The Work and Professionalization of University Sport Coaches

Alixandra Krahn, PhD Candidate

This study investigates how Canadian sport coaches and sport administrators understand ‘sport coaching’ within the university sport context (USports) as work and ‘sport coaches’ within the USports context as professionals. The terms work, professional and occupation (to name a few) are often used when describing the practice of university sport coaches. However, there is a lack of research investigating the nature of university sport coaching as work or as a profession and even less research on the nature of sport coaching as work or as a profession for women. As such, this study critically examines whether sport coaching within the university sport context is considered work and if university sport coaches are considered professionals, to identify and explore the conditions that frame the daily practices of sport coaches in relation to and within their university (academic and athletic) settings and to explore the gendered and gendering nature of the practices of university sport coaches. This study adopted a qualitative approach and utilized semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis as methods of data collection. This study aims to clarify the work and professionalization of sport coaching specifically in Canada, and broadly within global sport communities. This study is the first of its kind within the Canadian sport landscape and as a result may have important implications for future sport policy considerations as they relate to high-performance sport coaches and highlight important socio-cultural considerations for the documented decline of women in USports coaching.