

THE EXPERIENCE OF A TRANS COACH IN YOUTH BASEBALL

AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

Examinations of women and girls in predominantly male sport spaces are numerous and encapsulate dimensions of identity, belonging, participation, and social reality.

With a dearth of similar research on trans people's experiences, a case study can begin to differentiate alternative dimensions of social phenomena specific to other marginalized genders.

The present study aims to add to the literature centring the transgender experience in sport amid calls for gender equity and inclusion in baseball.

As one of two known transgender coaches at the 18U AAA level in 2023, I had the unique experience of navigating an environment where **my expertise made me an insider, but my identity made me an outsider**. The tension between those realities is the starting point for this research.

OBJECTIVE

To answer the research question:
"What are the social conditions experienced by a transgender coach in high-performance youth baseball?"

METHODOLOGY

This project is an autoethnographic study to critically assess the sociocultural and political orientations, narrative themes, and impacts of institutional norms on a trans baseball coach.

I analyzed the content of the following materials:

- electronic communications
- field notes
- journal entries
- structured self-interviews

The value of pursuing this method of research is situating critical analysis within my own social, economic, and political alignments, with attention to those of the institution itself. The end product is a marriage of **first-person narrative with theoretical analysis of dramaturgical gender and economic power dynamics** within a baseball organization.

ANALYSIS

There is a connection between each of the major findings, in that **they each work to uphold the others and ultimately disincentivize attempts at change**.

- Where the institution is motivated by repeat enrolment in its high-performance program, its success is also contingent on the **marketability of its coaching staff**.
- If the athletes' families carry biases against the coaching staff based on who they believe is best suited to develop their children's skills, they work to **undermine their legitimacy**.
- Some athletes' non-adherence to established team norms in the absence of a cis man signal an **internalized social hierarchy that subordinates non-men** despite their positions of power.

CONCLUSION

My coaching experience is characterized by interpersonal **mechanisms of social hierarchy maintenance** and **gender-based discrimination** that was upheld as necessary by members of the baseball community **in pursuit of a marketable product**.

FINDINGS

