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HISTORICAL

"The Struggle Is Real": The Life History of a Groundbreaking African American, Female Basketball Coach

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to construct the life history of Dana "Pokey" Chatman, a successful African American, female basketball coach. The study was guided by elements from critical race feminism. Data were collected through formal semistructured interviews, informal interviews, and documents and artifacts. They were analyzed through analytic induction and constant comparison. Key findings were that Pokey faced a considerable amount of marginalization and experienced a steady flow of microaggressions with the exception of the time she worked in Eastern Europe. Pokey's mother, sister, childhood community, love of sport, university teammates, and head coach all played a role in helping her overcome the racism she faced. Pokey's life history is inspiring and should encourage other women of color who have similar ambitions to persist in their efforts to become sports coaches. It can also be employed in efforts to transform the working environments of African American, female coaches.

In 2020, only 10% of the women who were head coaches and 24% of the women who were assistant coaches of college basketball teams in the United States identified as African American. By contrast,

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45% of the women playing on college basketball teams identified as African American (National Collegiate Athletic Association [NCAA], 2020). Moreover, during the 2019 season, there was only one African American, female head coach in the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), the premier professional league in the United States. Conversely, the proportion of WNBA players who identified as African American or a person of color was 82.70% (Lapchick, 2019). There is, then, a need to find out why there are so few African American, female basketball coaches, and an important element of that research should focus on uncovering the degree of marginalization of those African American, female coaches who are employed at the college level or in the WNBA.

The life history approach is a qualitative design that feminists and sport pedagogists have argued is useful in discovering why physical educators and coaches are marginalized on the basis of their gender, race, ethnicity, age, physical ability, class, and subject matter (Ashford-Hanserd, 2020; McLaughlin & Tierney, 1993; Sparkes et al., 1993). Advocates of this approach stress its advantages in terms of giving marginalized persons voice (Dowling et al., 2015). This approach involves scholars describing a participant's life story and explaining the influence of political, historical, social, and cultural factors on this story (Given, 2008; Goodson, 1980, 1992; Payne & Payne, 2004; Plummer, 2001). A number of data collection methods can be used in life history work. These include formal and informal interviews, the collection of artifacts and documents, autobiographies, storytelling, and memoir writing (Cazers & Curtner-Smith, 2013; Sparkes, 1993).

Coaches' Life Histories

Despite calls for more life history work focused on marginalization of educators (Sparkes et al., 1993), there are few examples of it in the sport pedagogy literature. Life histories of coaches that have been completed with this focus have included those of African American (Milton-Williams & Bryan, 2021) and White (Templin et al., 1994) teacher-coaches, those of two Latino American football coaches (Iber, 2009), and that of a Latino Major League Baseball coach (Iber, 2014, 2016). In addition, scholars have written the life histories of an Australian rules football coach (Wedgwood, 2004, 2005); Percy Cerutty, a well-known track and field coach (Turner,

2017); and several disability sport coaches (Berger, 2009; Douglas & Hardin, 2014; Douglas et al., 2016). To our knowledge, only two life histories of women's basketball coaches have been completed (Summitt & Jenkins, 2013; Stringer & Tucker, 2009). Key findings of these two biographies of high-level coaches were both women experienced sexism, and the one African American coach experienced overt and covert racism, most notably when a radio host referred to her team as "nappy-headed hoes."

Purpose

Our aim was to extend the research in this line. Specifically, following Sparkes et al. (1993), Cazers and Curtner-Smith (2013), and Milton-Williams and Bryan (2021), we were interested in examining the impact of marginalization through race and gender. The purpose of the study, therefore, was to construct the life history of one African American, female basketball coach. The specific research questions we sought to answer were (a) to what extent did the coach experience marginalization? and (b) to what extent did the coach experience microaggressions?

Theoretical Framework

Scholars employing critical race theory describe and reveal how persons of color are discriminated against in general (Delgado et al., 2017; Tate, 1997). In this study, construction of the participant's life history was guided by a branch of critical race theory known as critical race feminism (Delgado, 1995; Wing, 2000, 2014). Critical race feminists argue that discrimination for women of color is different to that of men of color and White women. Specifically, women of color experience marginalization from both a White patriarchal system and racism. For this reason, critical race feminists study the intersection of race and gender on women of color with the goal of revealing and combating discrimination and oppression (Crenshaw, 1989; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016).

During this study, we drew on two constructs from critical race feminism. These were counter-stories and microaggressions. In this context, counter-stories are rarely heard narratives in which women of color describe the discrimination, marginalization, and injustice from which they suffer. These stories contradict narratives from the majority and dominant group, in this case White men (Ashford-

Hanserd, 2020; Berry, 2010; Clark et al., 2015; Dixson et al., 2017; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). During this study, our goal was to enable the participant to tell such a counter-story.

Microaggressions include brief verbal or nonverbal slights or attacks that are, in this context, directed at women of color. They may or may not be intentional but are derogatory, racist, and negative in nature (Sue et al., 2007). Over time, the mental health of women of color subjected to microaggressions can deteriorate (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015; Pierce, 2013). There are three types of microaggression (Sue et al., 2007). Microinvalidations occur when the views of women of color are ignored or belittled. Microinsults are rude and insensitive comments that disparage and demean the heritage of women of color. Microassaults include discriminatory actions and derogatory name-calling aimed at causing hurt. During this study, we were interested in describing the microaggressions the participant experienced and her reactions to them.

Method

Participant

The participant in this study was Dana "Pokey" Chatman, a 51-year-old African American WNBA head coach and former NCAA Division I (i.e., the highest level of university sport in the United States) college coach. She was purposely selected for the study on the basis of her race, gender, longevity in coaching, and success. In accordance with our institutional review board's regulations, she signed a consent form indicating her willingness to take part in the study. She also asked that we use her real name in this paper, and to be brief, we refer to her by her preferred moniker, Pokey. Our university's institutional review board approved this research.

Data Collection

Pokey completed three in-depth, semistructured formal interviews (Patton, 2015) with Richard F. Jowers by telephone. During the first formal interview, Pokey answered questions about the impact of her family, friends, schooling, sport participation, and local culture on her childhood and youth prior to entering college. In the second formal interview, Pokey described her life as an undergraduate college student-athlete and her coaching career. During the third

formal interview, Pokey provided examples of the marginalization she had experienced to that point in her life, in terms of discrimination and injustice, and the microaggressions she had been subjected to. In addition, Pokey relayed and described important cultural, social, historical, and political events and experiences that influenced her. The interviews ranged from 55 to 111 min, were recorded with Adobe Audition, and were transcribed verbatim.

Pokey completed two follow-up informal interviews by phone with Jowers and answered other follow-up questions Jowers posed via email. These informal interviews and emails helped us to confirm and develop points made in the formal interviews. Jowers recorded the contents of follow-up informal interviews by making notes during the interviews. Supplemental data included useful documents we discovered online (e.g., digital yearbooks, Pokey's biography, team media guides) and artifacts and documents (e.g., photographs, practice plans, film of Pokey in action) that Pokey supplied and that illustrated and filled out her life history and the marginalization and microaggressions she faced. Jowers made notes on the contents and salience of each document and artifact.

Data Analysis

Jowers entered data from all sources into NVivo 12 (QSR International, n.d.). Jowers then used the computer program to sort the data into logical chronological periods. Next, Jowers employed analytic induction and constant comparison (Patton, 2015) to code and categorize the data. Codes and categories were both inductive and congruent with constructs from the two research questions and critical race feminism. Following previous sport pedagogy life history work (Armour, 2006; Sparkes et al., 1993), Jowers created a timeline of Pokey's life on which important cultural, political, historical, and social events were related to her life story. Taking on the role of critical friend (Costa & Kallick, 1993), Matthew D. Curtner-Smith critiqued and provided feedback on the chronological periods and emerging categories and codes.

Trustworthiness and credibility were established through three techniques (Patton, 2015). Jowers used any negative and discrepant cases to modify or alter codes and categories during the analysis. Triangulation involved Jowers cross-checking data across all sources. Jowers carried out member checking during the informal interviews

by asking Pokey to examine an earlier version of this manuscript for factual errors.

Dana "Pokey" Chatman's Life History

We describe Pokey's life history in three subsections. These are childhood and adolescence, university, and coaching career.

Childhood and Adolescence

Family and Community

Dana "Pokey" Chatman was born in Ama, Louisiana, just west of New Orleans, in 1969. It was the year Richard Nixon became president, the first Americans landed on the moon, large-scale protests against the Vietnam War took place, and 14 African American players were forced to leave the University of Wyoming football team because they wore black armbands into the head coach's office. It was also a year after the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy and the end of the decade of racial, worker, and female protests against inequality and injustice during which the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964.

Pokeys' mother and father were divorced a few years after her birth, and she and her elder sister were raised by their mother in humble circumstances:

> My mom goes from being married to working three jobs [i.e., at the post office in the morning, at the courthouse in the afternoon, and as a housekeeper or security guard in the evenings]. So my sister became the one who took care of the house, and I did the odd jobs. . . . I didn't know we didn't have any money. We always had food. We didn't have a hot water heater, so we boiled water in a couple of pots to take a bath. But despite all those things, that helped me navigate later on in life. (Interview 1)

Indeed, Pokey credited her mother for much of her later success, labeling her as her "first head coach," and noted the family's structure led to her and her sister developing a "strong bond." In addition, she indicated, as in many small southern towns of the time, there was a great deal of poverty and few facilities and amenities in the working-class African American area in which the family lived:

> In terms of the community being marginalized, when you're a kid you really aren't aware. Obviously, I think the one thing that I was aware of was the fact that I went to an elementary school, and 200 yards away from my elementary school was a swimming pool. But it was for White people only. [There] wasn't a sign . . . but it was widely known that it was a White people pool. And that was always weird to me because I had White classmates, White friends, and I didn't quite understand that. . . . And I think part of that made us all cling to the fact that we had sports. [That] you never felt that [i.e., racism] when you participated in sports, in terms of the marginalization, . . . is interesting. (Interview 3)

Despite this marginalization, Pokey recalled the community as being tight-knit and explained that to a large extent

> the village raised me. . . . It didn't matter if it was a neighborhood crook, crack-head, weed-head, alcoholic older person. Don't bring that crazy stuff around Pokey or to the basketball court. . . . I was the protected one [and] everyone had my best interest at hand. (Interview 1)

Schooling and Youth Sport

Schools had been officially integrated 15 years before Pokey was born (*Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954)—hence her schools were "majority White" and reflected the town's 60% White and 40% African American population. Pokey had both White and African American school friends and sporting teammates; however, she recalled being outraged about the bias of her schools' curricula:

> You're not even aware of how bad it is. My family talked about it, but I was just always appalled at how little time we spent on anything related to Black history or some of the films that were shown or books that were read. You know, *Birth of a Nation*, or whatever. I think that carried a lot of weight with me to my young adulthood. . . . I remember being pissed that really we get the shortest month out of the year for Black history month. So I've always had . . . this huge pit in my

stomach and anger for the lack of attention that our history and existence has always gotten. (Interview 3)

Regardless of the curricular bias she experienced, Pokey had many positive memories of her schooling, particularly her "thirst for knowledge," "her favorite subjects, mathematics and history, and physical education," which she described as her "second favorite part of the day . . . I felt like it wasn't long enough." Pokey participated on the girls' basketball, volleyball, and softball teams at her middle school, but by high school she focused solely on basketball. Describing herself as "short," and "not fast, or athletic," Pokey became one of the best high school guards in the country, an achievement she put down to her "work ethic."

The sporting facilities outside of school were also poor in Ama, and the opportunities for working-class African American children, particularly girls, to participate were restricted compared to those for middle-class White children. Even so, Pokey started playing "youth sports" before she was 6 years old. Specifically, she recalled being "very active" as a child and adolescent and playing on basketball, volleyball, and softball teams that were mainly "Black." In this youth sport environment, she traveled to tournaments and Pokey and her teammates experienced "nasty looks and whispers, but nothing blatant . . . nothing that scarred [her]."

By age 11, Pokey had played on a top Amateur Athletic Union (i.e., an organization in the United States that oversees youth sport) basketball team called the New Orleans Dominos and had won multiple team and individual awards. She described her Dominos experience in general and her coaches in particular as being "really influential" in her development as a player and later as a coach:

> There were people that were in that organization that were very influential. . . . It shaped my early commitment to the game. . . . Before [playing for the Dominos], I was only playing with guys. We didn't have a girls' team. It was tough. It was regimented. I was on a 12-year-old team, but my mentor, who they assigned to me when she was 16 years old, . . . seemed like she was 26. . . . I admired her grit, her toughness. Stacey Gaudet was her name. She has been in my life since I was 10 and she's always been the steady force. But I credit my

> basketball experience to people [like Stacey] who brought me along, and some are still with me today. (Interview 1)

University

Basketball

Pokey was heavily recruited to play at the highest level of college basketball by a number of well-known and high-ranking university teams when she graduated from high school in the summer of 1987. These included Louisiana Tech University; the University of Tennessee; the University of California, Los Angeles; and the University of Georgia. She chose to attend Louisiana State University (LSU) in Baton Rouge, however, largely because of the opportunity to work with Sue Gunter, a White hall of fame coach with whom she felt comfortable from the outset:

> I think what sealed the deal . . . was getting to know Sue Gunter. I felt her realness and the authenticity. . . . I thought, "Who was this woman coming to my house and eating red beans and fried chicken with my family like she been here before?" It wasn't any false pretense. It wasn't these promises. And it just grabbed me. And from that point on she became one of the most influential and important people in my life. (Interview 2)

Pokey went on to have a very successful basketball career at LSU. She set several individual records (e.g., for steals, assists, and free throws made in one game) and led her team to the prestigious, invitational, end-of-season NCAA tournament during all four of her years at the university. In addition, she earned multiple personal awards (e.g., she was named the most valuable player in the conference in which LSU played in 1991) and represented the United States at the 1988 International Basketball Federation championship in Sao Paulo, Brazil, that she and her teammates won. Despite all this success, Pokey still experienced and encountered some marginalization in her capacity as a college basketball player. Specifically, she recalled that women's sports were not as well funded as men's sports.

Academic Studies

The other half of Pokey's life at LSU was as a "general studies" student with a "business emphasis." She described her program as "really good," noted that she was given "every opportunity to succeed" and "learned a lot," and was grateful for her "exposure to international students." Pokey was mainly insulated from the effects of racism as a basketball player, thanks to her coaches and playing on a predominantly African American team, the members of which were "like sisters." She was, however, more exposed to racism during classes and on campus, where African Americans were in the minority. Specifically, she recalled, "You have racial tension, you know. You're a minority, but you're accepted because of sports." Examples of microaggressions Pokey encountered at this stage of her life included being looked at as if she "didn't belong" and having new acquaintances quick to proclaim, "I don't see color" or "I have Black friends." Furthermore, Pokey felt socially isolated when away from her teammates:

> I just didn't see a whole lot of me [i.e., other African Americans on campus]. And that was probably the biggest thing to get used to socially. It's desolate, and you get just a corner of the campus that was your playground [i.e., playing basketball]. . . . So that social part was the difficult part for me to mesh with. (Interview 3)

Not surprisingly in this context, Pokey was careful around White students and professors, and her strategy was to "just kind of stay in my lane."

Coaching Career

Positions

Pokey began teaching basketball while she was still an undergraduate at LSU when she coached a girls' "10-year-old" team in New Orleans during the summer of 1990. Her second opportunity came in her last semester at LSU in 1991 when she was no longer eligible to play for the university team. Coach Gunter took her on as a student assistant coach. Her initial plan on graduating was to seek employment in an area in which she could use her newly acquired

business management skills. This plan changed, however, when Coach Gunter offered her the opportunity to stay on as a full-time assistant coach at LSU, a position she held from 1992 to 2004:

> I thought I would end up in a really big business, preferably a hotel that offered everything. I wanted to manage people, but it [i.e., assistant coaching] was an opportunity to work with another person who was influential in my life, Coach Gunter, at the school that I had my degree from. And . . . 20 years later I was still there. (Interview 2)

When Coach Gunter retired from LSU in 2004, Pokey became head coach, a position she held until 2007. During her tenure, Pokey's teams won 85% of their games and reached the Final Four of the NCAA end-of-season invitational tournament three times (2004, 2005, 2006). Moreover, Pokey was named coach of the year by the Black Coaches Association (2004, 2005), Louisiana coach of the year (2005, 2006), United States Basketball Writers Association national coach of the year (2005), Southeastern Conference coach of the year (2005), Naismith national coach of the year (2005), and the Women's Basketball Coaches Association national coach of the year (2005). In 2005, Pokey was also one of the assistant coaches of the gold medal–winning U.S. women's basketball team at the World University Games in Izmir, Turkey.

Following her resignation from LSU in 2007, Pokey worked in a number of overlapping roles within Eastern Europe and the United States. Specifically, she was the head coach of the Slovakia national women's team (2008 to 2010) and an assistant coach (2008 to 2009) and the head coach (2009 to 2013) of the Spartak Moscow Region women's basketball club in Vidnoye, Russia, that won the EuroLeague championship in 2010. Pokey also became the first head coach and general manager of the Chicago Sky (2011 to 2016) and the head coach of the Indiana Fever (2016 to 2019) in the WNBA. She had considerable success with both of these American teams, most notably leading the Sky to its first championship game appearance in 2014.

At the time we collected data, Pokey was no longer coaching. Instead, she was making a living as a motivational speaker, working as a scout, and doing some freelance work for different media outlets.

Having established a foundation in Baton Rouge to help people rebuild their houses after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Pokey was also doing some "humanitarian work" for Operation Rebound, Habitat for Humanity, and Mount Zion Baptist Church in her hometown of Ama.

Marginalization

At the beginning of Pokey's coaching career in the early 1990s, some scholars suggested that racism was worse than it had been before the passage of the Civil Rights Act for many African Americans, especially those in the working class (Jones, 1997). Pokey's experiences support this contention. For example, she explained the difficulty in recruiting African American players to LSU when she first started coaching, noting the university was situated in a Deep South state:

> When I was recruiting, people on the west coast didn't want to come to the South because they thought we were 12 years behind the rest of the world. We were archaic. We were racist. I once lost a player because David Duke [a former Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard] was in a runoff for governor [of Louisiana]. Excuse me, the struggle is real. So you've got Black and female [i.e., Pokey's potential player] . . . and then he runs. That's the whole cultural, political, racial thing. It's just screaming to them, [don't come to the Deep South]. (Interview 3)

Another incident that Pokey recalled from early in her career at LSU was a White booster (i.e., an individual who donates money to the university sports program) openly suggesting to one of Pokey's assistants that she "should go . . . recruit some White kids" as opposed to the African American players that had been recruited. Pokey was particularly disturbed by the incident because although the team was successful, the booster was "comfortable enough to say that," and his comment suggested "they [i.e., some White boosters] think it's them against us."

On a more positive note, while Pokey referred to the "barriers" that African American women "[couldn't] get past" in her early years in the coaching profession, and while she explained that

opportunities for female coaches of color were scarce, she was also adamant this state of affairs had improved in the ensuing years:

> It [i.e., racism] was subtle, I would say. So it was just understood, you know? Collegiate ranks back in the day—it was like, you should just be lucky to be here and have this job. . . . But now our blackness and our femaleness has gotten catapulted. Now people want to hire Black females. (Interview 3)

Moreover, Pokey believed that rather than play it "safe," which African American, female coaches had once had to do to survive, they could and should strive to help the next generation:

> [Current African American, female coaches should] navigate and amplify, you know, women of color to the big chair. . . . I pulled a big chair back for somebody to sit in. So we're still fighting for that. . . . We are taught, don't rock the boat. Don't ask for what's yours. Toe the line. (Interview 3)

Finally, Pokey added a note of caution to her story. She noted concerns about political changes in the United States since 2016, particularly the rise in right-wing extremism and of White supremacists, that threatened to negate the progress African Americans had made during her life:

> Just disgusting. Justice matters. How so many people can continue to stick their heads in the proverbial sand is beyond my comprehension. The tomfoolery—racist rhetoric being casually passed off in today's day and age. . . . The tape [showing the attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021] doesn't lie. Take a look. They are domestic terrorists. Period. Yet many folks, along with elected officials, will ignore and/or excuse insurrectionist behavior. . . . It's disgusting and unpatriotic. Yet, Kaepernick [i.e., Colin Kaepernick a former American football player and powerful voice in the Black Lives Matter movement] is still vilified. What a joke. And the energy to suppress our vote is so vile and egregious. The senate won't even vote on an anti-lynching bill, but our [i.e., persons of color] right to vote is being dismantled. And critical race

> theory is being attacked. . . . And that's not my narrative. That's the narrative of the justice department and the FBI [i.e., Federal Bureau of Investigation], and those people who said it's the number one threat. . . . Oftentimes, those Trump loyalists, and people who were acting like January 6 didn't happen, they tend to forget I didn't call that White supremacy. The powers that be, who are mainly White, called it out. . . . And it's just disgusting in 2021. I've had strained relationships because the ugliness and inhumane things that have come up in the last four or five years regarding people in this racial divide. But we're going to be better for it. We're going to conquer it because that's what we do. (Interview 3)

Microaggressions

Pokey also remembered being subjected to a multitude of microaggressions across her career. One example of a microinsult that she found particularly offensive was when White coaches were "telling stories, and they wanted to tell the part of the story that's pertaining to a Black person or a Black coach," they would use "Black dialect." A second microinsult that Pokey recalled vividly was when White persons were surprised that she was "so articulate" and "well spoken":

> One [microinsult] that permeates to this day is the fact that I'm continually told that I'm so articulate. And, obviously, [White] people think they're complimenting you. . . . It's like you expect me not to be able to talk. . . . And I immediately feel that their expectations of me are lower [than for White people]. And it just makes me cringe because those same words aren't used across the board. I think it hurts because . . . you're a Black female from the South. [And] if their expectation of you shrinks, then your opportunity sometimes shrinks. And . . . you end up wowing them because their expectations are so low. (Interview 3)

Pokey also recalled being annoyed by one microinvalidation when working in the WNBA. She explained that the owner of the team expected her to sign a new contract without her and her agent/lawyer "looking it over." The "implication" was that, as an African American female, Pokey could not possibly understand the contract

and that she should implicitly trust the owner to do the right thing. Finally, another incident that clearly still irked Pokey was a good example of the kind of microassaults she faced. In this instance, an official from the LSU athletic department was being interviewed on local television and was asked about an increase in college coaches' salaries in general and in Pokey's salary in particular:

> I can recall the time when I was at LSU . . . the [official was doing] the interview with the reporter . . . about salary and lifting the salary of coaches. And it [i.e., the increase in salary] was in line with Title IX, gender equity, all of that. And I remember [the official] referring to me as "gal." And basically, the gist of it was that the gal should be happy with $400,000. (Interview 3)

Contrasting Experiences in Eastern Europe

Interestingly, Pokey found her treatment during her time coaching in Russia and Slovakia to be more positive than that in the United States in some respects. She described her three years (2008–2011) of living full time and her further two years of working part time (2011–2013) in these countries as "wonderful." She learned a new language and enjoyed coaching a "diverse" group of players who came from an array of cultures. Moreover, rather than marginalizing her, the Russia and Slovakian officials and colleagues with whom she worked "gave [Pokey] confidence because they backed everything [she] did and appreciated [her]." She also found this positive treatment ironic. This was because she was having a difficult time voting by absentee ballot in the 2008 presidential election in her own country in which an African American, Barack Obama, was running:

> Now here I am coaching in Russia [in spite of] all the [disagreements] we have politically with them. But because I'm in sport, I'm so accepted. And I'll tell you this, it was the easiest contract I ever negotiated in my life. . . . [In the United States] we're so used to hearing you as a Black, as a female, you know, begging. I'm supposed to take whatever they give me. But over there they were really good. . . . [Their mentality was] we want your expertise and all that other stuff we don't

care about. We want to be the best. And that was different for me. (Interview 3)

Conclusion

Pokey's counter-story reveals a considerable amount of marginalization and a steady flow of microaggressions throughout her childhood and adolescence, university education, and coaching career, with the exception of the time she spent in Eastern Europe. She was insulated from the racism in the Deep South, to some extent, by the African American community in which she grew up and her teammates at LSU. She was also inspired by her mother, sister, and the head coach at LSU to overcome the racism. Also playing a part in Pokey's eventual success were the opportunities she had to play organized sport at an early age, the love of sport these experiences inculcated, and the work ethic she first developed during a difficult childhood. In her early coaching career, Pokey had to take care not to upset the establishment. Later, she developed something of an activist approach to the profession and became a strong advocate for other women of color who aspired to follow her. This approach also led to her engaging in some humanitarian work. Pokey was mainly optimistic about the future for women of color who joined the coaching ranks. This optimism was tempered to some extent by political changes that had occurred in the United States since 2016.

Pokey's story is inspiring. It should encourage other women of color who have similar ambitions to persist in their efforts to become sports coaches. Indeed, we suggest that as well as learning technical pedagogies, acquiring advanced content knowledge, and studying the natural exercise sciences, students in coach education programs should be required to read and reflect on life histories such as Pokey's. As others such as Rovegno (2003) and Cazers and Curtner-Smith (2013) suggest, Pokey's life history, and others like it, could be employed in efforts to transform the working environments of African American female coaches. Finally, given that the world of coaching is a microcosm of what occurs in other walks of American life, we also suggest that Pokey's story has the potential to inspire and promote reflection among those in other occupations who have little or no interest in sport.

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