

Ski Like a Girl, Coach Like a Girl

A Review of Feminist Literature in Sport and an Acknowledgement of a
Feminist Standpoint in Coaching

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In the first section of this paper I hope to provide the reader with a brief autobiography while at the same time intertwining a literature review of feminist writings on coaching and statistics of women coaches and athletes. In this way, I hope to firmly establish my standpoint not only as a woman but also as a female athlete and coach and to use this standpoint as a “starting point for inquiry” (DeVault, 1999, p. 39). In keeping with the feminist tradition of subjectivity, a reflection on my experiences will guide much of this discussion.

In the second part of the paper, I will bring to the reader’s attention a contradiction that exists between the predominately male dominated profession of coaching and the feminist approach to coaching that has now come to be considered standard “good” coaching. I hope to show the reader, in this consciousness raising exercise, that although women are minorities in the coaching profession, the feminist standpoint has firmly embedded itself in current coaching philosophy. In making the reader aware of this feminist standpoint that characterizes current coaching philosophy, my goal is not to insist that only women would make good coaches (although certainly they are more likely to easily adopt these philosophies). Instead I would like to suggest that it has been through the struggle of both female and some male coaches to subvert androcentric coaching strategies, and the successes of those subversions (Harding, 2004), that this standpoint has come to characterize successful coaching philosophies.

PART I: WOMEN IN SPORT AND MY STANDPOINT

I have always been a skier. Of course this could hardly be helped growing up in a snowy mountain town nestled at the heart of the Colorado Rockies. Shortly after I learned to walk, I started to ski, up and down the front street on a pair of neon orange, plastic skis. It was one of those perfect days for skiing in 1977 when my mom bundled me up and took me out to ski for the first time. As I happily made my way through the snow drifts, I wasn't aware that for several years now women of second wave feminism had been fighting for my right to compete in skiing and other sports once I started school. I certainly wasn't aware of the heated emotional battle that had led to the 1972 passage of the Education Act and its Title IX provision prohibiting sex discrimination in federally funded educational institutions (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1994). This year of change also marked the establishment of the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) (Acosta & Carpenter, 1994).

In the years between 1972 and my first ski in 1977, the number of girls participating in high school athletics in the United States increased from 294,015 to 2,083,040 (see Figure 1) (NFHS, 2003). Thus, the struggles of women I didn't even know had opened doors for me before I even set my skis on snow. And there were struggles. Although Title IX was adopted in 1972, a three-year grace period was given to colleges before they were asked to comply. In fact, it was not until the end of this grace period (June 4, 1975) that the regulations were finally published in the *Federal Register* and were set to go into effect on July 21, 1975 (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1994), just two days before I was born! So it was on that day in 1977, as I happily tried out my skis for that first time, that many women who had fought for equality in sports were feeling as if

perhaps we were headed in the right direction. But their relief was premature. Revisions to Title IX continued and enforcement was inconsistent. By the time I was four years old, the number of girls participating in high school athletics had decreased to 1,750,264 (NFHS, 2003). Unfortunately, this number would stay nearly the same as I made my way through elementary school. During these years, the Reagan administration would favor a more conservative interpretation of Title IX. And in 1984, the Supreme Court's *Grove City College v. Bell* ruling would largely kill Title IX (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1994). As I finished up second grade, the number of girls in high school athletics was the lowest it had been in ten years (NFHS, 2003).

I'd like to say that I was aware of these difficulties and struggles as I got kicked out of math class again and proceeded to do cartwheels down the hall to the Principle's office, but I wasn't. After all, there were more important things to think about with the yearly tumbling team show coming around. This compilation of gymnastics and dance performance was my annual claim to fame. I had been a star of the tumbling mats since before kindergarten and would continue to return to the elementary school for guest performances until my sixth grade year. In fifth grade I would perform to Madonna's *Material Girl* (complete with paper money) and in sixth grade to Janet Jackson's *When I Think of You*. As I danced to Janet's rhythmic voice, I don't remember being aware that Ronald Reagan's second term was coming to an end. Liberal feminists were gaining support to fight the battle of Title IX again. Congress passed the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988 and, despite a veto by Reagan himself, the regulations of Title IX would finally truly be realized (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1994). Once again, I was the

benefactor of women's struggles unknown to me. I would enter into junior high athletics at a time when girls' sporting opportunities were increasing.

In a small, mountain town like Leadville one can count the number of coaches with only minimal use of toes, and of the coaches that I encountered only two were not also PE instructors. Of course, with this in mind, I guess it should not have been a surprise that the PE instructor that supervised the tumbling team was also my junior high and high school cross-country running coach. While we had tolerated one another fairly well for the first seven years, the arguments got increasingly worse until during my senior year they became almost unbearable. The pre-run lectures would commonly end with some profound statement about how this experience was not supposed to be fun and that it was only through blood, sweat and tears that we would taste victory. Being the shy, dainty young lady that I had become I would pipe back, "If we have fun, we will win!" He would restate his point, "No Rachel, winning is fun!" And so the argument would go.

I don't remember him arguing like this with anyone on the men's team but perhaps I wouldn't have found this so strange had I known that, like all PE instructors, he tended to treat boys and girls differently and to have different expectations for them (Cheyptor-Thompson et al., 2000). Perhaps he was troubled by our continuing arguments and poured over his physical education journals for suggestions about dealing with female athletes. If so, he likely would have been disappointed as a later study led by Jepkorir Rose Cheypator-Thompson showed that during my high school and early college years, only 4.11% of the common research, theory and practice-based American physical education journals considered gender. Perhaps he did come across a study done in 1988 by Gail Whitaker and Susan Molstad. In this study, 94 high school and 71 college

female basketball players were surveyed to determine their role modeling patterns. Unlike the college athletes, high school players considered female coaches to be better role models. If he had read clear through this study, he may have noted that the findings led the authors to suggest that the importance of women coaches of female athletes seemed to be increasing. But in reality, if studies like these were read by my coach or by the athletic director, their words fell upon deaf ears as I would have only one female coach in high school and she would have a largely volunteer status.

Despite arguments with many coaches, I was deterred little from my athletic goals and fortunately I was not alone. During the years I spent at Lake County High, the number of girls participating in high school athletics steadily increased until it hit an all-time high my senior year (1993-94) (NFHS, 2003). And as I skied to a State and National Title, I wasn't aware of these increasing numbers but I did know, like so many other girls, that I wanted to go on to compete in college. Because of the battles, hard-fought, by liberal feminists, this desire for intercollegiate competition was not a dream, nor a hope, it was a reality.

While in 1972, colleges and universities offered female students an average of 2.5 varsity teams per campus, by 1990 this number had risen to 7.24 (Acosta & Carpenter, 1994). In the years since I started kindergarten in 1981 until I graduated in 1994, the number of women competing in NCAA championship sports had increased from 64,390 to 102,994 (NCAA, 2003). During my senior year of high school alone, 253 new NCAA women's teams had been added (NCAA, 2003).

So as I left the small town and made my way to the University of Denver, it was clear that much progress had been made in allowing women access to college athletics.

However, what the numbers failed to show was that there were still many universities and athletic conferences that had failed to comply with Title IX (Costa, 2003). Lawsuits of the nineties would show that punitive and compensatory damages were available to plaintiffs in cases of intentional violations of Title IX (Acosta & Carpenter, 2000). Thus, throughout my college years, campuses would continue, sometimes reluctantly, to attempt to increase women's athletic opportunities (Costa, 2003).

As I started my first year of NCAA Division I skiing, I thought rarely about Title IX or the successful discrimination lawsuits. Between my academic coursework and my ski training I had time for little else. We trained as a team six or seven days a week and practice would often last for four or five hours. If we had a day off, it was always on a Monday, and so we were never able to leave campus on the weekend. It wasn't long before I was physically, mentally and emotionally exhausted. So it was a cool day, late in the fall, when I called my coach to ask for the weekend off. I hadn't been home since school had started and I wanted to see my family. I will never forget his cold, heart-breaking reply, "Rachel, we're your family now."

I only wish that day that I had been familiar with a brand new book, just published, called *Women, Sport and Culture*. One article in this book, written by Elaine Blinde, focuses on exploitation of the female collegiate athlete. Using previously existing survey and interview data she found evidence for academic, physical, social and psychological exploitation. If I had known of this article, as I read through the section on psychological exploitation, I would have realized that I was not alone. Many interview responses showed that female athletes were not treated as adults, being manipulated and constantly told what they could and couldn't do outside of practice. I would have

understood and maybe gained strength from the quotes of other female athletes discussing the condescending, intimidating, and coddling way in which their male coaches treated them.

But I didn't read this article and as the year went on, the situation only worsened. After the first race of the year, my coach would tell me that I was overweight; he would stipulate exactly how much weight I was to lose before each of the next races. I would substantially limit my food intake, which, with the intense training, would only cause my body to hoard calories and gain weight. I would only have needed to turn back one page in Elaine Blind's article (1994) to see this physical exploitation summarized:

Two potential forms of physical exploitation were identified in the responses of athletes.... The second, which appears to be a growing phenomenon in college sport, related to the imposition of weight limitations/standards and the subsequent development of eating disorders in athletes. (p. 140)

While I managed to avoid a long-term eating disorder, it would take me a full year to recover and come back to my proper race weight.

Throughout my entire freshman year, things would not get better. During our six-week holiday training camp, we would train twice a day, everyday and if I stopped to talk to a friend or teammate, the coach would slap me on the rear with his pole and tell me to get moving. I certainly would have agreed with Elaine Blinde's conclusion that, "... female athletes are victims of more diverse forms of exploitation than male athletes. Not only must female athletes contend with their position of powerlessness as athletes, but they must also exist in a sport structure that devalues and uses them as women" (p. 146).

I think I would not have made it through my freshman year if it hadn't been for my assistant coach. He was a very talented athlete and caring coach from Norway. He would spend hours with us, helping us improve our technique. We would balance on one ski for as long as possible, learning complete weight transfer and commitment. He would say, "Be graceful, pretend you are a dancer." It was him, who made me keep skiing. It was him who we requested as head coach when at the end of the year we finally found voice to express our discontent with the current coach. And it was him who made me realize that not all men coached using the same method. The next three years of my ski career would be magical, fantastic years that I would remember fondly forever and that would leave me knowing that I would never leave the sport of skiing.

So it was with this mindset that I graduated with honors and a degree in chemistry in the spring of 1998. It was with the dream of continuing my ski career that I broke all the rules and chose to go to graduate school in Wyoming. Upon my arrival, it was only a few months before a series of serendipitous events led to my partner and I becoming the volunteer coaches of the University Club Ski Team. We didn't realize at that time that six years later we would still be coaching, that the athletes would become like a family to us and that we would stay in Laramie largely to accommodate this volunteer career. We simply jumped in with both feet and started to coach. We compared notes on our NCAA experiences, talked about flaws in the system, acknowledged other teammates' experiences and put together a very unique training system.

In our system athletes would not be required to come to practice. We felt that if they wanted to become better skiers, they would come. We wanted to help the students become informed athletes, able to structure their own training after college and continue

skiing as a life-long sport. Thus we would always try to explain why we chose the workouts or wax that we did. We wanted not a coach/athlete relationship but instead an equal information sharing relationship. We were interested in having athlete feedback and soon learned that every athlete had individual differences and needs.

It is only now, six years after we began coaching, that I realize the feminist nature of our coaching strategies. Our ideas of getting athlete feedback and acknowledging athlete difference are very much in keeping with Margaret Talbot's (1997) call for the "holistic" treatment of athletes. In her feminist critique of sports science, written only one year before we started coaching, she calls for sports players to be treated, not as human machines, but as whole persons within the context of their sports and everyday lives. In wanting to build informed athletes capable of structuring their own training and becoming life-long skiers we were really echoing Talbot's call for the treatment of athletes as whole, thinking beings and for the use of sport science not only to increase competitiveness but also quality of life. Our desire to steer away from the traditional coach/athlete relationship and toward a more equal information sharing relationship is very much akin to the feminist critique of the traditional positivist notion of the subject/object power dynamic (DeVault, 1999).

With time our unusual coaching strategies would become successful but this would take some adjustment and struggle. The nature of this struggle is perhaps best described by Talbot when she states, "... the danger for women attempting to present alternative models of knowledge and enquiry, is that they may remain separate and marginal to mainstream (malestream) academic and professional activities" (Talbot, 1997, p. 275). At first the athletes, all used to "malestream" systems, had trouble

adjusting to the freedoms that we gave them. However, within three years the system had become successful. Our athletes started to just stop by the house to discuss their future training. If we forgot to explain to them why we were doing something, they would ask. The embroidery on our end-of-the-year gifts changed from Coach Boggs and Coach Watson to Christi and Rachel. And best of all, we would see our graduated athletes out skiing over Christmas break just for fun!

Of course with this success did come a more mainstream type of achievement; our athletes were winning. In 2001, the women won their first USCSA team title in the skate race and we had two individual champions in both the men and women's skate race. In 2002, the young man who won in 2001 defended his title. So it was, as he crossed the finish line in Waterville Valley, NH, that we, as coaches, were feeling like things were going pretty well. As the race finished up and we were packing all the gear into the van, we just happened to overhear our winning athlete talking to a friend. He was talking about us, describing our past racing successes, detailing our coaching and academic credentials. He was truly gloating. Christi and I smiled at each other and listened on... and at the end of his thought, he said in an incredulous voice "... and they're women!"

It was true, and in our haze of success, I don't think Christi and I had given it much thought. In fact I don't think we realized how few coaches were women. In 1972 when title IX was enacted, 90% of women's teams were coached by women (Acosta & Carpenter, 2000). By 1978, only 58% of the women's NCAA teams were coached by women. This number dropped to 52% in 1992 (Acosta & Carpenter, 1994) and to only 45.6% in 2000 (Acosta & Carpenter, 2000). Between 1998 and 2000, only 107 of the 534 new head coaching jobs of NCAA women's teams went to women. In 1992, women

coached only approximately 20% of the co-ed teams, such as cross-country running and skiing (Acosta & Carpenter, 1994). And perhaps the most striking statistic: In 2000, less than 2% of NCAA men's teams were coached by women (Acosta & Carpenter, 2000). So while Title IX vastly increased the number of female intercollegiate athletes, it led to the unforeseen, undesirable loss of women coaches.

The cause of this loss has been perceived very differently by various individuals and groups. In 1988, Acosta and Carpenter mailed out surveys to 400 men and women involved in athletic administration. In the 60% of these surveys that were returned, women perceived the top reason for the skewed gender ratio to be the success of the "old-boys-club". The men, however, perceived the top reason to be the lack of qualified female coaches (Acosta & Carpenter, 1994). In a detailed analysis, Annelies Knoppers argues that the problem stems not from women's lack of interest or qualifications but instead from structural difficulties that women encounter in the institution and workplace. She uses Kanter's three structural determinants of work behavior: opportunity, power and proportion. In terms of opportunity, she explains that women are rarely hired to work in men's programs and they are less likely to receive endorsement in women's programs. There is less of a chance that a woman will graduate into administration and more of a chance that she will have to endure sexual harassment. In terms of power, women have less autonomy and freedom of action; they are less likely to be able to mobilize resources. Finally, proportion, the ratio of men to women, commonly makes women subject to tokenism. Thus, a woman coach or athletic administrator is likely to be overburdened and her mistakes are often taken to typify women in general. Boutlier and SanGiovanni further incriminate structure by pointing to the fact that the liberal feminist push behind

Title IX resulted simply in the absorption of women's athletics by the a male dominated system rather than the restructuring of the system itself. They argue that the addition of women has merely led to more high profile teams, teams with the same structural inequities found in male sports and "... more job opportunities for *white males*" (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1994, p. 106).

It is now six years after I started coaching and only months until the start of a new ski season. I wonder if any young female athletes will be coaching for the first time this season. The statistics paint an almost hopeless picture. But, perhaps the outlook is not so bleak. I believe that despite the struggle that has and continues to characterize women's athletic and coaching experiences, and undoubtedly due in part to these struggles, a feminist standpoint has begun to characterize traditional coaching philosophy. Just as Christi and I failed to notice the feminist nature of our coaching, society as a whole has failed to notice that the standpoint of successful coaching is feminist. I hope in the next section that by comparing coaching literature with feminist literature I can show evidence for the existence of a feminist standpoint in coaching.

PART II: ACKNOWLEDGING THE FEMININE IN COACHING

As I continue to read more literature, not only on women in coaching but also on feminist standpoint theory, an irreconcilable contradiction becomes quite noticeable. Despite the lack of female coaches, the words used in coaching texts and journals to describe the role and characteristics of successful coaches are incredibly similar to those used by standpoint feminists when speaking of feminine character and the hidden work of women.

We can begin by looking at a coaching textbook by Rainer Martens. Rainer Martens, previously a faculty member at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, is the current president of the American Academy of Kinesiology and Physical Education. His textbook, entitled *Successful Coaching* is intended for coaches of all levels and is the most commonly read coaching book ever written. In the beginning pages of this text, Martens leads the reader through the process of developing his or her own coaching philosophy, details coaching styles and outlines the qualities that make a coach successful.

When explaining qualities of a successful coach, Martens states that knowledge of the sport, motivation and finally, empathy are essential. He further describes empathy as, "... the ability to readily understand the thoughts, feelings and emotions of your athletes and to convey your sensitivity to them" (Martens, 1997, p. 15). It is interesting to note that while the first two qualities, knowledge and motivation, are genderless, the third quality, particularly when further described, seems distinctly feminine. In fact it is interesting to compare this discussion with a discussion by Nancy Hartsock in her famous text *Money, Sex and Power* in which she defines the feminist standpoint. It is common for standpoint feminists to use psychoanalytic theory in order to relate perceived gendered systems to early childhood experiences (Jaggar, 1983) and to help suggest a standpoint that is unique to women. In this discussion, Hartsock (1983) keeps with this tradition and focuses on psychoanalytic development of boys and girls. She refers to the work of another feminist, Nancy Chodorow (Chodorow, 1979):

Chodorow concludes that girls' gradual emergence from the oedipal period takes place in such a way that empathy is built into their primary definition of self, and they have a variety of capacities for experiencing another's needs or feelings as their own. Put another way, girls, because of female parenting, are less differentiated from others than boys, more continuous with and related to the external object world. (p. 238)

In a similar discussion of psychoanalytic gender theory, Alison Jaggar (1983) states:

Girls will have relatively less-rigid ego boundaries: they will be more concerned to make connection with others rather than to separate from them, they will be more sensitive to the needs and feelings of others and they will be open to the persuasion and judgments of others. (p. 375)

In further developing a feminist standpoint, many theorists describe not only the psychoanalytic determinants of gender difference but also socially constructed gender roles and the distinctive but often hidden work of women (DeVault, 1999) (Jaggar, 1983). Jaggar describes empathy as the work of women when she restates one of Hartsock's examples, "... it is only from the standpoint of women that household labor becomes visible as work rather than as a labor of love. The same might be said of socializing children, of empathizing with adults ..."(Jaggar, 1983, p. 384). Thus, if we believe Martens' description of a successful coach, the labor of empathizing, previously considered a largely invisible type of women's work, has become visible as a quality of a good coach.

In Martens' discussion of coaching styles, he describes three unique styles. The first two are the dominant (dictator) style and the submissive (babysitter) style. The third, and the style favored by Martens, is the cooperative style. Coaches using this style share decision-making and responsibility with the athletes. They provide leadership, but at the same time they give athletes enough freedom to learn to make their own decisions. It is interesting to compare the characteristics of a cooperative coach with those identified in a study of young girls and boys done by Clersida Garcia (1994). In this study, children were observed while learning fundamental motor skills. Interestingly, the girls were found to interact in a cooperative, caring and sharing manner. In contrast, the boys were found to interact in a competitive, individualized and egocentric manner. Standpoint feminists such as Nancy Hartsock, Sandra Harding and Jane Flax have restated this contrast and pointed to an unconscious masculine preoccupation with separation and domination (Jaggar, 1983). Certainly the qualities described by these researchers and theorists would indicate that a feminine standpoint further characterizes successful coaching with respect to preferred coaching style.

In an earlier section of Martens' text, he helps coaches assess their coaching objectives. He does this by leading the reader through a series of exercises in which he or she prioritizes certain objectives. By the end of the discussion, it is very clear that number one priority of a good coach is to help young people have fun and develop physically, psychologically and socially. Winning, then, is second priority. Ideally, I suppose, every coach would concur with these priorities. However, a study done by Dibrezzo et al. (1994) shows that the coach's gender does influence the placement of these priorities. In this study questionnaires were used to survey female high school

varsity basketball players and their coaches. The following passage summarizes pertinent findings:

Females may put more emphasis on mastery rather than winning. Although there was no mean difference in ratings of competition between male and female coaches, female coaches did rank competition lower than did males.

They also believed that fitness (physically active lifestyle) was a more important purpose of basketball than male coaches believed. (p. 13)

In addition to these findings, athletes coached by males rated competition higher.

Perhaps these results are not surprising when we remember the study by Garcia described above. From the earliest age, the social interaction of boys emphasizes, "... competition, comparison, and willingness to outperform the others" (Garcia, 1994, p. 223). Although they may not come as a shock, these findings do further suggest that a feminine approach has come to characterize good coaching.

Martens shows us, then, that ideally one of a coach's priorities is to help young people develop physically, to become aware of and able to understand their bodies. With this in mind it is interesting to note that throughout history, it has been women, and not men, who are associated with the body (Jaggar, 1983) (Hartsock, 1983). This bodily connection has even at times been described in a derogatory way: women are those ruled by their bodies and not their minds (Hartsock, 1983). Yet it seems that this, sometimes negatively perceived, feminine characteristic of being in tune with the body has also come to characterize successful coaching.

Although Martens' text is the most widely read, there are other books and journal articles that discuss qualities important in successful teams and coaches. For example, studies throughout history have shown that, regardless of team gender, interacting teams with a high degree of cohesion are more successful (Bird, 1977). It has also been assumed that the coach, because of his or her leadership role, can affect team cohesion (Bird, 1977). In this role, the coach would instigate team unity, attempt to pull the players together and help them stick together. Certainly many of the comparisons made between gender studies and cooperative coaching are also pertinent to the discussion of team cohesion. In addition, it is interesting to compare a coach's role in cohesion to Nancy Hartsock's (1983) description of a woman's social construction of self:

Women's construction of self in relation to others leads in an opposite direction – toward opposition to dualisms of any sort; valuation of concrete, everyday life; a sense of a variety of connectednesses and continuities both with other persons and with the natural world. (p. 242)

While this description depicts women as socially constructed toward unity, connectedness, Hartsock describes the psychoanalytic and social development of men as tending toward dualisms, individuation and the construction of barriers to others.

Hartsock (1983) further describes life from the standpoint of women:

Generalizing the human possibilities present in the life activity of women to the social system as a whole would raise, for the first time in human history, the

possibility of a fully human community, a community structured by a variety of connections rather than separation and opposition. (p. 247)

Thus, it seems that the traditionally feminine quality of connectedness also characterizes successful teams and that the successful teams as a group, mirror the type of community that is only accessible from a feminist standpoint.

In addition to testing the influence of cohesion on team success, Anne Marie Bird also explored the type of leadership style that was effective for successful women's collegiate volleyball teams. Bird had hypothesized that athletes would perceive coaches of successful teams as being very task oriented. Interestingly, this prediction only applied to the NCAA Division II players and not to the Division I athletes. The successful coaches of these more highly skilled sportswomen were instead viewed as being socioemotional, providing necessary caring and emotional support. These players' descriptions of their coaches, echo that of Hartsock when she describes women raising children, "To rear children successfully ... women must be sensitive to the changing needs of the child and they cannot remain emotionally detached from their work" (Jaggar, 1983, p. 373). For these teams the traditionally feminine qualities of nurturing and emotional involvement were important to success.

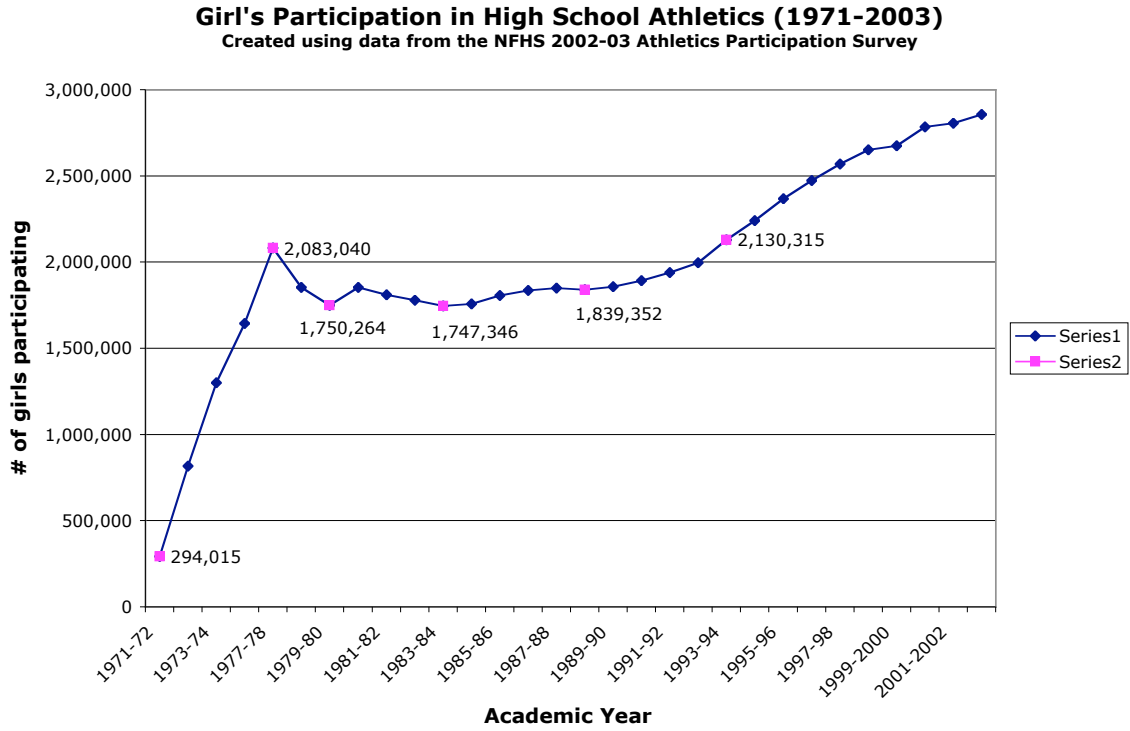
In 1994, a team of researchers performed a study in which 10 NCAA Division I coaches were interviewed in order to identify factors contributing to athlete success (Giacobbi et al., 1994). While the coaches felt that many factors were involved in the success of an athlete, the coaches agreed that getting to know the individual athlete was the most important way that a coach could contribute to that success. This idea that the

most important job of the coach is in forming bonds with and getting to know players, is oddly reminiscent of Marjorie DeVault's (1999) description of the invisible part of housework that involves the construction of relationships. Thus again, work that is very much like the traditionally invisible work of woman is made visible in the job description of a successful coach.

Perhaps these arguments have left you as a reader wondering how any male coach could ever be successful when nearly every facet of good coaching seems to be permeated by the feminine. It surely does seem that a woman would be much more likely to easily adopt the coaching philosophies and practices that have been found to be successful. And the literature comparisons certainly do show that women are not unsuited for coaching, as the statistics would imply. It is, in fact, quite the opposite. But, my goal is not to suggest, in a radical way, the complete takeover of athletics by women coaches and administrators. To make such a sweeping generalization would not allow for differences, cultural or otherwise. It would be irresponsible not to acknowledge that some men are empathetic, cooperative, and feel connectedness to others and the body. In fact, in the study by Garcia (discussed above) a small group of Asian children were observed to be cooperative regardless of gender (Garcia, 1994). This is certainly in keeping with my earlier observations of skiing for a Norwegian coach. Despite this, it would also be irresponsible not to acknowledge that the current philosophies of successful coaching mirror the western, traditional qualities and roles of women. Thus, in acknowledgement of this as well as cultural difference, I believe that it has been through the struggle of both female and some male coaches to subvert androcentric

coaching strategies (Harding, 2004), and the successes of those subversions, that a feminist standpoint has come to characterize successful coaching philosophies.

Figure 1



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