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## Women Coaches Navigating the Leadership Labyrinth at a Division II Regional Comprehensive University: Queering Discourse and Narratives

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# Women Coaches Navigating the Leadership Labyrinth at a Division II Regional Comprehensive University: Queering Discourse and Narratives

## Abstract

Representation by female head coaches in the NCAA is at an all-time low. This study analyzed an institution (LSU) where women's representation and gender equity is higher than average. Using a qualitative inquiry approach applying Critical Narrative and Foucauldian Dispositive Analyses in a queering fashion, the study explored ways in which institutional (macro) discourses shaped individual (micro) daily narratives. The overarching goal for this study was to reveal themes, language and discourse informing women's coaches' recruitment, retention and persistence at an NCAA Division II and Regional Comprehensive University excelling in gender equity and inclusivity.

Findings indicated power-knowledge connections via Foucauldian Dispositive Analysis of documents including coach self-evaluations, the 360 evaluation process, athletic strategic plan and department meetings. Findings also illustrated six women coaches' narratives about their recruitment, hiring and onboarding experiences and their sense-making of LSU discourse through a collective narrative of the athletic evaluation and promotion process, spaces, department meetings and written/non-written discourse.

Implications and recommendations focused on how specific stakeholders can improve the recruitment, retention and persistence of collegiate women coaches by employing lessons learned from the LSU athletic department. These lessons include: senior institutional leaders foster gender equity within athletic departments and must be intentional with recruitment and hiring practices; athletic administrators need to create clear procedures and provide support (e.g., assigned mentors) for onboarding/orientation of new women coaches; evaluation and promotion should be holistic tied to institutional type/mission and Division II status; physical spaces create discourse and power dynamics especially within department meetings and finally, that people act as embodied forms of discourse. Embodied discourse is especially effective when positively and carefully utilized to cultivate inclusive departmental cultures leading to the success of women coaches. Areas of future research could incorporate queer theory especially with research on neoliberal cultures in higher education. Future research also might focus on the potential ways women coaches' narratives shape the institutional discourse, organizational saga and inform quantitative evaluation tools. Potential implications from these future areas of research might positively affect athletic and institutional culture and the evaluation of faculty and administrative staff to improve student learning outcomes.

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Women Coaches Navigating the Leadership Labyrinth at a Division II Regional Comprehensive

University: Queering Discourse and Narratives

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A Doctoral Research Project

Presented to

the Faculty of the Morgridge College of Education

University of Denver

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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by

Julie A. Wienski

August 2019

Advisor: Cecilia M. Orphan, Ph.D.

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Author: Julie A. Wienski

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## DEDICATION

To all women navigating leadership labyrinths... Those spanning the past and present; from K-12 to higher education, medicine and law to business and beyond - you make a difference and you matter.

I also dedicate this research endeavor to my beloved sister and friend, Linda J. Wienski, who passed away as I finished this project. Linda navigated many of life's labyrinths with courage and grace. I love and miss you – thank you for always inspiring me, throughout my life, to dig deep and carry on.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

It was a frigid, raw afternoon, typical for the Northeast in October, during a crucial match my first year on the Smith College Tennis Team. I lost the first set 6-4 and was down 4-5 in the second set. Statistically on paper, the odds were not in my favor. My opponent had a wicked, aggressive forehand, was a sophomore and a solid singles player. I, on the other hand, was a first-year and doubles specialist with a killer serve, yet at 110 pounds soaking wet, I needed hope and a prayer. However, sports are more than statistics; persistence, sheer will and heart can prevail. My coach was someone like me, someone who knew what it was like to be in my shoes and could relate to me not only as an athlete, but also a young woman.

For the first time in a very long time, my coach was a woman. During each change-over, she looked me directly in the eyes. I listened to every word of encouragement, every piece of strategy and took each point one at a time. “Steady”, “work the point”, “each shot sets up the next”, “don’t change direction of the ball”, and “capitalize - get to the net”, she said. It felt like I was playing chess on the court, but slowly, I chipped away at my opponent’s confidence, claimed point after point and ultimately, won the tiebreaker in that second set. This momentum resulted in a tidal wave of power, unstoppable force - I captured that last set. Game, set, match, Wienski, Smith College 4-6, 7-6 (10-8), 6-2! I had no idea this was the deciding match that helped us win 5-4 overall against Wheaton College, a major conference rival.

This vignette depicts more than tennis and collegiate sport, it illustrates much of what happens in higher education. My story captures the essence of digging deep and searching for inner-strength to believe in your abilities and overcome the odds to persist in undergraduate and graduate atmospheres. I came out on top that time, but I owe much of that victory to the support of my team and more importantly, my coach – the woman who stood behind my court, always

had my back and knew what to say to a naïve 18 year-old. That coach's name is Christine Jane Davis, and she indelibly impacted my life for years to come. Chris was also my inspiration to become a collegiate head coach myself.

Coaching is an art and science that involves more than understanding sport strategy or technique, but also requires an exquisite skill-set encompassing leadership, mentoring, providing/receiving feedback and support, sport science pedagogy and recruiting talent. Collegiate coaches constantly critique as they work to understand, modify, inspire and motivate player and/or team behaviors to effectively achieve desired student-athlete outcomes (Knoppers, 1987).

The role of the intercollegiate athletic coach within the larger context of higher education and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is unique and significant. Compared to higher educational faculty and administrative staff, NCAA coaches spend considerable time holistically supporting student-athletes to develop playing styles, work ethics, attitudes and behaviors that reveal character and integrity, over the course of a four to five-year timeframe. Saxe, Hardin, Taylor and Pate (2017) found that Division I intercollegiate football, basketball and baseball players devote approximately 40 hours per week to training and practice while athletes in all other sports and divisions spent 28 hours per week on athletic activities, demonstrating coach-player relationships are extensive and involved. The intercollegiate coach holds much authority within athletic contexts often acting as pseudo-parents and role models for student-athletes (Knoppers, 1987; LaVoi, 2016) who are transitioning from structured adolescent life at home/high school to the autonomous atmosphere of college. Coaches help student-athletes foster self-determination through building self-confidence, self-concept (self-awareness) and



self-efficacy (Amorose & Andersen-Butcher, 2007), not only for individual triumphs but also to promote team success (LaVoi, 2016).

Women coaches and leaders can lead differently than men, exhibiting more collaborative styles for cultivating human behavior and development (AAUW, 2016; The White House Project, 2009). However, the discourse and methods used to evaluate women coaches may privilege male ways of coaching due to the highly gendered nature of higher education organizations (Acker, 1990). Acker (1990) described the hegemonic masculine power legitimized within organizations as demonstrated by images of the robust, attractive, virile, authoritarian and even-keeled leader with a family. This exemplified power to which “women’s bodies cannot be adapted...[for] to function at the top of male hierarchies requires that women render irrelevant everything that makes them women” (Acker, 1990, p. 153). Such sense-making of male organizational leadership also manifested within the NCAA encouraging hegemonic masculinity (see Table 1.1 Key Terms with Definitions), verbally and physically displaying masculine traits. Burton and LaVoi (2016) contended that these masculine traits manifested as institutionalized masculinity (see Table 1.1) and became prevalent within organizational culture, marginalizing women in roles of athletic directors, coaches and players. My doctoral research project examined written and non-written discourse that evaluated and helped women coaches navigate their daily roles. Through my research, I also unveiled women coaches’ narratives and lived experiences regarding their successful recruitment, hiring and onboarding within a Regional Comprehensive University and Division II athletic department.

## **Problem Statement**

Research reveals that women have been disenfranchised from the upper echelons of leadership in the U.S. for decades. Despite progressive efforts stemming from the 1970's women's movement, women only hold one out of three positions in medicine and law (LaVoi, 2016; Miller, 2015), they occupy approximately one out of four seats within U.S. Congress (DeSilver, 2018) and despite running for president, women have not achieved U.S. Presidential leadership as demonstrated most recently by the 2016 elections. Additionally, a recent Pew Research Center Report (2018) indicated 4.8% of Fortune 500 business corporations had women chief executive officers. Within academia, women led only 30% of colleges and universities as President or Chancellor (American Council on Education, 2017).

Extracurricular higher education sectors, for example intercollegiate athletics and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), also portray a lack of women in leadership, with a plunging trend in the proportion of women coaches. In 1972, nine out of ten coaches (90%) of women's teams were women, but recent research portrayed four out of ten coaches (40%) of women's teams are women (LaVoi, 2018; LaVoi & Wasend, 2018). Coaches of color are also underrepresented in the NCAA. Disaggregated data for Division I athletics show 5.8% of head coaches for women's teams are women of color, as compared to 9% men of color for women's teams (Carter-Francique & Olushola, 2016). Gender disparity also exists within athletic administration, mirroring the U.S. Congress, with only one out of five women athletic directors (ADs) compared to four out of five men as ADs (Acosta and Carpenter, 2014; Miller, 2015; LaVoi, 2016).

Research on the sociology of sport and collegiate coaching explores themes such as the female apologetic (see Table 1.1) which refers to women athletes exaggerating femininity to

dispel associations with queerness, queer (see Table 1.1) which is an umbrella term describing antinormative identity to heterosexuality, women remaining closeted and silenced, and stigmas attached to the queer athletic population affecting identity and job performance (King, 2008). Although the aforementioned research is useful for describing the lesbian coach experience, King (2008) posited the discourses responsible for molding and providing meaning to these experiences remain hidden. Foucault (1990) was pivotal in advancing discourse (see Table 1.1) as an area of study. Discourse analysis examines who is speaking and how communication is achieved in reaction to particular contexts implying more than discussion (what has been said) and language only, and how such phenomena shape our conceptualizations of reality and knowledge. And, this knowledge as expressed by Foucault (1990), manifests as power with a political edge (Ponikvar, 2016) or tone that is discursively transmitted.

King (2008) contends the term “closet” (see Table 1.1), which refers to individuals hypothetically hiding LGBTQ identities, regulates discourse on sexuality portraying rigid “either/or” binaries privileging certain identities by limiting and silencing different conceptualizations of identity or marginalizing and failing to acknowledge sexual fluidity. Similarly, neoliberalism (see Table 1.1), or the ideology exhibiting increased value of the free market and socioeconomic investment within society over society’s public sphere, and neoliberal discourses also regulate and perpetuate these either/or and win/loss dichotomies. These dichotomies manifest from neoliberal effects and over-emphasize leadership that privileges masculine ways of leading, dismissing women’s leadership altogether, as well as institutionalized structures that promote haves versus have nots. Ultimately, these dichotomies maintain the status quo within society and higher education. Thus, King (2008) called for queering (see Table 1.1) research by distinctly resisting dominant culture and notions of identity

and visibility by placing sexuality at the epicenter of research about difference while documenting the sexual culture (see Table 1.1) which is group belief regarding sexuality, of sport as a form of political and transnational power. Queer discourse deviating from the heteronormative norms which make the culturally familiar or the accepted strange may provide an antidote to neoliberal forces negatively affecting women coaches in the NCAA.

Homophobia may also be related to a declining population of women coaches (Paule-Koba, 2012). Women in sports and collegiate athletics historically have fought lesbian stereotyping and endured daily microaggressions and negative discourse targeting women coaches and emanating from athletic directors, parents, media and athletes. Women coaches have been labeled less feminine, for example, and disparagingly called “dykes” or “mannish,” which has discouraged and limited them from pursuing coaching careers or advancing within the profession (Miller, 2015; Norman, 2011; Paule-Koba, 2012), another consequence of navigating leadership.

Unfortunately, sports and collegiate athletics are consistently associated with gender bias and discrimination, especially regarding the evaluation of women as leaders. Research demonstrates sexism exists within coaching and college sports which engenders the “think manager, think male” (see Table 1.1) gender stereotype used to evaluate leadership (Aicher & Sagas, 2010) and undermines women’s management styles (Norman, 2010). In a recent poll, 83% of women coaches stated gender inequality exists within collegiate athletics, demonstrating discrimination occurs more frequently in women’s athletics than any other profession (Miller, 2015). Miller (2015) reported, from additional survey results, that four out of ten people stated women were discriminated against in all areas of society which also indicates frequent existence of gender discrimination. Aicher and Sagas (2010) and Sabo et. al (2016) compiled data

examining NCAA environments with findings indicating bias correlated to the gender of the coach, not the team, with 31% of the women coaches surveyed stating male coaches are preferred over females by athletic administration and sharing they fear discrimination, retaliation and job loss when voicing Title IX issues and violations. Additionally, more women coaches experienced gender bias than male ADs or coaches illustrating gender discrimination as a ubiquitous concern not limited to a small number of higher education institutions (LaVoi, 2017; Sabo et al., 2016).

Additional research on discrimination in the U.S. workforce demonstrated women identifying as LGBTQ (lesbian, bisexual, transgendered or queer) on their resumes received 30% fewer follow up calls from employers (AAUW, 2016). These discriminatory actions may reinforce homologous reproduction (see Table 1.1) which takes place when hiring managers privilege and provide those with similar traits access to the same organizational power and control. Homologous reproduction exists in the NCAA as demonstrated by the high proportion of men athletic directors (LaVoi, 2016). Sabo et. al (2016) reported 15% of women coaches describing significant levels of homophobic encounters frequently occurring within athletic department culture which created discriminatory workplace environments. Beliefs about women leading as “coach” automatically associated with “being” unfeminine, as well as discrimination and perceptions towards straight and queer women coaches, become problematic when: 1) endorsed by ADs, athletes, peers, media and parents, and 2) disseminated within the coach evaluation process. These problematic views of women in coaching resulted in biased, negative interpretations of women coaches’ prowess. Additionally, these forces led to unfavorable performance or salary reviews for women coaches suggesting more research is needed in this area.

As prior research has revealed, NCAA women coaches experienced multiple daily barriers navigating heterosexism, pay inequity and negative discourse directed at them as a population stemming from environments promoting institutionalized masculinity and heteronormativity (Burton & LaVoi, 2016). Eagly and Carli (2007) conceptualized these barriers as twists and turns in a “Leadership Labyrinth” and Burton and LaVoi (2016) clearly documented the Leadership Labyrinth’s negative effects on the retention and success of NCAA women coaches and administrators. Negative discourse within athletics departments directed towards women coaches manifests as damaging narratives, from both external and internal sources, that focus on blaming women coaches for their own lack of success resulting in double standards associated with gender bias (e.g., inequities with promotion and evaluation processes) (Kamphoff, 2006; LaVoi, 2016). Because sport has long been viewed as a male domain, men coaches do not experience these gendered double standards and often receive positive evaluations from both students and administrators leading to their promotion and continued success (Aicher & Sagas, 2010).

Neoliberal ideology, a theory that demonstrates over-emphasis of the free market dominating human behavior and social ethics (Harvey, 2005; Gildersleeve, 2017; Saunders, 2014), may support “blame the women narratives” existing within the NCAA that affect how female coaches are evaluated. The binaries of “winners” entitled to power/privilege versus “losers” emanating from a theoretical lack of socioeconomic self-investment (Berg, Barry & Chandler, 2012; Saunders, 2014) perpetuates existing gender hierarchies within higher education. Negative discourse directed towards women coaches and about their narratives within collegiate athletics buttress neoliberal influences that maintain the status quo in higher education and the male-centric, white, heteronormative, cis-gendered, able-bodied athletic environment

(Birrell & Theberge, 1994; LaVoi, 2016). Often, these narratives are recycled by decision makers within athletic leadership. While these effects are well-documented in the literature, how athletic directors and leaders utilize this discourse, however, is not well studied (LaVoi, 2016). As a result, I determined that examining the institutional discourse surrounding the evaluative process and overall leadership within the NCAA was vital to understanding women coaches' recruitment, retention and persistence.

### **Purpose of Research**

The purpose of this study was to examine the discourse, narratives and practices used at Loveland State University (LSU), a Regional Comprehensive University (RCU) and NCAA Division II institution that was positively modeling gender equity and inclusivity evidenced by demographics of coaching staff. Approximately, 200 student-athletes compete while pursuing an undergraduate degree at LSU. Seven out of nine women's athletic programs are coached by women, while two out of seven men's teams are coached by women (LSU Athletics, 2018). Analysis included examination of coaching evaluations and relevant performance and staffing documents within the athletic department, observation of athletic department meetings, and interviews with athletic directors and women head coaches. The research questions for this study were:

- 1) What were the narratives of women coaches at a Regional Comprehensive University (RCU) and Division II NCAA institution that positively modeled gender equity evidenced by demographics of coaching staff ?
- 2) How did these coaches make sense of the institutional discourse while navigating their roles?

- 3) How does this institutional discourse inform women coaches recruitment, retention and persistence?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study was depicted as a metaphoric storm cloud comprised of neoliberalism, institutionalized masculinity and heteronormativity hovering above a labyrinth full of twists and turns that women coaches and athletic leaders must navigate every day (see Appendix A “Visual Representation of Conceptual Framework”). Eagly and Carli (2007) defined the “Leadership Labyrinth” and Burton and LaVoi (2016) clearly documented the labyrinth’s negative effects on women coaches and administrators. One effect may be the combination of neoliberalism, institutionalized masculinity and heteronormativity creating rain that infiltrates the labyrinth. Thus, when raindrops hit athletic departmental culture, they intensify and/or create additional challenges for women navigating the Leadership Labyrinth space stemming from institutionalized masculinity and heteronormativity. As such, norms of masculine power and privilege form binaries of men as “winners” and women as “losers”, and blaming narratives directed at women coaches and administrators.

Furthermore, obstacles such as bias towards women’s ways of leading and coaching in the evaluation process and negative discourse directed at women, heterosexism, homophobia and pay inequity may permeate NCAA operational and institutional culture. Language and discourse may expose behavioral dynamics for redistributing power within the NCAA by explicitly illustrating these facets of neoliberalism affecting the efficacy of female coaches. I drew upon neoliberal theory, positionality theory, critical discourse theory and queer theory to highlight inequities or positive practices within athletic departments useful for adopting inclusive



frameworks (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2018), promoting social change and empowering the women's coaching population.

### **Theoretical Framework and Methods**

Neoliberal, positionality, critical discourse, and queer theories comprised my theoretical framework and lenses for informing analyses of discourses, narratives and praxis at LSU, a Regional Comprehensive University and NCAA Division II institution. Methodologically, deeply investigating the discourse, narratives and practices of a single institution's athletic department that was positively embodying gender equity and inclusivity provided lessons and information other institutions can employ. Specifically, I combined critical narrative analysis (CNA) and Foucauldian Dispositive Analysis to create a queer discourse methodological approach to document analysis (e.g., hiring documents and coach performance evaluations), observations (e.g., athletic departmental meetings) and semi-structured interviews with study participants. Participants included women coaches and athletic administrators (e.g., the Athletic Director, Assistant Athletic Directors and Senior Women's Administrator). The overarching goal for my study was to illuminate macro discourses of the athletic department and micro narratives of women coaches and athletic leadership at an institution excelling with gender equity and inclusivity for other NCAA institutions to model.

### **Organization of Doctoral Research Project**

This research project is organized into six chapters. The first chapter introduces the study providing the statement of the problem, research questions directing this endeavor and a definition of key terms. Specifically, research questions focused on investigating the narratives

of women coaches, how they made sense of the institutional discourse and how this institutional discourse informed their recruitment, retention and persistence at LSU. Chapter two discusses a review of current and relevant literature as well as the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that guided this study. In chapter three, a comprehensive explanation of the methodology and research design is provided. Data collection, analysis, ethical considerations and trustworthiness are discussed in depth. Chapter four depicts six women coaches narratives about their recruitment, orientation and onboarding experiences at LSU. Chapter five revealed document analysis, my observations of department meetings and themes from administrator and women coach interviews. In this section, first, FDA analysis is provided, next, themes from administrative interviews are illustrated, and then, a subsequent section described women coaches collective sense-making of LSU's institutional discourse. Finally, chapter six discusses findings and examines how they align with the existing literature on women in collegiate coaching or contribute new knowledge. Additionally, implications and recommendations geared towards specific stakeholders are provided and future areas of research are explored.

**Table 1.1 Key Terms with Definitions**

<b>Key Terms</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
<b>Closet</b>	A hypothetical term referring to those identifying as LGBTQ hiding same sex attraction, sexual fluidity or transgender identity.
<b>Critical Discourse Theory</b>	Critical theory purporting power is conveyed throughout society explicitly and implicitly through communication, language and discourse manifesting as individual knowledge.
<b>Critical Narrative Analysis</b>	Qualitative method merging critical discourse analysis with narrative analysis to examine how macro institutional discourse affects micro personal narratives and vice versa (Souto-Manning, 2014b).
<b>Discourse</b>	Differs from discussion implying what language is communicated, who does the speaking, how communication is achieved relating to context and societal reactions as a result.

<b>Dispositive Analysis</b>	A way to operationalize Foucault's (1990) critical discourse theory by analyzing meaning and power relations of discursive (e.g., texts) and non-discursive (e.g. actions and objects).
<b>Emotional discourse</b>	Expression and communication of thoughts, feelings and bodily reactions through social construction of identity.
<b>Female Apologetic</b>	Behavior exhibited by female athletes over-emphasizing femininity (e.g. clothes choice, physical appearance, self-expression and competitive style) to negate masculine/lesbian stereotypes of women in sport (Hardy, 2015; King 2008).
<b>Gendered</b>	Controversial term referring or relating to socially constructed binaries of male or female.
<b>Gendered homophobia</b>	Term used by Norman (2011) to explain the daily discrimination and prejudices sexual minorities endure based on complex perceptions of sexual identity and gender ideology.
<b>Hegemonic masculinity</b>	A heterosexual verbally and physically domineering display of socially constructed masculine traits (e.g., aggression, competition and sexual potency).
<b>Heteronormative</b>	Presumption that the heterosexual experience and heterosexuality is the preferred norm within society.
<b>Homologous reproduction</b>	Framework discussed by Burton (2015) depicting individuals in power positions allowing only those with similar traits access to the same organizational power and control.
<b>Institutionalized masculinity</b>	Privileging and reinforcing maleness and masculine behavior as conventional within organizational culture manifesting within policies, vision, values, job descriptions, hiring practices, promotion and evaluation procedures, use of space, staff meetings, and opportunities (Burton & LaVoi, 2016).
<b>Leadership Labyrinth</b>	Term Eagly and Carli (2007) used to describe the sum of multiple hurdles along women's paths to highest levels of management (e.g., heterosexism, homophobia, pay inequity and unfair performance review).
<b>Neoliberalism</b>	Ideology of free market logic and operation. Privatization, commercialization and deregulation (Harvey, 2005) combined with heightened consumerism (Saunders, 2014) is valued guiding human behavior and social ethics, especially hyper-competitive/individualistic desire to accumulate wealth and

	capital for bettering one's self (Gildersleeve, 2017).
<b>Neoliberal Feminism</b>	Form of feminism hyper-focused on individual self-care and self-reliance by women socioeconomically investing in themselves to eradicate gender inequity (Sandberg, 2013; Rottenberg, 2014).
<b>Positionality Theory</b>	Theory suggesting individuals draw upon multiple identities to conceptualize and make sense of the world around especially leadership (Kezar & Lester, 2010).
<b>Queer (verb)</b>	Term used to resist heterosexual and homosexual binaries for making what's acceptable by dominant culture strange. One can "queer" discourse, pedagogy, spaces or behavior.
<b>Queer (noun)</b>	Referring to an individual identifying as antinormative to heteronormative constructions of identity and sexuality.
<b>Queer (adjective)</b>	Contemporary and activist way individuals identify as sexually fluid for reclaiming power in society. Before the 1990's, the term was used negatively to shame people's sexuality as strange and wrong positioning them less than within society.
<b>Queer Theory</b>	Framework critically examining and resisting the practices of normalizing sexuality. Emphasizes sexual identity as fluid within discursive frameworks (Luhmann, 1998). Culturally accepted ≠ normal. For example, the opposite notion of people having to "come out" as heterosexual.
<b>Sexual culture</b>	Spectrum of beliefs and practices regarding sexuality and sexual activity within a group.
<b>Student-athlete</b>	College/university student competing on a team within the intercollegiate athletic context or NCAA.
<b>"Surviving"</b>	Descriptive metaphor portraying the negative and challenging climate women leaders navigate.
<b>"Thriving"</b>	Descriptive metaphor portraying positive climate women leaders seek to exist within.
<b>"Think manager, think male"</b>	Catch phrase used by Aicher & Sagas (2010) describing the gender stereotypes society constructs for evaluating leadership capability.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This literature review explores existing research describing conditions women coaches have historically navigated in sport and collegiate athletics and is organized into five sections. First, I portray a brief history of women in sport from the ancient era to modern U.S. time frames within the context of higher education. Additionally, I have highlighted consequences of Title IX legislation with the transition of women's collegiate sports from women's only governance structures to the current male-centric atmosphere. In the second section, I illustrate the current landscape of women in collegiate sport leadership delving into neoliberal influences contributing to a dearth of women in head coaching and athletic director positions within the NCAA. In section three, I describe the gendered (see Table 1.1), socially constructed binaries of male/female, leadership conditions women leaders navigate within collegiate athletics. Within section four, I depict how research has shown that women and queer women survive rather than thrive (see Table 1.1) in the NCAA. As I show in this section, the reason women and queer coaches are not thriving is a result of problematizing gender and sexuality specifically with performance evaluation detailing why investigating a lack of women coaches matters. Finally, in section five, I describe the study's theoretical framework drawing upon positionality theory (see Table 1.1), critical discourse theory (see Table 1.1) and queer theory (see Table 1.1) as avenues for exploring neoliberal and gendered systems in which women and queer women collegiate coaches exist and must navigate.

## **History of Women in Sport**

### **Women in Sport During Ancient Periods**

Women have been involved in sport since ancient periods; however, Western modern academia has overlooked this history. Prehistoric accounts show women participating in foot races, ballgames, wrestling, hunting, swimming, driving chariots, dancing and singing (Kennard & Carter, 1994). Kennard and Carter's (1994) research showed that women wrestled men during the harvest season in both Sparta and Africa. Partnership societies, where neither patriarchal nor matriarchal cultures dominated, existed in ancient times. A lack of binaries was evidenced by collaborative displays of power between men and women (Kennard & Carter, 1994). Women playing and participating in sports was a common part of daily life.

However, between 4300 and 600 BC, historical accounts indicate society became increasingly male-dominated and patriarchal (Tyrell, 1986). Kennard and Carter (1994) pointed to the following forces as responsible for the rise of Indo-Europeans that changed the atmosphere with the Kurgans, of Russian descent, seizing much of Greece, Mesopotamia, Canaan and Egypt enacting punishment towards individuals rebelling against the patriarchy. Worship of violent Gods, strict hierarchies, increased crime, murder and rape characterized this time period (Kennard & Carter, 1994), setting punitive tones and fearful environments for society and women.

Similarly, Greek mythology portrayed the Goddess Athena's symbolism radically transforming roles from collaborator to dominator. Athena represented the mythical warrior virgin Amazon intending to be perceived as non-threatening while in contrast, the Goddess Hera (formerly Gaia) lost power because she became jealous of Zeus' wife (Kennard & Carter, 1994; Mouratidis, 1984). The revered position of Goddesses increasingly became threatened.

Additionally, most Greek mythological writings about men's sports originated with Homer who was well known for his patriarchal bias (Kennard & Carter, 1994; Mouratidis, 1984). Homer suggested that in ancient Greece, men's athletic events occurred with horses and skilled craftsmen as main prizes. Fathers held competitions where men battled to claim daughters as property (Kennard & Carter, 1994). In their discussion of Homer's *Illiad and Odyssey*, Kennard and Carter (1994) illustrated that at the Olympic games and Greek festivals women playing sports were not cited in Homer's accounts, even though they frequently participated in chariot riding and ball playing. Often, women were excluded from the Olympic games and were not allowed to watch, even from afar, with the penalty for any transgressions being death (Mouratidis, 1984). This became a time when the masculine athletic physical form was exalted as evidenced by statues of Greek Gods, not Goddesses. Conversely, women in athletic form, often associated with Athena the Amazon, were viewed as independent and challenging to male figures of authority (Kennard & Carter, 1994). As these historical and Greek mythological accounts show, the foundation for prejudice against women in sport originated and has been ingrained within society since ancient times.

### **U.S. Women in Sport and Higher Education 1870-1980**

The story of women's athletics in the U.S. began in the 1870's paralleling the surge of women in higher education. Wellesley College, chartered in 1870 (Trustees of Wellesley College, 2017), and Smith College, founded in 1871 (Smith College, 2017), were the first all-women's colleges. With an influx of female students entering post-secondary environments, women physical education instructors were needed to teach gymnastics and calisthenics, healthy lifestyles, and strategies for enduring the rigors of womanhood (e.g., maintaining physical well-

being for sexual reproduction) (Hult, 1994). By the mid-1880's, most eastern women's colleges as well as several mid-western colleges and universities offered physical education classes. The 1890's unveiled an age of the liberated, reinvented woman in society shifting the perception of women's bodies. Women physical educators influenced and inspired students to become strong, active and commanding; to fully express themselves through active sport (Hult, 1994; Park, 2010). They coached women to build muscle mass to maintain maternal function and augment physical beauty (e.g., feminine silhouette and curves), proper posture and overall well-being (Hult, 1994). A correlation between women's bodies and the patriarchal expectations placed upon them became evident during this time.

Soon thereafter, women's basketball originated in 1892 at Smith College, becoming one of the most popular intercollegiate team sports (Hult, 1994). Women physical educators became a cohesive group, fostering collaborative atmospheres and providing novel approaches to coaching individual and team sports (Hult, 1994). As women's collegiate varsity offerings grew exponentially, women physical educators and athletic leaders worried women's sports were modeling men's athletics. Thus, women athletic leaders pursued authority over women's programs establishing their own athletic standards, policies and regulations ultimately managing women's collegiate sports and athletes (Hult, 1994; Park, 2010).

Between 1920-1940, physical educators' sought organizational control of women's collegiate sports and created the Committee on Women's Athletics (CWA). This era additionally depicted power struggles as another women's group, the National Amateur Athletic Federation (NAAF) along with the men's Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), were competing for control over intercollegiate women's athletics. The NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) was established in 1910 and, because of decreasing membership, began challenging the AAU's



authority by aggressively seeking women as members and women's athletic programs (Hult, 1994). Over time, the men's AAU obtained jurisdiction over campus and national policy/administration of women's athletic teams by monopolizing leadership positions, resulting in few women occupying these roles. Tension surfaced as women physical educators refused to compromise with the AAU's political principles and philosophy for administering intercollegiate programs. As a result, these women were forced out of managing women's sports leading to male hegemony within the higher educational athletic context (Hult, 1994). Consequently, the dearth of women in decision-making positions and AAU's successful quest to mobilize women's sports out of educational competitive spheres and into public recreational sectors diminished women's power over athletic policies and procedures causing women's athletics to be less competitive within higher education (Hult, 1994).

Conversely, the decade between 1940-1950 showcased women as strong and capable in workforce since many men were abroad fighting World War II. Physical education and competition became crucial methods of training women for labor historically reserved for men during the Industrial Revolution and thereafter (Park, 2010). Women physical educators reclaimed power overseeing several competitive programs for the War Department and conducting athletic trainings for the military (Hult, 1994; Park, 2010). Younger physical education teachers established coalitions and the increasing demand for women's sports and competition effectively shifted organizational power back to women. Additionally, women's physical education groups sanctioned tournaments organizing national championship opportunities allowing women to compete at the highest skill levels (Hult, 1994).

## **Consequences of Title IX**

A revolution in U.S. women's athletics took place during 1960-1980. As a result, a progressive alliance of athletic leaders transpired from changes women physical educators enacted during the post-World War II era, envisioning women competing at the highest levels of varsity intercollegiate sport (Hult, 1999). These leaders focused on student needs and rebelled against the commercialization of the men's athletic model, preferring that women's athletics not be similarly commercialized (Hult, 1999, 1994). The National Association for Girls and Women in Sport (NAGWS) and The Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) were established in the 1960's. Both organizations provided operational leadership and procedures for women's intercollegiate sports. Title IX originated in 1972 and was intended to eradicate educational discrimination and denial of access to equal opportunities for women in sport. According to Hult (1994), while Title IX was a pivotal legislative act for growing, directing and defining women's athletics at this time, power struggles between women physical educators and men's governance structures resulted. Although Title IX improved women's representation in and access to sport offerings, thousands of women's leadership and coaching positions were eliminated (Hult, 1999, 1994; Park, 2010), the male commercialized version and philosophy of athletics began dominating girls and women's athletics, physical education and athletic departments became segregated into male and female domains, and the AIAW – an important women's athletic leadership association - was disbanded (Hult, 1999, 1994). The aforementioned administrative and leadership consequences as well as the rise of a masculinized and commercialized world of men's and women's collegiate sports resulted from Title IX's passage. As such, these negative outcomes have been pointed to as the origins for the decrease of women in athletic leadership and college coaching today.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) emerged as a result of the AIAW disbanding and affected women in sport. The NCAA was male-dominated during this time and did not consider the AIAW a professional equal. Leaders of the NCAA had desired control of women's collegiate sports since the mid-1960's and assured efficiently administered championships, subsidizing championship travel expenses, the same rules for men's and women's teams simplifying overall procedures, and abundant television coverage (Hult, 1999, 1994). Athletic directors were attracted by the NCAA's plethora of resources, but failed to embrace the different programmatic needs of women's programs compared to men's (Hult, 1999). In 1972, 90% of women's athletic teams were coached by women and women in leadership positions within the once collaborative and nonhierarchical AIAW transitioned into the hierarchy of NCAA leadership. However, these women had limited access to paid positions within the NCAA. As a result of these complex and compounding forces, women in collegiate sport leadership began dramatically declining during this time. Interestingly, this historical account of the twists and turns that women physical educators and coaches endured within early collegiate sport parallels the power differentials women experienced in sport during ancient times. Since history tends to repeat itself, it is important to study women in collegiate coaching not only from historical viewpoints, but also angles that will help institutions change policies and practices for achieving a gender equitable workforce while positively impacting student-athletes.

### **The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Governance**

The athletic environment can breed an unhealthy desire to win at all costs with an over-emphasis on competition, rule-breaking for personal/institutional gain, and gamesmanship over sportsmanship and integrity. Combined with the rising public interest in collegiate, the desire to

win has led to increases in consumerism and commercialization of athletics and athletes (Beyer & Hannah, 2000; Smith, 2000). Given this atmosphere, higher education institutions seek advantages for remaining competitive in athletics where more robust rules and regulations are needed.

In 1905, there were over eighteen deaths and one hundred injuries resulting from intercollegiate football, catching President Roosevelt's attention, resulting in a White House conference to evaluate football rules (Smith, 2000). Football deaths and injuries persisted impelling Chancellor Henry McCracken of New York University to call a national meeting of intercollegiate representatives to assess whether college football could be regulated or should be eliminated (Smith, 2000). In 1910, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) was established, at the White House and college/university leaders' urging, and emerged as a member-led organization of higher educational institutions to regulate collegiate sports. Today, the NCAA is comprised of college/university presidential leadership, athletic directors, faculty representatives, research analysts, compliance officers, academic support staff, coaches, sports information directors, and health and safety personnel committed to an over-arching mission of collegiate athlete well-being, fairness and success in sport, classroom and life. The NCAA operates based upon seven core values including (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2017c):

- Acting as the model for collegiate athletics;
- Incorporating the highest level of integrity and sportsmanship;
- Pursuing academic and athletic excellence;
- Supporting collegiate athletics within the larger context of higher education by embracing community and solidifying member identity;

- Fostering an inclusive culture for student-athletes and career advancement for coaches and administrators from diverse backgrounds;
- Respect for institutional autonomy and philosophy;
- Presidential governance of intercollegiate athletics at the individual campus, regional (conference) and national echelons. (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2017c)

NCAA members serve on committees, create rules and adopt policies for implementation on campus designed to oversee college sports, including universal compliance standards for academics, recruiting of student-athletes and administration of National championship events (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2017a).

### **NCAA Divisional Delineation**

In the early 1970's, the NCAA's membership created three divisions, Divisions I, II, and III, to represent differences in institutional competitive capabilities (NCAA Report, 1999; Smith, 2000), varying university philosophies of athletics represented in various postsecondary sectors, and types of men's and women's sport offerings (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2017b). Colleges and universities with Division I status offer multi-year scholarships where 56% of athletes receive athletic financial aid (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2017b). Comparatively, schools within Division I typically enroll the largest number of students with median undergraduate enrollments at approximately 9,200 and average graduation rates of 83% (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2017d), while managing robust athletic budgets and offering the most athletic scholarships. Division I athletes may pursue professional athletic careers upon graduation, however, less than 10% of NCAA student-athletes (see Table 1.1) choose this route (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2019).

Division II offers high level athletic competition coupled with academic opportunities for student-athletes, many of which are first-generation college students, with special focus on academic achievement, retention and community/civic engagement (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2017d). These institutions typically enroll average student populations of approximately 2,500 providing 61% of student-athletes some type of athletics financial aid in the form of full or partial scholarships and have an average academic success rate (graduation rate) of 71% (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2017d).

Division III institutions offer integrated environments for scholarship and athletics where academic rigor is primary and athletic engagement extracurricular. Typically, these are smaller, highly selective colleges with median student populations of approximately 1,800 reporting an average academic success rate (graduation rate) of 87% and highest graduation rates among athletes (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2017d). Division III schools provide 82% of all student-athletes either an academic grant or need-based financial aid (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2017d).

Research on women in coaching and generally on collegiate sport has focused on Divisions I and III with very few studies concentrated on Division II institutions. The lack of research on Division II and women in coaching is interesting given the emphasis on educational access for marginalized student populations and civic community engagement at these schools. This gap in the literature signifies an untapped area of research, pointing to the need for a study elucidating the pathways women in collegiate coaching must navigate to serve students and achieve positive learning outcomes.

## **Landscape of Women in Collegiate Sport Leadership**

Women have been disenfranchised within collegiate coaching and sport leadership roles for decades. Most notably, the percentage of women coaching NCAA sports has drastically declined since the passing of Title IX in 1972, when women possessed 90% of collegiate women's athletic coaching positions, to approximately 40% today (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Burton, 2015; LaVoi, 2018; 2016; Miller, 2015). Women of color are also underrepresented in the NCAA. Disaggregated data for Division I showed 5.8 % of head coaches for women's sports are women of color compared to 9% men of color for women's sports (Carter-Francique & Olushola, 2016). Acosta and Carpenter's (2014) thirty-seven-year longitudinal study of women in sport across the United States demonstrated that one out of five athletic directors (A.D.s) were women compared to four out of five men as A.D.s. Though the findings from Acosta and Carpenter's (2014) study highlight gender as a focal point, they neglect to present data on the number of women coaches identifying as lesbian, bisexual, transgendered or queer signifying gaps regarding sexuality and the potential implications of queer women coaching in the NCAA.

From a regional perspective, the Northeast U.S. showcased the highest percentage of female A.D.s at 29.9%, the West coast demonstrated the highest actual reported number of women athletic administrators, while the Southern region reported the lowest (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). The south also demonstrated the highest percentage of institutions lacking women in any athletic administrative positions (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). From a political viewpoint, traditionally "blue" states yielded the highest percentage of women A.D.s at 26.8% while "red" states reported a mere 15.10% and the highest percentage of institutions with no women represented in athletic administration overall (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014), indicating a

correlation exists between support for and retention of women in athletic leadership and a region's political affiliation.

There is also a lack of women as A.D.s across the entire NCAA, within Divisions I, II and III, which affects the hiring of women coaches. Miller's (2015) empirical study on the composition of athletic leadership across all NCAA divisions portrayed 80% of athletic directors were men. Men A.D.s preferred hiring men for coaching roles based on familiarity and comfort level, regardless if the available position was for a men's or women's sport (Miller, 2015). However, Miller (2015) neglected to define "comfort level" or potential discourses operating about gender and sexuality in these cases. Additionally, Burton (2015) corroborated Miller's (2015) findings, contending men in collegiate athletic leadership demonstrated homologous reproduction to maintain power and authority by perpetuating male-centric networks preventing women's access to collegiate coaching positions.

For decades, men have occupied sport leadership positions ranging from youth-based entities to professional teams and monopolized leadership positions at all skill levels. As women's participation in collegiate sport increased exponentially, women's teams gained popularity and coaching positions multiplied revealing numerous financial opportunities for coaches (Kane, 2016). Men have applied for these positions gaining momentum in the profession, and women have found it difficult to compete for coaching jobs, specifically for women's teams. College sports and coaching have become competitive territory with men obtaining and retaining athletic coaching and director positions more so than women. Kane (2016) portrayed this condition as the individuals currently in positions of power who can enact lasting social change in athletics (e.g. men as A.D.s/administrators) do not confront inequities



because they benefit the most (e.g., self- preservation for advancement or promotion) from maintaining the status quo.

### **Neoliberal Effects on Collegiate Women Coaches**

Collegiate athletics, a subset of postsecondary institutions, can be viewed through a neoliberal lens. Although much of the literature on neoliberalism fails to define the term, neoliberalism embodies a philosophy and ideology of free market logic and operation guiding human behavior and social ethics (Harvey, 2005; Gildersleeve, 2017; Saunders, 2014). Gildersleeve (2017) and Gannon, Kligyte, Mclean, Perrier, Swan, Vanni and Rijswijk (2015) contend neoliberal influences, such as heightened atmospheres of competition and individualism, exist within and between universities and its faculty and staff. According to Gannon et. al (2015), the culture of the academy asserts an un-biased nature with gender and race but in actuality, portrays hidden double standards for women and women of color, not men, where social connectedness is less valued, almost invisible, in the quest for productivity and high performance under a neoliberal condition. Competition and individualism along with heterosexism and classism exist in society and higher education more than ever evidenced by increased misogyny, xenophobia, homophobia and transphobia, and decreased awareness of inclusion, compassion and integrity (Gannon et. al, 2015). Additionally, today's colleges and universities lack opportunities for students and faculty to engage in emotional discourse (see Table 1.1), defined as the expression of thoughts, feelings and bodily reactions, or space to acknowledge human challenges or achievement (Gannon et al., 2015). For example, vulnerability and any display of anxiety, depression, fear and frustration and/or fulfillment and feelings of happiness, joy and love are often dismissed by academic leaders and culture (Gannon et. al, 2015) negatively

impacting student identity, relationships, teaching, research and creativity for imparting knowledge. Emotional discourse is often devalued by white heteronormative men while economic principles are exalted preserving and illuminating white male heteronormative privilege (see Table 1.1) and heterosexuality as the societal norm, deterring women from thriving (Gannon et. al, 2015). Women who are authentic, real and emotional, and incorporate their positionality into academic roles embody inclusivity or women's ways of leading. These women's ways of leading create teaching and learning spaces that deconstruct oppressive neoliberal binaries of masculinity and femininity (Burke, Crozier & Misiaszek, 2017), embracing students' ways of being and knowing that foster positive learning outcomes (Belenky et. al, 1986).

Women's ways of leading are often at odds with neoliberalism, however. Specifically, the collective, human-centered, collaborative, emotive discourses women often use to lead are sidelined while a masculine, heroic, hyper-individualistic and win-lose neoliberal mentality is rewarded within academia (Berg, Barry & Chandler, 2012; Gannon et. al, 2015; Gildersleeve, 2017). Neoliberal undertones, such as competition and the desire to accumulate wealth and capital in individualistic and masculine ways, present barriers for women faculty, coaches and athletic leaders. However, scholarship has yet to explore this potential connection between neoliberalism and gender, sexuality or intersectional identity, specifically pertaining to the representation and experiences of women and queer coaches within the NCAA.

As Saunders (2014) described, although a money-service exchange with education has always existed, a change has happened with the rise of neoliberal ideology wherein administrators ubiquitously incorporate business models and market ideals into campus life at the exclusion of higher education's public purposes and curricular focus. Neoliberalism's core tenet

of accumulating wealth, important for bettering one's social capital, becomes the ideological imperative for individuals to compete and achieve academic success. Additionally, success or failure becomes contingent upon the ability to socioeconomically invest in one's self through schooling. Conversely, consequences of neoliberalism include the state (e.g. government or educational institutions) becoming subservient to the market and accentuating competition among individuals and educational institutions; freedom defined as the constant desire to accumulate capital; and choice manifesting as rational economic decisions (Gildersleeve, 2016). Harvey (2005) describes this relationship as the state, in this case higher education, surrendering to the global market. Within athletics, the consequences of neoliberalism manifest as individual heroic leadership where masculinity becomes an exalted and normative ideal. This emphasis on masculinity results in dangerous dichotomies of men as winners (entitled to privilege) versus women as losers (those failing to invest socioeconomically and marginalized), negating collaborative decision-making, devaluing women's ways of leading and dismissing their presence altogether (Berg, Barry & Chandler, 2012; LaVoi, 2016). Women and queer athletic leaders are blamed for their own lack of success due to meritocratic (LaVoi, 2016), masculinized, neoliberal and heteronormative institutional structures, creating barriers and lasting implications, diminishing women's and queer women's access to and retention within collegiate coaching and athletic leadership positions.

### **The Emergence of Neoliberal Feminism and the Leadership Labyrinth**

Women are also complicit with neoliberalism evidenced by Sandberg's (2013) publication of *Lean In*. In her book, Sandberg (2013) professed that the gender leadership gap exists because women have not embodied a new, liberated form of feminism hyper-focused on

individual self-care and self-reliance by socioeconomically investing in themselves to eradicate gender inequity. Sandberg (2013) outlined three tenets to leaning in: internalize the revolution, sit at the table, and work together towards equality. First, effectively internalizing the revolution takes place when women stop holding themselves back from leadership opportunities by increasing their own self-confidence and freely participating in decision making. Second, Sandberg (2013) professed that women need to sit at the leadership table and better position themselves to assume more leadership responsibility and thus, power. Finally, women working together towards equality suggests that more women in higher echelons of leadership equates to improved treatment of women in general due to shared experiences of empathy (Rottenberg, 2014; Sandberg, 2013).

Interestingly, the quest to “Lean In” highlights another twist and turn in the Leadership Labyrinth. “Leaning in” embodies a neoliberal version of feminism called neoliberal feminism (Rottenberg, 2014) (see Table 1.1), which over-emphasizes individualistic self-care and self-reliance over collaboration in order to achieve gender equity (Rottenberg, 2014). By applying a neoliberal theoretical lens to examine this version of feminism, it becomes evident how this ideology fails to consider the structural, institutionalized discrimination and hierarchy resulting from the lack of focus on cultural, social and economic inequities affecting leadership (Rottenberg, 2014). In other words, neoliberal feminism has emerged from wealthy white heteronormative women trying to navigate leadership under a masculinized, neoliberal culture. Moreover, Sandberg (2013) neglected to include lived experiences of the majority of women within society from an intersectional perspective or consider challenges due to race, class, sexuality, gender identity or expression, (dis)ability, religious or cultural identity. Neoliberal feminism perpetuates white heteronormative privileged environments by separating the “haves”

from the “have nots” emphasizing a binary system much like neoliberalism in general. Thus, women are blamed for not claiming their own power or focusing on themselves, instead of the system being held responsible for addressing structural inequality. Collective partnership and well-being among women are eroded while hyper-independence, self-reliance and autonomy is promoted (Rottenberg, 2014) negating fluid, more inclusive approaches to leadership and perpetuating exclusive versus inclusive spaces.

The costs of neoliberal feminism are severe. First, the heightened propensity to “Lean In” for catapulting women into leadership roles in actuality incites a reverse effect enabling heterosexism and structural inequities of power and privilege. Power and privilege manifests by increasing competition and individualism while dismantling solidarity, intentionally and unintentionally creating silos that prevent women from working collaboratively, under neoliberal and masculine norms (Rottenberg, 2014; Wilson, 2015). Within academia, the neoliberal feminist agenda also affects the creation of new knowledge and lack of mentoring between women as colleagues which dampens their power, influence and perpetuates hierarchical structures of inequity (Gannon et. al, 2015). Due to these complex forces, women may embody neoliberal approaches to advance personally and professionally or opt out altogether (Gannon et. al, 2015) maintaining the status quo and gender binary system.

Second, traditional feminist views pertaining to issues of social justice and the public good become invisible with attention directed towards the private good and individualized self-care rationalized by women’s level of socioeconomic investment (Rottenberg, 2014). Neoliberal feminism focuses on the elite 0.1% of U.S. women versus the 99.9% of women within society (Rottenberg, 2014) – those who will not achieve success by Sandberg’s (2013) definition of “Lean In” because they have already been leaning in simply to exist and survive. By not

acknowledging intersectionality and positionality of multiple lived experiences, neoliberal feminism disavows that women's leadership and identities are complex and fluid, and ignores contexts of race, class, gender expression, sexuality and (dis)ability further institutionalizing neoliberalism, heteronormativity and patriarchy in general.

Third, given Sandberg's (2013) "Lean In" is a best-seller and popular, her discourse may be pervasive in shaping identity and embodiment of leadership through a narrow, singular framework (Wilson, 2015). Additionally, "Lean In" and neoliberal feminism encourages women to only look inward constantly monitoring their progress by efficient, innovative and cost-benefit measures further perpetuating market ideals and entrepreneurialism (Rottenberg, 2014). This discourse is powerful and disenfranchises historically oppressed populations under a neoliberal, masculinized condition.

### **Neoliberalism and Resource Allocation within Collegiate Athletics**

In U.S. culture, professional men's sports are idealized as evidenced by increased media television coverage, marketing and sponsorship illustrating an increased focus on the free market and consumerism for accumulating wealth and capital in society. For example, Cooky, Messner, and Musto (2015) conducted a 25-year longitudinal study of women's sports covered in television highlight and news programs, and concluded that there was decreased coverage within both network affiliate athletic news and cable television programs. In 2014, 3.2% of broadcast time was allotted to women's sports on network news programs and two percent was devoted to women's sports on ESPN's SportCenter (LaVoi & Calhoun, 2016). Additionally, women coaches and professional athletes are paid less than their male counterparts. LaVoi (2016) indicated there are several double standards regarding the way men and women coaches are

compensated. Common situations within collegiate athletic departments regarding pay inequity for women coaches are (LaVoi, 2016):

- winning women coaches are paid less than underperforming coaches of men's teams or male counterparts with comparable experience.
- women coaches with the same experience level are paid less than coaches of men's programs.
- women coaches are paid less for coaching more athletes within the same sport than men's teams.

As a result of the aforementioned marginalization, women athletes are devalued within society compared to the men's model of athletics.

Men's sports are also favored within higher educational spheres demonstrated by increased athletic budget allocations for men's programs which are often used as a vehicle to generate revenue for postsecondary institutions (Kampoff, 2006; LaVoi, 2016; Miller, 2015) and strive for prestige (Beyer & Hannah, 2000). However, resource allocation for men and women's collegiate athletic programs drastically differs, even though Title IX mandates athletic departments provide equal funding to men's and women's NCAA programs. Such a resource disparity further confirms neoliberal influences and focus on wealth and capital by illustrating a "have vs. have nots" dichotomy and hierarchy within athletic departments. Kampoff's (2006) study on the attrition of women coaches within Division I programs revealed \$3.4 million are devoted to women's athletics juxtaposed to \$6.5 million spent on men's programs.

Approximately \$200,000 was distributed to recruiting student-athletes for men's athletic programs versus \$97,300 for women's student-athletes with those showcasing successful football

teams garnering more money than all women's programs combined (Kampoff, 2006).

The University of Minnesota-Duluth (UMD) is a relevant case study in how neoliberalism coalesces with sexism and heterosexism in college athletics. Three former UMD athletic coaches, Shannon Miller (women's ice hockey), Jen Banford (women's softball) and Annette Wiles (women's basketball) sued the university for not renewing their contracts based on age, gender and sexual orientation discrimination, and for Banford and Miller specifically, Canadian National origin (Blount, 2015; USHCO, 2016). All three coaches identified as queer women. Administrators cited budget reasons for Miller's termination after the winter 2014-2015 season. Ladda (2015) has argued this to be an inconsistent, biased and sexist decision as the University of Minnesota-Duluth paid the men's hockey coach, who has been less successful than Miller, more money. Although Miller was the highest paid women's ice hockey coach at \$215,000, her UMD counterpart coaching the men's program grosses \$20,000 more (New, 2015). Miller has routinely showcased success with her teams winning five National Championships under her tutelage (LaVoi, 2016; New, 2015), while the men's program has advanced to six National Championships, but have won zero (University Minnesota Duluth, 2018).

Investigating UMD's athletic budget revealed the men's ice hockey program has received approximately \$500,000 more per year than the women's programs evidenced by expenditure reports dating back to fiscal year 2014 (University of Minnesota Duluth, 2016). The Banford, Miller and Wiles cases demonstrate widespread implications regarding gender equity and inclusion of sexual minorities exist within higher education and the NCAA. The message conveyed by athletic departments is that it is insufficient for women coaches to manage successful programs earning respect and admiration from students, peers and the community, and



acceptable for women's programs to be underfunded and women coaches underpaid (LaVoi, 2016). As such this discourse perpetuates white male heteronormative privilege within athletic environments. New (2015) reported the unusual nature of not renewing coaching contracts due to a college or university no longer being able to afford the coach's salary possibly implying men's collegiate sports are valued within higher education and the market at large more so than women's sports. From a neoliberal and masculinized vantage viewpoint, this perpetual quest for accumulated wealth and capital in college athletics may be disenfranchising women coaches.

Continued analysis suggests if men's sports receive more money, ticket sales and fan support will increase. Thus, men's athletics must be more lucrative and deserving of augmented focus or awareness. Subsequently, views of sports as a male domain, masculinity and white male privilege as an ideology then normalizes within society and higher educational atmospheres. Emphasizing sport as predominantly a male preserve (Birell & Theberge, 1994) mirrors neoliberal tenets of hyper-individualism of masculinity permeating NCAA departments, potentially explaining why administrators, coaches, students and the media value male sports and athletic leaders more so than women's sports and leadership (Burton & LaVoi, 2015; LaVoi, 2016; Paule-Koba, 2012). Valuing and respecting women's sports/athletics would manifest in equitable media coverage, budget allocations and celebration/communication of women's athletes' success and coaching ability both professionally and collegiately.

Consequently, the lack of attention on women's athletics and coaching achievements coupled with a heightened focus on sexualizing, commodifying and objectifying women's physical characteristics and persona, especially bodily features, perpetuates patriarchal, heteronormative conditions in sport (Norman, 2010) and showcases men as powerful and women as "less than". Moreover, Roth & Basow (2004) and Dworkin (2001) contend societal standards

encourage women to look and behave in certain ways (e.g. ultra-feminine) because achieving this persona is profitable demonstrated by the success of cosmetic, fashion and fitness industries portraying the influence of neoliberalism.

### **Gendering of the Coaching Profession**

Sport, specifically NCAA athletic environments, can be considered gendered (see Table 1.1) and embodying distinct qualities of masculinity and femininity. Competitive sports value and promote traditional conceptions of masculinity, specifically heteronormative traits, as paramount to success and acceptance within the socially constructed nature of athletics (Sullivan, 2003; Theberge, 1994). In practice, hypermasculinity can manifest as over-emphasis on manliness exhibited by excessively loud, boisterous behavior, flirtatiously showing off of athletic ability, jockeying for position and “one-upping” or competing with others, overt discrimination or hate crimes directed at women and the LGBTQ population, and lewd “locker-room talk” sexualizing and demeaning women and queer individuals (Birrell & Theberge, 1994). These behaviors represent discourses at work in college athletics that preserve the athletic space as a commercialized, heteronormative and male-centric atmosphere. Burton (2015) and LaVoi (2016) contended an over-emphasis of hegemonic masculinity (see Table 1.1) breeds athletic environments and overshadows or fails to acknowledge fluid expressions of gender and queer identities. Additionally, Burton (2015) and Burton and LaVoi (2016) argued that institutional views of masculine sport leadership are crucial to studying the underrepresentation of women in NCAA head coaching and athletic director roles. Women are deemed the ‘other’ and endlessly scrutinized while in athlete, coach, manager or leadership roles. Burton (2015) additionally described athletics instilling and privileging institutionalized masculinity, normalizing and

requiring masculine behavior, ways of leadership and existence within larger higher educational and coaching contexts. Thus, masculinity as the norm becomes ensconced in discourse used to embody organizational saga, accepted regardless of context, where such privileged behavior permeates organizations negatively impacting marginalized populations.

### **Women Navigating Leadership Labyrinths**

Women coaches routinely endure several challenges within the NCAA, similar to women leaders in the business world. Drawing upon scholars Eagly and Carli's (2007) and Mavin's (2008) work on the "Leadership Labyrinth" (see Table 1.1), the twists and turns and roadblocks women encounter along the pathway to the highest levels of management, is a better metaphor than the popular glass ceiling allegory to explain the decline of women in leadership and NCAA coaching. Burton and LaVoi (2016) and Eagly and Carli (2007) demonstrated that the glass ceiling metaphor is not accurate because it describes a single barrier for example, that women are not reaching senior management or leadership levels, which is not the case. Women obtain upper echelons of business leadership as senior managers and CEOs or within athletics as coaches and administrators, but they are underrepresented because a myriad of maze-like obstacles exist which negatively affect their pathway to leadership (Burton & LaVoi, 2016; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Mavin, 2008). For example, in addition to increased competition for NCAA head coach positions, the labyrinth women coaches typically navigate includes pay inequity, bias within the evaluation process, and the general perception men's sports are more financially valuable and viable than women's (Alexander & Anderson, 1993; Burton & LaVoi, 2016). The aforementioned discrimination manifests in complex ways within the Leadership Labyrinth perpetuating the male-centric quest for capital and power in college athletics and

disenfranchising women coaches.

Societal norms that gauge leadership, coaching and teaching, through a heteronormative masculine lens, are apparent within NCAA atmospheres. However, the terms masculine and feminine are socially constructed expressions of identity which are fluid and detached from biological sex categories (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Men exhibit feminine as well as masculine traits and similarly, women demonstrate masculine and feminine characteristics (Mavin, 2008; West & Zimmerman, 1987). However, society and organizational systems punish women leaders portraying masculine or agentic qualities (e.g., assertiveness, directness, ambitiousness, self-confidence and forcefulness) and feminine or communal traits (e.g., supportiveness, sympathy, friendliness and being soft-spoken and nurturing) (Burton, 2015; Burton & LaVoi, 2016; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Mavin, 2008). Women leaders and coaches are often trapped in a double bind (LaVoi, 2016) for exhibiting agentic qualities and uniquely suffer from negative stereotyping (e.g., being labeled “bitch” and “harsh”). Additionally, they experience double standards when displaying communal qualities (e.g. viewed as irrational, erratic or emotional) (Norman, 2010). These stereotypes are another element depicting negative discourse and challenging labyrinth twists and turns men in athletic leadership do not experience. Mavin’s (2008) research on senior leadership synthesized and illustrated discourse of stereotyping and double standards women faced daily:

He is ambitious – but there is something quite ‘dirty’ about an ambitious woman; just something not quite right. He is political but she is manipulative. He is tough, focused, but she is a control freak. He is committed, but she is an obsessed workaholic. He is passionate but she is very emotional. These are some of the different ways that we describe men and women leaders on a daily basis. Communal, emotional, feminine

behaviour will not get you into the boardroom. It is not strategically valued; it is not rewarded in women; it is not yet there in our consciousness as a positive leadership style. At the same time, agentic women with masculine behaviour do not conform to men or women's expectations of a woman leader (p. 5).

Similar narratives exist within NCAA atmospheres creating challenging situations for women coaches and athletic directors seeking to advance within the profession or simply carry out daily job responsibilities (Burton & LaVoi, 2016; Norman, 2010). LaVoi (2016) discussed narratives blaming women for their lack of success within athletics such as,

Women aren't confident or assertive enough; Women don't 'Lean In' and take responsibility for their own careers; Women coaches are too 'relational'; Women don't have thick skin and can't take the pressure; Women are too 'whiny' and demand resources; Women don't support each other and 'eat their own' . (p. 21)

However, LaVoi (2016) and Mavin (2008) did not investigate the impact of sexuality, specifically, on the discourse affecting women in senior leadership. Moreover, there is a lack of studies examining this discourse about women coaches in the NCAA. Although women coaches and/or athletic directors felt compelled to express communal styles of leadership (Burton & LaVoi, 2016; Norman, 2010) possibly preventing team success and perpetuating their disenfranchisement, more research is necessary to determine how neoliberalism affects the discourse on sexuality and gender pertaining to women coaches.

The gendering of women in sport and the dominance of masculinity in society also manifests via societal interpretations of women's bodies as weak (Roth & Basow, 2004; Steinfeldt, Carter, Benton & Steinfeldt, 2011; West & Zimmerman, 1987) and interestingly,

much research has avoided challenging this myth. Dowling (2000) found in a study of nine year-olds that although both boys and girls performed equally while cycling anaerobically, girls perceived themselves to perform worse than the boys. Additionally, Dowling (2000) researched physical education elementary standards which demonstrated that boys are held to a higher standard from elementary school until puberty even though girls outperformed boys on every assessment category except agility. Among adults, men on average are only 10-15% bulkier than women as was demonstrated by a military study showing that one in four untrained women were able to lift 100 pounds (Roth & Basow, 2004). Though the aforementioned study did not specifically mention men's lifting capacity, when relative strength between men and women is compared, (e.g. factoring body weight), studies demonstrate women can leg press 110% of what men lift per kilogram of lean body mass (Roth & Basow, 2004). This suggests women have greater relative leg strength overall and are actually stronger than men in this context. However, this knowledge on women's relative strength is not conveyed within society and dismissed within collegiate athletics thus, the discourse on women's physical ability and athleticism is gendered and tiered with men positioned above women.

The male form, exalted as powerful and strong within society, has been accepted as the athletic norm while women's physiques have been stereotyped as fragile, delicate and gendered feminine (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Steinfeldt, Carter, Benton and Steinfeldt (2011) report 71.4% of the U.S. believe for men to be masculine, they must be muscular. This positions women's bodies subordinate to men's, attaching gender differences to biological hierarchies and highlights another labyrinth women navigate. Women have been socialized to internally self-denigrate based on societal standards exhibited through film, television and magazines, conveying women's bodies as weak and their self-identity as only feminine (West &

Zimmerman, 1987). Consequently, women can accept self-defeating discourse as truth through perpetuation of negative self-talk, low self-esteem and comparing one's self to unrealistic media images of the body (Dworkin, 2001, Ghidinelli, 2013, Roth & Basow, 2004). Ghidinelli (2013) and Roth & Basow (2004) further contend women self-inflict conceptual limits and disciplining behaviors based on the way they view their bodies exhibited by poor body image, dieting, eating disorders to conform to societal ideals of feminine curves and thinness ubiquitously portrayed in the media. How women come to understand or know their bodies through discourse illustrates how, when and if they exercise their power. Demonstrating one's power is an important way to relate and navigate within society and cultivate self-esteem (Foucault, 1990), principles that coaching and teaching promote. Although, the aforementioned studies examined power in the context of women's bodies, they failed to study how the discourse associated with women's physical power intersect and impact one's sexuality.

### **Women Coaches Surviving**

Athletic departments may be considered a community within themselves as well as a subgroup of an overall postsecondary institution. However, a sense of community or togetherness does not automatically exist, especially on college campuses or within athletic departments (Burton & LaVoi, 2016; Sullivan, 2003; Theberge, 1994). Administrators and coaches share obligations of developing student athletes, but might not respect one another in the process. Sullivan (2003) contended several assumptions in the literature exist, claiming those who share an identity, similar viewpoint or work responsibilities automatically comprise a community. Fitting into the athletic community for queer women collegiate coaches can be difficult, especially if these individuals become problematized because of gender and/or sexual

identity, or when sexism and/or homophobia saturate college athletics (LaVoi, 2016; Norman, 2011). However, there is a lack of sociology on sport literature focused on the nexus of athletic climate and queer coaches' leadership. Sullivan (2003) posited the aforementioned challenges exist due to lack of awareness by administrators and leadership for managing identities and organizational systems, privileging and perpetuating heteronormative settings that normalize reproductive sexuality. Heteronormative standards are perpetuated in NCAA environments making coaching, working, or simply existing extremely challenging for many queer/women coaches, exemplifying the need for research about how athletic department culture and discourses affect women's ability to lead.

Consequently, queer/women coaches are seen as challenging norms and arbitrary masculine or feminine heterosexual standards socially constructed within the sports world. West and Zimmerman (1987) discuss the gender binary of masculine and feminine occurs frequently in organized sports where masculine behaviors become institutionalized in the very fabric of the setting, perpetuating neoliberal and patriarchal environments and marginalizing queer individuals and women. This neoliberal and patriarchal perception of athletics becomes problematic if the belief that women participating or coaching sports makes them unfeminine is supported by athletic directors, athletes or coaches. However, more research is needed to understand how these perceptions might manifest into discourses within athletics departments. Women might be perceived as unfeminine, but this does not necessarily suggest they are not female (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Challenging masculine norms disrupts heteronormative culture in the classroom as well as on the court or field. Since both men and women possess the physical, mental and emotional capabilities to play and participate in sports, gender contextually



is irrelevant. This necessitates recognizing that femininities, masculinities and sexualities occur fluidly along a spectrum (Scraton & Flinton, 2013).

### **The Intercollegiate Coach and Student-Athlete Relationship**

Coaches relate to their players in many ways to promote athlete self-determination. How coaches create and orchestrate practice sessions, their decision-making and leadership styles (e.g. authoritarian, autocratic or democratic behaviors), and the quality and quantity of feedback provided to students greatly affects player motivation and development (Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007). Amorose & Anderson-Butcher (2007) studied athletes' perceptions of their coaches and the effects on player motivation levels. Their findings indicated that coaches exhibiting a process-oriented leadership style focusing on instruction, training and learning while also largely democratic (e.g., soliciting feedback from players) in nature versus autocratic (e.g., decisions dominated by head coaches) positively affected athletes and increased intrinsic motivation in their players (Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007). Additionally, coaches providing high amounts of positive, specific and technique or strategy-based feedback while minimizing punishing or ignoring indifferent behavior also increased player motivation and well-being (Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007), increasing the probability of these coaches serving as role models for their athletes (LaVoi, 2016).

### **Women Coaches in the NCAA**

Revisiting the concept of the body is highly important as this presents challenges within the world of collegiate athletics for women coaches and athletes. Women athletes need to build muscle in order to compete effectively and successfully. Steinfeldt, et. al (2011) suggest women college athletes often struggle with internal conflicts between the need to be muscular for their

sport while satisfying societal standards or social pressures to be normatively feminine. However, this line of reasoning does not apply to all women competing in collegiate athletics. The issue of “being” a muscular and strong athlete is closely related to homophobia and lesbians in sport (Norman, 2011; Paule-Koba, 2012; Roth & Basow, 2004; Steinfeldt et. al, 2011). In this context of conceptualizing the body, the goal is not to feminize or deconstruct women’s identity, but to compromise and limit women’s power by labeling lesbian and queer athletes as unwomanly (Roth & Basow, 2004). This marginalizes and places pressure on these athletes to either prove they are not lesbian/queer or suppress their sexual identities. Individuals can become intimidated when women challenge patriarchal, male athletic norms. Thus, women’s strength and athleticism resist patriarchal, masculine conceptions that men should dominate the sports world (Birrell & Theberge, 1994; Burton & LaVoi, 2016). Women coaches also experience the tension of being muscular and facing society’s view that they are unfeminine, perpetuating negative discourse that disenfranchises them from coaching and athletic leadership. The lack of women in coaching negatively impacts student athlete development because students do not experience women in leadership.

Women coaches uniquely know women athletes – how far they can and need to push their bodies, physically, mentally and emotionally for success; a way of knowing men do not experience or communicate. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) compared women’s methods of connected teaching that emphasize cooperation versus those focusing on power and subordination. Connected and cooperative teaching are women’s ways of knowing where men typically do not demonstrate cooperative qualities and tend to embody neoliberal competitive influences fostering subordinating, hierarchical environments. Connected teachers believe in their students’ voices, empowering them to grow cognitively and psychologically

(Belenky et. al, 1986). Coaching mirrors teaching where women coaches often utilize these same qualities through helping their athletes thrive in ways women coaches uniquely know, and highlighting the importance of attracting women coaches and athletic administrators to the NCAA. Belenky et. al (1986) further advocated that educators celebrate women's voices via pedagogical methods of connection, collaboration and acceptance, encouraging students to contribute knowledge from their lived experiences.

Delving deeper connecting women's ways of knowing into women's ways of leading, Bensimon (1989) placed gender as a focal point for examining leadership juxtaposing men's and women's interpretations of university leaders and discovered that one's "being" or positionality intersects with one's leadership style and discourse interdependently. In her study, the man as president demonstrated competitive, hierarchical discourse utilizing phrases such as "being first", heroically leading by example and cajoling employees to move in specific directions (Bensimon, 1989). The other president, a woman, also focused on mobilizing individuals, in contrast described leading as assimilating goals of institutional mission and context, reshaping them if needed, empowering individuals – her ways of leading and "being" became ensconced with the university reflected in her discourse (Bensimon, 1989). Thus, her presidency embodied university mission, vision and values as she led organizational change and demonstrated that being connected with the institutional discourse impacts leadership identity (Bensimon, 1989).

However, Bensimon (1989) did not investigate the reflexive potential of sexuality intersecting with women's ways of leading, positionality and identity that might affect the embodiment of university mission, vision and values. Analyzing discourse revealing female coaches' embodiment of leadership through institutional mission, vision and values and a discursive queer lens might illustrate correlations between the discourse surrounding women

coaches' struggles with societal demands placed upon their physical embodiment. This discourse analysis can demonstrate how the athletic and higher educational community relates to NCAA women in coaching.

### **Queer Women Coaches in the NCAA**

Many women and NCAA coaches in particular, identify as queer, lesbian, bisexual and/or transgendered. Bilodeau and Renn (2005) contend specific research on LGBT identities explored relationships between gender, sexuality, socioeconomic class, ability and spirituality as greatly affecting general human development. Investigating an individual's multiple intersecting identities highlights social inequities as visible and explicit rather than invisible or implicit. Illustrating openly the way women, especially queer women collegiate coaches, are perceived within both society and NCAA atmospheres is vital to understanding how these coaches choose to exercise or not exercise power as well as the opportunities available to them. As Bowleg (2008) discussed, intersectionality research augments and updates programming that can shape public policy, expand knowledge within higher educational campus settings and benefit marginalized identities often overlooked, such as queer women coaches. Researching these coaches' experiences in ways that provide opportunities to voice their struggles and inequities within NCAA atmospheres matters and becomes increasingly critical to preserving women's ways of coaching and women's opportunities to coach, but more importantly, to growing the coaching profession.

Drawing upon the notion of intersectionality, Kezar and Lester's (2010) work showcased positionality as an essential aspect to consider when researching the relationship of discourse and leadership. In other words, how individuals' stories and backgrounds encompass multiple aspects of identity in addition to race and gender (e.g., sexuality, class, personal/professional status and

education level) affects their perspectives of leadership and encourages dialogue revealing the myriad of ways others experience leadership within organizations (Kezar & Lester, 2010). Much of the literature on women in athletic leadership portrays singular identity frameworks with LaVoi's (2016) ecological-intersectional model (see Appendix A) the only one to date discussing how women's multiple identities, including sexuality, affect women coaches as leaders in sport. Specifically, LaVoi's (2016) model explained the lack of women in sport coaching from individual, interpersonal, organizational/structural and sociocultural aspects combined with the reflexive potential of power manifesting within top-down and bottom-up directions affecting human behavior within collegiate environments over time. Additionally, the individual component of the model accounts for a comprehensive set of women coaches' intersecting identities (i.e., gender, race, sexual identity, class, age, parental status and (dis)ability) impacting them personally and professionally and molding action or non-action within the larger organizational and institutional context (LaVoi, 2016).

Norman's (2011, 2016) as well as LaVoi's (2016) research corroborated a male dominated atmosphere within college athletics and showed that many studies fail to explore the day to day nuances, encounters and voices of queer women coaches. Despite progressive gains for women athletes, Paule-Koba (2012) described homophobia as a significant barrier keeping women out of sport, silencing lesbians' voices and dismissing their lived experiences. However, studying the discursive effects of power manifesting within athletic department climate as a result of these lived experiences through queer theoretical vantage points might provide insight to explain and/or raise consciousness for athletic leaders concerning the lack of and overall oppression of this population.

## **Problematizing Women and Queer Women Coaches**

Queer theory resists society's focus on heteronormative representations of identity and purports gender roles, identity and sexuality as socially constructed (Nagoshi & Brzuzy, 2010). However, queer theory delves deeper through questioning whether gender and/or sexuality labels should exist at all and rejecting the tendency to categorize individuals (Glasser & Smith, 2008; Nagoshi & Brzuzy, 2010). Additionally, the term "queer" aims to shock society and empower those claiming a more fluid self-identity that rejects masculine and feminine contextual binaries while eradicating heterosexuality as the societal norm (Luhmann, 1998). From an educational perspective, the term queer seeks to erode hetero/homo binaries for social justice transgression.

Norman (2011, 2016) advocated for investigating the discrimination and homophobia lesbian coaches endure and how confronting societal norms impacts them professionally, emotionally, psychologically and socially as vital to reshaping the current landscape of NCAA athletics. While examining self-identified lesbian coaches' experiences within the United Kingdom, Norman (2011) coined the term "gendered homophobia" (see Table 1.1) as frequently existing within lesbian coaches' daily lives, arguing they were problematized based on their sexual orientation, perceived as "others" and thus, portrayed as "less than" regarding leadership ability. As a result of the exclusionary othering and problematizing of coaches, a white male heteronormative culture became systemic within collegiate athletics. Consequently, lesbian coaches increasingly felt compelled to deny and hide their sexual identities to survive a discriminatory and hostile environment promoting exclusivity rather than inclusivity. Ladda (2015) reported in a recent editorial, an NCAA athletic director mentioning to another coach, "It is better to be a whore than gay" (p. 1) exemplifying homophobia and problematizing discourse within U.S. athletic department culture. Norman's (2011) work lays the foundation for applying

a critical research approach where marginalized lived experiences equates to self-awareness, reflexivity and provides an objective lens (Jermier, 1998) for future research on sexuality and leadership capability.

### **Women & Queer Women Coaches' Performance Evaluation Challenges**

There is a dearth of research discussing the relationship between gender and/or sexuality bias and the performance appraisal/review process for NCAA coaches. Much of the literature regarding coaching performance reviews within intercollegiate athletics mentioned issues regarding attributes necessary for leadership, how coaching effectiveness be measured or the hiring process operate (Aicher & Sagas, 2010; Cunningham & Dixon, 2003). However, Aicher and Sagas (2010) and Cunningham and Dixon (2003) did not document or analyze how these processes affect the intersecting identities of underrepresented, marginalized groups. Sabo et al. (2016) suggested recommendations NCAA departments can follow for promoting gender equity and reducing bias for example, establishing policies and processes conveying clear expectations, constructive evaluation feedback and allowing space for employees to voice concerns about the evaluation and appraisal process in general. Although Sabo et. al (2016) provided useful general guidelines for assessment and evaluation, they neglected to determine the overall value of the coach evaluation process and/or provide discourse analysis, how these processes relate to intersectional identities, or reveal power dynamics within athletic departments. Examining how the coaching performance review process affects women and queer women coaches reveals discourses at work in athletics departments and would be an area ripe for extensive inquiry and new knowledge.

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used for this study effectuated neoliberal theory, positionality theory, critical discourse theory and queer theory. These theories may also be depicted and expressed as:

*neoliberalism + negative discourse @ women and queer coaches + coaches' positionality = decrease of women NCAA coaches.*

Applying positionality, critical discourse and queer theoretical lenses to neoliberal influences within the NCAA allowed for a comprehensive intersectional approach to this research and revealed hidden nuances currently not explored in existing literature. Utilizing positionality theory, critical discourse theory and queer theory on athletic department practices (e.g., onboarding, hiring practices or performance evaluations) showed how power may be equalized between coaches and administrators and used to improve social equity and athletic department culture.

### Positionality Theory

LaVoi (2016) indicated researchers need to be mindful not to create binaries or essentialize coaching within static gender roles. Thus, it is important to view positions and identities of coach as leader in fluid and dynamic ways. Applying positionality theory to contexts of women and queer women in sport leadership provided a comprehensive view of how coaches and those working with, evaluating, and relating to them make sense of their leadership. Similar to other post-structural ideologies considering subjectivity, Kezar and Lester (2010) posit that positionality theory exposes how individuals draw upon their multiple identities to conceptualize and make sense of the world and leadership.



Three main tenets comprise positionality theory: intersecting identities, power relations and context. First, intersecting identities refers to people embodying multiple identities in addition to race, class and gender. Second, power exists as a central component to how people mold their conceptualizations and experiences interrelated to one another, often modified through sense-making of norms and ideologies (Kezar and Lester, 2010). Third, considering power relations within specific environments becomes increasingly relevant to people's interpretations of key organizational concepts such as leadership. Through applying these tenets of positionality theory, I reveal the fluid nature of multiple identities illuminating plural interpretations of women coaches as leaders within the NCAA. Additionally, positionality theory emphasizes the intersectionality of identities to encourage dialogue and help people understand one another within athletic departmental contexts.

Kezar and Lester (2010) contend using positionality theory as a theoretical lens uncovers how power dynamics at differing levels of institutions combine to sculpt and influence beliefs and behaviors about leadership. Given that leadership styles are affected by all parts of an individual's life not only experiences within the workplace, higher educational institutions can intentionally and openly discuss power struggles to equalize power imbalances affecting campus cultures (Kezar & Lester, 2010). Leadership that is simplified and narrowly defined by attributes privileging dominant cultures, for example white heteronormative institutionalized masculinity within the NCAA, in actuality creates inflexible and discriminatory practices impeding progress as well as individuals' (e.g., women coaches) access to advancement opportunities and retention within the organization (Kezar & Lester, 2010). Examining women and queer women coaches leadership from a positionality perspective elucidates existing power dynamics, but more

importantly, demonstrates that coaching, leadership, gender and sexuality are all fluid, improving their working conditions and ultimately benefiting student athletes.

### **A Critical Discourse Approach**

Analyzing the relationship between gender, language, discourse and power through a critical discourse lens is imperative when examining the lack of women NCAA coaches and athletic directors. Actions are important, but language is equally, if not more powerful for achieving equity especially manifested and portrayed as discourse. Mavin's (2008) aforementioned portrayal of women in leadership described men as ambitious and political, but demeaning ambitious women as dirty, manipulative and over-achieving. This research exposed hegemonic either/or neoliberal binaries of male privilege, and discourses, institutionalized within the fabric of organizational philosophy in higher education.

Foucault (1990) argued that language, specifically discourse, manifests as knowledge. Knowledge is power; whomever decides what is talked about also determines what becomes knowledge which effectively shapes how we think and our self-awareness (Ponikvar, 2016). Our thoughts turn into words, these words influence our actions, and our actions evoke habits revealing integrity and character, both consciously and subconsciously. Subsequently, individuals make sense of knowledge through discourse and have the ability to exercise power as a result (Foucault, 1990; Gildersleeve & Hernandez, 2012). This relationship between knowledge, discourse and power molds the construction of identities, such as gender, sexuality related to leadership, which affect human social relationships (Gildersleeve & Hernandez, 2012) and can manifest within collegiate sports (Knoppers, 1987).

LaVoi (2016) discussed viewing women coaches through an ecological-intersectional lens revealing that stereotypes and discrimination towards women in coaching will remain if the

discourse of coach as leader is only conceptualized as masculine. LaVoi's (2016) model explained the lack of women in sport coaching from individual, interpersonal, organizational/structural and sociocultural dimensions that, when combined with the reflexive potential of power manifesting within top-down and bottom-up directions, can affect human behavior over time. Although LaVoi (2016) highlighted negative discourse directed at women coaches manifesting as blaming narratives from individuals within and outside athletic departments perpetuating the status quo, she did not examine how neoliberal ideology might impact individual, interpersonal, organizational and societal aspects of women in sport. Additionally, LaVoi (2016) did not include how other forms of discourse (e.g., coaching evaluations, hiring documents or language/discussion during athletic department meetings) affect how coaches enact their roles and navigate the labyrinth under neoliberal conditions, highlighting gaps in the literature and areas ripe for further inquiry.

Discourse is filled with power and ideology (Gildersleeve & Hernandez, 2012). Additionally, discourse that embodies masculinity and heteronormativity situates men as effectively doing the talking while silencing women's voices and authority. Using critical discourse analysis thus has the potential to unveil how the aforementioned negative discourse jeopardizes women coaches and athletic directors' existence, access, opportunity and self-concept while exacerbating their marginalized status within NCAA atmospheres. Importantly for this study, utilizing critical discourse analysis might also elucidate discourse, language and contexts supportive of women coaches that create inclusive environments and allow them to reclaim power, lead in collaborative ways and infuse their positionality into their leadership roles (Kezar & Lester, 2010).

Athletic environments supportive of women's ways of leading, positionality and

discourse embodying this leadership are essential for student success, persistence and retention in the classroom and society (LaVoi & Wasend, 2018; LaVoi, 2016). Essentially, as Gildersleeve and Hernandez (2012) contend, “discourse produces reality” (p. 4) laying the foundation for athletic departments to either promote inclusivity or perpetuate discrimination. Thus, more inquiry on discourse and the flow of power within the NCAA is needed to determine practical ways athletic department culture, women in coaching and sexual minorities can move forward positively affecting student outcomes.

### **A Queer Approach**

Adding a queer approach to critical discourse theory highlights the antinormative and power as political (Foucault, 1990) positively positioning, in this case, sexual minorities within athletic culture. King (2008) discussed antinormative politics as an important tenet of queer theory embracing broader perspectives of intersectional issues and dominant narratives, rejecting accepted views of marginalized identity narrowly categorizing sexual identity as simply lesbian and gay. Queering critical discourse theory entails viewing sexuality as fluid where labels become non-existent and sexual mutability is embraced and intersecting identities such as race, class and ability matter. This sense-making of intersectional identities drives powerful transformation for sexual liberation (King, 2008) and revealing one’s truth (Foucault, 1990).

When looking to address programmatic inequities, we often examine processes and issues that have gone wrong, but what if we queer our approach and study institutions that embody gender equity and inclusivity? Examining current coaching evaluation practices at an NCAA higher educational institution that has successfully fostered gender parity among collegiate coaches and administrators may yield useful data institutions can model, effectively creating

inclusive, equitable and queer athletic cultures. Utilizing collective leadership styles - or women's ways of leading – coaches can employ positive reinforcement and discourse strategies with players to nurture their development. Coaches using collective leadership styles can also value disenfranchised populations and craft equitable, supportive learning/working environments (The White House, 2009). Thus, investigating coaching evaluations and promotion processes matters because holding key stakeholders accountable for ensuring gender equity and inclusivity within NCAA environments promotes equity and social justice in higher education. Upholding gender equity and social justice standards is vital for women and queer women administrators/coaches to thrive and enhances student-athlete learning and performance outcomes.

All three of the aforementioned theories have facets in common, but also display unique tenets useful for uncovering hidden narratives and discourse perpetuating inequity. Moreover, the study's theoretical framework elucidates equitable dynamics and offers a comprehensive approach to scholarship and praxis, applied practice within higher educational settings. Instead of viewing women in coaching utilizing individual theories, when combined, each theoretical lens sharpens the focus of this study's inquiry and enriches our conceptualization of women coaches within higher education and the NCAA. This intersectional vantage point and framework is a powerful queering tool for praxis helping women coaches break down barriers to ease navigation through the leadership labyrinth.

### **Conclusion**

The history of women in sport during ancient times demonstrated men and women existed collaboratively until Indo-Europeans dominated the region with patriarchal influence and punishment. Greek mythology highlights a transition of power from Goddess to God with the

perspective of the women's physical form shifting from collaborator to dominator threatening men's authority. History documents women physical educators struggles and paths throughout U.S. sport, within the context of higher education, from the late 1800's to modern day mirroring power relations during the ancient era.

A review of women in sport and collegiate athletic leadership depicted a decline of women coaches in addition to an absence of athletic administrators since 1972 and "leadership labyrinth" trend within leadership and the NCAA. The leadership labyrinth metaphor portrayed a more accurate picture than common glass ceiling allegory of heterosexist discriminatory challenges and barriers women leaders faced in sport and other fields, while pursuing professional advancement and longevity. Since leadership is often viewed through single identity frameworks (Kezar & Lester, 2010), more research on intersectionality and one's positionality through a queer theoretical lens is necessary for critical examination of the conditions affecting women in sport leadership.

My analysis of the literature discussing the practices within the NCAA and other professional environments illustrated language and discourse associated with gender (e.g., men portrayed as ambitious and passionate; women as manipulative and emotional) and sexuality (e.g., homophobic slurs referring to queer women coaches as dykes, mannish and unwomanly). This language and discourse dismisses women's power, leadership influence and privileges male-centric collegiate settings under a neoliberal condition. Thus, women and queer women collegiate coaches focus on surviving in the labyrinth resulting from the dominant culture unfavorably conflating their identities with problematizing their leadership capabilities (Aicher & Sagas, 2010; Alexander & Andersen, 1993; Kane, 2016; Mavin, 2008; Miller, 2015; Norman, 2010; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Consequently, these coaches can suffer from negative

performance evaluations and discourse utilized for promotion and upward mobility, due to the “think manager, think male” mentality (Aicher & Sagas, 2010; Sabo et. al, 2016) similar to women faculty and business leaders, thwarting their progress towards power, opportunity, retention and persistence.

A dearth of literature examining neoliberal effects on discourse and positionality via a queer theoretical perspective relating to women in sport leadership exists. It is imperative to recognize and examine through research the neoliberal, masculinized and heteronormative discourses operating within college athletics, which contribute to a declining population of women and queer women NCAA coaches/leaders. Studying power dynamics and discourse at institutions currently employing gender equitable and inclusive performance evaluation/appraisal practices may reveal valuable information other NCAA affiliated institutions can model. Because power is discursively conveyed within organizations affected by neoliberal influences and the intersectionality of multiple identities, exposing affirming, progressive language and discourse can “queer” athletic culture. Queering even one athletic climate can produce ripple effects of inclusivity for social justice change, improving conditions for women and queer women as NCAA leaders.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Although many educational professionals and policy makers profess that truth lies in the numbers, the truth is revealed and expressed through participants' personal stories of transformation (Orphan, 2015) and the language of qualitative inquiry. Qualitative methods, specifically story-telling, interviewing, observations and document analysis offer unique information to which people can react and relate. Qualitative inquiry is also important for promoting social justice perspectives and organizational change through uplifting narratives and discourse that communicate meaning which nominal data does not often portray. As such, this study used qualitative methodologies and I was guided by my theoretical framework in my choice of methods.

### **Research Design**

This study employed qualitative methods applying critical narrative analysis (CNA) and Foucauldian/Dispositive approaches. Table 3.1. "Summary of Methodological Aspects, Types and Descriptions" provided an overview of the methodology planned for this research endeavor. I was drawn to particular coaches' experiences and narratives affected by institutional discourse and vice versa within the Loveland State University's (pseudonym) athletic department. Loveland State University (LSU) was of particular interest because it had a high representation of women head coaches of athletic teams.

LSU is a regional comprehensive university (RCU), a type of higher educational institution with a mission to promote educational access, regional well-being and student-centeredness (Orphan, 2015). RCUs have been places where leadership tends to be more diverse than other postsecondary sectors and typically enroll a high percentage of underrepresented



groups identifying as students of color, first generation, low income and non-traditional age (Orphan, 2015). Additionally, LSU is an NCAA Division II institution, a subset of collegiate athletics, that matriculate large populations of first generation students (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2017d). Often, research on collegiate athletics and women in NCAA coaching has been conducted from a deficit perspective. In other words, prior research has focused on the lack of women in collegiate sport coaching instead of investigating institutions that embody gender equity or exploring why head coaches decide to work at, persist within their roles and stay long-term. I investigated an institution succeeding with athletic department gender parity and inclusivity. This approach was considered an antinormative, queering approach to scholarship.

It is important for researchers not only to examine how institutional discourse can impact or influence individuals' daily lives, but also how people existing within organizational systems can mold this discourse to fit their own needs (Souto-Manning, 2014b). Unlike most forms of critical discourse analysis (CDA) purporting a one-sided effect of institutional discourse upon the individual (Souto-Manning, 2014a; 2014b), critical narrative analysis (CNA) is the study of critical discourse coalescing with narrative methodology at both the micro and macro levels of discourse analysis. In other words, CNA aims to investigate how people make sense of social interactions and exhibit critical meta-awareness at both personal and institutional levels to solve problems and address issues affecting their lives (Hibbert, Lingard, Vanstone, Kinsella, McKenzie, Pitman & Wilson, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2014a). Power is discursively conveyed (Foucault, 1990) within higher educational contexts under neoliberal conditions (Gildersleeve, 2017) and via institutional discourse that affects individuals (Hibbert et. al, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2014a ; 2014b). However, it is the everyday stories people tell and personal narratives

that also help individuals to interrogate how systemic institutional discourses sculpt their beliefs and values for generating social change (Souto-Manning, 2014b). Thus, CNA researchers examine how institutional discourses are pluri-directional, or shape and are shaped by individual daily narratives (Souto-Manning, 2014b).

Foucault (1990) did not devise a specific methodology to operationalize his theory on discourse or analysis. However, he emphasized that discourse should be treated as both practices and physical signs, meaning we have to discover and describe more than just the “what” of language and speech. Essentially, unveiling the “how”, “to whom” and the “why or context” of the discursive and non-discursive elements (Caborn, 2007) excavates how power manifests between and within these what, why, how and by whom dimensions of discourse. Jager (2001) created Dispositive Analysis (see Table 1.1) as a way to operationalize Foucault, where the term dispositive stems from the French word *dispositif* loosely translated as “at one’s disposal” illuminating a nexus of power in examining discourse. Three elements comprise the dispositive:

- Language and speech (discursive practices)
- Actions (non-discursive practices)
- Physical objects (non-discursive practices)

All three dispositive elements transmit knowledge through which we can analyze meaning-making and power relations within and between.

I used dispositive analysis to determine the type and meaning of discourse along the knowledge axis for athletic department meetings and document analysis (coaching self-evaluations, 360 evaluations and the athletic department strategic plan). While considering my theoretical framework comprised of neoliberal, critical discourse, positionality and queer theories, I pondered questions adapted from Jager & Maier’s (2016) Foucauldian/dispositive

methodological approach. To determine the flow/power of discourse along the power axis (e.g. top-down or bottom-up), throughout my analysis I asked the following questions:

- What knowledge is manifesting at a certain place and time?
- How does this knowledge emerge (from whom/what) and how is it transmitted (by whom/what)?
- What functions/purpose does the knowledge have for participants?
- What consequences/implications exist for shaping the space (e.g., the what, whom, why, context)?

Finally, I created x-y plots with gray dots depicting the relationship of knowledge and power of coaching evaluations, the athletic department strategic plan and department meetings. These plots may be found in the Findings chapter or chapter four.

### **Site Selection and Description**

The population of interest was based upon Jager and Maier's (2016) discussion on determining a plane and sector for discourse studies. The sector for this study included women coaches and athletic leaders at Loveland State University (LSU) (pseudonym), a member of the NCAA Division II (overall plane). Division II institutions provide high level athletic competition and opportunities for student-athletes, many of which are first-generation college students, with special focus on academic achievement, retention and community/civic engagement (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2017d). These institutions typically enroll average student populations of approximately 2,500 providing 61% of student-athletes some type of athletics financial aid in the form of full or partial scholarships and have an average academic success rate of 71% (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2017d). I have chosen to study LSU because

there is a lack of scholarly work focusing on women coaches and athletic leaders at NCAA Division II schools, especially qualitative studies pertaining to discourse, narratives and retention issues (Beam, 2001; Weiss & Robinson, 2013). More importantly, investigating discourse, narratives and practices at LSU shed light on an institution currently achieving gender equity and embodying inclusivity. Additionally, other NCAA institutions can learn valuable lessons from LSU for improving their own athletic culture, policies, and procedures.

LSU competes in an Intermountain athletic conference and sponsors 16 sport offerings including: men's and women's basketball, cross-country, indoor and outdoor track, soccer and tennis; men's baseball; and women's golf, softball and volleyball. Approximately, 200 student-athletes compete in the aforementioned programs while pursuing an undergraduate degree. Seven out of nine women's athletic programs are coached by women, while two out of seven men's teams are coached by women (LSU Athletics, 2018). This positions LSU as a unique and antinormative (queer) site because of the high representation of women coaches leading both men's and women's teams.

LSU is a public regional comprehensive university in the heart of the Intermountain region. Orphan (2016) discussed regional comprehensive universities (RCUs) serve an indispensable purpose, existing as "people's universities" or "democracy's colleges", connecting higher education with a larger civic mission of regional engagement for benefiting the local community and promoting educational access. Approximately 20% of U.S. undergraduate students matriculate to RCUs, many identifying as students of color, first generation, low-income and of non-traditional age/status (Orphan, 2015). LSU's mission statement embodies Orphan's (2016) portrayal of an RCU:

... to provide a high-quality, accessible, enriching education that prepares students for successful careers, post-graduate education and lifelong learning in a multicultural, global and technological society. To fulfill its mission, LSU's diverse university community engages the community at large in scholarly inquiry, creative activity and the application of knowledge (LSU, 2018).

LSU holds a basic Carnegie Classification in the Master's Colleges and Universities: Medium Programs category (Carnegie Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education, 2018) granting bachelor's degrees housed in three schools: Business, Professional Studies, and Letters, Arts and Sciences offering 59 majors, 85 minors and 32 certificate programs (LSU Athletics, 2018a). Additionally, this RCU offers three Master's Programs encompassing: Social Work, Teacher Education and Professional Accountancy.

The National Center for Education and Statistics (2018) indicated a Fall 2016 undergraduate enrollment of 20,474 students (including transfers) with 63% full-time, 37% part-time and 27% graduation rate. Fall 2016 Graduate enrollment data designated 534 students (NCES, IES, 2018). Racial and Ethnic breakdowns for undergraduate students include: 57% White, 24% Hispanic/Latino, 6% Black/African American, 4% Asian, 1% American Indian or Alaska Native, 4% two or more races, 3% race/ethnicity unknown and 1% non-resident alien (IES, NCES, 2018).

### **Participant Recruitment**

Given the plethora of employees comprising the LSU athletic department with 200 athletes representing athletic teams alone, Creswell (2013) recommended purposeful methods be used to make decisions regarding whom, what configuration of participants, and how many

participants to include. Thus, key participants for this study involved administrators in the athletic leadership suite (e.g., A.D., Associate A.D.s, Senior Women's Administrators (SWA)) and all women head coaches for each athletic team (specifically, six women head coaches of nine women's athletic teams and one women head coach leading two out of the seven men's teams). Women coaches and athletic leadership at LSU were appropriate and essential to interview because they are the key stakeholders comprising athletic departments. Thus, athletic administrators' and women coaches' narratives are a form of discourse aligning with the chronological sequence of reported events (Chase, 2005). Chronological sequencing was important because when participants tell stories, they construct, perform and make sense of their encounters and their truths emphasizing the narrator's voice (Chase, 2005). How these stakeholders make sense of their lived experiences and stories matters to unveil power dynamics that multi-directionally affect both the institution and the individual. Such information is useful for other NCAA institutions to model. Regarding participant recruitment, I was invited to an initial department meeting, by LSU's athletic director, to introduce my study. Subsequently, I sent out an official Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved recruitment email to each participant. 100% of participants (all twelve) responded that they were interested in taking part in the two rounds of interviews.

### **Data Collection**

After IRB approval was granted with informed consent obtained from participants, data collection consisted of drawing upon several sources of information including direct observations of participants, interviews and document analysis (Creswell, 2013). I used field notes to capture observations of events, conversations and setting while conducting research on

campus and within the athletic department. I utilized the Foucauldian/dispositive approach and representing discourse specifically, language/speech, actions and physical objects were assessed during the data collection phase. I employed member checking and shared written transcripts from each interview with each participant to confirm accuracy.

Data collection first entailed examining documents within the athletic department and utilized by athletic leadership. These documents consisted of the athletic department strategic plan and coaching evaluations (coach's self-evaluation document and an email about the 360 evaluation process) used by athletic department administrators. Specifically, each coach filled out a self-evaluation and then, coaches typically chose five raters to provide a 360 comprehensive evaluation from multiple angles of the university. I was able to collect the coach self-evaluation and information on this general process of 360 evaluations, but not the actual 360 evaluations.

Next, I was invited to observe three athletic department meetings (November, December of 2018 and January of 2019). While observing these meetings, my goal was to obtain an initial picture of athletic departmental culture, mission and vision. I took copious field notes on several aspects of discourse describing the content of each meeting or what was being talked about, who did most of the talking and how this communication was achieved (traditional standing up in front of members or small group discussions). I also observed interactions between the coaches, the coaches with the administrators and their seating configurations during each meeting. Additionally, I looked at the physical space and how this impacted discourse among participants.

Consistent with the critical narrative approach, I conducted two rounds of one-to-one semi-structured interviews (see Appendices D and E "Sample Interview Protocols for Athletic Director/Administrator and Women Head Coaches", respectively) with the athletic director

(AD), senior women's administrator (SWA) and two other assistant/associate athletic directors and each of the six women head coaches. Interviews lasted anywhere from 50-90 minutes and provided intimate narratives unveiling how institutional discourse is recycled through individual stories (Souto-Manning, 2014a). The first interview covered participant's backgrounds, what attracted them to the institution, the hiring, on-boarding and evaluation processes for women coaches, and how participants were supported by the athletic department. The second interview touched on additional thoughts arising from the initial interview, how practice and competition space is utilized/allocated among teams and coaches, the discourse materials responsible for the success of women coaches, the tone and communication details of department meetings and finally, the culture of the athletic department.

### **Data Analysis**

Caborn (2007) built upon Jager's (2001) strategy creating a visual grid system for utilizing Foucault's theory on discourse as the dispositive (Appendix B "Visual Representation of Foucauldian/ Dispositive Analysis"). I used Foucauldian signs (F signs) to comprise the dispositive (aspect of discourse), either a text, action or object plus the (para)text or meaning associated with each form. These F signs may be expressed as:

*F sign = a) text, action or object + b) (para) text/meaning* (Caborn, 2007). The F signs representing discourse fall in a grid along a horizontal axis of *knowledge*, essentially a spectrum of the discursive versus the non-discursive, and along a vertical axis of *power* delineating a subjective or system disposing power (e.g., top-down institution) or as Caborn (2007) posited an objective/instrumental field non-disposing of power (e.g., bottom-up entity). According to



Caborn (2007) using the aforementioned diagram as a guide, I followed four steps for data analysis, in a fluid fashion:

- 1) Ascertain the F sign(s) (text, action or object) or parts comprising the dispositive and then determine the meaning of this discourse form.
- 2) Locate these F sign(s) on the *knowledge axis* by determining if discursive (language/speech) or non-discursive (e.g. action or object).
- 3) Next, position F sign(s) on the *power axis* by interpreting “whom” or “what/why context” is at the disposal of whom.
- 4) Contemplate and assess the practices associated with these F signs of the dispositive and discourse.

Subsequently, I conducted semi-structured interviews with participants which allowed me to apply a critical narrative approach while incorporating Foucault’s vision of discourse as the dispositive. Additionally, conversational language, speech and grammar were examined (Souto-Manning, 2014b) and coded to identify cross-narrative patterns of institutional discourse recycling among individual participants’ stories. My goal was to reveal the interweaving (micro) narratives and (macro) discourses (Souto-Manning, 2014a) and demonstrate how participants construct their realities to deal with issues affecting their NCAA lives. By considering discourse in both Foucauldian/dispositive as well as critical narrative forms, I approached this study in a queering fashion because of the reciprocal, reflexive and cyclical way discourses sculpt and are sculpted by/from both top-down and bottom-up directions. The following equation expresses this approach: Foucauldian/Dispositive Approach (FDA) + Critical Narrative Analysis (CNA) = Critical Queer Discourse Approach.

Next, I assigned descriptive coding or indexing in an etic a priori fashion (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011) to field note data. Utilizing Atlas.Ti qualitative software, I continued analysis by drawing upon themes and developing categories to create key codes emerging (emic) from artifact, document analysis, observations and interviews (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). The aforementioned process of “coding” is a way to abstract or interpret ideas as well as understand meanings and patterns (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011; Lofland & Lofland, 1995). For this study, I based coding upon tenets of neoliberal, positionality, critical discourse and queer theories. Codes that were applied to data may be found in Appendix F (“Salient Codes for Analysis”).

Analytic memoing or written reports describing the codes were performed immediately after attending department meetings to relate ideas to the theoretical framework (Lofland & Lofland, 1995) (e.g., neoliberal, positionality, critical discourse or queer lenses). Transcribing, re-reading transcripts and analytic memoing after each interview assimilated patterns and themes for additional coding and analysis, in a similar fashion as previously mentioned, revealing an overall picture (Creswell, 2013) of the discourse communicated during interview conversations.

I created word clouds and co-occurrence tables showing codes by using Atlas Ti analysis functions. These word clouds and tables depicted the frequency of codes occurring as attached to all interview transcription data (phrases, quotations, and sentences), documents collected (coach self-evaluation and 360 evaluation information) and my field notes taken during department meetings. In the word clouds, I illustrated codes that occurred most frequently in the largest font while codes that occurred less frequently showed up in smaller font. I generated co-occurrence tables and confirmed the themes gleaned from transcript examinations. For co-occurrence tables, an Arabic number within the matrix indicated the frequency of codes existing throughout all types of data collected.

## **Positionality**

I am a queer, cis-gendered, white, able-bodied woman, educated, upper class, spiritual, but not associated with organized religion, and I love being a teacher and coach. Teaching and coaching makes my heart sing, a calling of service and purpose to disrupt hegemonic, heterosexist, racist and xenophobic socialization cycles maintaining the status quo in society.

I completed my M.S. in Exercise Sport Studies (ESS) and Coaching in 1998 at Smith College and moved to Massachusetts, shortly thereafter, to start my first head coaching/faculty position at Wellesley College. Wellesley and Smith could not have been more polar opposite and I was stepping into a somewhat challenging position as the former coach was beloved by her athletes with several of them remaining on the team. Additionally, the athletic director was a tough old school lesbian, a tyrant demanding as hell with a “break you down, leave you to build yourself back up” mentality. Consequently, this turned out to be an excruciatingly draining year despite my team winning the conference title and posting a high national ranking. I continually wrestled with my sexuality finding support and mentorship from my beloved assistant coach while a player at Smith, also a lesbian, and head men and women’s tennis coach at Bowdoin College. Networking behind the scenes, discovering Colby College was searching for a head coach of men’s and women’s tennis, I applied and was offered the position.

Colby restructured their racquet programs to be sport specific with each coach leading both men’s and women’s teams, however, previous configurations were gender specific (e.g., one head coach for women’s tennis and squash and same for the men’s programs). This was the first time the men’s tennis team was led by a woman, a big deal especially for an old boy’s club institution, like Colby. My feminine yet, masculine persona and role, conflicting with my sex

category, was seen as problematic (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Sullivan, 2003) and I was challenging gender norms.

The first few years at Colby were rough - my men's team ripped me apart in student evaluations, despite the fact we were winning and posting better results than previous teams coached by men. Statements such as, "She makes irrational decisions, she's illogical. We would beat Bates and Bowdoin if we had a male coach – someone who understood our needs as men.", all code for we want a buddy we can hang out and drink with - you don't have a penis so you can't join this club. These memories infuriate me especially as I recall Halperin's (1989) perspective on sexuality insinuating sex with a phallus to be the only real form of sex. Could marginalizing those not preferring sex this way be a root cause for the sexism I experienced or unconscious bias we see in higher education today? It's certainly possible especially if women coaches endure, for example, performance reviews lacking equity and saturated with overt sexism.

During my third year at Colby, I was summoned to the Dean's office feeling like a kid sent to the principal for bad behavior. As I stepped into the office and sat down in a stiff, black wooden chair with Colby's Institutional seal embedded in gold on the back, my chest tightened and I almost choked on the white patriarchal privilege permeating the room. The Dean, a white man easily in his 50's and a Colby alum, immediately asked me to defend, "Why are your evaluations from the men's team so poor?" which felt demoralizing and at 29, I didn't quite know how to handle this situation. I was up for a three-year contract, but "due to my evaluations", they granted me a two-year contract which to my knowledge, wasn't exactly an option outlined in the faculty handbook. Colby's athletic director, also a white man and interestingly a Bowdoin alum, frequently mentioned to me, "Why don't you spend some time

around men over the summer or attend conferences focusing on the male psyche”. Resisting being problematized for my gender and finding this treatment to be a sexist crock of bullshit, I spent my final year focusing on recruiting players desiring the program because of my gender.

If being a woman as head coach was this much of an issue at Colby, then certainly my sexuality would be as well. Interestingly, a woman also head coached the men’s and women’s Nordic ski team, but she exuded an overtly heterosexual persona and did not experience the same challenges as me. Sullivan (2003) discussed the impact of one’s sexuality being shaped by cultural factors contending, “...external pressures ‘encourage’ individuals to conform to social expectations and/or to hide forms of behaviour that are likely to be considered inappropriate” (p. 9). Attuned to this, I selectively stayed in the closet during my four years at Colby to not be problematized even more as a woman and lesbian jeopardizing my career. Power at Colby, especially regarding men’s sports, rested with, as Halperin (1989) describes, the penetrator (the one with a phallus) versus the penetrated (the one without), my power was dismissed simply because of my sex category. I was “out” to the one other lesbian coach there and several at Bowdoin, many of whom were also closeted, forming a pseudo support system. Traveling practically every weekend coaching year-round sports, work became my life, I felt alone, incredibly isolated and fell into a deep depression. I dated women sparingly as much as any lesbian could in rural Maine, but felt increasingly hollow. I was not willing to confess my truth to claim my power (Foucault, 1990).

Desperately seeking work-life balance and wanting to live more openly true to myself, I left Colby at the pinnacle of my career with my teams posting the most successful records in Colby Tennis history, earning both regional and national accolades. Addressing both teams about my departure was heartbreaking, almost unbearable. I broke down in front of them sobbing,

seeing the sadness on all of their faces and tears in their eyes. Through blood, sweat and tears of mine and mine alone serving Colby for four years, I built this successful program, but ached to live my truth and reclaim my power (Foucault, 1990). Leaving coaching behind was tough - I felt like I had to choose between my sexuality and coaching and thus, started a new chapter of my life.

While a first year EdD student in DU's Higher Education program during a beloved professor's organization/governance class, I discovered captivating research on sexism in academia questioning if women collegiate coaches were experiencing the same discrimination or if the culture improved. Interestingly, results demonstrated a dearth of women coaching in the NCAA at all divisional levels describing inequitable atmospheres much like my coaching days over fifteen years ago. Specifically, these coaches faced rampant systemic sexism and homophobia; discrimination profoundly decreasing their access to and retention within the profession. This kept me up at night, causing a burning feeling in my belly enraging, compelling me to act. Making sense of this to disrupt privileged, racist, heterosexist and homophobic socialization cycles (Harro, 1997) within higher education, especially the NCAA, has become my purpose for doctoral study at DU and beyond.

My experiences as a head coach in the NCAA and my interests as a researcher make me uniquely suited to studying this topic in this particular way. First, my lived experience as a collegiate head coach was dominated by the Leadership Labyrinth (I did not realize this during my coaching years, however), and the masculinized, patriarchal and neoliberal conditions of students being treated as consumers. Student feedback and the evaluation process held considerable power over my promotion and my own retention and persistence in coaching and academia. Neoliberal feminism also dominated the culture of Wellesley athletics negatively

affecting my pathway through the labyrinth which affected student success. Later on, I discovered that several of my recruits ended up transferring to other schools.

Second, I faced overt and covert discrimination, especially at Colby, for being a woman in leadership coaching a men's team. Even though society is becoming more progressive with women in leadership, women's sports and women in coaching continue to be devalued and were devalued at Colby (during my time). And, the fact that research indicated this still happens across the country sixteen years later means my positionality as a queer woman functions as a barometer for assessing what makes an athletic department inclusive. Additionally, I can critically examine departmental discourse and practices because of my reflexive efforts and extensive study of positionality, critical discourse and queer theories applied through critical narrative and Foucauldian dispositive analyses (Critical Queer Discourse) as a graduate student.

Third, my own lived experience as a coach helped me to build a strong rapport with my participants, both coaches and administrators. Even though I did not work at this particular institution, I knew what it was like to work in collegiate athletics and be a coach. My ways of knowing were similar (not the same) as the coaches I interviewed. I could truly empathize with their struggles and know how it feels to live the extreme lows and celebrate the highs of the profession. Due to this rapport, my participants entrusted me with rich information and we engaged in an interview process I never expected as a researcher. Participants were authentic, emotional and earnest while sharing their stories; not only the positive, but the darker, raw side of their past experiences, their childhoods, what inspired them to become a coach and what they currently struggle with in coaching. Some coaches invited me to see them in action which allowed me to observe them in more intimate ways other researchers without my positionality might not see. Surprisingly, the administrators were equally welcoming and authentic in sharing

their experiences. Many of them had not been coaches before and seemed to value my positionality and research interest in narrative/discourse analysis. These administrators rigorously and reflexively engaged with interview questions evidenced especially during the second interview when they had time to marinate and share additional thoughts.

Finally, my interest in queer theory was an asset. What is so transformative about queer theory is that it is much more than sexuality and identity. It challenges us to be reflexive about normativity and the power associated with normative culture. For once, I feel *both* validated about being holistically unconventional (in my thinking, the way I live my life, teaching and learning) *and* queer theory/queering research constantly makes me question the ways in which I conform (e.g., marriage). As a researcher, I was able to consistently look for these *both/and* situations and the ways my participants embodied, shared and made sense of antinormative practices and information.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is both a science and an art. As a science within qualitative practice, Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, as essential for maintaining authenticity and rigor. Credibility referred to truth value associated with participants' lived experiences emerging as findings and not defined a priori by the researcher (Krefting, 1990). In this study, findings emerged from participants' stories, my observations of department meetings at a specific time and place and my analysis of documents using FDA in a step by step fashion. I achieved transferability, or the fittingness and applicability (Krefting, 1990) of findings to other contexts because the study site was one that demonstrated positive practices other institutions might model. Dependability was



defined as the variability associated with identified sources and inclusion of antinormative findings (Krefting, 1990). Thus, this study looked at the range of participants' experiences from institutional leadership, athletic administration and women coaches rather than the average participant experience. I addressed confirmability, or the ways in which the researcher tests findings (Krefting, 1990), through observations, interviews and document analysis triangulated to ensure researcher integrity. I also used member checking to confirm that the analysis was accurately capturing events and reality. I merged my own reflexivity of findings within emergent findings of participants which helped me become aware of my influence within the study.

Regarding trustworthiness of qualitative inquiry as an art and CNA specifically, Moss (2004) built upon the aforementioned criteria and asserted that critically analyzing and interpreting the stories told by participants and then presenting them with their transcript for review/revision leads to fidelity - a more creative, inclusive understanding of researcher integrity. Transcripts were professionally transcribed and reviewed for accuracy of language and discourse. Subsequently, emerging themes were coded for quality production of knowledge fused with co-creating stories for narrative analysis (Moss, 2004). Most importantly, understanding the multi-directional nature of power via macro (institutional) and micro (personal) discourses (Souto-Manning, 2014b) and reflexively disclosing my positionality achieves critical self-conscious objectivity (Jermier, 1998), trustworthiness and rigor. By operationalizing Foucault's vision of discourse, visually and using a knowledge and power axial grid, I was able to transform an abstract theory into a queering tool for praxis.

Voice is an instrumental part of narrative research. I combined Chase's (2005) "Supportive Voice" (p. 665) , similar to Testimonio methods, and "Interactive Voice" (p. 666) to create my own queer voice in the collective narrative section within the findings chapter. My

supportive voice was represented by the conversational tone and approach I used throughout each narrative. My interactive voice was demonstrated when I spoke about my rapport with each participant. This interactive approach allowed me an opportunity to insert my own vulnerability, feelings and positionality into the findings, as narrative inquiry and queering research encouraged. These participants shared valuable, intimate and vulnerable information with me. I felt it was essential for me to reciprocate in a similar way.

### **Ethical Considerations**

It is important to note the information regarding space, evaluation and promotion and department meetings, within the coaches collective narrative section of my findings, have elements that could uniquely identify each coach. These facets of institutional discourse carry a charge or risk, that if the coach was identified, might affect the relationship each coach has with each other and administration. I was responsible for maintaining participants' anonymity within these findings and I felt that presenting these elements as a collective would sufficiently answer my research questions without affecting their careers and/or relationships. This section demonstrated my ethics and integrity as the researcher and my responsibility to protect participants' identities.

### **Limitations/Delimitations**

As with most research, limitations exist and will be addressed. The potential limitations in this study lie within procedures and methodology. Two rounds of interviews with athletic administrators and coaches were completed which may not reveal the extent of greater institutional discourse, for example inclusive of other areas of the university, manifesting within

individual narratives. However, by utilizing a triangulated approach, this inquiry allowed deep analysis of the institutional setting, operational culture, language, discourse and documents to provide a complex picture of the LSU athletic department with conclusions/themes potentially transferable (Creswell, 2013) to other NCAA institutions. Document analysis and member checking ensures data analysis is accurately capturing reality.

Critical narrative analysis by nature is critical because it interrogates issues of power originating from macro discourses and how they are recycled within individual micro narratives. However, narrative analysis relies on the participant to recall specific language and discourse relating to one's life and on the researcher to accurately re-story and present details pertaining to the topic in a cogent manner. Observations and document analysis complement story-telling providing nuance and complexity to the narratives shared addressing the aforementioned limitation. Finally, operationalizing Foucault by incorporating a Foucauldian/Dispositive approach is not an easy task, however, utilizing Caborn's (2007) grid provides loose parameters for determining categories of and the respective power relations associated with discourse.

Delimitations also exist with this study. I selected LSU as a site based on the high representation of women coaches and diversity within athletic leadership. I have also chosen to specifically examine a regional comprehensive university (RCU) and NCAA Division II institution because they lack representation within the literature, educate a large population of underrepresented groups, and highlight an institutional mission encouraging access and positively influencing the surrounding community. I did not focus on micro-narratives of men's coaches or teams at LSU because they typically are not affected by the complex forces of macro discourses or blaming narratives as women coaches. Due to time constraints and extensive nature of CNA, women assistant coaches were not interviewed. Regarding critical discourse studies,

CNA and Foucauldian/Dispositive approaches fit better methodologically than CDA because they are less abstract and more focused on the union between macro discourses and micro narratives demonstrating the reflexive and cyclic nature of how power is discursively conveyed from both bottom-up and top-down directions, and between the individual and the institution.

### **Conclusion**

This study analyzed LSU, an RCU and Division II institution with a high representation of women in athletic head coaching roles. Foucauldian/Dispositive Analysis (FDA) was used to examine LSU head coach self-evaluations, the 360 evaluation process and the athletic strategic plan. FDA was also employed to investigate discourse and power dynamics within three athletic department meetings. Subsequently, two rounds of semi-structured interviews were conducted with athletic administrators and women head coaches via Critical Narrative Analysis (CNA) and a conversational approach. Of the twelve participants recruited for this study, all of them agreed to partake and be interviewed. In chapters four and five, findings are presented in detail.

**Table 3.1. Summary of Methodological Aspects, Types and Descriptions.**

<b>Methodological Aspect</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>
<i>Categorization of Study</i>	Qualitative	Critical Narrative & Foucauldian Dispositive Analyses  *Combined = Queer Discursive Approach
<i>Sampling Strategy</i>	Purposeful sampling techniques (Creswell, 2013)	Stakeholders: Women head coaches & athletic administrative leadership suite
<i>Data Collection</i>	a) Documents b) Observations c) Semi-structured interviews  <u>Discourse (Dispositive) defined:</u> Language/speech, actions, physical objects	a) Strategic plans, onboarding info, facility schedules and coaching evaluations. b) Departmental meetings c) Women head coaches, athletic director/ administrators
<i>Data Analysis</i>	a) Caborn's (2007) Dispositive Power/Knowledge Grid b) Souto-Manning's (2014) Conversational narrative via interviews	a) Way to operationalize Foucault's critical discourse theory b) Collect stories and critically interpret power relations  a)+b) = Queering analysis

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

In this chapter, I provide narratives of the six women head coaches recruited and interviewed for this study. These narratives convey information about the women's backgrounds within athletics and intercollegiate coaching and their stories of recruitment, hiring, and orientation/onboarding at LSU. Although each coach's narrative is unique, common themes throughout all narratives also exist. Pseudonyms attached to each coach narrative were inspired by the *L Word*, the popular SHOWTIME drama series between 2004-2009 showcasing queer women and their stories (Bendix, 2019). The *L Word* was and still is a significant form of discourse that queered entertainment and television. Presenting women coaches' narratives first highlighted the agency and power these coaches embodied within the LSU athletic department.

### **Narratives of Six Women Coaches at LSU**

In this section, I tell a story of each of the six women head coaches at LSU. Across these narratives, I determined it was more effective to present the narratives regarding hiring, onboarding and their backgrounds as a single unique narrative of each coach. These stories touch upon their backgrounds with collegiate athletics, attraction to coaching as a profession and LSU, as well as the athletic department's recruitment, hiring and orientation/onboarding processes from their perspectives. It is my hope and sincere intent to honor each coach's voice and accurately capture salient themes of their stories and experiences. Identifiable information has been changed to protect the identities of each coach. Throughout their narratives, I also share my thoughts, reflexivity related to my own experience as a coach, reactions to interviewing them and feelings associated with crucial moments of their narratives.

Of important note, voice is an instrumental part of narrative research. I combined Chase's (2005) "Supportive Voice" (p. 665), similar to Testimonio methods, and "Interactive

Voice” (p. 666) to create my own queer voice in this section. My supportive voice was represented by the conversational tone and approach I used throughout each narrative. My interactive voice was demonstrated when I spoke to my rapport with each participant. This interactive approach allowed me an opportunity to insert my own vulnerability, feelings and positionality into the findings, as narrative inquiry and queering research encourages. These participants shared valuable yet intimate and vulnerable information with me. I felt it was essential for me to reciprocate in a similar way.

### **Helena: Head Women’s Field Hockey Coach**

#### ***A Second Chance***

I met Helena after the very first LSU athletic department meeting I observed. Towering above me with a presence larger than life yet warm and welcoming at the same time, she immediately shook my hand, “Hi, I’m Helena and I would love to be in your study.” At this point, I had not sent out recruitment emails for interviews, but was completely surprised and delighted by her enthusiasm and support of my research. Often, participants can be aloof with external researchers (Creswell, 2013), however, this was not the case and I immediately felt accepted by Helena. She continued, “I really think what you’re doing is great, what you’re studying is great, and I would love to be a part of it.” I was eager to learn more about her background in collegiate athletics and experiences as a head coach at LSU. Our time together was completely invaluable. She captivated me with not only her story, which is absolutely compelling, but also her realness, a down to earth nature that felt like a breath of fresh air.

During our first interview, I started off by asking Helena about her background in collegiate athletics and then, what attracted her to coaching. Excited and nostalgic, she

mentioned that watching the Olympics with her dad while in middle school inspired her to play sports and then pursue college scholarships:

...So, I was like, "Oh, wow that would be very cool," if you're playing in the Olympics, you're probably one of the best in the world, so that would be really great. So, that was, I wanted to do that. That would have been my goal. Then, I knew that passage of, well I didn't know as much about Title IX back then, but then I knew scholarships were available to play, so I wanted to play in college.

Helena was successful in pursuing college scholarships and played for a legendary coach and Division I collegiate field hockey program. Her college coach positively influenced and motivated her to become a collegiate coach herself. As she reminisced about her success and competitive days, she lit up while talking about her coach who had been a role model not only for Helena, but her sport and women in collegiate coaching and athletics:

...not because I played there, because what she meant to the sport and women's athletics. You wanna talk about women's athletics, I mean, we're sitting here doing what we're doing here, able to do, able to coach at this level and do all that a lot because of what she did. And that's one big reason why I'm coaching. Such a role model for me is her, I could say she's probably ... she seems to love what she did and I thought it'd be so cool to coach, so even though I didn't coach until [several] years after I got out of school, because I played, I played [professionally for a long time], I knew I always wanted to coach, yeah.



Helena's college coach played a vital role in sparking her own interest and pursuit of college coaching as a profession. She described admiring her coach's work ethic, commitment to and love for the game and her players, and especially her sheer will to not settle for anything less than excellence. Helena spoke of her coach almost as a parental figure, always there for her providing support, even after she graduated, "And she'd call you back. Always there for you, that's the one thing you'd really admire also about her is you're always connected to that program." Helena's relationship with her coach extended beyond the sport of field hockey and her official time as a collegiate athlete.

After playing professionally for several years, Helena entered the coaching world and worked at a couple of institutions, but endured difficult times. She was fired from her first head coaching position after a few years due to recruiting, scheduling mistakes and generally, a lack of experience in knowing how to handle the administrative aspects of coaching. Reflecting upon these challenges, she made sense of her lived experience as a woman in the coaching world and the difficulty re-entering the profession. She also perceived that ending up at LSU was a blessing and a second chance.

Now, I'll take responsibility, but speaking of females again, as a female, I'm making those mistakes. It's harder for me now to get back in to [Division I] as opposed to maybe a male would get, you know how they retread males and everything like that. Well, they don't do that as much with females, but this was the best thing ever to happen to me is to come here.

Although this was a tough time in Helena's career, the misfortune of being fired actually led her to LSU. The events leading to her recruitment and hiring at LSU were equally

enthraling. The previous LSU Athletics' A.D., Alice, happened to be traveling to the west coast and specifically sought her out to meet with her in person about an opening they had for a head coach. As Helena contemplated this time of her career and life, I could tell this particular recollection meant a lot to her and invoked many emotions. Pensively, she expressed,

So, she asked me what had happened, and I just told her everything about what I thought and at that point, I had no idea that it wasn't completely my fault. But I told her everything. She's like, 'That's what really sold me. You took responsibility for everything.' And I did. All of it.

Having been a head coach myself and perseverating on the plethora of things you could do differently, from conversations with players, recruiting, scheduling and feeling the weight of an entire program on your shoulders, I empathized with Helena. I also felt incredibly encouraged and hopeful while she reflected upon her meeting with Alice who asked her to go through the search process as the following interview exchange depicted:

Helena:            Whatever happens in your program, it's your fault, you're responsible for it, so you better take ownership of it and I did. So, fortunately, she took a long time to go through the process of hiring the coach here, which was gonna be me. So, I came out, I'm like, 'Yeah, I'll go through the process and all that,' and I could tell that the committee did not wanna hire me. They didn't wanna hire me.

Julie:             Tell me about that...

Helena:           [The LSU Associate AD at that time] didn't want me hired either...but she really just did not like me. That's fine. Whatever. My interview with the kids, with the

players, I had two interviews with two players and they, I sold them. I could tell the committee didn't and so, I'm like, 'Gosh, I can't even get a DII job,' at that point I'm getting fired from a DI, I'm going, 'I can't even get a DII job,' I'm thinking. I knew the committee didn't want me, I could tell.

Julie: But Alice did ?

Helena: But Alice did...

Julie: What did she do? Was she just good at seeing talent?

Helena: She just [had] that instinct of knowing who would be good fits and the fact that she really wanted me. So, she was there recruiting me, but it was so subtle. That's her genius is her subtlety. She goes, 'If you don't take this job, I'm opening it up,' so I called her the next day and said, 'I'm gonna take the job.' 'Great.' And that's how it happened.

Similar to the administrative interviews, Helena's story indicated an intentionality of seeking out and hiring "a good fit". However, Alice drew upon her positionality as a former coach to infuse a subtle recruiting-like style in hiring Helena to be head coach of the field hockey program at LSU. In Helena's first two years as head coach at LSU, her teams achieved a 30-3 and 27-4 records, respectively, and NCAA tournament appearances in the elite eight and sweet sixteen brackets, important athletic championship events. She is one of the most successful coaches in the history of LSU athletics. As Helena's successes indicated, Alice saw that Helena possessed immense talent both as a player and coach, intangible qualities indicating she was a fit with LSU, but that she had lacked an understanding of and mentoring with crucial administrative and leadership facets of coaching – a unique way of knowing that the other ADs Helena worked for did not

possess. As Helena shared, she felt seen by Alice not only for her competence as a coach, but also for her integrity. Helena's ways of being and knowing as both a coach and person were celebrated and respected.

### **Bette: Head Women's Lacrosse Coach**

#### ***Culture is Crucial***

I met Bette the first day I set foot on LSU's campus and was lost trying to find the athletic administrative offices. She was conducting summer lacrosse camps on campus. As I fumbled around outside the athletic complex on an incredibly dry, hot August afternoon, she noticed I was struggling and offered me directions. Warm and helpful, she pointed me in the right direction, and we chatted about why I was on campus and the focus of my research. A few months later, I was delighted when she enthusiastically accepted my invitation to participate in this study.

Bette first began coaching within the NCAA as a graduate assistant pursuing her Master's in Recreation and Sport Management at a Division I institution in the Midwest. After receiving her degree, she landed her first head coaching job at a Division II institution and rival of LSU. Interestingly, while she was coaching at this institution, she worked with two current LSU administrators, Ivan, being one of them. She entered LSU at the same time as these administrators. After coaching at this rival college for several years and winning the conference title in her first year, she moved back to the Midwest to be with her now wife and coached for another Division II school for three years.

It was at this time that Alice, the LSU AD at the time, contacted her to share that the head lacrosse position was open. Bette recalled that Alice had watched her career while at the rival

institution and like Helena, recruited her for the position at LSU. When I asked her what message Alice's direct approach to recruitment sent, she responded,

Well, it feels good to have somebody reach out and want you to take their job or recruit you because they think highly of you or think you'd be a good fit. And obviously, it makes you think you're doing something right. Well, Alice likes to win. So, I think she liked the turn-around part she saw at [LSU's rival school]. And as soon ... When I was at [rival school] and [LSU] was trying ... It was pretty competitive and at times had a chippy rivalry, but I think Alice's kind of liked that too.

Additionally, Bette revealed she was told she was good fit and felt she was hired to tighten up the program. Again, intentionality within the hiring process was evident with her hiring narrative.

In asking Bette about her orientation and the processes that helped her acclimate to LSU, she recalled that more than anything else, it was the other coaches providing support that made a difference in her success as a coach at LSU. Ivan was the head men's lacrosse coach at LSU at the time of her onboarding. Bette mentioned he was instrumental in helping her adjust to this new athletic environment,

I think if the athletic department is doing what they should be, then it's a good culture that coaches help one another. Obviously [Ivan]... he was the [men's lacrosse] coach at the time. He and I, we had a relationship with our time at [LSU's rival] so he was huge helping me. We're friends, so it was easy. And our programs are really similar...

Similar to the findings from Tim’s administrative interview, Bette referred to people as discourse in creating a supportive family-like culture within the LSU athletic department. It was this discourse of a supportive culture, especially the other coaches, that eased the orientation and onboarding process for Bette at LSU. Bette expressed, “I’d say mostly it was other coaches, and just trying to figure out, which is, again, at the end of the day, most jobs is that you're figuring that out what's gonna work.”

### **Jodi: Head Women’s Swim Coach**

#### ***Drawn to the Mission***

Jodi was one of the first participants to respond to my research invitation. From the initial and introductory department meeting, I felt a collaborative and energetic vibe from her which led to excellent rapport during our interviews. Our time together was precious and often these interviews lasted the longest where I gained immense insight into her narrative and background in collegiate athletics. Her enthusiasm and passion about coaching and life in general rubbed off on me each time I had the privilege of interviewing her.

Although Jodi competed as an athlete in college, she didn’t realize that collegiate coaching would result in a lasting career. She was attracted to the metropolitan area in which LSU is located and landed an assistant swim coach position at the Division I state flagship university. While an assistant coach at this institution, she became good friends with the then head women’s swim coach at LSU and they traveled together on recruiting trips. As it turns out, this coach decided to retire and the head women’s swim position at LSU became available. At this time, Jodi had moved back east, working as an assistant at another Division I institution, but

was drawn to the mission of LSU, not only the focus on first-generation students, access and affordability, but also the overall growth of the university.

So seeing how the campus has evolved and even recruits. It's interesting. A lot of recruits are from [the LSU area] and their families are from here and been here for a long time. And they always like [LSU] as sort of this commuter, like truly commuter, campus. And it was spread out through downtown and kind of like it was affordable for first gen. And as much as that's still the emphasis, I think that it's evolved to be offering a lot more, being able to offer and continue that same message and mission but at the same time offer more for people like not just in-state and not just first gen here. And families that were kind of like, 'Oh my goodness. I haven't been on this campus in decades and didn't realize what had changed.'

Unlike Helena and Bette, Jodi was hired by Mark as the A.D. after Alice, the previous A.D., had moved to a different institution. Reflecting on the recruitment and hiring process, Jodi recalled she was the only woman in the pool. Additionally, she revealed that women occupying head coaching positions for swimming were rare and the entire application process was incredibly competitive. Interestingly, she had a prior connection with the newly hired women's gymnastics coach, Dana. Jodi and Dana were roommates, both worked as assistant coaches at Division I university near LSU and knew each other for decades. Jodi mentioned that seeing Dana had already gone through the hiring process at LSU and under Mark's tutelage helped her navigate her own interview process.

I will say in terms of viewing [Mark's] track record of hiring he hired Dana, the gymnastics coach, who she and I were roommates. We were assistant coaches together at

[State University]. So [Dana] was someone that I'd known that had gone through the process. She's sort of like, we were the same like in terms of resume on paper, assistant coach for a long time, associate head coach, and then getting her first head coaching job here. And then for me, I think that was promising, because there was only one other position that I had. I was a finalist for an [east coast] Division II school.

Regarding on-boarding and orientation, Jodi recollected that she felt welcomed right away and Ivan, her sport administrator, was one of the first to send private messages to her on social media offering congratulations and support. Additionally, veteran women coaches Helena and Bette were instrumental mentors helping her acclimate to the LSU athletic environment.

Helena and I have great conversations. She's someone I talk to a ton. Even Bette, I'll pop my head in there, but like Ivan's always been like a really ... we became really good friends. Yeah. Like good mentors and good peers. Like, 'Hey, we've been where you are. So, we understand. So, let us know if you need anything. But let me help you transition as well.' I think that that was probably more so from the coaches side than ... But they're also like my people, so I probably naturally felt more comfortable talking to a coach. And getting to understand roles and stuff.

Veteran coaches (both men and women) mentoring newer women's coaches was an integral part of Jodi's onboarding and orientation experience. Ivan's role as administrator and positionality as a former coach was equally vital in supporting Jodi's transition into her first head coaching role.



## **Dana: Head Women's Gymnastics Coach**

### ***Growing Your Own***

Meeting and interviewing Dana was a very moving experience for me. Like my time with Jodi, our interviews ran longer and Dana opened up about intimate details of her life in coaching not only at LSU, but the other institutions at which she worked. Similar to the other coaches, she provided rich information and was authentic and thoughtful with her responses. I found myself empathizing with her struggles on a deeper level because of the emotions she displayed and honesty she shared. Her trust in me, truly, was a gift because it helped me recall my own emotions related to my coaching days and establish a rapport with her that enriched the research experience and our interview encounters. Dana's captivating story follows.

Dana comes from a family of coaches and grew up in a mountain town about an hour from LSU. Her father was a high school gymnastics coach and she learned about the sport from him at a very young age. She has several sisters many of whom also competed in gymnastics and coached mainly at the high school level. I would sum up Dana's background as coaching being in her blood. Fortunately, Dana received a gymnastics scholarship to play at a Division II school in the Midwest. Interestingly, she did not think she would end up coaching gymnastics for her career even though she received a Master's in Exercise Physiology. After earning her master's degree, she decided to move back to the LSU area and coached club gymnastics. She then, applied to be an assistant coach at a Division I school close to LSU, the same institution Jodi coached at as an assistant. Dana worked as an assistant coach for nine years before becoming promoted to associate head coach her last year.

Having coached in the same area as LSU, Dana knew the former gymnastics coach and was aware of LSU's gymnastic team success. When the LSU gymnastics coach retired, she reached out to Mark to enquire about the position. She was not interested in climbing the ladder but finding the "right fit" to embody her philosophy to influence lives, "... I had opportunities climbing the ladder and that's not what it's about. It's about being in the right place at the right time, in the right fit for me. And you know, my philosophy is to influence lives, not, not to go be at the top of the, what some would consider the top..."

What was so compelling about Dana's hiring story was that LSU did not automatically fit her traditionalist mold, meaning she was socialized within a more elite university and this was not what she expected from a collegiate coaching career. She did not see herself working at an RCU, but she was encouraged to pursue the head coaching position anyway.

So, I'm very much a traditionalist and so LSU is kind of like out there for me, like a commuter school, no dorms, very diverse, very, you know, like I don't know about this. So, I think there was resistance in me because it didn't fit my mold, if that makes sense. But I think there was a stirring in me and encouragement from other people like, Dana, you need to go for this,...

Dana recollected that there was a search process for the women's gymnastics' head coach position, and she knew that the current assistant, a male, had also applied. When I asked her to reflect on why she thought she was hired and the messages she received during the hiring process, Dana replied,

...I would say it, it communicates that a female is capable of being a head coach and there's trust in that. I think it, it shows faith and like someone who doesn't have head coaching at the college level, like an assistant to get hired, that there's a lot of confidence in that as well, of like that you're capable and have the tools necessary to be successful as a head coach.

Additionally, Dana communicated that growing up near LSU also played a role in why she was hired, "I've been in [the LSU area] business. So, a commitment to maybe hiring local and keeping, you know, your homegrown people here could convey that." Dana's reflection on her hiring story mirrored Mark's responses regarding his own hiring story that LSU often searched for individuals with potential, "outside of the mold", for athletic leadership and coaching positions.

As Dana recounted memories of her orientation and onboarding at LSU, she displayed more emotion, a sadness not present at the start of the interview. She recalled her orientation and onboarding being the most difficult aspects of her transition into the head coaching role at LSU. Specifically, her office and the head coach of men's gymnastics office resided in a different building, centrally located, but across campus and away from all of the other head coaches' offices.

As far as orientation, that was probably the hardest time of being separated. Now I tell [administration], I love being over here because I think from recruiting and our athletes at every other perspective now it's really good. But with orientation it was hard because there wasn't a person next door to ask questions to and these are, my assistants were here prior and I kept them both on, which really helped my process because this place is so

unique. If I hadn't had them who knew what was going on, it would have been 10 times more difficult.

In addition to her assistant coaches, Dana found support from a veteran coach, Amy the former head swim coach before Jodi, who was an excellent resource helping her figure out policies and processes at LSU and within Division II which often varied from Division I procedures.

However, Amy's office was across campus separated from Dana making mentoring a more laborious process. Dana reflected upon her first year at LSU saying, "So that first year honestly, was survival in a lot of ways a kind of like not really having a system but just like a hodgepodge of getting things done". Dana struggled acclimating to the uniqueness of LSU and its procedures. With tears in her eyes, she expressed throughout this interview that she often felt lonely in her role. As I listened to her narrative, I also had tears in my eyes and was deeply moved. Remembering my own struggles as a coach, a horrible year at Wellesley and my own challenging onboarding experience at Colby, I identified with similar feelings of loneliness and isolation not knowing to whom I should turn for help and if anyone was really on my side.

In responding to questions about improving the orientation and onboarding process for women head coaches at LSU, Dana mentioned that assigning newer coaches a veteran coach mentor would be helpful. Other interviews portrayed that mentoring occurred organically because of the proximity of coaches' offices centrally located in one building. However, Dana's office was not located in that same building thus, having an assigned mentor would ease orientation and onboarding processes as Dana expressed,

I would suggest assigning a mentor to a new coach that's been here that's like, you're my go to, you know what I mean? And they know that they expect that and I can ask any

question and they're gonna help me. And then leaving it up to me it's like, okay, well when I need Helena's perspective on this I can go get Helena's perspective, but like someone to kind of just walk you through the process and then yeah, I mean I think it's important to meet with each of [the administrators] to understand things.

Interestingly, as the findings from Dana's narrative show, in the same way that individuals function as discourse, so do spaces, allowing for or preventing mentoring relationships to arise. Mentoring and relationships were also essential forms of discourse for Dana.

### **Tina: Head Women's Crew Coach**

#### ***An Unconventional Approach***

Tina was the first participant to respond to my study invitation and my first interview. Although I feel the sequencing of interviews is fairly innocuous, I do think it signals a sense of enthusiasm which is part of the research process. Immediately from the initial email, I sensed a willingness and eagerness that I was not expecting participants to display yet, this trend continued throughout each coach and administrative interview. Easy going, open and unguarded, we established an instant rapport and I truly enjoyed learning about her time as a competitive Division I athlete, teaching professional and now collegiate coach at LSU. Repeatedly, she expressed the importance of conducting this study and my research. Although my time with Tina and our interviews were on the shorter side, 45-50 minutes, her story was quite fascinating and set the tone for a positive research experience at LSU.

Tina was a successful Division I athlete for the local state university an hour away from LSU and had been working as a teaching professional in the area for 10 years. After graduating from college, she rowed professionally for a few years. Tina found out about LSU from a woman

athlete and crew team member, who has since graduated, that she had been training individually. This athlete knew LSU was looking for a head women's crew coach and encouraged Tina to apply, but at first Tina was not sure this was the right time for her to extend her responsibilities beyond her current teaching position. After meeting with a few of the other athletes on the team, Tina began seriously considering that she could be an asset to LSU athletics based on her experience as a Division I and professional athlete, "I think that was a huge thing for me [was] wanting to be able to share that knowledge with the girls."

In telling the story of how she was hired, Tina recalled Mark saying he was looking for a woman to step into the head women's crew coach role,

So, when we actually met face to face or the first time that was one of the things he said, you know, 'I'm really looking for someone, a female coach that can be a little bit more of a mentor for the girls.' And so, that was one of the big things. I know when they did the coaching search they had a couple of guys that were in the final running, and I guess had ended up not picking any of those candidates.

Tina remembered her application process being almost non-existent where Mark traveled to meet her in person for an hour and asked if she would be interested in coaching the women's crew team. She recalled he was looking for a female coach that had a strong competitive and teaching background and when she indicated that she was interested in the position, the hiring process proceeded unconventionally,

...he asked if I was interested and I was like, 'Yeah,' he goes, 'So, here's what's gonna happen. We're gonna open up the application again. You're gonna submit your resume, fill out whatever the questions are, and then we're gonna close it as soon as you've done it.' So, basically they opened it up just so I could put in my application and then they

closed it. And then we went through what was the rest of the hiring process. So, it was a little bit of a different process.

I was struck by Tina's story remembering my own hiring story at Colby where I felt like I was being recruited to coach the team because of both my competitive and teaching capabilities for skill development and, because I could also check off a box as a woman who could coach a men's team. However, the athletic director at Colby did not visit me at Wellesley or display a level of intentionality that Mark exhibited with Tina or the same level of sincerity to truly get to know me. In asking Tina, how this process made her feel, she responded,

It, it was all kind of a whirlwind for me, I thought like...oh it's just kind of an informal meeting just to kind of see like, you know, if there's interest on both sides and, I finished the meeting and he was like, 'Do you want to, we'd like to go forward with you. And here's what's gonna happen.' And, by the end of it I was like, 'Whoa... what just happened?' [Laughing]. Yeah, it was a cool process. I mean it, obviously it's very flattering that they would come to me and, entrust in me the program.

Tina mentioned she was an emergency hire because the team was in the midst of the fall season with Carmen acting as interim coach. Mark spent considerable time recruiting Tina, observing her teaching and coaching and truly getting to know her. Interestingly, it seemed LSU was more attracted to Tina for the head coaching role than she was attracted to LSU.

We pivoted to talking about her orientation and onboarding experience which like many of the other coaches was a bit disjointed and rapid as the team had two important competitions left. Even though initially starting work at LSU seemed like a whirlwind, Tina emphasized that

Carmen was instrumental in providing her with one-on-one training and walking her through processes like a co-coach,

So, walking me through some of that stuff and you know, hours of all of that. So, it was a little bit of a crash course, but [Carmen] has been amazing. And she, I can call her, text her, and she'll answer me right away, and has helped me through the process a lot. I always joke with her that she's like, my co-coach.

The way Carmen embodied her role as an administrator was pivotal in helping Tina acclimate to LSU procedures and processes especially her role as an advisor on academic issues with student athletes, professors and leading the student athlete advisory committee (SAC).

Additionally, Tina spoke of Ivan as vital helping her with the nitty gritty of coaching issues, especially since she was a step behind with recruiting and hired later on in the season. Ivan guided her through strategies for recruiting Division II athletes specific to LSU,

Yeah, so [Ivan] kind of walked me through the recruiting and he was like , 'Hey you should check out transfer students like [junior college], or transfer students,' which I hadn't even like, that didn't even cross my mind. 'Here check out these kids a lot of times wait to commit 'til the very end.' And, or 'til like the end of the school year, which I feel like in division one, we didn't get a lot of junior college transfers, so it wasn't really something that was on my radar. So, that part was a, a learning curve for sure.

As Tina's story showed, both Carmen and Ivan embodied essential forms of discourse in helping women coaches adjust to LSU and perform their job duties. Clearly, Carmen pulled Tina under her wing demonstrating that "let me help you be successful" image mentioned by others in the



athletic department. Tina's story also conveyed a message of administrators and coaches truly working together a "*both/and*" instead of "us versus them" and "either/or" fashion. Tina's story also clearly depicts administrators and coaches sharing goals of being successful and embodying the notion of a "department" as a team and family.

### **Shane: Head Men's & Women's Tennis Coach**

#### ***Positionality Is Powerful***

Meeting and interviewing Shane was an amazing trip down memory lane. I identified with Shane's positionality and subsequent transition into coaching from a former career as a scientist perhaps the most, especially since she is the only head coach of both a men's and women's team at LSU. Our interviews were lively and truly conversational. Shane depicted details of her life and background before coaching with much passion and integrity. As Shane told her story, she provided valuable insights about LSU and expressed her truth in a way that I was really able to see a glimpse of how she embodied her role as a coach. Shane's narrative demonstrated the essence of women in coaching and the impact that women make as leaders with student-athletes. Her story follows.

Shane attended a local Division II college, a rival institution of LSU which was male dominated. She specialized in a STEM field and competed as a tennis athlete. After graduation, Shane worked in STEM while serving as a part-time assistant coach at her alma mater for close to twenty years. As time passed, she developed more of an interest in coaching than her position in STEM and decided to pursue an associate degree in exercise science. Shortly after completing her degree, Shane was hired as an assistant coach for the tennis and squash team at LSU. Prior to working at LSU, the head coach position was open at her alma mater, she applied, but was not

hired. She was offered a low-paying assistant position, but really acted as the Director of Operations without the pay or title, dealing with the trivial and unpleasant parts of the head coach's job. Interestingly, Shane felt the committee struggled with her lack of experience as a full-time assistant coach. These events signify hidden meaning as Shane was not hired by her alma mater as a woman and ended up working at LSU. The discursive importance here speaks to the differences between these two institutions and focus on gender equity and inclusivity at LSU. Shane reflected on her experience as a part-time assistant and undergraduate,

The committee had trouble hiring somebody who hadn't been a full-time coach at all regardless of all my other managerial experience and all the things I did in the [STEM] world, which I felt brought a ton of value. I didn't get the job. They hired, who's now the head coach at [my alma mater]. Oh, yes, and if you look at it, they don't have as much gender equity at [my alma mater].

Realizing an assistant position was open at LSU, she applied. This was an opportunity to get her foot in the door as a coach. At that time, the current head coach of LSU's program, Adam, was instrumental in mentoring her and helping her acclimate to a full-time career in coaching. While working as an assistant coach at LSU, Shane's primary role was to coordinate recruiting and the mental training group. Mental training in sports encompasses visualization techniques and relaxation methods to help athletes perform optimally. This position required more responsibility, yet with only a \$5,000 salary.

So I was recruiting coordinator, I was in charge of the [mental training] group, and I was still making \$5,000. And I'm doing it happily, right, because I got my foot in another door, and if I just keep working hard enough this is going to turn into something else.

Originally, tennis and squash existed as one program. Eventually Adam left for family reasons and the head coaching position became available. At this time, Shane mentioned Mark was hired as AD and realized the current lay out of sports was hierarchical causing a lot of turnover. Mark split the positions and flattened out the organizational structure. This was a great opportunity for Shane - she was hired as an interim head coach of men's and women's tennis with an additional interim coach hired for the men's and women's squash teams.

Although the mission of LSU was not her primary reason for applying, Shane immediately noticed a difference in environment between working at her alma mater and coaching at LSU. In responding to questions about the mission of LSU, she recalled feeling accepted,

... I think that immediately I felt the difference in this athletic department. I felt very accepted from the moment that I ... especially the more time I spent inside of the department even as a part-time person. Yeah, you could tell that there was a difference in the staff and the way that they treated one another. And then getting to know the student athletes is a very difference experience here than at ... because at [my alma mater] it's just different. They're different kids. They face different struggles, definitely, but I think I felt here immediately, and the reason you coach, the reason I coach is to make a difference in somebody's life, and I did.

Shane attributed being hired as the head men's and women's tennis coach to both Adam's and Mark's tutelage and the contrast of LSU's departmental feel compared with the atmosphere at

her alma mater. Shane was mentored and supported by Adam who helped her transition into the role of head coach. Shane recalled Adam's influence,

[Adam] was such a huge supporter of me, and I think really helped me understand my value, and I felt ... because I had lost a little bit of confidence I think in that whole thing [my alma mater] and people not trusting me, so forth. He was so supportive of, 'You can do this.' Absolutely he wanted me to be his full-time assistant, but when he left I was like, 'I don't know. I'm a little bit scared.' He was like, 'No, you're the perfect person for this position. You can do this.'

Throughout this interview, Shane referenced her positionality having endured the STEM field and male dominated environment both within her undergraduate experience and professionally. Additionally, she drew upon these experiences as a source of strength since most of her acclimation to LSU was a "hit the ground running learn as you go type of experience". However, she also felt accepted and connected with the other women at LSU working in head coaching roles. She expressed statements about feeling empowered to do her job as a coach and being treated like an equal by both other coaches and administration to effectively embody her role,

Well, I think being accepted as ... I think it started with [Adam] where I felt like, 'Hey, he really thinks of me as an equal,' but then you start noticing there are a lot of other women, and when I'm talking to other coaches they're treating me the same way. And so I think what it does is it empowers you to ... I think it empowered me to do my job. I felt supported to help these kids to do whatever we needed to do to make sure that they not only got to be better [tennis] athletes but that they get to be better people, and that they

get to graduate, and they get to have an education. I think you can't do that without the support of your administration, not fully. You've got to know that you're supported to make the decisions that you need to make to really truly affect change and help kids.

Gender equity within the LSU athletic department was a central theme within Shane's narrative of not only navigating coaching at LSU, but her evolution as a head coach. Her positionality and ways of knowing empowered her to effectively carry out job duties, impact her student-athletes and actively embody her role. Interestingly, the way Shane depicted feeling accepted by the athletic department mirrored my own feelings of acceptance as a researcher while conducting this study within the LSU athletic department and while spending time on the campus.

## CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

In this chapter, I present the findings of my Foucauldian Dispositive Analysis (FDA) of Loveland State University's (LSU) evaluation and promotion process for women athletic coaches and strategic plan. I also portray an FDA of three athletic department meetings I observed. I describe themes gleaned from coding coaches' self-evaluation documents, the athletic department strategic plan, field notes from the three athletic department meetings and transcripts from six athletic department administrative participant interviews. The FDA findings as well as the document, departmental meetings and administrative themes represent institutional discourse I uncovered during data collection. Findings in this chapter are presented in the order that I collected data and performed the analysis. Presenting findings sequentially juxtaposes institutional discourse with coaches' stories and depict how coaches made sense of this discourse to navigate their roles.

I conclude this chapter by depicting various ways these coaches collectively experience the organizational culture and make sense of specific elements of LSU's institutional discourse. This collective narrative tells the story of women's coaches' perceptions and ties together themes that are important regarding LSU's evaluation and promotion process, departmental meetings, physical space within athletic facilities/campus and written and non-written materials they used to navigate their professional roles.

### **Foucauldian Dispositive Analysis (FDA)**

In this section, I present findings from applying the FDA method to coaches' self-evaluation documents, the overall 360 evaluation process for LSU athletic coaches, where multiple individuals are selected by women coaches to rate their performance, the athletic

department strategic plan and each one of the three athletic department meetings I observed. To briefly recap the FDA process, I determined if the discourse was a text (anything written), action (embodying or performing a behavior/communication) or object (physical item or space) and the paratext or the meaning of each discourse type (F-sign) and then, located this F-Sign displayed as a gray dot, along an x-axis of knowledge. If the discourse was a text, the dot was placed on the “discursive” end of the of x-axis spectrum. If the discourse was an object, the dot was plotted on the “non-discursive” end of the x-axis spectrum. If the discourse was an action, the dot was positioned in the middle of the x-axis spectrum.

Within the next step of the FDA process and after I created each visual, I asked specific questions interrogating the flow of power to determine the position of the F-sign along the y-axis of power. The top of the y-axis signifies institutional/departmental power whereas the bottom of the axis represents power exhibited by individuals working within the institution or department (e.g., coaches). These FDA findings or F-signs are presented as gray dots on x-y plots of knowledge/power axes with my notes pertaining to discourse type - paratext/meaning and the directional flow of power (bottom-up, mid-way or top-down). To reiterate, top-down power emanated from the overall institution and administration in the athletic department and bottom-up power was represented by coaches. Dots placed mid-way demonstrated a mix of institutional/departmental power and coaches power. It is important to note that FDA is an interpretation of Foucault’s post-modern notion of the dispositive and not an exact science. The purpose of FDA is to visually represent the types of discourse operating and determine the meaning (paratext) of this discourse, who holds the power associated with the discourse and how this power manifests within written discourse materials, spaces, actions and objects. By

employing FDA, I was able to critically assess, but also visually see, how to equalize power for creating inclusive environments.

### **LSU Athletic Department Documents**

The documents collected for this study include a self-evaluation for the coaches, an email pertaining to and describing the 360 evaluation process and the athletic department strategic plan. With the 360 evaluation process, coaches' work with their administrative supervisors to identify external individuals who will rate each coach. Administrators received an email with a link to a survey tool from an external assessment group and entered each raters' email address. Raters received an email from the external assessment group with the evaluation form to assess the coaches. I could not access the actual evaluation form, but analyzed the 360 evaluation process via an email from LSU's Human Resources department.

*Coach Self-evaluations.* The coach self-evaluation document and FDA indicated that women coaches' value to the athletic department and progress towards institutional and athletic goals rests in a bottom-up power structure and action-oriented knowledge position (Figure 5.1). Women coaches' describe their personal coaching and professional narratives about their strengths and weaknesses, via the self-evaluation form, to inform the administration about their progress towards institutional and athletic department goals. For example, key questions and line items on the coach self-evaluation include (LSU Self Evaluation Form):

- “List the major initiatives or efforts for your position this past year.”
- “What key evaluation or measures could you have done better during this past year?”
- “Provide a list of key evaluation indicators or measures that are evidence of your success for this past year.”

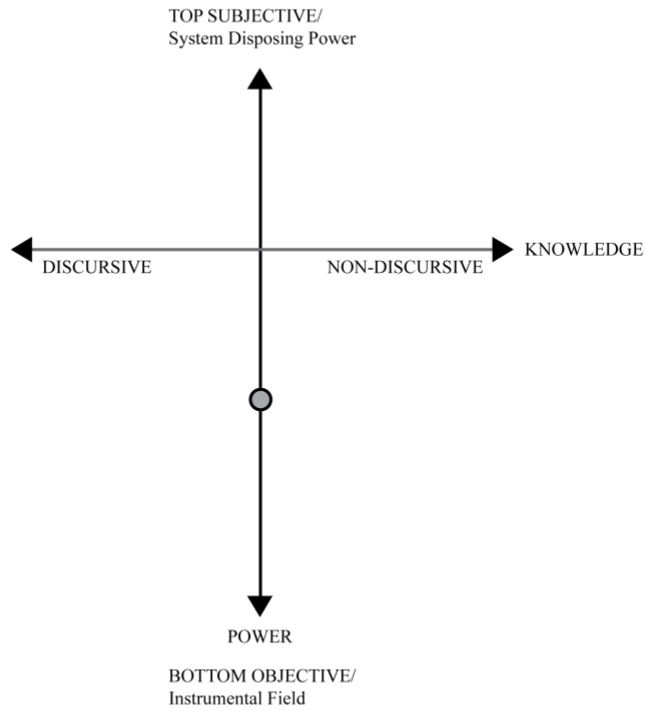


Additionally, the coach self-evaluation asked each coach to discuss their performance goals for the following year. For example, questions and prompts included (LSU Self Evaluation Form):

- “List the major initiatives or efforts you foresee for your position in the coming year. The initiatives should fall within the goals, statements and action articulated in your unit strategic plan and/or the university strategic plan.”
- “Based on a total of 100% of time, determine what percentage of time will be spent on each of the initiatives outlines in item 1.”
- “Under each initiative, provide a list of key indicators or measures that will be evidence of your success by the end of the coming year.”
- Discuss how your supervisor, or your unit’s administrative team, can support or assist you more effectively in accomplishing your plan.”

These coach narratives are a positive form of discourse and tools that allow them to enact and exert agency, claim their own power, and demonstrate their value, worth and goals. Because coaches have to be subjective about their own performance, this form of discourse may also be subjective (both favorably and unfavorably) and lead to coaches evaluating themselves overly harshly or not critical enough.

Figure 5.1 FDA Plot of Coach Self-Evaluation Document



*F Sign (gray dot) plotted - middle on knowledge axis and bottom-up direction on power axis*

**Text:** Written document

**Action:** Verbal communication/meeting between administrator and coach.

**Paratext:** Critical self-examination of athletic program/coaching/ability to meet department metrics or outcomes.

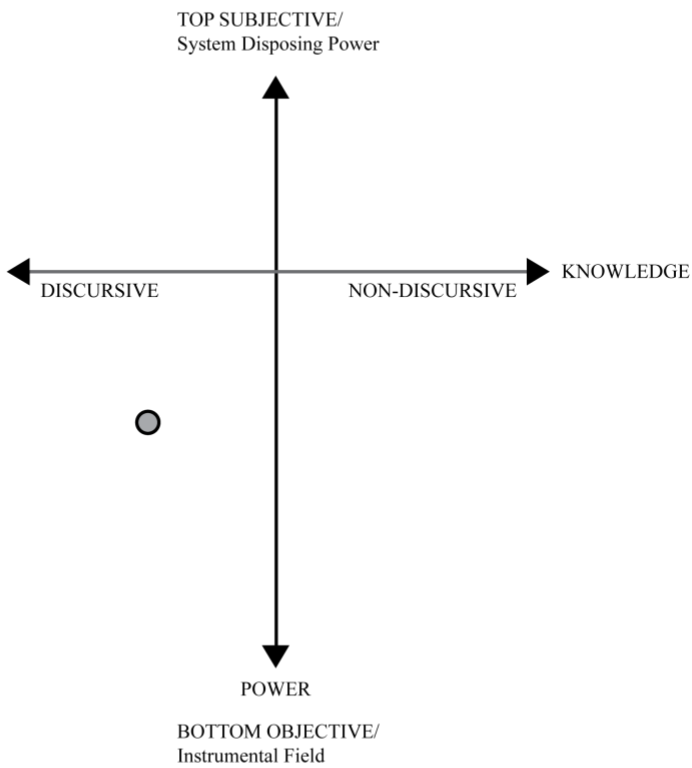
### Questions used during analysis to determine the flow of power (top-down or bottom-up):

1. **What knowledge is manifesting at a certain place and time?** Coach's value to team and department; judgement by the raters of abilities; ability to meet goals or expectations for self; way for women coaches to make sense of their own progress and value to the athletic department (written).
2. **How does this knowledge emerge (from whom/what) and how is it transmitted (by whom/what)?** Coach's narrative about own value/progress. Am I valuable and how?
3. **What functions/purpose does the knowledge have for participants?** Critical self-identified strengths and weaknesses; one aspect used by coaches, department and institution to determine value.
4. **What consequences/implications exist for shaping the space (e.g., the what, whom, why, context) ?** Discourse as positive way to enact agency and demonstrate value, worth, improvements and goals. Discourse could be subjective in both favorable and unfavorable ways (e.g., over- or under- emphasize success or judge self too harshly/not enough).

*360 Evaluation Process.* Like the coach self-evaluation, the email document associated with the 360 evaluation explaining this process and FDA also demonstrated a bottom-up power structure (e.g., given that coaches choose their raters) as well as a text/action (e.g., the process occurs via email, but coaches also meet with their supervisors to discuss evaluations) knowledge position (Figure 5.2). Women coaches choose their own "raters" external to athletic department staff and leadership to evaluate their performance. This rating emanates from the multiple viewpoints of individuals across campus. Such discourse can be positive given that coaches choose who they want to rate them and that multiple data points for one's performance are collected. As was stated in email correspondence from an LSU Human Resources staff member, "The guidance was to use the tool [360 Evaluation] to uncover common themes along with other factors to discuss employee performance and goal setting." Conversely, the possibility of bias may exist by the raters since coaches subjectively choose them and if bias is demonstrated by the raters, the raters' evaluations could be perceived as negative discourse (e.g., discourse not seen as favorable or credible to helping coaches succeed or effectively navigate their roles). As was

also stated by the LSU Human Resources staff member in email correspondence, "...due to very mixed reviews on the tool and other internal factors, the 360 review process will take a pause this year. It may reviewed down the line. This decision was approved by senior [institutional] leadership."

Figure 5.2 FDA Plot of 360 Evaluation Process



*F Sign (gray dot) plotted - left of center on knowledge axis and bottom-up direction on power axis*

**Text:** Written document (e.g., email)

**Action:** Written and verbal communication from coach identified “raters”.

**Paratext:** Multiple views of performance external to the department; coaches exhibiting choice or agency; teamwork across the institution.

**Questions used during analysis to determine the flow of power (top-down or bottom-up):**

- 1. What knowledge is manifesting at a certain place and time?** Coach's value from multiple viewpoints as evidenced by 360 evaluations.
- 2. How does this knowledge emerge (from whom/what) and how is it transmitted (by whom/what)?** Individual raters selected by both coach and sport administrator; top-down, bottom-up and all around.
- 3. What functions/purpose does the knowledge have for participants?** Critical self-examination of performance from multiple constituents and different areas of campus within various roles.
- 4. What consequences/implications exist for shaping the space (e.g., the what, whom, why, context) ?** Discourse is positive in that multiple data points are involved and collected. Discourse could be biased (negative) via selection of individuals purposefully providing favorable feedback.

*Strategic Plan.* Interestingly, findings and FDA from the LSU athletic department strategic plan depicted a top-down power structure across two knowledge and discourse forms, action and object positions, but the written language supported a bottom-up power structure (Figure 5.3). The athletic department strategic plan was a written document available in booklet form, electronically on the LSU athletic departmental website, with the overarching strategic initiatives viewable on signs located within the athletic department waiting area and just before entering meeting room space within the athletic buildings on campus. The purpose of the strategic plan was to communicate departmental expectations of mission, vision and values guiding micro (personal) and macro (departmental) behaviors by athletic personnel. A steering committee, comprised mostly of administrators and one women's head coach, drafted the strategic plan. As positive discourse, the strategic plan was a centrally organized way to communicate what LSU athletics is about, evidenced by the multiple forms of discourse (e.g., text, action and object), included parameters for individuals to work within and provided the basis for the athletic staff evaluation process. However, this discourse was created mostly by administrators and in a top-down direction which may lead to less micro "buy in" from women

coaches on macro mission, vision or values. A version of the mission, vision and values of the LSU Athletic Department Strategic Plan is summarized below. Table 5.1 describes “Seven Pillars of Success” outlining how the LSU Athletic Department plans to achieve and operationalize their mission, vision and values.

**Mission:** “LSU athletics is committed to impacting the lives of student-athletes and developing future leaders by providing a championship caliber experience that emphasizes excellence in academics, in athletics and in the community.” (LSU Strategic Plan, 2018)

**Vision:** “The LSU Athletics Department will be recognized nationally as the premiere athletic department in Division II both athletically and academically.” (LSU Strategic Plan, 2018)

**Values “The LSU Way”** (LSU Strategic Plan, 2018):

Education – Support academic mission of institution via athletics, cultivate an environment of personal development and lifelong learning.

Excellence- Relentlessly pursue success in every endeavor and consistently produce high quality results.

Integrity- We will be honest, trustworthy, and display high moral character in all that we do.

Accountability – Hold ourselves to high standards of conduct. Represent university in a manner consistent with core values.

Respect – Celebrate a climate of mutual respect and diversity recognizing each individual’s contribution to the team.

Tradition – Respect and honor those that came before us and build upon tradition of success to further instill a sense of pride in [LSU mascot] athletics. “We are a part of something greater than ourselves.” (LSU Strategic Plan, 2018)

Community- “We are a community encompassing our teams, the athletic department, the university, alumni, friends of LSU mascot athletics, and the surrounding metropolitan area. We will cultivate a welcoming and supporting family environment within the athletic department, while also striving to positively impact the lives of others within the broader community.” (LSU Strategic Plan, 2018)

**Table 5.1. Seven Pillars of Success Used to Operationalize LSU Mission, Vision and Values**

Themes/Pillars of Success	Goals
<i>1) Academic Excellence &amp; Student-Athlete Development</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Foster student-athlete centered culture of academic success, development and welfare as central focus throughout the department.</li> <li>2. Ensure student-athlete success and academic excellence.</li> <li>3. Enhance academic support services and student-athlete development programming.</li> <li>4. Improve student-athlete health/well-being resources.</li> <li>5. Implement SAAC initiatives to enhance overall student-athlete experience.</li> </ol>
<i>2) Competitive Excellence</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sustain &amp; enhance universal departmental commitment to championship caliber excellence by positioning programs for conference, regional and national championships.</li> <li>2. Provide state of the art facilities.</li> <li>3. Review sport operating budgets and scholarship allocations to remain competitive in conference, regionally and nationally.</li> <li>4. Recruit and retain high quality coaches and administrative personnel.</li> <li>5. Recruit and retain high caliber student-athletes.</li> <li>6. Establish and maintain a positive game day environment conducive to a winning home court/field advantage while upholding Conference &amp; NCAA sportsmanship codes.</li> </ol>
<i>3) Rules Compliance</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure departmental and institutional compliance/integrity with regional and national rules/regulations by creating an environment where expectations are clear and infractions reported in timely and professional manner.</li> <li>2. Review and standardize department compliance operations to enhance overall efficiency</li> <li>3. Foster better collaboration among the campus to ensure control with compliance.</li> </ol>
<i>4) Fiscal Responsibility &amp; Maximizing Fundraising</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review athletic department expenditures and internal budget monitoring process to ensure long-term financial stability.</li> <li>2. Ensure fiscal responsibility while also developing strategies to maximize and enhance financial allocations.</li> <li>3. Maintain departmental commitment to Title IX and gender equity as a key function of our daily operations.</li> <li>4. Leverage institution’s location, community partnerships, alumni base, and athletic facilities enhancing outreach and maximizing revenue.</li> <li>5. Leverage state of the art athletic complex to engage with surrounding community and increase revenue for athletic department.</li> </ol>

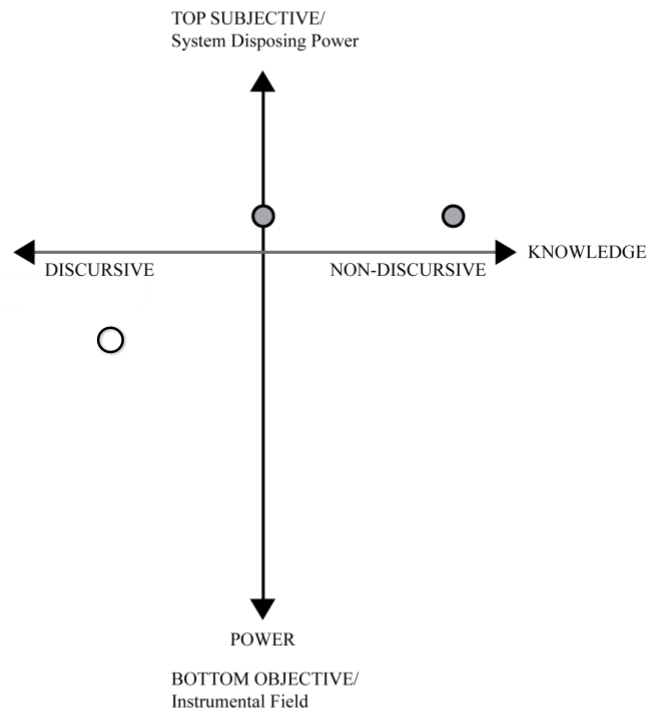


<p><b>5) Community Engagement</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positively impact surrounding community developing strategies that utilize our facilities and human capital.</li> <li>2. Develop a departmental community service initiative.</li> <li>3. Positively impact student-athletes through education and awareness of department community engagement.</li> <li>4. Increase awareness of department’s community engagement initiatives.</li> </ol>
<p><b>6) Telling Our Story</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Effectively and creatively communicate academic and athletic success to recruits, donors, alumni and fans.</li> <li>2. Evaluate effectiveness of impact and reach of communications by external operations staff while upholding “telling our story”.</li> <li>3. Collaborate with university marketing/communications staff to produce one feature article/month distributed across entire campus and university channels.</li> <li>4. Communicate events effectively through engaging marketing materials.</li> </ol>
<p><b>7) Culture of Inclusion</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish department culture that promotes and environment where diversity/inclusion is embraced and student-athletes., coaches, and staff share their diverse experiences openly and without judgement.</li> <li>2. Educate student-athletes, coaches and staff on diverse, inclusive behaviors with intent to practice such behaviors daily.</li> <li>3. Comply with University policies/procedures and NCAA best practices that address diversity and inclusiveness.</li> <li>4. Cultivate an engaging and welcoming departmental environment fostering a sense of community.</li> <li>5. Firmly incorporate “the LSU Way” into our daily interactions and utilize as a guide for decision-making.</li> </ol>

Regarding LSU’s strategic plan, the textual elements depict inclusive and collective written discourse. LSU’s language supported POS & CDT codes, with a couple of NEO codes describing winning and losing, typical of an athletic department. It was not the “what” of the strategic plan (the text supported a bottom-up power structure), but the “who” or architect(s) of the document and “how” the plan was designed that resulted in a top-down structure. The

strategic plan only had one coach on the steering committee. Performing FDA and asking the power questions revealed the strategic plan as top-down structure, in action and object dispositive forms. Without FDA, it would be very easy to just examine the written language and because of this language, determine the plan was completely inclusive. By employing FDA and interrogating “who & how” sources of power, however, we can dig deeper and see a different picture evidencing that coaches’ ways of knowing were missing from the strategic planning process. The lack of coach input was also why the queer reflexivity code did not show up at all while during plan analysis.

Figure 5.3 FDA Plot of Athletic Strategic Plan



*F Sign (gray dots) plotted - left, center & right on knowledge axis, and bottom-up as well as top-down in direction on power axis*

**Text:** Website and written brochures

**Action:** Assessment and evaluation of coach and department's performance

**Object:** Hanging sign in athletic department facilities

**Paratext:** Vehicle for embodying culture; road map for expectations and behavior; informing of macro to micro narratives as evidenced by the Seven Pillars of Success for operationalizing the LSU Strategic Plan.

### Questions used in analysis to determine the flow of power (top-down or bottom-up):

1. **What knowledge is manifesting at a certain place and time?** Departmental expectations of mission, vision and values guide macro or institutional wide, to micro or individual coaches' behavior.
2. **How does this knowledge emerge (from whom/what) and how is it transmitted (by whom/what)?** Steering committee combination of top-down (administrators) and bottom-up (coaches). More administrators than coaches were on the steering committee to draft the strategic plan.
3. **What functions/purpose does the knowledge have for participants?** Tangible and theoretical resource guiding daily practices of the department and individual behaviors.
4. **What consequences/implications exist for shaping the space (e.g., the what, whom, why context)?** Discourse is positive because it clearly indicates what is expected from coaches and administrators, what type of working environment is expected and how the athletic department chooses to reach their goals. Because the strategic plan exists in multiple forms of discourse, it is centrally organized way to communicate what LSU athletics is all about; includes parameters for individuals to work within and is the basis of the evaluation process. Discourse might be perceived as negative since it was disseminated/created mostly by administrators in a top-down direction. There is a potential for less "buy-in" on macro mission, vision, or values from coaches.

### LSU Athletic Department Meetings

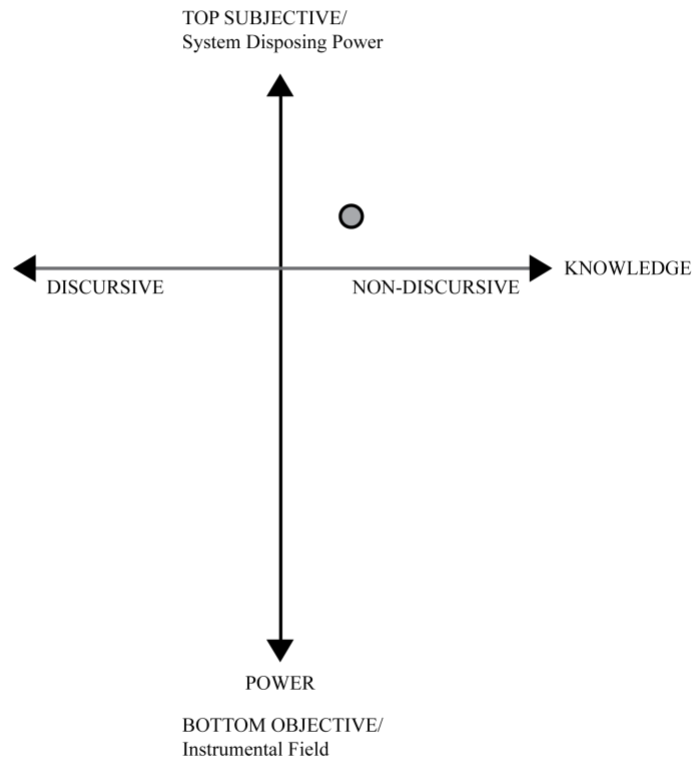
I conducted observations and FDA of three monthly department meetings between November, 2018 and January, 2019. Findings illustrated top-down power structures on the y-axes and action-oriented positions along the x-axes of knowledge for both November and December department meetings (Figures 5.4 and 5.5). Figure 5.4 demonstrated administrators speaking approximately 70% of the time, and coaches speaking roughly 30 % of the time. Figure 5.5 depicts an increase in top-down activity and communication. Both November and December meetings relayed important information for coaches to carry out their daily responsibilities. This information and discourse is vital for coaches to serve students and carries several consequences. First, lack of knowledge about an institution can create a lack of transparency. Second, a decrease in transparency can lead to a decrease in trust. Finally, decreased trust can prevent the development of positive organizational cultures.

November's meeting focused on eight agenda items: coach/team updates, debrief of a feasibility study on campus, Board of Trustees/Foundation updates, critical compliance information, academic updates, athletic training information, issues with Regional Championships/student evaluations and a summary of an on campus Inclusive Leadership Summit. Women coaches participated in the coach updates, Regional Championships/student evaluations and Inclusive Leadership Summit parts of the meeting. The coach updates and discussion about Regional Championships/student evaluations were typical in that only logistical information and timing of student evaluations were discussed. However, the conversation about the Inclusive Leadership Summit was lively. One administrator and two women coaches attended and reported to the group about the Summit during this department meeting. In general, there was consensus among coaches that, during the Summit, more time should have been devoted to the question, what is leadership? Women coaches expressed that this event was rudimentary for them and that there was a disconnect between athletics and other departments on campus. Members of other departments did not understand the extent to which coaches embodied leadership with their student-athletes. Thus, the LSU Athletic Director expressed the importance of coaches representing the athletic department at events like the Inclusive Leadership Summit, sharing that this helps "cross-pollinate relationships and establish relationships with others across campus. We can help educate other parts of campus through things like this." Conversations during this meeting demonstrated how women coaches' micro narratives about leadership informed the macro discourse of the institution.

December's meeting (Figure 5.5) was brief (45 minutes) and covered NCAA rules and regulation legislative changes. As a positive discourse, both of these meetings were essential in helping coaches perform their jobs optimally as lack of this knowledge, or negative discourse,

would result in decreased performance of coaches or disqualification from post-season appearances for LSU athletic teams. However, with the extensive top-down structure of both meetings, there was less opportunity for dialogue among coaches and with administration about concerns and matters important to the coaching staff. Dialogue within department meetings and among coaches helps them learn and relate to one another to be successful. Dialogue reinforces one's positionality, ways of knowing, that contributes to women's coaches' sense-making of daily responsibilities and optimal navigation of their roles.

Figure 5.4 FDA Plot - Observation First Department Meeting (November, 2018)



*F Sign (gray dots) plotted - right of center on knowledge axis and top-down direction on power axis*

**Action:** Presentation/Dialogue

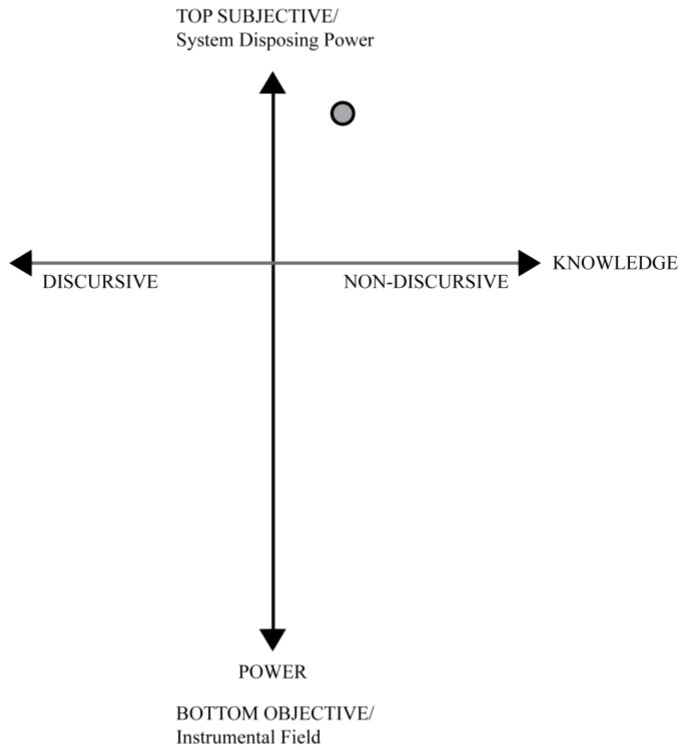
**Paratext:** Disseminate institutional knowledge, happenings, expectations, events, procedures; update from teams; theoretical venue for coach feedback.

**Questions used during analysis to determine the flow of power (top-down or bottom-up):**

- 1. What knowledge is manifesting at a certain place and time?** Relay information regarding institution; coach progress reports; feedback from an inclusive leadership summit.
- 2. How does this knowledge emerge (from whom/what) and how is it transmitted (by whom/what)?** Administration spoke 70% of the time and coaches participated 30% of the time.
- 3. What functions/purpose does the knowledge have for participants?** understand institutional information to perform job duties; transparency; opportunity for dialogue and providing feedback to administration.
- 4. What consequences/implications exist for shaping the space (e.g. the what, whom, why context) ?** Lack of knowledge about institution can create a lack of transparency; decreased transparency can create a decrease in trust; decreased trust might impede the ability of athletic leaders to develop a positive culture for coaches to effectively carry out responsibilities and serve students.



Figure 5.5 FDA Plot - Observation Second Department Meeting (December, 2018)



*F Sign (gray dot) plotted - right of center on knowledge axis and top-down direction on power axis*

**Action:** Presentation/Dialogue

**Paratext:** Disseminate institutional knowledge and NCAA legislation, compliance job search; congratulations to successful teams.

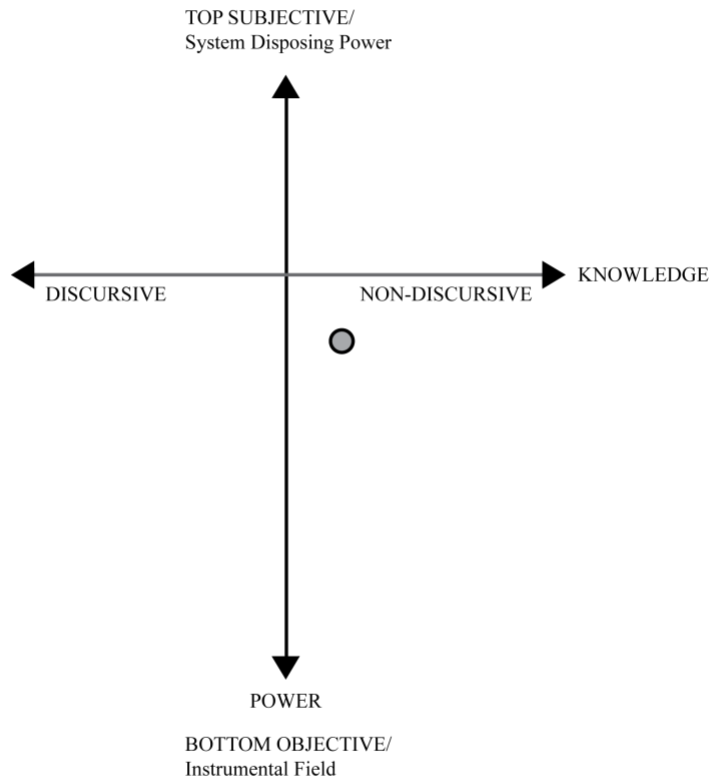
### Questions used during analysis to determine the flow of power (top-down or bottom-up):

1. **What knowledge is manifesting at a certain place and time?** Relay essential information regarding NCAA legislation; coach progress reports – congratulations to teams qualifying for Nationals.
2. **How does this knowledge emerge (from whom/what) and how is it transmitted (by whom/what)?** Administration – top-down.
3. **What functions/purpose does the knowledge have for participants?** To understand NCAA standards/rules for student athlete welfare.
4. **What consequences/implications exist for shaping the space (e.g. the what, whom, why context) ?** Lack of knowledge about NCAA rules would disqualify teams from post season championships leading to a lack of success which affects the opportunity for student-athletes. Due to top-down nature of discourse sharing, potential for lack of dialogue focusing on concerns from coaches, staff and teams.

Observations and FDA of January's department meeting showed an action/object position along the knowledge axis and slightly more of a bottom-up than top-down structure on the power axis (Figure 5.6). An external consulting group hired by LSU was invited to this meeting to share results of an audit performed to assess LSU's brand campus-wide. This audit showcased the changing nature, status and identity of LSU evolving from a state college to a state university evidenced by including "university" versus "college" within institutional name and changing vision for the university. Specifically, and in 2006, LSU was perceived as a "school of last hope". Since 2012, LSU has been experiencing a "time of transformation" and most recently in 2018, has been charged to exhibit a "time for demonstration". These transitions of RCU identity, from colleges to universities, are very common. Morpew (2009) discussed the ubiquitous nature of colleges and universities offering more comprehensive course programming simply to seek prestige. Orphan (2015) described some RCUs searching for identity due to their middle status within the Carnegie Classifications. As such, some RCUs demonstrate isomorphic tendencies and academic drift or mission drift from their original higher educational mission and purpose (Morpew, 2009; Orphan, 2015).

The purpose of the LSU brand audit presentation was to illustrate and communicate to the athletic community the evolution of the university and how the athletic department can embody institutional attributes for reaching wider audiences and better student-athletes for achieving excellence both academically and athletically. Highlights and top line recommendations from the audit demonstrate: LSU's academic offerings, the LSU name, LSU's excellence and innovation and assessment of "diversity and demonstrate inclusivity". As a positive discourse, the brand audit functioned to help coaches market their teams and improve recruiting efforts for enhancing student-athlete academic progress and athletic performance. Conversely, the issue of branding any part of LSU's identity illustrated a desire of the university to participate in striving behavior and mission creep as well as possible lack of focus on original organizational identity and saga. These phenomena of striving behavior and mission creep are not unique to LSU. O'Meara (2007) indicated that institutions moving up within U.S. rankings and seeking prestige has often been associated with a greater paradigm shift within higher education mainly changing admissions policies to attract more highly selective student applicants and aggressive recruitment and retention of research-oriented faculty. Additionally, Orphan (2018) and (2015) examined that regional comprehensive universities, like LSU, often embody adaptive strategies that are intended to align with the external environment, regardless of mission, and/or interpretive strategies which embody mission for survival or to seek legitimacy.

Figure 5.6 FDA Plot - Observation Third Department Meeting (January, 2019)



*F Sign (gray dot) plotted - right of center on knowledge axis and bottom-up direction on power axis*

**Action:** Presentation from external consulting entity.

**Paratext:** Relay changes with institutional leadership; brand audit to increase recruiting capability of coaches/teams.

**Questions used during analysis to determine the flow of power (top-down or bottom-up):**

- 1. What knowledge is manifesting at a certain place and time?** Changing nature (identity and status) of the institution from a college to a university.
- 2. How does this knowledge emerge (from whom/what) and how is it transmitted (by whom/what)?** An external consulting firm conducting a campus wide (precipitated by institutional leadership) audit of university brand.
- 3. What functions/purpose does the knowledge have for participants?** Communicate to coaches the evolution of university brand and how to demonstrate what the university is about.
- 4. What consequences/implications exist for shaping the space (e.g., the what, whom, why context)?** Recruiting tool to reach wider audiences for better student-athletes; way to embody organizational saga and identity to achieve excellence. Potential for mission creep and striving behavior – lack of focus on institutional/organizational saga could equate to an identity crisis.

**LSU Athletic Administration**

I conducted semi-structured interviews with four current administrators, one former administrator and one former institutional leader. These interviews revealed themes regarding the hiring, orientation/on-boarding procedures, evaluation and promotion process, space, discourse materials and department meetings. Salient themes discovered during interview exchanges included:

- Intentionality existed with recruitment and hiring practices
- Orientation, onboarding and department meetings could be improved
- Evaluation and promotion was a holistic process
- Physical spaces created tension and discourse
- People and culture were essential forms of discourse

These themes are discussed and analyzed in depth in the following sections. I did not analyze information from interviews using FDA due to the way Caborn (2007) depicted the relationship between knowledge and power. In Caborn's (2007) diagram, the knowledge axis sits higher

closer to the system field and institutional power. I determined plotting FDA for both administrative and coach interviews would diminish voice within the participants' narratives. My intent was to observe how the critical narrative analytic method emerged throughout the interviews.

### **Hiring of Women Coaches – Intentional Practices**

Administrators expressed their goals for facilitating intentionality in hiring women's coaches at LSU. This intentionality was connected to an overarching goal in the athletic department to achieve gender parity. A current administrator, Mark, mentioned making a distinct effort to approach hiring differently, get qualified women coaches into the hiring pool and consider individuals who may not automatically apply for head coaching positions.

I did need to be more intentional about trying to get qualified women into the pool, asking my colleagues and things like, "Who do you know? Who would be good? Who should we go after?" and understand that just because of the lack of representation of female head coaches, that I may have to look at a very qualified assistant or an associate head coach and know that that's going to be a transition and bank on the upside and the potential as opposed to the documented performance that they would have had as a head coach.

The hiring of women coaches at LSU also manifested in unconventional approaches for seeking coaching talent and expertise. As previously discussed in chapter two, homologous reproduction often occurs within athletic departments where athletic directors sought out individuals much like themselves to occupy head coaching roles and maintain the status quo (LaVoi, 2016; Sabo

et. al, 2016). Since men dominated athletic director roles across the U.S. (e.g., 80% of athletic directors are men), they hire men to fulfill head coaching positions for both men's or women's teams (Miller, 2015). Mark also spoke about not being satisfied with the diversity of applicants during the search process for the women's crew coach. To improve the pool, he visited a prospective coach at her workplace to meet with and observe her coaching.

...we did a search. I was open to looking at both male and female head coaches, but I really wasn't satisfied with the applicant pool. We interviewed some folks and I just didn't really feel comfortable. [Tina] was recommended to me by actually one of the players. I went out to [her place of work] and I sat down with her. I don't know if it was something about the fact that I'm seeing her in her element. I'm like, she knows the development aspects of [crew]. She had this quiet confidence about her. She had [competed in crew] here in the state. She's a [local state university] grad. I just felt like it was a good fit.

A former administrator, Alice, described the hiring of women coaches at LSU as analogous to the recruiting process of athletes. Additionally, this administrator had been a head coach herself for close to 15 years at LSU before moving into administration. Alice was adamant about conceptualizing a plan of who to hire even before a search process began and looking within one's own athletic department for possible candidates.

...you got to go out and find them and build your pool of candidates. Hopefully, before you're starting to have a list before a search even starts, before you even have an opening, and have a plan and you're developing a network in the business that you're tracking so when you do have an opening. So, that's one. Two, so, like in one case, I think it was just

the sport of women's [swimming] where we hired one of our assistant coaches who had also [swam] for us. So, I would call it growing your own.

Alice's positionality as a head coach helped her seek out certain attributes of prospective coaches whom she knew would be successful at LSU. She mentioned three top qualities that successful head coaches possess: knowing one's sport inside and out, being able to recruit talented and competitive players and being driven. Additionally, she mentioned there are intangible characteristics coaches often embody. These characteristics include grit, displaying empathy and "transparent realism":

As long as the kids know you care about them, they'll do anything for you. So, that's got to come through. It doesn't have to come through every day. But I think I would call it transparent realism. Yeah. So, they need to see you for who you really are. But again, not every day because you know you have that professional relationship. But if they know, it comes through at some point that they know you really care about who they are as individuals, I'm telling you, they will do great things for you. It's hard to define that skill.

Both Mark and Alice were supported and guided by institutional leadership to embody the mission and values of LSU regarding diversity and inclusion within the hiring process of women coaches. Matthew, LSU's former president, hired both Mark and Alice to be autonomous and lead the athletic department instilling diversity and inclusion as aspects paramount to a successful athletic program. Matthew was very involved with the NCAA during his presidency. He served as Chair of NCAA Division II Athletics and was a member of the NCAA Board of Governors, Executive Committee and the NCAA Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Through



his extensive participation with the NCAA, Matthew frequently examined the data about women in coaching from both gender and ethnicity viewpoints,

So, I had an opportunity, I think, to see the data pretty clearly. And both with respect to athletes, and to coaches, and to administrators, with respect to both ethnic and gender diversity. And it was very clear on the gender side, that there was a huge dearth of women coaches. And because there was a dearth of women coaches, there was a dearth of women administrators. And particularly, senior women administrators. And so, as Chair of the NCAA, I intentionally put that data before the Council of Presidency in Division II, and said, "We have a responsibility to change this. You all are in a position to make a difference, just as I am in a position to make a difference." And so, if I'm gonna articulate that to my colleagues, then it puts on me, the responsibility to be a leader there, as well, in my own institution.

Matthew clearly communicated to both athletic directors that gender parity was a crucial part of his vision for the University and specifically, the athletic department. His reflections about gender equity was also linked to diversity and inclusion at LSU. In the following excerpt, Matthew demonstrated a commitment to diversity and inclusion, but also used tokenizing language possibly emanating from a greater institutional vision or macro perception of how staff should be diversified:

So, I just feel like it was my responsibility not to be the person making the hire, but the person who's articulating and making sure that we're being true to the values that we, as an institution, supposedly hold about diversity and inclusion. And I feel the University's done a pretty good job of that. And you saw it now, in who our current Athletic Director

is. Tell me how many Universities have a Black Athletic Director, number one, more less, a Black Athletic Director with a PhD.

Mark reflected upon his own positionality, identity and story of being hired to lead the LSU athletic department, as the current AD, in terms of institutional commitment to diversity:

I mean the commitment to diversity was significant. The fact that [LSU President] was interested in taking a chance on an African American male that was his first Athletic Director job, big time for big time athletics department. I believe that's consistent with [LSU President's] values and consistent with the mission of LSU and also how it was articulated to me is that this is a place that is willing to take a chance on potential. I thought that was very appealing because if you talk about this position specifically, I would assume it garnered a lot of interest from sitting ADs from other successful division two institutions.

Mark recalled Matthew insisting on recruiting women coaches into LSU athletics hiring pools and eventually becoming head coaches for women's teams.

He's very vocal about diversity. He's been very pointed with me and would say, 'Hey ... Again, hiring a women's ... coach position, it's like, Hey, do we have any good females in the pool?' I'm like, 'Yes and no. I'm trying.' He'll ask me, 'What are you doing to get them,' and whatnot. It would be a thing where he wouldn't ... if I came to him and said, I'm going to hire a male for the position, he wouldn't veto it, but I'd have to tell him like, 'Okay, what have you done to try to get a female in that position and just want to make sure that we've done our due diligence, and if it comes down to it that this male

individual is the best fit, then okay. I just want to make sure that we've done everything we could do to try and fill it with a female.'

### **Orientation/Onboarding of Women Coaches – Opportunity for Growth**

Interviews with administrators revealed that the orientation and onboarding process for women coaches could be improved. Mark and Carmen, another sports administrator, both felt that the LSU athletic department needed to be more intentional with their orientation/onboarding process of women coaches. Interestingly, in responding to questions about orientation/onboarding, Carmen mentioned that her personal interactions with women coaches were some of the most enjoyable parts of her job as an administrator.

So, for me, I feel like our onboarding process is not the best. I feel like it's good to have the personal interaction, and with ... like even kind of before we started this [interview], I was like, I needed to run over to my coach next door and get a signature from them, and talk through a new process and things like that. So that part is great, I feel like I'm trying to constantly educate them or help them, whether it's internal processes, NCAA changes, compliance related now, that's kind of been on my plate for a while. And more explanatory. And then just getting to see their side of it, too. So even some of the trips, traveling with teams to regionals and doing some things, you just get a better interaction, you get to see what they live day in and day out.

Although participants reported that the actual LSU orientation/onboarding process for women coaches needs improvement, Tim, another LSU athletic administrator, mentioned that Carmen's communication and relationship efforts were vital in onboarding new women coaches.

So, one of the things that's been critical for success of our female coaches ... Any coach really, but ... Is their onboarding of communication and relationship. I think that's huge. ... When Tina started as our women's crew coach, Carmen was really able to bring her into the mold. She's a part time head coach, so she's about as fringe as we get. But Carmen was able to pull her in and walk her through processes and be a point of contact that "let me help you be successful". And so, I think developing those relationships has been a big deal.

The way Carmen embodies her role as an administrator was an interesting and unique finding. Essentially, she was an integral form of discourse, especially with orientation/onboarding situations, leading to the success of women in coaching at LSU.

### **Evaluation/Promotion – A Holistic Process**

The LSU evaluation process of women coaches focused on several metrics including: win-loss record, improvement within the conference, academic success, community development and the student-athlete experience. Findings indicated a flat organizational structure in that the athletic director conducted the actual evaluation review with all women coaches. This flat structure was evidenced by removing assistant/associate athletic directors from evaluative roles in the administrative hierarchy. Additionally, as demonstrated with FDA of the 360 evaluation process, coaches enact agency because they choose their own raters also indicating flatter

organizational management. Associate and assistant athletic directors serve as sport administrators weighing in on this process by collaborating with each coach on selection of 360 evaluation raters, however, the formal evaluation process rests with the athletic director. Mark expanded on details and benchmarks he uses when evaluating women coaches at LSU:

I look at are you committed to the mission and vision of not only the department but the university? How do you exemplify that? How involved are you in moving those initiatives forward? I think overall, and I think it's probably a benefit of being in Division II, that we have the ability to take a more holistic look of the success of a program that's not just grounded in wins and losses, but the student experience, the academic success and obviously the competitive success also. We don't just look at the win-loss record. We don't just look at academics. We look at the whole picture.

Although win-loss record was an important factor within the LSU athletic department, LSU's mission and vision of access, equity, student-centeredness, and creating opportunities for first generation students, drove the evaluation process. Women coaches are asked to reflect upon how they affect student-athlete academic success, engagement within the community and the overall student experience of their players. Interestingly, the student-athlete experience was also tied to the LSU athletic department strategic plan that communicates a clear grade point average (GPA) objective of 3.0 to ensure high graduation rates were achieved. Mark mentioned he was conflicted about the 3.0 GPA requirement because all-academic awards were usually based upon 3.2 or 3.3 GPAs. However, he was advised by his senior leadership team (comprised of all administrators) to maintain the 3.0 GPA benchmark to truly embrace the positionalities, backgrounds and daily realities of LSU student-athletes.

When we did our strategic plan, we indicated that success is 3.0 or above at our institution, because we have a lot of first gen students student athletes and they come from modest means, they may have to work, there may be some other issues that they're dealing with. I was advised by my senior leadership team, which I value, to maybe not put as much emphasis on the GPA because I wanted a higher GPA 3.2, 3.3 because that's where all the conference academic awards start... We compromised on the 3.0 because at the end of the day, the graduation rate is the most important thing. If somebody squeaks by with just barely a 3.0 or whatever because they are working two jobs or they have other responsibilities in addition to being an athlete, then that's success.

### **Physical Space Created Tensions and Discourse**

According to administrative interviews and my observations, issues with physical space were defined in terms of strength and conditioning (weight room) training areas, the on-campus gym, locker rooms for men's and women's teams and coaches' offices. In general, teams considered to be in their competitive season get priority in using strength and weight training facilities. The gym was shared by all athletic teams, the human performance program and a nearby community college. The women's gymnastics and field hockey teams have locker rooms in the gym as the gym location is closest to their competitive areas. Although the women's gymnastics and field hockey teams each have their own locker room spaces, I observed that one large locker room was split into two to create space for each team. Comparatively, the men's basketball team also competes in the gym and has a locker room twice the size of the women's gymnastics and field hockey teams. This issue of the women's teams sharing one locker room while the men's team has its own created some tension among coaches. Additionally, the tension

with space reinforces discourse of a gendered hierarchical structure. All other women's teams' locker rooms are located in a newer athletic complex closest to their competitive areas and are similar in size to the men's athletic teams that also have locker rooms in this complex.

Coaches offices were also split across two locations, the gym and an administrative building that resides across the street from the newer athletic complex. The women's gymnastics head coach's office was in a building adjacent to the gym space while all other women's coaches offices (including the field hockey coach) were in the administrative building along with LSU administrators' offices. While physical spaces were important forms of discourse, as the next section reveals, people also operated as discourse within the LSU athletic department.

### **Discourse Used for Women's Coaches' Success – People as Discourse**

Participant responses to questions regarding the discourse that helped women coaches' at LSU to be successful in their roles demonstrated the presence of both written and non-written or discursive and non-discursive types of discourse represented by people in the department. In this way, people operated as discourse. Mark focused on both discursive and non-discursive discourse and discussed men's and women's athletic teams were equally represented via competition schedule cards, website space and especially media sources.

...as you're featuring certain coaches, the female coaches [will be] profiled just as much as the men are. We do a Coach's Corner, where we are highlighting what's going on throughout the season, highlighting coaches based off of whether or not they're in season. We do that across the board. We don't have the men's [lacrosse] show. I think some of that, again, is driven by what the appetite is of the market and how much publicity you'll get, and revenue, and all that. I think for us we do it in house. We feel like we can profile

a number of our sports, and so we do it across the board. I think that probably helps, because there's no inherent or underlying imbalance in general, which helps provide equitable representation across the board.

Like Mark, Carmen also mentioned both written and unwritten discourse types. For written discourse, she highlighted that all athletic department personnel performed the DISC behavioral and personality assessment led by an NCAA trainer. The DISC tool was based on psychologist Dr. William Marston's 1928 book, *Emotions of Normal People* and provided a model for understanding and adapting human behavior for individuals to co-exist and build relationships within work, group or team environments (Personality Profile Solutions, LLC, 2019). People who score a "D" or "Dominance" are usually results-oriented, confident individuals interested in the bottom line. People who fall within an "I" category or "Influence" emphasize persuading others and openness within relationships. People who score an "S" or "Steadiness" like calm environments and focus on cooperation, sincerity and dependability. Finally, people falling within a "C" category or "Conscientiousness" concentrate on quality, accuracy, expertise and competency. Carmen expressed the DISC assessment improved relationships within the athletic department because individuals learned about each other's preferences for achieving work goals. The DISC tool provided another way for individuals to make sense of their working styles - an important discourse for any team with shared goals - and understand their ways of knowing to successfully carry out their roles.

For unwritten discourse, Carmen emphasized that there was a very strong mentoring network organically created among the veteran and newer women coaches at LSU.

I think we have a really good network. Even with the female coaches. Them just being able to talk to each other and asking for advice. It really helps that [Bette and Helena



veteran coaches] have been here the longest and have been successful and had really good teams throughout their career here, and in general. I feel like they're good role models and leaders.

In addition to the mentoring network, Tim spoke about people as a discourse relating to women coaches' success. He used terms like the "stories and oral histories" women coaches' discussed about challenges they endure and how they then relay that information to him as an administrator.

And it's the coaches talking to each other about this is the issue, this is where I'm running into a problem. So, getting that information from the coach to me allows me then to use my connections that I've developed relationships with across campus to fix the problem for the institution. So, you're not going to see that on a piece of paper... there's no way that's going to happen unless it's through the relationships that we have built. Because you're not going to see an org chart that's going to tell you here's where I need to go. So that's the example I give, because I think it's a good one of how our relationships have gone. And it's almost an oral history of hand me downs.

The most compelling response to the discourse questions came from another administrator, Ivan, who expressed that having self-awareness of his leadership and decision-making style by clearly communicating expectations helped women coaches most. He also mentioned how his own experience as a former collegiate head coach influenced the way he interacted with women coaches and embodied his role.

We're leaders, like yeah, I manage [position title], but that's like pushing paper, you know what I mean? I think we make our impact as leaders making the proper decisions in a

timely fashion and informing and explaining and holding people to high standards and expectations and things like that. So, that's how I lead. That's how I led as a coach and it kinda rolls over.

Although administrators mentioned written discourse like schedule cards, website spaces and DISC assessment inventories positively affected women coaches success, each administrator also shared that people acting as discourse was common within the LSU athletic department. People embodied discourse which manifested in forms of coaching mentoring networks and specific administrators' drawing upon their positionalities and former identities as coaches.

### **LSU Athletic Department Culture – A Form of Discourse**

From the moment I set foot on the LSU campus in late August, 2018 until the last interview I conducted on January 22, 2019, I felt a warmth and acceptance I have not experienced since my undergraduate days at Smith College. My feelings reflected the culture of the LSU athletic department. This group of administrators and coaches embraced me, metaphorically speaking, like I was a part of their family. They made me feel like I belonged, like I was one of them. Indeed, family was a resounding and powerful theme that resonated throughout every single interview. Administrators commonly used adjectives to describe the culture of the athletic department which included: “gritty/scrappy”, “collaborative”, “family”, “caring”, “supportive”, “good people with integrity”, “autonomous” and “inclusive/diverse”.

LSU's mission was a discourse that influenced the athletic department and manifested as culture. The culture at LSU and within the LSU athletic department existed congruently with each other. As a former institutional leader at LSU, Matthew discussed this important connection between institutional mission and how it affected the culture across campus, especially athletics.

I think our goal is to try to create that sense of community, and family, and values together. And to say, I mean, that we were very clear...I was trying to send a message to the rest of the University. In particular, the academic community, that these issues and values that are a part of the University, that that is for all of the University. And we don't treat athletics differently. And by the way, every address I would give at the University, the welcome back addresses and stuff, the athletic administration and the coaches were there all the time. Not because they were told to be there. Because they wanted to hear what's going on and be a part of it.

Mark expressed his thoughts regarding the congruency between institutional mission and athletics mission regarding diversity and inclusivity and how he embodied and embraced this in his leadership style. He mentioned the importance of being receptive to feedback and allowing people to have a voice in order to establish a positive, inclusive culture.

As an athletic [administrator], you have to be open to hearing the criticisms, hearing pushback, and being able to deal with that in a healthy way, and also being able to provide the platforms for people to be invested and to have a voice into establishing culture. I believe that that would at least set the groundwork for the ability to further develop that. I believe that that's something that is ... and if we're talking about inclusivity, not just in terms of ideas and processes, but inclusivity in terms of embracing diversity, culture, race, gender, sexuality, or what not, then you have to be intentional with that as well.

Mark's comments about embracing multiple forms of diversity (e.g., race, gender, and sexuality) were linked to being intentional with forming an inclusive culture. One must not only check off

the boxes of inclusive excellence (AAC&U, 2018), but actually embody an openness to individuals' ideas and voices from different angles, backgrounds and ways of knowing and an understanding that it is impossible to be excellent unless you are inclusive.

Carmen expressed that the LSU campus and athletic department was different than other campuses she has worked at where a sense of pride was crystal clear. She highlighted that there was an attitude of rolling up one's sleeves, a strong work ethic balanced with a competitive streak ingrained across each individual program that manifested as, "The heartbeat and the thread [that] drives people, intrinsically". Both Mark and Carmen's narratives illustrated that inclusivity and excellence were not mutually exclusive but were integrated within the culture of the athletics department. These findings illustrated how the culture of the LSU athletic department operated as discourse.

### **Athletic Department Meetings – *Both Necessary and Could Be Refreshed***

Generally, interviews with administrators indicated that department meetings were intended to communicate discourse so that all coaches and administrators were on the same page with institutional happenings, NCAA regulations and teams and programs updates. Additionally, these meetings were intended to provide coaches space to voice their concerns and share progress reports on team successes or improvements. Mark's interview revealed that athletic leadership understood it might take time for reciprocal discourse to evolve as illustrated by the following excerpt,

What I find though, even though the opportunity is there, not everybody feels comfortable engaging in that way without some type of direction and maybe some

individual exchange or direction from me to make them feel comfortable and okay with speaking out or testing boundaries, because they don't know what's gonna happen...[One institutional leader] painted a very good illustration about grasshoppers in a jar. When you open up the top of the jar, you're gonna have some grasshoppers are just gonna jump right out, but you're gonna have others that are still in there like, 'I'm not sure. Can I jump out? Is it safe for me to jump out?' You know, you have to be a little bit more deliberate and intentional with those grasshoppers that stay in to say, 'No. It's okay. You can hop out.'

Several administrators mentioned receiving feedback from coaches that meetings could be shortened, refreshed and made interactive to increase effectiveness of communication and provide opportunities for bonding among programs. One administrator recalled a positive and productive department meeting that included reciprocal dialogue among both coaches and administrators that was achieved by rearranging space within the room so that participants could be interactive with one another.

We had a meeting. It was just head coaches. We put the tables in the hollow square and brought up some things and topics. It was a really productive meeting, but it was different. Yeah. There was more engagement with everybody. That seemed to go really well, instead of having one person at the front talking to everybody.

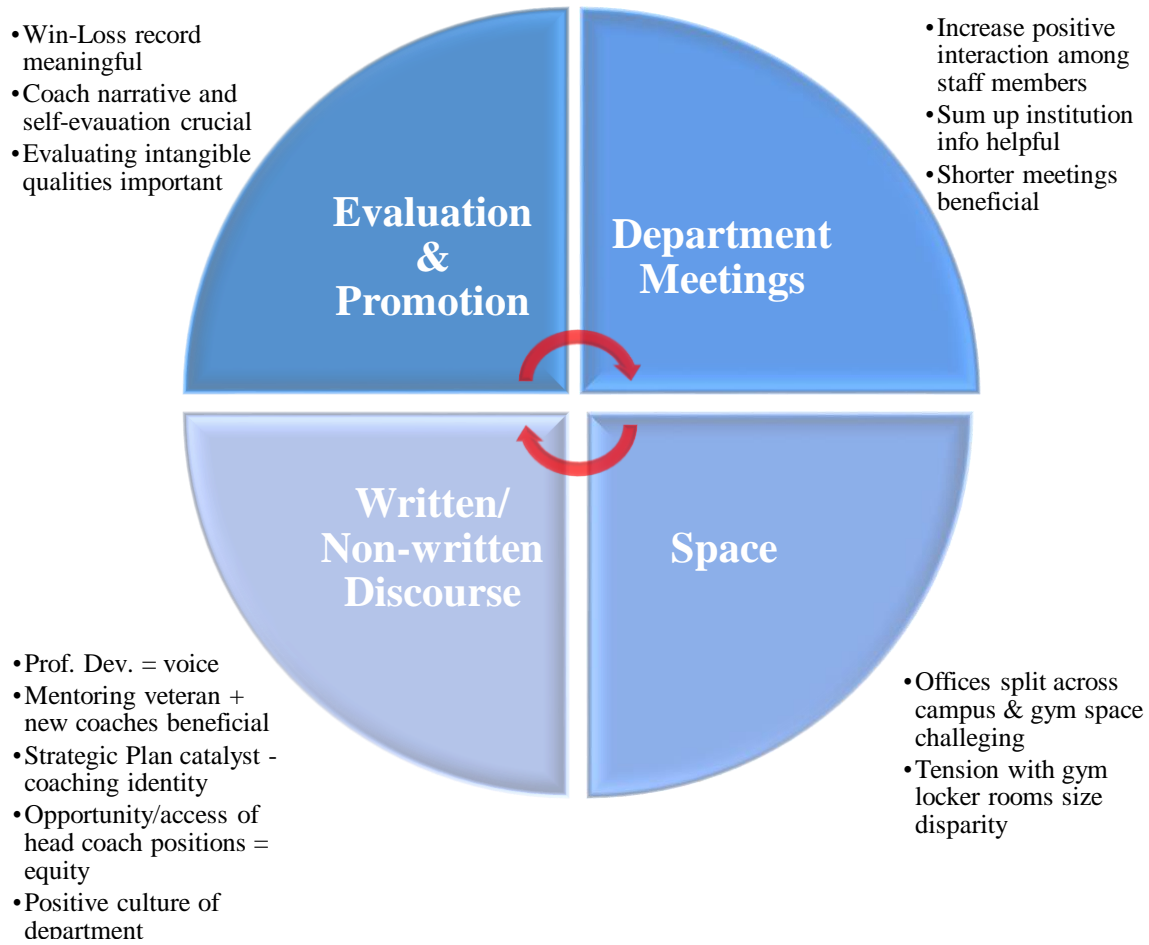
This administrator suggested that modifying the arrangement of meeting space (e.g., configuration of tables, etc.) changed the overall discourse between department members. Essentially, how individuals were physically positioned for a discussion made a positive difference and encouraged more dialogue than simply having one person standing in front of the

room speaking/talking to others as my observations and FDA also illustrated. These findings portrayed that department meetings are necessary, but can also be refreshed through reconfiguring physical space to promote dialogue between coaches and administrators.

### **Women Coaches' Making Sense of Institutional Discourse**

In this section, I tell the story, as a collective narrative, of the ways in which women coaches made sense of the institutional discourse at LSU. I was inspired to use the term “collective” because of Kiyama’s (2018) polyphonic testimonio about the lived experiences of college-going Latinas. It is also important to note the following sections regarding space, evaluation and promotion, and department meetings have elements that could uniquely identify each coach. These facets of institutional discourse carry a charge or risk that, if the coach was identified, might affect the relationship each coach has with one another and the administration. I am responsible for maintaining participants’ anonymity within these findings and I felt that presenting these elements as a collective would sufficiently answer the research questions without affecting their careers and/or relationships. This section speaks to my ethics and integrity as the researcher and my responsibility to protect participants’ identities. Figure 5.7 illustrates a summary of the themes (denoted by bullet points near each category of discourse). These themes are discussed at length in subsections after the visual demonstrating the various ways LSU coaches’ conceptualize the four categories of institutional discourse: evaluation and promotion, department meetings, space and written/non-written discourse while navigating their professional roles at LSU.

**Figure 5.7. Summary of Collective Coach Sense-Making of Four Areas of Institutional Discourse**



**Evaluation and Promotion**

Both sets of participants (coaches and administrators) described the evaluation process in similar ways. Common metrics referenced within the coach interviews included win-loss record, improvement within the conference, academic student success, community development and the student athlete experience. Additionally, coaches mentioned evaluating themselves through the 360 evaluation process where they chose five raters, scheduling sit-down conversation with the athletic director and were evaluated through a survey sent to all of their players in the spring. With the self-evaluation process, women coaches often referenced they were tougher on

themselves and that overall, the process was positive due to frequent communication and informal meetings with administration throughout the year as demonstrated by the following:

I don't think our plan is that bad. 'Okay, here are your goals for the year,' so they ask us our goals, which is great. Our goals and then how did you meet them and then you do a self-evaluation. And I'm more often harder on myself than they are on me (LSU Women's Head Coach).

I fill out my piece. [Administrator] fills out his piece. And then he approves mine and then we meet about it in our next meeting to sort of finalize it. So, which is good, but again I think to me it's pretty simple because we've had communication. It's not like, again, I don't know how often professors are meeting or how many meetings they're having or people with their supervisors on a monthly basis or whatever. So for me I feel like we've already had all these meetings and it's just sort of like the icing on the cake saying, "Hey, throughout the course of 10 months, your season, off season." He already knows what's going on and we're always interacting. He's just always ... whether he's popping in to say, 'Hey how's recruiting? What's going on?' There's always check-ins... (LSU Women's Head Coach).

Regarding promotion, interviews indicated that only one woman coach was employed via contract with the remaining women coaches denoted "at will" state employees. Interestingly a hierarchy with sports existed not by gender, but funding for different programs (e.g., one men's and one women's sport were fully funded by institution, all other sports were not).

Coach interviews also reflected that administration preferred evaluating aspects of head coach performance in ways that are measurable (e.g., service hours by athletes, GPA, wins-losses



and post-season conference bids to NCAA tournaments). However, one coach brought up measuring all of the intangible ways coaches impact players. Additionally, emphasis was placed on administrators and senior leadership team who can infuse positionalities as coaches into evaluation processes.

But yeah, measurable I mean in terms of how many service hours are you doing. There's some things like winning and losing obviously is the easy one, GPA. Everything in each of those line items has a measurement, but I do think that there's a lot more immeasurable things within those that a coach has the ability to impact. And I truly believe people that do the right things, karma, hopefully it comes around. I don't know, I think it's hard. It's hard I think for somebody that's never been in it to really know. And everybody knows it's a grind. The grinding out you do, it's a lot. And from every department. But I think [Ivan's] the one that's like, yes it is a grind, but to understand what a coach goes through I think is really unique (LSU Women's Head Coach).

### **Department Meetings**

Most women coaches felt that department meetings were necessary for disseminating information, keeping everyone on the same page, and operationalizing the mission, vision and values of LSU and the Athletic Department. One coach made sense of and summarized department meetings this way:

[Y]ou've got to make sure everybody is on the same page, everybody is getting the information they need to get and communicated the right way and know where we're headed. I think they are important, and again, maybe not one of those administrative type duties that go with our job that everybody likes, but you have to have them. You need to

hear what's going on in student services and what's coming down the pipe, or what's going on with external operations and marketing, and what new things are going to have gone on or what events we have coming up, and maybe what they need help with and whatever, so it's important. Again, it kind of comes back to emails can be good, but sometimes you need to sit there and listen and everybody be there. Yeah, and then if there's questions, we can follow up... and have a conversation about something if you need to have a conversation...(LSU Women's Head Coach).

Although women coaches felt group department meetings were necessary, across the board, interviews reflected that many coaches believe they ran too long. Coaches realized that the administration values dialogue, however, and they suggested differentiating between information that should be communicated via quicker bullet points, streamlined during the meetings, or emailed, and essential agenda items that need to be discussed during meetings. For example, one coach expressed that shorter meetings would be beneficial, "Shorter. More efficient. And yeah, 'Hey, this is what we need. Here, this is what's updated, this is what's updated here', and we were done. This is what we need, this is it, boom, boom, and you're done" (LSU, Women's Head Coach). I observed that coaches felt meetings ran long because they were not participating. However, this was an inference I made by synthesizing women coaches' responses. Since administration has the power to set the structure of meetings, this inference indicated there is a power differential regarding discourse within department meetings.

Findings also indicated that women coaches value interaction, discussion among themselves/administration and positive reinforcement during monthly department meetings. Women coaches mentioned this could be achieved by minimizing being lectured to/at as one coach communicated:

I think normally a lot of [us] just kinda sit there in staff meetings, so it'll be good I think to have a little more interaction and have some points on there that we want to make sure we get covered too. I would say the biggest thing would probably just be, make things more of a conversation instead of, I feel like a lot of times it's like, we're getting talked to. (LSU Women's Head Coach).

## Space

Space was a form of discourse that affected the success of women coaches at LSU. The athletic spaces women coaches discussed included training spaces, office spaces and gym spaces. In the following sections, I examine each aspect of space in depth.

*Training Spaces.* Women coaches corroborated findings from administrative interviews that “in season” sports get priority for strength, conditioning and training venues. “Off season” sports then sign up for training space via a first-come, first-serve basis with an auxiliary staff member. Some coaches felt teams were prioritized and the process was not actually first-come first-serve, but hierarchical. A couple of coaches described some confusion and inequity with the allocation of times to use strength, conditioning and training venues, and overall sign-up process for shared training space,

For workouts, it is ... I feel like it's a little prioritized. Every semester they send out an email and say, hey, first come, first serve, send us the times you want. I swear I'm like the first one to answer, I answer in like a minute, and I always end up with a 6:00 am time slot. I've asked for 7:00 am numerous times, and I'm always, ‘oh, this team got it because their team's, they're in season now.’ Or ‘This team has it because they're in season.’, I'm like well, when are we ever in season? Because our season goes year-round... I'm sure it's

team size and, I don't know if it has anything to do with money brought in for the school, or how that works. (LSU Women's Head Coach).

Inside [this space issue], I do feel like there's a little bit of inequality. I don't blame the kids. I don't blame the athletes for feeling like [support staff member] doesn't care about us. Sometimes you do sort of get that feeling, just sort of... as we go through. It's up to us I think to ... I just would just want [support staff] to communicate with my athletes the same way and give them the same respect [given to] a team, one of the team athletes (LSU Women's Head Coach).

Physical training space seemed to be a competing interest for lower profile teams than higher profile teams. Women coaches discussed how this corresponded to a prioritization of teams, due to revenue generation, not a gender equity issue. Women coaches expressed that lower profile men's programs were treated in similar ways as lower profile women's teams. As these coaches discussed, training space as a discourse becomes an issue when the prioritization of sports sends messages that certain athletes and coaches matter more than other athletes and coaches. Additionally, the prioritization of teams based upon revenue exemplified neoliberal undertones of haves (teams financially supported by LSU) versus have nots (teams that fundraise to augment their budgets).

*Office Spaces.* Many coaches commented on the proximity of their offices to one another and to administrators as an advantage for carrying out their roles in that they were able to maintain relationships because they saw each other daily. One coach mentioned,

But, I think more often than not, it's an advantage to be here with the other coaches. I like to talk with the other coaches or if I need something, I go down the hall for an administrator, I don't have to email. I think it's really good ... I prefer it. I think the other sports, they're used to it over there and they like it over there. They're close to the gym, but I think it's a disadvantage as well, because you don't have that day-to-day what's going on in the department (LSU Women's Head Coach).

When asked if the separation of coaches' offices affected athletic department culture, interestingly, this coach commented that it does but at the same time, it was not an issue for women coaches. "I think it does. It's not an issue, because we're just used to it, but I think overall it does affect things, because it just keeps a little bit of a separation, but I've got a great relationship with [those coaches]."

*Gym Spaces.* Women coaches with teams practicing, training and competing in the gym illustrated the complexity of sharing space with other LSU departments and neighboring university programs. Specifically, responses from interviews indicated that time for training and practice was at a premium and were limited. Although this issue only impacts a couple of coaches, this topic was mentioned in many interviews. One coach synthesized gym space in this way:

The gym space is ridiculous here because we share it with three entities, not only three institutions, but then within our institution it's our rec center, our human performance, you know, program and athletics. So we're talking like six entities that are five or six entities that we are trying to manage in there (LSU Women's Head Coach).

From interviews and my observations, it was evident that one locker room was split to make space and house two women's teams. Women's coaches mentioned the corresponding men's locker room was twice the size of women's locker room space. Although women's coaches diffused the negative discourse focused on unequally sized locker rooms with their players, these coaches emphasized that their players noticed the size disparity and mentioned these inequities. In responding to the question asking what potential messages this situation might convey, one coach expressed,

I'm not like dead set like, 'We have to have everything the guys have,' and I just don't get caught up in that, because I think I understand there's a reality. Now, if two people are doing the same job in the workforce, and there's a male and a female, and they have the same degree and they're doing the same thing, they should be getting the same amount of money. Like why should, in my opinion, why should gender matter in that sense? You're doing the same job. So I feel like that's a great injustice, right. And I'm like, 'Okay, I get it. But here's reality too,' and this is my view, so you can disagree with me, but I'm like, '[This men's program] is generating revenue, right?' And so, I get it, but there's just some reality in that when you take gender out of it, you know what I'm saying? (LSU Women's Head Coach).

Interestingly, this coach made sense of her situation, qualifying locker room space inequity by removing gender and focusing on revenue generation. This discourse is important as it shines light on maintaining the status quo perpetuating neoliberal masculinized binaries of "haves versus have nots" and the gender hierarchy within collegiate athletics.

## Written and Non-written Discourses - Navigating Roles

Both written and non-written forms of discourse affected the success of women coaches at LSU. For written discourse, women coaches expressed that the strategic plan was both complex and important for navigating their roles. Although women coaches communicated there were complexities with the strategic plan, they indicated the plan inspired additional thought and reflexivity of their positionalities. For unwritten discourse, women coaches shared that relationships, mentoring, professional development and the culture of the athletic department directly influenced their abilities to successfully navigate coaching roles. In the following sections, I examine each aspect of written and unwritten discourse in depth.

*Strategic Plan.* All women coaches viewed the athletic strategic plan (a.k.a. “Strat Plan”) as complex. They reported incorporating general facets or foundational pillars of the strategic plan: educate, engage and compete into their daily coaching roles. Coaches were both adamant that understanding the strategic plan was important, but also commented that simplified versions would help them operationalize institutional values. Tegarden, Tegarden, Smith & Sheetz (2016) investigated how group support systems (GSS) providing anonymity and cognitive factions, or a process soliciting anonymous input from individuals to generate ideas and represent their beliefs, could decrease the impact of power during strategic planning processes. Although the Strat Plan was very detailed and perhaps, overly comprehensive, the complexity served as a catalyst for participants’ introspection regarding their individual coaching identity. One coach mentioned establishing her own pillars of identity and personal values, embodiment of “honesty, integrity and excellence”:

So the educate, engage, and compete are aspects of the department, but for me I always said my three personal pillars were honesty, integrity, excellence. Those are the things

that I lean more on outside of my program. And then really trying to find ... this is what kind of the process is defining the program's pillars, because I think the program's pillars are different than the department's pillars, and I think it's different than [other programs]. We're all different and we're all not gonna look and coach the same, and run our program the same (LSU Women's Head Coach).

Another coach mentioned that her conceptualizations of the Strat Plan helped her interrogate, "What do I stand for as a coach?" This reflexive process inspired her to create an acronym for her core values, WTF or "Work, Trust and Family" (Figure 5.8). She then made sense of her WTF coaching identity explaining core tenets of each of the three values in the form of flow charts (Figures 5.9, 5.10 and 5.11). This coach mentioned her reflexive process in the following excerpt:

[T]hree years ago I was talking to somebody and I said, 'I need to come up with something that is mine. What do I stand for as a coach?' So, we did some work and I did some work with my assistants and I made it really simple and it's that: the WTF. And it's Work, Trust, Family, there's a lot of things that's a tree from it, but it's mine. But it's simple. And it's kinda a play, it doesn't mean what you think it means, but [the players] know. They do. They know it's about work, they know it's about developing trust. They know that we're a family. They know that.

WTF existed as the foundation for her team's identity infiltrating into every facet of the program (e.g., coaching staff, recruiting, engagement with the community, practice sessions and competition). I observed that players (members of this team and family) displayed the WTF flow



charts on their lockers. I personally experienced WTF in action with this particular team embodying a Work, Trust and Family persona when I observed games and attended team events. In my opinion, WTF was the most creative example of a coach making sense of LSU institutional discourse. As a researcher with a similar positionality, I emphasized this coach's creativity because of the way she derived and communicated her belief system. She used an acronym (WTF) that was relatable to her players and compelling because of the increased level of player buy-in to her philosophy. Additionally, this coach exercised her agency to reconceptualize the strategic plan and take ownership for her own purposes. The agency and ownership she employed through her reflexivity and WTF philosophy demonstrated an athletic department discourse that allowed for coach autonomy and bottom-up flows of power. She queered and navigated the labyrinth through this increased autonomy.

The "Work" flow chart (Figure 5.9) has several tenets that mirror leadership qualities by the athletic director. For example, "intentionality" and "consistency" appear on the work flow chart paralleling the way the athletic director embodies leadership. "Toughness and grit" are also located on the flow chart. Many former and current LSU administrators described the general culture of the athletic department as "gritty". The "Trust" flow chart (figure 5.10) is also interesting with the presence of the words "respect", "empathy" and "transparency". Remember Alice, the former athletic director, expressed that there are intangible qualities coaches often embody. These qualities included "grit, empathy and transparent realism." Alice emphasized that coaches displaying "transparent realism", or authentically showing care for each athlete as an individual, was especially important. Finally, the "Family" flow chart (figure 5.11) also describes the culture of LSU athletics. The word "Pride" appears prominently. Carmen's responses depicted that the LSU athletic department was different than other campuses and she mentioned

a clear sense of pride. Although this coach included many values of the LSU athletic department, she also indicated her own individual coaching values. For example, these are depicted by word choices like the “physical, mental and emotional” breakdown in the Work flow chart; “respect, reliability and communication” in the Trust flow chart; and in the “Family” flow chart, the both/and of being a “team” and “natural family.”

Figure 5.8 WTF Acronym

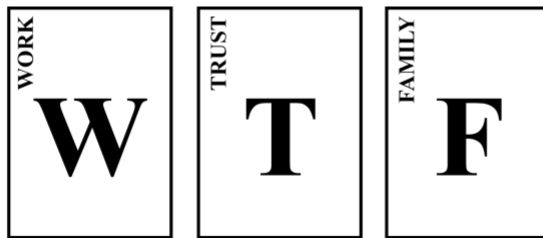


Figure 5.9 Work Flow Chart

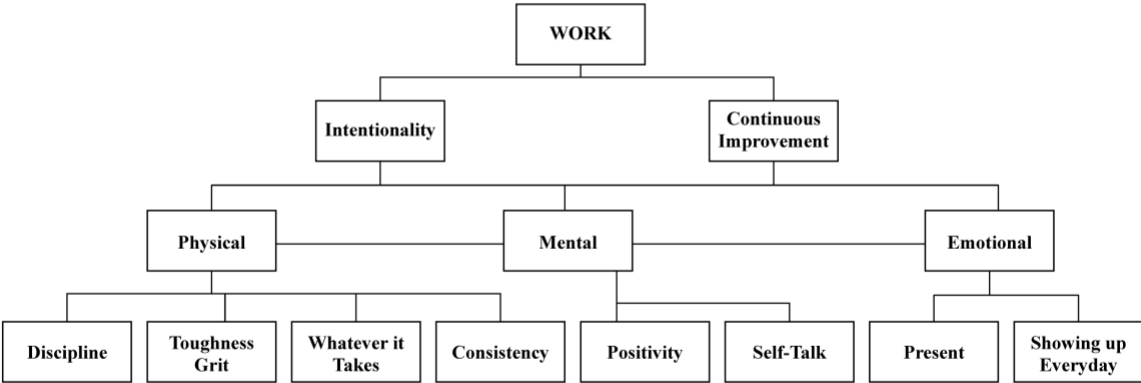


Figure 5.10 Trust Flow Chart

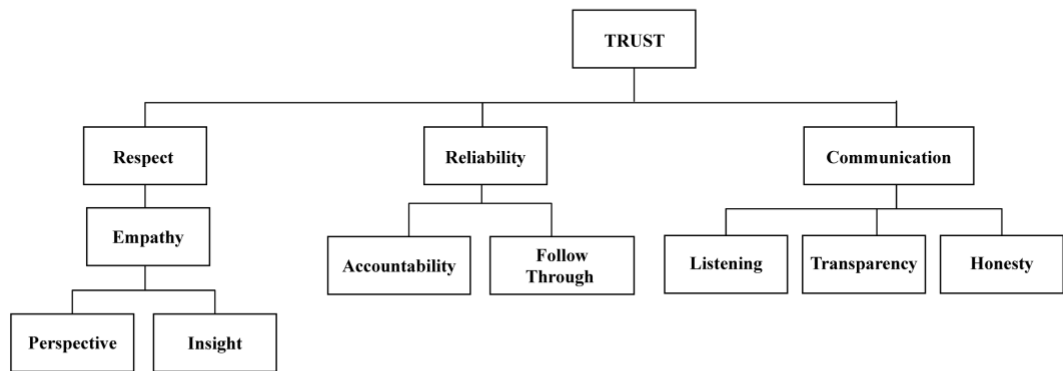
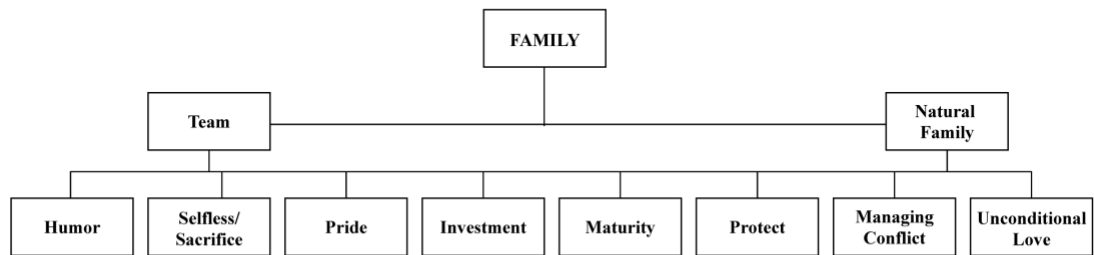


Figure 5.11 Family Flow Chart



*Relationships and Mentoring among LSU Women Coaches.* Women coaches described relationships occurring within the athletic department where coaches not only assisted one another with daily logistics, but also supported one another through being genuinely interested in each other's team successes and challenges. One coach described this relationality thusly:

I think you know that you're not marching into battle alone, that you've got this group of people that truly cares about you, asks how your season's going, and to know that you've

got a support system. Our success in [my program] is a reflection of our athletic department and it's an athletic department success. (LSU Women's Head Coach).

Additionally, this coach linked the relationality and character of the athletic department with the example set by LSU's current president, who is a woman. The persistence of coaches collaborating towards overcoming a common challenge, especially working together to address the lack of institutional funding, is demonstrated in the following excerpt:

I think we're gritty. Our institution is underfunded. We're having to be creative and go out and find ways to fund things. Our new president...is a woman who has surpassed all boundaries. We've got a woman leader who has done some pretty damn amazing things. She has fought and fought. So to have that kind of a leader out there but you've got to ... You know, you were in it. You got to have a little chip on your shoulder to get through what she got through, and I think all of us fight that same fight... (LSU Women's Head Coach).

Conversations with women coaches also revealed that veteran coaches mentored newer coaches and consistently shared information with each other. Veteran coaches willingly demonstrated leadership, helping newer coaches with administrative tasks, positively interacting with them and forming a network of collaboration. Veteran coaches approached their leadership as nonhierarchical and flexible instead of hierarchical and rigid as other veteran coaches might act. This non-hierarchical, flexible nature of the veteran and newer coach relationship dynamic at LSU is depicted by the following:

I could go to coaches and ask, and they're gonna help. And everyone is willing to like, there's a competitiveness I think always between coaches, but everybody is really willing

to help and want to talk through things and friendly when it comes to that. Yeah, I do think that that's pretty healthy right now, like the coaches. Probably because a lot of them are new. We don't have this old and new regime, and the ones that are all new have fit in really well, with everybody (LSU Women's Head Coach).

Yeah, I've found that with the open-door policy, if I ever have a question about recruiting, or ... I've asked [Helena] some questions about players, 'Okay, have you ever had this situation happen?' They're all very willing to help with that stuff. [Ivan's] been super helpful, because he used to be... a coach, and he helped me with a lot of the recruiting stuff, but yeah, I think there's definitely that mentoring. I think if we have any questions, all the coaches are always willing to help out and answer however they can (LSU Women's Head Coach).

Both the relationality and mentoring among women head coaches manifested in a family-oriented atmosphere. Coaches not only supported each other at competitive events, but also would intentionally interact at team, student and overall athletic department outings. One coach depicted this natural tendency to want to get to know one another, despite their offices being separated across campus,

We don't just coach our sport. It's fun as coaches, we do it the right way. You can go and be a part of [student athletic department event], and you're all there together doing it. I sat with [two other women's coaches] last night, and we mostly were just sitting there listening, but we had little conversations before and after, and so it's a little bit like you can get to know each other a little bit better and talk about where each other are at. It's

nice because we don't have a ton of time to do that, especially when our offices aren't by each other, but that's an easy way for us to interact and be connected (LSU Women's Head Coach).

The relationality and mentoring that occurred among LSU women coaches parallel the collaborative ways of leading that women often embody in their professional roles.

*Professional Development.* Findings revealed that coaches utilized books, podcasts, and literature about their individual sports, leadership, developing purpose and self-improvement. Some coaches were active on social media platforms, especially Twitter. For example, one coach mentioned finding support from an entire Twitter forum devoted to issues related to gender, women in coaching and her sport:

[I]n general I think just as a woman I actually got this question asked to me. Twitter has [my sport] coach problems and ... girl problems. It's like this popular Twitter thing. And [my sport] coach problems I got reached out to, direct message on Twitter, cause they wanted to do a podcast. They wanted that person to do a podcast and I don't know who it is, who runs it, but they assumed that that was a guy that was running the Twitter handle and it was a woman. And so she reached out to me and was like, 'Hey, I actually am changing this podcast to issues women in coaching and our stereotypes and things we have to deal with.' She did this whole like bingo like game like if you've ever felt like this or this or this (LSU Head Women's Coach).

Another coach emphasized that financial support offered by the administration for coaching conferences and conventions was paramount to her success. As a result of this administrative



support, this coach was able to have a voice at conferences representing her team and LSU athletics.

So I would say the support and professional development and attending conferences and conventions and taking part in the process of being part of our governing body for [my sport], [administration] always been very supportive of that for me. ...It's important to have a voice and being there and be willing to allow me a week to go and have a voice. Sometimes it's as much about listening to what's going on and being able to come back and say, hey, this is coming, we need to prepare for it. ..it's important that I know how I feel about it so that [administration] can represent me the right way... So [administration] is supportive of that... professional development has been a big piece (LSU Women's Head Coach).

*LSU Athletic Department Culture as Discourse.* Notably, adjectives used by coaches describing the culture of the athletic department mirrored terms expressed by athletic administration during interviews and included: “gritty/scrappy”, “collaborative”, “family”, “caring”, “supportive”, “autonomous” and “competitive with pride”. One coach expressed the character of the athletic department in this way, “...there's a certain level of everybody [the] coaches...there's always a competitive aspect of it, but I think it's a different feeling that I've had here. It's like you just fight for everything. It is this gritty determination” (LSU Women's Head Coach). Interestingly, “opportunity”, which referred to being granted the chance to become a head coach, was a term also used by head coaches describing LSU athletic department culture.

Overall, LSU's current athletic leadership was viewed as transparent, easy to approach, displaying an open-door policy, not micro-managing, thoughtful and process-oriented. Many

coaches described that there are two types of administrators, those with an academic, student success and administrative background (administrators' A.D.), and those with a coaching history (coach's A.D.). The former AD who had been a head coach for several years had an intuitive decision-making style and focused on competition (wins and losses). Coaches expressed that although the current and former A.D. leadership styles differed, where the former A.D. drew upon her coaching background and the current A.D. embodies a student success vision, both leaders cultivated a supportive, family-oriented and collaborative culture. One coach described her experience with athletic leadership in this way:

Honestly, at the end of the day I can still just be me. Yeah, they let me be me. I think the most important thing to me for working with both is that they both have fully supported me with any player personal issues, or even a few times parents wanted to kind of complain or anything. At the end of the day, that's probably my number one thing from the administration that I want, is to be backed. Yeah, and they both had my back, which was really nice (LSU Women's Head Coach).

LSU's athletic department was also characterized as being in transition. Notably, four out of the six women's head coaches were hired by the current administration. Additionally, participants described that the athletic department, as a whole, was searching for identity. Coaches reflected that more "buy-in" from the coaching staff was needed to achieve shared goals. Some women coaches felt winning would improve this aspect of culture while other coaches expressed a need to prioritize departmental values in recognition of the department's

limited resources. When asked to expand on the need for an athletic department identity and how this relates to culture, coaches responded:

I think winning. I know that's kind of a silly thing to say, but I think when there's a lot of success, I think that's kind of contagious, and I think if the whole athletic department starts doing well, I think that changes the whole mentality for everybody. I think we have a good mentality, but I think that would make it different (LSU Women's Head Coach).

I think one thing we struggle with is like a priority list. We can't be great at everything. We want to be great at community service, going to be great at fundraising, wanna win and we want to have when our cake and eat it too. And the reality is not that we can't strive for that, but like we can't be great at 100 things. What are we, what are we going to be great at? And I think we have an identity issue with that right now (LSU Women's Head Coach).

Interestingly, these coaches' comments about the evolving identity of LSU Athletics paralleled my FDA findings from the January, 2018 department meeting and brand audit, "Time for Demonstration" presentation. The first goal of the audit was to determine LSU's strengths and areas of improvement for showcasing an identity as a university. The audit also provided a framework for the LSU community to operate within. These coaches were exercising their agency and trying to make sense of what was important to the athletic department which was not clear. They were also conceptualizing how they could prioritize and operationalize athletic department values to fit within the greater context of University mission and vision.

Finally, and most importantly, all six of the women head coaches interviewed for this study discussed the lack of women in NCAA coaching generally and specifically the unique presence of gender equity (regarding demographics) within LSU's athletic department. Interviews with coaches often morphed into them making sense of why multiple women occupy head coaching roles at LSU. Generally, coaches shared that LSU's overall commitment to diversity and inclusivity promoted gender equity occurring in the athletic department. Prior research has demonstrated that RCU mission is tied to equity and access (Henderson, 2007; Orphan, 2018). One coach conceptualized inclusivity embodied by both individuals and the institution as an act of demonstrating integrity and excellence on a daily basis and showing the desire to include people. She expressed, "I think in certain aspects, we want everybody to feel good and feel included, and be like hey come, you know? But at the same time, I feel like there's also a ... responsibility to prove it." (LSU Women's Head Coach). Another coach delved into the long history of women in leadership at LSU. She linked the presence of women in senior administrative positions and athletics as a factor contributing to the growth of women in head coaching roles.

I mean, obviously the campus embraces diversity, and from the top-down, we have women in leadership roles. In fact, it's dominated by women in leadership roles. [Former AD] used to be here. And she was female. I think she was the only female athletic director in the conference. And so I'm sure she valued it as well. So I think it's just 'cause of the history of our campus of embracing diversity. I think it's 'cause of the campus having had a female athletic director (LSU Women's Head Coach).

As findings indicated, the culture of the athletic department has been shaped by the overall culture of the institution. Women coaches depicted a positive culture and atmosphere at LSU where inclusivity and diversity existed with institutional leadership and extended to the athletic department. This cultural congruency conveyed a powerful message that women, especially women coaches and women in leadership across the institution, matter.

### **Conclusion**

Findings comprised the re-storying of six women coaches' narratives about their recruitment, hiring and onboarding at LSU. Findings also demonstrated power-knowledge connections by employing FDA analysis of documents including coach self-evaluations, the 360 evaluation process and the athletic strategic plan, and observations of three athletic department meetings. Finally, women coaches' making sense of institutional discourse was presented as a collective narrative. This collective narrative illustrated how the evaluation and promotion process, spaces, department meetings and written/non-written discourse shaped and illuminated women coaches ways of knowing and paths throughout the leadership labyrinth. The final chapter discusses how these findings relate to both the current literature on women in coaching and higher education. In the final chapter, I also discuss new knowledge gleaned from these findings regarding the recruitment, retention and persistence of women coaches and that informed my implications, recommendations and areas of future research and praxis.

## CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

### **Introduction**

Women coaches and leaders are underrepresented within NCAA environments with approximately 40% of women coaching women's teams (LaVoi, 2018). Women in coaching navigate Leadership Labyrinths full of barriers to their success in the profession (Burton & LaVoi, 2016; LaVoi, 2018; Eagly & Carli, 2007). These coaches travel through the labyrinth experiencing multiple twists and turns negatively affecting their recruitment, retention and persistence within the NCAA. Neoliberal ideology may explain why narratives about women, blaming them for their own lack of success, exist as a common twist and turn in the Leadership Labyrinth (Burton & LaVoi, 2016; LaVoi, 2016). Research indicates these "blaming narratives" or negative discourse can be recycled by athletic administrative leaders and decision makers (LaVoi, 2018; 2016; LaVoi & Wasend, 2018; Miller, 2015; Aicher & Sagas, 2010). However, how this discourse manifests within the evaluation and leadership of women coaches, and within athletic departments has not been examined.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the discourse, narratives and practices at a Regional Comprehensive University (RCU) and Division II institution (Loveland State University (LSU)) that positively modeled gender equity evidenced by the number of women coaching women's athletic teams. LSU also maintained a head coaching staff that was balanced between genders, with 56% of the coaching staff comprised of women. The research questions for this study were:

- 1) What were the narratives of women coaches at a Regional Comprehensive University (RCU) and Division II NCAA institution that positively modeled gender equity evidenced by the demographics of coaching staff ?
- 2) How did these coaches make sense of the institutional discourse while navigating their roles?
- 3) How did the institutional discourse inform women coaches recruitment, retention and persistence?

I applied Foucauldian Dispositive Analysis (FDA) to examine LSU's institution-wide 360 coach evaluation process, coaches' self-evaluation documents/process, athletic strategic plan and my observations of three athletic department meetings. FDA is a version of discourse analysis that helps ascertain and visually depict the types of discourse (written texts or non-written actions and objects) and the meaning associated with this discourse (Caborn, 2007). FDA is also a way to critically interrogate who holds the power associated with such discourse and how this power manifests within written discourse materials, spaces, actions and objects to equalize power dynamics and establish more inclusive settings.

Additionally, I used Critical Narrative Analysis (CNA) to reveal how macro discourses of the institution and athletic department shape and inform micro discourses of women coaches. I achieved this by conducting semi-structured conversational interviews with both athletic administrators and women coaches at LSU. By combining FDA and CNA methods in this study, I was able to queer discourse and narrative analysis. In the following sections, I provide a discussion of findings, implications and recommendations for research and praxis, areas of future research and significance of this study relating to women in collegiate coaching.

## Discussion of Findings

Analysis of findings revealed three major areas to discuss. First, I used FDA to visually depict analysis of the type of discourse (written texts or non-written actions and objects) along with the meaning or the “what” of the discourse for LSU documents including coach self-evaluations, the 360 evaluation process and strategic plan as well as the three athletic departmental meetings I observed. Additionally, through FDA, I analyzed “where”, “with whom” and “how” power rested utilizing x-y plots. Second, I re-told stories of the recruitment, hiring and orientation/onboarding processes for each of LSU’s six women coaches. Third, I shared the collective ways these six women coaches made sense of LSU’s institutional discourse. In order to demonstrate coaches’ sense-making both individually (e.g., via their personal narratives) and collectively, I first ascertained themes from administrative interviews regarding the hiring, orientation/on-boarding procedures, evaluation and promotion process, space, discourse materials (both written and non-written) and department meetings. These themes represented the macro context of LSU’s institutional discourse.

Foucault (1990) posited there is an unequivocal relationship between knowledge and power. However, Foucault (1990) and discourse analysis can be difficult to understand or follow. Caborn (2007) developed a method to visually make sense of the concept and theory of discourse in multiple forms as the dispositive, and then, subsequently employ FDA as a discourse analytic method. To my knowledge, this study was the first to actually apply FDA methodology to discourse within a collegiate athletic setting. In the following sections, I answer research questions one and two and discuss findings from my FDA analysis of documents and department meetings. Additionally, I provide discussion about findings regarding LSU athletic departmental discourse, women coaches’ narratives and their collective sense-making of institutional



discourse. Next, I examine how the LSU athletic department is a diamond in a very neoliberal higher education context. Finally, I answer research question three by providing implications and recommendations for research and praxis, areas of future research and the significance of this study.

### **Foucauldian Dispositive Analysis (FDA)**

To answer the first two research questions: What were the narratives of women coaches at a Regional Comprehensive University (RCU) and Division II NCAA institution that positively modeled gender equity evidenced by the demographics of coaching staff? And how did these coaches make sense of the institutional discourse while navigating their roles? I discuss findings from Foucauldian Dispositive Analysis (FDA) referring to composite plots from document analysis (Figure 6.1) and athletic department meetings (Figure 6.2), LSU athletic department discourse, women coaches' narratives and their collective sense-making of the institutional discourse.

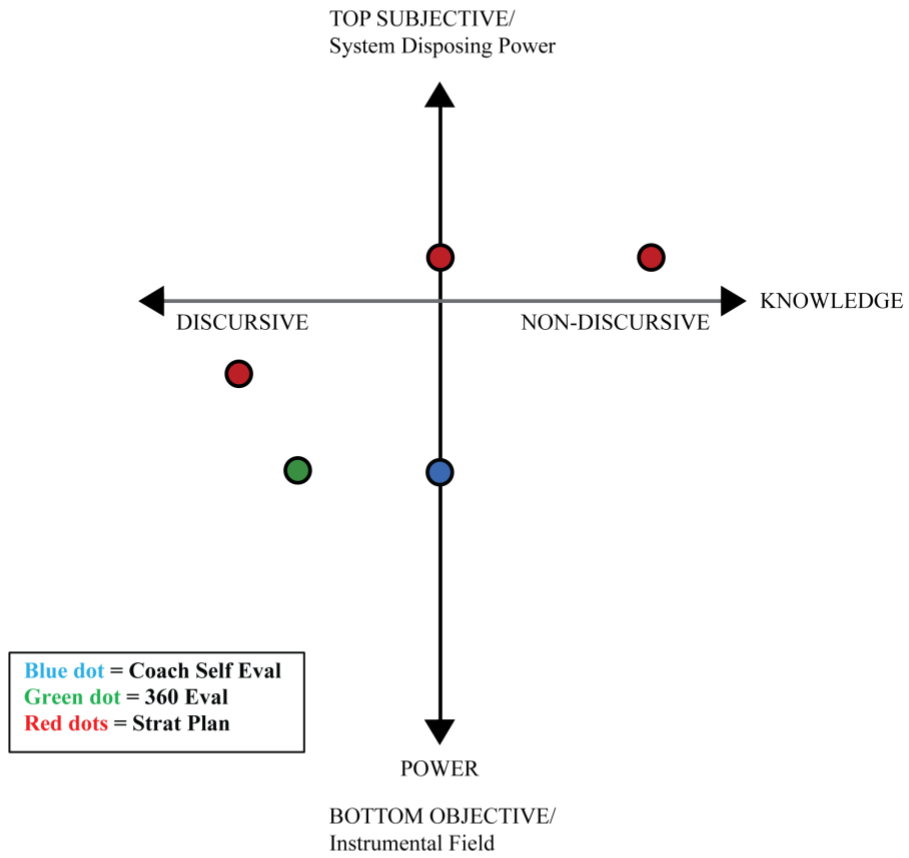
*LSU Athletic Department Documents.* Referring to Figure 6.1, FDA plots demonstrated that both the coach self-evaluations (blue dot) and 360 evaluation process (green dot) showed action-oriented positions along the x-axis of knowledge and bottom-up power structures along the y-axis of power. These FDA bottom-up power structures and action-oriented knowledge positions make sense given that the coach self-evaluation and 360 evaluation process are ways in which coaches exert agency by telling their own stories and choosing their own raters. This finding exposes the power in positive discourse emerging from the institutional field and bottom-up direction (e.g. women coaches) which is important to the evaluation process. Baez (2000) coined the term “critical agency” as a way to change the discourse surrounding faculty of color

(FoC) engaging with service-related activities in the academy to reclaim power. Since power is often embedded and disguised in social structures (Baez, 2000), employing evaluative methods from the bottom-up also promotes critical agency of women coaches. As such, evaluating women coaches in this way demonstrates a holistic approach inclusive of multiple ways of knowing women coaches utilize to reclaim power.

The FDA plot for the strategic plan (see Figure 6.1) revealed three positions (red dots) across written, action and object positions of the x-axis spectrum and top-down power structures along the y-axis for the action and object positions. A bottom-up power structure existed with the text or written discourse of the plan evidenced by the inclusive language used. Multiple dots along the knowledge axis or spectrum makes sense because LSU's strategic plan represented multiple forms of discourse as the dispositive. Given that the steering committee was comprised of administrators with only one woman head coach, the top-down power structure evidenced was unsurprising. However, this FDA plot and the juxtaposition of power between the written portion and the action and object aspects of the strategic plan clearly depicts that power and overarching mission, vision and values of LSU rests within the macro institutional system and athletic administration. Research has demonstrated that strategic plans are laden with both structural power (from an organizational authority figure) and horizontal power (lateral relationship among people within similar organizational levels) echoing the beliefs, values and vision of their authors and creators (Tegarden, et. al, 2016). The presence of this power differential affects the textual content included or not included in a strategic plan and then how social actors consume and disseminate knowledge gleaned from the plan (Tegarden, et. al, 2016; Vaara, Sorsa & Palli, 2010). Unveiling power dynamics that exist between macro administrators and micro employees through strategic plans in written documents helps to identify the direction of power and the

multiple ways of knowing that exist. The ways in which the strategic plan (strat plan) was devised represents a single form of knowing from the administrative group that may dismiss coaches ways of knowing and leading. This finding is essential to note as the lack of coach input at the micro level could lead to marginalization of women coaches. Information from this finding builds upon prior research demonstrating powerful top-down neoliberal undertones in the academy that often foster a masculine, heroic, hyper-individual mentality (Gannon et. al, 2015; Gildersleeve, 2017) as ways of knowing and leading. FDA findings for the November, December and January LSU athletic department meeting is discussed in the following section.

Figure 6.1 FDA Composite Plot of LSU Athletic Documents

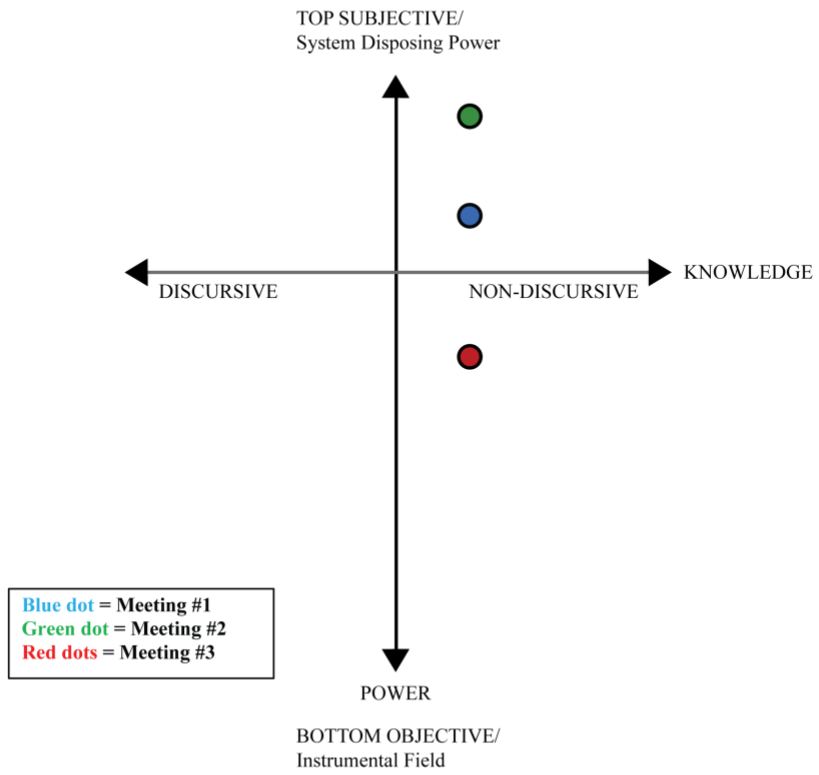


*LSU Department Meetings.* FDA indicated an action-oriented knowledge position along the x-axis and top-down power structure along the y-axis (see Figure 6.2) for the first two meetings, November (meeting #1 blue dot) and December (meeting #2 green dot). The action knowledge position is unsurprising because these meetings were of a traditional presentation style. However, the top-down power structure pattern for both meetings was surprising to me because athletic administration typically embodied a very collaborative and approachable nature. Critical discourse theory interrogates more than simply discussion but the greater context of discourse, how power is achieved and then, how people make sense of knowledge (Foucault, 1990). The way that meeting agenda items are compiled and chosen, or the “how” as Foucault (1990) might say, is also a demonstration of power. This FDA finding is new knowledge relating to the discourse within collegiate athletic departments and adds to the greater context of ways of leadership within the NCAA. Specifically, this finding revealed the traditional masculine top-down ways of leading by athletic directors which has been well-documented in the literature (Burton & LaVoi, 2016; LaVoi, 2016; Miller, 2015; Birrell & Theberge, 1994). How agenda items were selected and the way department meetings conducted revealed power dynamics between coaches and administrators important to recognize. Increased levels of top-down activity at a macro-level within department meetings (i.e., athletic directors and the administration) may negatively affect the buy-in from constituents at the micro-level of an organization (e.g., coaches).

Referring to Figure 6.2 and the third January (meeting #3 red dot), FDA revealed an action-oriented knowledge position along the x-axis, but a bottom-up power structure along the y-axis. The action knowledge position reflected the meeting’s style as a traditionally lecture/presentation format led by the athletic director. However, the bottom-up power structure

represented the presence of guest-speakers from outside of the athletic department and from my observations, a more participatory feel to this meeting. Salazar, Norton and Tuitt (2010) suggested that in order to achieve an inclusive learning environment and demonstrate respect in the classroom, it was necessary to include multiple identity groups. Adding guest speakers exemplified a commitment on the part of the administration to be open, respectful and willing to share different ways of knowing which created an inclusive department meeting. Additionally, the actual content or the “what” being discussed in this meeting was important to the larger context of LSU’s identity as an RCU. This meeting focused on results from an institution-wide brand audit and evolution of LSU from a “college” to a “university”. The “what” discourse evident in this finding aligns with prior research on academic drift and institutional change as RCUs seek status through evolving into “universities” (Morphew, 2009) and legitimacy within the academy through striving processes (Gonzales, 2014; O’Meara, 2007). Orphan (2018; 2016) illustrated that RCUs often respond to neoliberal state contexts by employing adaptive and/or interpretive mechanisms for survival. As Orphan (2018; 2016) discussed, many RCUs engaged in *adaptive* (less focus on civic engagement and more emphasis on neoliberal effects of economic advancement) and/or *interpretive* (neoliberal contexts used as a catalyst for strengthening RCU public purpose) forms of strategy to become legitimate. Time will tell whether LSU will incorporate adaptive, interpretative or both strategies as it evolves and becomes more university-like while also emphasizing its focus on access and mission.

Figure 6.2 FDA Composite Plot of LSU Athletic Department Meetings



## **LSU Institutional Athletic Department Discourse**

Interviews with LSU athletic department administrators revealed five themes. First, intentionality existed with the recruitment and hiring practices of women coaches. The finding of intentionality is consistent with LaVoi and Wasend's (2018) application of an ecological-intersectional model, specifically from the organizational level, and study of the recruitment and retention practices of ADs. Second, both the orientation/onboarding process and department meetings could be improved and explicitly outlined. Third, evaluation and promotion at LSU was a holistic process. Fourth, physical spaces created discourse. These second, third and fourth themes have not been well-studied in the literature. Aicher and Sagas (2010) and Cunningham and Dixon (2003) generally examined the attributes of effective leadership and processes for hiring coaches. My study demonstrated the importance of a holistic approach to evaluation and promotion for women coaches in order to achieve gender equity and perpetuate inclusive discourses. Finally, physical spaces, people and culture all manifested as forms of discourse. Burke et. al (2017) expressed that higher educational spaces greatly impact student learning and teaching pedagogy. LaVoi and Wasend (2018) discussed the importance of positive, inclusive cultures as factors impacting the workplace environment of women coaches from an organizational level. Building upon Burke et. al's (2017) and LaVoi and Wasend's (2018) research, my study found that 1) physical space creates discourse and this relationship is important to investigate within athletic departments; and 2) people actually embody discourse profoundly affecting women coaches' existence and success within the LSU athletic department.



## **LSU Women Coaches Narratives**

The stories of recruitment, hiring and onboarding/orientation for LSU's women coaches answered the first research question, which was what were the narratives of women coaches at a Regional Comprehensive University (RCU) and Division II NCAA institution that positively modeled gender equity evidenced by the demographics of coaching staff? Each coach's narrative was unique and focused on different aspects of recruitment, hiring and onboarding/orientation at LSU. Helena's story revealed that LSU was her second chance at being a head coach as she was recruited to Division II after being fired from Division I. Bette emphasized that culture is crucial (term she used not necessarily invoking organizational theory's notion of culture) within athletic departments and for women coaches' success. Jodi was drawn to LSU's mission - one that focused on access, first generation students and opportunity. Although, Dana did not initially seek out LSU, she, too, was granted the chance to be a head coach at an athletic department conveying messages of growing one's own and trusting women to be in leadership positions. LSU was more attracted to Tina than vice versa, unconventionally seeking her out to lead and coach demonstrating the importance of individualized attention on the part of the athletic director in the hiring process. Lastly and significantly, Shane's story revealed how powerful one's positionality and persistence can be in pursuing head coach positions and personal dreams.

Although each coach's story was unique, the common theme threaded throughout all six narratives included intentionality with recruitment and hiring and people acting as essential forms of discourse within the orientation/onboarding process of LSU's athletic department. Prior research on women coaches' narratives have focused on only the stories of their lived experiences as coaches. Gearity et. al (2016) called for more creative analytic research on

women coaches that would make a difference in growing the pipeline of women coaching collegiate sports. Thus, the coaches' narratives depicted in this study contributed knowledge regarding their recruitment, hiring and orientation/onboarding and more importantly, the discourses surrounding this praxis that other institutions can use to improve their own recruitment, hiring and orientation/onboarding approaches. In the following section, I discuss LSU women coaches collective sense-making of the institutional discourse and answer my second research question, how did these coaches make sense of the institutional discourse while navigating their roles?

### **LSU Women Coaches Collective Sense-Making of Institutional Discourse**

In answering my second research question, how did these coaches make sense of the institutional discourse while navigating their roles?, I refer back to Figure 5.7 (p. 145). Women coaches made sense of four areas of institutional discourse within the athletic department: evaluation and promotion, department meetings, space and written/non-written discourse. I presented these findings as a collective narrative to protect the identities of each coach and preserve their relationships with each other and administration. Coaches' ways of knowing and how they collectively made sense of each facet of institutional discourse is discussed below.

*Evaluation and Promotion.* LSU women coaches expressed common metrics used for evaluation and promotion during their interviews. These metrics included win-loss records, that women coaches were often more critical than administration during the self-evaluation process and the need for ascertaining intangible qualities that can influence players. These findings were important as there is a dearth of literature depicting the way women coaches make sense of the

evaluation and promotion process as previously discussed with Aicher and Sagas' (2010) and Cunningham and Dixon's (2003) research.

*Department Meetings.* LSU women coaches believed that department meetings were necessary, however, many coaches communicated they felt that these meetings were lengthy and should be shortened. Additionally, coaches value institutional data (e.g., information from admissions, the President or student services), but indicated this type of discourse could be streamlined. Most importantly, women coaches expressed a desire to have more interaction with each other and the administration during departmental meetings, instead of passively listening to administrators and guest speakers.

*Spaces.* Women coaches described physical training spaces as a competing interest due to a hierarchy of higher profile sport programs with lower profile sport programs, but not due to the privileging of particular genders. This ranking and prioritization of teams suggested a neoliberal undertone that teams bringing in more revenue received more institutional and administrative support (Kampoff, 2006; LaVoi, 2016; Miller, 2015; Saunders, 2014). Although most women coaches' offices existed together in the administration building, one coach's office was across campus and situated closer to her team's training and competing venue. Coaches' offices that were far from the central athletic administration building presented challenges during orientation and onboarding, but not daily work activities. However, women coaches mentioned gym space utilization and locker room disparity were issues. Women coaches' making sense of this disparity with locker room space between women's and men's teams unveiled discourse highlighting the neoliberal status quo of binaries between the haves (teams that receive institutional funding) vs. have nots (teams that do not receive institutional funding and fundraise for many aspects of their programs). As such, this discourse on space perpetuates a masculinized

and gendered hierarchical social structure within LSU athletics. Coaches' sense-making of written and non-written discourse at LSU is discussed below.

*Written/non-written discourse.* The athletic strategic plan (strat plan) was the primary written discourse that helped women coaches navigate their roles. Although the strat plan was viewed by many women coaches as complex, this form of written discourse emerged as a catalyst inciting reflexivity by several coaches. Women coaches critically examined their positionalities and personal identities about the mission, vision and values for coaching/leading their teams. Specifically, the WTF example created by one coach (figures 5.8, 5.9, 5.10 and 5.11 p. 156-159) illustrated an interlacing of positionality, critical discourse and queer theories in a kaleidoscope-like fashion. Essentially, this coach took institutional discourse (e.g., the strat plan), engaged reflexively about her intersecting identities and context as a leader and then, queered this institutional discourse based upon her own ways of knowing (e.g., resulting in the WTF philosophy) to carry out coaching/leadership roles. This particular coach was able to exercise her agency, taking ownership of her personal mission, vision and values, signifying a bottom-up flow of power that helped her successfully navigate the leadership labyrinth. Additionally, this coach reconstructed the labyrinth making the walls more scalable to achieve her individual and team goals.

The unwritten discourse that women coaches made sense of included themes of relationality, professional development and departmental discourse. A sense of relationality among coaches, especially between veteran and non-veteran coaches, existed at LSU. The issue of relationality and success with women in coaching has been discovered by LaVoi and Wasend (2018) in their study of athletic directors. However, my study emphasized women coaches' perspectives on the importance of relationality amongst staff and people acting as discourse for

supporting and retaining women coaches within collegiate athletics. This collaborative picture of relationality between the more experienced and newer coaches also depicted a resistance to neoliberal environments that often focus on exclusivity, hierarchies and hyper-individuality as Gannon et. al (2015) and Gildersleeve (2017) have found.

Kiyama, Lee and Rhodes (2012) built upon Baez's (2000) critical agency concept and coined the term "critical agency network" (p. 277). In studying mid-level professionals working towards sustainable university outreach programs, Kiyama et. al (2012) discovered this professional group combined their agency related to their work roles with the power of their social connections to incite change. Women coaches at LSU have formed their own critical agency network (Kiyama et. al, 2012) due to the power they collectively exhibited by their social relationality interconnected with the agency they demonstrated in several collegiate coaching roles.

LSU women coaches utilized many forms of professional development such as podcasts, literature and Twitter to assert their voices and find support outside of the athletic department. One coach drew upon her identity as a coach, participating and voicing her concerns in a Twitter forum focused on women coaches and the problems they face in the coaching profession. This coach's involvement with Twitter was important networking for professional development and support. Given that Twitter is a popular social media forum and platform that queer youth turn to for support (Craig, McInroy, McCready & Alaggia, 2015), women coaches using Twitter is another way they can relate to their student-athletes. It is also possible that social media provides support to queer youth and adults as they are navigating heteronormative spaces. These findings asserted the link between one's positionality as an important factor for women coaches navigating daily roles and working towards success for their teams. To my knowledge, few

studies have specifically investigated professional development as a form of voice and discourse in the collegiate sport sector.

Women coaches described the discourse of the athletic department in similar ways as administrators. Common adjectives used by both coaches and administration during interviews to describe LSU athletics included: “gritty/scrappy”, “collaborative”, “family”, “caring”, “supportive”, “autonomous” and “competitive with pride”. The commonality of word choices suggests that LSU represented a queer (e.g., antinormative) and unconventional atmosphere. Most athletic departments do not exhibit the qualities/adjectives described by LSU women coaches and administrators (LaVoi, 2016; LaVoi & Wasend, 2018; Miller, 2015). Also, this finding illuminated that athletic departments, like LSU, promote self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2008) of women coaches. Self-determination theory asserts that people seek out and thrive within environments where they can be competent, connected and autonomous leading to higher motivation levels of individuals (Deci & Ryan, 2008). If women coaches exhibit self-determination attributes, their athletes may also experience these same qualities positively impacting student learning outcomes, for example, graduation and academic success rates.

Women coaches also shared that the discourse of the athletic department was highly shaped by athletic directors, both past and present. I interviewed two very different types of athletic directors representing LSU, one with an administrative background and the other with a coaching background. Both leaders intentionally focused on achieving gender equity of the coaching staff, a directive from the LSU president, by cultivating supportive, family-oriented and collaborative environments. This finding describing athletic directors’ ways of embodying leadership parallels Kezar’s (2013) study on non-tenure track faculty revealing that academic department chairs greatly shape the overall climate, discourse and whether faculty members,

regardless of tenure status or category, feel supported. Supportive environments for non-tenure track faculty correlated with department chairs establishing clear written policies regarding roles and responsibilities (Kezar, 2013). My study clearly illustrated that athletic directors serve a vital role cultivating athletic department discourse and re-emphasizes the importance of embodied discourse for recruitment, retention and persistence of women coaches and their student-athletes. Gender equity in an athletic department does not happen accidentally and requires intentional maintenance.

Interestingly, although gender equity was highly present at LSU and athletics, women coaches described the athletic department as in transition. Women coaches suggested that the department may be searching for an identity. This finding is not surprising since the identity of LSU as an institution, specifically an RCU, seemed to be evolving as evidenced by my FDA findings of the brand audit January 2019 department meeting. The evolution of LSU from a “college” to a “university” supported Morphew’s (2009) work on academic mission drift and institutional theory which posited that higher education institutions seek prestige to establish or maintain legitimacy, and such efforts may create changes to organizational identity. LSU’s quest to brand themselves as a “University” in a “Time for Demonstration” aligned with findings from Orphan’s (2016) comparative quadruple case study on RCUs where one president mentioned he would know his university had “made it” when students walked around campus wearing t-shirts bearing the institution’s name, meaning that the RCU’s identity would be affirmed by students wearing university branding.

Finally, all six of the women coaches at LSU commented on the number of women coaching women’s teams. Women coaches articulated the importance of LSU’s overall institutional commitment to diversity and inclusivity for shaping gender equity within the athletic

department. In their study of recruitment and hiring practices of NCAA administrators, LaVoi and Wasend (2018) suggested that future research on women in coaching should examine if there is a trickle-down effect from institutional leadership's valuation of diversity to athletic departments. Along these lines, my study provided knowledge addressing LaVoi and Wasend's (2018) research request regarding gender equity as a form of diversity. Women coaches communicated that gender equity within the athletic department was a function of the long history of women embodying leadership roles at LSU. The discourse of the athletic department was shaped by the discourse of the institution, in essence a discourse congruency occurred and originated institutionally which emanated to the athletic department. Incidentally, at the time of data collection, LSU's president was a woman which may also encourage a macro discourse in which women leaders are celebrated and respected. This discourse congruency finding at a macro institutional level and similarly at a micro departmental/coaching level is extremely important to discuss. The macro-micro relationship between discourse congruence and gender equity highlights that women in leadership, and women in general, matter at LSU. Senior leadership's attitudes towards inclusivity and gender equity can positively impact the recruitment and hiring of women coaches.

### **LSU Athletics – A Diamond in the Neoliberal Rough**

Interestingly, my analysis revealed slight evidence of neoliberalism as I only identified and used one code describing the binary of "Haves vs. Have nots." I designed my conceptual framework from a deficit viewpoint and theorized that neoliberalism was responsible for the twists, turns and barriers that women coaches faced in the leadership labyrinth (Burton & LaVoi, 2016; LaVoi, 2016). However, the LSU athletic department actually embodied gender equity and



seemed to be centered on higher education's public purposes to promote social justice and equity. This study was conducted from a positive viewpoint or a truly queer, antinormative perspective making LSU a queer study site. I suggest that queer theory with both/and, antinormative and fluid contexts is the complete antithesis, perhaps even antidote, of the either/or, binaries, wins and losses, and exclusivity of neoliberalism. Thus, LSU is a queer site, for example, an athletic department that displays antinormative recruitment and hiring practices. Interestingly, scholars have not focused on women in coaching and the relationship of sites (athletic departments in particular) exhibiting queer qualities.

Since LSU is queer and antinormative within the larger NCAA context of athletics, it makes sense that my findings would support a positionality, critical discourse and queer theoretical framework exemplifying inclusive both/and versus exclusive binary concepts in the following ways. First, LSU Athletics' holistic evaluation process reflected a queer approach to evaluating coaching ability. Although wins and losses are important, they are not the sole evaluation focus of women coaches' performance or athletes' success. LSU's athletic administration utilized an evaluation and promotion process that links closely with Division II philosophy which focuses on first generation students, academic development and civic engagement combined with athletic excellence and the mission of RCUs to promote access. Second, the LSU athletic department promotes a family-oriented, collaborative, mission-centered collectivist environment. This type of discourse is completely opposite from discourse infiltrated by neoliberal influence in which hyper-individualism and excessive competitive behaviors exist due to an over-emphasis of market ideals (Harvey, 2005; Gildersleeve, 2017). The neoliberal undertone of "Haves vs. Have nots" I discovered through analysis also aligns with the tendency for RCUs to engage in adaptive and/or interpretative mechanisms for survival and legitimacy

(Orphan, 2018; 2016). Despite this slight evidence of neoliberalism, however, LSU has stayed true to its mission of access, social justice and equity and preserved their RCU identity, at least for now, while existing in a higher education landscape shaped by neoliberalism (Gannon et. al, 2015; Gildersleeve, 2017; Saunders, 2014).

Revisiting my conceptual framework of women coaches traversing through the leadership labyrinth, LSU women coaches successfully navigated their roles by queering the labyrinth through their sense-making of institutional discourse via individual and collective narratives and their critical agency network. Subsequently, women coaches made the labyrinth's walls permeably scalable, and distinctly different. Perhaps, there was not much of a labyrinth to begin with because the system, LSU as an institution, already provided an environment where gender equity was promoted by institutional leaders during the recruitment, hiring and onboarding of women coaches. Of importance, by methodologically combining women coaches' narratives with FDA, we can challenge and queer traditional paradigms of critical discourse analysis that emphasize power flows solely from top-down, system and institutional directions. Implications and recommendations for research and praxis regarding women in collegiate coaching are discussed in the following section.

### **Implications and Recommendations for Research and Praxis**

In this section, I answer my third research question, "How did the institutional discourse inform women coaches recruitment, retention and persistence?", and discuss the implications of this study for research and praxis geared towards increasing gender equity of women in collegiate coaching. These implications cover recruitment, retention and persistence of women coaches with recommendations attached. Study implications and recommendations are also

focused towards specific stakeholders (e.g., coaches, athletic administration, institutional leadership and/or the NCAA). Table 6.1 outlines and summarizes the implications, impacts on recruitment, retention and persistence of women coaches. Table 6.1 also provides recommendations for various intercollegiate athletic stakeholder groups to improve gender equity.

*Implication 1: Senior institutional administration and women in senior cabinet positions matter for creating gender equity of women coaches.* During his tenure as president of LSU, Matthew hired both athletic directors, Alice and Mark, to lead the athletic department and issued a mandate to them to intentionally achieve gender parity with head coaching staff. Additionally, LSU women coaches described in their collective narrative the presence of women in senior cabinet positions contributing to the growth and recruitment of women coaches and leaders in the athletic department. At the time of data collection for this study, LSU's president was a woman which may also demonstrate a macro-micro discourse that celebrates and respects women leaders. Chancellors and presidents can create gender equity by intentionally recruiting and hiring women for athletic director positions. This top-down and macro directive and impact from senior leadership to athletic directors affects the growth of the number of women in coaching. Additionally, since university presidents and chancellors often serve on NCAA committees, the discourse on intentional hiring practices of women coaches should be a consistent focus of NCAA Board of Governors, Divisional Chairs, Executive Committees, and Diversity and Inclusion Committees.

*Implication 2: Reflexivity about one's positionality leads to intentional hiring practices.* Helena described Alice's instinct and skill at recruiting women coaches who would be "good fits" based upon the mission of the institution. Alice drew upon her positionality, reflexively

engaging with her own ways of knowing as a former head coach, to approach hiring in a recruiting-like manner. “Fit” for LSU Athletics was a function of leadership positionality and the combination of focus on the mission and commitment to inclusivity. However, the notion of intentionally seeking “fit” as applied to the hiring process often carries implicit bias reinforcing racial, gender, heteronormative and other social hierarchies (Strunk & Bailey, 2015). Mark was also reflexive about his own story of being hired as athletic director at LSU and how Matthew took a chance on his potential believing he would be a good fit to lead the athletic department. Alice and Mark’s ability to reflexively engage with their positionalities promoted an access-oriented discourse and is a best practice for intentional hiring and recruitment of women coaches. *Recommendation for 1 and 2:* Information on LSU’s intentional recruitment and hiring practices should be disseminated nationally to other schools and by the NCAA. Educate institutional leadership on the impact of their choices and power of positionality when selecting athletic leadership/directors. Intentionally recruit and hire women and diversify athletic director positions to grow the pipeline of women coaches in the NCAA.

*Implication 3: Individualized attention is important in the recruitment and onboarding/orientation process.* Tina’s narrative and hiring story depicted Mark individualizing the recruitment and hiring process for women coaches at LSU. Mark traveled to Tina’s place of work to observe her while coaching and have a conversation with her. Mark also spent considerable time getting to know Tina during this process. Athletic administration personalized the recruitment and hiring process in humanizing ways which led to higher self-determination of employees. Tina clearly indicated she felt flattered by Mark’s efforts and honored that he would entrust her with the women’s crew program. Additionally, Carmen also personalized her approach while helping Tina with the onboarding/orientation process at LSU. Carmen’s

individualized, relational approach to helping Tina was a form of embodied discourse integral to Tina's coaching success during her first two years at LSU. Embodied discourse, especially by administrative athletics staff, has important implications for the retention of women in coaching. *Recommendation for 3:* Create a procedure manual, with input from Carmen for LSU or SWAs at other institutions, operationalizing steps used for onboarding women coaches and throughout the orientation process.

*Implication 4: The philosophy of DII schools allows for gender equity.* Within the evaluation and promotion process, LSU holistically looks at athletic program success, not just wins and losses demonstrating a resistance to the neoliberal "winners versus losers mentality" and ideology. This holistic approach is tied to the RCU mission of access as evidenced in Mark's evaluation of women coaches based on their commitment to LSU's mission and vision of the department and university. Jodi's narrative of being drawn to LSU's mission, one that focuses on first generation students and diversity, also indicated a relationship between DII philosophy of student-centered access, academic development and civic engagement along with athletic excellence and LSU's RCU identity and mission. Additionally, my FDA analysis of coaches' self-evaluations and choices of raters within the 360 evaluation process illustrates that coaches exert agency, power and buy-in with the evaluation process. All of these factors positively affected the retention of women in coaching, essential information for women coaches, athletic directors, institutional leaders and the NCAA.

*Implication 5: Institutional type/mission and DII status are important for supporting women coaches.* Shane indicated that although the mission was not her primary reason for applying to work at LSU, she immediately felt accepted and noticed a difference in the athletic environment compared to her alma mater. Shane's feeling of acceptance mirrored my own

feelings while conducting research on the campus. These notions of acceptance reflect a deeper issue of LSU's commitment to access, RCU identity and the ways we conceptualize prestige and inclusivity in higher education.

Prestige and inclusivity are different currencies. Inclusivity can lead to prestige, however, prestige rarely leads to inclusivity due to fear of risk-taking, working outside of the box, being open to new ideas, and/or facilitating access as opposed to exclusionary admissions and hiring practices. If an organization has gained prestige without inclusivity (e.g., without institutional organizational saga reflecting some type of diversity) (Clark, 1972), there will be fear of working outside of the original formula that gained them the institutional prestige in the first place (Gonzales, 2014; O'Meara, 2007; O'Meara, Templeton & Nyunt, 2018). This exclusionary behavior directly opposes inclusive, queer ways of knowing which require creativity, flexibility and open-mindedness to new ways of knowing. Thus, this behavior reifies neoliberal hierarchies that severely affect equity and social justice threatening RCU's identity and mission.

*Implication 6: Institutional commitment to diversity and inclusivity is important for shaping gender equity in athletic departments.* Collectively, women coaches expressed the importance of LSU's commitment to diversity and inclusivity for shaping gender equity within the athletic department. The focus on inclusivity over prestige at LSU, and at many other RCUs, functions as the macro discourse that shaped the micro discourse of the athletic department (Gonzales, Murkami & Nunez, 2013). This macro-micro combination influences inclusivity as a discourse within the LSU athletics department which leads to higher retention of employees positively fostering self-determination of coaching staff, athletic directors and institutional leaders. This information would be important to share with the NCAA as few athletic studies focus on Division II schools. Specifically, the NCAA should be informed of the prominent

relationship between DII institutions, RCU mission, and the inclusivity/prestige binary resultant effects on creating gender equity.

*Recommendation for 4, 5 and 6:* Conduct additional research on women in coaching at DII RCU institutions. Disseminate the information that connects DII & RCU mission fostering gender equity and inclusivity of women in head coach roles through appropriate NCAA communications.

*Implication 7: Strategic plans are macro discourses that act as catalysts for individual reflexivity or micro discourses about identity and roles.* My FDA analysis of LSU's athletic strategic plan showed that even though there was increased top-down activity and complexities, this particular document sparked women coaches' reflexivity and sense-making of their roles as coaches and leaders. Women coaches *both* exercised critical agency to queer institutional discourse modifying the composition of the labyrinth *and* found their own pathways to successfully navigate their roles. The collective narrative illustrated one coach interrogating "What do I stand for as a coach?" which resulted in a Work, Trust, Family (WTF) acronym guiding several facets of her program. For example, these programmatic aspects included the hiring process for assistant coaching staff, recruitment styles, engagement with the community, practice sessions, and approaches to competition. Another coach mentioned, also in the collective narrative, that she developed her own pillars of identity, "honesty, integrity and excellence." Interestingly, coaches not only drew upon queer reflexivity, but also their positionalities critically examining their identities, conceptualizations of leadership and coaching contexts. This queer reflexivity about their positionalities encouraged them to stay at LSU and persist in their daily roles as coaches.

*Recommendation for 7:* Include a cross section of coaches on steering committees for revising and simplifying strategic plans. Ask each coach in the department to answer: “What do I stand for as a coach?” and, “How does my identity fit within the athletic department and larger discourse from the institution?” Leaders of the NCAA and Higher Educational strategic planning should also include these best practices for recruitment, retention and persistence of women coaches from LSU as a DII RCU institution.

*Implication 8: Mentoring that is structured a priori instead of by ad hoc convenience achieves gender equity.* Tim mentioned that women coaches formed a “mentoring network” at LSU where they drew upon each other’s experiences and related socially, exemplifying Kiyama et. al’s (2012) critical agency network concept. Helena’s & Jodi’s stories also revealed that veteran coaches assisted newer coaches especially with orientation. Dana’s story clearly indicated the need for mentors to be intentionally assigned by administration. In the collective narrative, women coaches noted that having their offices close to one another and the administration facilitated a positive, collaborative interactions with daily check-ins helping them persist in their roles, especially through evaluation and promotion. Additionally, coaches referenced that social media, like Twitter, was an effective way to relate to other coaches outside of LSU, especially for sport specific and women in leadership issues. Since queer youth often participate in social media, this is one way coaches might embody mentoring of their student-athletes. It is also possible that social media is an important site of support for queer and women coaches. Mentoring, relationships and people are forms of discourse in and of themselves evidenced by Ivan’s positionality and efforts supporting Bette and Jodi during onboarding and orientation at LSU.



*Recommendation for 8:* Assign mentors to each new coach and do not rely on ad hoc convenience or relationships flourishing organically. Match a veteran coach with each new coach. If possible, have a veteran coach of a team sport support a newer coach of a team sport and the same for individual sports. Drawing upon my years of experience as a collegiate head men's and women's tennis/squash coach, team and individual sport coaches experience different dynamics within their own team ecosystems and with administration, support staff and budget.

*Implication 9: Physical space creates discourse.* FDA analysis demonstrated that there was a top-down power structure during the November and December department meetings. One administrator recalled putting tables in a hollow square at a prior meeting which encouraged dialogue between coaches and administration. This notion of physical space is important for enhancing discourse. How people are situated can either reify top-down power (e.g., traditional standing in front lecturing) or equalize power (e.g., everyone physically sitting at the same level). When discursive power is equalized in this way, women coaches' or administrators' levels of self-determination increase and they feel more comfortable drawing upon their positionalities and engaging in the meeting. These processes help women coaches tap into their ways of knowing to make sense of discourse, carry out leadership roles and serve students.

*Recommendation for 9:* Redesign athletic department monthly meetings in the following ways:

- a) At each meeting, summarize and disseminate information via a bulleted sheet or infographic with important institutional discourse/data coaches need to know.
- b) Include relational group activities – does everyone know everyone else's DISC behavioral assessment scores? This information might be important for daily operations in the department. Team building and ice-breaker activities often create “buy-in” from the entire group. The coaches themselves are great resources for team-

- building activities. Ask coaches, ahead of time, if anyone would be interested in running a quick two to three minute energizer to get the meeting started. Coaches leading energizer activities would be an inclusive method for incorporating their ways of knowing and collaborate in shared spaces.
- c) Encourage small group work with share-outs. For example, provide each administrator or coach two to three minutes of free writing or journaling about the good and bad happening with them. This activity would encourage coach reflexivity and help queer traditional types of meetings. Pair up individuals with others they are comfortable talking with where they can share what is going on with them for two to three minutes. After this two to three minute time frame, ask if small groups would like to share out to the larger group. This type of activity builds brave spaces, or environments open, respectful and inclusive of multiple ways of being and knowing, for coaches to convey their concerns. Coaches could also email their concerns or ideas to athletic administration before meetings if they feel more comfortable sharing knowledge in this way.
- d) Organize chairs and tables in a circle or hollow square to facilitate face to face discourse. Athletic administration should avoid the traditional mode of standing in front of room and lecturing. Everybody sitting in a circle or square equalizes power dynamics and helps facilitate discussion amongst participants.

*Implication 10: Queer theory is the antithesis of Neoliberal ideology.* Queer theory interconnects both/and, antinormative and fluid contexts with the power of identity. These queer theoretical tenets directly oppose the either/or, wins versus losses binaries and exclusivity of neoliberalism. If we can designate something as queer, for example an athletic department,

meaning it supports the both/and, antinormative and fluidity of intersecting identities, we can learn more about how diversity and inclusivity are embodied within the discourse of an organization. By studying queer and antinormative sites, we can investigate how the embodiment of inclusivity (the “both/and”) resists neoliberal influences (the “either/or”) that threaten institutional mission and can better focus on access and equity.

*Recommendation for 10: Incorporate queer theoretical frameworks into qualitative research that examines Neoliberal organizational discourses.* I encourage researchers to draw upon queer theory as a lens for studying discourses infiltrated by neoliberalism. As this study demonstrated, queer theory is an effective way to highlight what institutions are doing well in terms of intersecting identity and power dynamics. I suggest the following tangible steps for implementing queer theory in the academy. First, I suggest that leaders critically examining what has always been done in terms of discourse with hiring practices, department meetings, evaluation, spaces and strategic plans, and then apply an “out of the box” or antinormative view to these contexts. For example, queering something begs questions: who or what does not exist in a context? And then, how can we change power dynamics and be more inclusive by shifting conventional paradigms? Utilizing ways to queer existing paradigms helps us think outside of the box and question what has been considered normative in academic discourse and society. The antinormative nature of queering research also can halt existing cycles of socialization that are not focused on equity and social justice efforts. In the next section, I discuss areas of future research that will build upon this study and improve conditions for women in collegiate coaching.

**Table 6.1. Implications and Recommendations for Intercollegiate Athletic Stakeholder Groups.**

Stakeholder Groups	Implications Research, Praxis & Impact	Recommendations
<p><b>Coaches</b></p>	<p><b>a)</b>DII philosophy/RCU mission = gender equity.  <b>b)</b>institution type/mission &amp; DII status supports women coaches. <i>Recruitment &amp; Retention</i></p> <p><b>c)</b>Strategic plans – macro discourse catalyst micro discourse identity &amp; roles. <i>Retention &amp; Persistence</i></p> <p><b>d)</b>Mentoring between veteran/newer coaches structured a priori vs. ad hoc = gender equity.  <b>e)</b>Physical space creates discourse. <i>Persistence</i></p>	<p><b>a &amp; b)</b>Engage reflexively about identity &amp; roles. What do I stand for as a coach?  <b>c)</b>How do identity &amp; roles fit or not with athletic strat plan &amp; institutional mission?</p> <p><b>d &amp; e)</b>Veteran &amp; newer coaches work with/relate during orientation/onboarding &amp; department meetings.</p>
<p><b>Athletic Directors/ Administration</b></p>	<p><b>a)</b>Reflexivity/positionality = intentional hiring practices. <b>b)</b>Individualized attention important for recruiting/onboarding women coaches. <i>Recruitment</i></p> <p><b>c)</b>DII philosophy/RCU mission =gender equity.  <b>d)</b>Institution type/mission &amp; DII supports women coaches. <i>Recruitment &amp; Retention</i></p> <p><b>e)</b>Strategic plans: macro discourse catalyst micro discourse - identity &amp; roles. <i>Retention &amp; Persistence</i></p> <p><b>f)</b>Mentoring between veteran/newer coaches structured a priori vs. ad hoc = gender equity.  <b>g)</b>Physical space creates discourse. <i>Persistence</i></p>	<p><b>a &amp; b)</b>Create manual with input from SWA operationalizing onboarding/orientation of women coaches.</p> <p><b>c, d, e)</b>Add coaches to steering committee for input revising &amp; simplifying strat plan.</p> <p><b>f)</b>Assign mentors a priori. Veteran coach with new coach.</p> <p><b>g)</b><u>Redesign department meetings:</u>  1)Summarize w/ sheet/infographic info coaches <u>need</u>.  2)Organize chairs &amp; tables in a circle or hollow square to equalize power. Avoid traditional standing and lecturing.  3)Add team building/energizer activities; 1-on-1 check-ins veteran/new coaches). Coaches email concerns to AD before meetings.</p>
<p><b>Institutional Leadership &amp; NCAA</b></p>	<p><b>a)</b>Senior Leadership affects gender equity.  <b>b)</b>Reflexivity/positionality = intentional hiring practices. <i>Recruitment</i></p> <p><b>c)</b>DII philosophy/RCU mission = gender equity.  <b>d)</b>Institution type/mission &amp; DII supports women coaches. <i>Recruitment &amp; Retention</i></p> <p><b>e)</b>Strategic plans: macro discourse catalyst for micro discourse identity &amp; roles. <i>Retention &amp; Persistence</i></p>	<p><b>a &amp; b)</b> Intentionally recruit &amp; hire women coaches.</p> <p><b>c &amp; d)</b> Conduct women in coaching research on DII schools.</p> <p><b>e)</b> Include best practices for recruitment, retention &amp; persistence of women coaches in National and Higher Education Institutional strategic planning.</p>

## **Areas of Future Research**

There are three areas of future research emerging from this study on women coaches at LSU. The first area involves a continuation and additional inquiry specifically studying women coaches narratives' impact on shaping LSU's institutional discourse. The second area builds upon information gleaned from studying the impact of LSU coaches' narratives on the institutional discourse and focuses on investigating if women coaches' narratives become the paratext or meaning of the F-sign in FDA methodology. And finally, the last area includes conducting mixed-methods research using psychometrics and coach interviews to investigate intangible attributes women coaches possess, as explained in Jodi's narrative.

*Research area 1. Conduct a follow up qualitative study with the same study participants at LSU asking the following research questions, How do LSU women coaches narratives inform/shape the institutional discourse? How do women coaches' narratives affect LSU's organizational saga? By considering the constituents of the institution and celebrating individuals' stories, these narratives might enhance organizational saga. Clark (1972) discussed an organizational saga as the way a professional group embodies unity, common beliefs and deep emotional commitment to their own unique identity. Implications would include institutions potentially adding new information to rewrite their organizational stories and change institutional discourse, especially those colleges and universities not founded on the basis of access and inclusivity.*

*Research area 2. Investigate the effect of women coaches' narratives or stories in general on FDA as a method. A potential research question would include, by including women coaches' or narratives in general, do they become the paratext (meaning) of the F sign in FDA? Another research question would be, if individual stories help an institution adapt, rewrite or add*

knowledge shaping an institution's discourse, can this be depicted visually? This area of research is important because narratives are ways individuals make sense of events that have happened to them (Chase, 2005). As such, narratives are meaning making mechanisms that might shift the knowledge axis of Caborn's (2007) FDA diagram closer to the institutional field on the power axis, the areas of the diagram representing students, coaches and faculty. Essentially, including individual's ways of knowing might shift the power/knowledge paradigm in this method as currently depicted by Caborn's (2007) model. Shifting this paradigm might positively affect and be of value to an institution's organizational saga.

*Research Area 3. Conduct a mixed-methods study ascertaining how to measure intangible qualities for women coaches success.* Mixed methods research entails the application of both qualitative and quantitative statistical methods to collect, analyze and integrate two forms of data, based upon pertinent research questions, that build upon one another (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). Mixed methodological approaches may be used in single study or multiple studies. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) contend the basic principle of mixed methods inquiry suggests that incorporating qualitative and quantitative methods together imparts a more comprehensive approach to answering research questions than either method could reveal alone.

**Quantitative strand:** Both, Alice as the LSU athletic director and Jodi as a head coach, mentioned that coaches exhibit intangible qualities difficult to evaluate and define. One way to approach defining these attributes would be to construct a survey of the intangible qualities that coaches frequently embody (co-constructed with coaches), For example, areas of focus for additional narrative research might include ways of leadership/knowing, critical agency and/or influence on players. Investigating the psychometrics of this survey by running factor analysis and multi-trait multi method (MTMM) analysis would determine what factors (essentially item

options significantly loading on the survey) are important for measuring these intangible coaching leadership and effectiveness attributes. This type of analysis might yield a tool for evaluating coach performance.

**Qualitative strand:** After running the psychometrics on the survey, conducting qualitative interviews would potentially unveil how certain X factors (from the psychometrics analysis) shape the mission, vision and values of the institution and organizational saga. A potential research question would be how would including coach narratives enhance this tool?

Implications would include potential transferability of knowledge from athletic and coaching contexts to other higher education departments (e.g., faculty and administrative environments).

For example, if we can develop an evaluation tool/process like this for coaches, could it be used in faculty teaching evaluations and/or administrator assessments of employees. Another research question might include how would such an evaluative tool be valuable and useful for shaping program evaluation paradigms in general?

### **Significance of Study**

NCAA coaches act as role models for student-athletes thrust into autonomous, unstructured college environments (Amorose & Andersen-Butcher, 2007). The interplay between athletic departmental discourse and personal narratives, via a queer approach and at an institution excelling in gender equity & inclusivity highlighted discourse, language, practices and tools that other NCAA institutions can employ and model. This study makes several significant contributions to the research on women in coaching and gender equity in higher education. First, this study revealed findings regarding the change in composition and decreased impact of the Leadership Labyrinth at this DII and RCU institution that positively modeled gender equity with

athletic coaching staff. Essentially, the walls of the labyrinth became more permeable or scalable at LSU because of the advocacy efforts of women coaches and the administration's approach to supporting them. Second, this study contributed new knowledge regarding the need for specific outlines or manuals for orientation and onboarding as well as the evaluation and promotion of women coaches. Current literature on women in sport (Aicher & Sagas, 2010; LaVoi, 2016; LaVoi & Wasend, 2018) has not focused on women coaches' sense-making of the orientation/onboarding, evaluation and promotion, or professional development processes.

Third, findings also provided an examination of power dynamics during department meetings and the notion that physical space creates discourse as few studies have specifically studied the relationship between such discourse and women coaches narratives. Fourth, this study provided valuable evidence on the relationship between senior leadership, and specifically women in senior cabinet positions, and the creation of gender equity emanating to other departments on college and university campuses.

Fifth, this qualitative study on women in coaching provides a starting point for informing future psychometric and quantitative studies. Theoretically speaking, I suggest queer theory be incorporated into more research that investigates the neoliberal effects within higher educational settings. Sixth, this was the first study to employ FDA as a method and to combine FDA with CNA to queer research focused on power dynamics associated with women in collegiate coaching and athletics. The combination of FDA with CNA is a major contribution because I queered each method, creating a Critical Queer Discourse methodology, which to my knowledge, has not been done before. As such, my study makes an important contribution to both methodologies. Finally, by employing FDA and CNA together, the notion of embodied discourse, as part of Foucault's (1990) concept of the dispositive, emerged from research



findings. This idea of embodied discourse challenges current discourse analytic paradigms limited to document, conversational and spatial analysis.

### **Conclusion**

Previous research on women in collegiate coaching has illustrated a grim picture of equity and often highlights their low representation within the NCAA as a deficit perspective (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Kampoff, 2006; Norman, 2016; 2011). This study focused on the discourse, narratives and practices of a Regional Comprehensive University (RCU) and Division II athletic department that excelled in gender equity based on head coaching staff demographics. Findings indicated power-knowledge connections via FDA analysis of documents including coach self-evaluations, the 360 evaluation process and the athletic strategic plan as well as three athletic department meetings. Findings also illustrated six women coaches' narratives about their recruitment, hiring and onboarding at LSU and their sense-making of institutional discourse through a collective narrative of LSU's evaluation and promotion process, spaces, department meetings and written/non-written discourse.

Implications and recommendations focused on how specific stakeholders can improve the recruitment, retention and persistence of collegiate women coaches by employing several lessons learned from the LSU athletic department. These lessons include: senior institutional leaders foster gender equity within athletic departments and must be intentional with recruitment and hiring practices; athletic administrators need to create clear procedures and provide support (e.g., assigned mentors) for onboarding/orientation of new women coaches; evaluation and promotion should be holistic and tied to institutional type/mission and Division II status; physical spaces create discourse and power dynamics especially within department meetings and finally, that people act as embodied forms of discourse. The idea of embodied discourse is especially

effective when positively and carefully utilized to cultivate inclusive departmental discourse leading to the success of women coaches. Areas of future research could incorporate queer theory especially with research on neoliberal discourses in higher education. Future research also might focus on the potential ways women coaches' narratives might shape the institutional discourse, organizational saga and inform quantitative evaluation tools. Potential implications from these future areas of research might positively affect athletic and institutional discourse and the evaluation of faculty and administrative staff to improve student learning outcomes.

It is my hope that coaches, athletic directors/administrators, senior institutional leaders and the NCAA will take notice of the evidence found in this study. These connections between Division II philosophy and RCU mission combined with queering discourse by truly listening to women coaches narratives, the power that exudes from agency and voice, is vital for growing the pipeline of women in athletic head coaching and leadership positions. Additionally, I hope stakeholders will utilize these implications and recommendations as a toolkit and roadmap that can guide them in breaking down the walls of the Leadership Labyrinth and supporting women coaches as they navigate pathways to success. Improving the recruitment, retention and persistence of collegiate women coaches not only creates a gender equitable and inclusive intercollegiate workforce, but also spotlights women in leadership as role models. Strong women leaders are needed, now more than ever, to guide the most important constituents we serve, our students. As this study has revealed, it is the student-centered mission, embodiment of inclusivity over prestige and willingness to embrace reflexive, queer ways of knowing that athletic departments, colleges and universities can draw upon to resist the pull of neoliberalism omnipresent within an ever-changing higher education landscape.

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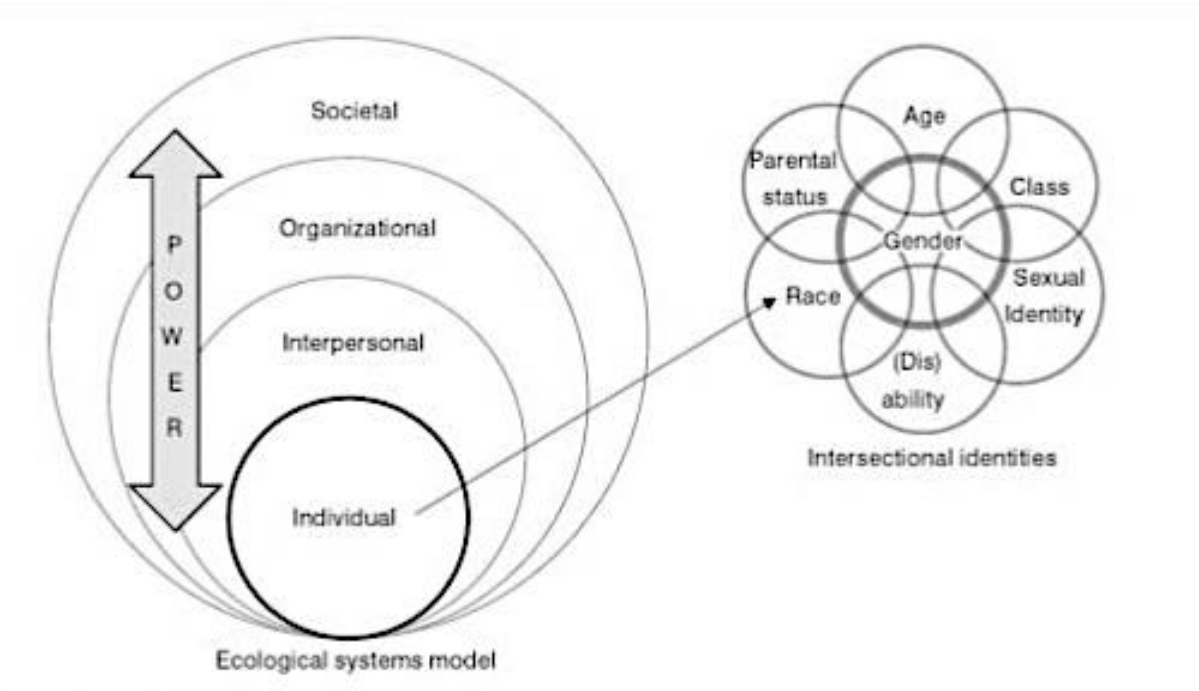
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## Appendix A

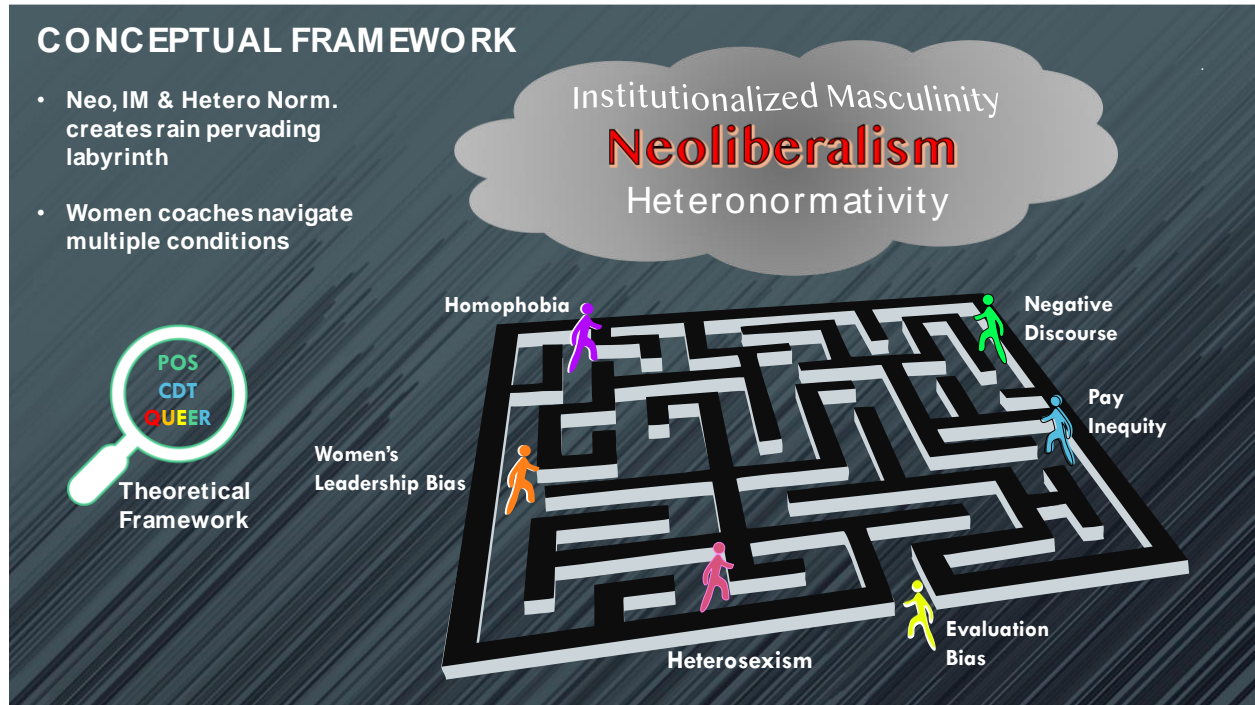
### LaVoi (2016) Ecological-Intersectional Theoretical Framework



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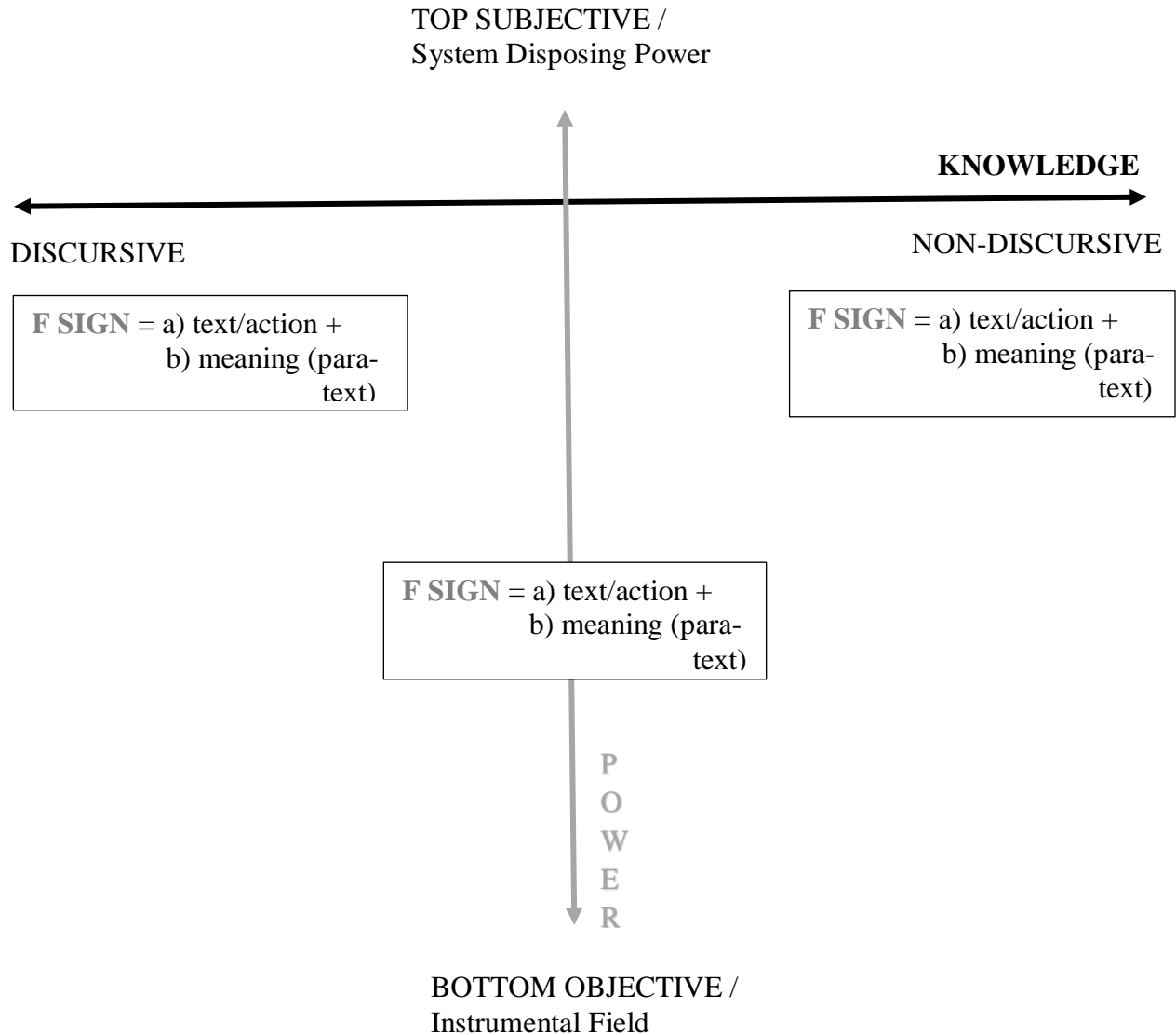
## Appendix B

### Visual Representation of Conceptual Framework



## Appendix C

### Visual Representation of Foucauldian/Dispositive Approach



Adapted from Caborn, J. (2007). On the Methodology of Dispositive Analysis. *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis Across Disciplines*, 1(1), 115-123.

## Appendix D

### Interview Protocol #1 Athletic Director/Administrator

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

Brief Description of Research: The purpose of this study is to examine the language, stories and practices used by the athletic department of a regional comprehensive university that holds a Division II NCAA designation. The site for this study was intentionally selected because it is positively modeling gender equity and inclusivity through the demographics of its athletics staff.

#### Questions:

I would love to learn more about your background in athletics and specifically the NCAA. What attracted you to working in collegiate athletic administration ?

1. What attracted you to working at this institution ?
  - a. What about the mission of the institution and students it serves was attractive to you?
2. Tell me about your experience working here. Describe what a day in the life of an athletic administrator looks like. What are the things that are most enjoyable for you? What is most challenging?
3. What do you enjoy most about working with coaches? What is most challenging?
4. How do you interact with female head coaches? How would you describe your working relationship with these coaches ?
5. How do you go about hiring coaches for women's teams?
6. What is the orientation process like for female head coaches? What are your goals for the orientation process for coaches? What kinds of messages are you trying to send to new coaches?
7. Tell me more about the evaluation and promotion process. What does a coach need to do for promotion? What characteristics do your best coaches exhibit?
8. How do you evaluate head coaches ? What evidence do you use to evaluate coaches ?

9. What do you see is the purpose of evaluation?
10. How are you supported professionally in your role here? How do you go about supporting head coaches ?
11. What regular advice do you offer to coaches?
12. Is there anything else you'd like to share about anything we talked about?

## Interview Protocol #2 Athletic Director/Administrator

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

Brief Description of Research: The purpose of this study is to examine the language, stories and practices used by the athletic department of a regional comprehensive university that holds a Division II NCAA designation. The site for this study was intentionally selected because it is positively modeling gender equity and inclusivity through the demographics of its athletics staff.

Questions:

Did any additional thoughts arise since the last time we spoke? If so, what are they?

First, I'd like to talk about how you go about allocating space for the various teams to practice. I know from my own experience that this is a difficult process.

1. How do you go about ensuring that women's and men's teams have equal use of practice space? What are the competing interests you have to balance in this process? Which teams typically are prioritized? Why are they prioritized?

Now I'd like to discuss the training materials you give to coaches. Many athletic directors distribute materials to coaches to enhance their success.

2. What training materials or items (written, non-written, verbal, or non-verbal) have helped you and female head coaches to be successful in their roles? For example, some people distribute ... [fill in types of materials].
3. How might these materials/items (from Q:2) contribute to a coach's or team's success? What are these stories?
4. What messages are you trying to convey through these materials ? What purpose do they serve?

I'd like to pivot to your experience with athletic department meetings.

5. How are athletic department meetings typically run? Who runs these meetings? What goals do you have for these meetings?
6. What information is shared among administrators and/or between coaches and administrators during meetings? How are these topics selected, discussed and/or approached?

7. How would you describe the tone of these meetings? Who gets to talk?
8. What goes well during these meetings? Why do these things go well? What could be done to improve athletic department meetings? What would you want coaches specifically to do differently?

Let's turn towards athletic department culture...

9. How would you describe the general character of the athletic department?
10. What works well about this culture?
11. What would improve the athletic department culture?
12. Is there anything else you'd like to share about anything we've talked about today?



## Appendix E

### Interview Protocol #1 for Women Head Coaches

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

Brief Description of Research: The purpose of this study is to examine the language, stories and practices used by the athletic department of a regional comprehensive university that holds a Division II NCAA designation. The site for this study was intentionally selected because it is positively modeling gender equity and inclusivity through the demographics of its athletics staff.

Questions:

I would love to learn more about your background in athletics and specifically the NCAA. What attracted you to working in collegiate coaching ?

1. What attracted you to working at this institution ?
  - a. What about the mission of the institution and students it serves was attractive to you?
2. Tell me the story of how you were hired. What was the application process like? What phrases do you remember from the job application? What did the interview process look like? What messages do you think the athletic division was sending to you as a prospective candidate? These messages may be captured in the interview questions and who was on the hiring committee.
3. When you were hired, what was your orientation like? What did you learn through this process that helped you acclimate to the institution, the athletic department and running your program? What did it take longer for you to figure out.
4. Tell me about your experience as a coach. Describe what a day in the life of a coach looks like. What do you enjoy most about your job? What do you find most challenging?
5. How do you interact with athletic administrators (i.e., ADs, Assistant/Associate ADs, and/or SWAs) ? Does communication take place in person or through email or other means? What about this communication helps you do your job better? What about this communication can be challenging?
6. How are you evaluated as a coach ? What evidence is used to evaluate you? If you could change the evaluation process, what would you change?

7. What has it been like for you to receive feedback? What about the evaluation process helps you do your job better ? What about the evaluation process could be improved?
8. Where do you find support here at the institution to do your job well? What about these sources of support are important to you?
9. What advice would you give the AD about managing coaches?
  - a. What would be your suggestions for improving the hiring or orientation process?
  - b. What about the performance evaluation or promotion process?
10. Is there anything else you'd like to share about anything we talked about today?

## Interview Protocol #2 for Women Head Coaches

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

Brief Description of Research: The purpose of this study is to examine the language, stories and practices used by the athletic department of a regional comprehensive university that holds a Division II NCAA designation. The site for this study was intentionally selected because it is positively modeling gender equity and inclusivity through the demographics of its athletics staff.

Questions:

Did any additional thoughts arise since the last time we spoke? If so, what were they?

First, I'd like to talk about allocation of space for the various teams to practice. I know from my own experience that this is a difficult process.

1. How is practice space allocated? Which teams typically are prioritized? Why are they prioritized? Are there competing interests at play and if so, what are they?
2. What types of materials or items (written, non-written, verbal, or non-verbal) have helped you to be successful as a coach?
3. How might these materials/items (from Q:2) tell the story of your success ? Why do you believe they have contributed to your success as a coach or that of your program?
4. If we were to look at a few of these items during this interview, what messages do they convey ? What is their purpose ?

Now, I'd like to focus on your experience during athletic department meetings.

5. How would you describe athletics at this institution?
6. How would you describe athletic department meetings at this institution? How are meetings administered and who runs these meetings?
7. Regarding these department meetings, what information is shared among the coaches and/or between coaches and administrators? How are these topics selected, discussed and/or approached?
8. How would you describe the tone of these meetings? Who gets to talk?

9. What goes well during these meetings? Why do these things go well? What could be done to improve athletic department meetings? What would you want administrators specifically to do differently?

Let's talk about the culture of this institution specifically the athletic department...

10. How would you describe the general character of the athletic department? Tell me more about the culture within the athletic department...
11. What works well about this culture?
12. What would improve the athletic department culture?
13. Is there anything else you'd like to share about anything we have talked about today?

## Appendix F

### Salient Codes for Analysis

Code	Definition
CDT – Bottom-Up Communication	Demonstrated feedback/discourse - instrumental field or from participants
CDT – Tension	Could be theoretical in nature; NEO & POS or btw participants or groups
CDT – Top-Down Communication	Discourse specifically communicated from institutional/athletic leadership
CDT - Ways of knowing	Making sense of discourse: language, speech, actions, objects
NEO - have v. have nots	Classic neoliberal binary illustrating with or without resources
POS - Commitment to Mission	Specific discourse related to mission of institution.
POS – Culture	Anything describing the tone or feel of Univ. or athletic department
POS - Family	Referring to a type of environment resembling a family
POS – Identity	Referring to participant or institutional identity
POS - Inclusivity	Participants making sense of & welcoming diversity, difference – everyone
POS – Intentionality	Specifically demonstrating certain actions for hiring, onboarding, training
POS - Mentoring	Advising/guiding newer employees for acclimating to environment
POS – Support	Anyone offering support for coaches
POS - Ways of knowing	Making sense of one's identity as it relates to leadership, roles, work
POS – Relationships	Any reference to interactions between other coaches/admin
Queer - Antinorm	Anything resisting what is considered dominant within society
Queer - Both/And	Concept fostering inclusivity directly oppositional to binaries
Queer - Inclusivity	Relating or referring to being inclusive in unique, different, antinorm ways
Queer - Reflexive	Tenet signifying thoughtfully & distinctly resisting normative discourses