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Abstract

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Coach Like a Girl: U.S. Collegiate Athletes' Views of Women as Coaches

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In this paper, we report opinions of collegiate student athletes regarding coaching competence, sexist attitudes, and acceptance of women coaches for men's sports among collegiate athletes. Analyses of quantitative data from 115 collegiate athlete respondents (male and female athletes, including softball, basketball, track and field, cross country, golf, soccer, baseball, and football) at a public, Division I, Midwestern university in the U.S. showed sexist views regarding sport leadership were commonly expressed by all gender athletes, with athletes identifying as men more negative in their beliefs about women coaches and leaders of athletic teams. This topic is of central concern because athletes, while relatively powerless, comprise the largest group in collegiate athletics, and evidence of sexism reflective of a preference for male coaches, consistent with hegemonic masculinity-dominant culture, indicates an overall culture unwilling to give female coaches a fair chance (in general, and especially as coaches of male athletes). Implications for progressive reform of collegiate athletics and relevance to larger cultural changes regarding women and sport are discussed.

Keywords: glass wall, hegemonic masculinity, women head coaches, collegiate sports coaching, athletes' perspectives