Coaching Youth Soccer as a Token Female

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ALL-TIME HIGH

Girls’ Sport Participation

Female Coaches

ALL-TIME LOW
Percent of women's collegiate teams coached by females

(Acosta & Carpenter, 2008)
% of Female Head Coaches of Female Athletes by Level of Competition (2008)
BARRIERS

- Interpersonal
- Intrapersonal
- Environmental
- Structural
- Societal
Why Does it Matter?

• Girls need female role models

• Challenge (and change) gender stereotypes

• Female coaches experience discrimination and sexism
2007-08 MSHSCA head coaches by sex (n = 4945)

Number and % of high school head coaches by sex

- Female coaches: n = 856, 17%
- Male coaches: n = 4089, 83%

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## Highest and lowest % of female head coaches for girls’ teams in MSHSL sports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top three sports with the highest % of female head coaches</th>
<th>Bottom three sports with the lowest % of female head coaches</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Synchronized Swimming:</strong> 100% (n =17/17)</td>
<td><strong>Girls’ Basketball:</strong> 13.7% (n=90/656)</td>
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<td><strong>Girls’ Track:</strong> 60% (n =36/60)</td>
<td><strong>Girls’ Softball:</strong> 20.9% (n =90/430)</td>
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<td><strong>Girls’ Cross Country:</strong> 51.1% (n= 23/45)</td>
<td><strong>Girls’ Soccer:</strong> 30.1% (n = 60/194)</td>
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</table>
% Female High School Soccer Coaches in Minnesota (2007-08)

Girls' Teams
- Female Coaches: 30.1%
- Male Coaches: 69.9%

Boys' Teams
- Female Coaches: 2.7%
- Male Coaches: 97.3%
LaVoi (2009). Occupational Sex Segregation in a Youth Soccer Organization: Females in Positions of Power

- Kanter (1977)
  - Tokenism & Marginalization
- $N = 5683$
  - Head Coaches ($N=2048$)
  - Assistant Coaches ($N=1499$)
  - Team Managers ($N=2136$)
- Sex of Coach, Sex of Athlete, Age Group, Competitive Level
Figure 1. Percentage of females in positions of power in organized youth soccer by age level for boys’ and girls’ teams combined.

LaVoi (2009)
Figure 2. Percentage of females in positions of power in organized youth soccer by competitive level for boys’ and girls’ teams combined.

LaVoi (2009)
Percentage of female Head Coaches for girls’ youth soccer teams by age group

LaVoi (2009)
Key Points: Study #1

• Females are under-represented
• Female coaches are “tokens”
• Females are marginalized
• Clear gendered division of labor
The Glass Ceiling
(Messner, 2009)

- Overt sexism
- Men’s domination of playing spaces with body and voice
- Surveillance & challenges to authority of female coaches
- Internalized beliefs about appropriate level
…this is why I’m not going to be coaching my older one competitively anymore. He’s now 13 and we’re at a point that two things, he is at a point where, like I mentioned the coaches have been the one who were the most educated, experience coaching wise…he needs a far higher level of coaching than what I can provide. That’s one reason, the second reason is we’re at the age level for him, that in order to sustain a good child-parent relationship I need to back away from being a coach of him as well.
The Glass Ceiling
(Messner, 2009)

- Overt sexism
- Men’s domination of playing spaces with body and voice
- Surveillance & challenges to authority of female coaches
- Internalized beliefs about appropriate level
- **Existence of old boys’ networks**
What is the impact of the sex of decision makers on the prevalence of female youth sport coaches?
Becker & LaVoi (in progress)

- Homologous Reproduction
- Online Survey
- N = 34 decision-makers
  - n = 28 male, n = 6 female
  - 741 Head Coaches,
    - 18% (n = 133) female
- 100% White
Results: Study 2

- Homologous Reproduction did not occur
  - $\chi^2 (1, N = 740) = 0.47, p > .492$

- Female decision-makers are tokens (17%)

- Female decision makers are marginalized
  - # coaches appointed
    - FemDM ($M = 15.2$)
    - MaleDM ($M = 23.2$)
Explaining Lack of Homologous Reproduction

- Conformity
  - Adopt dominant decision making patterns

- Exceptional skill & ability
Females are under-represented as decision-makers, thus providing little opportunity for females to challenge the current gender hierarchy in the youth soccer organization.
LaVoi & Leberman (in progress)

- $N = 24$ youth soccer mothers
- In-depth, semi-structured interviews
- Motivations, perceived barriers, challenges, experiences, & beliefs about coaching, roles negotiation
Leberman & LaVoi (in press).

Juggling Balls and Roles, Working Mother-Coaches in Youth Sport.

- Role conflict v. role enhancement
- Negotiation: Triad of roles
- Transference of skills
Strategies Handout

Mother-Coach Generated Strategies for Increasing Female Coaches in Youth Sport
Future Directions

• Ambivalent Sexism
• Qualitative investigation of gendered decision making processes
• National Longitudinal Survey
• Education & Empowerment
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