

# Women Coaches' and Athletic Directors' Perceptions of Women Coaching Boys

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## INTRODUCTION

Current studies suggest that there are very few female coaches at all sport levels, particularly as head coaches of male teams (Acosta & Carpenter, 2008; Kamphoff, 2008; Kane & Stangl, 1991). In fact, only four studies have been conducted to date examining the experiences of women coaching boys. Two studies were conducted at the high school level (Kane & Stangl, 1991; Straurowsky, 1990) and two examined female's experiences at the collegiate level (Kamphoff, Armentrout, & Driska, in progress; Yiamouyiannis, 2007).

Straurowsky's study, for example, reports that all the female coaches she interviewed who coached high school boys met resistance, experienced discrimination, and had to work harder to appear competent compared to their male colleagues. In a recent study, Whisenant (2008) studied whether or not male hegemony continues to exist in regards to hiring patterns in high school athletics. He found that the practice of males dominating coaching boys sports "reinforces the presence of hegemonic masculinity" (p.773), and because sport is considered "masculine," both male and female athletic directors typically perceive men as being more qualified to coach. Thus, the purpose of this study was to better understand the experiences of females who coach boys at the high school level, and to understand athletic directors' perceptions of females coaching boys.

**Research Questions:** 1) How do current female coaches of high school boys teams describe their experiences, and 2) How do athletic directors perceive females coaching male teams?

## METHOD

An on-line survey based on Yiamouyiannis' (2007) study was sent to all female head coaches of male high school teams (N = 193), and all high school athletic directors in Minnesota (N = 453). Both the female head coaches and the athletic directors were identified from the Minnesota State High School League website.

The survey was completed by 67 female head coaches and 143 high school athletic directors (a 34.7% and 31.6% response rate, respectively). Of the 67 female coaches, 94% were Caucasian/White (n = 63), 44.8% had a master's degree or above (n = 30), and 82% had competed in the sport that they currently coached (n = 55). The average age of the female coaches was 41 years old (range 23-63),

Of the 143 athletic directors, 81.3% (n = 117) were males, 94% were Caucasian/White (n = 136), and 64.6% had a master's degree or higher (n = 93). The average age of the athletic directors was 46 years old (range 24-73).

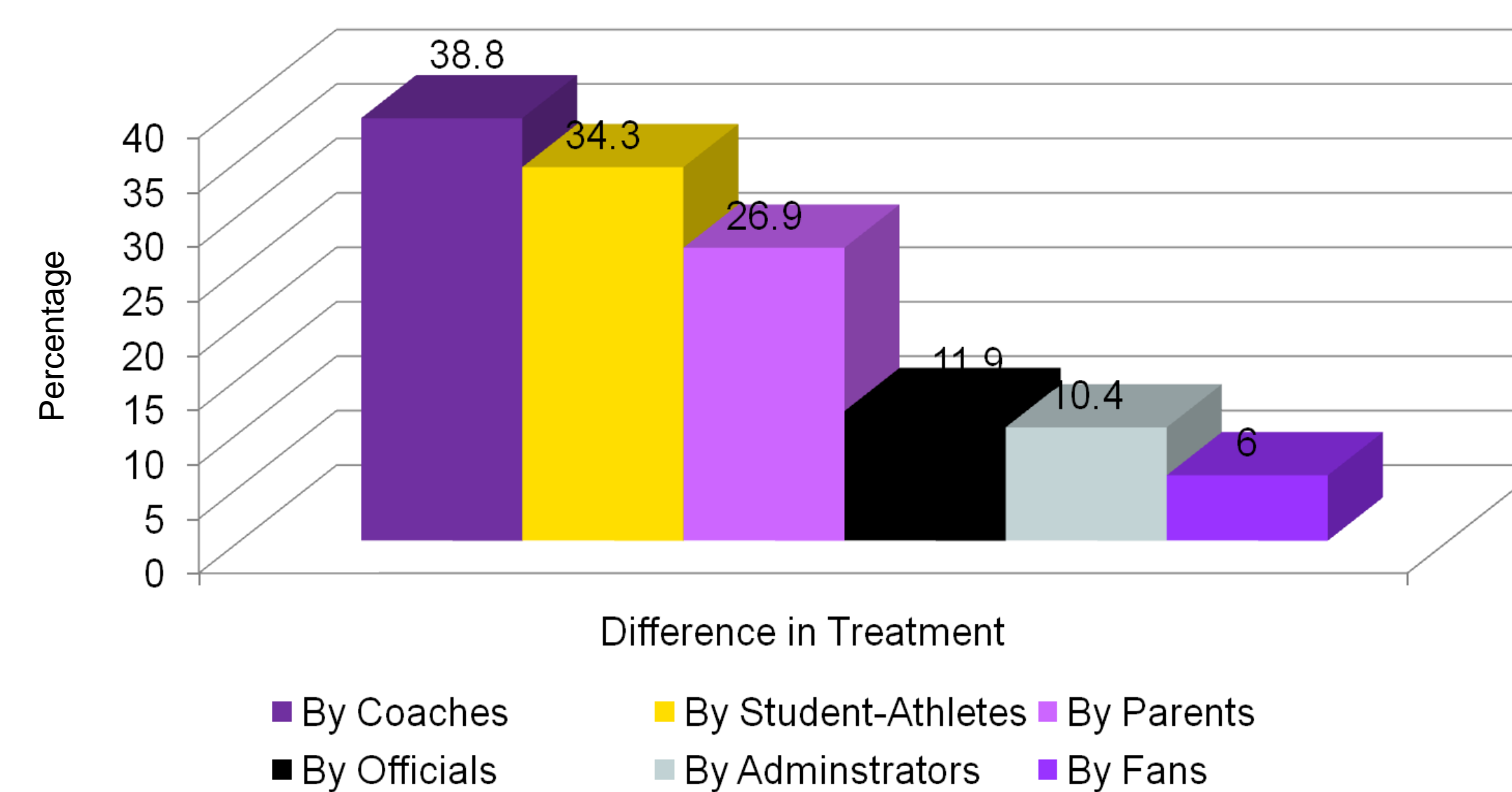
## RESULTS

### Boys Sports Coached by Women

Female coaches were more likely to coach less prestigious male sports (i.e., individual versus team sports).

In fact, only 4 of the 67 female head coaches had coached a male team sport (3 as head soccer coaches and 1 as a head basketball coach).

### Difference in Treatment Perceived by Women Coaching Boys' Teams



Female coaches indicated they noticed a difference in treatment because of their gender most often from other coaches (38.8%) compared to student-athletes (34.3%), parents (26.9%), officials (11.9%), administrators (10.4%), or fans (6.0%).

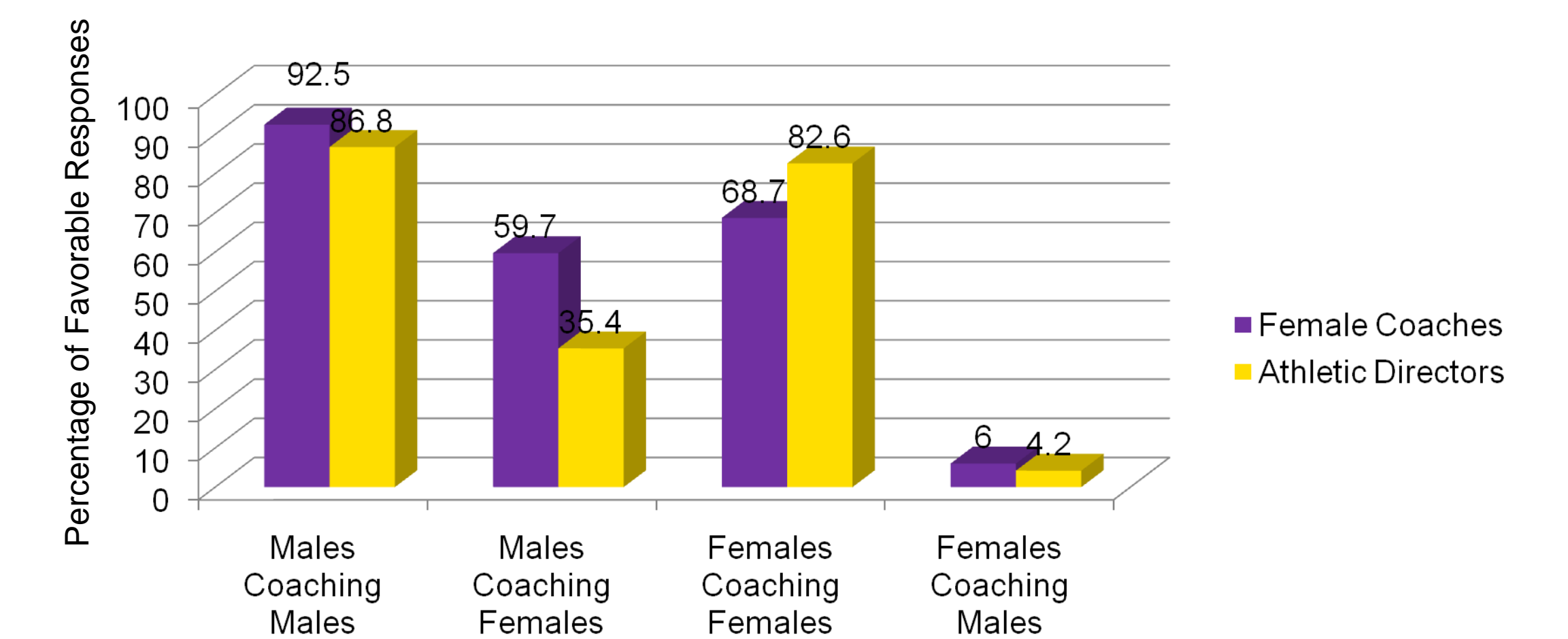
### Reasons for the Lack of Female Coaches

Female coaches were most likely to indicate the following reasons to explain the lack of female coaches of boys' teams:

Reasons Indicated by the Female Coaches	Mean and Standard Deviation
Female coaches are not applying for jobs coaching boys' sport teams.	M = 4.0, SD = 1.27
Parents prefer a male coach for boys' teams.	M = 3.4, SD = 1.27
Women as coaches of boys' sport teams has not been supported by society.	M = 3.28, SD = 1.1.5
Athletics Directors are not recruiting/hiring women to coach boys.	M = 3.27, SD= 1.23
Female coaches do not apply for jobs coaching boys' sport teams because they do not feel such job opportunities are open to women.	M = 3.16, SD = 1.51

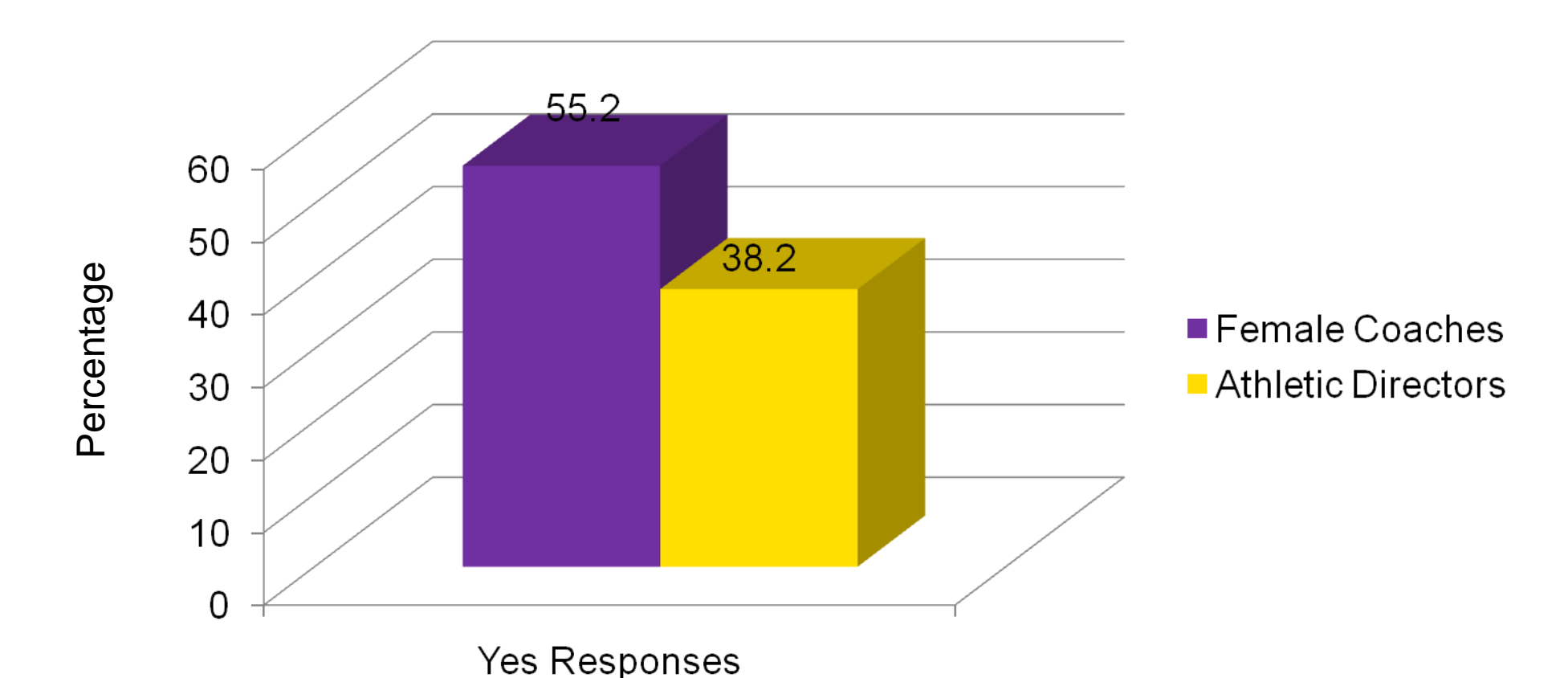
(1= Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree)

### Society's View of the Coaching Profession



Both female coaches and athletic directors thought that American society viewed males coaching males as most favorable, compared to females coaching females, males coaching females, and females coaching males.

### Desirability of Increasing the Number of Females Coaching Males



55.2% of the female coaches thought it was desirable to increase the number of females coaching males, whereas only 38.2% of athletic directors thought it was desirable.

## DISCUSSION

Female coaches experience marginalization specifically because they are more likely to coach less prestigious male sports (i.e., individual versus team sports) which confirms previous research (Kane & Stangle, 1991; Straurowsky, 1990). In addition, athletic directors and current female coaches think that males coaching males is viewed as most favorable in society which confirms research that suggests coaching is exclusively defined as "men's work" (Kamphoff, 2010). Certainly, coaching male teams is a "glass ceiling" that females still encounter. Since there are so few female coaches working with males, role models for other females coaches and athletes are minimal. Females should be encouraged to apply for all coaching positions including coaching males, and administrators should provide support and encouragement to female coaches.