Who Is Coaching High School Girls’ Sport Teams?
Angela Lumpkin
University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS

Judy Favor
Kansas State University-Olathe, Olathe, KS

Lacole McPherson
University of Minnesota-Crookston, Crookston, MN

ABSTRACT

While the number of high school girls’ teams has dramatically increased since Title IX, the number of female head coaches has not. In the 10 most popular high school sports in 2011-2012, only three (volleyball, swimming and diving, and competitive spirit squads) had more than 44% female head coaches. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether females or males are coaching high school girls’ sport teams and whether female coaches are attaining head coaching positions in the most popular high school girls’ sports. Additionally, the study sought to understand better why males and females choose to become head coaches of high school girls’ sport teams and what factors might cause head high school girls’ coaches to resign from coaching. In the 21–30 age group, there were more female than male head coaches of girls’ teams, but after age 40, male head coaches vastly outnumbered female head coaches. Of the coaches with 12 or more years of experience, only 33% were females. Time away from family, player issues, inadequate compensation, and time away from other activities were the top reasons high school coaches might resign.

Key Words: interscholastic, athletics, coaches, sex
Who Is Coaching High School Girls’ Sport Teams?

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 requires equal opportunity in all educational programs for both sexes. As a direct result of this law, public schools throughout the United States began to offer or greatly expanded the number of teams for girls. In the 1971-1972 school year, for example, 294,015 girls were playing on high school sport teams; by 2011-2012 the number of girls participating in high school sports had risen to 3,207,533 (National Federation of State High School Associations, 2012). This dramatic increase in the number of high school participation opportunities for females resulted in the need for thousands of new coaches. Because females were coaching the few high school girls’ sport teams that existed (Sisley & Capel, 1986; True, 1986, 1987), many assumed that female coaches would step into these new coaching opportunities. Instead, there has been a downward trend in the percentage of females coaching high school girls’ sport teams. Acosta and Carpenter (2012) have examined college sport teams across the United States for over 30 years and found an overall steady decline in the percentage of females coaching women’s intercollegiate athletic teams. Although there have been no longitudinal, comprehensive studies like Acosta and Carpenter’s at the high school level, limited evidence suggests that the percentage of females coaching high school girls’ sport teams is decreasing as well.

Researchers investigating high school sports have offered several possible reasons for the decline in percentage of female coaches, including lack of interest in coaching among females (True, 1986, 1987), perceptions among hiring officials that males are more qualified to coach than females (Everhart & Chelladuria, 1998; Lovett & Lowry, 1994; True, 1986), lack of role models (Bradford & Keshock, 2009; Dixon & Bruening, 2007; LaVoi, 2009), females dropping out of coaching due to family responsibilities (Dixon & Bruening, 2007; Knoppers, 1987; Pastore, 1991; Sisley & Capel, 1986), effectiveness of the “old boys’ club” and the lack or ineffectiveness of the “good old girls’ club” (Lovett & Lowry, 1994), male domination of sports (Dixon & Bruening, 2007), and prejudicial hiring by mostly male high school athletic directors and principals who selected individuals like themselves (Delano, 1990; Hart, Hasbrook, & Mathes, 1986; Lovett & Lowry, 1994). However, there are limited empirical data to support these hypothesized reasons.

Furthermore, few studies have examined the educational preparation, experience, and satisfaction of high school girls’ coaches by sex or evaluated the reasons coaches might choose to discontinue coaching high school girls’ sport teams. The purpose of the present study was to begin filling this void by examining the sex, educational background, licensure status, experience level, and satisfaction of coaches of high school girls’ sport teams. Additionally, the present study examined the sex of individuals who selected high school girls’ coaches and explored key factors that might influence coaches to resign from coaching. Specifically, the authors sought to answer the following research questions: (1) Are fewer females than males head coaches of high school girls’ sport teams? (2) Are there differences in qualifications or experience between male and female head coaches of high school girls’ sport teams? (3) Do the percentages of female and male head coaches of girls’ teams vary by sport? (4) Are the individuals responsible for selecting...
Are Fewer Females than Males Head Coaches of High School Girls’ Sport Teams?

In the early 1980s, True (1986) examined a national sample of state directories of coaches and found drastic declines in the percentage of females coaching high school girls’ sport teams. Between 1971-1972 and 1984-1985, True reported that the percentages of high school girls’ sport teams coached by females decreased from 89% to 38% in Colorado, 100% to 52% in Illinois, 69% to 33% in Kansas, 55% to 37% in Minnesota, 48% to 30% in Nebraska, 96% to 40% in Ohio, 92% to 42% in Virginia, 85% to 32% in Washington, and 100% to 41% in Wisconsin. As possible reasons for these decreases, True suggested increases in the number of teams, females leaving coaching, equal pay for coaches of girls’ teams as for boys’ teams, not enough females choosing careers in teaching and coaching due to the availability of more prestigious and financially rewarding professions, less societal acceptance of females as coaches, and societal attitudes that female coaches still were expected to fulfill most family responsibilities. In a later study, True (1987) examined the percentages of schools offering girls’ teams and who was coaching these teams in three states. She found that between 1973 and 1985, Illinois, Virginia, and Washington had average increases of 63% in the number of high school girls’ sport teams and average decreases of 55% in the percentage of females coaching these teams.

Other studies also have reported on the sex of coaches of high school girls’ sport teams, but most have been single-state studies conducted in the 1980s and 1990s. For example, Chesbro (1985) found the percentage of females coaching girls’ sports in Illinois had been declining, and by the early 1990s, Wilkinson and Schneider (1991) reported that females were coaching only 54% of high school girls’ sport teams in Illinois. Stangl and Kane (1991) reported declines in the percentage of high school female coaches in Ohio from 93% in 1974-1975 to 43% in 1981-1982 to 33% in 1988-1989.

Are There Differences in Qualifications or Experience Between Male and Female Head Coaches of High School Girls’ Sport Teams?

Authors have been speculating for decades about reasons for the declining percentage of females coaching female sports. Delano (1990) suggested there was a lower percentage of females coaching high school girls’ sport teams due to perceptions that females lacked qualifications, experience, and technical expertise; internalized sex-role stereotypes; failed to apply for positions; made choices to prioritize family responsibilities over coaching; and faced
role conflict. She argued that these internal explanations ignored external factors and led to blaming the victim.

In addition to perceptions of being less qualified or experienced, some authors have argued that the “good old boys’ club” has caused a decrease in female coaches. For example, Acosta and Carpenter (1985) identified the success of the “good old boys’ club” as the most important cause and the weakness of the “good old girls’ club” as the third most important cause for the diminishing role of women in intercollegiate athletics. At the high school level, not as many females may be coaching because of the success of the “good old boys’ club,” perceptions that females were unqualified or lacked experience, the failure of the “good old girls’ club,” and discrimination resulting in lack of enough female coaches to serve as role models for adolescent female athletes (Delano, 1990; Everhart & Chelladuria, 1998; Knoppers, 1987; LaVoi, 2009; Lovett & Lowry, 1994; True, 1986; Wilkinson & Schneider, 1991).

Sex stereotypes and other sociological and organizational barriers in sport may also limit female coaches, regardless of their qualifications or experience. According to Kamphoff and Gill (2013), sex differences have persistently pervaded sports, and the coaching profession has often been non-welcoming for females. These inequalities and power struggles regarding sex have persisted in sports as well as in society, with coaching continuing to be viewed as men’s work. These authors suggested that males, more than females, were welcomed into social conversational networks and more likely to be promoted through the “good old boys’ club.” Furthermore, some female coaches experienced conflicts with motherhood and family responsibilities, they chose these as priorities over their coaching duties. As a result, they received fewer resources and felt less administrative support; sometimes they were assigned more responsibilities while receiving lower salaries. Not surprisingly, they often dropped out of coaching (Kamphoff & Gill, 2013).

After an extensive review of literature, LaVoi and Dutove (2012) used an ecological model to categorize barriers and supports for female coaches. They identified as supports, on the individual level, the continued involvement in sports, interest in coaching, job stimulation, skills and knowledge, desire to stay in coaching, being single, and not having children. They cited, as barriers on the individual level, low perceived confidence and perceptions of competence; lack of assertiveness, self-efficacy, skills, knowledge, and experience; time commitment required of coaches; strains on family and personal lives; feelings of being undervalued and underpaid; limited upward mobility; stress; and burnout. Females stated as positive interpersonal factors an informal network of other coaches; support from a parent, spouse, or partner; and interactions with and respect from athletes. Interpersonal barriers included lack of encouragement or cooperation from significant others, isolation from other coaches, a nonexistent “good old girls’ club” yet pervasive “good old boys’ club,” lack of female role models, harassment from male coaches, negative interactions with players, and lack of respect. Females experienced few supports, at the organizational and structural level, other than occasional family-friendly policies and a minority of females in power positions. In contrast, the male-dominated and masculine nature of sport marginalized females, and many males viewed them as intruders. Consequently,
females were feeling discouraged, lacking opportunities for professional development and mentoring, facing work-life challenges, seldom receiving positive feedback or recognition, facing tokenism, and being relegated to coaching less prestigious sports. Socioculturally, when females were supported, it was most often in nurturing roles and coaching children. Barriers facing female coaches at the sociocultural level included masculine hegemony and male-dominant ideologies and stereotypes (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012).

Do the Percentages of Female and Male Head Coaches of Girls’ Teams Vary by Sport?

In Ohio high schools in the 1970s and 1980s, Kane and Stangl (1991) found that females were significantly more likely to coach less prestigious sports, such as cross-country, gymnastics, and tennis. Sisley and Capel (1986) found similar results in Oregon; there 17% of the coaches of high school boys’ and girls’ teams were females, and they most frequently coached tennis (51%) and volleyball (77%). More recently, research at the Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport (2009) found that female high school coaches in Minnesota were more likely to coach sports historically appropriate for females, such as synchronized swimming (100%), volleyball (70%), and gymnastics (69%). According to Whisenant (2008), sport sex-typing may be one reason for this disparity. Sport sex-typing categorizes many sports, such as basketball, as masculine, several as neutral, and a few as feminine, such as cheerleading. With sport sex-typing, males are often perceived as capable of coaching all sports and females are often hired to coach only “feminine” sports.

Bruening, Dixon, Burton, and Madsen (2013) proposed several reasons for the decline in female coaches in specific sports. One possible reason was the continuation of the power and privilege of males who may have chosen not to hire females to coach or support them as coaches. Persistent sociocultural attitudes often created barriers for females entering and working in male-dominated careers in sports. The abundance of same-sex mentors available for male coaches due to the “good old boys’ club” and virtual absence of same-sex mentors for female coaches was another factor that might be affecting the percentage of female coaches in specific sports. A lack of same-sex mentors for female coaches could influence the overall organizational structure and culture, causing additional challenges to work-life balance for females, especially those with children. As a result, Bruening et al. (2013) suggested that many females choose family over coaching. In essence, these authors posited that women were choosing not to enter or were prematurely exiting the coaching profession, not because they were less competitive or had not attempted to build support networks, but because the structure and culture of coaching made it extremely difficult to survive and thrive.

Are the Individuals Responsible for Selecting Head Coaches of High School Girls’ Sport Teams More Likely to Hire Coaches of the Same Sex?

Stangl and Kane (1991) analyzed the sex of high school athletic directors in Ohio and found that the percentage of high school male athletic directors over a 15-year period (1974–1989) was 92–94%. They reported that a significantly higher percentage of female head coaches...
was employed by female athletic directors during the three time periods investigated and concluded that females’ opportunities to coach were limited with so few females in power positions. In her examination of sex segregation in a youth soccer organization, LaVoi (2009) affirmed that female coaches were marginalized, underrepresented in positions of power, and viewed as tokens when associated with boys’ teams and at the highest level of girls’ teams.

Several other researchers (Bruening & Dixon, 2008; Chesbro, 1985; Greenhill, Auld, Cuskelly, & Hooper, 2009; Norman, 2010; Whisenant, 2003, 2005, 2008) have claimed that the predominance of male athletic directors in high schools perpetuates a gendered culture and hegemonic masculinity. For example, Norman (2010) suggested masculine hegemony caused female coaches to experience relative powerlessness, especially because most male athletic directors may have believed males were naturally superior to females as coaches.

In their examination of the administrative structures in over 1,100 public secondary schools in Texas, Lovett and Lowry (1994) found significant differences among four administrative models with regard to the sexes of head coaches. They reported that female athletic directors and female principals hired a significantly higher percentage of female coaches than did male athletic directors, thus leading them to attribute the decline in percentage of female coaches since the enactment of Title IX to effectiveness of the “good old boys’ club.”

More recently, in a review of 134 job announcements for interscholastic athletic administrators in Texas, Whisenant (2005) found that 77% of the announcements stated that the person hired also would need to serve as coach of a boys’ sport. Especially disconcerting was that 97 of the 134 job announcements stated that the person hired would have to serve as head football coach. These types of dual-sport job announcements may prevent qualified females from applying.

Do Male and Female Head Coaches Choose to Coach High School Girls’ Sport Teams for Different Reasons?

Both current and former high school female coaches in Montana cited love of sports as the most common reason for entering the coaching profession (Weiss & Stevens, 1993). The authors reported that both groups believed that benefits associated with program success and continued involvement with athletics outweighed costs related to time demands, lack of support, and self-perceptions of low competence. Hart et al. (1986) found that coaches chose to coach and continued to coach because they valued maintaining involvement with athletics, enjoyed competition and the challenge of winning, and enjoyed working with motivated and more skillful athletes. The top four reasons for entering the coaching profession for both sexes, according to Pastore (1991), were (1) remaining associated with athletics, (2) working with advanced and motivated athletes, (3) becoming role models, and (4) helping female athletes reach their potential. Coaches, according to Bruening and Dixon (2007), believed autonomy in managing their time was a highly desirable aspect of coaching that could contribute to achieving a balance
between their careers and families. This could benefit male coaches as well, even though work-family conflict typically has been viewed as a women’s issue.

What Factors Might Influence Head Coaches of High School Girls’ Sport Teams to Leave Coaching, and Do These Factors Differ by Sex?

Several reasons have been proposed for why females exit the coaching profession. Hart et al. (1986) hypothesized that females dropping out of coaching may be due to role conflict; time demands of coaching, teaching, and family duties; incomplete occupational socialization through the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and values associated with being a coach; and discriminatory treatment such as pay inequities and less administrative support. The authors (Hart et al, 1986) found that former coaches left the profession because of time and role conflicts with personal lives, while current coaches indicated they would leave coaching if they were ineffective or not successful. These differences signaled different occupational socialization experiences. Neither former nor current coaches indicated that discriminatory practices led them to leave coaching or would influence decisions about continuing to coach.

Lovett and Lowry (1994) postulated that some females left coaching due to perceiving they lacked technical expertise and experience, while other females may have prioritized fulfilling family responsibilities over coaching. Kilty (2006) identified four external and four internal barriers to professional opportunities for female coaches. The external barriers were unequal assumption of competence, homologous reproduction, homophobia, and lack of female mentors. The internal barriers were perfectionism, lack of assertiveness, inhibition in promotion of accomplishments, and high stress of balancing work and life. Bruening and Dixon (2007) reported that turnover was an inevitable outcome of role conflict for female intercollegiate coaches who left the coaching profession to spend more time with their families. These authors also questioned the long-term impact of the coaching profession on males and females due to work-family conflict.

The large percentage of males coaching high school girls’ sport teams may serve to further reinforce sex-role stereotypes in sports. Knoppers (1987) explored how opportunity, power, and proportion in the coaching profession affected females entering and leaving the profession. Knoppers described opportunity as “the shape of one’s career ladder, perceived obstacles and satisfaction, access to training, and availability and type of feedback” (p. 13). She conjectured that coaching could be perceived as a dead-end career for females, given males’ overall domination of sports, and suggested that opportunities for females in sports have been thwarted by sexual harassment, homophobia, time and role conflicts between coaching and family responsibilities, negative attitudes toward them such as occupational stereotyping, and lack of feedback (which adversely affected self-esteem, limited career aspirations, and threatened survival in the coaching ranks). She concluded that female coaches often were not perceived as equals, experienced occupational stereotyping, and were viewed as tokens.
The position of head coach has been considered “the most visible position of power and prestige throughout the sports world” (Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport, 2009, p. 3). It is posited that a lack of female role models in the power position of head coach perpetuates a relative scarcity of female coaches for many high school girls’ sport teams. Researchers at the Tucker Center concluded that female coaches may have devalued their abilities, demonstrated less self-efficacy, accepted negative stereotypes, failed to reach their potential, and limited their career aspirations in sports, making them less likely to become coaches.

In summary, it appears that some of the same factors identified by Acosta and Carpenter (1985) over 25 years ago in intercollegiate athletics may have trickled down to the high school level. The limited recent research suggests that a lower percentage of females than males may be coaching high school girls’ sport teams, resulting in a decrease of females serving as role models for girls who might aspire to become coaches. Further, the pervasiveness of males coaching high school girls’ sport teams may be attributed to the successful “good old boys’ club,” time demands for fulfilling family responsibilities experienced by females, role conflict and persistent stereotyping, or other social and psychological factors negatively affecting females. The paucity of recent data regarding the status of female coaches, their professional preparation, and reasons they might leave coaching supports the need for a multistate study to explore further who is coaching high school girls’ sport teams.

The purpose of the present study was to examine whether females or males are coaching high school girls’ sport teams and whether female coaches are attaining head coaching positions in the most popular high school girls’ sports in the United States. Additionally, the authors wanted to gain a better understanding of why males and females choose to become head coaches of high school girls’ sport teams and what factors might cause high school coaches to leave a position coaching girls’ sport teams.

Better understanding of the percentage of females who are coaching high school girls’ sport teams, the sports they coach, and the reasons they enter or might leave the coaching profession is valuable for several reasons. First, if there are fewer females entering or continuing in coaching, there are fewer same-sex role models for adolescent girls, which may influence whether they might pursue a career in coaching. Second, if most females are hired to coach less prestigious sport teams or teams traditionally associated with females, it could send a negative message about career opportunities for females. Third, if the reasons why females choose to coach can be clearly identified, these factors can be reinforced to encourage more females to enter and continue coaching. Fourth, if the reasons why females might choose to leave coaching can be clearly identified, these issues potentially could be ameliorated.
Methods

Participants

Participation was solicited by emailing executive directors of the 50 state high school athletic associations, plus the District of Columbia, in the United States via contact information on the state association website and requesting their assistance with the study in one of two ways: (1) providing email addresses for high school athletic directors in their states, or (2) forwarding an email message containing a survey link to high school athletic directors in their states with a request to send the link to head coaches of girls’ teams in their schools.

Sixteen executive directors agreed to collaborate on the study. Six executive directors provided lists of high school athletic directors in their states. Each athletic director on these six lists (N = 2,015) received an email message that included a link to the survey and a request to forward the email to each head coach of a high school girls’ sport team. Ten executive directors agreed to forward the authors’ email message and survey link to high school athletic directors in their states. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and all participating coaches read an informed consent statement as required by the institution’s Human Subjects Committee before completing the survey. The electronic Qualtrics survey site was open for four weeks.

Head coaches of high school girls’ sport teams who participated in the study (N = 3,910) represented 16 states (Alaska, n = 60; Arkansas, n = 84; Kansas, n = 458; Kentucky, n = 126; Maryland, n = 449; Nebraska, n = 259; New Hampshire, n = 92; North Carolina, n = 536; North Dakota, n = 153; South Carolina, n = 119; Tennessee, n = 159; Vermont, n = 72; Virginia, n = 486; Washington, n = 315; Wisconsin, n = 456; Wyoming, n = 86). Participants were 48% female, 52% male, and 90% Caucasian. High school girls’ sport team head coaches were distributed in the following age groups: 21–30 (n = 927, 24%); 31–40 (n = 1,006, 26%); 41-50 (n = 1,011, 26%); 51–60 (n = 759, 20%); 61 or over (n = 189, 5%). Seventy-six percent of participants were licensed or certified teachers in their states, 44% held at least a bachelor’s degree, and 43% had earned a master’s degree.

Instrument Development

Because no existing survey appropriately examined the research questions we sought to explore, the authors developed an electronic survey instrument. Initially, 12 potential questions were designed by the first author and distributed to two colleagues for feedback regarding survey content and item clarity: (1) a former high school and college coach; and (2) a veteran school district administrator. This feedback resulted in elimination of one item and addition of items addressing licensure of coaches, age, gender of the person who selected the coach, satisfaction coaching girls, and reasons for coaching girls’ teams.

The final 15-item instrument included 4 demographic questions (about sex, ethnicity, highest degree earned, and age group) and 11 content items (See Appendix 1). Thirteen items
utilized a simple check-box response method. For example, coaches checked their state, whether or not a teaching license or certificate had been earned, whether they were a varsity or junior varsity head coach, and the sport(s) coached. Coaches also checked the role and sex of the person who selected them as a head coach of a high school girls’ sport team from a list of choices that included high school athletic director, high school principal, high school superintendent, or other. Coaches also checked how many years of paid experience they had attained as a high school head varsity or junior varsity coach from response choices of 1–2 years, 3–5 years, 6–8 years, 9–11 years, 12–15 years, 16–19 years, 20–24 years, 25–29 years, and 30 or more years.

Using a 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree, coaches identified their levels of agreement with five potential reasons for coaching high school girls’ sport teams: (1) I wanted to coach, and no positions coaching boys were available; (2) coaching a high school girls’ sport team is an easy way to supplement my income; (3) my teaching contract included coaching a sport; (4) I wanted to coach a high school girls’ sport; and (5) I wanted to teach values and important life lessons to adolescents. Coaches used the same 5-point Likert scale to rate their level of agreement with the statement “I thoroughly enjoy coaching a high school girls’ sport team.” Because coaching satisfaction can depend on performance and intrateam dynamics, coaches were asked to consider their overall agreement with coaching a girls’ team rather than evaluating their current or most recent team.

To gain insights into potential reasons why head high school coaches might resign from coaching a girls’ team, coaches were asked to identify, from a list of 10 potential reasons, the top three reasons they might resign. Potential responses included those commonly cited in the literature, including time away from family, inadequate compensation, lack of administrative support, tired of dealing with parents and players, and pressure to win. Coaches also were provided an opportunity to select “other” and write in a response.

Research Design and Data Analysis

Because few multistate studies have been completed recently, the present study sought representation from head coaches of high school girls’ teams in as many states and as many sports as possible to gain a better overall understanding of who was coaching high school girls’ sport teams in the United States. Thus, a cross-sectional, self-administered, electronic survey design was utilized (Creswell, 2003).

A total of 4,701 survey responses were received. Before data analysis, responses were analyzed for inclusion in the study. Because gender analysis was an important aspect of the study, responses from 11 individuals who did not identify their sex were excluded. Responses from junior varsity head coaches ($N = 780$) were also excluded, resulting in 3,910 usable surveys.

For each research question, descriptive analyses by sex of the head coach were calculated. To determine whether the percentages of female and male head coaches varied by
sport, the 10 most popular (defined as number of teams) high school girls’ sports were identified using participation data from the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS, 2012). Because written comments made by many head coaches indicated the apparent use of two different sport categorizations (cheerleading and competitive spirit squad) meaning nearly the same thing, respondents who reported being head coaches for cheerleading were combined with those who reported being head coaches for competitive spirit squads for data analysis.

Nearly 300 coaches reported coaching two or more sports. To ensure a nonduplicative head count, only the sport ranked highest according to the 2011-2012 NFHS 10 most popular sports for high school girls was included in calculations of head coaches by sport and sex. Coaches were not double-counted if they coached a second or third sport. For example, if a coach reported coaching basketball, softball, and cross-country, he or she was included in the head-count calculations for basketball only, because basketball was the top-ranked high school girls’ sport according to the 2011-2012 NFHS data.

A series of binary logistic regression analyses using the Enter Method and a .05 significance level was conducted to determine whether differences between male and female head coaches were statistically significant on research questions four, five, and six. To evaluate whether individuals responsible for selecting head coaches of high school girls’ sport teams were more likely to hire coaches of the same sex, the sex of the person who hired the coach served as the predictor variable, and the sex of the head coach served as the dependent variable in the logistic regression.

Before analyzing whether male and female head coaches chose to coach high school girls’ sport teams for different reasons, Likert responses of strongly disagree or disagree were combined into one variable and recoded as “0” and responses of agree or strongly agree were combined into one variable and recoded as “1.” Respondents who chose “neither disagree nor agree” were excluded from the logistic regression analysis. Whether coaches disagreed or agreed with each statement served as the dependent variable, and sex of coach served as the predictor variable.

To evaluate whether there were significant differences in the reasons male and female coaches might resign from coaching a high school girls’ sport team, responses that were checked were considered as “yes” responses and coded as “1” and those not checked were considered as “no” responses and coded as “0.” For each of the 10 potential reasons coaches could mark, the “yes/no” responses served as the dependent variable, and the sex of coach served as the predictor variable in the logistic regression analysis.

In addition to the 10 potential reasons provided, respondents had the option to select “Other” and write in a response. Six hundred thirty-one coaches selected this option and provided written comments. A three-step process was used to analyze these responses. First, each author conducted an independent content analysis of each written response and assigned each
response to an organizational category (Maxwell, 2005). This individual author analysis resulted in 30 categories ranging from desire to coach at the college level to retirement to lack of interest from girls. Next, the first two authors analyzed the 30 independently created categories to identify similarities and discrepancies in naming conventions. When discrepancies existed in where the three authors had placed an individual comment, the first and second authors reanalyzed the written comment verbatim and reached an agreement about which category most appropriately described the content of the response. When the meaning of the written response was unclear or the authors could not reach consensus, the response was excluded. This analysis resulted in 15 categories, each with at least 10 written responses. In the final step of the coding process, the first and second author grouped responses into six thematic areas of responses: career-related, player-related, personal-related, support-related, miscellaneous, and would not resign.

Results

The results are aligned with each of the original research questions.

(1) Are Fewer Females than Males Head Coaches of High School Girls’ Sport Teams,
(2) Are There Differences in Qualifications or Experience Between Male and Female Head Coaches of High School Girls’ Sport Teams?

Head coaches of high school girls’ sport teams in this study were 48% female and 52% male. Females constituted larger percentages of head coaches in the younger age groups and lower percentages in the older age groups. As shown in Table 1 and Figure 1, in the 21–30 age group, 74% were females. Among head coaches ages 31–40, 50% were female; by the 51–60 age group, 28% were females.

Table 1. 
Head Coaches of High School Girls’ Sport Teams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21–30 years old</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>682</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31–40 years old</td>
<td>1006</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41–50 years old</td>
<td>1011</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51–60 years old</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 years old or older</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 3,892; n = 1,857 females; n = 2,035 males.
There were no notable differences in academic preparation between male and female head coaches. Among female head coaches, 42% had a master’s degree, 46% had a bachelor’s degree, 5% had an associate degree, and 5% had a high school diploma. For male coaches, 43% had a master’s degree, 42% had a bachelor’s degree, 4% had an associate degree, and 6% had a high school diploma. Academic credentials above a master’s degree were held by 3% of female coaches and 4% of male coaches.

Overall, female coaches had fewer years of paid coaching experience than males. Among coaches with 1–2 years of paid experience, 60% were females. At the 3–5 years of experience level, 55% of respondents were females. As shown in Table 2, among more experienced coaches (over 12 years of experience), male coaches outnumbered female coaches in all experience categories.
Table 2.
Total Years of Paid Experience as a Head Coach by Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1–2</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3–5</td>
<td>943</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6–8</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9–11</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12–15</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16–19</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20–24</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25–29</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 or more years</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 3,861; n = 1,847 females; n = 2,014 males.

(3) Do the Percentages of Female and Male Head Coaches of Girls’ Teams Vary by Sport?

As Table 3 shows, females held fewer head coaching positions than males in 7 of the 10 most popular girls’ sports: basketball (34%), track and field (34%), softball (39%), cross-country (43%), soccer (30%), tennis (41%), and golf (22%). Only competitive spirit squads (99%), swimming and diving (57%), and volleyball (77%) had higher percentages of female than male coaches.

Table 3.
Top Ten Most Popular High School Girls’ Sports by Sex of Head Coach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Female Coaches</th>
<th>Male Coaches</th>
<th>Percentage of Female Coaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Track and Field (outdoor)</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Softball (fast pitch)</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cross-Country</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1141</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Swimming and Diving</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Competitive Spirit Squads</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Nonduplicative head count of top 10 most popular high school girls’ sports from the National Federation of State High School Associations, 2011-2012.
Are the Individuals Responsible for Selecting Head Coaches of Girls’ High School Sport Teams More Likely to Hire Coaches of the Same Sex?

Athletic directors (65%), principals (23%), or superintendents (6%) individually or in some combination selected 94% of the coaches of high school girls’ sport teams. Of these selectors, 85% were male (see Table 4). Females constituted 12% of athletic directors, 22% of high school principals, and 1% of superintendents. A binary logistic regression was used to determine whether female head coaches were more likely to get hired by female selectors, and it showed no significant differences. For female head coaches, 47% were hired by male selectors, and 50% were hired by female selectors.

Table 4.
Role and Sex of People Who Selected Head Coaches of High School Girls’ Sport Teams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of Selector</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school athletic director</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>2,214</td>
<td>2,509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school principal</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>713</td>
<td>910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school superintendent</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>3,304</td>
<td>3,874</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex of Head Coach</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>1,565</td>
<td>1,852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>1,740</td>
<td>2,034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>3,305</td>
<td>3,876</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Unduplicated head count of coaches.

In the top 10 most popular sports, 45% of female coaches were selected by males while 47% of the female head coaches were selected by females. As shown in Table 5, over 50% of the male coaches in basketball, track and field, soccer, tennis, and golf were hired by male selectors.
Table 5. 
*Sex of Head Coaches and Sex of Selectors by Sport*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Total Number of Teams</th>
<th>Female Coach Total</th>
<th>Female Coach Percent</th>
<th>Male Coach Total</th>
<th>Male Coach Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female Selector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male Selector</td>
<td></td>
<td>199</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Track and Field (outdoor)</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female Selector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male Selector</td>
<td></td>
<td>143</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female Selector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male Selector</td>
<td></td>
<td>366</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Softball (fast pitch)</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female Selector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male Selector</td>
<td></td>
<td>148</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cross-Country</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female Selector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male Selector</td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female Selector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male Selector</td>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female Selector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male Selector</td>
<td></td>
<td>80</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female Selector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male Selector</td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Swimming and Diving</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female Selector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male Selector</td>
<td></td>
<td>94</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Competitive Spirit Squads</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female Selector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male Selector</td>
<td></td>
<td>147</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3573</td>
<td>1,626</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>1,947</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The top ten most popular sports based on number of teams are from the National Federation of State High School Associations, although the number of teams for respondents in the 16 states in this study differs slightly.
(5) Do Male and Female Head Coaches Choose to Coach High School Girls’ Sport Teams for Different Reasons?

Table 6 shows the percentages of female and male coaches who agreed with each potential reason for coaching high school girls’ sports and the logistic regression coefficient, Wald test, significance, and odds ratio. Only 1% of females and 4% of males agreed they coached a high school girls’ sport team because their contract required it, while 99% of females and 98% of males reported that they wanted to teach values and important life lessons to adolescents. Binary logistic analyses revealed no significant differences between male and female head coaches in these reasons for coaching.

Table 6.
Reasons for Coaching High School Girls’ Sport Teams by Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Female Agree</th>
<th>Male Agree</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp. (B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wanted to coach/no boys’ teams available.</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>-1.28</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>48.18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy way to supplement my income.</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>97.22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching contract included coaching a sport.</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.206</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanted to coach high school girls.</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>45.34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanted to teach values and life lessons.</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.179</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.672</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 3,123 to 3,774; p < .05.

Three percent of female coaches and nine percent of male coaches agreed they coached a girls’ team because they wanted to coach and no positions coaching boys’ sport teams were available. Binary logistic regression showed that male coaches were 72% more likely to agree with this item than were female coaches.

Over twice as many females (25%) as males (12%) agreed that coaching a girls’ sport team was an easy way to supplement their income, and binary logistic regression analysis affirmed that female coaches were 1.6 times more likely than male coaches to agree with this item. More female coaches (97%) than male (91%) agreed with the statement “I wanted to coach a high school girls’ sport.” Binary logistic regression analysis confirmed that females were 2 times more likely to agree with this item than were male coaches. A large number of male coaches chose the neutral response on this item.
(6) What Factors Might Influence Head Coaches of High School Girls’ Sport Teams to Leave Coaching, and Do These Differ by Sex?

Regardless of sex, the number one reason coaches might resign from coaching was that coaching took too much time away from their families. Males and females also agreed that being tired of dealing with parents might be a second reason. As shown in Table 7, female and male coaches were in agreement by rank-order on 6 of the 10 potential reasons that might influence a high school coach to resign.

Table 7. Reasons Coaches Might Resign from Coaching High School Girls’ Sports by Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Takes too much time away from family.</td>
<td>1,338</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>1,440</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tired of dealing with parents.</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>845</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate financial compensation for coaching.</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes too much time away from other personal activities.</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes too much time away from teaching responsibilities.</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of support from athletic director and/or principal.</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of interest in continuing to coach.</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tired of dealing with players.</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much pressure to win.</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning to coach a boys’ sport team next year.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 3,910; n = 1,865 females; n = 2,045 males. Coaches could select up to three reasons.

Table 8 shows the percentages of female and male coaches who identified each potential reason as well as the logistic regression coefficient, Wald test, significance, and odds ratio for each of the 10 potential reasons for resigning from coaching a high school girls’ sport team. Binary logistic regression analysis showed that male coaches were 20% more likely than female coaches to identify time away from other personal activities as a potential reason to resign, 45% more likely to identify a lack of interest in continuing to coach as a reason to resign, and 74% more likely to report they would resign because they were planning to coach a boys’ team the following year.
Table 8.
*Reasons Coaches Might Resign from Coaching High School Girls’ Sport Teams by Sex*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Female Agree</th>
<th>Male Agree</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp. (B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time away from family.</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.361</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time away from other personal activities.</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>-.23</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>10.89</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time away from teaching.</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>18.54</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate financial compensation.</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>32.77</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of interest in coaching.</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>-.60</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>42.94</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of support from athletic director and/or principal.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.247</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tired of dealing with parents.</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.193</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tired of dealing with players.</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>6.51</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much pressure to win.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning to coach boys’ team next year.</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>-1.35</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>20.33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $N = 3,910$; $p < .05$.

Female coaches were 1.5 times more likely than male coaches to indicate that pressure to win would be a reason to resign, nearly 1.5 times more likely to cite inadequate financial compensation as a reason to resign, and 1.4 times more likely to agree that time away from teaching might be a reason to resign. Female coaches also were 1.3 times more likely than male coaches to indicate that being tired of dealing with players might cause them to resign. Lack of support from the athletic director and/or principal might influence 20% of females and 21% of males to resign with no significant differences by sex of coach.

Coaches ($n = 631$) also wrote in a variety of other factors that might cause them to resign from coaching. As shown in Figure 2, personal factors including such things as retirement, age or health, and family-related situations accounted for 35% of other possible reasons for retiring. Career-related factors (29%), including current job responsibilities, a new job, and coaching other sports, were listed second most frequently. Player-related reasons (15%), including girl drama, lack of work ethic, and lack of player commitment to sport, constituted the third most identified category. Reasons related to a lack of administrative support (12%), which included lack of budget, facility issues, and perception of girls’ sports not being important within a district, constituted the fourth most frequently cited category.
Discussion

(1) Are Fewer Females than Males Head Coaches of High School Girls’ Sport Teams?

In the present study, the overall percentage of females (48%) coaching female sports was only slightly lower than males (52%), which fails to support True’s (1986) finding that female sport teams were being coached by females only 30–42% of the time in 8 of the 9 states she examined. From a broad perspective, it appears that the number of females entering the coaching profession may have increased in recent years, perhaps due to increased exposure of women’s sports in the media. However, it is important to note that this result may merely reflect sampling limitations. Several states were represented by fewer than 150 head coaches, and female head coaches may have been more willing to participate than male coaches due to the sex-based focus of this study. Future research that includes head coaches in a given state will provide a clearer picture of whether the number of female head high school coaches is increasing or decreasing.
(2) Are There Differences in Qualifications or Experience Between Male and Female Head Coaches of High School Girls’ Sport Teams?

While there were no striking differences between male and female coaches in academic degree attainment, there were interesting differences in participants’ ages and number of years of experience. Females appear to be entering the high school coaching profession as shown by the 74% of coaches in the 21–30 age group. With the exception of that age group, however, male coaches were older and had more years of coaching experience. Thus, it appears that while many young female coaches are being hired to coach girls’ teams, fewer females than males are continuing to coach high school girls’ sport teams in the long term. In fact, females constituted less than 50% of the coaches of girls’ teams beginning in the 6–8 year range and dropped precipitously between 9–11 and 12–15 years of paid experience. While specific reasons why female coaches left coaching were not examined in the current study, a lack of veteran female coach role models (Bradford & Keshok, 2009; Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport, 2009), family priorities, (Bruening & Dixon, 2007, 2008; Bruening et al., 2013; Delano, 1990; Knoppers, 1987; Sisley & Capel, 1986), or inadequate support for less popular sports for girls (Dixon & Bruening, 2007; Hart et al., 1986) are possible reasons for this decline.

(3) Do the Percentages of Female and Male Head Coaches of Girls’ Teams Vary by Sport?

The results of the present study suggest that males are often selected to coach the more popular sports girls’ high school sports as well as those perceived as more masculine, which corroborates what other researchers have reported (Kane & Stangl, 1991; Sisley & Capel, 1986; Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport, 2009; Whisenant, 2008). The results by sport, however, suggest a much larger disparity and support previous findings that lower percentages of females are coaching certain girls’ high school sports (Chesbro, 1985; Delano, 1990; Hart et al., 1986; Lovett & Lowry, 1994; Sisley & Capel, 1986; True, 1986, 1987; Wilkinson & Schneider, 1991). In fact, if volleyball (77% female coaches) and competitive spirit squads (99% female coaches) are eliminated from analysis in the present study, females coached only 36% of girls’ teams in the 10 most popular high school sports. In stark contrast, only 34% of head girls’ basketball coaches (the most popular and more “masculine” sport) were females. Thus, it appears that female head coaches are being relegated to the less popular and more “feminine” sports, while more males are being hired to coach the more popular high school girls’ sports. Again, relegating female coaches to the less popular girls’ sports means the majority of young female athletes lack exposure to same-sex role models in the athletic world, and instead are seeing sport as a male-dominated domain. Athletic directors and others charged with hiring high school coaches must be committed not only to hiring more female head coaches in the most popular high school girls’ sports, but to retaining quality female coaches by providing mentors, professional development opportunities, and administrative support to help them succeed (Bruening et al., 2013; Dixon & Bruening, 2007; Kilty, 2006).
(4) Are the Individuals Responsible for Selecting Head Coaches of High School Girls’ Sport Teams More Likely to Hire Coaches of the Same Sex?

Unlike prior authors (Lovett & Lowry, 1994) who found that females hire a significantly higher percentage of female coaches, no evidence of homologous reproduction was apparent in the present study. However, it is important to note that in the current study head coaches were only asked to identify whether they had been hired to coach a girls’ sport team by a male or female. It did not examine individual selectors and the number of male and female coaches that person hired, which would have provided a clearer representation of hiring preferences and habits. Nonetheless, the results do confirm that an overwhelming number of males are in power positions at all levels of hiring in high school sports, as reported elsewhere (Bruening et al., 2013; Kamphoff & Gill, 2013; LaVoi, 2009; LaVoi & Dutove, 2012; Norman, 2010; Stangl & Kane, 1991). High school sport is still clearly male-dominated, with few female role models in power positions. Not only do female athletes need same-sex coaches serving as role models, but they need to see more females breaking through the glass ceiling to become high school athletic directors. While it is possible that the predominance of males in hiring positions may be because these individuals have been working in athletic and educational administration longer than have females, it is also possible that the “good old boys’ club” is at work and men are being promoted to athletic director and principal positions rather than females. Historically, many principals and athletic directors have been former coaches, so the male domination in these positions may continue to persist if fewer females enter and remain in coaching. Whisenant (2008) explained the pervasive cycle that occurs when males dominate the coaching profession:

With girls seeing so few women in coaching or management roles at the high school level, when making career choices in college or later in life, they may self-select themselves out of careers in interscholastic athletics. The decision to exclude high school athletics as a viable career option maybe [sic] made more based upon the lack of women in the field rather than their own ability to succeed in the domain. (p. 769)

(5) Do Male and Female Head Coaches Choose to Coach High School Girls’ Sport Teams for Different Reasons?

Few differences were found between male and female coaches in the reasons they coach high school girls’ sport teams. As expected, 90% of female coaches reported that they wanted to coach a high school girls’ sport team. In contrast, only 65% of male coaches indicated that they wanted to coach girls. Interestingly, nearly 30% of male coaches chose a neutral response. However, 96% of male coaches reported that they highly enjoyed coaching girls’ sport teams. This incongruence may indicate that male coaches did not necessarily plan or initially want to coach female sports, but learned that they enjoyed coaching females once they began coaching. Surprisingly, a higher percentage of female (20%) than male (10%) coaches reported coaching a female sport was an easy way to supplement their income. This difference might be related to this sample, which had over twice as many females than males in the youngest age category.
Because beginning teaching salaries are relatively low, the higher percentage of younger female coaches in this sample may have been more dependent upon a coaching stipend to supplement their beginning teaching salaries than were older, more veteran coaches who likely had higher teaching salaries. It is also possible that a higher percentage of young female coaches were still single, while more male coaches were married with employed spouses, thus making a coaching stipend less important.

(6) What Factors Might Influence Head Coaches of High School Girls’ Sport Teams to Leave Coaching, and Do These Differ by Sex?

Regardless of sex, too much time away from family was by far the top reason female and male coaches alike might resign from coaching. While family responsibilities have often been a reason given for why female coaches might drop out of coaching (Knoppers, 1987; Pastore, 1991; Sisley & Capel, 1986), it has seldom been associated with male coaches. However, this surprising finding may reflect changing sex roles in American society, especially among younger generations of coaches. It also may indicate that male coaches today may be less likely than their predecessors to commit such a large percentage of their lives to work. Coaches from the millennial generation (born 1979-1994), for example, have often been characterized as being more focused on prioritizing and striving for work-life balance than their older co-workers (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Younger coaches from the millennial generation may perceive the time demands of coaching as excessive and disruptive to their families and drop out of coaching at higher rates than their older colleagues. This could be detrimental in retaining coaches in general, but it may be even more challenging in retaining young female head coaches who may already be experiencing role and family conflict.

Being tired of dealing with parents was the second most common reason that male and female coaches might resign from coaching. Both male and female coaches also identified inadequate financial compensation, which supported Pastore’s (1991) findings, and taking time away from personal activities as common factors that might influence them to resign from coaching. Player issues, retirement, lack of administrative support, and age or health-related issues were common qualitative themes. Career-related factors, such as current job responsibilities of coaches who were not teachers, seeking a new job, and other coaching duties were additional reasons the coaches noted that might influence them to resign.

There were, however, some interesting differences in the reasons why male and female coaches might choose to resign from coaching. For example, males were significantly more likely than females to identify time away from other personal activities and a lack of interest in continuing to coach as potential reasons for resigning, and some males indicated they were planning to coach a boys’ team the following year. Female coaches, on the other hand, were significantly more likely than males to cite pressure to win, inadequate financial compensation, time away from teaching, and tired of dealing with players as factors that could cause them to resign. Given these differences, it appears that personal reasons and interests are more likely to
cause males to consider resigning from coaching, while structural or organizational issues are more likely to be pivotal factors for female coaches.

To retain female high school coaches, school administrators and athletic directors must be aware of these differences and strive to minimize the structural and organizational factors that might cause females to quit coaching. Specifically, they must strive to make the athletic culture welcoming and inclusive for female coaches, provide financial support to female teams, pay female coaches worthy stipends for their work, create situations that help them achieve work-life balance, and involve females in social conversational networks as previously suggested (Bruening & Dixon, 2007, 2008; Bruening et al., 2013; Dixon & Bruening, 2007; Kamphoff & Gill, 2013).

**Limitations and Future Research**

While the purpose of this exploratory study was to gather data regarding the number of males and females coaching high school girls’ sport teams across the United States and gain initial insights into potential reasons coaches may enter or leave coaching, some limitations must be considered. First and foremost, the fact that only 16 executive directors of state athletic associations cooperated limited the scope of the study. Likewise, the study was limited by the circuitous route of soliciting participation, via either an executive director to the athletic director to the coaches, or from the researchers to the athletic directors to the coaches. It is unknown how many head coaches actually received the email message and survey link and had an opportunity to participate. Second, because sex-related surveys may be ill-received in some populations, it is possible the items in this survey may have affected the response rate of coaches. Specifically, female head coaches may have been more likely and male head coaches may have been less likely to participate. Thus, although the study includes representation from head coaches of high school girls’ sport teams in 16 states, generalizations cannot be drawn. Future research that builds upon the findings in this study and includes methodology with direct access to high school coaches is needed to further understand the intricacies of who is coaching high school girls’ sport teams.

Gaining a better understanding of the reasons why female coaches enter or leave coaching also deserves continued attention, as this important information could be used not only to recruit new coaches, but to design retention programs to keep quality female coaches in the profession. Future research should also investigate whether selectors perceive greater stability by hiring male coaches and whether male coaches are selected because not enough females apply for coaching positions, a reason often provided by those in hiring positions. Finally, research investigating the impact of mentoring and administrative support on female coaches would add value to the current coaching education literature.
Conclusions

In the present study we sought to understand better who is coaching high school girls’ sport teams and to identify reasons why males and females chose to coach girls’ sport teams or might resign from coaching. With the aforementioned limitations in mind, the four primary findings of the study are (1) female coaches are more likely to coach less popular sports and sports traditionally associated with females; (2) males overwhelming dominate the power structure in high schools (i.e., principals) and high school sports (i.e., athletic directors); (3) female coaches are leaving coaching earlier than males; and (4) there appear to be both similar and different factors that might cause males and females to leave high school coaching.

These findings provide some important insights to sport administrators and coach educators. First, the limited percentages of female coaches from the most popular sports combined with the overwhelming number of males in athletic director positions portrays sport as a male domain and provides few same-sex mentors and role models for females. Thus, many adolescent girls may not consider coaching as a legitimate career field for females. Furthermore, without adequate support and mentoring, young females who enter coaching may struggle and drop out of coaching.

Coach educators need to identify ways of recruiting qualified females into the coaching profession, work with local high schools to provide early practical experience, and perhaps develop on-going mentoring programs for early career coaches who might not have access to female mentors in their first high school coaching positions. Additionally, athletic directors and those aspiring to become athletic administrators must make diligent efforts to recruit, retain, and provide professional development and mentoring to qualified female coaches for all female sports, and especially the more popular sports, where females are vastly underrepresented.

It is also important to further explore and identify the reasons why female coaches leave coaching, perhaps before reaching their potential. Coach educators who better understand the reasons female coaches leave coaching can ensure that young females fully understand the realities of coaching before entering the profession. Long-term mentoring programs might provide young females with familiar colleagues and someone to turn to for advice. Athletic directors and coach educators who better understand why female coaches appear to be exiting around the 10–15-year mark can and should work to develop programs and support systems to help minimize this exit.
References


Whisenant, W. (2003). How women have fared as interscholastic athletic administrators since the passage of Title IX. *Sex Roles, 49*, 179–184.


Authors’ Notes
Angela Lumpkin is with the Department of Health, Sport, and Exercise Science at the University of Kansas, Judy Favor is with the Department of Educational Leadership at Kansas State University–Olathe, and Lacole McPherson is with the Department of Sport and Recreation Management at the University of Minnesota–Crookston.

The first author wishes to acknowledge the School of Education’s Research Support Program. Correspondence concerning this paper should be addressed to Angela Lumpkin, Professor Department of Health, Sport, and Exercise Sciences, University of Kansas, 146B Robinson, Lawrence, KS 66045-7567.
Appendix 1

Survey of Head Coaches of High School Girls’ Sport Teams

1. Please check the box beside the name of the state (or District of Columbia) where you coach a high school girls’ sport team at the varsity or junior varsity level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>Utah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Are you a licensed or certified teacher in the state where you currently coach a high school girls’ sport team?

☐ Yes

☐ No
3. For which sport(s) below do you currently serve as head coach of a varsity high school girls' sport team. Please check all that apply.

**VAR艰Y**

- [ ] Adapted sports
- [ ] Ice Hockey
- [ ] Archery
- [ ] Lacrosse
- [ ] Badminton
- [ ] Riffrey
- [ ] Basketball
- [ ] Rodeo
- [ ] Bowling
- [ ] Skiing
- [ ] Canoeing
- [ ] Soccer
- [ ] Competitive spirit squads
- [ ] Softball (fast pitch or slow pitch)
- [ ] Crew
- [ ] Swimming and diving
- [ ] Cross Country
- [ ] Synchronized swimming
- [ ] Dance/Drill
- [ ] Tennis
- [ ] Equestrian
- [ ] Track and Field (indoor and/or outdoor)
- [ ] Fencing
- [ ] Volleyball
- [ ] Field Hockey
- [ ] Water polo
- [ ] Flag football
- [ ] Weightlifting
- [ ] Golf
- [ ] Wrestling
- [ ] Gymnastics
- [ ] Other (please specify) ______________
4. For which sport(s) below do you currently serve as head coach of a junior varsity high school girls’ sport team. Please check all that apply.

**JUNIOR VARSITY**

- [ ] Adapted sports
- [ ] Archery
- [ ] Badminton
- [ ] Basketball
- [ ] Bowling
- [ ] Canoeing
- [ ] Competitive spirit squads
- [ ] Crew
- [ ] Cross Country
- [ ] Dance/Drill
- [ ] Equestrian
- [ ] Fencing
- [ ] Field Hockey
- [ ] Flag football
- [ ] Golf
- [ ] Gymnastics
- [ ] Ice Hockey
- [ ] Lacrosse
- [ ] Lacrosse
- [ ] Riflery
- [ ] Rodeo
- [ ] Skiing
- [ ] Soccer
- [ ] Softball (fast pitch or slow pitch)
- [ ] Swimming and diving
- [ ] Synchronized swimming
- [ ] Tennis
- [ ] Track and Field (indoor and/or outdoor)
- [ ] Volleyball
- [ ] Water polo
- [ ] Weightlifting
- [ ] Wrestling
- [ ] Other (please specify) ______________
5. Please check the box beside your gender.

☐ Female

☐ Male

6. Please check the box beside your ethnicity.

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native

☐ Asian

☐ Black or African American

☐ Hispanic or Latino

☐ Multi-race

☐ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

☐ White

7. Please check the box beside your current age.

☐ 21–30 years old

☐ 31–40 years old

☐ 41–50 years old

☐ 51–60 years old

☐ 61 years old or older
8. What is the highest academic degree you have earned?

☐ High school diploma
☐ Associate’s degree
☐ Bachelor’s degree
☐ Master’s degree
☐ Specialist degree
☐ Doctoral degree

9. Who was the person responsible for selecting you as head coach of a high school girls’ sport team?

☐ High school athletic director
☐ High school principal
☐ High school superintendent
☐ Other (please specify) _______________________________________

10. What was the gender of the person you marked in question #9 who selected you to coach a high school girls’ sport team?

☐ Female
☐ Male
11. How many years of paid (not voluntary) head coaching experience (varsity and/or junior varsity) of a high school girls’ sport team did you have before you were hired into your current position as head coach of a high school girls’ sport team?

☐ 0–2 years
☐ 3–5 years
☐ 6–8 years
☐ 9–11 years
☐ 12–15 years
☐ 16–19 years
☐ 20–24 years
☐ 25–29 years
☐ 30 or more years
12. How many years have you been paid as the head coach of a high school girls’ sport team (varsity and/or junior varsity)? (If you currently coach more than one team, please check the box for the team you have coached the longest number of years.)

- □ 1–2 years
- □ 3–5 years
- □ 6–8 years
- □ 9–11 years
- □ 12–15 years
- □ 16–19 years
- □ 20–24 years
- □ 25–29 years
- □ 30 or more years
13. Please rate your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements about why you coach a high school girls’ sport team?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree nor agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to coach, and no positions coaching boys’ sport teams were available.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching a high school girls’ sport team is an easy way to supplement my income.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teaching contract included coaching a sport.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to coach a high school girls’ sport.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to teach values and important life lessons to adolescents.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. Please rate your agreement or disagreement with the following statement. Please answer this question overall, not specifically about the current or most recent season.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree nor agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I thoroughly enjoy coaching a high school girls’ sport team.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. Regardless of your answers in #14, what would be the top three reasons why you might choose to resign from coaching a high school girls’ sport team?

☐ Takes too much time away from family (e.g., spouse, children, parents)

☐ Takes too much time away from other personal activities (other than family)

☐ Takes too much time away from teaching responsibilities

☐ Inadequate financial compensation for coaching

☐ Lack of interest in continuing to coach

☐ Lack of support from athletic director and/or principal

☐ Tired of dealing with parents

☐ Tired of dealing with players

☐ Too much pressure to win

☐ Planning to coach a high school boys’ sport team next year

☐ Other (please specify)