

An Investigation into How Race and Gender Impact Occupation Outcomes: A study of  
NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Coaches

by  
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## **DEDICATION**

To my boys, CJ and Cosmo. Thank you for keeping me sane.

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## **ABSTRACT**

I examine how race and sex affects whether a university is likely to hire or dismiss head coaches. I test whether race, sex, and performance affects the odds of being let go. I also test whether the rating of the exiting coach affects the type of coach that universities are likely to hire. Data for these analyses come from a unique data set that explores universities and colleges that compete in NCAA Division I women's college basketball over three years (N = 1,035). Logistic regression analyses confirm that being black, and especially being a black woman, increases the likelihood of being let go. Furthermore, logistic regression analyses confirm that better performance in the previous year will increase the likelihood that universities will hire white head coaches to fill openings, with Universities being most likely to hire white men and least likely to hire black women.

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## INTRODUCTION

During the 1960's and 1970's, and in response to government legislation, many employers voluntarily adopted affirmative action plans which were meant to curb racial and gender discrimination and give racial and ethnic minorities as well as women more opportunities in the workplace (Bielby 2000; Oppenheimer 2016).

Affirmative action alleviated some racial discrimination in the workplace and created new opportunities for racial minorities, especially African Americans (Bielby 2000).

However, the effects of these policies have slowed in recent years as companies have shifted from voluntary affirmative action to diversity management (Oppenheimer 2016). Likewise, women continue to face hurdles when securing and maintaining leadership positions in male-dominated workplaces (Glass and Cook 2020; Ryan and Haslam 2007).

Past research identifies various reasons for why racial minorities and women experience disadvantages in job outcomes. For one, racial and ethnic minorities and women often suffer from a double standard that requires them to prove their capabilities at a higher threshold than their white male counterparts (Glass and Cook 2020). They also suffer from various negative stereotypes, including beliefs about a lack of leadership, ability, and commitment (Dufur 2008). These stereotypes make it difficult for them to gain access to and keep job positions with responsibility and power (Glass and Cook 2020). In addition, these groups face structural inequalities, encapsulated in metaphors like the glass ceiling and glass cliff. Where the glass ceiling refers to the unofficial inability of minorities to advance in a profession, the glass cliff concerns the tendency of individuals from disadvantaged groups to secure positions



with relatively low odds of success, which, in turn, increase the likelihood of dismissal (Cook and Glass 2013; Glass and Cook 2020; Ryan and Haslam 2007).

Because of occupational segregation and sorting (Mintz and Krymkowski 2010), past studies on barriers to occupational success in particular professions have typically focused on gender or race, but not both (Theune 2016). Women's basketball coaching, however, provides an ideal context for simultaneously studying the effects of each for a few reasons. First, there is an above average number of racial minorities and women in this workforce (Dufur 2008). The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport examined women's NCAA Division I (DI) women's basketball in 2019. They found that 77.6 percent of the head coaches were white and 19.3 percent of head coaches were black. They also found that 59.4 percent were men and 40.6 percent of head coaches were women. Further, 14.1 percent of the coaches were black women (Lapchick 2019). As a result of this racial and gender diversity, NCAA DI women's basketball coaching is a case that allows for a systematic investigation into how race and gender processes affect occupational mobility.

Second, because college basketball has more objective measures of performance (West 2008), it allows for these race and gender processes to be disentangled from performance. In many workplaces it is difficult to isolate the unique effects of race and gender, but college basketball coaching helps get around this problem by explicitly controlling for those performance-related factors likely to affect occupational mobility.

And finally, to the extent that sports reflect general social processes (Cook and Glass 2013; Lieberman 1997; Savage and Seebruck 2015), discovering how race and

gender affect occupational mobility in college basketball coaching may produce knowledge that is generalizable to other elite fields. Coaching has been compared to other elite occupations such as chief executive officers of corporations because of the similar job characteristics and expectations (Cook and Glass 2013; Halgin 2009; Katz 2008). Thus, my research into how race and gender impact occupational outcomes in NCAA DI women's basketball coaching will yield insights into how these two characteristics influence career outcomes in an elite and competitive labor market.

### RACE AND GENDER VULNERABILITIES AT WORK

Well-established in the literature is that women and racial and ethnic minorities face disadvantages at work (Joseph and Hirshfield 2011; Reid 2002; Ryan and Haslam 2007). As I will show in the sections below, these disadvantages permeate the work experience from hiring to dismissal. I will begin by reviewing the literature as it pertains to race and then pivot to discuss how these disadvantages are particularly problematic for black women. In doing the latter, I adopt an intersectional approach by considering how race and gender jointly operate to affect job vulnerabilities at work.

#### *Race-related Job Vulnerabilities*

Despite historical, political, and social actions aimed at curbing racial discrimination in the workplace, racial discrimination persists (Bielby 2000). Compared to Whites, racial and ethnic minorities are less likely to be hired, more likely to experience job loss, and even when they avoid job loss, less likely to be promoted (Bloch, Taylor, Church, and Buck 2020; Wilson and Roscigno 2010). These disadvantages in job attainment and retention make it difficult for racial and ethnic

minorities to attain and retain top positions (Mintz and Krymkowski 2010; Wilson and McBrier 2005).

Racial and ethnic bias is present in many organizations and at all job levels (Bielby 2000). Negative stereotypes pose a threat to the upward mobility and job attainment of African Americans, as they are often viewed as more insubordinate and less capable than whites (Bielby 2000). Nevertheless, research focusing on black executives in predominantly white corporations' shows that it is possible for racial minorities to gain economic success through their careers. This, however, has largely been driven by fluctuating public policy agendas, making this mobility unstable (Collins 1993). When public policy agendas like affirmative action are in practice, African Americans are more likely to obtain job positions with responsibility and leadership. While more racial and ethnic minorities have entered the labor market and achieved executive positions in recent years (Rolen and Toossi 2018), that upward mobility can be attributed to public policy agendas like affirmative action, which aims to provide more opportunities to racial minorities (Collins 1993, Oppenheimer 2016). Civil rights are not always a top public policy priority, so the benefits of civil rights movements, like upward mobility for racial and ethnic minorities, are often inconsistent (Oppenheimer 2016). Consequently, many elite labor markets have yet to be deracialized (Rolen and Toossi 2018).

Even when employed in privileged positions with responsibility and power, black individuals are more likely to fear job loss than white individuals, controlling for human capital (Wilson and Mossakowski 2009). This is likely due to a deeply rooted history of discrimination that blacks have faced as they are more likely to face

downward mobility than whites (Wilson and Mossakowski 2009). These fears are not irrational considering that compared to whites, minorities are more likely to be let go even when their ability is comparable to their white counterparts (Wilson and McBrier 2005; Wilson 2009; Wilson and Roscigno 2010). One way that blacks in the US are disadvantaged relative to whites is that they are more susceptible to job loss on an amorphous basis, meaning the parameters for being let go are not as rigid as they are for whites (Wilson and McBrier 2005).

Moreover, research shows that these disadvantages frequently occur at a structural level. For example, racial and ethnic minorities are susceptible to the glass cliff as they are disproportionately promoted to leadership positions at times when the chance of failure is high (Ryan and Haslam 2007). This results in minorities being in leadership roles for shorter tenures as they are less likely to realize the success needed for sustained employment (Glass and Cook 2020). Compounding this disadvantage is the fact that when minorities succumb to the glass cliff, white men are often hired to replace them—a phenomenon known as the savior effect (Glass and Cook 2020).

Thus, racial and ethnic minorities, as compared to white individuals, experience greater vulnerability in the workplace. One result of this for black employees in elite fields is a feeling of marginalization, regardless of their high status (Wilson and Roscigno 2010). The discrimination historically faced by black people leads them to feel insecure in their jobs which causes psychosocial deficits, commitment struggles, and productivity problems (Wilson and Mossakowski 2009). These negative effects are all compounded by the negative financial consequences they face when they experience downward mobility (Wilson and Mossakowski 2009).

These consequences make it difficult for racial and ethnic minorities to secure and maintain high status positions.

*Intersection of Gender and Race-related Job vulnerabilities*

The disadvantage racial minorities experience at work may be particularly burdensome for women of color in elite job markets. Like racial minorities, women face stereotypes that make it difficult to earn promotions (Bielby 2000, Moss and Tilly 1996). Women are stereotyped as lacking ability relative to men (Bielby 2000; Knoppers et al. 1991), and lacking commitment due to family constraints (Dufur 2008). These stereotypes are especially problematic for the abilities of black women to secure positions of authority and status (McDowell and Carter-Francique 2017; Smith 1999) as they are stereotyped on both their race and gender. Thus, black women face a double jeopardy whereby they suffer the penalties of both their race and gender (Greenman and Xie 2008).

Dual invisibility is a form of discrimination that black females experience (Theune 2016). It portrays black females as invisible due to their multiple-subordinate-group race and gender identities. As bell hooks (1981:7) notes, “When black people are talked about the focus tends to be on black men; and when women are talked about the focus tends to be on white women.” Thus, even the scholarly literature tends to ignore this group, emphasizing the effects of racism for black men and the effects of sexism for white women (Sesko and Biernat 2010; Theune 2016). As a result of the inadequate attention to the black female experience, Kimberle Crenshaw (1989:1241) introduced the concept of intersectionality, which highlights

the importance of exploring how race and gender combine to create unique challenges for minority women.

Negative stereotypes and generalized ideas about black women result in others perceiving them as being unable to successfully do their jobs, particularly when those jobs are high-level positions. Black women are often stereotyped as being defiant to authority in the workplace (McDowell and Carter-Francique 2017) and less capable than their white and male counterparts (McDowell and Carter-Francique 2017; Moss and Tilly 1996; Wilson and McBrier 2005). These stereotypes make it difficult for black women to gain promotions (Moss and Tilly 1996).

In light of these stereotypes, black women often experience greater performance pressures and feel the need to prove themselves by taking on extra tasks and roles while meticulously avoiding mistakes (Abney and Richey 1991; McDowell and Carter-Francique 2017; Nelson 1999). Moreover, they often feel the need to participate in performative contortions where they act in ways that help them blend in with their white and male counterparts in order to achieve and sustain leadership positions (Glass and Cook 2020). Taking on extra tasks and acting out performative contortions leads to feelings of isolation and fatigue (Abney and Richey 1991; Glass and Cook 2020). When black women achieve leadership positions, they must take unsustainable calculated and performative steps in order to keep their positions (Abney and Richey 1991; Glass and Cook 2020).

HOW RACE AND GENDER AFFECT JOB OUTCOMES IN NCAA DIVISION I  
WOMEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL COACHING

Women's NCAA DI basketball coaching provides a unique opportunity to examine the unique and joint effects of race and gender on job outcomes because of the diversity of the occupational field (Dufur 2008). Research shows that racial minorities are susceptible to the 'glass cliff' in basketball, as they are often promoted to losing teams whereby the odds of success are low (Cook and Glass 2013). Because those who coach teams that do well generally earn more money (Dufur 2008), this can pose negative financial risks to being a racial minority in this field.

Women also face obstacles that make landing head coaching positions difficult. They are saddled with deeply rooted gendered stereotypes that impose additional hurdles (Knoppers et al. 1991). Coaches are expected to express masculine qualities, such as assertiveness and ability to be a strong leader (Knoppers et al. 1991). However, when women hold these characteristics, their femininity is questioned, which can make them appear as less hireable (Dufur 2008; Moss and Tilly 1996). This imposes a difficult dilemma that female coaches must face as they are expected to embody conflicting characteristics (Dufur 2008). This disadvantage becomes male advantage (Budig 2002) as evidenced by the disproportionate number of men that now coach women's teams (Acosta and Carpenter 2012; Stark 2017). As women face barriers to securing head coaching positions in this field, the door opens for their male counterparts to serve as head coaches for women's teams.

This disadvantage is all the more problematic given that women are essentially blocked from coaching NCAA DI men's teams. When asked by a CBS reporter if they believed women would coach men's NCAA DI basketball teams in the next 25 years, more than 75 male NCAA DI men's basketball coaches indicated that they did not

think so (Borzello 2014). Most of the coaches did not believe women have the ability to successfully coach the men's teams. And those who did, did not believe women would be able to gain access to those head coaching positions (Borzello 2014). One anonymous coach responded by saying "A big part of being a college coach is molding boys into successful men. Obviously, a woman can't do that" (Borzello 2014). This attitude is in line with extant research that documents negative stereotypes about leadership skills of women (Abney and Richey 1991; Bielby 2000; Knoppers et al. 1991; McDowell and Carter-Francique 2017; Nelson 1999).

That women are effectively blocked from coaching men's teams becomes all the more problematic given their representation in NCAA DI women's college basketball coaching. In 2017, almost 60 percent of NCAA women's teams were coached by men (Stark 2017). This discrepancy is notable given the enactment of Title IX in 1972. Title IX, the 1972 Education Amendments to the Civil Rights Act, made it illegal to discriminate against one due to their sex in colleges. In 1982, the Supreme Court Case *North Haven Board of Education v. Bell*, 456 U.S. 512 (1982) decided Title IX applies to employees as well as students.

After Title IX was enacted, most universities were forced to merge their women's and men's athletic departments. Consequently, about 85 percent of the athletic directors for the merged departments were men whereas prior to 1972, over 90 percent of the athletic directors for the women's teams were women. Further, Title IX allowed for women's teams to receive more funding which led to an increase in the number of women's teams (Everhart and Chelladurai 1998). This required departments to hire more coaches, and men were usually in control of employment



decisions regarding hiring and firing and men were usually hired to fill the vacant positions (Acosta and Carpenter 1992). So although Title IX has increased female athlete participation in sports, it has led to the decreasing percentage of women coaching sports. Before Title IX was enacted, over 90 percent of coaches of women's teams were women. However, this number has decreased to 40 percent (Stark 2017) due to leadership changes in athletic departments (Everhart and Chelladurai 1998) and an increase of males seeking women's head coaching positions (Acosta and Carpenter 1992). Thus, Title IX provides a legal framework that should reduce inequality in job prospects in this profession, and yet, has not.

Moreover, research shows that black women have especially lost out (Theune 2016). That is, white women have benefitted more from Title IX than their black female counterparts. For instance, research shows that black female athletic directors were burdened with occupational stereotyping that caused their qualifications to be questioned through gendered and racially stereotypical lenses (McDowell and Carter-Francique 2017). This example shows that the challenges black women face in college sports occur even at the administrative level. This disadvantage is compounded by cultural taxation, which is a phenomenon where racial and ethnic minorities are urged or required by administration to serve as racial experts in programs, committees, and other roles (Padilla 1994). Thus, racial minorities in college athletics are burdened with extra responsibilities and duties while also being held to the same productivity standards as their white counterparts (Joseph and Hirshfield 2011).

Cultural taxation is particularly problematic given that even when women achieve head coaching positions, they are less likely to earn a salary comparable to

head coaches of men's teams (Dufur 2008). Because women are blocked, at least in practice, from coaching NCAA DI men's teams, there are financial implications to being a woman in this field (Dufur 2008). Research posits that women experience coaching differently and have different coaching opportunities than men due to gendered ideologies and expectations combined with lower status and power in this field (Morris, Aurthur-Banning and McDowell 2014 ). It also finds that men and women have different perceptions about why men are more likely than women to fill vacant head coaching positions in this labor market. Women tend to blame the "old boys club" network and an absence of a support system, whereas men tend to blame a lack of qualified female coaches and athletic directors as well as women's failure to apply for vacant jobs (Acosta and Carpenter 1992). The first attribution is in line with literature documenting gendered stereotypes about ability (Abney and Richey 1991; Bielby 2000; Knoppers et al. 1991; McDowell and Carter-Francique 2017; Nelson 1999). Even sports like volleyball and field hockey, which are traditionally female driven sports, are largely being coached by males (Acosta and Carpenter 1992).

This is detrimental not only to women's occupational outcomes, but to female players who lack female role models (Bass 2016). This illuminates the need for further research to examine the intersectionality of gender and race as there are several factors that lead to disadvantages unique to black women due to their gender (Bielby 2000; Knoppers et al. 1991) and their race (McDowell and Carter-Francique 2017; Padilla 1994). I aim to investigate if this holds true for NCAA DI Women's Basketball head coaches by examining the demographic makeup of the public and private universities.

## HYPOTHESES

I am interested in examining the impact that gender, race, and the intersection of the two have on job security in NCAA Division I women's college basketball coaching. More specifically, I am interested in whether the likelihood of a school dismissing a head coach varies by the head coach's race and sex. I am also interested in understanding how the performance context affects the types of people (i.e., men or women, whites or racial minorities) colleges and universities hire when head coaching vacancies open. My proposed research, therefore, will help uncover racial and gender disparities in this elite occupation, which is important given its relatively high levels of racial and gender diversity.

Because women and racial minorities are disadvantaged in the workplace and historically susceptible to job vulnerability (Mossakowski 2009; Offermann et al. 2014; Wilson 2009; Wilson and Roscigno 2010), I hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 1:* Colleges and Universities competing in NCAA Division I women's basketball will be more likely to dismiss black head coaches.

*Hypothesis 2:* Colleges and Universities competing in NCAA Division I women's basketball will be more likely to dismiss female head coaches.

*Hypothesis 3:* Colleges and Universities competing in NCAA Division I women's basketball will be more likely to dismiss female black head coaches relative to all other groups.

Also, given past research on glass cliffs (Cook and Glass 2013), which suggests that women and minorities are disproportionately likely to be hired into positions that make it difficult to succeed, I hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 4:* A better performance in the previous year will increase the likelihood that colleges and universities competing in NCAA Division I women's basketball will hire white head coaches to fill openings.

*Hypothesis 5:* A better performance in the previous year will increase the likelihood that colleges and universities competing in NCAA Division I women's basketball will hire male head coaches to fill openings.

And because black females have not benefited from Title IX to the same extent that white females have (Theune 2016), I hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 6:* A better performance in the previous year will increase the likelihood that colleges and universities competing in NCAA Division I women's basketball will hire white males, minority males, and white females to head coaches to fill openings.

## METHODS

To test my hypotheses about racial and gender differences in job vulnerability and opportunity in NCAA Division I women's college basketball coaching, I rely on a unique dataset that tracks the head women's basketball coaches at every school, excluding the service academies, competing at this level over a three-year time period. From 2015 to 2018, I used secondary sources, such as school websites, media guides, news articles, and government websites to record data about the head women's college basketball coach at each of these 345 schools. 228 of which were public university or colleges. I also used Jeff Sagarin's online website to gather data about each team's yearly performance and the National Center for Education Statistics as well as the U.S. Department of Education's Equity in Athletics Data Analysis website to gather data

about each school. Using these sources, I constructed a school-level panel dataset consisting of 1035 school years (3 years nested within each of my 345 schools).

Across these 1035 school years, there were 137 head coaching job changes, with schools opting to fire or not renew contracts 79 times. This provides sufficient variability in the data to assess the sociodemographic and performance-related factors that affect not only who schools let go but also who they hire. That is, this dataset is useful for my research purposes because it provides adequate variability in job turnover to evaluate school-level differences in the occupational stability of NCAA Division I women's basketball coaches across race and gender lines.

#### *Dependent Variables*

My study has three dependent variables. The first dependent variable concerns whether a school fired a head coach or forced the head coach to resign because of poor performance. The variable was created using news articles to detect the cause of job changes, with specific attention paid to whether a school fired an outgoing head coach or forced the person to resign. Values of 1 indicate the head coach was fired or forced to resign. Values of 0 indicate otherwise.

The second and third dependent variables concern the race and sex of the incoming head coach, respectively. Over the three-year period, 137 job head coaching positions became available, 79 because of firings and 58 because of voluntary job exits. Of these 137 openings, 119 occurred prior to the 2018 year, which allowed me to assess the race and gender of incoming head coaches. Race was coded dichotomously as white (1) or not (0) and sex was coded as male (1) or female (0). (Below I describe in detail how I made these determinations.) Using these 119 cases and these dependent

variables, I assessed whether past performance affected who schools hired as head coaches.

### *Independent Variables*

My analyses focus primarily on how race, sex, and performance affect the job outcomes of head women's basketball coaches at NCAA DI schools. My main independent variables then assess these factors. To determine the sex of the head coach for each team at each year, I used team websites and media guides to examine the physical characteristics, names, and pronouns for each head coach. Across the 1035 school-years, 416 were occupied by male coaches and 619 by female coaches. Similarly, I used team websites and media guides to examine the coaches' name and physical characteristics when coding race (Murguia and Telles 1996; Savage and Seebruck 2015). A vast majority of the head coaches identified were white (780) or black (251). Indeed, only 4 head coaches, constituting 8 school-years, were identified as something other than white or black. Thus, I coded this measure dichotomously as white (=780) or not (=255).

I also consider these effects in light of performance, which I conceptualize contextually as a team's performance relative to their immediate comparison group. In the mid-1980s, Jeff Sagarin developed a method to rank sport teams in various sports and since applied that method to NCAA DI women's college basketball. Although the specific details of his method are not publicly disclosed, the method considers multiple factors including win-loss record, strength of schedule, and margin of victory, to objectively and accurately measure a team's performance (West 2008). The method, therefore, provides a numeric rating for each team, with higher values indicating better

performance. Therefore, the Sagarin score captures the team's performance and serves as a proxy for the coach's performance, as the coach leads the team.

Similarly, Sagarin also uses his method to provide numeric ratings for each athletic conference within which teams compete. While the overall team ranking does capture performance in the overall field, it is also correlated with salary and overall school budget (Seebruck and Savage 2014), suggesting it is not a pure measure of performance and also reflects the overall prestige of the school. Moreover, the team-level Sagarin measure ignores the reality that when it comes to performance social comparisons are less likely as differences in ability grow (Festinger 1954). Therefore, to capture a localized performance measure that accounts for each team's likely comparison group, I subtracted each team's Sagarin rating from average Sagarin rating for their respective athletic conferences. This created a continuous localized performance measure, where higher positive values indicate a worse team performance relative to the other teams in the conference. I use this measure when evaluating the likelihood of a school firing a head coach.

When I evaluated who a school hires to fill an opening, I included both the overall team Sagarin score as well as the more localized performance measure for the previous year. By including both, I captured both the general prestige of hiring school and its relative performance. Including both in this analysis allows me to assess how past prestige and relative performance block certain groups of people from top jobs in this profession.

### *Control Variables*

In addition to above variables, I controlled for a number of other variables of theatrical interest. The first control variable captures tenure. This variable is a continuous variable measuring the number of years the head coach has been at the school in this position. Second, I controlled for whether the head coach competed as a NCAA DI basketball player. Third, I controlled for their age by using their undergraduate graduation year as a proxy for age. Lastly, I controlled for various school characteristics, like whether the school is public or private, the sex composition of the student body, and whether the schools compete in a power conference.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in Statistical Models

Variable Name	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Interpretation
<i>Dependent Variable</i>					
Let Go	.076	.266	0	1	1 = let go 0 = else
<i>Independent Variables</i>					
Sex	.402	.491	0	1	1 = male 0 = female
<i>Race</i>					
White (Reference)	.754	.431	0	1	1 = white 0 = else
Black	.239	.426	0	1	1 = black 0 = else
<i>School Type</i>					
School Type	.339	.474	0	1	1 = private 0 = public
<i>Power Conference</i>					
Power Conference	.217	.413	0	1	1 = power conference 0 = else
<i>College Player</i>					
College Player	.707	.455	0	1	1 = Played in college 0 = else
<i>Tenure</i>					
Tenure	6.126	6.629	0	39	Number of years at current university
<i>Graduation Year</i>					
Graduation Year	1991.74	8.502	1955	2012	Year the coach graduated from college
<i>Female Student Body</i>					
Female Student Body	54.459	6.145	21.486	74.488	Percentage of female student body
<i>Performance</i>					
Performance	-.077	8.498	-42.900	42.900	Team performance rating

N = 1, 035

### *Analytic Strategy*

Technically, my project is a panel study of 345 NCAA Division I women's college basketball teams, making my primary unit of analysis the team- or school-year. The nested nature of these data mean that I cannot assume cases are independent and I should adopt a statistical technique that addresses this. However, such statistical approaches are beyond the training we receive in the M.A. program at the University of Houston, so instead, for the firing analyses, I rely on logistic regression models that account for pooled nature of the data by producing robust standard errors that correct



the non-independence of years nested within schools. Logistic regression is appropriate given the binary nature of my dependent variable.

For analyses predicting the race and sex of the individual hired to fill a head coach opening, I can assume relative independence of the 119 cases and will rely on logistic regression. Again, it is appropriate to use logistic regression because my dependent variable is binary in nature.

## RESULTS

My study builds on literature that shows that racial and ethnic minorities and women are disadvantaged in the workplace in terms of job vulnerability and job opportunities (Mossakowski 2009; Offermann et al. 2014; Wilson 2009; Wilson and Roscigno 2010). As such, I investigate these disadvantages by using the case of schools who compete in NCAA DI women's basketball as collegiate coaching has been compared to other elite occupations such as CEOs because of the similar job characteristics and expectations (Cook and Glass 2013; Halgin 2009; Katz 2008).

### *Let go*

First, I examined the factors that might affect the likelihood of a school dismissing their head women's basketball coach. Of the 619 instances where a team was led by a female, there were 50 dismissals. Of the 416 instances where a team was led by a male coach, there were 29 dismissals. Thus, approximately 8 percent of the years with a female head coach resulted in women being dismissed, and approximately 7 percent of the years with a male head coach resulted in men being let go. A chi-square test reveals no statistical difference.

Of the 255 instances where a team was led by a non-white head coach, there were 32 dismissals. Of the 780 instances where a team was led by a white head coach, there were 47 dismissals. Thus, approximately 12.5 percent of the years with non-white coaches resulted in dismissal, compared to approximately 6 percent of the years where teams were led by white coaches. This difference was significant based on results from a chi-square test ( $p=.001$ ). Based on these bivariate statistics, it appears that schools are more likely to part ways with non-white head coaches relative to their white peers. This provides some initial evidence that there is a racial difference in being let go, but little evidence of a gender difference.

To more formally test for racial and gender differences in school dismissal, I ran logistic regression models with robust standard errors. The logistic regression models in Table 2 show the effects of our key independent variables on the odds of a school letting the head coach go. Model 1 indicates that race, tenure, and having been a DI basketball player significantly impacts the odds of a school letting the head coach go. The significant effect for race is consistent with hypothesis 1. Sex is borderline significant (odds ratio .629,  $p<.089$ ) which contrary to the bivariate analysis indicates some weak support for hypothesis 2.

Model 2 includes the team's performance relative to the conference average. Including this variable eliminates the effect of sex on whether the college or university dismisses the head women's basketball coach. Race remains significant (odds ratio .563,  $p < .031$ ), offering additional support for hypothesis 1. That both the race and the sex variables lost some strength with the inclusion of the relative performance measure suggests differences in performance partly explain racial and gender

differences in dismissal in this field. However, this could be a consequence of minorities and women securing head coaching positions at underperforming schools, making it harder for them to meet performance expectations (Cook and Glass 2013; Glass and Cook 2020; Ryan and Haslam 2007). I test this possibility below and as I show there, find some evidence in support of the idea that individuals from disadvantaged groups like racial minorities and women are susceptible to the glass cliff. That is, they tend to secure positions with relatively low odds of success, which, in turn, increases the likelihood of dismissal (Cook and Glass 2013; Glass and Cook 2020; Ryan and Haslam 2007).

**Table 2. Logistic Regression Models Predicting What Kind of Coach Universities Let Go**

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Odds Ratio	Standard Error	Odds Ratio	Standard Error
Race	.435***	.110	.563**	.150
Sex	.629†	.171	.704	.203
Power Conference	.968	.276	.808	.207
Tenure	.962**	.017	1.003	.018
Percent Female	.992	.019	.996	.012
School Type	.776	.195	.870	.214
Graduation Year	.987	.015	.983	.014
College Player	.516**	.147	.608†	.179
Performance	-	-	1.147***	.019

Note: N = 1,035; †p<.1 \*p<.05 \*\*p<.01 \*\*\*p<.001; two-tailed; Race reference category: white

Before examining that, however, I more thoroughly investigate how race and gender combine to affect dismissal. The logistic regression models in Table 3 show the effects of our key independent variables on the odds of being let go as compared to non-white females. Research posits racial and ethnic minorities face job loss at a higher rate than their white counterparts even when their performance is comparable (Wilson and McBrier 2005; Wilson 2009; Wilson and Roscigno 2010) and this may be

particularly likely for minority women, who also must overcome sex as well as racial discrimination.

Model 3 shows an interaction comparing non-white women to all other groups (white, men; white, women; and non-white, men). When relative performance is not included in the model, non-white women are significantly disadvantaged relative to whites regardless of sex, but supplementary analyses show there is no difference for males who are non-white.

Model 4 includes relative performance and shows that non-white women are disadvantaged relative to white males, but not the other two groups (non-white males, and white females). This is suggestive of a status ranking with non-white females at the lowest rung of the ladder, white males at the top, and white females and non-white males in-between the two. This provides some support for hypothesis 3, which posited that colleges and universities would be more likely to dismiss female black head coaches relative to all other groups.

Finally, to ensure that these findings are not driven by performance relative to the field rather than relative to the conference, Model 5 includes the Sagarin score, which accounts for a university's performance relative to the field. When the Sagarin score is introduced, non-white females are still disadvantaged as compared to white males (Odds Ratio = .404,  $p < .035$ ). Black women are often perceived as being unable to succeed at high-level positions because they are often stereotyped as being defiant to authority in the workplace (McDowell and Carter-Francique 2017) and less capable than their white and male counterparts (McDowell and Carter-Francique 2017; Moss and Tilly 1996; Wilson and McBrier 2005). These generalizations, coupled with the

job vulnerability that racial and ethnic minorities face as compared to their white counterparts even when performance is taken into consideration, leave black women at a unique disadvantage (Wilson and McBrier 2005; Wilson 2009; Wilson and Roscigno 2010). My findings provide some conditional support for this idea, showing that non-white women are disadvantaged relative to white men in this profession.

**Table 3.** Logistic Regression Models Predicting What Kind of Coach Universities Let Go

	Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	Odds Ratio	Standard Error	Odds Ratio	Standard Error	Odds Ratio	Standard Error
Non-white Males	.595	.251	.749	.330	.744	.328
White Females	.423**	.131	.582	.194	.602	.206
White Males	.274***	.106	.397**	.168	.404**	.174
Power Conference	.955	.275	.811	.208	1.066	.475
Tenure	.962**	.017	1.002	.018	1.003	.018
Female Student Body	.992	.019	.996	.012	.993	.012
School Type	.780	.195	.865	.214	.871	.216
Graduation Year	.986	.015	.984	.014	.985	.014
College Player	.517**	.149	.606†	.180	.614	.184
Performance	-	-	1.147***	.019	1.131***	.028
Sagarin Rating	-	-	-	-	.986	.019

Note: N = 1,035; †p<.1 \*p<.05 \*\*p<.01 \*\*\*p<.001; two-tailed; Reference category: Non-white Females

### Hiring

Next, I examine the factors affecting who schools hire as head women's basketball coach. For hypotheses 4, 5 and 6, I restricted my data just to those years where there was a new coach (N = 119) to test if the previous year's performance impacts the universities likelihood of hiring white versus nonwhite and male versus female head coaches.

Of the 119 instances where a new head coach was hired, there were 45 male and 74 female coaches hired. Thus, schools hired male coaches approximately 40 percent of the time and female coaches approximately 60 percent of the time. A chi-square test reveals no statistical difference.

Of the 119 instances where a new head coach was hired, there were 77 white and 42 non-white coaches hired. Thus, schools hired white coaches approximately 65 percent of the time and non-white coaches approximately 35 percent of the time. This difference was significant based on results from a chi-square test ( $p=.004$ ). Based on these bivariate statistics, it appears that schools are more likely to hire white head coaches relative to their non-white counterparts. This provides some initial evidence that there is a racial difference in being hired, but little evidence of a gender difference.

To further test for racial and gender differences in school hiring, I ran logistic regression models. For these models, I included independent variables that describe the outgoing head coach's race, sex, and whether they left because the school dismissed them. I also included a measure for the team's Sagarin ranking for the previous year, whether the school is in a power conference, and whether the school is public. I also included a variable examining whether the incoming head coach played college basketball. The logistic regression models in Table 4 show the effects of our independent variables on the odds of a school hiring a new head coach of a particular sex or race. The performance rating of the exiting head coach is significant when predicting the odds of a white head coach being hired (Odds Ratio = 1.081,  $p<.004$ ). Thus, every unit increase in performance increases the odds of a white coach being hired by 8.1 percent. This supports hypothesis 4 which posits that a better performance in the previous year will increase the likelihood that universities will hire white head coaches to fill openings. The Sagarin rating for the prior year, however, is not significant in predicting the odds of a male head coach being hired by a university.

This contradicts hypothesis 5 which posits that a better performance in the previous year will increase the likelihood that universities will hire male head coaches to fill openings. We, however, do find that being a college player actually decreases the odds of a school hiring a male coach to lead their women’s basketball team, suggesting that women but not men need evidence as a collegiate player to secure these positions.

**Table 4.** Logistic Regression Models Predicting What Kind of Coach Universities Hired

	White		Male	
	Odds Ratio	Standard Error	Odds Ratio	Standard Error
Rating Previous Year	1.081**	.029	1.024	.030
Previous HC White	1.980	.971	.727	.455
Previous HC Male	.726	.326	.696	.373
Previous HC Let Go	2.073	.995	.796	.460
School Type	1.895	.885	.748	.419
Power Conference	.730	.598	2.420	2.027
College Player	.710	.335	.034***	.019

Note: N = 119; \*p<.05 \*\*p<.01 \*\*\*p<.001; two-tailed

Given these findings, I next use multinomial logistic regression to assess how these variables affect whether schools hire non-white males, white females, or white males relative to non-white females. The rating in the previous year is significant in predicting the odds of universities hiring white females (odds ratio = 1.098, p<.006) and white males (odds ratio = 1.111, p<.004). This is suggestive of a status ranking with non-white females again at the lowest rung of the ladder, white males at the top, and white females and non-white males in-between the two. This provides some support for hypothesis 6, which posited that colleges and universities would be more likely to hire white males, minority males, and white females to head coaches to fill openings as compared to non-white females. Further, this is in line with literature on the glass cliff as we find that white men are more likely to be hired onto teams that are

performing better relative to nonwhite women (Cook and Glass 2013; Glass and Cook 2020).

**Table 5.** Multinomial Logistic Regression Predicting What Kind of Coach Universities Hired

	Non-white Male		White Female		White Male	
	Odds Ratio	Standard Error	Odds Ratio	Standard Error	Odds Ratio	Standard Error
Rating Previous Year	1.050	.042	1.098**	.037	1.111**	.041
Previous HC White	.868	.640	2.306	1.436	1.240	.819
Previous HC Male	.558	.391	.670	.366	.427	.264
Previous HC Let Go	.906	.652	2.131	1.258	1.737	1.125
School Type	.579	.468	1.472	.849	1.757	1.098
Power Conference	1.784	2.590	.920	1.140	1.166	1.487

Note: N = 119; \*p<.05 \*\*p<.01 \*\*\*p<.001; two-tailed; Reference category: Non-white Females

Finally, table 6 includes whether the head coach competed in DI basketball. When I control for whether the incoming coach was a college player, I found that incoming non-white female coaches are more likely to have been college players than all other groups, although the difference is not significant for white females. This is in line with research that posits that black women must prove themselves before gaining access to leadership positions (Abney and Richey 1991; McDowell and Carter-Francique 2017; Nelson 1999). Minority women often suffer from a double standard that requires them to prove their capabilities at a higher threshold than their white male counterparts (Glass and Cook 2020). This suggests that universities are likely to hire minority women who have competed in NCAA DI women’s basketball because they are able to evaluate their abilities, whereas white males are able to secure head coaching positions through other pathways.



**Table 6.** Multinomial Logistic Regression Predicting What Kind of Coach Universities Hired

	Non-white Male		White Female		White Male	
	Odds Ratio	Standard Error	Odds Ratio	Standard Error	Odds Ratio	Standard Error
Rating Previous Year	1.055	.048	1.102**	.040	1.120**	.049
Previous HC White	.798	.662	2.034	1.297	1.348	1.106
Previous HC Male	.701	.544	.707	.393	.479	.351
Previous HC Let Go	.970	.788	2.384	1.452	1.752	1.363
School Type	.445	.395	1.394	.812	1.337	.997
Power Conference	3.027	4.618	.893	1.102	2.336	3.236
College Player	.044***	.041	.766	.723	.022***	.020

Note: N = 119; \*p<.05 \*\*p<.01 \*\*\*p<.001; two-tailed; Reference category: Non-white Females

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Given that I collected three years of data that followed schools who compete in NCAA DI women's basketball, a model that accounts for the longitudinal nature of the data would be preferred. Because that is beyond the scope of what I learned in this master's program, I rely on logistic regression models that account for pooled nature of the data by producing robust standard errors that correct the non-independence of years nested within schools. Future research should revisit this case and use the appropriate modeling strategy to predict job outcomes.

Further, when investigating who colleges and universities hire, it is important to note that I do not have data on the pool of applicants or qualified candidates. Therefore, my conclusions as to who universities are likely to hire in terms of race and gender are limited. Future research should also examine social networks and how coaching trees, which concern the various networks of assistant coaches working under prestigious head coaches, impact what kind of coach universities are likely to hire in regard to race and gender (Halgin 2009; Savage and Seebruck 2015).

## CONCLUSION

It has been established that women and racial and ethnic minorities are

disadvantaged in the workplace (Bielby 2000; Glass and Cook 2020; Ryan and Haslam 2007). Because of the diverse makeup of women's basketball coaching (Dufur 2008), the ability to control for performance (West 2008), and the generalizability of this workplace to other elite workplaces (Cook and Glass 2013; Lieberman 1997; Savage and Seebruck 2015), women's basketball coaching is ideal for studying occupational racial and gender inequality. My research builds upon extent literature on racial and gender inequality in the workplace and furthers research on how race and gender intersect and create unique disadvantages for minorities by examining how race and gender combine to impact occupation outcomes like job attainment and dismissal.

Collegiate basketball is a useful case because there are clear and measurable indicators of performance (West 2008). When examining the factors that might affect the likelihood of a school dismissing their head women's basketball coach, my research shows that racial and ethnic minorities are disadvantaged as compared to white individuals even when controlling for their performance. This contributes to the literature on the minority vulnerability thesis, which describes how minorities are more susceptible to job loss based on parameters that are less rigid than their white peers (Wilson and McBrier 2005).

Further, when examining who universities are likely to dismiss, we find that non-white women are especially disadvantaged as compared to non-white men, white women, and white men as universities are more likely to dismiss female black head coaches relative to all other groups. This indicates that the black women face a double jeopardy because they suffer the penalties of both their race and gender (Greenman

and Xie 2008).

When examining who universities are likely to hire, we find that the performance rating of the exiting head coach increases the odds of white males being hired which indicates that racial and ethnic minorities and women are susceptible to the glass cliff. Racial and ethnic minorities and women are promoted to teams with relatively low odds of success, which, in turn, increases the likelihood of the coach being dismissed. (Cook and Glass 2013; Glass and Cook 2020; Ryan and Haslam 2007).

This study finds support for the minority vulnerability thesis (Wilson 2009) and the glass cliff (Cook and Glass 2013). With my unique dataset, I examine who universities let go and who they hire to fill vacant positions. There is evidence that racial and ethnic minorities are disadvantaged in this field, and that minority women face the greatest disadvantaged relative to all other groups.

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