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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Allison Fulmer entitled “Examining the Leadership Style and Sustainability of Two Female Head Coaches at a Southeastern Land-Grant University.” I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science with a major in Agriculture Leadership, Education and Communication.

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Examining the Leadership Style and Sustainability of Two Female Head  
Coaches at a Southeastern Land-Grant University

A Thesis Presented for  
the Master of Science  
Degree  
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Allison Kathleen Fulmer  
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## Abstract

Reflection on the influences and experiences of successful female head coaches of women sports is important to understanding the factors that have enabled them to obtain and sustain their leadership positions in a male-dominated profession. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the experiences of two female head coaches at a Southeastern land-grant university and to understand how they have sustained their role as a head coach in a world where female coaches are significantly declining. The specific objectives of this research were to: (a) understand female head coaches' knowledge of what a land-grant institution was created for and if its purpose affects the way they coach; (b) determine how female head coaches sustain their title as head coach; and (c) determine the female head coaches' preferred leadership style.

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## *Chapter 1*

### *Introduction*

#### *Overview*

Chapter one provides an introduction to the study of two female head coaches at A Southeastern land-grant university, the study of their leadership styles and their sustainability as head coaches and role models. The chapter includes a historical overview of land-grant universities and how they were formed, a brief look at the history of Title IX, an explanation of liberal feminism, and two different leadership styles chosen to be researched in this study: Trait and situational leadership. The purpose and limitations to this study are also included in Chapter one.

#### *A Historical Perspective of the Study*

A land-grant university is an institution that has been designed by its state legislature or Congress to receive the benefits of the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 2008). Essentially, the government gave land to each state in order to create a public institution for further learning. Land-grant institutions started in hopes of teaching agriculture, military tactics and mechanic arts to agricultural and industrial workers where higher education was not readily available (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 2008). As a land-grant institution, the universities stand by the morals and values on which land-grant systems were built. The university also abides by the Title IX regulations formed by the NCAA.

The Title IX amendment was introduced because of the Equal Rights Act (ERA) developed in 1923 (Schriver, 2008). Although the ERA was formed in the 1920s, it was not until 1964 when congress passed the Civil Rights Act that the ERA was taken more seriously. Birch Bayh and Representative Edith Green added Title IX to the educational amendments -part of the 1964 Civil Rights Act- in hopes the amount of discrimination females faced in educational and athletic settings would be decreased (Schriver, 2008). Finally, in 1972 Title IX was implemented in our government system.

As the land-grant system was designed to further people's education, Title IX was designed to create gender equity between male and female participants, including students and student-athletes and coaches. Title IX gave opportunities for female athletes to receive funding for college and to compete in athletics at a much more competitive level (Schriver, 2008). Title IX also gave female coaches the opportunity to not only coach at a competitive level, but to receive financial payment for coaching. For the most part, Title IX is continuing to annually increase the addition of women's sports and continue the intention of gender equity in educational settings. However, collegiate female coaches have been on a steady decline since the 1980s (Acosta & Carpenter, 2008).

When understanding the background of women and their opportunity to coach at the collegiate level, it is important to understand the liberal model of feminism. The liberal feminist theory is the major feminist paradigm in the United States (Costa & Guthrie, 1994). To date, liberal feminism has played a significant role in creating equality between women and men. "For liberals, a just society allows equal opportunity for all

people to develop their rational powers, without interference from other people or government” (Costa & Gruthrie, 1994, p. 236). Liberal feminists give full approval to the Title IX Amendment because it suggested equal opportunity in all educational settings. Furthermore, the liberal feminist theory still plays an important role in the lives of women in sport and should be considered when studying the female head coaches at A Southeastern land-grant university and their sustainability as role models and leaders at a land-grant institution.

#### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine experiences of two female head coaches at a Southeastern land-grant university and to understand how they have sustained their role as a head coach in a world where female coaches are significantly declining.

The specific objectives of this research were:

- 1.) To understand two female head coaches’ knowledge of what a land-grant institution was created for and if its purpose affects the way they coach;
- 2.) To determine how two female head coaches’ sustain their title as head coach;  
and
- 3.) To determine two female head coaches preferred leader styles.

## *Chapter 2*

### *Literature Review*

Chapter two provides a historical background of each of the desired topics chosen to be researched and analyzed. These historical overviews will allow the reader to have a better understanding of land-grant institutions, Title IX, feminism and three specific leadership theories. By understanding the historical background of this chapter, the reader will be more informed when reading the results and conclusion sections of this study.

### *The History of Land-Grant Institutions*

In 1861, Justin Smith Morrill introduced a United States land-grant bill, which included 30,000 acres given to each U.S. senator and representative to create a public land-grant institution with the requirement that recipients of the bill teach military tactics (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 2008). The government established the Morrill Act as an opportunity to create a smarter and more efficient America during the pressing times of the Civil War. The bill was signed by President Abraham Lincoln and was officially approved on July 2, 1862. The Morrill Act of 1862 was also created due to the recognition of an increasing need for agriculture and technical education in the United States and its purpose was to provide a practical and relevant education to the working class (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 2008). Legislators understood that there was a need to further the education of those who could not afford it. The term “land-grant” was established

because the funding was land-granted to each state by the federal government (Morrison, 1994).

Since the first Morrill Act of 1862 was passed, there were two other bills that have been included into the system. The Second Morrill Act of 1890 provided an opportunity to extend access to higher education by prohibiting the distribution of money to states that did not accept people of other races such as African Americans (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 2008). At the close of the Civil War in 1865, it was still a crime to further the education of African Americans who were prohibited from attending colleges or universities (NASOLGC, 2008). Most of the land-grant institutions that were restricting African Americans were located in the southern regions of the United States. In order to protect the rights of African Americans, the Morrill Act of 1890 was designed and regulated. Later, in 1994, a grant passed for the Native American Tribal colleges which are mostly located in the Midwest (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 2008). The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) colleges are located on or near reservations and operate as the most important provider of higher education to Native Americans (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 2008). Although education is essential to provide to a diverse group of people, it is the three-pronged requirement that makes land-grant institutions so unique. Land-grant universities require research, teaching and extension at every institution (National Association of State Universities of Land-Grant Colleges).

Currently, there is at least one land-grant institution in every state including the District of Columbia (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 2008). American land-grant universities are continuing to fulfill their purpose “through the land-grant university heritage, millions of students are able to study every academic discipline and explore fields of inquiry far beyond the scope envisioned in the original land-grant mission” (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, p. 2).

Not only are land-grant universities required to follow the original guidelines set by the government, they are also expected to follow additional guidelines set by other legislations, such as Title IX. Title IX was instituted by the NCAA in the late 1970s and prohibits gender discrimination in educational settings that receive federal funds and include physical education as well as athletics (Shriver, 2008). Additionally, Title IX It has played a vital role in the equality between women and men sports, particularly in Southeastern land-grant institutions.

#### *Title IX*

Although the purpose of Title IX was to help build gender equity, there were many conflicting interpretations of the use of Title IX. In 1978, a three-prong test was created and this helped set explicit guidelines as to what is required to meet Title IX expectations (Schriver, 2008). The three-prong test included: “(1) Does the institution provide participation opportunities proportionate to undergraduate enrollment?; (2) Does the institution show a continuing practice of expanding opportunities for underrepresented gender?; (3) Does the institution show that interests and abilities of underrepresented gender are being full and effectively met?” (Schriver, 2008, p.xxx ).

March 22, 1988 was a stepping-stone in implementing Title IX on this date, the Civil Rights Restoration Act went into effect and with that became the law that “any type of federal financial assistance, whether it direct or indirect, were bound by Title IX legislation” (Schrivier, 2008 p. xxx). Finally, in 1994, after the NCAA completed a two-year gender-equality study, Congress passed the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act (EADA). This act required any “co-educational institution of higher education that participates in any federal student financial program and has an intercollegiate athletics program to disclose certain information concerning that intercollegiate program” (Schrivier, 2008, p. xxx). The first information report was to be accessible no later than October 1, 1996 (Schrivier). The EADA insured gender equity because there was a public record of what was going on at each institution of higher education containing intercollegiate sports.

It was hoped that Title IX would also create gender equity between male and female athletes. For the most part, it has accomplished its purpose by continuing to increase annually the addition of women sports, its female coaches and participants. 9,101 female athletes participated in intercollegiate sports in 2008; the highest participation statistic to that date (Acosta & Carpenter, 2008). However, there is a significant problem in the coaching arena that has surfaced over the past 30 years. In 1972, over 90 percent of head coaches for women’s teams were female, but in 2008 only 42.8 percent of females are head coaches for women sports (Acosta & Carpenter, 2008). Looking at intercollegiate sports as a whole, both men’s and women’s sports, only 20.6 percent of coaches are female leaving 79.4 percent of head coaches in intercollegiate

sports male (Acosta & Carpenter). Since 1978, the year that Title IX compliance went into effect, there has been a steady decrease of female coaches each year.

There are many different explanations as to why the decrease in the percentage of female coaches could occur. Although Title IX has significantly helped female student-athletes create a world of equal opportunity, it is clear that it has not had the same affect with the female coaches associated with collegiate sport. For this study, a closer look into what feminism, specifically liberal feminism, is and how it has played an effect on female coaches is a vital part of possibly understanding that although female coaches take on an equality mindset, there is still a steady decrease of collegiate female coaches.

### *Feminism*

The term feminism is defined as both an intellectual commitment and a political movement that seeks justice for women and the end of sexism in all forms (Costa & Guthrie, 1994). Liberal feminism was one of the first types of feminism formed, as it gives emphasis on the equality of liberal principles to both women and men, and suggests that most sexist discrimination is based on the custom of a culture (Costa & Guthrie, 1994). In other words, liberal feminists believe that discrimination against women comes from a contemplation that arises from cultural norms. For centuries, women have been discriminated against in many different ways, especially in terms of job support. In liberal feminism, “the most obvious form of injustice is that mandated by sex-biased legislation that assigns different rights, responsibilities and opportunities to females and males” (Costa & Guthrie, 1994 p. 237). This particular type of feminism does not concentrate on encouraging women to overbear men, but supports that men and women

are equal and should get equal opportunities in all facets of life. “Early liberal feminists opposed sexist discrimination by arguing that women are equal to men in their ability to reason and thus should be allowed the same freedoms....consequently, their goals usually involve strategies for incorporating women into the mainstream of public life, which includes politics, the workplace and sport” (Costa & Guthrie, 1994, p. 237).

Liberal feminism and Title IX have coincided to help bring more equality to women sports over the past decades. In 1984, before the Summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles, a lawsuit was filed by liberal feminists suggesting that the women’s 10,000-meter track-and-field race should be added to the schedule since women were already running those distances (Toohey, 1984). Liberal feminists have also played a large part in bringing equality to women in schools. To date, they have helped provide athletic opportunities, grant-in-aid for women’s sports and have provided overall funding for women’s sports (Costa & Guthrie, 1994). Liberal feminists have a reputation for pushing equality in education just as much as they do in sport which coincides with the purpose of creating Title IX.

Although their efforts should be praised as they have brought more participation for women in education and sport, it did not, however, bring the same equality in women’s vs. men’s earnings who were working in the same field (Costa & Guthrie, 1994). Today, women are able to participate in more sports as well as advance in their professional lives as coaches, but they are not being paid on the same level as a man performing a similar job. Although women have gained more opportunities in general and more money on the professional level, they are still continuing to lose positions of

power in coaching and administration and are still restricted to professional outlets in the United States (Acosta & Carpenter, 2008).

The lack of equal payment for female head coaches as compared to male head coaches is a big concern and factor as to why there is a steady decline in female head coaches at a collegiate level. As stated before, Title IX protects the female athlete's opportunities, but does not address the equality of female versus male head coaches. Understanding the different factors that apply when paying male vs. a female head coach could play an important role in the sustainability of a female head coach. When taking a closer look into these differences, it is clear that society plays a role with the paradigms of the roles in which females should take. Being a dominant public figure is more of a masculine trait and females are expected to play more of a feminine role (Duberman, 1975). Taking a further look into the study of these female coaches, it is necessary to understand leadership roles and responsibilities that society typically associated with a female stereotype.

#### *Family Background: Leadership Roles/Responsibilities*

During World War II, the United States faced an expansion of women in the work force. There were approximately one million more employed women in 1947 than there were in 1940 (Duberman, 1975). However, when the war ended, women were told they were not needed in the work force anymore. Feminists then declared that a female's position in society was not determined by her biology, but by her social structure (Duberman, 1975). As shown in the explanation above, women were able to portray masculine qualities only when men were not available. Less than a century ago, the idea

of masculine and feminine was solely based on the sex of an individual. “Masculinity and femininity are gender roles, acquired during one’s lifetime through learning, role-taking, imitation, observation, and direct instruction... Gender is learned behavior, usually related to one’s sex, but sex status does not necessarily determine gender role”

(Duberman, 1975, p. 26). This definition explains where and how gender stereotypes and myths are formed. The gender-role of an individual is determined by how much positive reinforcement one has received by others. In other words, society defines what is masculine and what is feminine.

One of the most practiced stereotypes in the topic of gender is sport-related (Theberg, 1993). Through sport, men have continuously been able to display the society imposed trait of masculinity, power, and authority (Theberge). Their actions and behaviors are assumed to be those of power, strength and dominance. Male coaches are also assumed to have full control over their team and the capability to direct everyone in an appropriate manner. Just as sport has helped build the stereotype of masculinity in men; it has enhanced the myth of female frailty due to women’s exclusion from sport (Theberge). Since females have not been involved in the world of sport for nearly the amount of time as males, there has not been the same possibility for females to change the perception of stereotypes created towards them. The philosophy of masculine superiority indicates that some believe the physical size of an individual coincides with their coaching ability (Theberge). The masculine stereotype has played a vital role in the lack of acceptance of female coaches because masculinity is predominantly only accepted when associating it with males. The effects of gender-based stereotyping contribute to

many disadvantages to women's opportunities in the workforce. For thousands of years, women have assumed a care-taking role and simultaneously have been one of society's oppressed groups (Schriver, 2008 p. vii).

In the coaching profession, many females are the object of the same gender stereotyping as women in other occupations. The Women's Sports Foundation (2012) reported three dominating gender bias myths of female coaches. The first myth was that female coaches are not winning championships (Women's Sports Foundation). The second myth stated women are less intense and are not as demanding of their players as male coaches (Women's Sports Foundation). When considering this myth, one must realize, "attributing strong characteristics to any large group of people is the root of discrimination" (Women's Sports Foundation, p. 2). The article implies that while some coaches may not be as intense as others, it is important to realize that one female coach's action does not define those of the entire population of female coaches. The third and final most common myth among female coaches is women do not appeal to other women and female athletes prefer to take instruction from a male (Women's Sports Foundation).

The perception of coaching as typically masculine is fed by the reality that most coaches are men (Theberge, 1993). Occupational gender biases suggest women have a higher priority for their family versus their job than men. This gender bias has an impact on the coaching world as well. According to previous research, male athletic directors are more likely to hire a male coach instead of a female coach because of the perception that women will have more family obligations than men (Acosta & Carpenter, 2008). Only 30 percent of full-time women coaches are married compared to 55 percent of non-coaches

and only 18 percent of all female coaches have children compared to 45 percent of women in other occupations (Drago, Hennighausen, Rogers, Vescio, & Dawn, 2005). This statement suggests that women who have the opportunity to become head coaches tend to make more sacrifices than women who choose other occupations. Not only are some women sacrificing the possibility of a family, but they are not getting paid at the same rate as their male counterparts. Overall, society is becoming more aware that although a coach may be a female, there is not a definite indication that she will marry and have a child.

Women's Sports Foundation (2012) explains that culture plays a vital role in acceptance of taking instruction from a male or female. If an athlete grows up in a household with a dominant male figure, it is more likely they will feel more comfortable with taking instruction from a male when participating in athletics (Women's Sports Foundation). Likewise, if today's youth is educated on consciously not stereotyping what is masculine and feminine, it can also have an effect on the perception of female coaches. Gender stereotypes and myths in coaching can be altered if women coaches are no longer evaluated in terms of masculinity (Williams, 1989). Essentially, today's youth will associate stereotypes with what they were taught at home and in society. It is important for educators to start influencing young athletes to realize that there are many different coaching and leadership styles, not just the one specific type they have been familiarized with.

Currently, there is a definite difference between male and female coaches. Currently, in the NCAA Division I-A, head coaches for women's teams receive an

average salary of \$850,400 whereas head coaches for men's teams average \$1,783,100. The difference between these salaries is \$932,700 per year (Women's Sport Foundation, 2011). The statistics above demonstrates the noticeable difference between men's and women's coaches in athletics. In order for one to understand how women sustain their leadership position roles as head coaches and break the masculine and feminine barrier, one must understand particular leadership styles which may affect how one leads.

### *Leadership Theories*

To understand certain theories on leadership, it is important to identify the definition; therefore, in this study, the term leadership is defined as: "the behavior of an individual directing the activities of a group toward a shared goal" (Hemphill & Coons, 1957, pg. 7). The trait, situational and team theories of leadership are three theories that could play a role in understanding why or how female coaches have been able to be successful and sustain their coaching careers. In order to be successful, coaches have to have the capability to deal with many different personality styles and behaviors due to the diversity of each individual on the team; therefore, they must be able to adapt their leadership style accordingly. They also hold the responsibility of understanding the strengths and weaknesses of each team member and how to effectively put the team together. Each of these theories explains the need for certain traits or characteristics, adapting to different situational leadership styles and the ability to provide guidance to a team in order to maximize performance levels.

### *Trait Leadership*

Trait theory suggests that a particular individual's traits or characteristics can define whether or not the individual will be successful (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano & Dennison, 2003). This theory evolved from the great man leadership theory which suggested that great men were born, not made (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). The great man theory also suggests that leaders inherit their leadership traits. This theory was popular in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as most men of power were born into their position instead of working for them (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). Early in the the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the trait theory started to evolve from the great man theory when theorist Ralph Stogdill stated, "a person does not become a leader by virtue of the possession of some combination of traits" (1948, p. 25). Stogdill's research showed that no traits were universally associated with effective leadership and concluded that there were also situational factors that played a factor on whether a leader was successful or not (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991).

Fundamentally, Stogdill insinuated that leaders did need to have certain traits in order to be successful; however, leaders who possess those traits must take a certain action in order to be successful. Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) identify key leader traits to have in order to be a successful leader. These traits are "drive (a broad term which includes achievement, motivation, ambition, energy, tenacity, and initiative); leadership motivation (the desire to lead but not seek power as an end itself); honesty and integrity; self-confidence (which is associated with emotional stability); cognitive ability; and knowledge of the business" (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991, p. 48). Other traits include

charisma, creativity/originality and flexibility (Kirkpatrick & Locke). Both Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) clarify that not only should a particular leader should possess the traits explained above, but they also need to have the desire to lead in order to be successful.

### *Situational Leadership Theory*

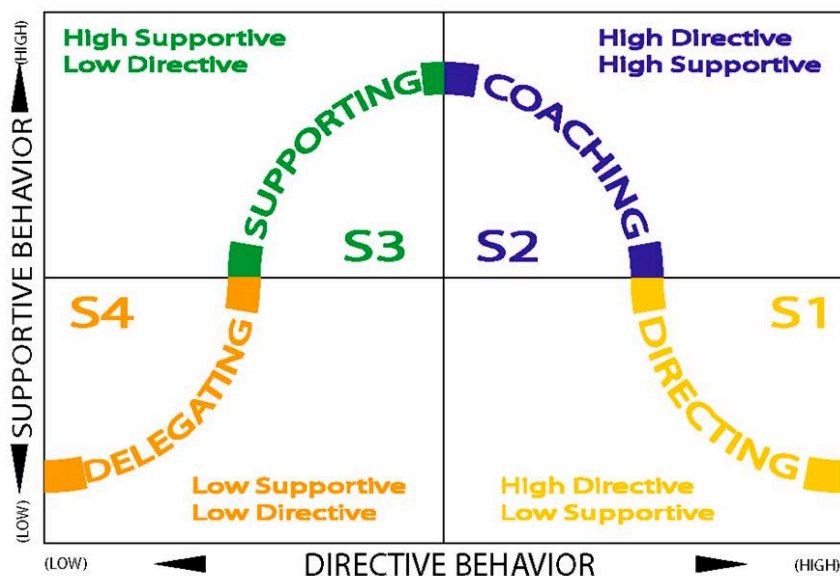
Situational leadership encompasses a wide range of purposes. According to Northouse (2004) situational leadership requires a person to adapt his or her leadership style based on specific situations. Situational leadership is designed to evaluate certain situations or goals and adapt to the best way of accomplishing those goals. There are no set of rules a good leader should follow, instead, leaders should analyze their tasks and maturity of the group (Levi, 2011). It also requires one to be able to communicate in many different facets whether it calls for playing a supportive or directive role. For coaches, situational leadership seems to be one of the best types of leadership to follow because of their constant association with different groups and individuals.

When taking a further look into the situational leadership theory, there are four models which express different types of situational leadership: Fiedler's Contingency Model, Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Model, Tannenbaum and Schmidt's Continuum and Adair's Action-Centered Model. Each model contains different situational factors that alter the task necessary to be a good leader. For female head coaches, an example of situational leadership could entail coaches adapting to different styles of leadership based on the athlete they are directing. As a coach, it is important to recognize the different personalities of his/her players. Not everyone can be coached or

taught the same way; therefore, it is important to recognize the learning styles of each athlete and act accordingly.

Fiedler's contingency model simply states that there is no best way to lead. It emphasizes that, "situations will create different leadership style requirements" (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano & Dennison, 2003, p. 8). This model describes three different situations that need to be considered when looking at a situation. The leader member relationship is the first situation listed in this model, which suggests the leadership style depends on how well the manager and employees interact (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano and Dennison, 2003). The second situation is task structure, which encourages the leader to explore and respond to a groups' highly or fairly structured routine (Bolden et. al). The last situation in this model is called position power, which promotes a leader to see how much authority he/she may have (Bolden et. al).

Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Model (See Figure 1) is based on the amount of task and relationship behavior a leader must provide according to the maturity levels of his/her followers (Bolden et. al, 2003). As a result of this model, four leadership styles are encouraged in this model: directing, coaching, supporting and delegating. In directing, the leader needs to provide clear instruction as well as specific direction. Directors are best matched with persons who are not easily self motivated. The leadership style of coaching encourages a two-way communication and helps build confidence while still maintaining control (Bolden et al., 2003).



*Figure 1.* Hersey-Blanchard Model. From *Leadership Theory and Practice* by Peter G. Northouse, 2007, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications. Copyright 2007 by Sage Publications.

The supporting leadership style is when decision-making is shared and the directing role is not as prevalent. The fourth area, delegating, is for the leaders whose followers are able to complete a task and willing to take on the responsibility of the task (Bolden et al., 2003). The model also encourages the leader to focus on different behaviors of the followers such as task, relationship and maturity (Northouse, 2007). Engaging in a task behavior determines the amount of effort and time a leader should engage with his/her followers such as telling one what, how, and when to complete a task (Bolden et al., 2003). As a leader, one must understand the type of relationship that is associated with his/her followers. Determining the relationship behavior included understanding whether

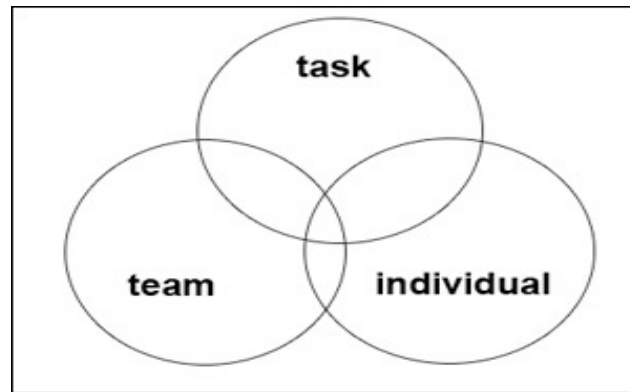
there is a two-way or multi-way type communication. The leader must play the role of a listener, facilitator and supporter (Bolden et al). Lastly, the Hersey-Blanchard model purposes that the maturity levels of each follower should be determined. In determining the maturity levels, a leader must understand the willingness and ability of his/her followers to be self-directed (Bolden et al).

The third model for situational leadership is the Tannenbaum and Schmidt's Leadership Continuum. This model describes leadership as a, "behavior that varies along a continuum and that as one moves away from the autocratic extreme the amount of subordinate participation and involvement in decision making increases" (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano & Dennison, 2003, p. 10). Essentially, as one allows more people to influence a decision, more people are willing to help the decision process. The leadership continuum suggests that the leadership styles of autocratic, persuasive, consultative and democratic are all necessary in given situations and proposes that the leader should look at whether he/she is telling, selling, consulting or joining its followers (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano & Dennison, 2003). An autocratic leadership style indicates that the leader makes all the decisions and expects his/her followers to do whatever is said without questions (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano & Dennison, 2003). In taking a persuasive approach, a leader continues to make all the decisions, however, feels a need to pursued his/her followers to ensure the idea is a good one (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano & Dennison, 2003). A consultative approach is when a leader presents an idea to others before making the final decision and in a democratic approach, a leader presents a problem to be solved to his/her followers and encourages a group discussion and solution

(Bolden, Gosling, Marturano & Dennison, 2003). This model of situational leadership is a great one for coaches to look at to insure they do not stick to one way to communicate.

The fourth and final model for situational leadership is the Adair's Action-Centered Leadership Model (See Figure 2). This model suggests that the leader must direct the job to be done, support and review the individual doing the task and co-ordinate and foster the team as a whole (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano & Dennison, 2003). This model is based on three areas which represents the need for different responses by the leader. Each area of the model could require more attention based on the situation; however, it is up to the leader to determine the situation they are faced with and the appropriate action that goes with it. Again, this is another indication that in situational leadership a leader has to be aware of the particular situational factors involved when choosing a leadership style.

Below is an example of the circle model of the Action-Centered Leadership Model. The circles represent the need to understand the different factors of the task, team and individual when choosing to lead and direct someone. When identifying the task, the leader needs to understand the job that is to be done. The task includes: defining the task, making a plan, distributing work and resources, controlling the work, checking performance and eventually adjusting the plan if needed (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano & Dennison, 2003). A leader also needs to identify whether he/she is working with a team or an individual. According to the model, a leader of a team should: maintain discipline, build team spirit, encourage, appoint sub-



*Figure 2.* Action-Centered Leadership Model From A Review of Leadership Theory and Competency Framework by Bolden, R., Gosling, J., Marturano, A., & Dennison, P., 2003, Report of the Centre for Leadership Studies: United Kingdom. Copyright 2003 by Report of the Centre for Leadership Studies.

leaders, ensure communication and develop the team (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano & Dennison, 2003). Lastly, if a leader is associated with an individual the model encourages one to: attend to personal problems, encourage individuals, give status, recognize individual abilities and ultimately develop the individual (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano & Dennison, 2003).

When looking at the Action-Centered Leadership Model, it is important to note that this type of situational leadership looks further into how to affectively lead a team. Looking at leadership from a teamwork perspective, one of the most significant leadership theories is the situational leadership theory (Hersey & Blanchard, 1993). Although understanding this leadership theory is a valuable asset to have when coaching, it is also important to understand the team leadership theory.

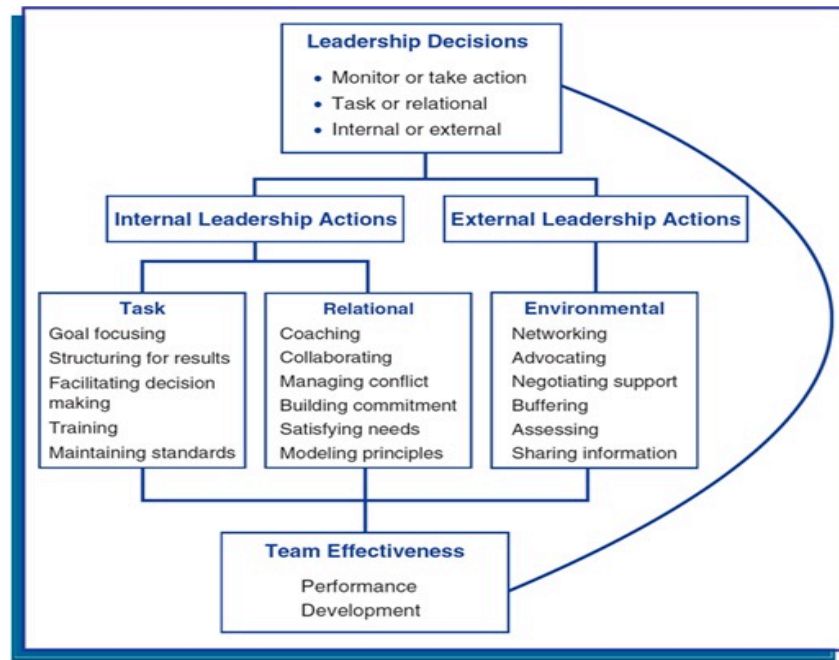
### *Team Leadership Theory*

When studying the team leadership theory, it is first important to recognize the definition of a team. According to Levi, “a team is a special type of group in which people work interdependently to accomplish a goal” (2011, p. 2). In sports, coaches are responsible for effectively putting a team together in order to accomplish their goal of winning games and in most cases, competing for and winning championships. Members of action or performing teams, such as sports teams, require unique abilities or skills as well as extensive training and/or preparation to maximize the performance of the team (Sundstrom, 1999). Although it is important to make the best use of each team member’s skills, it is also important to develop other aspects of a team. “A successful team completes its tasks, maintains good social relations and promotes its members’ personal and professional development” (Levi, 2011, p. 18). The team leadership theory explains how putting together a sports team requires much more than getting the best athletes; it is about creating a vision, building cohesiveness, and developing athletes on and off the field as well as understanding many more aspects of team development.

According to the team leadership theory, leaders of teams are chosen by the organization (Levi, 2011). Collegiate coaches are hired by the Athletic Directors and/or hiring committees. After being hired, coaches are expected to fulfill the role of team coaching. Team coaching is a leader who is chosen to guide team members and improve performance by providing guidance to a team (Hackman & Wageman, 2005). According to Levi (2011), there are three different types of team coaching: motivational, consultative and educational. Motivational coaching is used to encourage progress and

increase the commitment of the team, whereas consultative coaching focuses more on team performance and strengthens the responsibility of team roles and tasks. Lastly, educational coaching builds the knowledge, skills and abilities of the team members as a whole (Levi, 2011). The team leadership theory suggests that each of these types of team coaching should be used depending on the development stage of the team. The primary focus of team coaching is to understand that coaching in general is about building a team and not about solely directing a team on how to accomplish a task (Levi). In addition, coaches are expected to do more than just manage a team; they are expected to build and strengthen the individual team members. To get a better perspective of the team leadership theory, it is important to understand the team leadership model.

The purpose of the team leadership model is to allow the team leader to understand a direction that he/she should follow. The model was created for team leaders to use when facing challenges within a team. It provides proper guidelines to help the leader identify team problems and take appropriate action to correct the problems (Northouse, 2007). The leader or coach needs to observe the functionality of the team identify the weak areas that are prohibiting a particular progress of the team, and then to identify if it stems from internal or external factors. By identifying these internal or external factors, the team leader can then implement the suitable behavior to ensure the most efficient leadership behavior (Fleishman, Mumford, Zaccaro, Levin, Korotkin, & Hein 1991). One example of a team leadership model is Hill's Model of Team Leadership (See Figure 3).



*Figure 3. Hill's Model for Team Leadership From Group Dynamics for Teams by Daniel Levi, 2011, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo: Sage Publications Copyright 2011 by Sage Publications.*

Hill's model for team leadership's purpose is to serve as a guideline for leaders or coaches of teams to intervene effectively. One of the most important aspects of this model is to determine whether the problems come from internal or external factors. After identifying where the problem stems from, a leader must then pinpoint whether the problems can be solved by tasks, developing better relationships or obtaining support through external factors. If followed correctly, the model is designed to build the team effectiveness and development.

Each leadership theory being researched in this study contains its own importance on becoming a coach and sustaining success. Containing particular traits such as

charisma, honesty, integrity and self-confidence are all positive traits that could contribute to whether or not a coach is successful. However, because many coaches communicate and guide people with diverse backgrounds, it is important to understand that there are situational factors that go into leading a team and that there is no one best way to lead. Lastly, understanding the team leadership theory and identifying with what a team is as well as how to form a successful team is another great asset to have when trying to sustain a role as a coach. Each leadership theory has its own strengths and weaknesses, but they all have the potential to play a vital role in how females are sustaining their roles as head coaches and role models.

### *Chapter 3*

#### *Procedures and Methodology*

In this chapter, the procedures and methodology used in this study are outlined. Chapter three contains descriptions of the qualitative study used in this research. Qualitative research is the study of a research topic in context that addresses the *how* or *what* versus trying to find an outcome of why things happen (Hays & Singh, 2012). Qualitative studies do not measure the quantity, amount or frequency of things; rather they focus more on processes and meanings of the data (Hays & Singh). In this study, the researcher chose to do qualitative research due to the type of research desired. The researcher did not want to find statistical and/or numerical information; rather, she sought information to explain how female coaches are sustaining their roles as head coaches and what type of leadership style they each possess (Hays & Singh). The data desired needed to be descriptive; therefore, a qualitative study was the best approach. Throughout this chapter, the purpose and design of the study will be explained as well as how the researcher gained entry to the participants. This chapter will also outline how the data was collected and how the researcher was able to prove that it was reliable and valid. Lastly, this chapter will explain possible biases that could have come up in this study.

#### *The Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine experiences of two female head coaches at a Southeastern land-grant university and to understand how they have

sustained their role as a head coach in a world where female coaches are significantly declining.

The specific objectives of this research were:

- 1.) To understand two female head coaches' knowledge of what a land-grant institution was created for and if its purpose affects the way they coach;
- 2.) To determine how two female head coaches' sustain their title as head coach; and
- 3.) To determine two female head coaches preferred leader styles.

### *Research Design*

This qualitative study is a biographical case study. Case studies have a long history of being used as a way to document life stories and events (Hays & Singh, 2012). Case studies also give researchers the opportunity to study individuals, events or activities (Creswell, 2006). In addition, biographical case studies enable the researcher to document the history of an individual by using information sources about the person (Plummer, 2001). The researcher also asked about the life of the interviewee, including the cultural norms and background of each participant during the interview which enabled them to get a biographical perspective and collect more personalized data.

Choosing the qualitative method of a biographical case study was the best method to use in this study due to the information the researcher was seeking. As stated previously, the researcher sought to find answers to how and why the female coaches lead their team the way did and analyzed the data to form two different cases. The researcher took the information from each case and studied reoccurring themes as well as the differences between each case. As a result, the researcher gained a better

understanding of how the particular female coaches were able to sustain their roles coaches and why their leadership styles are the way they are.

#### *Gaining Entry*

In order to conduct the research, an Institutional Review Board Form B was completed and approved by the University of Tennessee Research and Compliance Services on November 29, 2011. Each prospective participant was first contacted by phone and by email by the researcher. Participants were chosen because of the availability for the researcher and the particular success of each female coach. After gaining authorization from the participants, a date and time to meet was established.

In order to protect the participant, the female head coach being interviewed was assigned a pseudonym and the university in which they are associated with will not be mentioned in the thesis document. The name of the sport each coach was in charge of is also concealed to further insure the protection of the participant. A confidentiality agreement form was signed by each female coach to assure that their name, school and sport will not be disclosed in the study. Prior to conducting the interviews, each participant was given an informed consent letter that was signed and collected at the time of the interview.

#### *Data Collection*

Each interview took place in the privacy of the coach's office located on the campus of the Southeastern land-grant University. During the interview process, interviews were recorded by audio recorder in order to obtain correct wording to transcribe the information. Each semi-structured interview lasted approximately 45 minutes in which each female coach was asked a series of open-ended questions. A list of

interview questions was used but not strictly followed in order to make sure to not interrupt the flow of interview. The interview focused on understanding the background of each coach, why they chose to coach at a land-grant institution, their experiences with Title IX and dealing with feminine stereotypes and what leadership practices they most often use.

After the completion of the interview, the researcher transcribed and analyzed the information that was obtained from the two female head coaches. After the transcription was completed, the data was examined using different methods, which included identifying noteworthy statements and elements of meaning as well as recognizing the commonalities and differences among each participant. Data were coded and sorted into specific categories by the researcher. Once the coding was completed, specific themes emerged. Those themes were identified as: gender barriers, experiences with Title IX, Division I coaching at a land-grant institution, leadership philosophy, family work-life balance and feminist perspective.

### *Reliability and Validity*

When looking at the reliability and validity of the study, it is important to understand why and how this biographical case study can be proven reliable and valid. In order for the researcher to establish reliability and validity: transferability, dependability, credibility and member checks were established. Transferability was established by utilizing thick descriptions to illustrate and describe each case within the environment in which the case was studied (Creswell, 2007). The researcher also made sure to have an in-depth analysis over each case. Dependability was established by utilizing inter-rater

reliability measures where an additional researcher coded the data and compared the results with the initial researcher (Creswell, 2007). In addition, data was reviewed by the additional researcher who is familiar with the study and trained in analyzing qualitative research. The credibility of this study was gained by gathering different forms of data and having prolonged engagement in the field (Creswell, 2007). The researcher has also spent many years in athletics and has a large knowledge base of the language used by the participants. Finally, data analysis, interpretations and conclusions of the study were confirmed by conducting member checks with each coach to reconfirm accuracy and credibility of the interpretations made by the researcher. No changes to the study were made by the two female coaches.

#### *Research Bias*

Prior to beginning the study, the researcher identified with biases she possessed that could impact her relationship with the environment and people in the study. The researcher has a strong passion for female sports as she has grown up playing sports and was a female athlete under the direction of one of the coaches interviewed in this study. Furthermore, her experience as an athlete could also influence the particular interview questions being asked to each participant.

Liberal feminist are focused on the equality of liberal principles to both women and men, and suggests that most sexist discrimination is based on the custom of a culture (Costa & Guthrie, 1994). Furthermore, the researcher has a liberal feminist viewpoint and takes a great interest in studying how males and females can and should be treated equally in an athletic setting.

The researcher also has a strong interest and belief in the situational leadership theory. According to Peter Northouse (2004), situational leadership requires a person to adapt his or her leadership style based on specific situations. Therefore, the interest in situational leadership theory could result in more focus on one type of leadership rather than being open to different types of leadership theories.

### *Conclusion*

As a result of the research questions, it was determined that a qualitative biographical case study was the best method for the researcher to use to conduct and analyze the data. After determining the research design, the researcher was successfully able to contact and gain entry to the participants in order to conduct an interview lasting approximately 45 minutes. Themes were identified for each case studied and data was reliable and valid due to the precautions and procedures the researcher took throughout the study. The researcher was also aware of the potential biases that could interfere with the study and was conscious of her relationship with the participants.

## *Chapter 4*

### *Examining the Leadership Style and Sustainability of Two Female Head Coaches at a Southeastern Land-Grant University*

Article developed for the submission to the *Journal of Leadership Studies*

#### *Abstract*

Reflection on the influences and experiences of successful female head coaches of women sports is important to understanding the factors that have enabled them to obtain and sustain their leadership positions in a male-dominated profession. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the experiences of two female head coaches at a Southeastern land-grant university and to understand how they have sustained their role as a head coach in a world where female coaches are significantly declining. The specific objectives of this research were to: (a) understand female head coaches' knowledge of what a land-grant institution was created for and if its purpose affects the way they coach; (b) determine how female head coaches sustain their title as head coach; and (c) determine the female head coaches' preferred leadership style.

#### *Introduction and Theoretical Framework*

In recent years, there has been a significant decline in female coaches who coach female sports. In 1972, over 90 percent of head coaches for women's teams were female, but in 2008 only 42.8 percent of females were head coaches for women sports (Acosta & Carpenter, 2008). In order to have a better understanding of how current female head coaches at land-grant institutions have sustained their roles as head coaches there are certain topics that need to be evaluated. Since most Division-I college campuses are, in

fact, land-grant institutions, it is interesting to find out if coaching at a land-grant institution is part of why coaches choose to coach at those institutions. It is also important to understand the stereotypes and/or barriers that female head coaches face on a daily basis. Lastly, identifying each coach's leadership style is vital in trying to understand how they have been so successful leading other people.

As stated in the literature review, the term "land-grant" was established because the funding was land-granted to each state by the federal government (Morrison, 1994). In 1861, Justin Smith Morrill introduced a U.S. land-grant bill that included 30,000 acres given for each U.S. senator and representative to the state create a public land-grant institution with the requirement that recipients of the bill teach military tactics to ensure that the bill was passed, however, the main purpose of land-grant institutions was to teach agriculture (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 2008). During this time period, only those who could afford higher education were receiving an education and the government recognized how important it was to ensure the American population be educated to better the economy. Therefore, the Morrill Act of 1862 was created due to the recognition of an increasing need for agriculture and technical education in the United States. Its purpose was to provide a practical and relevant education to the working class (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges). Although the Morrill Act of 1862 was a success, there was still a need for further opportunities to extend higher education to individuals. The Second Morrill Act of 1890 provided an opportunity to extend access to higher education by prohibiting the distribution of money to states that did not accept non-Caucasians such as African

Americans (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges). After seeing the success that the Morrill Act of 1890 provided to African Americans, the government sought an additional act to help Native Americans. In 1994, there was a grant passed for the Native American Tribal colleges, which are mostly located in the Midwest (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges).

Currently, there is at least one land-grant institution in every state including the District of Columbia (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 2008). American land-grant universities are continuing to fulfill their purpose “through the land-grant university heritage, millions of students are able to study every academic discipline and explore fields of inquiry far beyond the scope envisioned in the original land-grant mission” (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, p. 2).

Not only are land-grant universities required to follow the original guidelines set by the government, they are also expected to follow additional guidelines set by other associations as well. Title IX was instituted by the NCAA in the late 1970s and prohibits gender discrimination in educational settings that receive federal funds, includes physical education as well as athletics (Shriver, 2008). It has played a vital role in equality between women’s and men’s sports, particularly in Southeastern land-grant institutions.

One of the main purposes of Title IX is to help build gender equity. After many years of discussion about how to properly implement Title IX, a three-prong test was created. This test included: (a) Does the institution provide participation opportunities proportionate to undergraduate enrollment; (b) Does the institution show a continuing

practice of expanding opportunities for underrepresented gender; (c) Does the institution show that interests and abilities of underrepresented gender are being fully and effectively met? (Schriver, 2008). Finally, Congress passed the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act (EADA) in 1994. This act required any “co-educational institution of higher education that participates in any federal student financial program and has an intercollegiate athletics program to disclose certain information concerning that intercollegiate program” (Schriver, p. xxx).

It was hoped that Title IX would create gender equity between male and female athletes. For the most part, it has accomplished its purpose by continuing to annually increase the addition of women’s sports and participants. 9,101 female athletes participated in intercollegiate sports in 2008 serving as the highest participation statistic to that date (Acosta & Carpenter, 2008). However, looking at intercollegiate coaching, only 20.6 percent of head coaches of female sports are female leaving 79.4 percent of head coaches in intercollegiate sports as male (Acosta & Carpenter). In fact, since 1978, the year that Title IX compliance went into effect, there has been a steady decrease the percentage of female coaches each year.

Liberal feminism and Title IX have coincided to help bring more equality to women’s sports over the past decades. In liberal feminism, “the most obvious form of injustice is that mandated by sex-biased legislation that assigns different rights, responsibilities and opportunities to females and males” (Costa & Guthrie, 1994, p. 237). Often times, female coaches are faced with this injustice due to the stereotypes or myths that come with being a woman. Some stereotypes include: being nurturers, being too

emotional and/or not being able to take a directive position. Liberal feminists have also played a large part in bringing equality to women in schools. To date, they have helped provide athletic opportunities, grant-in-aid and funding for women's sports (Costa & Guthrie). Liberal feminists have a reputation for pushing equality in education just as much as they do in sport which coincides with the purpose of creating Title IX; they are also proactive in educating others to understand the difference between gender and sex roles (Costa & Guthrie).

Less than a century ago, the idea of "masculine" and "feminine" was solely based on the sex of an individual. "Masculinity and femininity are gender roles, acquired during one's lifetime through learning, role-taking, imitation, observation, and direct instruction... Gender is learned behavior, usually related to one's sex, but sex status does not necessarily determine gender role" (Duberman, 1975, p. 26). In other words, being a male does not automatically define someone as "masculine" and being a female does not define someone as being "feminine". As stated previously, gender roles are learned behaviors. Too often, society tends to shape our viewpoints towards thinking masculinity is a male trait and femininity is a female trait. Through sport, men have continuously been able to display the society imposed trait of masculinity, power, and authority (Theberge, 1993). Their actions and behaviors are assumed to be those of power, strength and dominance. The masculine stereotype has played a vital role in the lack of acceptance of female coaches because masculinity is predominantly only accepted when associating it with males. The effects of gender-based stereotyping result in many disadvantages to women's opportunities in the workforce. For thousands of years, women

have been relegated to a care-taking role and simultaneously have become one of society's oppressed groups (Schriver, 2008 p. vii).

There are also cultural norms that come with studying gender roles. King explains that culture plays a vital role in acceptance of taking instruction from a male or female. If an athlete grows up in a household with a dominant male figure, it is more likely they will feel more comfortable with taking instruction by a male when participating in athletics. Likewise, if our youth are educated on consciously not stereotyping what is masculine and feminine, it can also have an effect on the perception of female coaches. Gender stereotypes and myths in coaching can be altered if women coaches are no longer evaluated in terms of masculinity (Williams, 1989).

Just like stereotyping females with gender biases, there is also a predisposed thought about women in leadership. In order to be successful, coaches should have the capability to deal with many different personality styles and behaviors due to the diversity of each individual on the team; therefore, they must be able to adapt their leadership style accordingly. They also hold the responsibility of understanding the strengths and weaknesses of each team member and how to effectively put the team together.

The Trait Theory of leadership suggests that a particular individual's traits or characteristics can define whether or not the individual will be successful (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano & Dennison, 2003). Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) identify key leader traits to have in order to be a successful leader. These traits are "drive (a broad term which includes achievement, motivation, ambition, energy, tenacity, and initiative);

leadership motivation (the desire to lead but not seek power as an end itself); honesty and integrity; self-confidence (which is associated with emotional stability); cognitive ability; and knowledge of the business” (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991, p. 48). Other traits include charisma, creativity/originality and flexibility (Kirkpatrick & Locke). Both Kirkpatrick and Locke clarify that not only does a particular leader should possess the traits explained above, but they also need to have the desire to lead in order to be successful. With these traits, the authors recognize that in some cases of leadership these traits may be necessary, however, are needed in more situational settings.

According to the book, *Leadership: Theory and Practice* written by Northouse (2004), situational leadership requires a person to adapt his or her style depending on the demands of certain situations. Leaders who follow the situational leadership style understand that no specific leadership style is right for everyone (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano, & Dennison, 2003). For female head coaches, an example of situational leadership could entail the coaches adapting to different styles of leadership based on the athlete they are directing or specific games they are preparing for. Not everyone can be coached or taught the same way, therefore, it is important to recognize the learning styles of each athlete and act accordingly.

When taking a closer look into situational leadership, there are at least different types of leadership: Fiedler’s Contingency Model, Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Model, Tannenbaum and Schmidt’s Continuum and Adair’s Action-Centred Model. Each model looks at leadership a little differently, but has the same idea of how leaders should adjust their leadership styles to different situations. Fiedler’s contingency

model focuses more on how a manager and employers should get along (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano, & Dennison, 2003). The model influences the leader to look to see how structured the group is and act accordingly whether it is highly structured, fairly structured or somewhere in between it also looks at position power to see how much power the leader actually has.

The second model is the Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Model. This particular theory is based upon of the amount of task and relationship behavior a leader must provide according to the maturity levels of its followers (Hersey & Blanchard, 1993). This type of model is good for coaches in particular because each student-athlete they coach will have different maturity levels and requires them to adjust to the personality and learning levels of each player. The Tannenbaum and Schmidt's model is the third model in studying situational leadership. This particular model suggests that the leadership styles of autocratic, persuasive, consultative and democratic are all necessary in given situations and proposes that the leader should look at whether he/she is telling, selling, consulting or joining its followers (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano & Dennison, 2003).

The fourth and final model for situational leadership is the Adair's action-Centred leadership model. This model suggests that the leader must direct the job to be done, support and review the individual doing the task and co-ordinate and foster the team as a whole (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano & Dennison, 2003). This model is based on three rings which represents the need for different responses by the leader. Although

understanding the situational leadership theory is a valuable asset to have when coaching, it is also important to understand the team leadership theory.

Team coaching is part of the team leadership theory and is described as a leader who is chosen to guide team members and improve performance by providing guidance to a team (Hackman & Wageman, 2005). Members of action or performing teams, such as sports teams, require unique abilities or skills as well as extensive training and/or preparation to maximize the performance of the team (Sundstrom, 1999). According to Levi (2011), there are three different types of team coaching: motivational, consultative and educational.

With the team leadership theory, comes the model of team leadership. This model was created for team leaders to use when facing challenges within a team. It provides the proper guidelines to help the leader identify team problems and take appropriate action to correct the problems (Northouse, 2007). By identifying whether each challenge stems from internal or external factors, the team leader can then implement the suitable behavior to ensure the most efficient leadership behavior (Fleishman, Mumford, Zaccaro, Levin, Korotkin & Hein 1991).

### *The Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine experiences of two female head coaches at a Southeastern land-grant University and to understand how they have sustained their role as a head coach in a world where female coaches are significantly declining.

The specific objectives of this research were:

- 4.) To understand two female head coaches' knowledge of what a land-grant institution was created for and if its purpose affects the way they coach;
- 5.) To determine how two female head coaches' sustain their title as head coach;  
and
- 6.) To determine two female head coaches preferred leader styles.

### *Research Design*

This qualitative study is a biographical case study. Case studies have a long history of being used as a way to document life stories and events (Hays & Singh, 2012). Case studies also give researchers the opportunity to study individuals, events or activities (Creswell, 2006). In addition, biographical case studies enable the researcher to document the history of an individual by using information sources about the person (Plummer, 2001). The researcher also asked about the life of the interviewee, including the cultural norms and background of each participant during the interview which enabled them to get a biographical perspective and collect more personalized data.

Choosing the qualitative method of a biographical case study was the best method to use in this study due to the information the researcher was seeking. As stated previously, the researcher sought to find answers to how and why the female coaches lead their team the way did and analyzed the data to form two different cases. The researcher took the information from each case and studied reoccurring themes as well as the differences between each case. As a result, the researcher gained a better

understanding of how the particular female coaches were able to sustain their roles coaches and why their leadership styles are the way they are.

### *Gaining Entry*

In order to conduct the research, an Institutional Review Board Form B was completed and approved by the University of Tennessee Research and Compliance Services on November 29, 2011. Each prospective participant was first contacted by phone and by email by the researcher. Participants were chosen because of the availability for the researcher and the particular success of each female coach. After gaining authorization from the participants, a date and time to meet was established.

In order to protect the participant, the female head coach being interviewed was assigned a pseudonym and the university in which they are associated with will not be mentioned in the thesis document. The name of the sport each coach was in charge of is also concealed to further insure the protection of the participant. A confidentiality agreement form was signed by each female coach to assure that their name, school and sport will not be disclosed in the study. Prior to conducting the interviews, each participant was given an informed consent letter that was signed and collected at the time of the interview.

### *Data Collection*

Each interview took place in the privacy of the coach's office located on the campus of the Southeastern Land-Grant University. During the interview process, interviews were recorded by audio recorder in order to obtain correct wording to transcribe the information. Each semi-structured interview lasted approximately 45

minutes in which each female coach was asked a series of open-ended questions. A list of interview questions was used but not strictly followed in order to make sure to not interrupt the flow of interview. The interview focused on understanding the background of each coach, why they chose to coach at a land-grant institution, their experiences with Title IX and dealing with feminine stereotypes and what leadership practices they most often use.

After the completion of the interview, the researcher transcribed and analyzed the information that was obtained from the two female head coaches. After the transcription was completed, the data was examined using different methods, which included identifying noteworthy statements and elements of meaning as well as recognizing the commonalities and differences among each participant. Data were coded and sorted into specific categories by the researcher. Once the coding was completed, specific themes emerged. Those themes were identified as: gender barriers, experiences with Title IX, Division I coaching at a land-grant institution, leadership philosophy, family work-life balance and feminist perspective.

#### *Reliability and Validity*

When looking at the reliability and validity of the study, it is important to understand why and how this biographical case study can be proven reliable and valid. In order for the researcher to establish reliability and validity: transferability, dependability, credibility and member checks were established. Transferability was established by utilizing thick descriptions to illustrate and describe each case within the environment in which the case was studied (Creswell, 2007). The researcher also made sure to have an

in-depth analysis over each case. Dependability was established by utilizing inter-rater reliability measures where an additional researcher coded the data and compared the results with the initial researcher (Creswell, 2007). In addition, data was reviewed by the additional researcher who is familiar with the study and trained in analyzing qualitative research. The credibility of this study was gained by gathering different forms of data and having prolonged engagement in the field (Creswell, 2007). The researcher has also spent many years in athletics and has a large knowledge base of the language used by the participants. Finally, data analysis, interpretations and conclusions of the study were confirmed by conducting member checks with each coach to reconfirm accuracy and credibility of the interpretations made by the researcher. No changes to the study were made by the two female coaches.

### *Research Bias*

Prior to beginning the study, the researcher identified with biases she possessed that could impact her relationship with the environment and people in the study. The researcher has a strong passion for female sports as she has grown up playing sports and was a female athlete under the direction of one of the coaches interviewed in this study. Furthermore, her experience as an athlete could also influence the particular interview questions being asked to each participant.

Liberal feminist are focused on the equality of liberal principles to both women and men, and suggests that most sexist discrimination is based on the custom of a culture (Costa & Guthrie, 1994). Furthermore, the researcher has a liberal feminist viewpoint

and takes a great interest in studying how males and females can and should be treated equally in an athletic setting.

The researcher also has a strong interest and belief in the situational leadership theory. According to Peter Northouse (2004), situational leadership requires a person to adapt his or her leadership style based on specific situations. Therefore, the interest in situational leadership theory could result in more focus on one type of leadership rather than being open to different types of leadership theories.

### *Findings*

The results section is divided into two biographical case studies documenting the life history of each case. Each case study will explain the background and experiences that each female head coach has had throughout their lifetime. Specific themes in this chapter were identified as: gender barriers, experiences with Title IX, Division I coaching at a land-grant institution, leadership philosophy, family work-life balance and feminist perspective.

### *Mary*

Mary's career as a student-athlete is unique. She did not choose to go to college to solely play sports as her first priority was to be a lawyer. She did, however, end up being a two-sport athlete at her university and she was successful. After college, Mary went to law school and in 1994, she moved to a location where her husband was coaching, practiced law for one year and then took a position where she taught business law at the University. Most people who become coaches tend to start coaching immediately after college; however, Mary was focused on getting her law degree.

Although she was very involved in sports throughout her youth, Mary did not pursue coaching until she realized a void in her life during law school:

So I am 22-23 years-old and it was like a big void in my life not having sports, not having a practice to go to, not having something to get ready for the season and I really missed that. That is when I decided to help coach while I was in law school, so I did not have a whole lot of time, but whatever time I did have I would help coach my former college team.

After law school, Mary's coaching was limited due to her practicing attorney responsibilities. However, the position she took to teach business law provided her more time to assist her husband with coaching. Although Mary is now a very successful coach, she states that she never made a conscious effort to leave law practice; however the coaching opportunity presented itself and she felt like it was a wise decision.

### *Gender Barriers*

Mary was born in the 1960s and is the middle child of three girls. As a child, she described her youth activities as being more typical of what boys did growing up than what girls did as she described hating dolls and always wanting to play Cowboys and Indians, football, basketball and baseball. During that period, she states that girls were expected to wear pink, play with dolls and learn how to cook and clean like their mother. This particular female head coach was taught differently,

It was never discussed in my household what girls do, what boys do. I saw my parents, they both did things in the house that some people might have not thought were traditionally male or traditionally female roles. My dad helped out

with the housework, my mom helped works in the yard. We did all the same things, so I never had a sense of “men vs. women.”

She never placed herself in one particular category or thought that she was only allowed to participate in certain things. The equal playing field between men and women that she grew up around could be an explanation of why she has been able to be successful in a male-dominated profession. Growing up in an environment where she was seen as equal to men enabled her to take the same thinking and apply it to her work ethic as a student-athlete as well as to her professional life.

#### *Experiences with Title IX*

Mary predicted that she was around ten years old when Title IX was passed and she started to see the effects it had on her as well as other female athletes and students.

Mary stated:

I remember later thinking that what it was intended to do was to give women the same opportunities as men; the same quality uniforms and facilities, equipment, schedules and all those kinds of things. I remember thinking that it should include coaching too.

She had a unique viewpoint on Title IX as she noticed that more women were able to coach female sports; however, the quality of coaching was not superb:

Coaches got hired because they were female and as an athlete and a competitor, I resented that. I wanted a coach who knew what they were doing, male or female, not in the position because they were a woman. I mean when the high school

softball coach was asking me as a player what she should do and how we should handle certain situations on the field, I felt like that was not the intent of Title IX. It is clear that her first encounter with discovering the changes that Title IX made was not completely welcomed. Because of Mary's upbringing, her mindset was not on whether or not she should have a female or male coach; it was set on having the best coaches to make her the best player she could be. Given the experiences that Title IX has created for female coaches, Mary speaks of many different factors which came into her decision to coach.

#### *Division I Coaching at a Land-Grant Institution*

Mary –like the other coach in this study-- is currently a head female coach at a land-grant institution. The term “land-grant” was established because land was granted to each state and sold to fund a better opportunity for people to obtain a higher education (Morrison, 1994). Much the same, coaches give scholarships to individual athletes to come play for their team as well as gain a higher education. As a coach, Mary is put in a leadership role as an employee at the land-grant university. Since she is a leader and public figure at the university, it is assumed that she agrees with what a land-grant institution stands for and abides by in its mission statement. When asked about why Mary chose to coach at a land-grant institution, there was no indication of wanting to be a part of the university as a whole; it was more about the athletic department and the success that she could have in the sport.

I don't think I ever thought in terms of a land-grant institution; it never factored into my decision...it was the opportunity for us to coach at the highest level of

Divison-I. It was the resources available to you as a coach, knowing that you would be able to recruit the best players in the country and compete for a championship at the highest level:

It is interesting to see that in Mary's case, the athletic department and the amenities it provided --not the university as a whole-- was the deciding factor to coach at the university. When discussing other factors that further explained the type of coach she is, Mary also spoke about her leadership philosophy.

#### *Leadership Philosophy*

She first explained that she does not have one particular philosophy that she always keeps in mind. Then she focused on her personal leadership traits and characteristics. She stated that she is a disciplinarian, confident and someone who is prepared for her coaching assignment:

I am going to research on what I am doing and make sure that I feel that I am doing it the right way and presenting things the right way to my players to get them to buy in and to follow what we are doing.

Mary explains that her technique probably is a product of her legal background, but she believes presenting herself as a confident person is something that makes her a successful coach. She continues to describe herself as a leader and more of an authoritarian and/or disciplinarian. She believes that players view coaches as either a parental figure or as a friend:

My coaching style is almost like the parental type of figure or the person you may hate while you are playing for them because they push you, but you have more respect for them down the road.

This type of thinking is a product of her background. Mary explains she did not have a close or personal relationship with her coaches, but she remembers having respect for them and wants to be perceived that same way. Mary mentioned a few times throughout the interview that coaches need to stay true to themselves and not try to be someone they are not. However, she also understands the need to be diverse in her coaching abilities:

I cannot and will not adopt a salesman approach, that would not work for me; that is not who I am. I do think a successful coach learns how to relate to each individual player though. I think it is a huge challenge for all coaches to be true to their own personality, but also understand when you have to bend a little without compromising yourself and your policies and ideas. But you have to be open to different players' personalities and learning styles. The whole goal is to get the most you can out of every individual player and it is not going to be the same approach for everyone.

It is clear that Mary understands the need for situational leadership when coaching. She explains that she tends to push her freshmen athletes harder because she needs them to learn at a fast pace. However, she describes being *less loud* with her junior and senior athletes because she knows they understand the expectations she holds for them. Mary stays true to herself as she is consistent with her personality and leadership style; however, she understands that the way she teaches the game may vary from player to

player. This technique could play a part in her success as a female coach; however, other factors may have an impact on her coaching success as well.

Mary has had the opportunity to work and coach with males and although she sees them as equals, she essentially stereotypes females as better communicators:

I would say they probably don't communicate with the players as frequently as girls prefer...It is even more true with girls that we really want a lot of feedback and I don't think guys I have coached with do that. Sometimes I have to tell them, "Hey, you have to got to be more consistent and constant with your communication."

Mary explains the need for coaches to be in constant communication with female athletes because she feels they need to feel invested with the people they are on the team with. She implies that she occasionally gets accused of talking too much during practice by her male colleague but she uses communication as a tool to allow her players to see that she is invested in them:

The connection they feel with their teammates and their coaches is very, very important. The more they have that connection and feel good about the connection, the more confident they are going to be on the field and the better they are going to feel about themselves.

Communication is something that theorists pinpoint in the trait theory as important in order to be successful (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). Mary not only uses communication as a way to get her point across, but she recognizes the need for players to have the confidence within themselves in order to perform. She feels that constant communication

on what she expects out of her players leaves no room for them to think differently than what she wants. However, Mary then pinpoints the fact that she thinks male coaches have an advantage when coaching female athletes:

Sometimes I think that men have an advantage because I think that girls perceive them much like they did their fathers. They want to please; girls are pleasers. She bases her perception off of her youth background. Mary implies that although she wanted to please both of her parents, she probably had more of a focus on pleasing her dad. She believes that there is an inherited relationship between a father/daughter and that sometimes it carries over into the male coach/female athlete relationship. Although Mary feels that there is a separation between her as a female coach and her female students-athletes, she does feel as though she is more in tuned with them:

I think as a female, I am more aware of what a girl is feeling and how she is responding just by her body language and the look on her face in a certain situation. Where I think sometimes guys don't really tap into that. They don't take the time to kind of sense what the feeling is among the girls at a given time. Being in tune with how and what her athletes are feeling could be another way that her players feel as though she is committed to their success. Mary not only feels like it is her job to teach them how to play a sport; she also feels as though she needs to teach them life lessons as well.

As a coach, Mary recognizes the need to be a role model as well. She believes that every coach is a role model and that they constantly model some behavior for their athletes:

A role model is really nothing different than being a leader. You are in a position to influence other people and you have an ability to influence others and how you choose to use that ability is up to you, whether you are going to choose a positive or negative road.

Mary does not look at being a role model or leader as a burden. She believes that it is an amazing opportunity to teach players life lessons. She recognizes that her actions and decisions have an effect on her players and that teaching the game she coaches is not her only responsibility:

I have a responsibility to teach my players a lot of things beyond my sport; the way I think they should deal with situations; the way I think they should pursue their goals and their dreams; and the way I think they should prepare to be the best for anything they want to do in life....They probably learn 80 percent more about just how to act and how to carry themselves than they do the sport itself.

Mary continually expresses the need to stay true to herself in order to stay consistent as a coach. Mary's willingness to act as a positive role model in her athletes' lives is also a positive trait to have as a coach and could play a role in why she has been successful.

#### *Family Work-life Balance*

When discussing internal and external factors that play a role in her success, Mary talks about her support system: "I think it is very important that you have a strong support system in your organization." She continues speaking on how lucky she feels to have a support system that understands that she is not perfect and cannot win every game. In addition, Mary expresses, too, that there is a process to coaching and winning games and

not everyone understands the entire process: “In our society, you know, winning is everything and sometimes it is just out of control how much importance we place on athletics, especially in college athletics.” She expresses that feeling the pressure from the community to win games could be bothersome to a coach; however, she states that what her upbringing has taught her helps her to differentiate what is really important:

I think I am lucky. My self-worth isn't defined by softball and by winning and losing games. But having done this now for 10 years at the highest level, I think that is a constant battle and you have to constantly be aware of whether or not you are getting too carried away with winning or losing.

She explains that although her support system is small, she can rely on those people to remind her that just because she lost a game, that does not make her a failure. Just like the societal pressure that is placed upon coaches to win, there are other pressures, biases and stereotypes that come with being a female coach, and that female coaches sometimes buy into themselves.

### *Feminist Perspectives*

Mary identifies many *perks* that come along with being a coach; however, she also recognizes barriers she has to overcome as a coach as well. One societal barrier Mary acknowledges is that she is expected to be the primary caretaker if she is to have a family. By having a family, Mary would not be able to spend the amount of time with her team that is conducive to being a head coach. Other barriers include society's viewpoint or stereotype in questioning female coach's sexual preferences and gender expectations. She expresses that there is still that stereotype that men will be able to fill a

head coach job better because of the assumption that females are and should be the primary caregivers:

We still are a society where women are the primary caregivers for the kids at home and this would be a very difficult job if I had a family. In fact, one of the reasons that I went from private law practice to teaching business law was because we intended to have children. I knew that a college professor's schedule would be a little bit more conducive to raising a family. We never did have a family so I would be very surprised if I would be coaching if I had children.

Mary not only recognizes the societal pressures and stereotypes put on women, but she openly admits that it would be hard on her to be a mother and a coach because of the time commitment that coaches are faced with. Another barrier that Mary is aware of as a female coach is the subject of femininity. When asked if she has ever felt that she had to demonstrate feminine qualities in order to be more accepted as a coach, she replied that she never has seriously thought about the issue. However, even though she has not felt personal pressure to act a certain way, she has noticed other coaches who do:

I do think that women in our profession who don't want to be perceived as more masculine definitely make an effort to do things in a feminine manner, to dress a certain way, to fix their hair a certain way, and to carry themselves a certain way because they don't want to fit a stereotype. There was a time when every woman who coached was a lesbian and I think that a lot of women did not want to get locked into that stereotype and they don't want to be perceived that way if it is not true.

She expresses that some coaches who do tend to act a certain way to fit the stereotype are trying to portray to the public that their sexual orientation fits the norm of what society expects, which is being a heterosexual feminine female. Previous research implies that although females coaches and athletes are becoming more accepted in society, there is still an “image problem” that suggests all women in sports are homosexual; therefore, in order to overcome this stereotype some women tend to adopt a feminine apologetic actions in order to emphasize they prefer males as a sexual preference (Knight & Giuliano, 2005).

Mary did place herself in the category as being a *Tom Boy* which signifies that she was a female who played a lot of sports growing up. She mentioned that girls who were *Tom Boys* when she was growing up did not date popular athletes and were not homecoming queens. However, she now has noticed that high school girl athletes who are becoming homecoming queens because of the more accepting mindset related to females who play sports.

Mary has consistently seen her sport evolve into something that society takes seriously and she has seen many positive changes. Her ability to continue to sustain her role as a head coach is much credited to her ability to stay true to herself and not try to cater to what society expects of her. She believes that having a balance in life is crucial in keeping a perspective on what is really is important in life. Mary hopes to continue to grow as a coach and serve as a positive asset to her player’s lives.

### *Sarah*

Sarah started playing sports at the age of five and continued to play sports through college and then professionally. In college, Sarah was an All-American in her sport and went on to play professionally before a career-ending knee injury. Sarah knew she would no longer be able to compete, but wanted to continue to participate in her sport as much as possible:

I wasn't sure what level I wanted to teach my sport or coach my sport so I have coached in several places but now have been coaching at the university for 15 years.

It is clear that Sarah has a passion for her sport and knew as soon as her athletic career ended, she wanted to pursue a coaching career in her sport.

### *Gender Barriers*

Sarah is a head female coach at a land-grant institution and has had much success being a head female coach in her sport. She grew up as an only child living with both of her parents. She describes her parents as having definite gender roles as she explains her mother's expectations of her:

My mom was more of, you know, you need to make sure you know how to cook and you need to make sure you know how to clean the house. She was actually the one that was very much into the female duties so to speak, and I think that was part of her generation.

Her father, on the other hand, was from the same generation as her mother but had a different viewpoint on how Sarah should act and the things that she needed to accomplish:

He always wanted me to be a strong female and he always taught me to not be dependent on anyone else; not to fall in the crowd of what everyone else was doing. I mean, he wanted me to be very independent and he wanted me to professionally be the best I could be and not worry about my gender or ethnicity... I remember him always emphasizing that he wanted me to be happy in whatever I was doing.

Sarah's parents both had an influence on her, but it was her father that seemed to have more of a role in her life as far as her way of thinking and her professional career. He was the one to influence her in starting to participate in her sport and was a support system throughout her athletic career.

As Sarah started to pursue her coaching career, she felt as though her resume and coaching experiences needed to be varied more --as a female-- in order to compete with other coaches. When asked if Sarah felt that she needed to have a back-up plan or secondary interest in case she was not accepted in the coaching world, she stated:

I just had the mentality at the beginning, I knew if I was going to try to separate myself a little bit that I would have to coach harder and longer and I would have to probably coach, like I said, different types of levels and just really get a wealth of experience.

Sarah felt she would have to put more effort into her coaching abilities than her male counterparts. She explained that a lot of the requirements of coaching depend on the level at which someone desires to coach:

As you start getting more and more elite, like you start coaching national ranked juniors or international top juniors or the collegiate level, I think you have to have something that is going to separate yourself a little bit.

The need and idea that she needed to separate herself in the coaching world stems from her viewpoint on the competitiveness of her sport and female coaches pursuing coaching:

there are so few female Division I coaches and I think, you know, that there is not so much as a comparison or not so much of a competitiveness among us (women) because there are so few. The top programs have male coaches so you need to be able to compete with them and be considered serious and to be considered, you know, a valuable coach, I think you have to do something a little different or work a little harder.

She continues to explain that the top programs have male coaches and insinuates that hiring male coaches seems to be one of the answers when looking to have successful teams and/or programs. Although Sarah feels as though she needs to find ways to differentiate herself in order to be hired as a female head coach at a competitive level, she also sees that there are other factors contributing to the equality of women sports and head coaches, such as Title IX.

*Experiences with Title IX*

During Sarah's adolescence and into her college years, she was not familiar with Title IX and explained that she just thought that the circumstances she was in was just the way it was. It was not until she was out of her competitive sport and got into coaching that she became aware of how Title IX has helped female equality:

I can tell a huge difference just as far as the opportunities for our girls to be able to travel and the opportunities that female coaches have to be able to be competitive and have a lot more... I think it has really opened the door to have more female head coaches.

As Sarah further explained her personal experience with Title IX, she could not recall any top female coaches in her sport before Title IX. However, she suggests that since there were not any particular top programs in her sport during the time Title IX was being passed, the female programs as a whole were lacking. She explains that her sport has become so competitive that programs are not just looking for a male coach to run the team; they are now looking for who will be the best at their job, no matter male or female. She also explains that there is more expected out of female coaches and athletes than there used to be:

There are some things that have been more opportunistic for female athletes...I think there is a lot more expected with our female sports. Not that you feel pressure, but the expectations are much higher since we are given a lot more.

Sarah recognizes the increased expectations that come with privileges that have been given due to Title IX, especially at the Division I level. However, she makes sure to focus

on what she needs to do to better for her players, not the increased pressure. With the increased expectations, she also feels that the time commitment has increased:

I just feel like there is so much more of a need or a lot more expectations and I think there is a lot more time commitment involved. Recruiting used to be only a few months out of the year and then you had your season, which were a few months of the year. Now recruiting goes all year round and coaching is all year round. I think sometimes that some females aren't prepared for that kind of trench and you know especially coaches that have kids. I think it is a very difficult commitment.

#### *Division I Coaching at a Land-Grant Institution*

She admits she was not familiar with what a land-grant institution is, which led to the conclusion that it did not play a factor in her decision. When asked what prompted her decision to coach, Sarah spoke about many different factors:

My husband was coaching already. I got to the point that I knew one of the highest levels, other than professional, was to coach on the collegiate level and I felt that was the level that I would best be utilized. I understand female athletics, I was in it so I know how females think and compete and I felt that was an advantage for me over a male coach.

#### *Leadership Philosophy*

Sarah's desire to coach was more about the opportunity to stay at her current location and the chance to coach at an elite level. In addition, she thought she could make a positive

difference in the lives of the female athletes. Her aspiration to coach is a driving force in many things that she does as a coach and plays a role in her leadership philosophy:

I believe in consistency of your actions. I believe in discipline. I know we are in a generation where or at a time where it is difficult for kids to be disciplined, but I believe in that. I still believe that there are boundaries... and I believe in honesty. I've always had a coach and wanted a coach that was very point-blank with me and I feel that is something I owe my players that as well... When I first started coaching I think that I thought that there was one best way to lead. Now as I have coached several different teams and types of teams and chemistry of teams, I think that it is more of a situational thing.

Sarah explained that her coaching and leadership style has evolved throughout her different experiences. She believes that it is important to adjust her coaching style based on the team and the individual she is coaching. Although Sarah changes the way she coaches depending on the player, she still thinks that it is important to be fair to each player as well as the team:

I don't think that you can always be equal with each player, but I think you can be fair. I expect my seniors to know more and when they do mess up I might be harder on them. Freshmen need to learn a little bit more so you have to be a little more patient with them so it's definitely situational and individual.

As a coach, Sarah tries to recognize different factors (e.g. maturity levels and personalities) in order to pinpoint how she should coach and/or lead her players. She feels mentally connected to her players and she thinks that her intuition is what separates

herself from male coaches; however, this is another example of a gender stereotype pertaining to male vs. female coaches.

I think as a female coach you understand a little bit more as far as how they think mentally. I definitely have a better sense emotionally when someone is going through a difficult time where a male coach may be unaware.

Sarah feels like she can understand her players, but she also feels her players feel more comfortable with her coaching vs. the other males on her coaching staff. In addition, Sarah explains that sensitive topics, such as body image, are easier for her players to communicate to her vs. other male coaches on the staff because she is a female and can relate to them. Sarah not only acknowledges her qualities, but she gives credit to her internal support staff that has assisted her in being successful.

Sarah praises her administrative staff and believes that they are the foundation of the program. She feels as though she can communicate with them, which results in a good working relationship. Although her and her staff may not always agree, Sarah feels as though she can always communicate her opinions openly. Having an external support system outside of coaching is also something that Sarah feels is important:

Coaching on this level becomes your life because it is just so time consuming, emotionally and physically and it sometimes can get to you more so when you are not having a good season or you are having issues with your team. That's when you need that balance of something outside of your sport. Taking care of my dogs is my stress releaser. I think you have to have a balance because then I don't

think you will ever be able to have a perspective of what is really important in life.

Sarah explains that what is most important to her is to be able to enjoy what she does. She believes that if she is enjoying what she does her time, then players will also enjoy what they are doing.

I have never gone into coaching because of the money. I have always wanted to help young females and that is something that has always stuck with me.

Sarah remembers her experiences as an athlete and describes how appreciative and thankful she was for all the people that helped her with the sport and with life lessons. She explains that she looks at coaching as her way to give back and is thankful for the position to play the role as a coach and leader to her players. Not only did Sarah want to serve as a leader, but she also welcomed the ability to be a role model to her players.

As a coach, Sarah explains that there is a definite opportunity to be a role model and describes what she thinks a role model should be. She defines that coach as “someone that you aspire to be like and trust and expect to give you good advice and good help and help prepare you for the real world.” As stated before, Sarah pursues the opportunity to lead her players on and off the field. She explains that the opportunity she has to make a difference in her athletes’ personal and professional lives is part of why she started coaching. She remembers what it was like being a female and the many different obstacles she has had to overcome:

I tell them that they have to work harder and we work harder here because I want them to be prepared when they go into the real world because it’s still tough for

females. I always tell them that they can be equal to their male counterpart or really anyone.

### *Family Work-life Balance*

Sarah does not have any children and shares her sympathy with those female head coaches that do try to balance a family as well as coaching a collegiate team:

I think a lot of time you find that females will not take as competitive of a position. I just think it is very difficult when you have to balance a family. I mean there are few that do it, but I think coaching is a very difficult commitment.

Even though she thinks Title IX has given females a tremendous opportunity to compete and coach at the highest levels, she does realize why females—who also have children-- would be hesitant in taking a position as a head coach. Sarah explained many reasons as to why she took the head coach position at her university, but identified that it was not the actual university that sparked her interest.

### *Feminist Perspective*

Although Sarah feels as though her sport has evolved and became more intense as well as attracted a larger audience, she still feels as though she has to overcome being stereotyped as a female coach. In most cases, Sarah sees that female coaches have to overcome being perceived as too feminine; however, she feels differently:

I almost feel the opposite. I almost feel like I have had to be more of a male or more unisex or masculine. I mean in a way I feel like if I am too feminine that they don't take me seriously.

Sarah is not concerned with the fans/media perception; but rather her recruit's perception of her is her biggest concern:

When it comes to recruiting where first impressions are important, I definitely think that you have to have the right image. Everything is a first-impression for most people.

As Sarah looks back on her past experiences and all that she endured as a player and coach, she credits her success to continuing to progress personally and professionally:

I think I have been able to sustain my role as a female head coach because I think it goes back to having a balance with your job and your life. I think it's hard to sustain this position when you are so consumed with your work and it just really kills you. I think just having that perspective of balance and also just being fortunate enough to be successful and the desire to have continued progress.

### *Conclusions*

These coaches have achieved a large amount of success as female head coaches. They both chose to coach at land-grant universities which are funded by the government, even though this fact was not a part of their decision making: "Through the land-grant university heritage, millions of students are able to study every academic discipline and explore fields of inquiry far beyond the scope envisioned in the original land-grant mission" (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 2008 p. 2). Since American land-grant universities are continuing to fulfill their purpose by serving and educating the public, it was assumed that athletic coaches who chose to

coach at land-grant institutions would be aware of the foundation in which they were built. This was not the case with Mary and Sarah. It was found that both of them were not aware of what a land-grant institution was and explained that their decision to coach at their particular universities were because of the opportunity for success and a chance to make a difference in the female-athletes' lives.

As both athletes and coaches, Mary and Sarah have experienced the progression that Title IX has provided for females and are grateful for the opportunities it has provided them to coach at a competitive level. Title IX was instituted by the NCAA in the late 1970s and prohibits gender discrimination in educational settings that receive federal funds and includes physical education as well as athletics (Shriver, 2008).

Although they identify with the continued progress that female sports have had, they, too, recognize the added pressures to win and the higher expectations that are placed on them. The lack of experience that females had in coaching could explain the inexperience and professionalism of Mary's coaches; however, putting females in the position to coach has allowed females more opportunities to gain experience and learn how to be successful coaches.

As Mary stated:

Even when I first started coaching, females were not getting a whole lot of money and I think you have really seen that change more recently in the last 5-10 years where there has been a big jump in salaries and long-term contracts for coaches. When I was first starting out in this business, you never heard of a woman's softball coach in a college program being fired, at least not for wins and losses.

And now we are measured just like the coaches of male sports are; for your performance on the field.

Furthermore, one conclusion from this study could be, that added expectations of female coaches might lead them to withdraw from coaching. In order to not get too caught up in the new-found pressures of coaching, they both focus on internal and external support to keep in mind that winning is not the most important thing in life. However, with that added pressure to win games, they both agree that the commitment of coaching makes it very challenging for female coaches to start or have a family. Sarah stated:

I just feel like there is so much more of a need or a lot more expectations and I think there is a lot more time commitment involved. Recruiting used to be only a few months out of the year and then you had your season, which were a few months of the year. Now, really, recruiting goes all year round and coaching is all year round. I think sometimes that some females aren't prepared for that kind of trench and you know especially coaches that have kids. I think it is a very difficult commitment.

When talking about the time commitment coaches have, Mary also mentioned the difficulty in having a family:

We still are a society where women are the primary caregivers for the kids at home and this would be a very difficult job if I had a family. In fact, one of the reasons that I went to private law-practice to teaching business law, at the time that I did, was because we intended to have children. I knew that a college professor's schedule would be a little bit more conducive to raising a family. We

never did have a family so I would be very surprised if I would be doing what I am not if I had kids.

Both coaches pinpointed the subject of added pressure and time commitment that female coaches struggle with. Each of these coaches do not have children and have commented that it would be very difficult to have time to coach as well as raise a family but they both are married. Mary and Sarah both have been influenced mostly by their fathers who taught them that they are equals in society and should not submit to the pressure of playing a feminine role; however, they both feel as though if they had a family they would serve as the primary caregivers. This fits into the statistic that only 30 percent of full-time women coaches are married compared to the 55 percent of non-coaches; only 18 percent of all female coaches have children compared to 45 percent of women in other occupations (Drago Hennighausen, Rogers, Vescio, & Dawn, 2005). Even though these coaches have been able to recognize their own understanding of feminine roles, they too believe in being equal to their male counterparts and/or colleagues.

Each coach believes in the idea of liberal feminism. Liberal feminism was one of the first types of feminism formed, as it gives importance to the equality of liberal values to both women and men, and suggests that most sexist discrimination is based on particular paradigms of culture (Costa & Guthrie, 1994). Both coaches acknowledged the expected gender roles that society puts on female coaches. Through sport, men have continuously been able to display the society-imposed trait of masculinity, power, and authority (Theberge, 1993). Mary does not personally feel pressure to act a certain way because she is married, but she does see some of her peers trying to be more feminine so

they do not get placed in the category of being a homosexual. Sarah, on the other hand, feels as though she has to act more masculine in order to be taken seriously. However, Sarah feels that acting too feminine decreases her credibility as a coach. Just as sport has helped reinforce the stereotype of masculinity in men, it has enhanced the myth of female frailty due to women's exclusion from sport (Theberge, 1993). Although each coach recognizes that there is gender discrimination in their profession, they do not focus on what the public thinks of them, but concentrate on the perception of their players and recruits. They also believe that being a female coach and coaching female sports has more of an advantage than a disadvantage, including increased communication skills, attention to detail and the ability to understand each athlete from a female point of view.

Mary and Sarah believe that coaches have the responsibility to not only teach their athletes about the sport, but to teach them life lessons as well and openly welcome being a role model in athletes' lives. As it pertains to their leadership style, each coach explains qualities of trait, situation and team leadership. Previous research has pinpointed different traits that leaders may have. These traits are "drive (a broad term which includes achievement, motivation, ambition, energy, tenacity, and initiative); leadership motivation (the desire to lead but not seek power as an end itself); honesty and integrity; self-confidence (which is associated with emotional stability); cognitive ability; and knowledge of the business" (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991, p. 48). Both coaches exemplified many of these traits. Mary described herself as driven and motivated, confident, a disciplinarian, honest, a parental figure, and an informative teacher. Mary

also explains that in order to be confident in what she is teaching, she needs to make sure that it is the best approach:

I am going to research what I am doing and make sure that I feel that I am doing it the right way and presenting things the right way to my players to get them to buy in and to follow what we are doing.

In the same regard, Sarah also describes many of the same leadership traits as Mary. She, too, explains that she thinks of herself as a disciplinarian, honest, motivated and experienced.

Just as Mary and Sarah share some of the same leadership traits, they also share the same idea that their coaching styles are situational. According to Northouse (2004), situational leadership requires a person to adapt his or her style depending on the demands of certain situations. Both coaches identified with the need to recognize the circumstances in which they are coaching. Mary emphasizes that a successful coach has to learn how to relate to each individual player; however, she also believes that a coach has to stay true to herself:

I think it is a huge challenge for all coaches to be true to your own personality, but also understand when you have to bend a little bit without compromising yourself and your policies and your idea. But you have to be open to different players' personalities and their learning styles.

Sarah believes in the same concept as Mary. She believes that situational leadership may not allow her to treat her players as equals, but she can remain fair. Both coaches seem to relate more to the Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Model, which is focused on

task and relationship behavior a leader must provide according to the maturity levels of his/her followers (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano & Dennison, 2003). Mary and Sarah believe that their coaching style should change based on whether they are coaching a freshman athlete or a senior, insinuating that they are at two different maturity levels of the sport.

Mary and Sarah both agree with the concept of team leadership. “A successful team completes its tasks, maintains good social relations and promotes its members’ personal and professional development” (Levi, 2011, p. 18). Both coaches explained that they have a duty, responsibility and willingness to teach their players more than just about the sport, but life lessons as well. Mary explains:

I have a responsibility to teach my players a lot of things beyond sport; the way I think they should deal with situations, the way I think they should pursue their goals and their dreams and the way I think they should prepare to be the best for anything they want to do in life.

Not only are these coaches building their athletes’ professional career, but they are teaching them life lessons. Sarah explains that the ability to be a role model to female athletes is one of the biggest reasons why she started coaching which is another indicator of the team leadership theory. In addition, leaders of teams are chosen by the organization (Levi, 2011). In this case, an athletic director, who is part of the organization, hired both coaches. Furthermore, both coaches play the different roles of team coaches who are motivational, consultative and educational (Levi, 2011).

Motivational coaching is used to encourage progress and increase the commitment of the

team, whereas consultative coaching focuses more on team performance and strengthens the responsibility of team roles and tasks. Lastly, educational coaching builds the knowledge, skills and abilities of the team members as a whole.

As a result, the coaches studied in this research did coincide with the previous theories outlined of how and why these female coaches have sustained their roles as female head coaches.

### *Implications*

This paper offers important information for young females who wish to pursue coaching and/or desire to be in a leadership position. In this study, the coaches did not choose to coach at the universities because of the idea of a land-grant institution, but because of the opportunity for success, facilities and the leadership position they could be in. Most leadership positions are maintained by predominately male figures in which females tend to have to overcome certain stereotypes. Although there is pressure and/or stereotypes in coaching, hard work and personal confidence increases success and eliminates societal pressures such as gender. The increased commitment of coaching in female sports requires a coach to sustain a balance in their life and to understand that winning and losing does not define them as a person. Recognizing the importance of administrative support within a team makes coaching easier as it creates a feeling of support. When leading a sports team, it is important to recognize the need for personal and professional development. Results from this study also suggests that having certain traits such as motivation and determination as well as understanding that there are

situational factors that need to be identified in leadership are also key components to being successful as a coach.

#### *Recommendations and Further Questions*

Based on this study, several additional research questions arose. Additional questions that the researcher feels should be explored are: How have the husbands of the female coaches impacted their success and how have they handled being married to successful coaches? What is each coach's definition of the terms "feminine" and "masculine"? What particular leadership traits are necessary in order to be successful as a coach? What is their definition of "success"?

In addition to exploring more research questions, the researcher could observe each coach during a practice or a game to evaluate her actions in her coaching environment. The researcher could also interview some of the coach's athletes to understand their perception of their coach to see if coaches perceive themselves the same as their athletes do.

## *Chapter 5*

### *General Discussions and Recommendations*

Results in this study have provided insight into the leadership style and sustainability of two female head coaches at a Southeastern land-grant university. Interviews were conducted, asking two successful head female coaches about their experiences as female head coaches and how they have sustained their role as a leader in a male-dominated profession. Throughout this research process, the areas of land-grant institutions, Title IX, feminism and specific leadership theories such as trait, situational and team leadership were examined.

The purpose of land-grant universities was to provide a practical and relevant education to the working class (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 2008). It was determined that both coaches chose to coach at the specific universities due to the structure of the athletic departments, opportunities to be a successful coach at a Division-I university and the potential to be a positive role model in athletes' lives. Not only did the coaches base their decision to take the head coaching position due to the athletic department's reputations, but neither coach knew the definition of what a land-grant institution was: they were not aware of the mission and vision of their university. Although they may not have been aware of their university's mission and vision statements, the coaches were aware of the rules and regulations inside their athletic departments; one being Title IX.

The NCAA was required to comply and enforce the federal law of Title IX in the late 1970s and prohibits gender discrimination in educational settings that receive federal

funds; this includes physical education as well as athletics (Shriver, 2008). Each coach experienced the progression of Title IX as an athlete and a coach and identified with continued progress that female sports have had since Title IX was created. However, as head coaches, they specifically recognize the added pressures to win and the higher expectations that were placed on them. In order to not get too focused on the pressures of coaching, they both turned to internal and external support to balance their lives and to remember that winning and losing games did not define their self-worth. With added pressure to win games, the commitment of coaching makes it challenging for female coaches to start a family or have children. Each of the coaches interviewed did not have children and explained the difficulty with trying to raise a family and coach at the same time. Although they identified the added pressures and sacrifices female coaches may have to make with having a family or being the primary caretaker, they both exposed liberal feminist views.

Both coaches have been influenced mostly by their fathers who taught them that they are equals in society and that they should not submit to the pressure of playing a feminine role, solely in their lives. Even though these coaches identified somewhat with feminine roles, they believed in being equal to their male counterparts, which follows the idea of liberal feminism. Liberal feminism was one of the first types of feminism formed, as it gives importance of the equality of liberal values to both women and men, and suggests that most sexist discrimination is based on particular paradigms of culture (Costa & Guthrie, 1994). Both coaches declared their expectations were to be considered as equal to their male counterparts. In addition, they did not desire special benefits

because of their gender or expect to be held to a higher standard than a male head coach. Regardless of their liberal feminist beliefs, the coaches have acknowledged the fact that society places them in gender-specific roles.

#### *Additional Research Questions*

Based on this study, several additional research questions arose. Additional questions that the researcher feel should be explored are:

1. How have the husbands of the female coaches impacted their success and how have they handled being married to successful coaches?
2. What is each coach's definition of the terms "feminine" and "masculine"?
3. What particular leadership traits are necessary in order to be successful as a coach?
4. What is their definition of "success"?

In addition to exploring more research questions, the researcher should examine each coach during a practice or a game to evaluate their actions in their coaching environment. The researcher should also interview some of the coach's athletes to understand their perception of their coach to see if coaches perceive themselves the same as their athletes do.

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## **Appendix A**

*Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Guide*

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
2. Did you have any secondary interests besides tennis that you thought maybe you should focus on because you felt sports had to take a background as a female?
3. When you started coaching did you feel that people were open to you becoming a coach? Did you feel like there were any barriers you had to overcome when getting into coaching?
4. When you were introduced to Title IX, what did you think the intent was as a young professional, in high school or in college?
5. Did you believe that there were quality female coaches being hired when Title IX first was put into effect?
6. Has Title IX now impacted your opportunities to be successful as a coach? Do you see that there are any differences? Do you think it has helped or hurt you?
7. Can you describe to me what a land-grant university is and what its purpose is? If not, I am more than willing to explain.
8. Was there a particular reason you chose to coach at a land-grant institution? Was it sports related or did you agree because you knew what Tennessee represented or a little bit of both?
9. Do you have a particular leadership philosophy? Is there something that you always revert back to or something that you always keep in mind?
10. Do you believe that there is one best way to lead or do you believe there are situational factors? Why or why not?
11. Do you think as a coach there is a difference between a freshman and a senior in having to change your personality or leadership style, or do you think that you need to remain steady with all of them?
12. In a world where men are becoming the majority of head coaches right now, and associate head coaches, how do you think you have sustained your role as a female head coach and in this case a co-head coach?
13. What are some theories you think as to why men are becoming more and more head coaches in female sports?
14. Describe yourself in general compared to a male coach. Do you think there are a lot of similarities? Do you think there are a lot of differences? Do you think there is a difference for the player in having a female coach compared to a male coach?
15. Do you think female coaches offer a little bit more communication into a coach/player type relationship?
16. Do you think there is more understanding between a female coach and a female athlete? Do you believe that having a male coach can inhibit a female athlete in any way?

17. Do you feel you have a strong internal support system, whether it be a significant other, your staff support, your athletics director support? Do you feel that it is necessary in order to be successful to have an internal support system?
18. Do you believe that there should be a separation between being a coach and having a life outside of coaching?
19. Do you feel as a female head coach you have to make sure to demonstrate feminine qualities in order to be more accepted?
20. Have you notice a progression in sports of people being more accepted of a female who made not be as feminine?
21. Do you believe that most coaches who show feminine qualities are trying to fit a certain stereotype and trying to stay away from people judging them or categorizing them in a certain way?
22. This University has a split Athletics Department, do you think this has benefited you as a coach or do you think it would not be much different if they were merged?
23. Would you recommend all men's and women's athletic departments be separate?
24. Do you consider yourself a role model?
25. Do you think its your choice to be a role model as a coach, or do you feel that every coach needs to be some sort of role model?
26. Do you believe as a coach, it is your job to not only teach your players about the sport, but to also teach them how to be a better person outside of their sport?
27. What is your definition of a role model?
28. Is there anything else you would like to add on the topic of female coaches at land-grant institutions and how you have sustained being a head coach?

## Vita

Allison Fulmer was born in Knoxville, Tennessee to the parents of Phillip and Victoria Fulmer, who currently reside in Maryville, Tennessee. She has three older siblings: Phillip Fulmer Jr., Courtney Fulmer Peace and Brittany Fulmer Ennen. Allison graduated high school from Maryville High School and went to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville where she obtained an undergraduate degree in Public Relations while serving as a student-athlete for the University of Tennessee Lady Volunteer softball team. She accepted a graduate teaching assistantship at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in the Agriculture Leadership, Education and Communication (ALEC) department. Allison graduated with a Master of Science degree in ALEC in May 2012. After graduation, Allison accepted a job to work for BPV Wealth Management located in Knoxville, Tennessee and will work in the client services, marketing and business development departments for the company.