Gatekeeping Theory is useful to assess and analyze how and why certain pieces of information pass through “gates” and other pieces of information are rejected. In abstracting Gatekeeping Theory, Shoemaker & Vos (2009) created five levels of study: (a) the individual communication workers (i.e., individuals’ attitudes or gender); (b) the routines or practices of communication work (i.e., deadlines or editing routines); (c) the organization level (i.e., the athletic department); (d) the social institutional level of analysis (i.e., influence from the university, boosters, or community); and (e) the social system level (i.e., variables like ideology and culture).

Thus, the purpose of this research was to explore how and why, from the perspective and experience of the SID, same-sex family narratives get masked and erased in online coaching biographies using semi-structured interviews as the data collection mechanism.

The results of this research show how Gatekeeping Theory is an applicable framework for considering the creation of online coaching biographies and the absence of same-sex family narratives in the medium. The reasons SIDs don’t ask parallel the levels of Gatekeeping Theory. The results of this research provide data that SIDs are complicit actors in this process—they help self-policing, they police themselves, and they reinforce institutionalized and administrative policing. When it comes to family narratives, SIDs participate in a surveillance function that values and promotes conventional arrangements and hides and protects perceived deviance. The results demonstrate that SIDs perceive a same-sex narrative as a threat and make conscious and unconscious decisions to provide protection to coaches, players, programs, and audiences. This research also furnishes information about that moment, process, and content. The results make it appears not only do SIDs not “ask” coaches if they want to include their same-sex family narratives, SIDs also do not think they could or should broach the subject.

With the potential to affect stakeholders and constituents in sport and LBGT communities, this project gives a voice to SIDs, while also raising their attention to a serious issue. The most practical implication of this research is that SIDs will ask a gay or lesbian coach if they want to include their partner included in their biography. Additional practical implication would be neutralizing any heterosexist language that exists in school forms that coaches fill out. Future research should address how SIDs can neutralize their routines and offer opportunities for inclusion of same-sex family narratives in online coaching biographies.

The initial population for this project was the coaches of 45 Division I women’s basketball coaches (N = 45), while the sample represented nearly a third of the total population (n = 14).

Major findings were trifold: (1) SIDs presented similar communication routines when creating online coaching biographies, (2) each level of Gatekeeping Theory was reflected in the content in online coaching biographies, and (3) SIDs explained the absence of same-sex narratives by placing the blame elsewhere and absolving themselves.

In conclusion, the purpose of this research was to explore how and why, from the perspective and experience of the SID, same-sex family narratives get masked and erased in online coaching biographies using semi-structured interviews as the data collection mechanism. The results demonstrated that SIDs perceive a same-sex narrative as a threat and make conscious and unconscious decisions to provide protection to coaches, players, programs, and audiences. This research also furnished information about that moment, process, and content. The results make it appear not only do SIDs not “ask” coaches if they want to include their same-sex family narratives, SIDs also do not think they could or should broach the subject. With the potential to affect stakeholders and constituents in sport and LBGT communities, this project provides a voice to SIDs, while also raising their attention to a serious issue. The most practical implication of this research is that SIDs will ask a gay or lesbian coach if they want to include their partner included in their biography. Additional practical implication would be neutralizing any heterosexist language that exists in school forms that coaches fill out. Future research should address how SIDs can neutralize their routines and offer opportunities for inclusion of same-sex family narratives in online coaching biographies.