into being all that they can be, and also they can use their God-given gifts to share and serve others. That's what I try to do. Be a servant leader.*

Yet again, Kennedy explicitly connects his service to his players with the intentional leader reproduction of legacy leadership. This also reflects the influence of Christian teachings such as Jesus washing the feet of his disciples in John 13.

Legacy leadership motives: Affectionate/emotional. Just one example of the great affection the coaches in this study expressed towards their players came from Kellie Harper. Harper very affectionately said, "*I think they (players) just need to feel that I will love them. That's what I do. I love my players; I will take care of my players. I'm not here to judge them."*

There are many Scriptures that discuss not judging others, from Jesus admonishment of the crowd who wants to stone the adulteress in John 8, to the Matthew 7's claim that you are a hypocrite if you don't first examine yourself before judging others.

Legacy leadership methods: Worthy of imitation. Mike Jarvis' faith influenced him to lead a life worthy of imitation. He explained it this way:

You want people to say, "Maybe he acts that way because he is a man of God and I want to be like him. And I want to be like Mike," you know what I mean? And if I can help one or two kids, then my coaching career has been a success.

1 Timothy 4 is among places in the Bible that mentions setting a good example for others.

Likewise, Kellie Harper discussed coaching as a role model:

I look at is as I'm an example and I have to live my life to show that and I'm in a position where there are a lot of people looking at me. I don't think that'd a bad thing. I'm not perfect, but I try to be a good person and I think people can see that in me, again, that I'm trying. I'm not perfect by any means. There are things that I struggle with, but I do believe people realize that I'm trying to be the best I can be.

Among other examples, this example reflects Paul's writings in 1 Corinthians 11:1 where Paul encourages the Corinthians to imitate him just as he imitates Christ.

Legacy leadership methods: Influence without exerting authority. Nikki Caldwell gave the most poignant thoughts on influencing rather than exerting her authority as head coach, *"My staff and my team, they know I am a God fearing woman, but I don't have to go out and tell them that, you know. Through our works, let it speak."*

I discussed several biblical teachings that could have influenced this thought from Caldwell in Chapter 3, Yet another example is seen in James 1:22, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." To Caldwell, the emphasis on doing, the fact that she actually lives out what she believes, is what generates influence on others.

Legacy leadership methods: Vulnerable/transparent. All of the coaches displayed a willingness to be vulnerable and transparent to a level that I was not expecting. Again, I think

that this speaks to the power of the subject, that they were willing to open themselves up so publically. For example, I was afraid that Mike Jarvis might drop out of the study when he was let go from Florida Atlantic, but instead, he was eager to talk about this difficult time and share how his faith comforted him and gave him peace amid the turmoil:

> *The reason why I chose to resign and not be fired (laughs) was so that I could finish the season, with my team where I belong, and that was on the bench. I wanted to have, my son (his long-time assistant coach) and I wanted, for our last game to be coaching and not watching on television or listening to a radio. So, I chose to go the route I went, as opposed to being fired.*

Kellie Harper transparently admits that coaches can "forget" that there are things more important than wins:

> *I think those were the times that I needed my faith to keep things in perspective. To keep me realizing there's a bigger thing in life than basketball, a bigger thing in life than winning and losing. As coaches, we're competitive by nature, and sometimes you just forget that there's more to it than the wins and losses. I think I rely on my faith to keep me grounded during those times.*

James 1 talks of trials producing steadfastness, and the coaches displayed this steadfastness in times of adversity in their careers and personal lives.

Legacy leadership measures: Changed lives. How do we know if the players' lives were changed? This is really something that can be better measured after some time has passed. However, we can see clear intent from the coaches to change their players' lives for the better. Nikki Caldwell gives one example:

> *We want to bring the spirit of competitive greatness back to these student athletes. We want them to graduate and along the way we want to make sure to be positive role models within our community and, really, let's be there for others.*

One of Billy Kennedy's former players, Isaiah Canaan, spoke to the impact Kennedy had on him:

> Coach Kennedy was one of the coaches that believed in me. I tried to give back to him as best I could by going out and playing as hard as I could. He showed me a lot and I learned so much from him. He helped me mature both as a basketball player and as a man and was really supportive spiritually off the court. (Quisenberry, 2013, p. 42)

Whittington, Pitts, Kageler, & Goodwin (2005) use the New testament example of Paul's guiding Timothy from young apprentice to pastor as an example of a changed life. Some final examples of changed lives are the reproduction of leaders.

Legacy leadership measures: Leader reproduction. This is also difficult to measure, but the coaches in this study had a clear intention to reproduce leaders who share their values relating to team settings. This intention comes from the investment that others made in their lives and their faith. Nikki Caldwell explained,

> *If you look at our profession, the torch is being passed, if you will, coming from a program like Tennessee and obviously Coach Summitt is no longer coaching but so many of us came under her leadership and so we feel an obligation to carry that on.*

Caldwell carried that on by instilling the same values that were given to her, thus the legacy continues.

Mike Jarvis' intention to reproduce his leadership in his son's career is another example. He explained it this way: "*My biggest responsibility, really, as a coach and a Dad is to prepare Mike for what he wants to do, what he's been gifted to do, and that is to be a head Division I basketball coach."* While Billy Kennedy gets right to the point in this example, *"I'm a product of somebody investing in me. When I became a head coach, I wanted it to be more than about basketball."*

Connections to Existing Literature

Establishing and investigating pressure on college basketball coaches has been a major facet of this study. Research has shown that pressure can cause stress on coaches, and that handling that stress is a key component of elite coaching (Frey, 2004; Olusoga, Butt, Hays, & Maynard, 2009; Richman, 1992; Wang & Ramsey, 1998). Furthermore, Fletcher and Scott (2010) claimed that the higher the level of coaching, the higher the pressure. The escalating television rights fees, the increase in media attention, the increase in coaching salaries, and the high turnover in DI basketball coaching confirmed that the elite level of college coaching has more pressure than lower levels. This is not to say that there is not pressure at lower levels, just that the pressure there is less intense. These findings were confirmed, as all of the participants acknowledged the pressure to win. This study added to that literature by demonstrating the role religion played in the participants' ability to cope with these pressures and resulting stress.

Fletcher and Scott (2010) also stated the importance of having a supportive social structure to effectively handle, or appraise, that stress in coaches. Kelley and Gill (1993) noted that in NCAA DIII and NAIA basketball coaches, higher satisfaction with social support was positively correlated with stress appraisal. All of the coaches in this study were able to appraise

the stress on them, achieving peace under pressure, through the support of their Christian communities, thus confirming that literature. Importantly, these studies did not include communities of faith as potential sources of social support, therefore this study expanded upon the previous literature in that regard.

Many scholars have noted the impact of globalization on and through sport (Coakley, 2007; Giulianotti & Robertson, 2013; Nagel and Southall, 2011; Woods, 2011). Two of the four coaches, Caldwell and Jarvis, discussed how including international players on their teams strengthened their programs. Caldwell explained, "*I love that I have a diverse staff; male, White male, Black male, female, Black, Portuguese. My team is diverse, Spanish, Japanese, Danish. Hopefully we can bring in some other kids internationally."* Jarvis added*, "The great thing about basketball is that it doesn't always have to be communicated with proper English language. It's a universal game that can be understood even if you don't understand language."* These findings confirm that globalization has extended to college basketball. The worldwide popularity of basketball has created an opportunity for the culturally competent leader to gain an advantage in expanding their pool of potential players and staff members to a global reach (Alon & Higgins, 2005). By demonstrating respect for global cultures, including religious and spiritual beliefs other than the coach's, a college basketball coach could attract, retain, and develop the best basketball talent from around the world.

The emphasis practitioners place on creating a team culture through core values was established through examples from successful coaches (Crean & Prim, 2007; Dungy, 2009; Krzyzewski, 2000; Krzyzewski, 2009; Riley, 1993; Stringer, 2008; Summit, 1998; UW Men's Sports Information Office, 2000). Furthermore, for most of those coaches, as explained in

Chapter 2, religion played a central role in their life. From that group, some explicitly tied their core values to their faith, while others were implicitly connected to their faith. Overman (2011) is among the scholars who have noted this overlap. The findings of this study confirmed both the use of core values to establish a team culture by the participants, and the overlap of those core values with Protestant values.

Leadership was another primary facet of this study. Servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970), was defined by Page and Wong (2000) as someone "whose primary purpose for leading others is to serve others by investing in their development and well being for the benefit of accomplishing tasks and goals for the common good" (p. 2). Coach Don Meyer, who at one time was the winningest college basketball coach, is among the many coaches who stress servant leadership in their basketball programs. In fact, Meyer (2002) felt this concept was important not just for the head coach, but for all of his program, writing "We really try to stress a servant-leadership concept for our staff from the head coach to all of our student athletes" (p. 43).

The participants in this study considered themselves servant leaders, even explicitly using that term. For example, in describing his leadership Billy Kennedy said,

> *I think it's about investing in people around you. Just try to build them into being all that they can be, and also they can use their God-given gifts to share and serve others. That's what I try to do. Be a servant leader.*

The participants in this study confirmed Valeri's (2007) contention that servant leadership and Christianity have shared values. Also, this study confirmed previous studies that applied servant leadership to the sport context (Andrew, Kim, Stoll, & Todd, 2008; Burton & Peachey, 2013) by sharing the lived experience of coaches who both consider themselves to be servant leaders and

were also interpreted as a servant leader by the researcher. In addition, by applying servant leadership specifically to college basketball coaches, this study also expands upon the current literature.

This study also expands upon the legacy leadership literature. There has been limited utilization of this theory, with application only to business (Sandstrom & Smith, 2008), professional organizations (Wilson & Dzikus, 2013), and religious leaders (Whittington, et al., 2005; Wildavsky, 1984). Block (2014) noted "it is paramount that leaders keep their sense of self intact as they interact with the world" (p. 237), and this study's findings revealed that Christian faith was an important part of the participants' sense of self. In addition, this study expanded upon Jensen's (2011) claim that self-awareness has benefits for leaders. In this study, the participants' self-awareness of their Christian faith provided a perspective that allowed them to appraise the stress of the profession.

Furthermore, this study's findings support and extend the authentic leadership literature. Block (2014) claimed that authentic leaders "lead by knowing and acting on the conscious awareness of who they truly are themselves. Authenticity involves the courage to stand for one's convictions even in the face of adversity" (p. 239). By appropriately integrating Christian faith into their leadership, meaning that they were still respectful of others' beliefs or lack thereof, the participants revealed themselves to be authentic leaders.

The existing literature further showed that the dichotomy of understandings of spirituality and religion has led religion to be discouraged in the workplace and spirituality to be encouraged (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010; Hicks, 2003; Lambert, 2009; Neal, 2013). Chapter 2 went into great detail about the distinction between the two, but in summary, organized religion is often

deemed dogmatic and offensive, whereas the individualistic nature of most concepts of spirituality it less offensive to some. The findings of this study confirmed this, as three of the four coaches mentioned that their religious beliefs had been discouraged in their professional role. The findings challenged the assertion that "if religion was allowed into the dialogue, that proselytizing and conflict would not be far behind" (Neal, 2013, p.10). All of the coaches expressed great care—"love" in fact—for those who held different religious beliefs, different interpretations of Christianity, or a lack of religious or spiritual beliefs. The participants expressly noted that they do not recruit or hire staff based on religious or spiritual beliefs, and two participants highlighted good relationships with players and staff who were not Christian.

Furthermore, the findings confirmed the existing literature that discussed work as a spiritual calling (Lambert, 2009; Miller, 2002). All of the participants described their belief that they had been guided or led by God to their current position, and one even explicitly called his job a "calling."

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations of this study included the researcher as instrument. As this was interpretive research, the findings are dependent on my ability to both collect and interpret the data. In addition, a further limitation is that the participants have the option to not be truthful in the interviews. However, this is why multiple data sources were used including documents and observations. The low number of participants, four, means that the results cannot be generalized. Christianity is a very diverse religion, so the small sample could not be a representative sample of the various branches, such as Catholicism, Greek Orthodox, and the many Protestant denominations. However, generalization is not the intent of qualitative research where

information-rich cases are the goal (Patton, 2002). My goal was not generalization, but to go into depth with the selected participants.

Difficulty in obtaining access to the participants was another limitation. These participants are high-profile individuals, and as such, have layers of protection preventing easy contact. This includes the lack of direct contact information in the school directory and administrative assistants that screen phone calls to the office phone number. A final limitation was the short time spent in the field for observations. I only observed one shootaround and one game per coach. Therefore, the observations were just a snapshot of the coach's leadership. Longer time in the field might have resulted in a deeper understanding of the context and the participants. However, this is why other data sources were included to supplement the observations.

Delimiting the study to public institutions helped narrow the focus. Public institutions operate under the restrictions of the First Amendment's Establishment Clause that limit what coaches can say and do in their official role. Sampling only NCAA institutions was the next delimitation. This was chosen because of the high profile nature of NCAA athletics. Next, the sample was delimited to Division I institutions. This insured that the participants in the study came from similar institutional backgrounds, though there are disparities even within DI. Including men's and women' head coaches was the next delimitation. Assistant coaches were not included because although they play a key role, they are under the direction of the head coach.

The research questions were another delimitation. There are many aspects of a DI coach's lived experience, but this study was delimited to their experience as a Christian. Critics may assail the fact that this study focuses on only one narrow form of religious expression and that

the study lacks sociological rigor by investigating the dominant form of religious expression in the United States, at that. However, far from reflecting a narrow experience, the sheer diversity in Christianity is profound. As evidence, despite the small number of participants in this study, it included several different denominational backgrounds under the Christian umbrella.

Furthermore, I intentionally included both Christian backgrounds and current beliefs into the research design because it has been my experience that they are often not synonymous. In both my involvement in parachurch sport organizations like Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Athletes in Action, and Coaches Outreach, and also my personal churches I find that it is very common for there to be distinct differences in background and current beliefs of the people involved. However disparate the individuals' experiences were, the discussion of religion would include the key constructs of beliefs, practices, and community.

As to the argument against studying Christianity due to its prominence in America society, this is not a drawback but a rather strength of the study. As previously noted, studying the taken for granted aspects of a society, such as Christianity in America, is an important aspect of sociological study. This study sought to go behind the veil of the perception of Christian coaches to investigate their true lived experience in a context where holding to Christian values in their leadership seems impractical, if not implausible, to many observers.

In addition, the second research question focused on the delimitations of socio-cultural influence on leadership style. I chose leadership style rather than other constructs as the best fit for the research purpose. A final delimitation was employing the qualitative method of portraiture. I chose portraiture as the best fit for my research purpose given the research questions and my research experience.

Evaluating the Quality of this Research

I will now revisit the standards Chapter 3 provided to judge the quality of this research, both as an interpretive study and through the method of portraiture. Piantanida and Garman's (2009) first criterion of judging an interpretive dissertation was whether it applied the self-conscious method through explicit rationales for conceptual and methodological decisions. To this end, the research's conceptual design was situated within the leadership, coaching, and spirituality literature in Chapter 2. In addition, the methodology was selected given the nature of the research questions and the skills and background of the researcher, as detailed in Chapter 3.

The second criterion was to make visible one's process for thinking through the interconnected facets of the inquiry. This was accomplished in Chapter 3 throughout the discussions of the procedures, data collection methods, and data analysis. The third criterion was to understand the epistemological and ontological implications of the study. In this case, Chapter 3 explained that the epistemological and ontological assumptions of coaching as a social activity made an argument for the interpretivist paradigm of this study. The last criterion was a persuasive logic-of-justification (Piantanida & Garman, 2009). This was achieved through a focus not just on how the study was completed, but also an explicit reflexive perspective that justified why it was completed in that manner.

In addition, in Chapter 3 I provided the five essential elements of portraiture: context, voice, relationship, emergent themes, and the aesthetic whole (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). I will now demonstrate that I have successfully included all five of these elements. According to Lawrence-Lightfoot, context includes physical, temporal, historical, and cultural details. In each portrait of Chapter 4, I established the physical context the

rough sensory details and vivid descriptions of the observation site. I established the temporal and historical context by showing how this season fit into the context of each institution's basketball history, and how this particular season fit into the coaches' careers, which all extended across multiple institutions. I demonstrated the cultural context through analysis of their conference affiliation, and geographical idiosyncrasies, such as football being more important in Texas.

Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) described voice as the transparent, autobiographical voice of the researcher in understandable language. My use of the language of the college sport context (e.g., Big Dance, March Madness) through both direct quotations and author interpretation, gave the study verisimilitude and an approachable voice. Lawrence-Lightfoot explained the importance of relationship between the researcher and the participant, a relationship that is collaborative and dialectic. My inclusion of some questions and their responses shows the dialectical nature of our conversations, and the exhaustive nature of the portraits required collaboration to produce.

Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) used the term emergent themes, as another essential element. This term may make some think in a more positivistic mindset, as if the themes were always there, just waiting to emerge after the researcher found them. However, Lawrence-Lightfoot also describes this as a repetitive refrain, which more clearly indicates the interpretive nature of the research. This was not a content analysis that merely counted the number of times the participants said God, for example. Rather, it was an interpretive look into the lived experience of the participants. The repetitive refrains of peace, perspective, and responsibility were detailed earlier in this chapter. Finally, Lawrence-Lightfoot emphasize the aesthetic whole of the

portraits, a “grand composition” that has combines the methods of social science and the aesthetics of literature. Each portrait in Chapter 4 was written as a grand composition that could be appreciated by a broad audience. By contrast, my explication of the repetitive refrains from the coaches’ experience in this chapter reflects the typical thematic analysis common to many forms of qualitative research. It does not have the flow of a complete narrative, but instead is staccato bursts, linked by analysis. By noticing the distinct difference in tone, diction, and structure between Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, the reader can appreciate the difference and judge the work, each according to their purpose.

Reflections on the Research Process

It was very difficult to obtain participants for the study given that the basketball-related organizations I contacted were not willing to send the letter of invitation to either their entire membership or to individuals they believed might meet the criteria. In addition, my decision not to use a convenience sample of my contacts also made it more difficult in obtaining participants than if I had done so. In addition, the time and expense of traveling for observations was more than I anticipated.

I had never met any of the four coaches in this study prior to the study, yet I felt an instant connection with the participants. I suspect that this was because of our shared background in coaching and as Christians. I made it a point to tell them that I was not judging the level of their faith and was not looking for perfect people, because I certainly am not perfect. I had to take their word that they were Christian and they had to take mine. One coach visibly exhaled in relief when I explained that before a gameday shootaround. Given the fact that identifying yourself as a Christian sets you up for increased scrutiny of your words and actions, I appreciate

the coaches' courage in allowing me to use their real names. In fact, not one of the coaches even hesitated. They understood that the power of their story is amplified by the context in which they operate, and that stripping away the context in the name of confidentiality would have greatly lessened the impact and authenticity of the portraits.

Furthermore, I fully expect critics of my interpretations and my application of Scripture to abound. Let me clearly state that I have not been to seminary; I am not an ordained minister, preacher, pastor, reverend, or the like. However, despite my lack of theological credentials, I have studied these subjects intently and passionately. Furthermore, I have my own lived experience as a committed Christian who once wavered in his faith, a coach, and a leader. In addition, I take solace in the story of Peter and John's arrest and interrogation by the Jewish leadership in Acts 4. After questioning Peter and John, Acts 4:13 (HCSB) shares the response of the Jewish leadership, "When they observed the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed and recognized that they had been with Jesus." I refer to this Scripture for two reasons (a) while I may not be performing healing miracles, I do pray that I may speak boldly about my faith in Jesus Christ and the impact of my faith on my leadership; (b) as I mentioned earlier, I am also "uneducated and untrained" in the sense of formal religious schooling, but can only hope that others would come to recognize that I too have been with Jesus by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. If I have been successful in boldly and clearly meeting my research purpose, then it will be through God and not me. There are many examples of God helping people find the words to say, to the disciples in Luke 12:15, to Moses in Exodus 4:12, in defense of persecution in Luke 12:12, Proverbs 2:6, Jeremiah 1:9, to Paul in Ephesians 6:19-20, and in James 1:5-7, and I relied on God to do the same here.

Recommendations

Practical Implications. The practical implications of this research are profound. Currently, there is a false dichotomy between secularists who believe in "freedom from religion" of all kinds, at all times, by clinging to their interpretation of the Establishment Clause—despite what the Constitution says to the contrary—and religious zealots who abuse the Free Exercise Clause in the name of spreading their worldview. In doing so, the freedom from religion crowd ignores a major part of many people's identity, and the religious zealots don't heed their own teaching that to whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48). We have been "given" much by the Constitution's guarantee that citizens can exercise their own religion, but that gift "requires" that we not abuse that freedom by forcing our beliefs on others. This is where the opportunity lies: governing bodies, administrators, and coaches have an opportunity to encourage respectful pluralism in the sports setting, especially at public institutions.

Hicks (2003) defined respectful pluralism as "resisting company-sponsored religion and spirituality while allowing employees to bring their own religions to work" (p. 2). Removing all religion and spirituality from the workplace is not an effective strategy in creating high-performing teams and organizations. Rather, appropriately including religion and spiritualty is a needed facet of a holistic care philosophy that our coaches and players deserve. Today, in elite DI programs, it is common to send an athlete to a team doctor or athletic trainer for their medical needs, a team sports psychologist for mental training, a team strength and conditioning coach for physical training, and a team nutritionist for advice on diet, but the athletes are left to their own devices regarding spiritual needs. Trying to prevent an athlete from receiving the services of a trained professional to counsel an athlete in any of these areas is inappropriate and morally

indefensible. Furthermore, to attempt to do so under the auspices of the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution is a sad perversion of our country's founding commitment to the freedom of religion. In contemporary times, our society celebrates all aspects of a person's identity (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation) except for religious identity.

Also, the current, inconsistently applied solution of a using non-employee chaplain is a partial and flawed proposition. First, all athletes should be provided services, not just those from one religion. Second, outsourcing the role may be a financial reality, but it is not the moral or legal one that some make it out to be. Colleges and universities that can afford to provide spiritual guidance to their athletes should be able to do so, just as they would hire a sports psychologist if it is within their budget.

Taking this a step further, while I agree that trained professionals should provide the counseling to the athlete in all of these areas, would we tell a coach that it is inappropriate for him or her to talk about what dietary patterns worked *for them* and to refer all questions about food to the nutritionist? I agree that the coach should not force their perspective on their players, but the extreme viewpoints on either end of this debate are not helpful to the coach or athlete experience.

To accomplish Hicks' (2003) respectful pluralism requires that coaches and administrators be trained on what respectful pluralism is, how to encourage it, and why it matters. In addition, I suggest that parachurch organizations that are already operating on college campuses, such as AIA, FCA, and NOC, and representatives from other religious and spiritual viewpoints be engaged in discussions about these issues and included in any plan to develop respectful pluralism in athletic departments and teams.

I will now connect some of the points that have already been made in this work to underscore the practical implications. Coaching is a high-stress profession (Fletcher & Scott, 2010; Frey, 2004; Olusoga, Butt, Hays, & Maynard, 2009; Richman, 1992; Wang & Ramsey, 1998), and among the ways to increase stress appraisal is through a supportive social structure, in general (Fletcher & Scott, 2010; Kelley & Gill, 1993), and spirituality, in particular (Lindman, Blomquist, & Takada, 2012). Therefore, coaches who can appropriately integrate their religious and/or spiritual beliefs into their coaching will have a better experience from the reduced stress. Furthermore, it would be disingenuous for adherents to the Abrahamic faiths to not integrate their religious faiths into their public lives (Bellah, 2006). In addition, positively correlated benefits to players will also reach the players of such coaches. This is because coaches who are able to integrate their true self into their leadership are deemed authentic leaders (Block, 2014), and players have been shown to respond better to authentic coaches. In addition, it has been called a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining global talent for organizations to allow people to appropriately express their religious beliefs at work (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010; Hicks, 2003; Lambert, 2009; Neal, 2013). This is especially important as this study confirmed that college basketball has been impacted by globalization. Attracting the best global talent is a goal in both hiring coaches and recruiting players. In addition, there have been calls for colleges in general to provide more spiritual service to students, as the college years have been shown to be times of spiritual struggle (Bryant & Astin, 2008). A major reason is that often students move away from family and support structures, like their church, synagogue, mosque, or temple. Allowing athletes, and coaches who also move frequently as part of the profession, to build a new community of support, that includes religious aspects, is a wise and humane decision.

Scholarly Implications. This study sits on the intersection of several academic disciplines, ripe for interdisciplinary investigation. Long sought within higher education, interdisciplinary studies have becoming more important outside academia as well (Forderman, Klein, Mitcham, & Holbrook, 2010). Within academia, there have been relevant calls for interdisciplinary research, including in athlete learning (Nelson & Colquhoun, 2013), coaching education (Morgan, Jones, Gilbourne, Llewellyn, 2013), leisure research (Mair, 2006), sport pedagogy (Pope, 2014), sports psychology (Ryba & Wright, 2005), sport science (Burwitz, Moore, & Wilkinson, 1994). However, most of these interdisciplinary calls have been for combinations of education and some other discipline or sub-discipline.

In this case, the confluence of religious studies, sociology, and coaching science with leadership needs to be explored. There have been other combinations of these areas, but to my knowledge no studies involving all of them. In fact, if practical suggestions made earlier are to come to fruition, then they need to be grounded in academic research. Next, I supply some examples of future research.

Future Research

There are several ways in which this research could be extended in the future. These research questions could be adapted for coaches at different levels of competition and/or different sports. Religious traditions and spiritual beliefs other than Christianity should also be studied, in addition to those who are atheists. For example, while I was exceedingly happy with the diversity that such a small sample brought in this study, I was disappointed that none of the coaches were practicing Catholics, though two of them did grow up in the Catholic faith. In the last 30 years there has been a surge in Catholic writings about the role of sports. Given the

historical influence of Catholicism on America and the doctrinal differences with Protestants, the Catholic lived experience in high-stakes athletics is worthy of study as well.

Another topic that this study did not address was consideration of the opponent from a Christian perspective. I did discuss the interaction with game officials from a Christian perspective, who are seen by some as a form of opponent, but not the opposing team in the competition. This is an area that has received scholarly attention (Hoffman, 2010), but has shown limited input from the coaches and athletes themselves. Exploring how they see their Christian faith's influence on their view of competition itself and the opponent in that competition is worthy of study.

In addition, the current study could be extended through mixed methods to supplement the qualitative data with quantitative scales measuring religiosity, spirituality, or faith development. This would allow for a much larger sample size and more generalizability on one hand, while still delving into individuals' lived experience on the other.

There is also great potential in continuing the application of social theorists, such as Erving Goffman, to explain coaching behavior in relation to religious orientation. For example, Goffman's dramaturgy, which compares an individual to an actor in the theater (Kendall, 2010; Ritzer, 1992; Ritzer, 2010), could be used in analysis of the various roles coaches play. In his 1959 classic treatise *Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life,* Goffman built upon George Herbert Mead's concept of "self" from his theory of social behaviorism (Ritzer, 2010). Goffman's (1959) idea of self "is a dramatic effect arising…from a scene that is presented" (p. 253). To Goffman, we are all like actors playing roles, roles that we hope our audience accepts.

These roles, or presentation of self, are presented before an audience in a "scene." The actor seeks to present a sense of self that the audience will accept given the context in which they are interacting, such as at a practice, a game, a pregame pep talk, or in the weight room. Tension results from possible differences in what the audience expects what the actor does spontaneously (Ritzer, 1992). The actors hope that the audience accepts their performance as intended, causing the audience to voluntarily behave as the actor intended, or what Goffman termed impression management (Ritzer, 2010). One can easily see the parallels in causing the audience to voluntarily behave as the actor intended and the leadership of coaches, for isn't leadership trying to get others to voluntarily behave as the leader wants?

Finally, I am suggesting that legacy leadership is especially suited to studies of sport in general and coaching in particular. Burton & Peachey (2013) have called for more servant leadership in intercollegiate athletics. I agree with this call, but think it can and must be taken further. Yes, we need to be follower-centered and serve those we lead, but we also need to intentionally build a pipeline of leaders in the making by intentionally developing their leadership potential. This can help mitigate the cycle of losing good leaders to turnover resulting from graduation, transfer, or a professional taking another job, Legacy leadership theory expands upon servant leadership through this intentional focus on leader reproduction. This applies to coaches in two key ways. First, coaches need to develop leaders not only during their season, but also for future seasons. Second, coaches need to have a vision for their program that is larger than game results. By intentionally developing their players' leadership skills, skills that are honed in the sport context but applicable beyond sport, coaches are helping to shape the future of both our sports and our society.

Conclusion

In my opinion, Christian coaches are often caricatured in one of four unflattering extremes: as a zealot forcing their religious beliefs on others, as a weakling who lets others take advantage of them by turning the other cheek (see Matthew 5 and Luke 6), as an opportunist who seeks God's intervention on their behalf in the outcome of games, or as a hypocrite who falsely professes Christianity when it is convenient or beneficial to them but will act unethically to win. This study, however, provided four examples of coaches who fell to none of these extremes. Contrary to the first extreme, all four coaches showed through their words and actions that they valued players and staff members of different religious orientations. To be specific, all four coaches explicitly stated that they do not use religion as a criterion for recruiting or hiring, and this was supported by the makeup of their teams and staff. However, the coaches clearly privileged Christianity through their use of Christian prayer in team settings, though they justified it as voluntary.

All of this is not to imply that achieving respectful pluralism is as easy as establishing workplace procedures. Anyone who has worked in an office setting knows how cold and detached workplace procedures can feel; how they condense human emotion and behavior to bullet points of do's and don'ts. In reality, no procedure or rule is meaningful without the people to implement it. This is especially true of respectful pluralism, for as a moral concept it "conflicts with a contractual relationship characterized by the employees' lack of social and economic power, and thus the employees dependence on the employers' good will" (Seifert, 2004, Section III, para. 2). In the intercollegiate athletics setting, the players and staff members have a similar

lack of power so it is crucial that the leader embrace the respectful pluralism principles of non-degradation and non-coercion first.

The second caricature of Christian coaches as weaklings who can't succeed in athletics was seen in the earlier example of questions about Coach Tony Dungy's toughness before he led his team to a Super Bowl victory. Another legendary football coach, the Dallas Cowboys' Tom Landry, discussed the caricature of the weak or passive Christian to Bob St. John (2000): "This is a misconception. Religion is anything but passive" (p. 206). All four of the coaches in this study clearly demonstrated and encouraged toughness in themselves and their players. The portraits gave examples of their emphasis on toughness in media guides, newspaper accounts, my interviews, and my observations.

The third caricature of coaches as opportunists is a common complaint of incorporating religion into sport. Why would God care about a game, or about one team more than another, the argument goes. In the film *Johnny Be Good* (Fields, 1988), the high school football coach opens a pregame prayer by saying, "Dear Lord, we pray that we may win this game today" before jumping into a rant filled with homophobic, nationalistic, sexist slurs and suggestions punctuated by shattering a drinking fountain in a frenzy of aggression leading his team to the field. This is an extreme depiction of the worst stereotypes of a coach who only uses religion to seek an advantage and clearly is not integrating their faith into their leadership. However, a hall-of-fame coach, Tom Landry countered that "God doesn't interfere in games…What God does is give you the courage to excel and the confidence to perform to the best of your ability" (St. John, 2000, p. 204). The four coaches in this study never looked at God as a divine "ace in the hole" to be pulled out for a winning hand. Rather, they viewed God as a source of strength, giving them

purpose in good and bad times. Their Christian faith did not exclude them from experiencing disappointment or hard times. In fact, three of the four coaches freely spoke of very difficult times, either professionally or personally. For these coaches, their conviction was that their faith helped them through those times—not that it would prevent the hard times from coming.

The fourth caricature of Christian coaches is as a hypocrite who falsely professes Christianity when it is convenient or beneficial to them, but will act unethically to win. Motivating a team is one commonly depicted scenario where this arises. For example, the 1991 film *Necessary Roughness* depicts a profanity-laced tirade of a college football coach, including repeatedly taking the Lord's name in vain, followed immediately by "Let us pray" as he drops to a knee in front of the team to lead a prayer. The implication being that the coach either is insincere in their prayer and is doing so out of cultural habit or, similar to the third caricature, in search of an advantage, or that the coach has compartmentalized their coaching from their faith to the point that they see no problem with the juxtaposition of the tirade and the prayer, as long as it get results on the scoreboard.

However, the four coaches in this study demonstrated that these caricatures of Christian coaches are not true, in their cases. This is not to say that they, or I, should be held as a standard of Christian behavior. Other coaches should not compare themselves to the coaches in this study, but rather to the examples in the Bible, especially of Jesus. The question should be raised, what if one of the coaches in this study ends up acting unethically or is punished for breaking NCAA rules in the future? Does that mean this study is founded on lies and can be discounted? No, these coaches, and this researcher, all face the same temptations to disregard the principles of our faith in our words or actions. I certainly hope that none of us give in to that temptation, but were

that to be the case, it would only publicly confirm what we already know, that we are all sinners who fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). As Joanne Ciulla (2005) noted, "the greatest strength and the greatest weakness of leaders is that they are human beings. As such, they are unpredictable creatures, capable of extraordinary kindness and cruelty" (p. 1).

None of the coaches claimed to be perfect, and in fact, all were quite open about their struggles and faults. Being a Christian coach does not make it easier to win, it just makes it easier to understand where winning ranks in the grand scheme of things. Hall of fame basketball and baseball coach Everett Dean laid out the challenge, "I have found it easier to win basketball games in a tough conference than it is to be a Christian" (p. 41-42). It is having a perspective larger than winning and losing that makes this challenge attainable, a perspective that was explained in detail in the portraits and earlier in this chapter. However, I will give one more example, again from St. John's (2000) quoting Tom Landry who did not commit to his faith until his 30s:

> God does not give us fear, but power and love and self-control. The thing that eats you up is fear and anxiety. Once you commit your life to Christ, it's in God's hands. He has a direction He wants you to take which isn't based on winning and losing. The more you dwell on your own power, the more anxious you become. (p. 204)

It is also important to note that I am not suggesting that a coach or leader must have a religious orientation to be effective or to enjoy their position. Rather, I am suggesting that for those leaders who do have a strong religious conviction, such as the Christian coaches in this study, there is a way to incorporate it into their leadership without becoming one of the four caricatures. Ciulla explained the divergent possibilities of incorporating religion into leadership

this way: “The way leaders use their religion to lead sometimes strengthens their moral relationship with followers and sometimes also destroys it. Religion can bring people together or tear them apart” (p. 3). In this study, the coaches used their Christian faith to try to bring people together.

The leadership style of the participants was influenced by their Christian faith in many ways. Previously, in this chapter, examples were given of the coaches as legacy leaders, which was a clear reflection of their faith that instructs them to love others and love God. The findings clearly support that Christian coaches can integrate faith into their leadership at a public institution in a manner that is appropriate. Coaches of any religious or spiritual beliefs should be encouraged to appropriately integrate their faith into their leadership through the principles of respectful pluralism (Hicks, 2003).

Various people and communities in the participants’ past had positively influenced them, and they intended to do the same for the people they were leading. This is sport and leadership at its finest, and is something that I have experienced as well. If you’ll indulge one final personal story, I will make the case for integrating one’s faith into their coaching and leadership.

My first coaching mentor and college coach, Jerry Wainwright taught me a great deal about leadership. I would argue that he met all of the criteria of a legacy leader mentioned earlier, such as authentic, worth of imitation, and an intention to change his players lives. I knew he was a Christian, but I also knew he respected everyone else’s right to their own beliefs. Before games, after the final scouting report and pep talk, in his deep, booming voice would say, “Okay, in your own way,” cross himself and bow his head in silent prayer.

Speaking to the prestigious Five Star Basketball Camp for high school aged phenoms and wanna-be phenoms, Wainwright said:

> There's a guy none of you probably ever heard of, Bill Golis, who was my coach at Morton Junior College in Cicero, Illinois. I'll remember him until I die, which is something he doesn't even know. He taught me poise and confidence. He showed me that a person is as good as what he perceives himself to be and that whatever happens, whether it's good news or bad news, tomorrow it's old news. That's why I'm here. There have been so many people that have helped me along the way, like Coach Golis, that I feel an obligation to give whatever I can back to kids. (Wainwright, 1993, pp. 47-48)

What Coach Wainwright's coach gave to him, Wainwright gave to us, I tried to give to my players, and my former players who are now coaches give to their players. As I mentioned earlier, early on in my ten years as a high school head coach I did not integrate my faith into my coaching or leadership. We still did community service, like reading at elementary schools and volunteering with a special needs basketball league. I still focused on improving my players' grades. I still taught life lessons and moral values through basketball. They still wrote articles about how we ran the program in the local newspaper (Couch, 2005). But years after he played for me, I received a Facebook message from a former player of mine who played for me when I didn't openly share my faith as my motivator.

"I think back now on how tough you were on us," he wrote. *"Man, we thought you hated us at times lol but now I realize why you did what you did."* He continued to give it a happy ending, *"I learned a lot from my high school career with you. Although I didn't play a lot, I learned a lot about myself,"* but all my mind saw was *"we thought you hated us at times."* I was

devastated that he could have ever thought that, even if he said it in jest. If he truly felt that way, then I had just coached my team, but I had not led it. I had loved that young man and his teammates, but if they did not realize how I felt about them, then that was my failing.

Contrast that with a letter I received in a package one Christmas. It was from a player who had played for me when I did openly share my faith as the motivator to my leadership.

Hey Coach,

As I look back on my high school years, it is obvious that you definitely played an influential role in my life- even if I didn't realize it at the time. I wanted to thank you for all the time and energy you put into your teams. You really poured out all you had for us.

He went on to explain that he had included a book he thought I might like. It's title: *Love Works*, by Joel Manby (2012). This book explained how a CEO led a multi-million dollar corporation based on the principles of 1 Corinthians, Chapter 13, commonly called the "Love Chapter." The player continued his note:

Although you are no longer coaching, you still have plenty of opportunities to change lives, and I hope this book will assist you in that. It is a book for leaders who care and you are certainly that.

Thanks

Now, that's a legacy worth leaving.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Email Title: The influence of Christian faith on coaches' leadership

Dear Coach,

My name is Hal Wilson and I am a doctoral student at the University of Tennessee and long-time basketball coach. Coaches can make a huge impact on the lives of their players through their leadership of their basketball program. I am specifically interested in studying the influence of Christian faith on the leadership of NCAA DI head men's and women's basketball coaches.

If you meet the criteria I am looking for, would be willing to share your experiences with me in three interviews from November 2013 to April 2014, and would allow me to observe your basketball program for one day this season, please contact me at cwilson5@utk.edu.

The participants I am hoping to speak with should have the following criteria:

- NCAA DI men's or women's head basketball coach
- Identify yourself as Christian
- Willing to be interviewed three times between November 2013 and April 2014
- Willing to allow your basketball program to be observed one day this season

I am seeking to include a diversity of coach backgrounds, including gender and race, in this study.

Thank you for your time and I hope you have great season!

Sincerely,

Charles "Hal" Wilson, Jr., Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Kinesiology, Recreation, and Sport Studies
The University of Tennessee
1914 Andy Holt Ave.
322 HPER Bldg.
Knoxville, TN 37996-2700
Phone: 865-974-3295
Fax: 865-974-8981
Email: cwilson5@utk.edu

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT
Primary Participant

Portraits of NCAA Division I head basketball coaches at public institutions: Examining the socio-cultural influences of Christian faith on leadership

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to examine if, how, and why NCAA DI head basketball coaches integrate their Christian faith into their leadership of their basketball programs. This will involve discussing the influences on your coaching and leadership.

PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

You will be participating in three interviews lasting approximately 45-90 minutes each between November 2013 and April 2014. The first and last interviews will be conducted by phone or via computer (Skype or Google Hangout), whichever you prefer. The middle interview will be conducted in person in conjunction of an observation of team and staff activities on one day during the season.

RISKS AND PROTECTION MEASURES

The potential risk to you is minimal. Being asked questions about your personal background, including personal religious beliefs and practices, may result in the uncovering of specific thoughts or feelings that may be unwanted. All measures will be taken to ensure each participant's confidentiality who wish to remain anonymous. Participants will have the opportunity to choose pseudonyms or authorize the researcher to create pseudonyms for dates, times, names, locations, etc., of the participants. However, due to the high-profile nature of NCAA DI coaching, it is possible that readers may even be able to identify the individual participants who chose to use pseudonyms and have the researcher strips identifying information. If at any point you are uncomfortable with participating in this study you have the opportunity to exit the study at any point with no consequence or prejudice.

BENEFITS

It is hoped that this study will provide participants with an increased self-awareness through self-reflection and discussion of the socio-cultural influences of their Christian faith on their leadership. This has the potential to strengthen your leadership. Other leaders, even outside of sports, who face ethical dilemmas in their professional lives resulting from potential conflicts in their faith-based values and common situations in their professions may also benefit from reading the results of this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless you specifically

give permission in writing to do otherwise. All digital recordings of your interviews will be erased upon completion of analysis.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects such as psychological effects from discussing your experience as a result of participation in this study) you may contact the researcher, Charles "Hal" Wilson, at 1914 Andy Holt Avenue, Knoxville, TN 37916, and (865) 974-3295. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-3466.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX C

SEMI-STRUCTED INTERVIW GUIDE

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW 1 QUESTION PROTOCOL

The focus of this interview is to build rapport and discuss leadership.

- Upon agreeing to participate in this study your media guide was analyzed for information in three main areas: their public persona, their personal coaching history, and their basketball program's history. Questions will be asked based on the analysis of the team media guide in these three areas.

Leadership Questions

- What makes a good leader?
- What leaders or coaches influenced your personal leadership style?
    - Probe: Can you share a story about the person(s) that influenced you and how they influenced you?
- What are some difficult decisions that a DI head basketball coach might face?
    - Probe: How would you handle it?
    - Probe: Why would you handle it that way?
- What are some ethical dilemmas that a DI basketball coach might face?
    - Probe: NCAA Rules, recruiting
- Did you have any other professional or spiritual mentors that we have not discussed?
    - Probe: Can you share a story about the person(s) that mentored you and how they influenced you?
- What effect does the media have on coaches?
- What effect does the pressure to win have on coaches?
- What advice would you give to young Christian coaches?

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW 2 QUESTION PROTOCOL

The focus of this interview will be your religious background and beliefs.

- Discuss your religious background.
    - Probe: Did you grow up in church?
    - Probe: What faith tradition/denomination?
- Discuss your religious beliefs.
    - Probe: Have your beliefs changed over your life? If so, how?
    - Probe: What does your Christian faith means to you?
- Do you integrate your personal faith into your leadership?
    - How do you integrate your faith into your leadership?
    - Why do you integrate your faith into your leadership?
- Are you allowed to express your religious beliefs in your profession?
- Have you ever felt discriminated against because of your religious beliefs?
- Additional questions will be based on the observation of the basketball program and follow-up questions from the first interview.

APPENDIX D

Transcriber's Pledge of Confidentiality

As a transcribing typist of this research project, I understand that I will be hearing tapes of confidential interviews. The information on these tapes has been revealed by research participants who participated in this project on good faith that their interviews would remain strictly confidential. I understand that I have a responsibility to honor this confidentially agreement. I hereby agree not to share any information on these tapes with anyone except the primary researcher of this project. Any violation of this agreement would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards, and I pledge not to do so.

_____ _____

Transcribing Typist Date

VITA

Hal Wilson completed his doctoral work in Kinesiology and Sport Studies with a concentration in Sport Studies and a specialization in Socio-Cultural Studies, at the University of Tennessee (UT) in 2014. He also earned a Graduate Certificate in Qualitative Research Methods in Education and volunteered with UT's Center for Sport, Peace, and Society.

In 2001, Wilson earned a M.S. degree in Human Performance and Sport Studies with a concentration in Sport Management, also from UT, while serving as a graduate assistant with the men's basketball team. Wilson has 18 years of coaching experience including in an inner-city recreational league, a private middle school, three public high schools, and two NCAA Division I universities. Wilson is a newly named Assistant Professor of Coaching Education at Georgia Southern University.