

Role Conflict among High School Teacher-Coaches: A Review of the Literature

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Abstract

The multitude of demands placed on today's high school teachers who also serve as athletic coaches often lead to significant role conflict, compelling them to prioritize one role over the other. This literature review is part of a broader research study aimed at informing leaders, influencing policy, and enhancing practices for high school teacher-coaches. Specifically, the review investigates the dual roles and responsibilities of secondary public-school teacher-coaches, employing role theory as a theoretical framework to explain their decision-making processes. Key findings from the literature indicate that teacher-coaches frequently experience role conflict between their educational and athletic responsibilities, which can lead to stress and burnout. Despite this recognition, gaps remain in understanding the nuanced ways in which role theory contributes to the dynamics of role conflict among teacher-coaches. Specifically, existing research often overlooks how contextual factors, such as school culture and community expectations, intersect with role theory to shape these conflicts. By addressing these gaps, this study seeks to provide deeper insights into the complexities of the teacher-coach role and to contribute to more effective strategies for supporting these educators.

Keywords: role conflict, athletic coaches, teacher-coaches, high school coaching

Introduction

The twofold roles of today's high school teacher-coaches, those who both teach an academic subject and coach athletics, are frequently unbalanced. The host of demands required of them often causes a problematic role conflict in which they must rank one role over the other (Austin, 2017; White et al., 2017). This dual concentration often hampers a teacher-coach's ability to fulfill the daily responsibilities of both teaching and coaching (Conner, 2019; Conner et al., 2018; Hamilton & LaVoi, 2017; Stacy, 2014).

There is a gap in the literature caused by a lack of research in the modern educational era that includes teacher-coaches teaching core subjects instead of traditional teaching positions held

by coaches such as social studies or PE. Much of the literature on teacher-coaches has not been considered for content-area teacher-coaches even though there is an extensive history of social studies teachers as athletic coaches. Many studies from this decade and the two previous decades reference seminal studies of Kahn and Katz (1952), Maslach and Jackson (1976), and Sage (1987), all conducted before national Common Core Standards and the standardized testing movement initiated by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001.

This literature review is part of a larger research study that aims to inform leaders on the conflict teacher-coaches exhibit, change policy regarding teacher-coaches and their teaching and coaching schedules and improve practice. What follows is a collection of research on teacher-coaches relating to role theory and the dual responsibilities of teacher-coaches.

Role Theory

Role theory is a framework in sociology and psychology that explores how individuals behave according to the roles they occupy within social structures. It asserts that roles are expectations linked to specific positions, guiding behavior, and identity (Mead, 1934; Linton, 1936). Role conflict arises when competing demands from different roles lead to stress or confusion (Kahn et al., 1952), often occurring when one role's expectations contradict another's, such as balancing work and family and maneuvering the roles of teacher and coach. Related to role theory is role strain, the difficulty of fulfilling a single role's demands such as a teacher-coach who has been assigned to teach a state-tested subject. Also related to role theory is role ambiguity, which refers to unclear role expectations such as a teacher-coach who is told he was hired to teach science but also told his job security is based on team wins. (Biddle, 1986). Together, these concepts illustrate the complexities of managing multiple social roles and can be a considerable stressor.

Franks (2007) traced the term "role" to Shakespeare's theater, where it referred to the actors' lines on paper, illustrated in the monologue "All the World's a Stage" from *As You Like It* (Shakespeare, 2016, 2.7.146). Shakespeare's character suggests that people play various roles throughout life, culminating in old age. Franks (2007) asserted that these multiple roles lead to diverse behaviors, forming the basis of role theory.

Role theory examines how individuals behave within specific roles and the expectations tied to them. Emerging in the mid-20th century, early scholars like George Herbert Mead (1934) and Ralph Linton (1936) introduced the concept of "role" to describe social functions adopted in

different contexts. Their work emphasized that roles arise from social interactions, shaping individual behavior and identity.

The theory was further developed by sociologists like Talcott Parsons (1951), who argued that societal stability depends on individuals fulfilling roles based on norms. Parsons contended that society operates effectively when people comply with established roles, such as parent or teacher. Thus, role theory provides a framework for understanding how individuals navigate complex social environments.

Role theory provides a valuable framework for analyzing the complexities faced by individuals who occupy multiple roles, such as academic teachers who also coach athletics. These dual roles often come with distinct and sometimes conflicting expectations, pressures, and responsibilities. By applying role theory, it becomes easier to understand the challenges that these individuals encounter. By examining role expectations, pressures, conflicts, and consequences associated with these roles, role theory highlights the complexities of balancing multiple professional responsibilities. The insights gained from applying role theory can help educators and administrators design strategies to support teacher-coaches, reducing role strain and enhancing both educational and athletic outcomes (Richards, Andrew, et al., 2014).

Role Expectations

Role expectations refer to the socially constructed norms and behaviors associated with a particular role (Biddle & Thomas, 1966; Grace, 1972). The role expectations of teaching are often incompatible with the role expectations of coaching (Locke & Massengale, 1978a; Millslagle & Morley, 2004), but these expectations can come from differing sources. The individual may place expectations on themselves for each role that can “conflict between the ideal and the actual” (Grace, 1972, p. 7). The self-imposed expectations may either be because of perceived expectations from the outside or expectations placed upon their own set of high standards and values. School, community, or societal expectations may also be concerning such as when the role expectations for one role may be incompatible with the role expectations of the other. Administrative leadership, school climate, program funding, and even government guidelines may contradict themselves, all leading the teacher-coach to experience role pressures (Grace, 1972). Role theory presumes that expectations are the major generators of roles, these expectations are learned through experience, and that role occupants are aware of the expectations they hold (Biddle, 1986).

These expectations are communicated through formal guidelines, cultural norms, or informal social interactions. When individuals take on a role, they internalize these expectations, which guide their actions and decisions (Biddle, 1986). In some cases, individuals may face explicit instructions about their roles, such as a job description, while in other instances, expectations may be more subtle, emerging through social cues and interactions.

For instance, teachers are expected to provide education, maintain discipline, and foster student development, while doctors are expected to promote health and offer expert medical advice. Role expectations create a blueprint for how individuals should behave in particular contexts, ensuring that societal functions remain consistent and predictable (Katz & Kahn, 1978).

Teacher and coach are two separate roles that demand differing skill sets and have differing role expectations; one should not assume the same person will be successful in both roles (Chelladurai & Kuga, 1996). Because accountability structure and praise often favor coaching, many teacher-coaches prioritize this role and retreat from the other. Teacher-coaches may believe that they matter more or differently than teacher-non-coaches because they receive specific accolades for their coaching processes that are not available to teacher-non-coaches for quality teaching (Ryan, 2008).

Role Pressures

Role pressures often synonymous with “role strain,” occur when the demands and expectations of a role become burdensome or overwhelming. One such pressure is when the behaviors are prescribed. Role prescription is a set of behaviors designated as moral, religious, aesthetic, scientific, legal, or economic. It is a synonym for norm when describing a covertly held prescription, and a synonym for demand when describing an overtly held prescription. Prescriptions may be deemed negative if they forbid behavior and positive if they permit behavior (Biddle & Thomas, 1966). Role ambiguity occurs when there is a lack of clarity for role expectations and priorities (Guinn, 2018). Ambiguous roles often lead to confusion and unwarranted stress and are often the result of a lack of communication or sometimes from change. Role overload is the reaction that occurs when the demands of two or more roles are more than the individual can bare. Role overload is considered the main cause of role conflict (Biddle & Thomas, 1966; Guinn, 2018).

This pressure may arise from internal desires to meet role expectations or external demands from superiors, colleagues, or society. For example, teachers may face pressure to meet

curriculum standards while also managing classroom behavior and meeting individual student needs. As these expectations increase, individuals may feel constrained by the need to balance conflicting demands (Biddle, 1986).

Role pressures can also be magnified when individuals hold multiple roles. A person who is both a teacher and a parent may feel stressed by the demands of both roles, each requiring significant time and energy. As pressures intensify, individuals may struggle to perform their roles effectively, leading to feelings of frustration and burnout (Goode, 1960).

Role Conflict

Role conflict occurs when an individual faces incompatible demands from different roles or when a single role presents conflicting expectations. This conflict can arise from multiple sources: for instance, work-family conflict occurs when professional obligations interfere with family responsibilities (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Similarly, within a single role, teachers may experience role conflict when asked to prioritize both academic achievement and emotional well-being of students, which can be challenging to balance.

Role conflict can also emerge from mismatched personal values and role expectations. If a person's internal beliefs contradict societal expectations, it can create tension and discomfort. Resolving role conflict often requires negotiation, compromise, or re-evaluation of priorities to ensure that competing demands are appropriately managed. Role conflict ensues when people play more roles than they can fulfill based on their time, energy level, or abilities. Role conflict can cause role retreatism when a person devotes more time and energy to one role while the other role suffers. It can also cause role compromise and role conformity. People can predict which role a person chooses by the way the person prioritizes the role. Roles are placed in order of importance. "Actors" often choose roles that are at the top of their list over other roles that are more closely tied to the person's identity (Richards et al., 2014).

Role Retreatism

Role conflict can cause role retreatism, also called role distancing, when a person identifies more strongly with one role and devotes more time and energy to that role while the other role suffers (Franks, 2007; Richards et al., 2014; Stryker, 2008). Researchers have found that to minimize role conflict and circumvent burnout, teacher-coaches frequently and often unknowingly ordered one role over the other through a commitment disparity or withdrew from one social role through role retreatism (Millslagle & Morley, 2004; Ressler et al., 2016).

Conner (2015) reported teacher-coaches admitted to not assigning class projects or papers due to the limited time they had to grade such assignments because they had chosen to “retreat” to their coaching roles. They also professed to “teaching shortcuts,” (p. 134) especially when teaching standards in the school in which they taught were higher. Some teacher-coaches managed role conflict by withdrawing from their teaching role during coaching season and acknowledged retreating and spending more time in their coaching role (Ressler, et al., 2016; Millsagle & Morley, 2004). People can predict which role a person chooses to retreat to and from by the way in which the person prioritizes the role, as they are placed in an order of importance (Richards et al., 2014). When teacher-coaches perceive a role conflict, participants consistently prioritize their coaching over their teaching. In-season coaches experience greater levels of role conflict due to the number of extra hours put into the workweek (Kahn, 1964, as cited in Conant, 2017). Various studies propose that role retreatism toward coaching results from an unbalanced reward structure favoring the coaching role (Konukman et al., 2010; Kwon et al., 2010; O’Connor & MacDonald, 2002; Richards & Templin, 2012).

Role Compromise

Role conflict can also result in role compromise. Role compromise refers to an action that is partially but not entirely consistent with both sets of prescriptions (Biddle & Thomas, 1966). Grace (1972) calls this a “redefinition of the situation.” In this case, the role conflict acts as a catalyst for change in the areas that are most confounding. From restructuring routines and reordering priorities to renegotiating with one’s employer and adjusting outside role demands, role compromise is a positive attempt at a resolution that satisfies both roles. Role compromise is a positive reaction to conflict that potentially “give[s] rise to productive transformations” (Getzel as cited in Grace, 1972, p. 8).

Role Conformity

Finally, role conflict can also result in role conformity, when an individual’s actions agree with what is prescribed by a norm or a demand. Conformity may be reached by meeting the prescriptions held by the individual himself or herself or the prescriptions held by someone else such as an employer or spouse (Biddle & Thomas, 1966). Conformity is the desired behavior of many employers and organizations. Often, the individual conforms to gain approval, conforming to the expectations and pressures of those people perceived as significant (Franks, 2007; Grace, 1972).

Consequences

The consequences of role strain, pressures, and conflicts can be profound, influencing both individual well-being and societal functioning. Role strain can lead to stress, burnout, and diminished job satisfaction (Biddle, 1986). For instance, teachers who face constant role pressures may feel overwhelmed, leading to emotional exhaustion and decreased performance (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The intensity of unresolved role conflict is associated with tension at work, job dissatisfaction, and a lack of confidence in superiors and the organization (Capel et al., 1987; Chelladurai & Kuga, 1996; Conant, 2017; Conner, 2019; Devasagayam, 2014; Grace, 1972; Joan et al., 2017; Kahn & Katz, 1952). Prolonged role conflict and strain can also contribute to mental health issues, such as anxiety or depression, as individuals struggle to meet conflicting demands (Goode, 1960).

On a societal level, when individuals consistently fail to meet role expectations, the stability of social institutions can be undermined. In work environments, unresolved role conflicts can lead to decreased productivity, higher turnover rates, and fractured team dynamics (Katz & Kahn, 1978). However, when effectively managed, individuals can adapt to role pressures and conflicts, finding creative solutions to balance multiple roles, leading to personal growth and strengthened social bonds.

Locke and Massengale (1978) proposed that role conflict is foreseeable when role expectations and responsibilities attached to each position may lead to role pressures that force the individual to make a larger commitment to one role over the other. Role conflict can result in role retreatism, role compromise, or role conformity. It is this conflict and lack of balance that often leads teacher-coaches to retreat to the coaching side of their dual roles for the sake of their teaching responsibilities (Conner, 2019; Millslagle & Morley, 2004; Rosse-Richards & Richards,

The Evolution of the Teacher-Coach

Over the last century, high school athletics have increased, while Physical Education (PE) courses and the number of PE teachers have declined. As a result, many athletic coaches now teach non-PE courses with heavier workloads. Despite this shift, literature still focuses on PE teacher-coaches where researchers recognize their area-specific knowledge in nutrition, strength training, and team building but identify little experience with planning, organizing, and implementing age-appropriate content (Brown & Sieben, 2014; McGladrey et al., 2014; Richards et al., 2014).

Figone (1994) traced the evolution of the PE teacher-coach to the Athletics are Educational Movement (AEM) from 1906-1916. Before AEM, teachers focused on health and hygiene, but athletics were incorporated into schools with the creation of the Intercollegiate Athletic Association in 1906, later becoming the National Collegiate Athletics Association. By the 1920s, varsity and intramural sports reshaped physical education, and by 1929, nearly every state required PE instruction. Universities began offering coaching courses in the 1930s.

By 1934, 51% of secondary students were in PE, and WWII furthered the transformation as sports became linked to national defense, giving rise to the profession of coaches and trainers (Figone, 1994). Brown and Sieben (2014) noted that PE was traditionally the content area for coaches but observed a shift, with many now teaching other subjects, such as social studies.

The Evolution of the Social Studies Teacher-Coach

The first teacher-coach was Thomas Arnold, headmaster of Rugby School in England, who emphasized Christian manliness through rugby and a classical curriculum in the 1830s (Neddham, 2004). Arnold's approach influenced the United States of America social studies curriculum adopted by the National Education Association's Committee of Ten in 1894, which emphasized Greek, Roman, and American history (Stacy, 2014). The Committee of Seven later revised the curriculum to include ancient, medieval, modern, and American history, maintaining a male-centered perspective (The Committee of Seven, 1899, as cited in Stacy, 2014).

In the early 1900s, social studies and athletics became tools for social reform (Stacy, 2014). Leaders like Luther Gulick believed teamwork fostered democracy, prompting James Naismith to create basketball as a team sport reflecting these values. Naismith viewed coaching as a way to engage the masses in democracy and fitness.

Coaching became professionalized at the college level in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, leading to the development of PE departments in secondary schools. However, the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 shifted funding to math and science, reducing the focus on social studies. At the same time, the professionalization of coaching grew with many pre-service teachers choosing social studies as an easy path to becoming coaches. This shift led to a male-dominated coaching staff, as social studies education often took a backseat to athletics, and winning became the priority (Stacy, 2014). The rise of the NCAA and athletic scholarships further solidified the teacher-coaches' focus on coaching over teaching, a trend that continues today.

With revised graduation requirements in many states that began as early 2018, many students choosing career and technical education (CTE) programs, for example, only need two social studies classes instead of four. Additionally, because there are substitutions for PE such as marching band or JROTC, there are fewer coaching positions found in the social studies and PE departments (Louisiana Department of Education, 2019). For instance, while Louisiana requires 1.5 credits of PE to earn a diploma, Texas, Arkansas, and Alabama require 1 credit (Alabama State Department of Education, 2018; National Association of State Boards of Education, n.d.; Texas Education Agency, n.d.). Mississippi only requires half of a credit (Mississippi Department of Education, 2023). This means more of the secondary coaching staff find themselves in required classes deemed “important” by students, parents, and administrators .

Seminal Studies

Locke and Massengale (1978) conducted one of the earliest studies examining the roles of the teacher-coach. They contend that teacher-coaches were easily affected by role conflict, asserting that role conflict may arise “when one person occupies several roles that demand incompatible behavior (inter-role conflict)” or “when a person occupies a single role for which different groups demand incompatible behavior (intra-role conflict)” (p. 162). Locke and Massengale argue that the exceptional strains of coaching separate from teaching may worsen the inter-role conflict teacher-coaches experience. Researchers concluded that teacher-coaches who perceived and experienced the most load conflict, conflicting demands resulting from the combined responsibilities of teaching and coaching, were particularly susceptible to role overload.

Templin and Anthrop (1981) examined inter-role conflict whereby the teacher-coach is subject to "two or more contradictory role expectations whose stipulations a person cannot simultaneously meet in behavior" (p. 183). Results indicated that although they said they were hired as a teacher, the emphasis on winning changed their priorities to coaching. Additionally, teacher-coaches say they "are seldom fired for teaching inadequacies" (p. 186). Other teachers view teacher-coaches as incompetent and believe the teacher-coach is quick to hide behind the role of coach whose only expectation is to win and not teach.

In his seminal study, Sage (1987) focused on the teacher-coach's feelings and attitudes about being a teacher-coach and the multiple role demands of the profession. He focused on male coaches because there were too few females to make a comparative study. Sage notes that

because there is so much emphasis on athletics, high school teachers who coach athletic teams have far different career contingencies than do teachers with other extracurricular assignments. They also must struggle with a unique set of demands and pressures. Sage looked at role theory to help understand his findings and argued, "the underlying principle behind different role expectations for each position is that a division of labor enables the goals of the organization to be accomplished" (p. 215).

Additionally, Sage noted there is little public evaluation for teachers or their students. Similarly, coaching carries specific roles; however, much of the job is completed after school, in the evenings, and at weekends. "Typically, a coach will spend 30-40 hours per week just on his or her coaching duties" (p. 218). In addition to planning practices, preparing for and coaching games, studying film, and providing team transportation, the coach is expected to win. Public evaluation of coaches occurs regularly, and the most common communication with the administration is based on the coach's wins and losses. Sage described the expectations of two separate jobs that are sandwiched into one, noting that in his observations, he often heard others comment, "I don't have time for that," "I'm too busy," or "I'm running behind" (p. 215).

Sage's research showed that role expectations for the positions of teacher and coach result in a great deal of interrole conflict for teacher-coaches. Time was the greatest concern for teacher-coaches, and when pushed to choose one role over the other, most teacher-coaches chose to coach. Teacher-coaches cited job security as the reason for choosing coaching over teaching, knowing that they were more likely to be fired for their losses than for their students' classroom performances.

Capel, Sisley, and Desertrain (1987) explain the relationship between role conflict, role ambiguity, and burnout in coaches. Results indicate burnout to be at a low to medium level and role conflict and role ambiguity were the only two variables consistently related to burnout. Additionally, personal accomplishment was best explained by the years of experience the head coach held. The researchers reported there are no published studies predicting the relationship between role conflict, role ambiguity, and burnout in coaches. However, Capel et al. (1987) alleged "studies of burnout in coaches have not shown burnout to be a severe problem, yet the literature suggests that burnout is of concern in athletic environments" (p. 109). This is one of many 1980s studies on this topic that exemplifies the changes to the education and coaching fields.

Common Themes in Contemporary Studies

Contemporary research studies on role conflict among teacher-coaches reveal several common themes related to the challenges they face in balancing dual responsibilities and the implications for their professional lives. These studies which were built upon the foundational work of earlier scholars such as Locke, Massengale, and Sage and highlight the complex nature of the teacher-coach role. Contemporary researchers continue to investigate how these dual responsibilities affect various aspects of a teacher-coach's life, including competing expectations, time management, and impact on student outcomes.

Role Conflict and Competing Expectations. Multiple studies underscore the inherent conflict arising from teacher-coaches' dual roles. For instance, Zadorozny (2023) and Conner (2019) emphasize the struggle between teaching responsibilities and coaching obligations, often leading educators to prioritize one role over the other. This tension is echoed in Meller, Gaudreault, and Fadale (2020), where the conflicting values and expectations associated with teaching and coaching were evident in the experiences of both veteran and novice teacher-coaches. The teacher-coaches will experience role expectations, predominantly self-imposed, but also expectations from their head coach, their principal, as well as other outside forces. These expectations will cause role pressures related mostly to role overload from having "too much" on their plates and "not enough" time to do it all (Locke & Massengale, 1978a; Millslagle & Morley, 2004).

Time Management and Work-Life Balance. Role conflict ensues when two or more sets of pressures, such as teaching demands and coaching demands, occur concurrently wherein complying with one leads to an inability to comply with the other (Kahn, 1964, as cited in Conant, 2017). Several studies highlight the significant time demands placed on teacher-coaches. Yang et al. (2021) found that principals, like teacher-coaches, often struggle with work-family conflict due to time constraints. Similarly, Iannucci (2018) noted that teachers juggling multiple subjects face challenges that complicate their time management, which can lead to burnout. Guinn (2018) suggests that effective scheduling and planning can mitigate some of these issues, but many teacher-coaches report exhaustion and stress due to insufficient time for both teaching and coaching roles. Sage's (1987) research from nearly 40 years ago speaks to the same 30-40 additional hours per week that coaches are still putting in today. One major difference, though, is that many of these coaches are no longer teaching PE classes and now teach content courses. Role

overload is the reaction that occurs when the demands of two or more roles are more than the individual can bare. Role overload is considered the main cause of role conflict (Biddle & Thomas, 1966; Guinn, 2018).

Perceived Value of Roles. The perception of the value of teaching versus coaching is another prominent theme. Meller et al. (2020) found teacher-coaches had differing views on their roles: one valued teaching more, while the other felt more appreciated in his coaching capacity. Conner (2019) and Camiré et al. (2017) also discuss how societal values often favor athletics over academics, further complicating the experiences of teacher-coaches and contributing to role retreatism, where they might choose to focus more on coaching to gain recognition. Role retreatism occurs when a person identifies more strongly with one role and devotes more time and energy to that role while the other role suffers (Franks, 2007; Richards et al., 2014; Stryker, 2008). When teacher-coaches perceive a role conflict, they consistently prioritize their coaching over their teaching. Various studies propose that role retreatism toward coaching results from an unbalanced rewards structure favoring the coaching role (Konukman et al., 2010; Kwon et al., 2010; O'Connor & MacDonald, 2002; Richards & Templin, 2012).

Impact on Student Outcomes. “Coaches have more impact on the lives of young athletes than parents, teachers, peers, schools, and religion” (Austin, 2017). While some studies like Egalite (2015) show no significant difference in student achievement related to teacher-coaches, other research indicates that the dual role can influence the quality of interactions with students. Sarchet (2021) discusses how teacher-coaches build social capital by engaging with student-athletes in both academic and athletic contexts, suggesting that while role conflict exists, there are potential benefits to students from these dual interactions. Sarchet says “the teacher-coach who thrives on the dual role, working with student-athletes in the classroom and on the playing field, are an asset in both domains” (p. 26) because they are about to educate the entire student, mind and body. Unfortunately, there are too many teacher-coaches who do not thrive in both domains at the expense of student learning.

Support Systems and Solutions. Change is the consequence of role conflict, and that change may not always be positive and will not always resolve the conflict. Research suggests that addressing role conflict requires systemic support. Sarchet (2021) recommends mentorship programs and professional development focused on time management to help teacher-coaches navigate their responsibilities effectively. Cullen (2023) echoes this sentiment, suggesting that

administrators play a crucial role in supporting teacher-coaches through better communication and understanding of their cyclical experiences of role conflict. Additionally, Conner & Bohan (2018) emphasize the importance of community support and coping strategies in preventing burnout among teacher-coaches.

Longitudinal Perspectives. Some studies, like the longitudinal work of Conner & Bohan (2021), emphasize the evolving nature of role conflict throughout a teacher-coach's career. This perspective suggests that teacher-coaches may navigate these challenges differently at various stages, highlighting the need for adaptive strategies in teacher preparation and ongoing professional development.

Conclusion

The synthesis of these studies illustrates the complex landscape of role conflict faced by teacher-coaches, characterized by competing expectations, time management challenges, and the need for supportive structures. Addressing these issues is critical for enhancing the experiences of teacher-coaches and improving outcomes for both educators and students.

This review of literature aimed to explain the unique phenomenon of the teacher-coach. Additionally, much of the literature on teacher-coaches has not been considered for content-area teacher-coaches even though there is an extensive history of social studies teachers as athletic coaches thus creating a gap in the literature.

While role theory explores the impact of multiple roles on individual behavior, there is limited research specifically addressing how female high school teacher-coaches navigate the dual responsibilities of teaching and coaching. Studies could focus on how these roles interact and influence their professional identity, well-being, and job satisfaction. There is insufficient exploration of the support systems available to teacher-coaches, including administrative support, peer collaboration, and professional development opportunities. Understanding how these support structures influence role fulfillment and conflict could provide valuable insights.

Most studies on role theory and teacher-coaches are cross-sectional, providing a snapshot of their experiences at a single point in time. Longitudinal studies could offer deeper insights into how teacher-coaches' roles evolve and how they adapt to changing circumstances. Finally, there is a lack of comparative research examining teacher-coaches in different educational contexts (e.g., public vs. private schools, urban vs. rural settings) to understand how these environments shape role perceptions and experiences. Gaps remain in understanding the nuanced ways in

which role theory contributes to the dynamics of role conflict among teacher-coaches. Specifically, existing research often overlooks how contextual factors—such as school culture and community expectations—intersect with role theory to shape these conflicts. Addressing these gaps could provide deeper insights into the complexities of the teacher-coach role and to contribute to more effective strategies for supporting these educators.

Teacher-coaches experience role conflict with their whole being, devoting most of their lives to a dual profession that most, even those in education, will never fully understand. They experience role conflict as members of an interconnected web of other teacher-coaches who are both co-workers and rivals. They experience role conflict through sacrifices of their health and their relationships for student-athletes in the pursuit of not only a win but also a “coachable moment.” Until the educational system decides to split the role of the high school teacher-coach into educators who coach and educators who teach, all administrators can do is attempt to lessen the burden of both by supporting them as much as possible.

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