

2013 North American Society for Sport Management Conference (NASSM 2013)

Women in Sport Leadership: A Dialogue Around Resistance and Strategies for Change

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Management/leadership

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**60-minute symposium,
roundtable, or workshop
(Room 408)**

Abstract 2013-052

2:10 PM

Increased participation in sport by women and girls over the last 35 years is cause for celebration. Numerous studies indicate, however, that increased participation has not resulted in concomitant advances in sport leadership positions held by women (e.g., Acosta & Carpenter, 2012; Claringbould & Knoppers, 2012; Shaw, 2012). Men comprise the vast majority of coaches of female teams at all levels, from youth to professional sport, across the globe (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012). And, of course, women are rarely considered to be viable candidates of coaches for boys' or men's teams (Walker, 2012). Men still dominate administrative roles in sport at all levels worldwide, and the higher the organizational level, the more they tend to dominate (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2012). Finally, it appears women are not making much progress in sport leadership positions as the numbers have remained relatively stable through the years, or worse, have declined as women's sports became legitimized (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012; Claringbould & Knoppers, 2012).

Over the last 35 years, this issue has been studied by a variety of researchers who have utilized a multitude of theoretical constructs and research paradigms. A majority of the work has been dominated by positivist paradigms. However Shaw and Frisby (2006), have encouraged researchers to consider inclusion of postpositivistic research paradigms, including poststructural feminism. There are recent examples of research undertaken via these paradigms as well (Knoppers & McDonald, 2010). Two recent reviews indicate well over 250 studies have been undertaken regarding the lack of women in sport leadership positions since 1973 (Knoppers & McDonald, 2010, LaVoi & Dutove, 2012). Despite this work, little has changed, and the problem remains solidly entrenched. Seemingly, we are at an impasse where the large body of research has done little to change the organizations, communities, and sectors in which it is conducted. This symposium is designed to begin a dialogue for creating change. Frisby (2005) implored sport managers to welcome and embrace different paradigms in order to more fully understand and solve problems in the field. Further, a number of other Zeigler award winners have advocated bridging theory with practice (e.g., Chelladurai, 1992; Chalip, 2006; Danylchuk & Boucher, 2003; Parks, 1992; Weese, 1995) in order to enhance our discipline.

In responding to this call, we bring together six established scholars in the area of women/sport leadership (from 3 different continents) whose work represents different theoretical constructs and research paradigms. These scholars address change with a variety of perspectives. A few examples include at the community level: looking at how the small changes organizational members can make and 'own' in order to influence their organizations and sectors; at the organizational level: examining organizational work life policy issues and how "individual" level perspectives may be enhanced by policy development; at the sociocultural level: focusing on how a multi-level analysis may be key to creating change in heteronormative culture and how gender role stereotyping influences perceptions of leadership and women's experiences in sport leadership; at the managerial/directors level: exploring how a management of diversity approach may both enhance and impede the erasure of inequalities; at the discursive level: investigating how top down power intersects with the discursive power of neoliberalism and meritocracy to strengthen the status quo.

The primary focus of the symposium will be centered on a dialogue amongst panelists regarding their common findings of resistance to change and, most importantly, strategies to overcome such resistance. Commitment to future change development and other 'take home' messages will also be explored.