

**Characteristics of mentoring women in leadership positions within sport: Results of a Meta-Ethnography, 1990-2007**

*Glenna Bower, University of Southern Indiana*

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**Poster  
Abstract 96**

One of the most critical aspects of advancing women within leadership positions in sport is the mentoring relationship. As the number of women entering sport increases, a growing number of professionals recognize the inherent benefits and challenges between the mentor and the protégé (Bower, 2007; Pastore, 2003; Sagas, Cunningham, & Pastore, 2006; Weaver & Chelladurai, 2000). While the mentoring relationship is important in career development for both genders, it is particularly critical for women, especially those in male dominated professions such as the sport industry (Bower, Hums, & Keedy, 2006; Grappendorf, Burton, & Lilienthal, 2007). Mentors may buffer the female manager from overt and covert discrimination, and may help their female protégé circumvent structural, social, and cultural barriers to advancement in the organization (Ragins, 1989). This study was designed to identify the characteristics of the mentoring relationship helping women to advance within leadership positions in sport. Although research has been conducted in the area of mentoring women within sport, no study has attempted to develop a relationship between these studies or seek patterns between them. Studies of the mentoring relationship of women in sport between the years 1990 and 2007 were collected and analyzed using meta-ethnography. A meta-ethnography, counterpart to a meta-analysis, was the methodology that allowed the researcher to synthesize 37 qualitative studies related to mentoring women within the sport industry. The studies were selected using both a content and methodological screening process. Studies were eliminated that did not meet the content and methodological criteria. Following the selection process, each study was read, coded, and analyzed using Ethnograph 5.0 software. This meta-ethnography was a structured way to identify themes, patterns and connections representing and defining similarities and differences while translating interpretive research studies (either ethnographic, interactive, qualitative, naturalistic, hermeneutic, or phenomenological) into one another (Noblit & Hare, 1988).

The findings of the study revealed 14 themes about the mentoring relationship between the mentor and women seeking to advance within leadership positions in sport. These themes seem to relate to the categories of (a) career functions, (b) psychosocial functions, (c) characteristics of the mentor, and (d) barriers of entering the mentoring relationship. The characteristics identified in the meta-ethnography provide critical variables in developing a mentoring relationship which may produce desired outcomes for women wanting to advance within leadership positions in sport.