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Abstract (Document Summary)

Opportunities for women in sport in the United States changed dramatically in the 1970s with the passage of Title IX. Researchers during the 1980s, however, indicated that negative attitudes toward female coaches remained. The purpose of this research was to assess current attitudes toward male and female coaches in two sports. In Study 1, 139 basketball players read scenarios and evaluated hypothetical coaches. Based upon the results, there were no overall differences in attitudes toward male and female coaches on the Attitudes of Athletes Toward Male versus Female Coaches (AAMFC-Q) questionnaire (Weinberg, Reveles, & Jackson, 1984). However, males expressed a significant preference for male coaches, $t(78) = -8.84, p < .001$. In Study 2, 129 volleyball players read scenarios and rated hypothetical coaches. In contrast to the basketball players, volleyball players showed no significant differences in their attitudes toward or preferences for a coach of a particular gender. Based upon the results of both studies we suggest that attitudes toward female coaches are changing, but preferences for male coaches may still exist, particularly for athletes involved in traditionally masculine sports.

One explanation for the low number of women coaches may be the history of negative attitudes toward women in leadership roles in general (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995) and in coaching in particular (Barber, 1998; Parkhouse & Williams, 1986; Weinberg, Reveles, & Jackson, 1984; Weiss & Stevens, 1993; Williams & Parkhouse, 1988). Weinberg and colleagues (1984) assessed male and female competitive basketball players' attitudes toward hypothetical coaches. The male and female hypothetical coaches were described as having identical credentials. Male athletes rated these female coaches more negatively than did female athletes. Parkhouse and Williams (1986) also assessed athletes' attitudes toward male and female coaches. They asked basketball players to evaluate hypothetical coaches after reading coaching philosophy statements. Both male and female athletes rated male coaches more favorably than female coaches even when female coaches were described as having better coaching records and more honors than male coaches.

Weinberg et al. (1984) and Parkhouse and Williams (1986), through their research conducted in the 1980s, revealed that male athletes held negative attitudes toward female coaches. That is, male basketball players rated female coaches significantly less favorably than male coaches. It is somewhat heartening to note that male athletes' negative attitudes toward female coaches may be changing. From the results of Study 1, a replication of Weinberg et al. (1984) we found no significant differences between male and female basketball players' attitudes toward male and female coaches on 11 items of the AAMFC-Q.

Full Text (4355 words)

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Abstract

Opportunities for women in sport in the United States changed dramatically in the 1970s with the passage of Title IX. Researchers during the 1980s, however, indicated that negative attitudes toward female coaches remained. The purpose of this research was to assess current attitudes toward male and female coaches in two sports. In Study 1, 139 basketball players read scenarios and evaluated hypothetical coaches. Based upon the results, there were no overall differences in attitudes toward male and female coaches on the Attitudes of Athletes Toward Male versus Female Coaches (AAMFC-Q) questionnaire (Weinberg, Reveles, & Jackson, 1984). However, males expressed a significant preference for male coaches, $t(78) = -8.84, p < .001$. In Study 2, 129 volleyball players read scenarios and rated hypothetical coaches. In contrast to the basketball players, volleyball players showed no significant differences in their attitudes toward or preferences for a coach of a particular gender. Based upon the results of both studies we suggest that attitudes toward female coaches are changing, but preferences for male coaches may still exist, particularly for athletes involved in traditionally masculine sports.

Introduction

The 1972 enactment of Title IX, which legislated equivalent sport opportunities for men and women in schools in the United States, triggered a gender revolution in collegiate athletics. Prior to 1972, approximately 15% of all college athletes were women, and women's sports programs received just 2% of college athletic budgets (Sage, 1990). Between 1972 and 1996, the number of women's collegiate teams per school increased from 2.1 to 7.53 (Acosta & Carpenter, 2000). These days, women receive 33% of all scholarship money and 24% of total sport budgets (Lopiano, 1998). NCAA participation rates in 1997-98 were as follows: 203,671 athletes were male, while 137,044 were female (National Association for Girls and Women in Sport, 2000). Clearly, significant strides have been made by female athletes during this period. Similar changes, however, have not occurred in the coaching arena. Only 48% of women's collegiate sport teams and 2% of men's collegiate sport teams are coached by women (Acosta & Carpenter, 2000).

One explanation for the low number of women coaches may be the history of negative attitudes toward women in leadership roles in general (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995) and in coaching in particular (Barber, 1998; Parkhouse & Williams, 1986; Weinberg, Reveles, & Jackson, 1984; Weiss & Stevens, 1993; Williams & Parkhouse, 1988). Weinberg and colleagues (1984) assessed male and female competitive basketball players' attitudes toward hypothetical coaches. The male and female hypothetical coaches were described as having identical credentials. Male athletes rated these female coaches more negatively than did female athletes. Parkhouse and Williams (1986) also assessed athletes' attitudes toward male and female coaches. They asked basketball players to evaluate hypothetical coaches after reading coaching philosophy statements. Both male and female athletes rated male coaches more favorably than female coaches even when female coaches were described as having better coaching records and more honors than male coaches.

More recently, Medwechuk and Crossman (1994) examined the attitudes of swimmers toward male and female swim coaches. Female coaches were viewed favorably by both male and female swimmers and were rated as being as knowledgeable as male coaches. Nevertheless, swimmers tended to favor coaches of their own sex.

Although opportunities for female collegiate athletes have burgeoned since the 1970s, we suggest that, based upon research conducted in the 1980s athletes held negative attitudes toward female coaches. More recent researchers Medwechuk & Crossman, (1994) indicated that negative attitudes toward female coaches may be changing. The purpose of this research is to expand upon previous research and examine contemporary attitudes of athletes toward male and female coaches.

Study 1

Method

Participants

Participants included 139 (male = 80, female = 59) NCAA Division III collegiate basketball players. Participants ranged from 18 to 23 years of age ($M = 19.48, SD = 1.26$) and had played basketball for an average of 10.20 years.

Data were collected from 9 basketball teams (male = 5, female = 4) located within the Northeast and Midwestern United States. The majority (85%) of participants were Caucasian ($n = 118$), and 21 participants (15%) were non-Caucasian (American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, African-American, and Hispanic or Latino). Forty-seven participants (34%) were on a team headed by a female coach, and 92 participants (66%) were on a team headed by a male coach. None of the male participants played on a team coached by a female.

Measures

Attitudinal questionnaire. The Attitudes of Athletes Toward Male versus Female Coaches Questionnaire (AAMFC-Q; see Appendix) is a tool to assess the attitudes and feelings Of male and female athletes toward having a new coach (Weinberg et al., 1984). The AAMFC-Q has both male and female versions that differ only in that they assess attitudes toward male and female coaches, respectively. Each version contains 11 statements, which participants respond to using Likert-type scales from 1 (not at all) to 11 (very much). Test-retest reliability coefficients were reported by Weinberg et al. (1984) as .80 and .77 for the male and female versions of the AAMFC-Q across a 2-week interval, respectively. Construct validity of the AAMFC-Q was demonstrated by the finding that male basketball players display more negative attitudes toward female coaches than female athletes display toward female coaches.

One additional item was added to the AAMFC-Q to assess athletes' preferences for a coach of a particular gender. Item 12, "I would prefer it if my new coach were a man (woman)," was scored on the same Likert-type scale from 1 (not at all) to 11 (very much) as the 11 items on the AAMFC-Q.

Background questionnaire. With a questionnaire we requested demographic information including gender, year in college, age, ethnicity, current sport, and how many total years that sport was played. Gender of each participant's current head coach, as well as any previous playing experience under a coach of the opposite gender of the athlete, was also assessed.

Procedure

Male and female coach scenario booklets were randomly distributed to each team. The two scenarios included information about hypothetical basketball coaches who were competitive, knowledgeable, and enjoyed coaching (see Appendix). Coaches were described as having high expectations for players, and a solid understanding of the game. Past coaching experience and previous success were identical for male and female hypothetical coaches. Gender was the only differentiating factor between scenarios. Half the participants on each team were randomly assigned to respond to a scenario describing a hypothetical female coach, the other half responded to the male coach scenario. After giving informed consent, participants completed the background questionnaire, read their scenarios, and evaluated the hypothetical coaches by completing the modified AAMFC-Q (Weinberg et al., 1984).

Results

Of the 139 basketball players, 16% of the females and 96% of the males had never played for a coach of the opposite gender. In accord with the procedures of Weinberg et al. (1984), responses to items 1 to 11 of the AAMFC-Q were used as dependent variables in 2 (gender of the athlete) \times 2 (gender of the hypothetical coach) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). A significant two-way multivariate interaction was found (Wilks Lambda = .84, $\dots(11,125) = 2.12$, $\dots < .05$) but there were no significant main effects for gender of the athlete or gender of the hypothetical coach. Follow-up univariate ANOVAs were conducted for each of the 11 AAMFC-Q items to examine which items contributed to the multivariate interaction. Based upon these follow-up analyses there were no significant interactions for any of the individual items (see Table 1). Thus, male and female athletes did not differ in their attitudes toward coaches of different genders.

A 2 (gender of the athlete) \times 2 (gender of the hypothetical coach) ANOVA was conducted on item 12, which assessed athletes' preferences for a coach of a particular gender. A significant two-way interaction was found, $\dots(1,135) = 37.22$, $\dots < .01$, but there were no significant main effects. To clarify the nature of this interaction, independent samples t-tests were conducted. Males who read a scenario about a female coach expressed a significantly stronger preference for a coach of the opposite gender (i.e., a male coach; $\dots = 8.07$, $\dots = 2.64$) than did males who read a scenario about a male coach ($\dots = 2.74$, $\dots = 2.75$), $\dots(78) = -8.84$, $\dots < .001$. Based upon these results we suggest that males have a preference for male coaches. Females did not prefer a coach of a particular gender after reading about a female ($\dots = 4.78$, $SD = 2.90$) or male ($\dots = 4.34$, $\dots = 2.74$) coach, $\dots(57) = .59$, $\dots > .05$.

Discussion

The most important finding of this study is that male and female athletes did not have significantly different attitudes toward male and female coaches. In their study of basketball players, Weinberg and colleagues (1984) found significant differences between male and female athletes' attitudes toward coaches on 8 of the 11 attitudinal questions on the AAMFC-Q. For all of the items on which they found differences, female coaches were rated less favorably than were male coaches. Based upon the results of our study we suggest males' and females' negative attitudes toward female coaches may be changing.

Changes in perceptions of female coaches seem to mirror changes in role conflict experienced by women participating in sport. Role conflict refers to the conflict women feel between the attributes of femininity (e.g., beauty, submissiveness) and the characteristics necessary for sport success (e.g., aggressiveness, strength). In the 1970s, a number of researchers suggested that role conflict hindered women's sport experiences (Duquin, 1978; Felshin, 1974; Harris, 1979). Later researchers, however, found that the majority of women athletes experienced little or no role conflict (Anthrop & Alison, 1983; Desertrain & Weiss, 1988). Indeed, Allison (1991) suggested that by focusing on role conflict, the "real" issue, that women are expected to experience such conflict, is overlooked. Changes in society's attitudes toward women's involvement in sport rather than changes in the women themselves may be necessary for women to realize the full benefits of sport involvement (Cogan & Petrie, 1996). The recent success of Coach Pat Summit and the Tennessee Lady Vols (Summit, 1998) and the existence of the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA; Voisin, 2000), highlight some of these changes taking place in the sport of basketball.

The athletes' responses to item 12, "I would prefer it if my new coach were a man (woman)," however, we suggest are an indication that male basketball players do have a gender preference - they prefer male coaches. One reason that male athletes may prefer male coaches is that they tend to believe that male coaches are more qualified for the job than are females (Sage, 1990). To control for issues related to qualifications in this study, the male and female coaches were presented as having identical skills and experiences.

Male athletes may have preferred male coaches because of their greater exposure to male coaches. The majority of male athletes (96%) had only been coached by males. In contrast, the majority of female athletes (84%) had been coached by both male and females, and may, therefore, have been less likely to express a preference based on gender. Male basketball players may also have preferred male coaches because basketball is perceived as a "masculine" sport (Kane, 1989; Parkhouse & Williams, 1986; Sage, 1990), played predominantly by males (Basketball participation, 2000). Indeed in 1999, 12.5 million males aged 18-24 played basketball in the US, compared to only 4.6 million females. A male coach for a male-dominated sport may seem like a better fit for some athletes. Athletes participating in sports with fewer male participants may respond differently to female coaches.

Study 2

Volleyball is a "gender neutral" sport (Mahan & Thomas, 1998; "New Kid," 2000). Unlike basketball, professional volleyball opportunities for both genders have been established for some time. Participation in volleyball is about equal between genders with about 9.2 million male and 9.5 million female athletes in the 18-24 year old age group (Volleyball participation, 2000). Indoor and outdoor (beach) professional volleyball leagues also exist. Professional beach volleyball offers opportunities for both men and women. The most recent women's professional volleyball league, United States Professional Volleyball (USPV), was founded in February, 1999.

Study 2 was designed to explore the attitudes of volleyball players toward male and female coaches. Based on research with less typically male-dominated sports, it was hypothesized that male and female volleyball participants would not differ in their attitudes toward male and female coaches (Medwechuk & Crossman, 1994).

Method

Participants

Participants included 129 (male = 42, female = 87) NCAA Division III collegiate volleyball players. Participants ranged from 17 to 24 years of age ($M = 19.56$, $SD = 1.34$) and had been playing volleyball for an average of 7.43 years. Data were collected from 10 volleyball teams (male = 3, female = 7) located within the Northeast and Midwestern United States. The majority (91%) of participants were Caucasian ($n = 117$), and 12 participants (9%) were non-Caucasian (American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, African-American, Native Hawaiian, and Hispanic).

or Latino). Forty-eight participants (37%) were on a team headed by a female coach, while 81 participants (63%) were on a team headed by a male coach. Again, none of the male participants was on a team coached by a woman.

Instruments and Procedure

The methods for Study 2 were identical to those in Study 1. Male and female coach scenarios were randomly distributed to each team. The scenarios included information about two hypothetical volleyball coaches (see Appendix). After giving informed consent and reading their scenarios, participants evaluated the hypothetical coaches by completing the modified AAMFC-Q. Participants also completed the background questionnaire.

Results

Of the 129 volleyball players, 20% of the females and 69% of the males had never played for a coach opposite their gender. As in Study 1, the 2 (gender of the athlete) x 2 (gender of the hypothetical coach) multivariate interaction was the analysis of interest. Based upon the MANOVA with questions 1 to 11 of the AAMFC-Q (Weinberg et al., 1984) as the dependent variables, the 2 x 2 interaction was not statistically significant, $... (1, 115) = 1.46, ... > .05$.

For item 12, "I would prefer it if my new coach were a man (woman)," an ANOVA was used to assess the 2 (gender of the athlete) x 2 (gender of the hypothetical coach) univariate interaction. The 2 x 2 interaction was not statistically significant, $... (1, 125) = 3.12, ... > .05$ (see Table 2).

Discussion

In contrast to the basketball players assessed in Study 1, male and female volleyball players reported no significant preference for a coach of a particular gender. Further, volleyball players' attitudes toward coaches did not differ significantly on the basis of gender. One possible explanation for this lack of bias may be that athletes involved in gender-neutral sports have had more opportunities to work with female coaches. In this study, 64% of the volleyball participants had, at one time or another, played for a coach of the opposite gender, whereas only 38% of the basketball players had played for an opposite gender coach. Direct experience with female coaches may contribute to volleyball players' more favorable attitudes toward female coaches.

Another reason that athletes in gender-neutral sports may have more favorable attitudes toward female coaches is that they may hold less rigid expectations of male and female gender roles. With female participation rates at an all time high, gender roles are evolving. The results of this research can be used in support of the notion that, particularly in gender-neutral environments, definitions of masculinity and femininity are not as concrete as they once were (Griffin, 1998).

General Discussion

Weinberg et al. (1984) and Parkhouse and Williams (1986), through their research conducted in the 1980s, revealed that male athletes held negative attitudes toward female coaches. That is, male basketball players rated female coaches significantly less favorably than male coaches. It is somewhat heartening to note that male athletes' negative attitudes toward female coaches may be changing. From the results of Study 1, a replication of Weinberg et al. (1984) we found no significant differences between male and female basketball players' attitudes toward male and female coaches on 11 items of the AAMFC-Q.

In Study 1 of this research, we added an item on the AAMFC-Q to directly assess athletes' preference for a coach of a particular gender. Although male athletes expressed favorable attitudes toward female coaches on the AAMFC-Q, they still expressed a statistically significant preference for a male coach. These results mirror findings of other gender researchers. Eagly, Mladinic, and Otto (1991) had participants evaluate the social categories of "woman" and "man." They found that "woman" was evaluated favorably, indeed, more favorably than "man." However, when researchers went beyond assessing attitudes and looked at preferences and behaviors, these results changed. For example, women in the workplace have been found to encounter the "glass ceiling," a preference for men in certain jobs that serves as a barrier to women's professional advancement.

Similar barriers may exist for females interested in coaching. Although the athletes in Study 1 expressed positive attitudes toward female coaches in general, male basketball players indicated a statistically significant preference

for male coaches. It is possible that the reporting of similar attitudes toward male and female coaches in this study may reflect a climate of "political correctness" that was not present for the Weinberg et al. (1984) study.

Before conclusions about attitudes toward and preferences for female coaches are made, it is important to consider athletes involved in sports other than basketball (Weinberg et al., 1984). In their 1994 study, Medwechuk and Crossman found male swimmers preferred male coaches and female swimmers preferred female coaches. From these results we suggest a change from Weinberg et al.'s (1984) and Parkhouse and Williams' (1986) results in the 1980s in that athletes expressed a preference for a coach of the same gender as themselves. Study 2 of the present research was an assessment of the preferences of athletes involved in the gender-neutral sport of volleyball. Both male and female volleyball players showed no significant preference for a coach of a particular gender. Thus, the cultures of different sports (e.g., soccer, tennis) may vary and be a factor in the attitudes of athletes toward women coaches. Generalizations across sports may not be warranted.

It is also important to consider the differences in sporting cultures among competitive levels. In this study we examined NCAA Division III student-athletes who compete under the least restrictive NCAA rules and do not receive athletic scholarships. The positive attitudes toward female coaches demonstrated by these athletes may differ from NCAA Division I athletes who carry the extra pressures associated with athletic scholarships and media attention (Andersen, 1996). Although Weinberg and colleagues (1984) did not report differences in attitudes toward coaches among junior high, high school, and college athletes, comparisons of attitudes of competitors at different levels may be useful to enhance understanding of attitudes toward and preferences for coaches of a particular gender.

The results of Studies 1 and 2 seem to reflect an evolution in athletes' attitudes toward male and female coaches over the past 15 years. Competitive athletes involved in both basketball and volleyball seem confident that male and female coaches have the skills and knowledge necessary to coach effectively. Female coaches have made strides in acceptance, particularly in gender-neutral sports. Although these results are heartening, it is not completely smooth sailing for women coaches. Indeed, based upon these results, preferences for male coaches continue to play a role in certain sports. Researchers examining other gender-neutral sports and traditionally male or female sports may shed some light on important factors that influence opportunities and satisfaction with competitive sport experiences for both coaches and athletes. It appears that one of the important factors in reducing gender bias among collegiate athletes may be having the opportunity to play for both male and female coaches.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of AAMFC-Q-Q Scores for Basketball Players

Females Males

Females Males Female Male

Hyp. Coach Hyp. Coach Hyp. Coach Hyp. Coach

n = 27 n = 32 n = 41 n = 39 Q1 8.04 (1.40) 7.94 (1.27) 6.78 (2.25) 7.54 (2.28) Q2 2.37 (1.55) 3.94 (2.49) 3.51 (2.39) 3.38 (1.93) Q3 8.74 (2.10) 8.84 (1.65) 7.83 (1.95) 9.00 (1.97) Q4 7.41 (2.14) 7.44 (1.78) 6.80 (1.95) 8.03 (2.30) Q5 9.74 (1.32) 8.94 (1.64) 8.15 (2.49) 9.44 (1.60) Q6 8.67 (1.18) 7.94 (1.64) 6.85 (2.12) 8.05 (2.10) Q7 9.04 (1.34) 7.91 (1.77) 7.32 (2.40) 8.08 (2.24) Q8 4.74 (3.30) 5.41 (2.55) 5.56 (2.77) 5.49 (3.24) Q9 7.00 (1.69) 6.16 (2.24) 6.54 (2.60) 6.72 (2.43) Q10 6.63 (2.31) 5.53 (2.71) 6.22 (2.57) 6.08 (2.76) Q11 4.70 (2.69) 5.53 (2.61) 5.12 (2.93) 5.38 (2.25) Q12 5.07 (2.80) 3.84 (2.08) 5.12 (3.12) 5.77 (2.83) Q13 4.78 (2.90) 4.34 (2.74) 8.07 (2.64) 2.74 (2.75) % that have had opposite 85.2% 81.3% 7.3% 0.0% gender coach

Note: AAMFC-Q = Attitudes of Athletes Toward Male versus Female Coaches Questionnaire.</TABLE>

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of AAMFC-Q-Q Scores for Volleyball Players

Females Males

Female Male Female Male

Hyp. Coach Hyp. Coach Hyp. Coach Hyp. Coach

n = 43 n = 44 n = 22 n = 20 Q1 8.05 (1.65) 7.39 (2.12) 7.45 (1.57) 7.25 (1.52) Q2 3.58 (2.04) 3.61 (2.60) 4.64 (2.80) 4.30 (2.41) Q3 8.63 (1.75) 8.68 (1.88) 7.59 (2.32) 7.65 (2.03) Q4 7.40 (2.31) 7.84 (2.06) 6.32 (2.38) 7.70 (2.60) Q5 9.12 (1.71) 9.11 (1.85) 7.82 (2.44) 7.25 (2.43) Q6 8.00 (2.17) 7.95 (2.37) 8.14 (2.23) 7.25 (2.40) Q7 8.51 (1.83) 8.14 (2.18) 7.77 (2.52) 7.45 (2.19) Q8 4.33 (2.71) 4.66 (2.90) 5.95 (2.95) 6.10 (2.88) Q9 6.42 (2.36) 5.95 (2.73) 6.91 (2.54) 7.00 (2.43) Q10 6.14 (2.24) 5.95 (2.80) 6.23 (2.58) 7.10 (2.05) Q11 5.26 (2.66) 4.91 (2.59) 6.05 (2.72) 5.60 (2.70) Q12 5.35 (2.34) 4.36 (2.81) 6.23 (3.09) 5.45 (2.39) Q13 3.93 (2.79) 4.07 (3.14) 6.45 (3.31) 4.50 (2.84) % that have had opposite 79.1% 81.8% 27.3% 35.0% gender coach

Note: AAMFC-Q = Attitudes of Athletes Toward Male versus Female Coaches Questionnaire.

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