

Stories of Developing Critical Praxes: Introspections into Coaches' Learning Journeys

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

Competitive youth sport does not occur in a vacuum, and societal changes impact coaches' practices. Researchers have called for a paradigm shift for coaches to become more socially responsible and adopt a critical praxis. The purpose of this dissertation was to advance our current understanding of critical praxis development within competitive youth sport, through narrative introspections into coaches' learning journeys. Anchored in cultural sport psychology research, this dissertation was guided by a relativist ontology, a social constructionist epistemology, and narrative inquiry methodology. The critical positive youth development framework (Gonzalez et al., 2020) was used to explore coaches' critical praxes and critical consciousness development in sport.

In Article 1, I explored coaches' challenges and successes in creating safer and more inclusive sport spaces. The coaches felt responsible for enacting change in sport while questioning when it was okay to intervene, feeling burnt out, and finding success with their critical actions. Composite creative nonfictions were developed to reflect the individual and shared experiences in developing their critical praxes as coaches. The coaches shared a desire for in-situ support for unpacking their biases and understanding complicated social issues in sport.

In Article 2, a 15-month collaboration is detailed, whereby I acted as a personal learning coach to support a competitive Nordic ski coach's (Sophie) critical praxis as they reflected on social issues and acted to enact positive change in their sport context and community. As suggested by Rodrigue and Trudel (2019), my role as a personal learning coach was guided by the narrative-collaborative coaching approach (Stelter, 2014) to focus on Sophie's narratives and co-create knowledge. From working together during two competitive seasons, Sophie's learning journey is presented through time hopping snapshot vignettes as they figured out what to fight

for, grew through discomforts and unknowns, and experienced progress in their critical consciousness-building.

An autoethnographic account is presented in Article 3 to detail how I ‘ran with’ becoming a personal learning coach for two competitive youth sport coaches, Sophie and Zoe. Through reflexive, evocative, and analytical writing, three salient experiences are presented, including how I used my ‘full’ biography to be(come) a personal learning coach, focused on the intricacies of relationality, and learned how to understand my limits as a researcher-participant acting as a personal learning coach. The complexities involved in co-learning between researchers and coaches are narratively explored.

Collectively, this dissertation contributes to cultural sport psychology research with the use of the critical positive youth development framework and the narrative-collaborative coaching approach to explore coaches’ varying levels of critical consciousness. Through creative analytical practices, narratives are shared of coaches’ who are working to create safer, more inclusive competitive sport spaces. Researchers, sport leaders, and coaches are all responsible for looking inwards, challenging biases and assumptions, and advocating for a transformed competitive youth sport system that is safer and more inclusive for all.

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my place and privilege as a settler on this Land and honour the Peoples and cultures of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation.

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Statement of Contributions

I, Sara Kramers, was responsible for (a) conceptualising this research; (b) collecting data; (c) analysing data; and (d) writing the full dissertation. My thesis supervisor, Dr. Martin Camiré, (a) refined the organisation of this research; (b) contributed interpretations of the findings; and (c) provided revisions and feedback; and (d) reviewed the dissertation in its entirety. Dr. Camiré is a co-author of Articles 1, 2, and 3.

Mx. Sophie Carrier-Laforte contributed to this project as a participant in the collaboration detailed in Article 2. After the collaboration ended and data analysis began, Mx. Carrier-Laforte provided informed consent to co-author Article 2. Their responsibilities involved: (a) taking part in the 15-month-long collaboration; (b) reviewing and refining the creative nonfiction vignettes; and (c) contributing to the writing of Article 2.

Thesis advisory committee member Dr. Corliss Bean reviewed the creative nonfiction stories in the prologue and epilogue and engaged in discussions on the findings of Articles 1 and 2 as a critical friend. With Dr. Bean, thesis advisory committee members Dr. Diane Culver and Dr. Tanya Forneris provided feedback during the proposal stage of the research. They also helped to reconceptualise the research design with the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Michel Milistetd and Dr. François Rodrigue also provided valuable feedback through multiple meetings on my role as a personal learning coach, as detailed in Article 3. Moreover, Dr. Milistetd acted as a critical friend to encourage more profound reflections *of* my reflections and my actions while I acted as a personal learning coach.

This research was examined, approved, and renewed by the University of Ottawa Office of Research Ethics and Integrity (#H-09-21-7318; Appendix A). Informed consent was obtained from all human research participants (Appendix B).

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List of Abbreviations

ACD	Advanced Coaching Diploma
BLM	Black Lives Matter movement
CAC	Coaching Association of Canada
CAP	Creative analytical practices
CNF	Creative nonfiction
CoP	Community of practice
COVID-19	Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2
CPYD	Critical positive youth development
CRT	Critical race theory
CSP	Cultural sport psychology
ICCE	International Council for Coaching Excellence
MPC	Mental performance consultant
NCC	Narrative-collaborative coaching
NCCP	National Coaching Certification Program
PLC	Personal learning coach
PYD	Positive youth development
SIRC	Sport Information Resource Centre
TTM	Transtheoretical Model

List of Appendices

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List of Definitions

It is recognised that many of the concepts and terms used within this dissertation are multifaceted and complex. Language use is dynamic as concepts constantly evolve over time. Nevertheless, for consistency and coherence purposes, some definitions are provided, which were drawn from the sport psychology, coaching science, and social justice literature.

Term/Concept	Definition
2SLGBTQ+	An acronym representing Two Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer people. An increasing number of different identities, including intersex, nonbinary, pansexual, questioning, asexual, and more, are included in the '+' sign for consistency and simplicity. (Egale, n.d. a)
Activism	A wide-ranging and intentional problem-solving action where individuals and groups challenge the status quo, identify discrimination and social injustice, and attempt to bring about positive socio-political and environmental change at an individual and systemic level. (Cooper et al., 2019; Klar & Kassir, 2009)
Advocacy	Intentional actions to bring about change in how individuals, communities, and institutions treat equity deserving groups. (Fietzer & Ponterotto, 2015)
Anti-racism	An active process of changing practices, organisational structures, systems, and policies by recognising and eradicating racism with the purpose of ending disparities across society, such as in sport, education, and health systems. (Roche & Passmore, 2023)
Assumptions and biases	Unconscious and unexamined assumptions and biases are cognitively developed to create automatic judgements of individuals and groups based on what is known and assumed, shaped by personal experiences, cultural norms, media, and social interactions. Assumptions and biases can be presented through opinion, preference, and prejudice often leading to microaggressions and unfair treatment of individuals and groups. (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, n.d.; Canadian Women & Sport, n.d. a)
Athlete-centred coaching	Collaborative coaching approach that emphasises and centres an athlete's agency, responsibility, initiative, and learning. (Pill, 2017; Willson et al., 2022)
Biography	Per Jarvis' (2006, 2007, 2008) lifelong learning theory, the accumulation of an individual's previous experiences that impacts their current understanding of the world.
Burnout	The psychological syndrome of chronic stress and exhaustion of physical and/or mental strength. (Smith, 1986)

Coaching philosophy	A complex organisation of a coach's values, beliefs, attitudes, and norms that are produced through practice and influenced by social structures in and beyond the coach's sport context. A coach should critically question the underlying ideology that informs their coaching philosophy and the assumptions that guide their coaching practice. (Cushion & Partington, 2016; Nash et al., 2008)
Competitive youth sport	Highly organised, selective, and structured sport programs that are focused on young athletes mastering skills, training extensively, and excelling from a performance standpoint. (e.g., Harwood & Thrower, 2019; Trudel & Gilbert, 2006; Woods & Butler, 2021)
Critical action	Per Gonzalez et al.'s (2020) critical positive youth development (CPYD) framework, critical action refers to activism and advocacy-related efforts related to addressing social oppression and marginalisation.
Critical consciousness	Per Freire (1973), critical consciousness (conscientization) is a cyclical process of critical reflection, reading, and dialogue in manners that enable individuals to realise social problems and act against oppression and social injustices. In the Gonzalez et al. (2020) CPYD framework, critical consciousness involves critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action.
Critical praxis	An integral aspect of critical consciousness; an iterative process of combining knowledge and action with critical reflection. (Freire, 1973)
Critical reflection	Per the Gonzalez et al. (2020) CPYD framework, critical reflection refers to understanding how oppression is created and sustained through systems of power.
Criticality	A 'way of seeing' that requires individuals to deeply reflect and understand their biases, histories, assumptions, and lived experiences. Criticality occurs through unpacking why/how one acts and questions the status quo within their sociocultural spaces. (Lynch et al., 2022; Rizvi, 2011)
Culture	Per Jarvis' (2006, 2007, 2008) lifelong learning theory, the attitudes, beliefs, emotions, knowledge, skills, and values that individuals have added to their biography.
Dialogue	A symbol and action of freedom, equality, and responsibility that occurs through interaction and the discovery and transformation of the world. True dialogue requires individuals to mutually engage in critical thinking and have faith, hope, humility, love, and trust. Through dialogue, individuals of different experiences, identities, and power interact for transformation on a personal and social level. (Freire, 1973; hooks, 1994)
Discrimination	Differential behaviour and treatment that denies individuals or groups equal treatment and opportunity without merit due to personal

	characteristics and group membership. (Canadian Women & Sport, n.d. b)
Discursive practices	Discourse refers to a historically situated and ever-fluctuating social system that produces ways of thinking, meaning, and doing. Discursive practices can be understood as active discourses, how individuals draw on various discourses to identify and produce value, meaning, and power (Hook, 2001). Discourses and discursive practices are used in sport to resist social change, diversity, and inclusion. For instance, the discursive practice of ‘speech acts’, underpinned by discourses of colour- and gender-blindness in sport, refers to using the language of diversity without enacting change. (Spaaij et al., 2020)
Disjuncture	Per Jarvis’ (2006, 2007, 2008) lifelong learning theory, a varied, complex, and idiosyncratic experience that is inconsistent with an individual’s current understanding of the world (biography). An individual may experience change and learning after experiencing disjuncture and disharmony with their biography. Disjuncture may occur through experiences of cognitive thinking, pragmatic acting, and affective feeling.
Diversity	Refers to internal and external differences that are considered socially meaningful among a group, such as one’s gender and sexual identity and expression, age, race, education, (dis)ability, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic background. (Cunningham, 2022; Petry et al., 2022)
Empowerment	Empowerment is not an automatic or spontaneous action and requires individual, organisational, and societal action for individuals to have equal and equitable participation. Emphasis is on strengthening an individual’s assets, knowledge, and skills and developing one’s capacity building. Power must be critically addressed when considering empowerment. Empowerment requires engagement in critical dialogue and consciousness-raising, while material changes are also made to address inequity and oppression. (Freire, 1973; Petry et al., 2022)
Equality	The process of allocating and distributing the same resources, programs, or assistance to all people. (Canadian Women & Sport, n.d. b; Lynch et al., 2022)
Equity	Treating people of all identities equally and providing resources, programs, and making decisions based on one’s individual needs and circumstances, with the underlying acknowledgement that power is not equally distributed. (Canadian Women & Sport, n.d. b; Lynch et al., 2022)
Equity deserving groups	A collective term to acknowledge the underrepresentation and challenges of individuals and groups, including but not limited to 2SLGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, girls and women, Black people, Indigenous Peoples, and racialized people. This term

	is not homogenous, as there are different intersectional identities, cultures, and experiences among individuals who are equity deserving, who will have diverse experiences in seeking social justice and equity. (Canadian Women & Sport, n.d. b; Garbutt, 2020)
Ethnicity	A socially constructed and multifaceted concept of the cultural heritage that ascends from a group of people's cultural social customs, traditions, beliefs, and behaviours. Ethnic groups are shaped by specific geographical, historical, linguistic, religious, and racial uniformity. (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, n.d.; Woods & Butler, 2021)
Gender	A socially constructed role, behaviour, expression, and identity, often perceived as a woman/man binary but is extensively diverse (e.g., genderfluid, nonbinary, trans, feminine and masculine categories). One's gender identity includes multiple features of intersecting sexuality, femininity, and physicality. (Egale, n.d. b; Hargreaves & Anderson, 2016)
Harmony	Per Jarvis' (2006, 2007, 2008) lifelong learning theory, harmony refers to when an individual experiences a situation that is consistent with their current understanding of the world (biography).
Heteronormative	An exclusive worldview whereby individuals who are heterosexual are considered to have the preferred and normalised sexual orientation. (Canadian Women & Sport, n.d. b)
Homophobia	Specific discriminatory attitudes, feelings, and actions towards 2SLGBTQ+ individuals, which can lead to contempt, hatred, and prejudice. (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, n.d.)
Inclusion	Implicit and explicit valuing of individuals because of their diversity, where a sense of connectedness and belonging is established for all individuals to be their true selves. Authentic and empowering actions are necessary for enhancing inclusion, whereby barriers are removed to ensure equitable access, resources, and participation for all. (Anderson et al., 2023; Canadian Women & Sport, n.d. b; Cunningham, 2022)
Indigenous Peoples	Within Canada, Indigenous Peoples is a collective and umbrella term to refer to individuals and groups of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples who are the traditional guardians of the unceded, never-surrendered land and territories within Turtle Island. Respectively, this term is not homogenous, as Indigenous Peoples have unique and diverse cultures, languages, heritage, and history and have diverse experiences of discrimination, cultural genocide, and eradication. (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, n.d.)
Intersectionality	Per Crenshaw (1989, 1991), a way to examine how social identities and roles are cumulative, intersectional, and overlapping (e.g., gender, race, disability) and are impacted by interdependent systems of discrimination and exclusion.

Learning	Per Jarvis (2006), learning is “The combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person—body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses)—experiences social situations, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the individual person’s biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person.” (p. 134)
Liberation	A replacement of current systems that oppress some and give power to others, so that all people can be empowered and experience agency. (Lynch et al., 2022)
Marginalisation	The silencing and exclusion of individuals who are not in the dominant social group of power based on their intersectional identities (e.g., race, gender, culture). (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, n.d.)
Mental health	Varying definitions are provided in sport research, though many acknowledge individual (e.g., reaching a state of well-being, coping with everyday stressors), social (e.g., family history, social support), and environmental considerations (e.g., policies and rules, sport culture). (Canadian Centre for Mental Health and Sport, n.d.; Lundqvist & Andersson, 2021)
Misogyny	Rooted in patriarchal societies, misogyny is the hatred, contempt, and prejudice against girls, women, and feminine individuals, shown through exclusion, discrimination, and violence. (Canadian Women & Sport, n.d. b; Lynch et al., 2022)
Narratives	Embodied resources that shape how humans feel, emote, and engage in culture and social interactions. An individual uses narrative to construct their stories, as a template to scaffold one’s learning and understanding of what is real, what actions should be avoided, and what actions are worth doing. Narratives are also ‘actors’ and can interact with humans by acting on, in, and for people. (Frank, 2010, 2013; Smith & Monforte, 2020)
Newcomer	A collective term to identify individuals who are recent immigrants, refugees, or undocumented persons. However, each individual new to Canada will have diverse settlement circumstances and barriers, including access to health care, education, sport, and being included in society. (NewYouth, n.d.)
Oppression	The controlling, subordination, and devaluing of an individual or group with a specific social identity due to unquestioned biases and socialised experiences. Critical consideration is needed to move beyond oppression and towards empowerment in recognising how power is controlled and distributed. With an understanding of one’s oppression and their oppressors, an individual can engage in dialogue with others to become empowered and accepted human being. (Egale, n.d. c; Freire, 1970, 1973)

Political efficacy	Per the Gonzalez et al. (2020) CPYD framework, refers to the belief in one's ability and capacity to bring about social change.
Power	A circulating force and pervasive dynamic relation that influences an individual's power, which must be critically recognised and acknowledge to become productive and not oppressive. (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; Freire, 1970, 1973)
Privilege	Unearned social advantages, benefits, or statuses of respect that an individual is afforded due to their perceived and actual intersectional identities and belonging to specific social groups, as well as the societal rules and norms. (Egale, n.d. c; McIntosh, 1998)
Race	Racial categories are socially and culturally constructed, often by socially dominant groups, to form meaning in a social context. Racial identities and groups are often subjugated to discrimination and defined as racially inferior, reflecting how certain attributes, including height, eye shape and colour, and skin colour, are positioned within a less and more inferior social hierarchy. (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, n.d.; Woods & Butler, 2021)
Racism	Beliefs, ideas, and practices that establish, maintain, or perpetuate the racial superiority or dominance of one group over another. The individuals and groups who experience racism are often part of an ethnic and racial group that is marginalised and excluded in society. Racism occurs through individual, institutional, and systemic actions and behaviours. (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, n.d.; Egale, n.d. c; Woods & Butler, 2021)
Reflection	Conceptualised as a purposeful and actionable non-linear process that involves a person's full biography, occurs through critical introspection and questioning, examines the related sociocultural contexts, and cumulates into change. (Cropley et al., 2019; Knowles et al., 2014; Moon, 2004)
Reflexivity	Involves critical introspection and questioning of the impact of a researcher's personal identities to acknowledge and enhance self-awareness of personal biases, backgrounds, and interests. Through reflexivity, individuals can challenge issues of self-identity, representation, and social position within research without marginalising others. (McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Schinke et al., 2012; Sparkes, 2002)
Safer sport contexts	Recognising that sport will never be completely safe, safer sport refers to the continuous involvement to changes in sport and society, and the maintenance of physical and environmental safety (e.g., preventing harm from proper equipment), psychosocial safety (e.g., use of inclusive and affirming language), relational safety (e.g., protection from maltreatment), and the optimisation of sport (e.g., creating an inclusive environment). A safer sport context is one where individuals recognise and acknowledge forms of harassment, maltreatment, and abuse, and intentional work towards

	empowerment. (Canadian Women & Sport, n.d. b; Gurgis et al., 2023; Vella et al., 2022; Willson et al., 2022)
Settler	Non-Indigenous individuals who, as such, have acquired unearned advantages through the societal and historical displacement and demotion of Indigenous communities. (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, n.d.)
Sex	While assigned sex is often conceptualised as a female/male binary, the identity is inclusive of individuals who are intersex, assigned female at birth, and assigned male at birth. (Egale, n.d. b)
Sexism	The belief that one gender or sex is inherently superior to the other, typically espoused through prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination against girls, women, and feminine individuals. (Canadian Women & Sport, n.d. b; Lynch et al., 2022)
Sexual orientation/attraction	Sexual orientation/attraction identities are wide-ranging, such as lesbian, gay, heterosexual, and bisexual. Many 2SLGBTQ+ identities fall into more than one category of gender identity and expression, assigned sex, and attraction, such as Two Spirit, queer, and questioning. (Egale, n.d. b)
Social issues	Per Kochanek and Erickson (2020), social issues broadly refer to “societal trends and social identity-related constructs that emerge in a given context” (p. 2-3), with the intention of focusing on social dynamics and constructions that oppress and harm individuals.
Social justice	A process and a goal of recognising and raising awareness about oppression and diversity while striving for equal opportunities and embracing equity, diversity, and inclusion for all people. (Bell, 2016; Camiré et al., 2022; Newman et al., 2019)
Stereotype	Implicit and explicit preconceived generalisations of a group of people, promoting that all individuals within the same group have similar characteristics, beliefs, and behaviours, without recognising individual differences. (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, n.d.)
Stories and Storytelling	Personally, culturally, and socially produced stories are used to understand, give meaning, represent, and communicate one’s lived experiences. Though ‘stories’ and ‘narratives’ are often used interchangeably, Frank (2010) explained that narratives are “not in itself a story, and stories can be collected into types of narratives” (p. 200). When an individual tells a story, they pull from sociocultural narrative resources available to them and use their bodies to express their storytelling, such as through changes and movement in their hands, eyes, and voice. Individual’s bodies may also shape stories, such as listening to a ‘gut feeling’ and using this embodied experience to inform and share specific stories. Storytelling can never be finalised, as the individual telling the story and the story itself can and will change over time. (Frank, 2010, 2013; Smith & Monforte, 2020; Smith & Sparkes, 2009)

Time	Per Jarvis' (2006, 2007, 2008) lifelong learning theory, the process of learning can happen through interactions an individual has with the past, present, and future. The timing of an individual's episodic experiences impacts one's learning.
Transformative action	An individual or a group engaging in intentional, liberatory change to societal systems through critical consciousness and social justice. (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001)
Well-being	From a positive psychology perspective, well-being refers to "people's emotional responses, domain satisfactions, and global judgments of life satisfaction" (Diener et al., 1999, p. 277). Coaches' well-being may be facilitated through basic psychological needs satisfaction, a lack of basic psychological needs thwarting, and self-determined motivation. A state of psychosocial and emotional well-being impacts an individual's daily life, social interactions, and ability to contribute to their community. (Canadian Centre for Mental Health and Sport, n.d.; Lundqvist & Andersson, 2021; Norris et al., 2017)
White privilege	'Unearned assets' provided to white and white-passing individuals because of the dominance of white people (and white supremacy) in Western society. White privilege is enacted and sustained through the creation of social and legal structures for white people's benefit. White privilege is detrimental to the well-being and justice of racialized people. (McIntosh, 1988)
Whiteness	An ideology, a way of being, and a structuring property within the social world. Individuals who are perceived and self-identify as white are positioned with advantages and power that are often invisible to the individual and greatly visible to racialised and 'non-white' people. There are many individuals who experience whiteness that also experience discrimination and marginalisation due to their intersecting identities (e.g., class, gender, ethnicity, religion, age, geographical origin). (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, n.d.; Roche & Passmore, 2023)
Xenophobia	Fear, prejudice, and hatred of individuals who are perceived as 'strangers' or 'foreigners' or of anything that is considered 'strange' or 'foreign' (e.g., religion, food, attire). (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, n.d.)

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CHAPTER I: Literature Review

Proem

Have you ever sat beside someone who (annoyingly) pauses the movie every two minutes to explain the deeper connections and themes that are unsaid? Have you watched a friend or family member cry so easily during emotional scenes that happen in life, books, TV shows, movies, and even commercials? Have you ever listened to someone share a story through long, winding, difficult-to-follow explanations that jump from point A to point Z? I am that person. I feel everything deeply and am empathetic to a fault. To promote dialogue, compassion, and empathy (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Smith, 2016) the stories shared within this dissertation are vulnerable, emotional, and raw. My dissertation is narratively presented to showcase the stories of my doctoral research and my Ph.D. experiences. I am a proud storyteller; I love pulling on threads, digging deeper into the possible meaning behind narratives, and searching for clues and connections. A meticulous effort was spent to ensure the threads from the stories shared in this dissertation come together to build a rich tapestry of meaning.

I encourage you, the reader, to draw on your own experiences with storytelling while flipping (scrolling) through these pages. Whose stories are often shared and celebrated in sport, and whose are not? If you often hold the microphone, like I am, how might you pass it along to someone whose voice is silenced? Can you relate to the shared narratives of experiencing gendered barriers, of feeling uncertain in addressing social injustices, of feeling exhausted from trying to make sport 'better', of engaging in critical action for social change, of feeling more confident in your ability to be an advocate for social justice in sport? As you begin to read this dissertation, I encourage you to take a deep breath and get comfortable. Open your mind to stories of awareness, reflection, and action for *transforming* competitive youth sport.

Introduction

Within Canada, sport is often seen as an “integral component of health and culture” (Sport Information Resource Centre [SIRC], 2022, p. 6). From grassroots to high-performance programs, sport *may* provide benefit to youth participants but may also lead to negative experiences and outcomes, such as injury, burnout, psychological distress, and maltreatment (e.g., Coakley, 2016; Owusu-Sekyere et al., 2022). Canada’s competitive sport systems are experiencing a cultural reckoning that has reached federal government levels (Canadian Heritage, 2023; Ibrahim, 2023), with inquiries into financial and governance transparency (e.g., Hockey Canada), adherence to safe sport policies (e.g., Gymnastics Canada), and equitable compensation for athletes (e.g., Canada Soccer). National sport organisations in Canada receive funding from Sport Canada. In 2021 and 2022, 66 national sport organisations received funding totalling over \$160,000,000 (Canadian Heritage, 2022).

Competitive sport contexts are highly selective, structured, and performance-driven, putting high demands on participants (e.g., Trudel & Gilbert, 2006). A conceptual shift in competitive sport is occurring as athletes, coaches, and organisational staff expose social problems that have been ignored or covered up for years (e.g., Ewing, 2022). The concept of sport coaching at the competitive level has evolved from a focus on winning to integrating elements that optimise how sport can be used as a vehicle for social change and personal development (Camiré et al., 2022; Norman, 2018). Researchers have explored the complex impacts of COVID-19, racism, and mental health, demonstrating how sport does not occur in a silo and competitive athletes are greatly impacted by sociocultural phenomena (e.g., Camiré, Sabourin et al., 2022; Newman et al., 2023). Following the COVID-19 pandemic, coaches are also traversing new waters, where athletes may need additional support and strengthen their

coping skills (Santos et al., 2021). Changes are needed in competitive youth sport to allow for the integration of alternative coaching practices that centre youth athletes' well-being, health, and psychosocial development in caring and respectful environments (Denison et al., 2017; Gearity et al., 2023).

Sport is considered an integral part of Canadian culture and identity (True Sport, 2022), and as such, it does not exist in a vacuum. Societal changes impact coaches' practices (Dorsch et al., 2022). Societal movements and social issues are entangled with/in sport, including, but not limited to, issues of gender inequity (e.g., LaVoi, 2016; Norman, 2022), racism (e.g., Gurgis et al., 2022; Love et al., 2019), exclusion of 2SLGBTQ+ athletes and coaches (e.g., Caudwell, 2022; Kavoura & Kokkonen, 2021), and maltreatment of athletes' physical/mental health and well-being (e.g., Gurgis et al., 2022; Vella et al., 2022). Underlying this conceptual shift is the expectation that coaches become reflective practitioners capable of being critical of reproduced biases and assumptions in sport (e.g., Cushion, 2018; Tinning, 2022). Governing bodies, sport organisations, and on-the-ground sport stakeholders (e.g., coaches, athletes) have shared their expectations for a transformed sport (e.g., Ewing, 2022), although changing the sport culture is a long and enduring process. Cultural sport psychology (CSP) researchers have also called for youth sport coaches to become more socially responsible and adopt a critical praxis (i.e., combining knowledge and action with critical reflection; Freire, 1973) to effect positive social change (Kochanek & Erickson, 2019, 2021). Coaches' critical consciousness can be strengthened with an enhanced awareness of oppressive social conditions and the critical action needed to change such conditions (Freire, 1973; Gonzalez et al., 2020). However, more research is needed to understand how coaches develop their critical consciousness within sport contexts, and how coaches' awareness of social issues in sport and their confidence to enact positive social change

can be better supported. Therefore, through this dissertation, I aimed to advance the current understanding of critical praxes development within competitive youth sport, through narrative introspections into coaches' learning journeys.

Review of the Literature

The literature review is organised into three sections. First, the literature on social justice in sport is reviewed. Second, youth sport as a context for psychosocial development is explored, including critical approaches to youth sport. Third, the literature on coach learning and reflection is reviewed, including the roles that are established to support coaches' development.

Social Justice and Sport

The multifaceted construct of social justice is difficult to define as a single concept (Walton-Fisette & Sutherland, 2018), existing as both a respectful, collaborative, and agency-fostering process and an equitable sport participation goal (Bell, 2016). Within youth sport, Newman et al. (2019) postulated that social justice includes “raising awareness about oppression and diversity, striving for equal opportunities for all people by ensuring access to resources, services, and information, and opening spaces so all groups can participate in decision making at different levels of citizenship” (p. 167). As society is stratified, divided, unequal, and structured so that all people are connected in systems of oppression and inequality, individuals must act toward social justice critically (Harrison et al., 2021; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). Social justice occurs through the acts of critically conscious individuals who work towards liberation, replacing current systems that oppress some and give power to others so that all people can experience agency and be empowered (Lynch et al., 2022). CSP researchers Camiré et al. (2022) summarised social justice as “embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion, while recognising the roles of privilege and power” (p. 1062).

To foster social justice, individuals should engage in criticality. Criticality is a ‘way of seeing’ that requires individuals to reflect and understand their biases, histories, assumptions, and lived experiences deeply. Criticality allows individuals to (a) unpack why/how they act, (b) question the status quo within their sociocultural spaces, and (c) find an inclusive alternative for everyone (Lynch et al., 2022; Rizvi, 2011). Indeed, acts of social justice must involve both critical reflection and action to address power, privilege, and oppression and attain Paulo Freire’s (1970, 1973) concept of *conscientização*, or critical consciousness. Critical consciousness is a cyclical process whereby individuals critically reflect on how their identities are socially, culturally, and politically situated to act against oppression and social injustices (Freire, 1973; hooks, 1994). The iterative process of critical praxis, a combination of reflection and action, is thus an integral part of the critical consciousness needed to address oppression (Freire, 1973).

In line with CSP researchers Kochanek and Erickson (2020), within this dissertation, social issues broadly refer to “societal trends and social identity-related constructs that emerge in a given context” (p. 2-3), with the intention of focusing on social dynamics and constructions that oppress and harm individuals. United with this view of social issues, Kochanek and Erickson (2020) highlighted the need for an intersectional approach for addressing social issues in sport. First theorised by Crenshaw (1989), intersectionality addressed the limitations and harm of viewing social identities as “mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis” (p. 139). Instead, with an intersectional lens, social identities and roles are viewed as cumulative and systems of oppression are understood as individually experienced (Crenshaw, 1991). Based on an individual’s intersectional identities, their experiences are affected by interactions with dynamic and connected societal systems, including racism, sexism, capitalism, ableism, colonialism, climate change, access to mental health support, and more. Using an intersectional lens enables

researchers to explore the differences of coaches' and athletes' sport experiences and understand how to address overlapping issues of power and oppression (Callow, 2022; Simon et al., 2022).

Researchers have explored many social issues in sport, acknowledging sport as political and impacted by the embedded structures of systems and power that divide individuals, oppressing some and giving power to others (Love et al., 2019). For instance, gender equity has been broadly studied in sport, including how women coaches experience, navigate, and overcome gender inequity (LaVoi, 2016; Norman, 2022). Some competitive coaches believe in social movements for gender equity (e.g., #MeToo movement to empower women who have experienced sexual violence) but remain afraid of false accusations and require education and support to become equipped to address gender inequities in sport (Tam et al., 2021). Nonetheless, sport is considered a gendered, ableist, ethnocentric, masculine, and heteronormative context, where few individuals are often positioned as superior and gatekeepers of power (e.g., Blodgett et al., 2015; de Haan & Knoppers, 2020; Schinke et al., 2019). Coaches may create a more inclusive environment for athletes with diverse identities by asking (and properly using) preferred pronouns and chosen names, proactively adapting the sport space to be safe and inclusive (e.g., restrooms and locker rooms), and implementing training and policies grounded in inclusion (Herrick et al., 2020; Morris & Van Raalte, 2016; Robinson et al., 2023).

The Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) considers a diverse coaching environment one that “acknowledges the differences in age, gender, education and background... individual’s unique life experiences, qualities, and characteristics” (n.d. a). Diversity can be presented at a surface level, including assumed observable differences (e.g., race, age, ability) and at a deep level, including identities and values that are expressed only when shared (e.g., gender identity, religion). Biases and assumptions of who ‘belongs’ in sport drive exclusive and discriminatory

behaviours (Gearity & Henderson Metzger, 2017; Gurgis et al., 2023; Spaaij et al., 2020). An coaching culture that focuses on inclusion “embraces, respects, and values differences in people regardless of gender, age, racial background, Aboriginal background [sic], disability, or sexual orientation” (CAC, n.d. a). Sport may be a vehicle for enhanced inclusion, but it also has embedded gender, racial, and ableist hierarchies, which foster exclusion through the pervasive discourses of whiteness, elitism, heteronormativity, and masculinity (Petry et al., 2022; Spaaij et al., 2014). For example, Muslim girls and women often experience marginalisation in sport through the policing of hijab-wearing and stereotypes of not being interested in sport participation or competition (Dagkas et al., 2014). Notably, inclusion is a broad and complicated concept that does not have an end goal or finish line (Dagkas & Armour, 2012). Sport is inherently competitive, with rankings to separate ‘winners’ from ‘losers’, the selection and deselection of athletes, and the cumulation of a sole champion athlete or team. As inclusion may be difficult to achieve within competitive youth sport, coaches and sport stakeholders should strive for more inclusive efforts that respectfully centre athletes’ needs and well-being.

To create safer sport spaces, anti-racism efforts should address and resist discriminatory discursive practices of colour-blindness, self-victimisation, and traditional speech acts that claim sport is a level playing field (Hylton, 2010; Spaaij et al., 2020). Safer sport also requires a safeguarding approach, where individuals’ human rights are promoted and protected in sport through the prevention of maltreatment and impairment (Gurgis et al., 2023; Owusu-Sekyere et al., 2022; Rhind & Owusu-Sekyere, 2018). In their attempts to develop a conceptual framework of safe sport based on stakeholders’ perceptions, Gurgis et al. (2023) found that safe sport contexts continuously evolve to changes in sport and society and maintain environmental and physical safety (e.g., preventing harm from equipment), relational safety (e.g., protection from

maltreatment), and the optimisation of sport (e.g., creating an inclusive environment). Recommendations have also been made to promote athletes' psychological safety at an individual and group level, which refers to "the perception that one is protected from, or unlikely to be at risk of, psychological harm in sport" (Vella et al., 2022, p. 15). At an individual level, coaches can support athletes' developmental outcomes and experiences, destigmatise mental health issues, and foster athletes' development of well-being within and beyond sport (e.g., Bissett et al., 2020; Henriksen et al., 2020). At a group level, coaches can facilitate positive connections with/between athletes, dually focus on athletes' performance and learning, and foster a positive social sport climate (e.g., Bean & Forneris, 2016; Bean et al., 2018). Importantly, coaches and sport stakeholders should consider how safer sport content encompasses physical, psychological, social, emotional, and cultural considerations, and that striving for safer sport recognises how there is no final destination for safe sport.

Explicit and intentional focus on athletes' mental health and well-being is important in competitive sport contexts as athletes may experience psychological distress, injury and burnout, performance pressures, and identity foreclosure, all while training and competing in a high-performance, high-stress environment (Poucher et al., 2021; Purcell et al., 2020; Rice et al., 2016). Athletes and coaches may be impeded from seeking help for their mental health within sport cultures and organisations where mental illness and help-seeking are stigmatised (Bird et al., 2018; Kerr & Stirling, 2017; Kegelaers et al., 2021; Olusoga et al., 2019). For example, competitive sport coaches may experience performance (e.g., doubt of coaching ability, athlete injuries), organisational (e.g., job insecurity, interpersonal conflict), and personal stressors (e.g., reduced social life, feelings of isolation), which can negatively impact their mental health and well-being (e.g., Kim et al., 2020; Norris et al., 2017; Olusoga & Thelwell, 2016).

Addressing social justice issues in sport requires a critical approach (e.g., Bishop et al., 2023; Camiré et al., 2022; Gonzalez et al., 2020; Schinke et al., 2019; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). First, individuals supporting social justice in sport should develop an awareness and understanding of how imbalances in power are enacted at individual and structural levels. Second, individuals should critically reflect and inquire about how knowledge is socially created, gatekept, and informs normative discourses in sport. Third, individuals should build from their critical reflections and shifts in their attitudes to develop the confidence and political efficacy for critical action towards socially just sport, such as through activism and advocacy efforts. Activism in competitive sport is not always welcomed. Athletes are often publicly criticised for campaigns of protest, lose sponsorships or their athletic position, are ostracized within/beyond their sport, and experience strain on familial relationships, and then may receive applaud for their bravery after the consequences have been given (Boykoff, 2022; Kaufman, 2008). However, sport can be(come) an ideal avenue for fostering social justice activism (Kaufman & Wolff, 2010). Activism in sport has a profound impact on society if we consider that, “the mere fact that athlete activism is so widely provocative speaks to the ways in which it can, and often does, leave an indelible imprint upon the public consciousness” (Sappington et al., 2019, p. 2).

Research within American intercollegiate sports suggests that student-athletes’ intentions and willingness to engage in social justice activism are significantly affected by their attitudes, perceived behavioural control, and subjective norms (Mac Intosh et al., 2020). Building positive and supportive relationships may shape athletes’ attitudes and behaviours around engaging in activism and advocacy (Fuller & Agyemang, 2018; Martin et al., 2022). Coaches should be committed and motivated to enhancing their critical awareness and confidence to enact positive social change, to support their athletes’ activism and advocacy (Gonzalez et al., 2020; Lynch et

al., 2022). Activist approaches that are grounded in feminist theories (e.g., Fine, 2007) and critical pedagogies (e.g., Freire, 1970, 1973) may help coaches work with young athletes as they: (a) create a safer space and build relationships; (b) co-identify barriers to sport in the community; (c) co-imagine alternative possibilities to address barriers; and (d) work collaboratively to foster more socially just sport through critical praxis (Lynch et al., 2022). By fostering a safer and more socially conscious sport context, coaches and athletes can adopt a ‘sporting activist identity’ within sport by acting as role models, advocating for equitable sport access, and creating opportunities for marginalised individuals to access quality sport (Smith et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2022). Moreover, coaches and athletes may adopt a ‘political activist identity’ by advocating for social change beyond sport (Smith et al., 2016).

However, it must be acknowledged that social justice issues are not considered relevant by all coaches or sport stakeholders in competitive sport. Through surveying sport coaches’ perceptions on topics that most affected them, their team, and their community, Newman et al. (2021) found that mental health (6.5%), race/diversity (1.9%), disabilities (1%), and LGBTQ+ (0%) topics were rated the least important in the participants’ sport contexts. The majority of the participants in Newman et al.’s (2021) study self-identified as male (80%) and white (89%), which reflects the lack of diversity often occurring within competitive coaching contexts (e.g., Joseph et al., 2021). When coaches resist or neglect social change in sport, they contribute to normative coaching practices of sport being for white, heterosexual, non-disabled men and shape organisational cultures that exclude equity deserving coaches and athletes (Gearity & Henderson Metzger, 2017; Kulick et al., 2019; Spaaij et al., 2020). Developing a greater awareness of one’s privilege may lead white coaches to favourably shift their attitudes towards addressing social justice in sport, better understand how LGBTQ+ athletes and coaches experience exclusion, and

increase the prospect of engaging in anti-racist behaviours (Bishop, Turgeon, et al., 2023; Gearity et al., 2023). Collectively, more research is needed on/with coaches who believe social justice issues are relevant in their sport context (Kochanek & Erickson, 2019, 2021; Tam et al., 2021).

Athlete Psychosocial Development through Youth Sport

Sport is enjoyed in different ways by people across the globe. Within this dissertation, the focus was on competitive youth sport, which refers to organised programs that are highly structured, selective, and focused on skill development (e.g., Harwood & Thrower, 2019; Trudel & Gilbert, 2006). Youth athletes train extensively to improve their performance in local/regional, provincial, national, and international competitions. Varying terms are interchangeably used to describe competitive sport contexts and coaches, such as ‘elite’, ‘expert’, and ‘high-performance’ (e.g., Swann et al., 2015). Youth athletes exist within a dynamic sport system of “interdependent persons (i.e., parents, siblings, peers, and coaches) and contexts (i.e., organisations, communities, and societies) that have the potential to influence or be influenced by an athlete’s behaviours, attitudes, experiences, and outcomes in youth sport” (Dorsch et al., 2022, p. 106). Competitive youth sport contexts were explored in this dissertation due to the vast amount of time the coaches spent with their athletes to develop relationships, shape the sport culture and climate, and impact athletes’ developmental experiences and outcomes (Dorsch et al., 2022).

Positive Youth Development

The role of a competitive sport coach has evolved from a sole performance-focused approach on technical, tactical, and physical skill development to also fostering athletes’ psychosocial and personal development (Holt, 2016). This holistic coaching method to youth sport aligns within the positive youth development (PYD) framework. The PYD framework represents a strengths-based, flexible, and relationally centred approach with a focus on

supporting youth as they develop assets, strengths, and life skills through appropriate developmental opportunities (Catalano et al., 2004; Geldhof et al., 2013).

Over the last two decades, the use of the PYD framework has expanded our understanding of how youth may experience psychosocial development through sport (Bruner et al., 2022; Holt et al., 2017; McLaren et al., 2021). To advance sport psychology research, researchers have made calls for exploring development through youth sport from a more critical approach. The current use of the PYD framework may present a neoliberalist and narrow approach to psychosocial development, where athletes' individual growth and productivity outweigh opportunities for experiential and relational learning (Coakley, 2016; Ronkainen et al., 2021). The PYD framework may also present a functionalist view of sport, where status quo norms are not questioned, and discrimination, marginalisation, and social injustices are not directly addressed (Gonzalez et al., 2020; Kochanek & Erickson, 2020; Woods & Butler, 2021). In detailing the ontological limitations of the PYD framework, Camiré et al. (2023) also suggested that researchers using the PYD framework include a transformative and social justice approach to sport and critically explore how 'development' in sport is operationalised. Moving forward, more studies on critical approaches to PYD and coaching are needed.

Shifting to Critical Approaches for Positive Youth Development

Researchers have suggested the utility of critical race theory (CRT) for exploring competitive youth sport contexts, to explain how racialised norms are created, maintained, and resisted in sport (Hylton, 2018; Kochanek & Erickson, 2020; Love et al., 2019). Kochanek and Erickson (2020) proposed three broad principles of CRT be used when exploring PYD through sport, including (a) the centrality of race and racism within sport, (b) the critique of liberalism while also amplifying the voices of racialized people, and (c) the commitment to purposeful

social justice. To foster social transformation in sport, the organisational culture of sport must shift alongside changes in coach curricula and professional development (Meir, 2020). As coaches' critical praxis may shift along a continuum of less and more awareness and confidence to enact social change, each minor change towards transformative coaching is important (Kochanek & Erickson, 2019, 2021). As suggested by Kochanek and Erickson (2019), a coach's critical praxis development may be impacted by their positionality and biography (e.g., experiences, knowledge, values; Jarvis, 2006), the social justice issue or topic of question (e.g., with their current level of understanding), and their sport context (e.g., working with or against status quo cultures and norms).

Gonzalez et al. (2020) developed the critical positive youth development (CPYD) framework to move beyond the limitations of the PYD framework and directly consider the impacts of systemic inequity, marginalisation, and oppression of youth (see Appendix C). The CPYD framework offers a critical approach to youth development that is focused on the knowledge and skills needed to challenge social issues and advocate for change. In this framework, Gonzalez et al. (2020) postulated that the development of the Five Cs of PYD (i.e., competence, confidence, connection, caring, character; Lerner et al., 2005) within a strengths-based and supportive environment will lead to developing one's critical reflection and political efficacy. While other researchers have studied and defined critical reflection, Gonzalez et al. (2020) referred to critical reflection as critically understanding how oppression is created and sustained through systems of power in youth contexts, such as sport. Following deeper critical reflection, an individual may develop political efficacy, the belief in one's ability and capacity to bring about social change individually and collectively. In developing one's critical reflection and political efficacy, individuals can then develop the 6th C (i.e., contribution through critical

action), which refers to activism and advocacy-related efforts to challenge social oppression and marginalisation in and beyond sport. Together, critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action contribute to developing the 7th C, Freire's (1973) concept of critical consciousness. A developing critical consciousness is vital for challenging oppressive social conditions and issues within sport contexts. Gonzalez et al. (2020) proposed that when structured appropriately, youth contexts can support youth's critical consciousness building, and potentially leaders' (coaches') critical consciousness as well. Prior to supporting youth's CPYD, coaches should intentionally develop their critical consciousness and work to model critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action for their youth athletes.

Research by Kochanek and Erikson (2019, 2021) suggested that coaches' and athletic directors' critical praxis varies along a continuum, with higher levels of awareness and action indicating a stronger critical praxis. Coaches and athletic directors found that different relational coaching strategies were helpful to navigate social issues depending on the athlete/team and the situation, such as working with athletes directly, encouraging dialogue within the team, being vulnerable, and coaching with care. Some coaches and athletic directors believed to strengthen their critical awareness and action through exposure to social issues in sport, such as creating more inclusive spaces reactively after a trans student-athlete asked for change. As such, some coaches and athletic directors seemed to lack critical action. Coaches need to become role models of CPYD, growing their understanding of social issues in sport, engaging in ongoing critical reflection and professional development, and modelling critical consciousness in and beyond sport (Camiré et al., 2022; Gonzalez et al., 2020). Bishop et al. (2023) used the CPYD framework to explore a high school coach's attitude towards social justice. The authors found that the coach was reactive and hesitant in his approach to social justice in sport, often relying on

others to support his critical reflection and missing opportunities to develop his critical consciousness (Bishop et al., 2023). CSP and sport sociology scholars have called for more intentional research and attention paid to social justice and safety in sport (e.g., Camiré et al., 2022; Love et al., 2019; Norman, 2018; Schinke et al., 2019; Van Slingerland et al., 2019). As critical actors in the competitive sport system, more attention needs to be paid to how coaches can develop their critical consciousness through professional development opportunities that enhance their learning and reflection.

Coach Learning and Reflection

Coach learning and reflection in sport have been explored extensively over the last two decades (e.g., Huntley et al., 2014; Thelwell & Dicks, 2019; Walker et al., 2018). Researchers have used different learning theories (e.g., Dewey, Jarvis, Moon, Schön) and epistemologies (e.g., behaviourism, social constructionism) to understand coach learning, and many terms have been suggested to categorise the situations in which coaches learn (Nelson et al., 2016). For instance, coaches may develop their knowledge and expertise through mediated (e.g., certification programs, formal mentors), unmediated (e.g., athlete experience, informal mentors, and peers), and internal (e.g., reflective journaling, guided reflection) learning situations (e.g., Sawiuk et al., 2017; Walker et al., 2018; Werthner & Trudel, 2009). Coach learning is affected by the culture of one's sport organisation and the micropolitics that shapes what 'good coaching' means, as well as the athletes, peer coaches, and sport parents who interact within one's sport context (e.g., Milistetd et al., 2018; Purdy & Potrac, 2016; Rossi et al., 2016).

Aligned with the relativist ontology and social constructionist epistemology that guided this dissertation (see Chapter II), coach learning was perceived as an idiosyncratic, lifelong, and

life-wide social process shaped by organisational norms and beliefs. According to Jarvis (2006), lifelong learning is defined as:

The combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person—body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses)—experiences social situations, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the individual person's biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person. (p. 134)

A coach's biography represents their current understanding of their life world, which is the multiple social dimensions in which they learn (Jarvis, 2006, 2007). While learning happens individually, one's identity is shaped through sensory and interactive experiences in geographical and social space across time and within one's culture. For Jarvis (2006), culture refers to "the knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, values and emotions that we, as human beings, have added to our biological base" (p. 55). As coaches experience disjuncture, episodic experiences that challenge their biography, they may decide to leave a state of harmony and learn from the disjuncture (Jarvis, 2006). Disjuncture may be experienced through cognitive thinking, pragmatic acting, and affective feeling. Coaches who are motivated to learn and approach disjuncture with an optimistic and confident attitude may impact their biographical change. Individuals supporting coaches' development should acknowledge coaches' unique biographies with a tailored, needs-based approach (Rodrigue & Trudel, 2019; Trudel et al., 2016).

Coaches often learn how to coach through experience (e.g., as an athlete, parent, through non-sport related work) and through reflection of/with/on their experience (e.g., Callary et al., 2012; Gilbert & Trudel, 2001; Wright et al., 2007). For instance, experiences from formal education, within and outside of coaching, can help coaches with problem-solving (Preston & Fraser-Thomas, 2018), and observing other coaches or interacting with peers can provide strategies for athlete development and performance (Van Woezik et al., 2022). To enhance

learning, researchers have advocated for coaches to become more reflective of, on, and in their practice, which should lead to a strengthened understanding of one's education, knowledge, and experience (e.g., Silva et al., 2020; Trudel & Gilbert, 2006). In their theoretical framework for examining coach reflection, Gilbert and Trudel (2001) identified how coach reflection might occur through coaching issues (i.e., the stimulus of reflection), role frames (i.e., to filter if a situation requires reflection or not), and the issue setting. Based on these three components, coaches may then generate strategies to address the coaching issue, experiment via implementing a strategy, and evaluate whether the strategy was effective in solving their coaching issue.

The concept of 'reflective practice' in sport coaching is difficult to define (Cropley et al., 2019). Many sport researchers have turned to philosophers and scholars in psychology and pedagogy, such as John Dewey, who is thought to have coined the first definition of reflection as "an active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (1910, p. 6).

Within the sport coaching literature, Knowles et al. (2014) defined reflective practice as:

A purposeful and complex process that facilitates the examination of experience by questioning the whole self and our agency within the context of practice. This examination transforms experience into learning, which helps us to access, make sense of and develop our knowledge-in-action in order to better understand and/or improve practice and the situation in which it occurs. (p. 10)

As reflection has become a superficial, taken-for-granted concept in sport coaching (Cushion, 2018; Tinning, 2022), coaches need to be intentional and transformative in their reflective efforts (Knowles et al., 2014). Reflective practice should not be unquestioned or assumed as inherently good for coaches' practice (Cushion, 2018), and coaches should engage in critical reflection on more than just their coaching practices (Berger et al., 2019; Tinning, 2022). Therefore, for this dissertation, reflection was conceptualised as a purposeful and actionable non-linear process that involved the coach's full biography, occurred through critical introspection and questioning,

examined the related sociocultural contexts, and cumulated into change (e.g., Cropley et al., 2019; Knowles et al., 2014; Moon, 2004). Researchers and individuals who work with coaches should recognise the danger of reflective practice (Tinning, 2022), in that there is no final destination for critical reflection or critical consciousness; coaches should be encouraged to view critical reflection as an ongoing process that happens in their sociocultural world. As such, to transform critical reflection to action (i.e., praxis), ongoing dialogue is needed between coaches and supportive individuals within trusting, hopeful, and understanding environments (Freire, 1973). Coaches who are engaged and passionate about their reflective practice may benefit from working with others to deepen their reflections, be challenged in their thinking, and overcome barriers in their reflective process (e.g., Moon, 2004; Naslund & Pennington, 2011).

Critical Approaches to Coach Learning and Reflection

As researchers have called for coaches to acknowledge social justice in youth sport (Camiré et al., 2022; Newman et al., 2022), explorations are needed of coaches' power and how it intersects with their learning (Bishop et al., 2023; Tinning, 2022). Sport coaching is a social process that is impacted by micro and macro political elements that interact within the sport context (Lyle & Cushion, 2017). Therefore, the structures, systems, norms, environments, and relationships in sport coaching need critical review (Norman, 2018; Tinning, 2022) as they are primarily created and upheld by (white) men, leading to organisational cultures often defined along (white) men's norms (e.g., Joseph et al., 2022; Schull & Kihl, 2019). Simply providing training for coaches to better understand and address social justice issues in sport will not automatically lead to transformative coaching. As such, researchers have attempted to explore coaches' learning and reflection with a critical lens.

Norman (2018) examined four coaches' perceptions of an equity coaching workshop delivered by Sports Coach UK [United Kingdom]. At one point, the one-time in-person workshop was mandated for all registered sport coaches; though, at the time of their study, the workshop was a suggested course for coach development. Through group discussions and practical exercises, the coaches were exposed to coaching principles for creating more equitable sport. After their workshop participation, the coaches discussed a heightened awareness of using more appropriate and inclusive language in sport and considered how their reflective practice could be improved to shift reflections to actions. However, the coaches felt their practices were already equitable, which led to reaffirming rather than challenging their beliefs, and minimal impacts were noted on their coaching practice after the workshop training ended. Norman (2018) suggested that the training may have been too "abstract, simplistic, and irrelevant to be of use to these coaches" (p. 21), as the coaches were possibly disconnected from what 'equity' meant in their sport contexts. Overall, the workshop may have promoted some critical reflection but seemed to be uninspiring for the coaches and inapplicable to their coaching practice.

In the United States, Kochanek et al. (2023) designed, delivered, and evaluated the impact of 'Dialogue in Athletics', a social justice education program framed within intergroup dialogue pedagogy. The program was delivered to coaches, school administrators, and student-athletes within one school over six virtual sessions. Evaluative findings suggested the program somewhat supported the participants' critical awareness of racism and other forms of oppression in sport, as well as their perceptions of confidence and intentions to carry out critical actions for social change. The participants' heightened awareness and confidence may be partially explained by the trusting environment created within the virtual sessions and the meaningful dialogue facilitated among peers. In a follow-up interview, some of the coaches and school administrators

shared that they felt motivated to challenge themselves to recognise stereotypes, biases, and structural inequities in sport. The follow-up interview data converged with quantitative evaluative findings of the program, including coaches' and sport administrators' increased mean scores in critical awareness from pre- to post-program surveys and the statistically significant changes in participants' intentions for dialogue-related action after the program ended.

Longitudinal evaluations are needed to understand if/how the participants engaged in praxis after completing the intergroup dialogue program, as the authors noted that supporting participants' critical awareness may require more time than just six virtual sessions.

To understand changes in coaches' and athletes' behaviours towards understanding, reflecting, and acting on social injustices in sport, Lee et al. (2021) proposed the use of the Transtheoretical Model (TTM) five stages of change (i.e., precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance; Prochaska & DiClemente, 1982). As coaches' awareness and advocacy may shift on a continuum (Kochanek & Erickson, 2019, 2021), understanding specific challenges in consciousness-raising would enable researchers and individuals working with coaches to support their praxis development. For instance, to move beyond hesitancy and uncertainty in addressing social justice issues in sport, coaches need to become aware of the history of social injustices in sport and be empathetically supported in questioning their biases, assumptions, and limits in knowledge as a coach. Learning from peer coaches who have overcome barriers in their deliberation to act on social injustice may also be helpful for coaches uncertain of their critical praxis (Lee et al., 2021). As not all coaches believe social justice is important in competitive youth sport, coaches will need to learn how to navigate push-back and cope with criticism when they attempt to 'coach differently'. Assisting coaches in building

supportive networks with individuals who will question their biases and challenge their coaching may help to maintain their social justice coaching approach (Lee et al., 2021; Tinning, 2022).

Within Canada, few social justice-informed formal training programs are offered for coaches to date. The National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) delivered an e-module on Anti-Racism in Coaching to help coaches understand how to address embedded and overt racialised discrimination in Canadian youth sport systems. The e-module Keeping Girls in Sport is delivered through a partnership between the CAC, Canadian Women & Sport, and Respect Group and provides coaches with information on addressing gendered barriers and challenges girls may face in youth sport. Canadian Women & Sport also offered the Gender Equity LENS to train coaches and sport leaders in challenging gendered assumptions and barriers in sport organisations. While such training programs represent a positive step towards training coaches on social justice issues in sport, these programs are offered as one-time self-directed online modules without immediate or ongoing support from trained individuals or mentors, or the opportunity for experiential learning. Social justice training should be relevant, accessible, and practical to unpack coaches' beliefs and values that are often unconsciously presented (Cushion, 2018; Norman, 2018). Ongoing support may also help coaches' praxes development to transform their coaching towards more inclusive and safer practices (Kochanek et al., 2023).

Supporting Coaches' Learning and Reflection

As a coach's role continues to become more complex in a dynamic and high-pressure environment, working with a coach of coaches, including mentors and coach developers, can support coaches' learning, reflection, and identify areas for improvement (e.g., Ciampolini et al., 2020; Crisfield & Bales, 2023; Rodrigue et al., 2019). Importantly, a coach needs to be motivated

and willing to work with a coach of coaches to engage in introspection of their coaching through reflective practice (e.g., Gallimore et al., 2014).

Researchers refer to sport coach mentoring as a dynamic pedagogical approach where an experienced coaching practitioner (i.e., mentor) supports a less experienced coach (i.e., mentee) with their coaching practice (Nash & McQuade, 2015). Whether informally or formally organised, sport coach mentors may help coaches navigate challenges and unknowns in their sport through observation and guidance (Stodter & Cushion, 2017). Since the early 2000s, mentorship has been advocated as a meaningful context to support coach learning and development; however, formalised mentoring programs within elite sport contexts suggest that mentees' learning is often shaped by the politics in organisations and culturally reproduced to satisfy organisational interests (Leeder & Cushion, 2020; Sawiuk et al., 2017). Mentors are in positions of power as the deciders of what is 'legitimate' knowledge, and without critical consideration, mentors may reproduce organisational norms and shape inflexible and controlled coaching approaches (Leeder & Sawiuk, 2021; Zehntner & McMahon, 2019).

A coach developer can support coach development in many ways, including mentoring, designing and facilitating workshops, and evaluating coaches' performance (International Council for Coaching Excellence [ICCE], 2013; McQuade & Nash, 2015). After working with a coach developer, coaches may have enhanced motivation for engaging in lifelong learning and a strengthened sense of purpose and belonging (Dohme et al., 2019). Consequently, coach developers have become invaluable to a coach's learning and development at the high-performance level in Canadian and other sport contexts (e.g., Culver et al., 2019; Edwards et al., 2020). A recent review by Jones et al. (2023) highlighted, however, that there is an inadequate understanding of who coach developers are, what their role is, and how they engage in coach

development. Coach development systems are becoming larger and more complex (e.g., Culver et al., 2019; Edwards et al., 2020), leading to a lack of perceived role clarity and diminished effectiveness (e.g., Stodter & Cushion, 2019). Moreover, with little ongoing support after training programs end, coach developers may not be informed of contextually relevant information and uncritically reproduce organisational beliefs for what ‘works best’ for coach development (e.g., Culver et al., 2019; Leeder & Cushion, 2020; Stodter & Cushion, 2019).

Although reflection is viewed as beneficial for coaches’ development, effective reflective discussions between coach developers and coaches require an awareness of what reflection is (and is not), motivation to reflect, as well as the development of rapport, trust, and sensitivity (e.g., Costello et al., 2023; Koh et al., 2015; Voldby & Klein-Døssing, 2020). The use and meaning of reflection often change to accommodate an individual’s interests and agenda (Cushion, 2018). Importantly, coaches of coaches must also adopt critically reflective positions to be aware of social structures and power relations that impact development and coaching (Bailey et al., 2019).

Coach development should occur through collaborative and reciprocal approaches to promote reflective discussion and relationship building (Tinning, 2022). For instance, Cope et al. (2021) examined how recreational youth sport coaches perceived a Freirean-based collaborative education program delivered by a coach developer for 9 to 13 weeks. The coaches were observed before beginning the education program for the coach developer to observe issues the coaches faced in their sport contexts. A background interview was then conducted individually with each coach to identify the coaches’ learning needs beyond the observations. During their seasons, the coach developer facilitated reflective conversations with each coach (i.e., five to six meetings, lasting an average of 98 total minutes), using Freire’s (1973) notions of dialogue to be an active

listener and support the coaches' reflection. Observations of the coaches' behaviours were also recorded in between the reflective conversations. In their post-collaboration individual interview, the coaches shared feeling a sense of freedom in their learning compared to formal coach education programs, feeling cared for and an active participant in the program, and noticing a greater ability to question their coaching approach. The authors proposed the continued use of Freirean (1973) notions in coach education, including dialogue and power distribution between the 'leader' and the 'learner'. While this program seemed beneficial for coaches' learning and agency, a limitation of Cope et al.'s (2021) study is the narrow reflection on the coaches' actions, without critically considering how power is used in sport settings to oppress some and give voice to others.

Repositioning the coach developer, mentor, or intervenor as an equal to the coach can help facilitate mutual learning and reflection. Leeder et al. (2022) proposed the use of educative mentoring, a collaborative and reciprocal approach where mentors learn alongside their mentee and are positioned "not only as a holder of knowledge but also as a receiver" (Wexler, 2020, p. 213). Within competitive sport contexts, the personal learning coach (PLC) role has also been suggested as a collaborative actor to guide coaches' learning and reflection as they coach.

Personal Learning Coach

Similar to a coach developer (Jones et al., 2023), a PLC offers coaches specific, in-situ support on their coaching practices through a collaborative partnership (Stelter, 2014). The PLC works collaboratively with coaches in their sport context to question, understand, and expand their learning and reflection from their coaching practices as they happen during their competitive sport season (Milistetd et al., 2018; Rodrigue & Trudel, 2019). A PLC differs from other individuals who work with coaches with the use of the narrative-collaborative coaching

(NCC) approach (Stelter, 2014). Rodrigue and Trudel (2019) outlined five main components of the NCC approach to guide a PLC's process.

First, the focus of the collaboration is on the coach's specific context, as the PLC aims to understand the coach's subjective reality and sociocultural experiences within their sport context. Understanding the coach's biography, values, memories, and intentions can help the PLC support their experiential meaning-making while they coach, connecting their habits, routines, and practices to action (Jarvis, 2006; Moon, 2004). The PLC is tasked with understanding the coach's sport context (e.g., coach-athlete and coaching staff relationships) and broader sport coaching science topics (e.g., coaching philosophy) to enrich the dialogue (Rodrigue & Trudel, 2019).

Second, the PLC creates a safe learning space where the coach feels comfortable engaging in dialogue on their biases, values, fears, pressures, and dominant norms that guide their coaching. A PLC can create this safe space by building rapport with the coach, thoughtfully and meaningfully navigating sensitive topics, and situating learning as fundamental to their coaching (Page & Margolis, 2017; Rodrigue & Trudel, 2019). By creating a safe learning space, a PLC can assist coaches in navigating the discomfort and unfamiliarity experienced from disjuncture (Jarvis, 2007), such as when adapting their coaching philosophy from being focused on performance to integrating elements of PYD (Santos et al., 2017) or when addressing social justice issues in sport (Bishop et al., 2023; Tam et al., 2021).

Third, the PLC works around a coach's narratives to support in-situ reflection during the collaboration. Narratives provide meaning to events and actions that happen in the coach's context. To support deeper reflection, a PLC can guide the coach through narrative exercises that consider different perspectives, invoke emotional reactions, and involve the coach 'standing back' from their viewpoint (Moon, 2016). Coaches create and share stories, choosing specific

events, characters, and memories to develop a storyline. To help change the storyline, the PLC encourages the coach to introduce new, specific events to ‘thicken’ the plot and ‘re-author’ their stories to consider a more positive, problem-solving perspective.

Fourth, the PLC and coach collaborate to co-learn and co-create knowledge. The PLC and coach are considered equals, both with their own knowledge, values, experiences, expertise, and stories. The learning and reflective activities involved in the PLC-coach collaboration are situated as a co-creative process, as the PLC is not there to solve the coach’s problems, answer their deepest questions, or to prescribe a solution (Rollnick et al., 2019). Instead, the PLC works around what the coach would like to work and reflect on (Rodrigue & Trudel, 2019). The co-learning aspect of the collaboration means that the PLC is also actively learning in this process through interactions with the coach.

Lastly, the PLC facilitates open-ended dialogue relevant to the coach’s learning. Narrative coaching involves two major perspectives: (a) landscapes of identity, where the coach questions their identity, values, aspirations, attitudes, and (b) landscapes of action, where the coach considers what actions will be needed to achieve an idea or aspiration. Through dialogue, the PLC aims to integrate the two perspectives meaningfully, so the coach can become more intentional in their praxis. A coach’s deeper reflection can be facilitated by working with a PLC and other critical friends in their networks (e.g., peer coaches, family members; Moon, 2016). The NCC approach guides co-creating stories between the PLC and the coach by combining a phenomenological perspective, based on the coach’s experiences, and a social constructionist perspective to re-write the socially constructed reality.

Findings from research in competitive sport suggest that by using the components from the NCC approach, a PLC can effectively support the co-creation of knowledge and enhance

coaches' awareness and reflection of their coaching practices. Milistetd et al. (2018) detailed a PLC collaboration with a high-performance tennis coach lasting six months, where empathetic dialogue supported the coach in achieving his coaching goals and becoming more confident in his reflection and leadership. Both the PLC (Milistetd) and the coach felt the collaboration produced opportunities for co-learning and co-creating knowledge through building mutual trust and motivation to work together. Building on Milistetd et al.'s (2018) study, Rodrigue et al. (2019) explored the value of a PLC through a 12-month collaboration with a university varsity rugby coach. The findings of the collaboration suggested that a safe and challenging learning space was created, where the coach felt confident engaging in dialogue with the PLC, and the coach felt progression towards their reflective capabilities. Again, the PLC (Rodrigue) and the coach felt the collaboration was mutually beneficial, fostered meaningful dialogue, and supported the coach's self-confidence. The integration of PLCs in competitive youth sport contexts may have the potential to advance support for coaches as they learn to create safer, more inclusive competitive sport contexts.

The reviewed literature demonstrates the need for competitive youth sport coaches to approach psychosocial development with a critical lens to acknowledge their athletes' needs and promote social change (Gonzalez et al., 2020; Kochanek & Erickson, 2020). To support a needed paradigm shift, coaches must engage in critical reflection to enhance their awareness and readiness for change and integrate new ways of thinking that prioritise inclusivity (Kochanek & Erickson, 2020; Spaaij et al., 2020). As demonstrated in Chapter I, there are multiple issues simultaneously happening within competitive youth sport, including a lack of inclusion, equity, diversity, and accessibility for athletes and coaches who do not align with status quo norms. There is also inadequate coach training on social justice issues to provide coaches with

opportunities for experiential learning and dialogue. Additionally, more research is needed on how personal support can be provided to coaches as they coach, with a redistribution of power between the 'learner' and the 'teacher' roles. Therefore, the purpose of this dissertation was to advance the current understanding of critical praxes development within competitive youth sport through narrative introspections into coaches' learning journeys.

CHAPTER II: Methodology and Methods

Researcher Positionality

I am a white, educated, woman living without a disability who is afforded benefits and resources because of how social systems advantage my identities. My parents gave me and my siblings opportunities to engage in organised programming after school, including sport and physical activity programs. Sport quickly became a space of comfort, where I began to shape my identities and build my self-confidence. My experiences led me to seek post-secondary education in human kinetics, volunteer coaching positions in my community, and graduate studies to explore how sport could become a safe and challenging environment for youth athletes.

My coaching experience took place in recreational and competitive sport contexts with youth and adult athletes who experience marginalisation within sport. I coached a barrier-free after-school hockey program in Ottawa for six years; the majority of the youth participants were recent refugees and immigrants, specifically racialized youth living in low-income housing who were not offered opportunities to experience quality sport programming. While I aimed to provide a safe and welcoming experience for the youth, discrimination and racist microaggressions were present in the hockey context. I also coached Special Olympics basketball and track and field programming for two years, working with youth and adult athletes. Again, I aimed to centre the athletes' needs and provide a safe environment for their development but experienced friction in supporting the athletes' competitive goals within a broader sport system that marginalised and othered individuals with disabilities. Most recently, I have been coaching a barrier-free after-school running program for girls for the last three years, where many of the girls are also recent refugees or immigrants to Canada. Through my coaching experiences, I recognise the social inequities and discrimination intersecting and occurring

within society, including how women in leadership often experience underlying gendered barriers to their advancement in sport and how racism and discrimination is embedded in the foundations of sport (e.g., LaVoi, 2016; Norman, 2022).

My cultural background and experiences guided my actions as a researcher throughout this dissertation (Ryba, 2013), with the assumption and belief that intentionally designed and delivered sport contexts can lead to positive developmental experiences for young athletes. Further, I carried the assumption that social injustice occurs within competitive youth sport contexts and are relevant to coaches' praxes (Kochanek & Erickson, 2019). As a feminist CSP researcher, I acknowledge the importance of ongoing critical reflexion on my positionality and proactive consideration of ethical principles in research (e.g., considering the ethical stakes of the questions that are not asked; Blee & Currier, 2011), as my identities and social position impacted the knowledge construction processes based on my assumptions (Ryba, 2013). For instance, through reflexion and implicit bias training, I am more aware of how I have held assumptions that the majority of coaches addressing social injustices in sport are women, and assumptions that individuals identifying as 2SLGBTQ+ would feel confident addressing gender and sexual discrimination in sport. Having a heightened awareness of my biases and assumptions was recognised as beneficial for undertaking this dissertation, as I was able to meaningfully work with the participants and build trusting relationships, as well as deeply engage in critical reflexion of my social position.

Beyond extensive reading and critical discussions with peers, I sought to advance my understanding of social justice in sport through educational courses, such as "Centering Black Youth Wellbeing: Combatting Anti-Black Racism", "Gender Equity Lens", and "Mental Health First Aid". In proactively reflecting on my identities, positionality, and privilege, I aimed to

meaningfully amplify the voices of individuals who are often overlooked in research (McGannon & Smith, 2015; Schinke et al., 2019). To ensure I respectfully centred the participants' stories in the research, I engaged in reflexive practices, including a bracketing interview with a trusted colleague (interview guide in Appendix D), to critically explore how I would make efforts to not diminish the participants' perspectives if there was misalignment with my assumptions and worldview. The bracketing interview was an initial stepping stone to more fruitful dialogue with critical friends around my impact as a researcher during the data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes. I attempted to handle the dialogue with the participants with sensitivity, openness, honesty, and an awareness of the difficulties often felt around social justice topics (Gearity & Henderson Metzger, 2017; Gearity et al., 2019). I used ethical safeguards to try to protect the participants from ongoing harm or distress following discussing sensitive topics (e.g., checking in with the participants; Pascoe Leahy, 2021), such as experiences of social injustices in sport. I also leaned on critical friends and my supportive network when impacted by the participants' shared stories and experiences of social (in)justice in sport. Reflexive strategies used to bracket, explore, and address my biases and assumptions are described further in the articles in this dissertation.

Paradigmatic Approach

This dissertation operated within a relativist ontology and social constructionist epistemology (Lincoln et al., 2018; Sparkes & Smith, 2009, 2014). With ontological relativism, realities are multiple, subjective to the individual, and contextually dependent. With epistemological social constructionism, individuals construct knowledge socially through interacting within their world. Researchers and participants also construct knowledge together through their social interactions. I purposefully selected this onto-epistemological approach

because of the non-foundational position of reality and knowledge, to acknowledge and respect the participants' individualised and socially created narrative stories. A socially constructed open-ended list of criteria was used to assess the quality of the research, including member reflections, critical friends, and evocation and coherence of the narrative findings (Lieblich et al., 1998; Smith et al., 2015; Smith & McGannon, 2018).

Theoretical, Conceptual, and Methodological Approach

Cultural Sport Psychology

The dissertation was grounded in CSP research to create dialogue that provides new and contextualised understandings of sociocultural challenges in sport (McGannon & Smith, 2015). CSP was created by researchers who identified a lack of attention to issues of intersectionality, sociocultural difference, and social justice in sport psychology. CSP integrates existing theoretical and conceptual sport psychology frameworks with critical studies, cultural consideration, and Freirean pedagogical concepts. Specifically, through the heuristic of cultural praxis, CSP researchers directly and intentionally account for issues of identity, diversity, and power within their sport psychology research and practice that are often ignored and undertreated (Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Ryba & Wright, 2010).

Through this dissertation, I aimed to contribute to CSP by challenging taken-for-granted understandings of sport contexts with a critical approach (Ryba & Wright, 2010; Ryba et al., 2013). Grounded in CSP, I explored how personal and cultural meanings are socially and culturally (re)shaped in sport through practices and discourses (Ryba & Schinke, 2009; McGannon & Smith, 2015). To engage in CSP research, cultural praxis was used as a heuristic to be(come) aware of, draw attention to, and challenge normative discourses in competitive youth sport, through reflexively combining theory, lived culture, and social action (McGannon &

Johnson, 2009; Ryba & Wright, 2010; Schinke et al., 2012). To shift my reflection towards reflexivity, I positioned my self-identities, assumptions, and biases to explore unknowns in the research process and challenge how power was (re)shaped with and between the participants (McGannon & Johnson, 2009). For instance, through a bracketing interview, reflective journaling, and critical discussions with my supervisor, family members, and friends, I questioned how my identities and social position affected my exploration, facilitation, and interpretation of the research (Blodgett et al., 2015).

Given my feminist inclinations, feminist approaches to CSP were interspersed in this dissertation. While not positioned as the driving theoretical framework, the decisions made in the prologue, three articles, and epilogue were grounded in a critical lens to recognise how many coaches and athletes are treated as inferior in sport based on their intersecting identities (de Haan & Knoppers, 2020) and to explore how competitive youth sport can be transformed for more equitable opportunities for all people. While I somewhat align with not “need[ing] to self-define or use the label ‘feminist’” (Prewitt-White & Fisher, 2020, p. 15), I am indeed an enthusiastic participant in the feminist movement. Aligning with feminist research, I attempted to create a beneficial experience for the participants and redistribute power that is often unchallenged and unquestioned in research (Frisby et al., 2005). I also aimed to critically explore intersectionality within sport, recognising the fluidity of identities and how sport is traditionally controlled by (white, non-disabled, heterosexual) men who succeed to the detriment of women’s advancement (e.g., Beal, 2018; Cooky & Messner, 2018). As many of the participants had intersecting identities often excluded and marginalised in sport and society, it was crucial to align myself with the feminist principles of fostering *engagement* with the participants to avoid harm through *exploitation* (Sprague, 2016). Moreover, with cultural praxis, knowledge production was

connected to addressing social change in competitive youth sport, that is, to create safer and more inclusive sport spaces (Blodgett et al., 2015). Efforts to transform competitive youth sport in this dissertation included (a) using participatory research approaches that concentrated on the lived experiences of the participants, and (b) reflexively questioning how my biases, identities, and power may have impacted the participants (e.g., Blodgett et al., 2015; Frisby et al., 2005; Ryba et al., 2013).

Critical Positive Youth Development Framework

The CPYD framework was used to theoretically and conceptually guide the dissertation. As described in Chapter I, the CPYD framework is grounded in critical theory and outlines how the development of critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action can lead to critical consciousness (Gonzalez et al., 2020). As outlined by Freire (1973), critical consciousness refers to one's ability to become aware, identify, and reflect upon oppressive social conditions, especially those related to one's identities and positionality, and consequently take action to enact positive change. While the CPYD framework was initially designed to explore and support youth's development, it has been suggested as a potential critical framework also to explore competitive youth sport coaches' critical consciousness development (Bishop et al., 2023).

Narrative Inquiry

A narrative inquiry methodology was used for this dissertation, which has been identified as an ideal approach to implement a cultural praxis agenda within CSP studies due to a shared understanding that self-identity is socially and culturally constructed (Blodgett et al., 2015; McGannon & Smith, 2015). In narrative inquiry, individuals are storytellers who make sense of and negotiate their self-identities through their experiences. Meaning-making occurs within the sociocultural world, as individuals use narratives to think, feel, and interact with others (Sparkes

& Smith, 2014). Narratives are continuously in flux between an individual's sociocultural world, shaping and affecting an individual's life and providing a scaffolded guide to build and structure personal stories and understand the stories of others (Frank, 2010; Smith & Monforte, 2020).

While an individual's experiences are personal, stories are perceived as socially and culturally constructed (Frank, 2013). In other words, dominant narratives are often used as a template for individuals to tell their own stories and shape who they believe they can become in the future (Frank, 2010; Phoenix & Sparkes, 2006). For instance, competitive youth sport coaches may see, and align, themselves with narratives of 'playing the part of the coach' (e.g., reluctantly fitting in to the 'win-at-all-costs' sport culture), 'living the part of the coach' (e.g., sacrificing one's personal values and identity to exhibit no-nonsense, tough coaching), or 'resisting the part of the coach' (e.g., choosing to focus on the athletes' developmental needs and not the winning records; Zehntner & McMahon, 2014). Coaches may also find meaning and build personal stories through a 'sporting activist identity' narrative, where a coach advocates for transformative sociocultural and political change within sport, and a 'political activist identity' narrative, where a coach advocates for positive social change beyond sport to address oppression and discrimination in the greater society (Smith et al., 2016). With the power that narratives hold in coach learning, reflection, and action, the cultural praxis tenants were anchored by an agenda of social justice (McGannon & Smith, 2015), to create an environment for each participant to safely reflect on their self-identities and narratives in sport.

The narrative inquiry methodology guided the creative analytical practices (CAP) represented in this dissertation. CAP is an umbrella term for arts-based, creative, and narrative forms of writing (Richardson, 2000). In using CAP, I aimed to represent the participants' complex and fluid lived experiences in a personal, emotional, and meaningful way (McMahon,

2016; Smith & Sparkes, 2009). The different forms of CAP I used in this dissertation included creative nonfiction (CNF), snapshot vignettes, and an autoethnography. Moreover, I developed four vignettes related to various social justice issues and used them as a reflective and discussion-provoking tool during the participant interviews (Appendix E). The vignettes were short descriptions of specific situations that mimicked actual events or issues (Skilling & Stylianides, 2020), including how discrimination based on religion, race, gender, and sexual orientation occurs within competitive youth sport contexts. I referred to researchers' recommendations to develop the vignettes (Barter & Renold, 2000; Bradbury-Jones et al., 2012; Skilling & Stylianides, 2020; Appendix F), as well as scholarship on social justice topics in sport (e.g., Anderson & White, 2018; Cooky & Messner, 2018; Hylton, 2018) and examples of discrimination within high-performance and competitive sport contexts (e.g., hijab-wearing young Muslim woman disqualified from high school cross-country meet; Jones, 2022). The vignettes were developed to guide discussion and reflection around sensitive topics due to the distance placed between the participant's and vignette characters' experiences to possibly offer some form of protection (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2014). Vignettes have been endorsed for exploring social justice issues in sport to discuss intricate implications related to inclusion and marginalisation (Gearity & Henderson Metzger, 2017).

Collectively, my aim was to employ an insider perspective and not distance myself from the research or the research participants. This aim aligns with my onto-epistemological approach, theoretical framework, and methodological approach. First, aligned with Poucher et al.'s (2020) description of social constructionism, I focused on how knowledge is constructed, social, cultural, and historical, while accepting that knowledge, power, and social action are interconnected. Second, as a CSP researcher, I reflexively acknowledged how my positioning as

the researcher impacted what was analysed and represented in this dissertation (McGannon & Johnson, 2009), as I participated as a co-learner and co-creator of knowledge (Stelter, 2014). Third, by employing a critical feminist lens, I was committed to the idea that researchers should strive to challenge status quo norms, redistribute power, and positively impact their research participants (Frisby et al., 2005). Fourth, the CYPD framework was used to explore how the participants' and my own critical consciousness were developing through our interactions (e.g., engaging in critical reflection together). Lastly, through narrative inquiry, I aimed to incorporate my personal experiences in the research and reflexively address how joint storytelling was happening, as I viewed the product (i.e., findings presented through CAP) inseparable from the producers (i.e., myself and the participants; Ellis, 2004; McGannon & Johnson, 2009). Consideration was given to the participants' first voice and meaning-making to ensure that the stories were engaging with the participants' experiences and not exploiting or tokenising their experiences (Sprague, 2016). To strive for coherence with the selected onto-epistemology, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, and methodology, the specific use of methodologies and methods within each article are outlined below.

Methods

Each of the participants were situated in competitive youth sport contexts (described in Chapter I). The coaches coached youth athletes between the ages of 14 to 24 years old competing at high school, collegiate/university varsity, regional, provincial, and national levels. All of the studied sport contexts were performance-focused, and highly demanding in terms of committed time, effort, and training.

The research process and methods for the Prologue, Article 1, and Epilogue were similar, as I engaged with CSP through empirical research. First, the participants were asked to partake in

one individual semi-structured interview prior to beginning their competitive season regarding their understanding and confidence towards addressing social justice issues in sport. Throughout their competitive season, the participants were asked to develop a reflective portfolio of their experiences with social justice, learning, and changing throughout the season, filled with journaling, screenshots of news articles, and other meaningful artifacts. At the end of their competitive season, the participants were asked to again partake in an individual semi-structured interview to discuss their season and their reflective portfolio. The extended participant-centred interviews and reflective portfolios were chosen methods for these studies due to the enabling of meaningful engagement with the participants (Ronkainen & Ryba, 2020). The selected CAP used to represent the findings for the Prologue, Article 1, and the Epilogue was CNF (Smith, 2016).

With the collaborative study presented within Article 2, I aimed to engage in CSP through equitable co-participatory research and practice (Schinke et al., 2012). Power was redistributed between Sophie (the coach) and me (the PLC), and meaningful dialogue occurred around Sophie's self-identities and meaning-making (Freire, 1973) as a competitive youth sport coach attempting to enact transformative social change. Sophie took part in a pre-season interview, a pre-collaboration timeline (Sheridan et al., 2011), multiple in-season PLC-coach meetings (Stelter, 2014), reflective activities and journaling, one in-person observation of their coaching practice, a post-season interview, and a post-collaboration timeline. Each method was grounded in the NCC approach (Stelter, 2014), detailed in Chapter I, to be focused on Sophie's coach and sport context, respective of their self-identities, and used to guide meaningful reflection and dialogue (Freire, 1973). The CAP used to represent Sophie's learning journey was snapshot vignettes (Spalding & Phillips, 2007) with a time hopping element (e.g., Shelton & Melchior, 2020) to present the nuanced non-linear journey of Sophie's critical consciousness building.

In Article 3, I aimed to engage in CSP research through autoethnography, a storied qualitative methodology that includes the self (i.e., ‘auto’), culture and human interactions (i.e., ‘ethno’), and the process and product of conducting research (i.e., ‘graphy’; Ellis, 2004). Specifically, my autoethnographic experiences of becoming a PLC are described through creative, reflexive, and narrative writing, including CNF and vignettes. A running-reflecting-writing process was undertaken to help me to feel, think, and emote on my PLC becoming reflections. This process was inspired by autoethnographies by critical sport researchers, such as Colyar (2013) and Douglas and Carless (2013). I felt seen reading their autoethnographic accounts of running, reflecting, and writing, recognising how I had been engaging in a similar process throughout my Ph.D.:

My watch beeps as I cross Lakeshore Drive and I run into the park around Humber Bay. I feel my head clear, ever so slightly, as I practice my text over and over again, adding words, editing. I am relieved. This is how I write. (Colyar, 2013, p. 364)

Aligning with CSP, my approach to autoethnography required reflexive awareness of the underlying epistemological and theoretical assumptions to explore my fluid researcher-participant identity as an embodied, experiential process and product that is inseparable from the sociocultural world (McGannon & Smith, 2015). Collectively, my experiences of becoming a PLC are represented through stories anchored in my personal memories and reflections; transcripts and notes from discussions with critical friends (Smith & McGannon, 2018); transcripts of interviews and PLC-coach meetings with two participants; as well as meaningful artifacts I collected throughout the process (e.g., photographs, social media, blog articles) that related to my reflections and experiences of social justice within competitive youth sport.

CHAPTER III: Narrative Findings

Presentation of the Articles

It's September 5th, 2018, the first day of my doctoral journey at the University of Ottawa. The highest level of education I had on this day was still my undergraduate degree, as my master's thesis defence was the following day, September 6th, 2018. I was optimistically told by colleagues who had experienced the Masters-to-Ph.D. transition that 'there are usually no breaks between degrees!'. I genuinely believed their claims, that it was 'normal' to not have any pause before starting this Ph.D. chapter. I would come to (painfully) learn that a break between degrees is advantageous. As explained in Article 3, I would experience burnout and mental health issues in part from running (researching) on empty. *Unsolicited advice for future/current graduate students who have found this thesis: take a break between, during, and after degrees!* I needed time to settle into the doctorate role: breath, become, evolve. From a project standpoint, what was initially discussed for my Ph.D. studies in 2018 changed many times before I would defend my proposal, acquire ethics approval, and start data collection in November 2021. Research had transformed. Society had transformed. I had transformed. With my academic supervisor, Martin, I continued tinkering how to meaningfully contribute to the field of sport psychology and pedagogy. Our research lab's bi-weekly meetings also became more focused on critiquing the individualist, functionalist, and neoliberal agenda that guided PYD sport and coach programs (Camiré et al., 2022; Ronkainen et al., 2021) and we discussed what sport could be(come) with a more critical approach (Gonzalez et al., 2020; Kochanek & Erickson, 2020).

Simultaneously, social justice movements were at the forefront of society. The #MeToo movement advanced gender equality and equity through amplifying women's voices who have been impacted by sexual assault and harassment, while also advocating for more support and

funding to services for survivors. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement had a resurgence with the murders of Americans Breonna Taylor and George Floyd in March and May 2020, calling for acknowledgment of systemic racism and reformations of public and police services. The COVID-19 pandemic halted life as we knew it, isolating individuals and families and disproportionality affecting racialised and Indigenous communities due to underlying health inequities and systemic racism. Numerous unmarked graves were ‘rediscovered’ of Indigenous children who were forcibly taken from their homes and communities to be assimilated in residential schools across Canada. Communities were displaced or lost completely from climate change disasters, including wildfires, hurricanes, drought, and extreme temperatures. Like many individuals, the synergy of multiple social justice issues led to critical introspection of my biography, actions, and intentions. As a white educated woman, I was in a position of power and privilege to address social issues and advocate for positive change. With family members, friends, and colleagues, I engaged in critical dialogue on how we could become more aware of our biases and assumptions and be allies and agents of change. I was also experiencing my own mental health challenges that required me to rethink my approach to being a graduate student, in that I was prioritising my studies over my relationships, health, and well-being. My proposed Ph.D. projects needed to evolve with the research, societal, and personal shifts occurring. Through many critical discussions with Martin, colleagues, and my committee members, a new path for my dissertation was identified.

While untraditional, the findings of this thesis (Chapter III) are bookended with an empirical narrative prologue and epilogue. In the Prologue, Hannah’s story is presented, explaining the pervasive gender barriers she has faced, and may continue to face, as a university varsity hockey player. I had planned to explore athletes’ critical praxis development throughout

their competitive sport season; however, after months of dedicated recruiting, only one athlete had volunteered as a pilot participant in the study. My recruitment efforts may have been unsuccessful from the long-term psychological and emotional effects of COVID-19 on youth athletes or because student-athletes in Canadian universities and colleges are often sought out as research participants and thus may be over-researched. The sole athlete participant, given the pseudonym of Hannah, shared her experiences of social justice issues in her hockey context through a pre-season interview (lasting 100 minutes), in-season reflective portfolio (including photos, social media posts, reflective notes, quotes from women in sport, and a school paper on gender equity in sport), and post-season interview (lasting 73 minutes). Please see Appendix G for Hannah's pre- and post-season interview guides. As she was initially recruited as a pilot participant, Hannah consented to be a full-fledged study participant and their data were included in the Prologue. Ethically speaking, despite securing only one participant, it was important to share Hannah's experiences collected during her study participation. Through narrative analysis about and with Hannah's story, I developed a CNF of 'advancing gender equity in women's hockey'. Hannah's story is purposefully shared within the prologue of Chapter III to situate the reader within an athlete's perspective of how coaches can foster an inclusive environment that explicitly addresses gender inequities.

In Article 1, I explored nine competitive youth sport coaches' challenges and successes in creating safer and more inclusive sport spaces. Three composite CNFs were developed to represent the central narrative theme of 'it's my responsibility to enact change': (a) when is it okay to intervene?; (b) burning out... it's consuming me; and (c) breaking through... it's necessary work. While at varying levels of critical consciousness, all of the coaches expressed a

desire for support as they became more aware of social issues in sport and refined their confidence to enact change, within and beyond their sport organisations.

Building off the findings of Article 1, a 15-month-long collaboration is detailed in Article 2, where I acted as a PLC to support Sophie's critical praxis development as they coached competitive Nordic ski athletes. Sophie felt stuck in their learning journey, and desired external support to reflect and coach with a critical lens. The central narrative theme of Sophie's intentions to 'reduce exclusion one intervention at a time' is presented through time hopping snapshot vignettes organised into three themes: (a) figuring out what to fight for, (b) growing through discomforts and unknowns, and (c) experiencing progress. We built a strong rapport to co-learn and co-create knowledge within our collaboration, which, we believe, lead to transformational shifts in Sophie's understanding of social issues in sport and their confidence to enact positive social change.

As a PLC, I became a co-participant, learning and evolving alongside two coaches: Sophie (who is introduced in Article 2) and Zoe (pseudonym), a competitive basketball coach for a girls' provincial team and a women's university team. An autoethnographic account is detailed in Article 3 of my experiences of becoming a PLC through these two collaborative journeys. Sharing my perspective through an autoethnography may provide the reader with a compelling and evocative insider perspective of how coaches' critical praxis and critical consciousness can be supported in sport.

Chapter III concludes with the Epilogue, where I share one coach's developing critical praxis in rugby. Brooke (pseudonym) was a participant in Article 1 and shared how she advocated for socially just sport spaces as a rugby athlete and coach. As a bisexual Indigenous woman, Brooke shared her experiences of feeling tokenised in sport and her motivation to create

safer experiences for the athletes she coaches. While developing the CNFs in Article 1, the richness of Brooke's experiences was getting lost in the composite stories; through her two interviews and one in-season meeting, we discussed the possibility of transformed competitive sport for 7 hours. Following the end of her data collection, I met with Brooke to discuss the potential of her story being shared as a separate CNF in the dissertation due to the richness and importance of sharing her story. We discussed the importance of purposefully sharing her story so that readers can engage with her experiences without positioning Brooke as a token or sole representation of Indigenous bisexual women. Brooke was enthusiastic about including her experiences as a CNF in the Epilogue and I acquired her consent to continue analysing and writing, given that her intersectional experiences reflect a person who is often not included in research and in sport. Brooke's story is purposefully included at the end of Chapter III to provide the reader with a strong example of a developing critical consciousness, where negative experiences of tokenism have been reclaimed to create inclusive spaces for representation.

Prologue: Advancing gender equity in women’s varsity hockey: “It takes all of us to believe, it can’t just be a small group of us”

Hannah walks towards the arena, country music pounding through her noise-cancelling headphones. Her worn-down university backpack looks mismatched with her game-day outfit, but that’s common for student-athletes on campus. “Women’s Hockey” is prominently stitched on her backpack in her university colours. She walks with purpose, shoulders back and chin up. It’s the final playoff game that will determine who plays in the championships.

The smell hits you as soon as you see the arena doors. Before they even open. It’s the old wood bleachers and the new rubber floors; the Zamboni fumes; the sweat, the tears, the blood; the smelling salts that Coach T swears by; the burnt popcorn from the concessions; the jerseys—new last year but already soaked with that hockey player smell. *Mmmmm*, I love that smell.

The music is blasting from the dressing room, it’s buzzing. The anticipation has been building all season. We’re ready for this game—it’s been weeks of highs and lows, 3-hour practices, dripping sweat in the gym, hill sprints behind the arena, our running shoes soaked from the knee-deep snow. We’ve clawed our way here. This game is our final step to championships. It’s do or die.

We have the same rituals each game. Every time Karlie starts chanting ‘let’s go storm’, it’s like the first time. Lower at first, scanning the room so everyone joins in. She was the right choice for captain, knows what’s needed to get in the zone, and can separate whatever she feels to lead the team. My role, especially since the beginning of this season, is to make the new girls feel welcome. Coach T says there are so many ways to show leadership, but I feel like if I don’t have a letter on my jersey, then I’m not in a place to say anything. So, for now, Karlie steers the

ship. The chant gains momentum in the room, getting louder, ‘let’s go storm’. By the time we leave the room, it’s a visceral screech—‘LET’S GO STORM’.

It’s tunnel vision down the hallway to the ice. My body is preparing for fight or flight. Jen stands beside the door, patting our shinpads with her stick as we run onto the ice. Each of us hits her goalie pads in return. The adrenaline is coursing, and my blood burns hot, running down the veins to my fingers, reaching my thumb and fourth finger, which meet through the holes I’ve burned through my right glove. A habit I started years ago. Maybe it was being the only girl on the boys’ team, and I had to prove something, but I worked on my shot every night until my gloves were worn down. I still have that urge to wear down my gloves now, many years later. Always striving for better, I guess.

I run onto the ice; the rush of wind brings me back to the moment, and I feel my sharpened edges cut through the freshly flooded ice. Is there anything better than skating on fresh ice? But then I look up to the stands. *God, why did I look up?* I can count how many people are there. It’s practically empty, besides proud parents and grandparents waving their arms. My heart drops like there’s a scratch on the record. Where’s our support? Why don’t more people care about women’s hockey?

Dad started me in house league hockey when I was 4 years old; my jersey practically dragged along the ice as I learned how to skate. I was the only girl on the team. My teammates were kind and treated me like everyone else. My coaches welcomed me. I belonged. This feeling shifted once we started travelling for games, once I moved on to a competitive league. I’d notice the other coaches, referees, the other parents—their stares and whispering. *What is she doing here?* I wasn’t just a hockey player anymore. I was a *girl* playing hockey. If I grew up playing on a girls’ team, would I still be playing today? I don’t know... I don’t wanna question it.

We'd spend the car rides home debriefing. Dad would say, "There's going to be people watching you, Hannah. They'll ask questions and watch for mistakes. You'll have to prove why you're here, why you're playing at this level." Those words are etched in my brain. Prove why I'm here? *I made the team!* I worked hard. I would refuse to come inside at night, chasing my big brothers and the neighbourhood kids around the outdoor rink Dad made for us each winter, our hands frozen and our breath making pillowy clouds in the night sky. Mom would call from the back door, 'Kids, dinner time!' And no one kicked me off the ice or called me names, but the whispering and glances were always there. Other young girls do not have the same story; many leave sport too early without knowing they could belong.

To make sure I keep my spot on the team, I need to be *coachable*. When I was 7, 8, 9 years old, I learned to listen to my coaches—they knew how we should act, and they would enforce that. My parents also weren't gonna let me act like a shithead. You must be on time. Set and reach big goals. Be a team player. Have good character. Because they're watching. *All. The. Time.* So, I sit up straight and keep quiet. It's hard sometimes, especially when frustrations run high. Coach T can be hard on me. He yelled at me again during our last game... I'm sitting on the bench, my heart rate is maxing out, nervously shaking my right leg because I know I messed up, but the yelling is not productive. I get it though, it's tough love. He's sarcastic and knows he can give me shit. I understand his position as head coach comes with pressure. *That's what coaches do. That's his job. He needs to win.* Coach J also pushes too far sometimes. She's the assistant coach, but *loves* having that whistle around her neck, overseeing everything when Coach T is not there. Last week, I asked her a question during practice, and let's just say my takeaway was to not question her again. She likes to feel like she has that power over everyone else. But when I get frustrated, I can hear Dad's voice clear in my head, "They're waiting for you

to make a mistake, Hannah”. My spot on the team is too valuable. I can’t lose this part of me because I’m frustrated, being a hockey player is who I am.

Bottomline, our coaches are supportive; they care about our studies and life outside of hockey. They sometimes talk with us about inequities women face in sport. But they still get drawn back into the ‘be thankful for what you have’ mindset. It seems like we need to stay small, don’t ask for more, don’t make any noise. Coaches say, “If we ask for more, we must sacrifice other things, like budget for hotel or food. Or be given not a nice dressing room.” Meaning our glass will never be full. But the men’s teams don’t have this issue. And it always comes to back to *why* for me. Why do they get better dressing rooms? Why do they get better ice times? I remember noticing the signage and content posted for the men’s home opener my first year. There was a theme night to encourage attendance, posters plastered all over campus. *What did we have?* Are we not competing at the same level? The first time Mom came to a home game, she arrived early so she could watch warmups. The men played after us, but in the parking lot they had a section blocked off. Mom wanted to park close to the arena, it was freezing outside with no other cars around. The arena staff told her, “This area is parking for the men’s game only”, even though we played hours before the men played. It made no sense.

Coaches have the responsibility to fight for their athletes, to be aware of social issues and inequities, to create better sport. They have *so much* power. Power that can be used for good. If our coaches stand up for gender equity, the athletes will feel more supported when they advocate for change. I think it takes all of us to believe, believe it like you need to, like it’s necessary for your career. Because for me, it truly is. It can’t be just a small group of us who believe change can happen. I think a lot of girls on the team feel the same way, but only a few speak up. I wish it was more of a conversation, that our players, our captain, our coaches spent time discussing the

reality of our situation after varsity hockey. And *why* that reality is happening. What keeps this wheel rolling that pushes women down? That excludes women and other people from even playing competitive sport in the first place. Wouldn't it be great if Karlie said, "Hey, everyone, let's fight this together"? And lead our team toward positive change? Because right now, change is not happening fast enough. After every game, I hear something new where our team is treated differently than the men's team. My family just realised that the concession stand only sells warm food during the men's game. *What!?* We just aren't considered important at our school.

Women athletes are often put into a box: be masculine but also fragile; be emotional but not hysterical; be competitive but not catty; be a leader but not bitchy. Then there is the stereotype that everyone who plays women's hockey is gay, and it's not in a welcoming way. It comes from thinking women who are gay or lesbian or bi are different or weird. Women are *more* than one identity, more than one label we've been given. When some form of discrimination happens to a member of our team, I stand up for them. Though I do have more comfort addressing some social issues than others, so I'm trying to learn more. I'm listening to my friends who have different life experiences because I can't speak to someone's experiences of being gay, but I can learn how to stand up for them. I'm reading different books and articles. I'm reflecting on what makes me tick and the stereotypes I believe in. But it's also hard... It's hard to address something and then not come off like I'm stepping out of place. I want to stand up for my teammates but yelling at an idiot who made a dumb comment isn't going to look good for our team. It brings me back to this idea of being coachable. *Sit. Listen. Be quiet.*

Before university, I realised how little I knew about social issues, but my understanding is growing; social justice is *a part* of sport. Especially how I have a voice that carries weight. Social justice means movement. Action towards change. Removing the inequalities blocking the

road. I've been reading about Allyson Felix and how she fought against losing her Nike contract because she was pregnant. Jen let me borrow her book on Billy Jean King, who championed gender equity in tennis. It's comforting knowing that women have broken down barriers, but it's also sad knowing that years have passed, and many issues remain. How easy is it for young boys to turn on the television and watch their favourite team or player? Or to dream of playing in the NHL [National Hockey League], making millions of dollars doing so? For young girls? Not so easy. How can she dream of it if she cannot see it? Once women are afforded opportunities to be successful in a professional context, young girls can make their hockey dreams a reality. We need legitimate financial and social support from fans, sponsors, *and* team management; equitable financial compensation for the athletes; and local, national, and international broadcasting. Equity in women's hockey is not confined to one league, one university, or one town.

When I think about the future, I feel torn. I doubt changes will be made for my career in hockey, but maybe for the next generation. Nothing seems to stick for women in professional hockey. And I want to play for a living like some men do, so I don't have to work another job. Some girls probably don't want that, but I'm honestly not a big school person. And I think that's my issue because I have these goals *just* to play hockey but there's this expectation for me to find a 'real job' once varsity ends. Boys can dream of making it as professional hockey players because they can see how it might happen for them, but the same pathway is less sustainable for women. And let's be honest—there is still some unconscious *or* **ahem** conscious bias towards women being professional athletes in general. So, I will need a degree to get a job, a stable income, to support myself and someday support a family. But how can I be the best hockey player while focused on another job? I know this is my reality and things won't change unless *we*

all do something about it. There are little girls who are starting in hockey now. I hope they can see a hockey career beyond varsity. I hope they believe.

The referee blows the whistle to start the game. Hannah glides towards her spot on the right wing, sliding her stick on the ice, shoulders down and ready. Out of the corner of her eye, she spots something bright waving around. Turning her face to the stands, she sees a little girl drowning in a local hockey jersey three times her size. She's maybe 5 or 6 years old. The girl waves at Hannah and shakes her homemade poster. It reads, "Someday I'll play just like HER!" Hannah forces a deep breath out, her eyes refocus on the puck now dropping from the referee's hand, bouncing on the ice before Karlie sweeps it back to the defence. She whispers to herself, "Alright, let's go Storm".

**Article 1: 'It's necessary work': Stories of competitive youth sport coaches' developing
critical praxes**

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Abstract

In this study, nine competitive youth sport coaches' challenges and successes in creating safer and more inclusive sport spaces were explored through individual pre- and post-season interviews and an in-season reflective portfolio of their coaching experiences. Through narrative analysis, the central narrative theme of 'it's my responsibility to enact change' was identified from a story analyst approach. A storyteller approach was then used to communicate the meanings of the central theme as creative nonfiction composite stories: when is it okay to intervene?; burning out... it's consuming me; and breaking through... it's necessary work. Building on previous research, the findings demonstrate how coaches' critical praxes shift on a continuum of awareness and advocacy. Coach educators, mental performance consultants, and sport psychologists may use the creative nonfictions to help coaches assess their critical praxes towards challenging social issues in sport and acting in ways that support advocacy and empowerment.

Keywords: coach learning, creative nonfiction, critical action, critical reflection, social justice

Introduction

Athletes, coaches, and sports staff in competitive sports have exposed social problems, maltreatment, and scandals that were previously ignored or concealed (e.g., Gurgis et al., 2022). Sport psychology researchers have also called for competitive youth sport to be *reimagined*, moving away from toxic cultures fixated on winning and instead focusing on fostering climates that safeguard athletes' personal well-being and psychosocial development (e.g., Camiré et al., 2022; Kochanek & Erickson, 2020). Coaches are in powerful positions to foster athletes' development, helping them become more aware, confident, and capable of addressing social justice issues in and beyond sport (Gonzalez et al., 2020). As actors who directly shape sporting climates, coaches hold much influence in moulding young athletes' attitudes and behaviours in relation to social issues (Martin et al., 2022). To shift competitive youth sport cultures towards inclusive practices, Kochanek and Erickson (2019) argued that coaches should pay further attention to developing their *critical praxis* in youth sport settings, an iterative process of combining knowledge and action with critical reflection (Freire, 1973).

Critical praxis is an integral part of *critical consciousness*, a process of reading, dialogue, reflection, and action to account for issues of diversity, identity, and power that are undertreated or ignored (Freire, 1973). As coaches become aware of social justice issues in sport, their critical praxis is supported through a cyclical process of combining their knowledge and action with critical reflection to effect social change (Freire, 1973). Through cultural sport psychology (CSP) research, critical praxis addresses the intersectional issues, powers, and pedagogies that function in and through sport (Kochanek & Erickson, 2019). Importantly, developing one's critical consciousness is a lengthy idiosyncratic process requiring coaches to dedicate time, engage in ongoing professional development, and critically reflect on their actions and privilege (Gonzalez

et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2021). When coaches adopt a critical approach, sport can become an important setting for promoting social justice—a dynamic and multifaceted construct that involves raising awareness of oppression and inequities in concerted efforts to provide all individuals with equitable opportunities (e.g., Camiré et al., 2022; Kochanek & Erickson, 2020).

To be(come) critically aware and advocate for positive social change, coaches should be committed and motivated to doing so. However, some coaches have been shown to regard social justice issues as irrelevant in their sport contexts. For instance, Newman et al. (2021) surveyed coaches (80% male, 89% white) on a wide variety of topics that most affected them, their team, and their community, with the findings suggesting that mental health (6.5%), race/diversity (1.9%), disabilities (1%), and LGBTQ¹⁺ (0%) were rated the least important topics. Such results highlight how some coaches and sport leaders may continue to resist social change in sport, (un)intentionally maintaining the status quo through discursive practices such as speech acts (e.g., “we are inclusive”) and in-group essentialism (e.g., “we’ve always done it this way”; Spaaij et al., 2020, p. 367). The continuation of dominant narratives in sport (e.g., built mostly by and for white, heterosexual, non-disabled men) maintains normative coaching practices and organisational cultures that create less safe, unsustainable sport participation for equity deserving athletes (Gearity & Henderson Metzger, 2017). However, it is important to note that there are coaches who want to become more informed and educated on social issues (Tam et al., 2021). Adopting critical approaches to youth development may help coaches support their own and their athletes’ critical praxis development (Gonzalez et al., 2020).

Youth sport has long been considered an ideal vehicle for fostering positive youth development (PYD) and enabling athletes to learn life skills (e.g., communication, leadership;

¹ Defined by Egale, LGBTQ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer. An increasing number of different identities, including nonbinary and trans, are included in the ‘+’ sign for consistency and simplicity.

Bruner et al., 2022). More recently, Gonzalez et al. (2020) developed the *critical* positive youth development (CPYD) framework in attempts to move beyond individualist and functionalist approaches to youth development. Building from the belief that the development of the 5C's of PYD (i.e., competence, confidence, connection, caring, and character) leads to the 6th C of contribution (Lerner et al., 2005), Gonzalez et al. (2020) suggested that with a critical lens, youth can also develop the Freirean (1973) concept of critical consciousness (i.e., the 7th C). Building on Freire's (1973) work, Gonzalez et al. (2020) proposed that critical consciousness includes three connected features: *critical reflection* refers to understanding how oppression is created and sustained through systems of power; *political efficacy* refers to the belief in one's ability and capacity to bring about social change; and *critical action* refers to activism and advocacy-related efforts related to addressing social oppression and marginalisation. Bishop et al. (2023) recently used the CPYD framework to explore a high school coach's attitude towards social justice, finding that reactive and hesitant coaching leads to missed opportunities to address social oppression and marginalisation directly. To meaningfully address social justice issues in sport, coaches can use the CPYD framework to intervene in ways that allow them and their athletes to develop their critical consciousness.

As athletes call for more support for social justice in sport settings (e.g., Martin et al., 2022), coaches are in strategic positions to transform competitive youth sport, but that requires a critical awareness of the social issues that are prevalent in sport, as well as a motivation to enact positive change (Camiré et al., 2022). Building on critical sport research (e.g., Bishop et al., 2023; Kochanek & Erickson, 2019), longitudinal research is needed to explore coaches' critical praxes development as they coach in their sport context. The present study explored competitive youth sport coaches' critical praxis development, with particular focus on their challenges and

successes in creating safer and more inclusive sport spaces. The CPYD framework was used to explore coaches' developing critical praxes and the challenges and successes they faced in engaging in critical reflection and enacting positive social change.

Paradigmatic Approach and Methodology

This study was guided by a relativist ontology and a social constructionist epistemology (Lincoln et al., 2018; Sparkes & Smith, 2009). With this paradigmatic approach, reality is considered subjective, multiple, fluid, and contextually dependent, and knowledge is socially constructed by individuals through interactions with the world. The study was grounded in CSP research to create dialogue that provides contextualised understandings of sociocultural challenges in sport (Ryba, 2013). CSP research intentionally unites critical studies, cultural consideration, and Freirean pedagogical concepts with sport psychology frameworks. At the “heart” of CSP research is *cultural praxis* (McGannon & Smith, 2015), which operates as a heuristic that intentionally accounts for issues of diversity, identity, and power in sport that are undertreated or ignored (Ryba, 2013). A central tenant of cultural praxis is to blend theory, lived culture, and social action in a reflexive process to understand cultural identities as socially constructed and fluid within social interaction and discourse. In this study, competitive sport was viewed as a gendered, ableist, and heteronormative context with normative discourses situating men as superior and women as inferior, and those with disabilities as menial (e.g., Hoerber & Dalhstrom, 2021).

Narrative inquiry was used as a methodology, which focuses on stories as social and cultural sites of analysis (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). Aligning with narrative inquiry, I (Sara) acted as a story analyst and a storyteller to address the purpose of this study (Smith, 2016). As a story analyst, I developed narrative themes within and across the participants. I then functioned as a

storyteller and engaged in a creative analytical practice (McMahon, 2016) to develop creative nonfictions (CNF) that illustrate the challenges and successes coaches experienced while developing their critical praxis.

Method

Procedure and Participants

Upon receiving ethical approval from my (i.e., Sara) institution, I recruited participants using a purposive sampling technique and a social media strategy. A recruitment form and study infographic (Appendices H) with my contact information was shared by colleagues, sport service departments, and sport organisations on email and Twitter (i.e., now referred to as 'X'). After discussing the study in an initial meeting (lasting 30 to 120 minutes), I asked consenting coaches to forward the study information to other coaches who met the inclusion criteria and may be interested. Two coaches were recruited through this snowball sampling. In total, eight coaches from Ontario and one from Nova Scotia provided verbal and signed consent (Table 1). The participants were 21 to 67 years old ($M_{age} = 36.8$; $SD = 14$), there were six men and three women, with two women identifying as LGBTQ, and seven participants self-identified as white, one as Indigenous, and one as a first-generation Italian Canadian. Accredited by the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) in Canada, two of the participants were coach developers, two were learning facilitators and coach evaluators, and one was a formal mentor. All the participants had a bachelor's degree or a college diploma; two had a master's degree; two had completed/were completing a teacher education program; and one was completing a doctorate. Three of the participants were parents with young or adult children, and one of the participants was also a grandparent. The participants coached competitive high school, college/university, regional, provincial, and national level sports, including baseball,

canoe/kayak, golf, rowing, rugby, soccer, softball, and Ultimate Frisbee. The participants' athletes ranged in age from 14 to 24 years old.

Conversations between myself and the participants were conducted via Zoom or by phone, were audio-recorded, and were transcribed verbatim. The participants took part in (a) one pre-season individual semi-structured interview, (b) the construction of a reflective portfolio during their season, and (c) one post-season individual semi-structured interview. The methods were piloted with two participants allowing for changes to be made to the methods (e.g., the need to clearly detail the portfolio purpose). Both pilot coaches consented to be full-fledged study participants, and their data were included in the study. I interacted with the participants during their seasons (e.g., email, Zoom) to guide them in completing their portfolio, answer questions, and discuss their experiences. Some of the participants chose their pseudonyms while other pseudonyms were randomly selected by me and approved by the participants.

Table 1*Participant Demographic Information*

Coach	Interview 1	In-season Meeting(s)	Interview 2	Age	Declared Identities	Highest Level of Education	Sport Level	Years Coaching	Highest Level of NCCP ^b Education
Andrew	154 min	165 min (2 meetings)	138 min	27	White man	Advanced college diploma	Regional	7	None
Ben ^a	92 min	10 min	97 min	26	White man	Bachelor's degree	University	6	None
Brooke	195 min	60 min	140 min	27	Indigenous bisexual woman	Bachelor's degree	High school	2	Competition introduction multi-sport certified
Doug	155 min	221 min (2 meetings)	170 min	28	White man	Bachelor's degree	Regional, national	12	Competition development advanced high-performance certified
Emma	128 min	60 min	130 min	21	White woman	Bachelor's degree; Teacher's education in progress	High school	5	None
Marco	120 min	45 min	124 min	67	First generation Italian Canadian man	Bachelor's degree	Regional, provincial	30	Competition development advanced high-performance certified
Melanie ^a	85 min	30 min	137 min	44	White LGBTQ woman	Master's degree; Doctorate in progress	University	29	ACD ^c
Nolan	112 min	90 min	114 min	47	White man	Master's degree	University	15	Competition development certified
Ryan	93 min	60 min	140 min	44	White man	Teacher's college	Regional, provincial, national	26	Competition development advanced high-performance certified; ACD in progress

a. Initial pilot coach, who consented to be a full participant at the end of their study participation.

b. NCCP = National Coaching Certification Program in Canada.

c. ACD = Advanced Coaching Diploma, formerly known as "Level 4 and 5" in the National Coaching Certification Program in Canada.

Data Collection

Pre-season interviews were conducted from December 2021 to July 2022. The pre-season interview guide was organised into three sections (Appendix I). First, the participants were asked to contextualise their sport settings (e.g., how did the COVID-19 pandemic affect your athletes?). Second, a variety of social justice issues were discussed using vignettes (i.e., short descriptions of specific situations that mimic real events or issues; Skilling & Stylianides, 2020). I developed four vignettes that portray social issues in sport (e.g., Gearity & Henderson Metzger, 2017) to guide reflective discussions with the participants around sensitive topics (Skilling & Stylianides, 2020). Third, the participants discussed perceived developmental impacts of sport for their athletes (e.g., the development of relevant life skills). The interviews lasted, on average, 126 minutes (Range = 85 to 195 minutes).

During their competitive season (lasting between three to seven months), the participants constructed a reflective portfolio by compiling artifacts that illustrated their coaching experiences (see Appendix J for reflective portfolio information letter). During this process, the participants were asked to reflect on “how they see, think, and feel about themselves” (Ronkainen & Ryba, 2020, p. 551) regarding social justice in their sport contexts. The participants shared their portfolios with me at the end of their season. The portfolios included first-person narratives and reflections, recorded in bullet-points or detailed long-form writing and visual artifacts of (a) athlete goal sheet templates; (b) letters written to athletes; (c) blogs, books, and news articles (e.g., [Bandini, 2022](#)); (d) team websites, results, and policies; (e) photographs from the season (e.g., team volunteering); (f) social media posts; (g) YouTube videos (e.g., [Duke Women’s Basketball, 2022](#)); and (h) podcasts (e.g., [Holiday, 2022](#)). Examples of portfolio artifacts can be found in Appendix K.

After their competitive season ended, each participant partook in an individual semi-structured interview (from April to November 2022). The interview guides were customised for each participant based on the preliminary analysis of their pre-season interview, in-season meeting(s), and reflective portfolio (Appendix L). During the interviewing, time was allocated for the participants to lead the dialogue on their portfolio (Ronkainen & Ryba, 2020) and to review any changes in their coaching approach that occurred in-season or through their study participation. The interviews lasted, on average, 132 minutes, ranging from 97 to 170 minutes.

Data Analysis

As a story analyst, I used a social constructionist thematic narrative analysis (Smith, 2016), where the stories were co-constructed within prevailing cultural narratives that impacted the coaches' experiences, reflections, and actions. Analysis began with organising each of the participants' data into individual cases, followed by narrative indwelling (i.e., becoming familiar with the data) through reading and re-reading the transcripts, listening to the recorded audio, and reviewing the portfolio artifacts (Smith, 2016). Notes were made in the margins of the transcripts to identify how the participants were telling their stories through verbal and body language and repeated refrains (e.g., "person first, athlete second"). The participants expressed frustration for the current sport system not changing fast enough, passion for creating a positive impact, and sarcastic humour for peers who disagreed with their coaching approach. Some participants shared their thoughts through crying, laughing, and sighing, often throwing their hands in the air or rolling their eyes in frustration.

The narrative indwelling and note-taking processes provided an opportunity to think *about* and *with* the stories and consider the latent and manifest meanings of the data (Frank, 2010; Smith, 2016). The process of thinking *about* the stories involved reducing the shared

information to content that could be analysed. For example, Emma described her first experience of sexism in sport, which occurred when she was 11 years old, consisting of an opposing man coach belittling her and showing other (boy) players that it is okay to talk to girls/women this way. Conversely, the process of thinking *with* the stories involved encountering and engaging with the story, “to experience if affecting one’s own life and to find in that effect a certain truth of one’s own life” (Frank, 1995, p. 23). In revisiting Emma’s transcript and her experience of sexism, I thought with the story as I reflected on my own experiences of sexism in and beyond sport, of feeling targeted, powerless, and quieted, and how I wanted to speak out against her experiences of sexism. Written portfolio content was analysed using the same process as the interview data, by analysing what content was shared and how the stories fit within my own framework. The visual portfolio content was analysed using critical visual methodology to consider the sites of production (i.e., how the content was produced, what the image contained, who was the audience), as well as the sites of circulation (i.e., technological, compositional, social; Rose, 2022). The analysed visual content provided nuance for the participants’ narratives.

Before analysing across the participants’ transcripts, I developed brief narrative overviews of each coach (Appendix M). I then identified narrative patterns (e.g., the coaches’ identities impact their coaching) that were organised into narrative relationships (e.g., the coaches believe their power and knowledge can be used for positive change). Themes were refined by moving back and forth through the narrative patterns and relationships (Smith, 2016). The central narrative theme identified was the participants’ belief that ‘it’s my responsibility to enact change’. I presented the themes to my co-author, who acted as a critical friend, as we discussed our interpretations of the data (e.g., is coach burnout related to social justice issues or

the workload of coaching?) and questioned how the narrative themes fit with the study purpose (Smith & McGannon, 2018).

I then shifted to a storyteller approach by selecting captivating passages identified in the story analyst phase to present the findings in relevant and accessible stories (Smith, 2016). The meanings of the central narrative theme were organised into three composite CNFs: (a) when is it okay for me to intervene?; (b) burning out... it's consuming me; and (c) breaking through... it's necessary work. I focused on the coaches' experiences as I developed characters and storylines using direct quotes and interpretations from the analysis. The CNFs were reviewed by my co-author, who provided critical feedback regarding the connection to the central narrative theme and the flow within and between each story. By means of composite CNFs, I connected meaning between the narrative themes and created a synthesis of the coaches' voices into a powerful shared account, where one character told a resonating story (Smith, 2016). Thus, while each story is presented from the viewpoint of one character, experiences of each participant are present in the CNFs. The frustration, passion, and humour displayed by the participants during the interviews were emphasised in the CNFs through the use of italics. I focused on presenting what coaches *are doing* to create safer, more inclusive sport spaces through their developing critical praxis and consciousness.

Study Quality

Throughout the study, I engaged in deliberate efforts of reflexivity to assess how my social position, power, and privilege impacted the research process, as well as my strengths and limitations as a researcher (Smith & McGannon, 2018). My identities as a white, educated, woman living without a disability impacted the knowledge construction processes through the benefits afforded by my identities and influenced my assumption that social issues are relevant

within sport and to coaches' praxes. As a CSP researcher, volunteer sport coach, and community member, I recognise how social inequities and discrimination are intersecting and occurring within sport and society, and how I am in a position of power to help transform sport. Aligned with my social constructionist epistemology, I employed a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge and acknowledged how I was entangled with the participants through our interactions (Poucher et al., 2020). With ongoing reflexive work around my social position, power, and privilege, the discussions with the coaches were handled with sensitivity, openness, honesty, and an awareness of the coaches' privilege regarding social justice topics (e.g., Gearity & Henderson Metzger, 2017). Ethical safeguards were used to protect the participants from ongoing harm or distress after discussing sensitive topics. I also kept a reflexive journal to record my experiences of/with the coaches' stories, and the CNFs were shared with the coaches to gather their feedback and insights (Cavallerio et al., 2020). Through this process of member reflections (Smith & McGannon, 2018), I gained valuable insight into the potential generalizability of the CNFs, as one coach shared, "Honestly, I saw myself throughout the text, which felt amazing". Together, through comprehensive data collection, the CNFs coherently, concisely, and insightfully present a meaningful picture of the coaches' stories (Lieblich et al., 1998).

Stories of Coaches' Developing Critical Praxes

As lifelong learners, the coaches acknowledged the challenges and vast expectations placed on competitive coaches in today's sociocultural climate, particularly working in sport contexts that were predominately white, homogeneous, and tolerant of discrimination and exclusion. Developing positive relationships with their athletes helped to adapt their coaching based on their athlete's experiences and intersectionality and foster mutual trust and dialogue.

The central narrative theme of ‘it’s my responsibility to enact change’ related to the coaches’ perceived power and position to support their athletes’ well-being, safety, and inclusion in sport. Subthemes are organised into three composite CNFs: (a) when is it okay to intervene?; (b) burning out... it’s consuming me; and (c) breaking through... it’s necessary work. Despite using sport-specific language in the CNFs, the situations occurred in similar ways across different sports. A brief introduction was developed during the storyteller phase of analysis and is shared to explain the composite character for each CNF. Tricia provides insight into coaches’ challenges and struggles in creating safer, more inclusive competitive sport. Callum reveals the experiences of coaches quitting their role to self-preserve their health and well-being when lacking organisational support. Isaac represents stories of critical action that have led to positive change in the coaches’ sport contexts.

When is it okay for me to intervene?

At 25 years old, Tricia’s experiences of gender inequity in sport have compelled her to foster girls’ confidence and belonging through her coaching. With no other volunteers, Tricia coached the boys’ high school soccer team this year. Having previously only coached girls’ teams, she anticipated new challenges but was not prepared to deal with her players facing racism and engaging in physical altercations. Tricia is left questioning the purpose of competitive sport and how it remains inaccessible to people who are marginalised...

I know it takes time to build trust, but this season *sucked*. The boys were physically fighting their teammates and their opponents. But the issues are deeper than surface level: the embedded, or ignored, racist roots reach across our mostly white town. Many of my players are Muslim, most of them are refugees, and there are only three white kids on the team—unheard of for our town. We also haven’t played against *a single* athlete who was not white. The boys have

been called racial slurs since game one. The first time was a shock to my system; I was frantically asking the boys, “Do you want me to confront the coaches, tell them what happened?!” The boys replied, “It’s fine, it happens”. Sadly, they were right... the racism continued. The boys feel it’s better to stay quiet and not make waves, not create more issues for their families navigating new, unknown waters as they settle in Canada. They said, “Say nothing”, not wanting more attention on them. *It happens*. But it’s not in my nature to ‘say nothing’; the top step on my metaphorical soapbox has been worn down from calling people out for being exclusive, being bullies. So, do I respect my athletes’ request or say something? How do I ensure their safety?

Competitive sport is also *different* for the athletes I coach. A local coach was scouting some of my players late in the season, saying they’d do well on his elite team. Yes, they’re talented, but the boys can’t even afford our small team fees, never mind astronomical club fees. Half the team is wearing my old cleats! I tried to explain how competitive sport includes one type of athlete; others must adapt or leave. The coach’s response still stings. He let out a big sigh, “Wasted potential.” *Sorry?! You have no idea what they had to endure to get here! WASTED POTENTIAL?! Even if they made that coach’s elite team, young newcomers have no sustainable opportunities to thrive in our competitive sport system. I’ll never forget that conversation. I spent the drive home thinking about what this middle-aged, white man said about my players. Shaking my head, knuckles white gripping my steering wheel. Stopped at a red light close to my apartment, I had a sinking feeling... what do I do with this experience? I don’t want to make my athletes feel less-than because they have more barriers to access competitive sport than other athletes. But I also can’t drive them to try-outs and games, provide funds for their gear and fees. I don’t have the capacity or understanding to help them deal with their trauma. What’s my role as a coach to make sport more accessible when my athletes do not inherently fit into our system?*

It hit me mid-season that I'm used to coaching girls and women, that my experiences have shaped how I coach. Like the first time I experienced sexism in sport is engrained in my brain... I'm 11 years old, playing boys' soccer, but to the other team's coach, I didn't belong: too delicate, too emotional, "spin for us, ballerina". That day became my coaching origin story. I aim to be supportive, fight for my athletes, and foster belonging. But these boys... *they just weren't hearing me*. Is it just teenagers? Is it because of my gender? One game, my assistant coach Erik wasn't there to help me. I was calling subs and they wouldn't come off, wouldn't even look at me... *Why am I here?* Instead of my usual halftime pep talk, I snapped, "You wouldn't act like this with Erik, is it because I'm a woman?" They quickly assured me, "Of course not", but then what's the difference? I'm learning that my biases run deep and that they impact my coaching, but there are also gendered biases that belittle women coaches. Sometimes, I want to put my foot down and scream 'I know what I'm doing!!!' But I'm not an old white man; I can't yell and expect results, not like that works anyway and I can't morph into a man to get the team to finally hear me.

I know these boys have been through so much, many of them recently arriving to Canada from war-torn countries, and they are having difficulty coping with their new surroundings as they deal with the trauma from leaving their homes. But the physical fighting that has been happening within our team and with other athletes is not helping. And the cops won't think about their circumstances when they're responding to a physical fight in the community. My athletes are dealing with things I'll never have to consider. When I see an opportunity to teach someone, I feel compelled to act, *to coach*. We talked about how different, unfair rules endure for people who are not white in our society, and I shared how these boys will unfairly suffer because of their skin colour if they keep fighting others, but am I reaching outside of my role as their coach?

My thinking has shifted this season... I thought I knew what inclusive sport looked like, but now I understand how inclusion goes *beyond* one's gender. I've been feeling hesitant, unconfident... My colleagues have encouraged me to dig deeper with my reflections, consider how my language and actions may be othering my athletes, supporting religious and cultural stereotypes of who a young refugee or a young Muslim man is and can/should be. My brother, who is a teacher, reminded me to be open-minded and supportive in my coaching because I do not have the same experiences as my athletes. Maybe I have been coaching this team all wrong. We can't remain blind to the social issues happening in sport, blind to our athletes' needs. If I speak out, I wouldn't be ostracized as much as my athletes because of my white privilege. But I still don't know what I'm doing to address racism and discrimination in sport. I feel stuck right now... I can continue educating myself but if I can't have a conversation about racism in sport, about making my athletes feel safer, change won't happen. So, I need to keep learning, growing... I don't want to be a white saviour—to speak without thinking, make the situation about me. To reach these athletes, I need more time to build trust and show the boys that I can support them and move beyond my words. But their message “Say nothing” rings in my head... When is it okay for me to intervene?

Burning out... I can't do this anymore, it's consuming me.

After 10 years of coaching competitive men's and women's rugby, Callum is run down and burnt out. Callum aims to support his athletes' mental health and well-being, belongingness, and psychological and physical safety. His coaching approach went against the organisation's aims for winning—leading Callum to feel burnt out, depleted, and eventually quit coaching at 28 years old. A year after leaving, Callum reflects on the sport he left behind...

I took a ‘person-first, athlete-second’ approach to coaching and it took its toll. I would’ve coached forever but I was killing myself, consumed with helping my athletes, neglecting my health. I finally saw the vast amount of (blissful) ignorance in our sport and the lack of motivation to change anything: people in positions of power kept saying ‘it’s worked for the last 30 years’, or ‘we’re still producing results’. Just because something’s been ‘fine’ for a long time doesn’t mean that it’s right. I advocated for safer sport, helping athletes *before* they crashed, not once they’re on fire. And rugby was my whole life... *my home*. Who could I have become if the club, at the very least, acknowledged how I was doing internally and not solely focus on my performance? Maybe I would’ve realised that I had depression when I was 13 instead of 23. Our athletes’ mental health issues have intensified, and no one seems to care. There’s been a few non-fatal suicide attempts during training camps. During one crisis, a parent responded, “Can they still finish his training?” after hearing of their child surviving their suicide attempt. *How screwed up is that?!* Since COVID-19, it’s like our athletes have crippling anxiety, and many have quit. Are the athletes dealing with issues that we can’t see? Or that we’re choosing to not see?

As part of my personality, I’m an open book. I don’t want to offend because I disclose too much, but I’ve seen how being vulnerable strengthens coach-athlete relationships. Before our finals last year, I told my team I was struggling with my mom in the hospital. I think it encouraged the athletes to open up—our captain shared after the game how his grandpa was in the hospital, too. When coaches normalise ‘it’s okay not being okay’, athletes can be their authentic selves, especially when you have kids that might be gay or are being abused at home. Maybe their family is going through a tough time; our team might be the only place they feel safe. Every year, I kept adding small ways to support each person, like our ‘warm fuzzies’ activity, where everyone wrote something positive about each other to read at season’s end. On

our annual goal sheets, I asked the athletes to commit to accepting themselves and learning from their experiences regardless of the score—a reminder that they're *more* than their accomplishments. But I was still fighting against the club's agenda of 'only winning matters'. Other high-level coaches and staff didn't want me spending time on the *person*. They wanted better results, performance statistics, and progress. To me, progress was finally seeing an athlete smile after a tough match instead of breaking down crying. By the end, it felt like no one else cared how our coaching impacted our athletes. I was consumed with caring for the athletes, but every stone I placed towards safer sport was removed by someone positioned above me.

The resistance from other coaches and organisational staff exhausted me. Whenever I'd push for change, ask for more mental health support so athletes could cope with schoolwork and training loads, I'd hit a brick wall of defensiveness: "That's not how it works around here". *How dare anybody question internal procedures*. No one wanted to have a conversation about how our coaching could improve. But were they upset about the fact that somebody called them out on their coaching? Asked for some accountability? Or because deep down they knew they were wrong? Do we have to wait for a generational change in management? Or will a plethora of people get bogged down in the same shit at the beginning of their career, pushing against an old, unmovable system that treats athletes like machines and not people? And my superiors are not paying for my therapy bills, racking up hours trying to unpack how this toxic sport climate has impacted me. I never thought I would quit before I turned 30 years old, throw in the towel on my dream career. But our society is evolving, our sport is evolving; the people I coached with refused to change with it.

Telling my athletes that I wouldn't be returning was... uhm... it was *tough*. I watched these kids grow up into teenagers and young adults. It all added up: not being paid well, being

overworked and tired, not having my own life, not taking any time off, ruining my relationships, so many things *I needed to do* so I could be the coach *I wanted to be*. My mental health was in turmoil and no amount of therapy was helping me; I had to leave coaching. My brain wouldn't turn off at night, I was mentally stuck pacing the floor in my club office. Always thinking how I can be a better coach because the memory of leaving my athlete at a psychiatric hospital after a failed suicide attempt will always stay with me. The scar tissue of watching athletes in pain has been building for years, layering over my own anxiety and depression. I stayed in coaching for so long because of my athletes, seeing in small ways that coaching the person first was working. An athlete who went away for university called me in tears before I left, saying, "Thank you for letting me *be me* and have my bad days". That hopefulness is everything.

Now, a year after quitting, my shoulders feel lighter, I'm sleeping better, being more social, proactively focusing on my mental health. I finally let my brain leave my coach office and I closed the door behind me. I'll always miss rugby and being a coach. I hope to get back on the pitch someday, but I'm not ready yet... Our sport culture must evolve more first, it's just not healthy for the athletes or the coaches. I'm starting to heal but I know it will take time to let go of my anger towards our sport system... anger that I had to step away from and not do what I loved anymore—coaching young athletes to be the best *person* they can be.

Breaking through... it's necessary work.

Isaac has been coaching women's university golf for several seasons after years of coaching his children and being a leader in club and regional sport organisations. Turning 45 this year, Isaac has had many opportunities to reflect on how his actions either empower or hinder others, through being a teacher, family person, and coach. Something clicked this season; Isaac became more direct and explicit in his actions for social change...

My mind is always running, constantly reflecting throughout the day on how I can be a better father, husband, coach. But I'll never fully understand someone's experiences of exclusion or discrimination based on their gender or race because I'm a white man... I've never been the affected person. Regardless, I feel confident to stand up to do the right thing. I've aged into this perspective from experiences over the last 10, 15 years. Every so often, a Facebook memory pops up from 2008, 2009... I was kind of a dick back then and I'm happy I've changed for the better. Teaching has helped, working with teachers and students of different faiths, backgrounds, and races. We are also faced with persistent change in school—our new curriculum is Indigenous-based, and we've been critically discussing how to teach intentionally, without culturally appropriating the knowledge. And the bias training I've done over the years has helped, like becoming aware that in the past I most often gravitated towards selecting athletes with names like my own, pulling away from someone with an East Indian name or a Chinese name. I've had to actively work on myself, learn, unlearn, learn again. Now, I can help other coaches become more aware too.

Last weekend, I had a breakthrough chatting with Bob, an older club coach. During the season, one of Bob's athletes transitioned to affirm their gender and now identifies as *he*. Bob said, "I haven't seen her around in the last little while, what's going on with her?" I kept using *he* loudly, but Bob didn't catch on. Finally, I'm like, "DUDE, use 'he'! *He* is presenting as a boy". Bob scoffed, "What difference does it make?" I cut him off, "It's important to the athlete so it's important to us". By the end, Bob said, "Huh, well good for *him*". From building a deeper understanding of social issues in sport I now feel more confident to question other people, to encourage coaches to consider a different perspective. And with this confidence, it just took 5

minutes to open an older coach's mind towards being more inclusive with his language. Now, if Bob hears another coach use non-affirming language, he can hopefully help them change too.

I also chat with the other university coaches to learn about social issues beyond golf. Like how in team sports, Black and racialized athletes are often typecast into specific roles, assuming they're more skilled to run than to throw. So, one of the coaches gave his Black athletes opportunities to become confident playing defence and offense, break out of that box. My athletes are typecast into a different box, they're treated like *girls who golf*, not competitive athletes. It's always been clear to me and to the players that we are viewed as a second-tier team, second-tier athletes. It's laughable at this point how obviously different the women's team is treated than the men's. Discussing gender inequities and social issues as a team is a *must* because these women will face inequities in sport now and in their lives in the future.

Our conversations around gender inequities in sport have always felt real... they feel grounded. Maybe because the focus has always been on *their experiences*. I am not at the front of the pack telling them how they will feel less-than or othered in sport. I give the players the time and space to speak up, share their stories, feel heard and validated, and then I support their rally cries for change. I tell the players: "If you want to host a pride event, let's do it! Host an awareness night for climate change? I love it!" We had a tournament on Truth and Reconciliation Day this year, so we discussed how to be respectful of our local Indigenous people and acknowledge the erasure of their history. We organised a ceremony to raise awareness of celebrating Indigenous cultures in our city and sport. In the off-season, we donated winter clothing to people experiencing homelessness in our community and discussed student-athletes' privilege and social position to help others in need. Those days volunteering with the team and engaging in our community... they are special memories. My players know that I will fight for

them, be that keyboard warrior telling the university that we need more support. I have hope that the younger generation will continue to fight, continue to disrupt the sport system.

I can see now how all of these moments have led to my own breakthrough... As a leader in our regional organisation, I was informed that an athlete felt excluded because she came out as bisexual. So, I quickly got to work, gathering accounts from everyone involved, learning the coaches acted on rankings and nothing else. But whatever the coaches' intentions were, I realised we did not have a policy to prevent or address any form of discrimination. I *NEVER* want to receive that email again. So, I went out for a solo round of golf and reflected on what my next steps were... either I do nothing and feel grateful the issue wasn't worse, or I be proactive and put myself out there, make a statement for more inclusive sport. I used the skills I have refined over years as a coach: communicating clearly with others, gathering intel and making an informed decision, thinking of the short- and long-term consequences of my actions. After talks with the provincial sport organisation and getting feedback from peer coaches, family, and athletes, it was clear there needed to be more accountability from an organizational standpoint. So, I created an EDI [equity, diversity, and inclusion] policy. Some of the feedback was negative, that the policy brings up things that "don't need to be a part of sport", or "now someone can come after me as a coach". But others shared, "We *desperately* need this policy because people are assholes all the time". I can understand that a coach newer to the organization or the sport may not have the same confidence to enact this policy or to question the status quo. I just couldn't see myself acting any other way... I want to be a role model for my players, for my children. And that means standing up for what is right, even when it is scary, or when the path forward is unclear. I do not want to look back in 10, 15 years, and think 'I was still a dick back

then'. And really, at the end of the day, it's my players who will suffer more than me if our sport system continues to be exclusive towards women. So, what do I have to lose by trying?

As a coach, I see this as necessary work. To be my best self, I need to be more informed and critical of what's happening in sport, make change happen. That means asking open-ended questions, talking with people who you might not agree with, listening to your players and their concerns. Not only will refining these skills be useful for addressing social issues, but also just becoming a *better coach*. Sometimes I feel like I'm lightyears ahead of others in my attempts to make sport safer, but I also recognise I have much to learn, and everyone has a different understanding of social justice. But you have to start somewhere... sometime. What is the legacy you are leaving behind as a coach? What do you want to stand up for? I know it's a privilege to keep learning and I do not take that responsibility lightly. I get to coach my favourite sport, show up every day to this job, and change the world. The breakthroughs I've seen of my woman players finding their voice and reclaiming their space make all of the difficult times worth it. The way I choose to coach is a big responsibility, but I wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore competitive youth sport coaches' critical praxes development by focusing on challenges and successes the coaches faced in creating safer and more inclusive sport spaces. Three CNFs detail the coaches' *developing* critical praxis through experiences of hesitation, burnout, and breakthrough in their competitive sport contexts. It is important to recognize that while this study was occurring, competitive sport in Canada was experiencing a cultural reckoning with exposure of athlete maltreatment and abuse, national inquiries into the lack of financial and governance transparency, and public questioning into the role of sport during the COVID-19 pandemic. While this study focused on coaches' critical

praxes, coaches are just one actor in the dynamic and complicated sport world; critical praxis is required throughout the sport system, as all individuals interacting in competitive youth sport contexts can improve the athlete and coach experience (Camiré et al., 2022). Practical implications are discussed for individuals who work with coaches such as educators, coach developers, mentors, mental performance consultants (MPCs), and sport psychologists to aid in the transformation of competitive youth sport.

Aligning with Kochanek and Erickson's (2019) findings, the coaches' critical praxis varied along a continuum of lower and higher levels of awareness and action, with each coach differing in the extent to which they were convinced of the importance of addressing social justice issues in sport (Gonzalez et al., 2020). As shown in Tricia's story, some of the coaches described their challenges in moving beyond critical reflection, based on their feelings of hesitancy, discomfort, or a lack of confidence to address social issues in sport (Bishop et al., 2023; Tam et al., 2021). Per the CPYD framework, overtime, the coaches had refined their ability to critical reflect and understand how oppression is created and sustained through systems of power but remained quiet around social issues they felt less experienced in. This pause in some of the coaches' critical reflection development could be due in part to not having a strong support system to challenge the status quo (e.g., newer to coaching, new program/team, other issues are pressing in their organizations, lack of connection with superiors). Similar to Bishop et al.'s (2023) findings, some of the coaches also felt reluctant to change the system, feeling that their efforts were minute within the larger sport context, leading to missed opportunities for critical action. To raise one's critical consciousness, coaches' awareness and literacy of social justice issues will need to be strengthened, and support will be needed for self-reflection of one's biases and assumptions that may contribute to pervasive and exclusive norms in sport (Gearity &

Henderson-Metzger, 2017). Recognition is also needed for *how* cultural change can occur with a systems-wide approach throughout sport organizations and cultures (Camiré et al., 2022).

During their season and through the construction of their reflective portfolio, some of the coaches shared overcoming hesitation to act on specific social issues. For example, during his pre-season interview, Marco (67 years old) acknowledged how he was raised and trained to coach in a different generation and believed that competitive sport should not be a place to discuss social issues. As such, Marco illustrated discursive practices of speech acts (e.g., ‘We treat everyone equally here’; Spaaij et al., 2020) that limited his critical praxis. However, Marco identified changes in his critical praxis during his participation in this study and by engaging in dialogue with his adult children about the importance of coaching with an intersectional lens to be inclusive of all athletes, especially those who are marginalized. In his post-season interview he shared his reflections on how his perspective is evolving around the potential for coaches to promote equity and inclusion. With social justice and CSP-informed training, sport psychologists and MPCs may critically assess if the coaches they work with are using discursive practices that normalize and tolerate exclusive coaching approaches (e.g., silencing individuals who address social injustice in sport by masking discrimination; Gearity & Henderson-Metzger, 2017; Spaaij et al., 2020). It is important for coaches to consider their social identities cannot be isolated (e.g., as a white man), much like their athletes’ identities are cumulative and intersecting (Lynch et al., 2022), as well as the systemic and dominant discourses in sport that limit the transformation of socially just sport spaces (Camiré et al., 2022).

As outlined in the CPYD framework (Gonzalez et al., 2020), with a heightened awareness of one’s biases and assumptions, and how oppression is created and sustained in sport, some of the coaches in this study developed their political efficacy, a belief in their ability and

capacity to lead social change. The coaches' political efficacy may have been further developed through their study participation by engaging in dialogue with myself and others in their networks on social justice topics. For instance, sharing the four vignettes during the pre-season interview with coaches who were less familiar or experienced in addressing social justice issues led to rich dialogue for considering different perspectives and strategizing how they might respond in their own sport context. Constructing their reflective portfolio throughout their season may have also enhanced the coaches' confidence to identify microaggressions in sport they were previously unaware of. Similar to Tam et al.'s (2021) findings, the coaches desired more opportunities for professional development and mentorship regarding social justice issues and how to address them in sport. While ongoing, long-term support is needed for continued efforts of critical praxis (Lee et al., 2021), dialogue-based education programs show potential for facilitating coaches' awareness for and confidence in addressing social justice issues in sport (Kochanek et al., 2023). Changes for socially just sport are also needed through both top-down and bottom-up approaches (Camiré et al., 2022), such as updating policy and education to include both preventative measures for social injustices and simultaneous promotion of more inclusive spaces built around equity-deserving athletes' and coaches' needs (Gurgis et al., 2022).

The experiences presented in Callum's story builds on the 'living the part of the coach' narrative, where the coaches initially navigated their identity within the performance coaching culture, but ultimately had to sacrifice what they valued most about their coaching, negatively impacting their well-being (Zehntner & McMahon, 2014). Multiple coaches within this study discussed feeling overwhelmed and burnt out from their efforts to coach differently in consideration of athletes' well-being and mental health. The burnout experienced by coaches in the present study (i.e., psychological syndrome of chronic stress; Smith, 1986) resulted in part

from a conflict between the coach, organizational intentions, and systemic problems within competitive youth sport, as to what the purpose of sport should be (e.g., securing results vs fostering well-being). Competitive sport coaches must manage stressors and maintain a high level of mental well-being and functioning to work the required long hours (with low job security), face scrutiny for their athletes' performance, and remain innovative for achieving results (e.g., Altfeld et al., 2015). With the coaches' added emphasis on creating a safer and more inclusive sport context, additional personal (e.g., lack of social support, health problems), organisational (e.g., concerns for athletes' safety, conflict with the organisation), and performance stressors (e.g., negative competition environment) may have hindered their mental health (Kegelaers et al., 2021). To prevent burn out, MPCs and sport psychologists may aim to foster coaches' development of self-regulatory strategies during their sport season, such as learning how to use facilitative self-talk and practice gratitude (McNeill et al., 2020), and foster their connections to peers who have overcome challenges of working in normative sport contexts while attempting to enact critical action (Lee et al., 2021).

The coaches who engaged in critical action for enacting positive change ranged in gender, age, and life experience. The primary variable that seemed to lead to a developing critical consciousness and motivate coaches to engage in critical action was their prior exposure to social issues in/beyond sport and their networks of support to help in their critical praxis development (Kochanek & Erickson, 2019). For example, Brooke demonstrated how she had developed her 5C's through sport as a young athlete (i.e., competence, confidence, connection, caring, and character), which helped her to critically reflect on social injustices as a young person and athlete. Using her experiences of tokenism and discrimination in sport as a bisexual Indigenous woman, Brooke continued to develop her political efficacy as a new coach, finding ways to

empower her athletes and create socially informed spaces where intersectionality is discussed and celebrated (e.g., Robinson et al., 2023). Melanie, also identifying as a LGBTQ woman, shared how she encouraged her men athletes to reflect on gendered biases in sport and challenge exclusive discourses. Additionally, the men coach participants all discussed the benefit of having women coaches and athletes share their experiences of sexism and inequities in sport, so they (as white men) could become more informed of microaggressions that (un)intentionally belittle and other girls and women (Gearity & Henderson-Metzger, 2017). Importantly, we are not stating that coaches and athletes who are marginalized in sport should be responsible for supporting coaches' praxes development. Rather, with a heightened awareness of social issues in sport, the coaches recognized how discrimination exists and is sustained within competitive sport contexts and connected with others to enhance their confidence for critical action. Each coach described how they could transform sport by critically reflecting on their experiences, getting support from peer coaches, mentors, and family members, and engaging in continued dialogue with others fighting for similar change (Kochanek & Erickson, 2019; Kochanek et al., 2023).

As demonstrated in Isaac's story, coaches with higher levels of critical praxis acknowledged that critical work is difficult, yet necessary, and never ending (Gonzalez et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2021). The stories presented in the third CNF reflect a 'sporting activist identity', a narrative identity to describe individuals who advocate for transformative change inside sport's structures and systems (e.g., policies, education; Smith et al., 2016). Moreover, some of the coaches described experiences of becoming confident to enact positive change beyond sport, reflecting a 'political activity identity' (Smith et al., 2016) by monitoring their biases in the workplace and fostering critical consciousness. The coaches who embodied these narrative identities discussed how they believe sport is socially and culturally intertwined with

society, as issues of gender inequity, racism, sexism, discrimination, and neglect of mental health impacted their athletes. Coaches with a heightened level of awareness also recognized how systemic inequities in sport continue to marginalize athletes based on their intersecting identities, which may lead to negative consequences if they advocated for social change in sport, such as ostracization and de-selection from their team or program (e.g., Love et al., 2019). As coaches develop their critical consciousness, they may feel more confident to support their athletes' CPYD by providing opportunities to critically reflect on their privilege, volunteer in their community, and advocate for advancing social change in/beyond sport (Camiré et al., 2022; Gonzalez et al., 2020). By developing their political efficacy, some of the coaches attempted to raise other coaches' critical consciousness through honest conversations grounded in their critical awareness of social issues happening in sport (Lynch et al., 2022). With ongoing support from coach developers and MPCs, coaches may espouse transformative leadership (i.e., appreciating one's privilege and power while deconstructing and reconstructing dominant narratives) and moral courage (i.e., becoming more comfortable being a public agent for change), important elements of the CPYD framework (Gonzalez et al., 2020).

The use of CNFs to communicate complicated life experiences of coaches and athletes in accessible and compelling ways is expanding (e.g., Allan et al., 2023; Crocker et al., 2021; Gearity & Henderson-Metzger, 2017). The coaches in this study shared how our discussions "were like therapy" and gave them a sense of relief that "finally someone knew how they were feeling". Sharing the CNFs of Tricia, Callum, and Isaac with coaches experiencing similar challenges and feats in their sport context may foster relatedness, feelings of validation, and self-reflection on their coaching practices. For instance, coach educators, MPCs, and sport psychologists may benefit from sharing Tricia's story with coaches and organizational staff to

promote critical reflection towards social justice issues the coaches feel uncomfortable with, or uneducated and unprepared to address. Dialogue may then be fostered on what this discomfort means (e.g., awareness of biases and assumptions) and how to move forward with their critical praxes' development (e.g., recognizing how biases and stereotypes enable discrimination; Kochanek et al., 2023). As coaches may avoid addressing social issues with their athletes due to the fear of making (fireable) mistakes and not knowing what to say (Bishop et al., 2023; Kochanek & Erickson, 2019), the CNFs may provide encouragement for moving beyond hesitations and fear. While competitive youth sport coaches were the focus of this study, the findings may be useful for sport organizational staff and administrators to reflect on their involvement in coaches' praxes development and in the facilitating of safer, more inclusive sport spaces, as well as make efforts to develop their own critical consciousness. Moreover, competitive athletes may also benefit from reading the CNFs to engage in self-reflection and dialogue with practitioners as to how their coaches can better support their critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action development, leading to a critical consciousness (Gonzalez et al., 2020; Martin et al., 2022).

The composite CNFs represent the nine coaches' experiences in this study and are not reflective of all possible narratives on coaches' developing critical praxes. Incorporating multiple storied perspectives, such as Allan et al.'s (2023) CNF of transformational coaching in disability sport, Crocker et al.'s (2021) vignettes of student-athletes' demands in university sport, and Gearity and Henderson-Metzger's (2017) stories of microaggressions in coaching, may help to facilitate dialogue with coaches alongside other coach education and training. Sensitivity should also be given to discussing coaches' experiences of social justice issues in sport, as MPCs, sport psychologists, and other practitioners may not be trained and accredited to deal with the potential

trauma and debilitation elicited from coaches sharing their experience of and exposure to social injustices. Sport organizations can support their consultants, psychologists, and counsellors to engage in critical self-reflection of their behaviours while working with coaches on social justice topics, as well as allocate resources to training staff in CSP to address intersectional issues of inclusion in sport (e.g., Quartiroli et al., 2020). Integrating additional staff who are accredited in trauma-based counselling may also be beneficial for supporting coaches as they experience, reflect on, and address social justice issues in sport. Reflective practice should also not be assumed as automatically beneficial for coaches' practice (Cushion, 2018). Understanding what reflection is (and is not) and how to engage in *critical* reflection is needed to transform competitive youth sport contexts towards social justice. Interventions and collaborative work may help coaches to shift their intentions to actions and move from stages of contemplating on social issues towards acting in socially just ways (Lee et al., 2021).

Competitive youth sport coaches have an evolving list of responsibilities and demands within a complicated and dynamic environment. As we learn more about addressing social injustices in sport, coaches will need additional time and space within their demanding schedules to pause, learn, reflect, and act. While sport can become *more just* and *safer*, there is no final destination or absolute end for 'safe' competitive youth sport (Gurgis et al., 2022). One's developing critical consciousness is also never a destination, but always an ongoing and sociocultural process (Freire, 1973). Outlined through the CPYD framework, coaches' critical consciousness can be developed in a sustainable and meaningful way through becoming more aware of social justice issues and one's social position, experiencing shifts in one's attitudes to enact positive change, and developing the confidence to act.

Concluding Thoughts

With a longitudinal design, moments of critical praxis were identified over the course of the coaches' lives (e.g., as an athlete, in their first non-coaching job) and through their study participation (e.g., in their reflective portfolio), suggesting the benefit of exploring coaches' critical consciousness *while* they coach. The purposeful recruitment of coaches who aimed to create safer and more inclusive spaces may have influenced the heightened awareness of social issues in sport, compared to other research on coaches' developing critical praxis (e.g., Bishop et al., 2023). Through building rapport over long interviews and meetings, the timing of the coaches' study participation seemed to be beneficial for exploring their critical praxes across their sport seasons. The reflective portfolio was also beneficial for supporting the participants' sense of autonomy in choosing how to reflect and engaging in critical reflection of their coaching as they coached, to ultimately move through additional praxis cycles by referring to previous portfolio artefacts. Rich dialogue occurred during the coaches' post-season interviews as we recognized moments of critical praxis development throughout their season. The inclusion of additional qualitative methods may enhance coaches' praxis in future studies, such as the using timelines (i.e., a visual form of graphic elicitation; Sheridan et al., 2011) to identify milestones for coaches' praxis development across time.

While the use of CNFs provided insights into the coaches' learning experiences, not all of the shared stories were included. Of note, Brooke, Emma, and Melanie discussed their experiences of sexism and assumptions of inferiority as women coaches in sport. Brooke also spoke of her experiences of tokenism as a bisexual Indigenous woman. Nonetheless, organizing the findings through relevant and accessible CNF may lead to critical dialogue with/between coaches, practitioners, and researchers (Smith, 2016). Also, despite extensive recruitment efforts,

there was limited diversity amongst the participants. Inclusive consideration should be given to involve individuals of equity deserving groups in similar research (e.g., coaches who live with a disability; Black, Indigenous, and racialized coaches) to enhance discussions of intersectional experiences of social justice in sport. This study was also limited in that, beyond asking their highest level of education, no questions were asked regarding the participants' socioeconomic status. Understanding coaches' socioeconomic status in future research will help researchers to better explore how sport is and is not accessible for specific individuals, so to work with sport stakeholders to increase inclusion and accessibility.

The present study contributes to explorations of coaches' developing critical praxis in youth sport (e.g., Bishop et al., 2023; Kochanek & Erickson, 2019) and to researchers' calls for reimagining sport coaching (e.g., Kochanek & Erickson, 2020). There is potential for coach educators, MPCs, and sport psychologists to work *with* coaches through meaningful reflection, reading, dialogue, and action to support coaches' critical consciousness (Freire, 1973). In competitive sport contexts with a toxic win-at-all-costs culture, coaches will need organisational support to become transformational leaders and agents of change (e.g., Camiré et al., 2022). The CNFs suggest that some coaches in competitive youth sport contexts are choosing to view their coaching role as a *responsibility* to enact positive change. Sport stakeholders, including coaches, are in a position of (often unquestioned) power and should become critically aware of their privilege (e.g., white privilege, non-disabled privilege) to create safer, more inclusive sport for all (Gearity et al., 2019). Moving forward, CSP research should explore *how* coaches and other sport stakeholders can be supported with their critical praxis, including through social justice-informed coach education (Newman et al., 2022) and collaborative research (Kochanek et al., 2023). While not designed as an intervention, the findings from this study demonstrate how

advancements in coaches' critical praxes can occur through engaging in dialogue and reflection during coaches' sport seasons. By sharing coaches' stories as they became more critically aware, reflexive, and active in creating more inclusive sport, we hope to provide readers with an opportunity to either feel validation for similar coaching efforts or feel compelled to try a different, more socially informed, coaching approach.

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Article 2: A Nordic ski coach's learning journey toward creating more inclusive and safer sport

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Abstract

Competitive youth sport coaches who aim to foster inclusive and safer sport often face challenges from their peers, organisations, and sociocultural systems in their sport contexts. A personal learning coach (PLC) can help coaches engage in critical reflection and critical action to enact positive change. This study details a 15-month collaboration as Sara (first author) acted as a PLC to support Sophie's (second author) critical praxis as they reflected on social issues in their sport context and acted to enact positive change as a coach and community member. Grounded in narrative analysis, two semi-structured virtual interviews and 11 virtual meetings were held. Sara and Sophie also shared reflections through emails, Facebook Messenger, voice notes, and one in-person meeting during Sophie's training. Through time hopping snapshot vignettes, Sophie's learning journey is presented as they figure out what to fight for, grow through discomforts and unknowns, and experience progress. Building on their experiences, Sophie believed that their "mind shifted" towards becoming a "better coach" throughout the collaboration, developing their critical consciousness to change oppressive social conditions in sport. By sharing insights from the collaboration, the study provides vivid examples how coaches can take to become more confident in enacting positive change in sport.

Keywords: creative nonfiction, critical consciousness, critical praxis, coach learning, youth sport

Introduction

Research over the last two decades suggests that reflective practice can lead to more effective coaching and a strengthened understanding of one's education, knowledge, and experience (e.g., Tinning, 2022). Reflection should not be undisputed, unguided, or assumed as inherently good for coaches' practice (Cushion, 2018). Ideally, competitive youth sport coaches should critically reflect on more than just their coaching practice and use their power and privilege to enact positive social change (Bishop et al., 2023; Kochanek & Erickson, 2019). Within competitive sport contexts, youth athletes train extensively to improve their performance in local/regional, provincial, national, and international competitions (Harwood & Thrower, 2019). Coaches are powerful actors who shape their sport contexts and athletes' experiences.

Many inquiries are ongoing as athletes, coaches, and staff expose social problems in competitive sport that have been ignored or covered up, such as athletes experiencing abuse and maltreatment (e.g., Gurgis et al., 2022). These inquiries point clearly to the notion that the purpose of competitive youth sport should shift from toxic win-at-all-cost cultures to the protection of athletes' well-being and psychosocial development (Camiré et al., 2022; Kochanek & Erickson, 2020). To effect positive social change within the current sport system, youth sport coaches should develop their *critical praxis* (Kochanek & Erickson, 2019), an iterative process of combining knowledge and action with critical reflection (Freire, 1973). With a developing critical praxis, coaches can enhance their *critical consciousness*, enabling them to take action to change oppressive social conditions (Freire, 1973). Individuals who support coach development may be ideally positioned to foster competitive youth sport coaches' reflection and action towards creating safer sport. Moving forward, exploration of *how* youth sport coaches can be supported in developing their critical praxis is needed (Kochanek & Erikson, 2019). Engaging in

critical praxis can be a difficult and long process (Lee et al., 2021); coaches may benefit from external support such as ‘coaches of coaches’ to effectively prepare for coaching inclusive competitive sport.

‘Coaches of coaches’ encompasses many roles, such as coach developers and mentors. The role of coach developer is globally recognised as an invaluable support for coaches’ development and practice (e.g., International Council for Coaching Excellence [ICCE], 2013; Edwards et al., 2020). A coach developer may be involved in mentoring, designing/facilitating courses, and evaluating coaches’ performance (e.g., ICCE, 2013). Working with a coach developer may enhance coaches’ motivation for lifelong learning and reinforce their sense of purpose and belonging (Dohme et al., 2019). However, there is a lacking understanding of the role of coach developers and how they engage in coach development (Jones et al., 2023). As coach development systems become more complex, organisational interests may impact coach learning and inhibit the time and capacity needed to critically reflect (Edwards et al., 2020).

With critical consideration and planning, coach developers and mentees can collectively acquire new perspectives from their joint relationship, with both parties able to enhance their ability to critically reflect their practice (e.g., Grant et al., 2020; Tinning, 2022). Importantly, effective partnerships require mutual buy-in as well as ample time dedicated to nurturing rapport, trust, and sensitivity (e.g., Costello et al., 2023; Milistetd et al., 2018). Collaborative approaches to coach development have provided coaches with personalised support (Rodrigue et al., 2019). Specifically, a personal learning coach (PLC) has also been situated as valuable for competitive sport coaches to receive collaborative and specific support on their coaching practices *while* they are coaching (Milistetd et al., 2018; Rodrigue et al., 2019).

A PLC works directly with a coach in their sport context to expand their learning and reflection *from* their coaching practice as it happens (Milistetd et al., 2018). A PLC differs from other individuals who work with coaches due to the inclusion of components of the narrative-collaborative coaching (NCC) approach (Stelter, 2014). For effective use of NCC in sport contexts, Rodrigue and Trudel (2019) suggested that a PLC (a) focuses on a coach's specific context, (b) creates a safe learning space to question dominant norms and biases, (c) works around a coach's narratives to support in-situ reflection, (d) collaborates to co-create knowledge, and (e) facilitates open-ended dialogue relevant to a coach's learning (Stelter, 2014). Research in competitive sport suggests that PLCs can support the co-creation of knowledge and enhance coaches' awareness and reflection of their coaching practices (Milistetd et al., 2018; Rodrigue et al., 2019). PLCs can create bespoke learning opportunities that account for coaches' unique biographies, helping coaches reflect on their thoughts, feelings, and actions as they navigate experiences of disjuncture (i.e., a situation inconsistent with one's current understanding; Jarvis, 2006). For instance, coaches may experience discomfort around addressing social justice issues and feel unsure how to respond (Bishop et al., 2023; Tam et al., 2021). To further address social justice issues in sport, coaches may benefit from a PLC to support their critical awareness, reflection, and readiness for change. The purpose of the present study was to detail the learning journey of Sophie, a competitive Nordic ski coach, who aimed to create more inclusive and safer sport spaces for their athletes. Over 15 months, I (Sara) acted as a PLC to support Sophie's critical praxis on social issues in their sport context.

Conceptual Framework

Gonzalez et al.'s (2020) critical positive youth development (CPYD) framework was used to explore Sophie's praxis development toward social justice in sport. The framework

begins with Lerner et al.'s (2005) 5C's of positive youth development (PYD) model, indicating that the development of competence, confidence, connection, caring, and character leads to the development of contribution (i.e., the 6th C). Freire's (1973) notion of critical consciousness is integrated into the CPYD framework as the 7th C to critically address social justice in youth contexts. Gonzalez et al. (2020) proposed that critical consciousness is supported through the development of critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action. *Critical reflection* refers to understanding how oppression is created and sustained through systems of power, *political efficacy* refers to the belief in one's ability and capacity to bring about social change, and *critical action* refers to activism and advocacy-related efforts to address social oppression and marginalisation. While sport is not the answer to all social issues, it may serve as a setting for developing coaches' critical consciousness (e.g., Kochanek & Erickson, 2020).

The CPYD framework was used by Bishop et al. (2023) to explore one high school coach's attitudes toward social justice. The authors identified that although the coach was developing their critical consciousness towards social justice in sport, they were mostly reactive with their reflection and action, missing opportunities for developing their critical consciousness. Bishop et al.'s (2023) findings promote the utility of deploying critical theories to advance social justice in sport coaching contexts (Kochanek & Erickson, 2020; Norman, 2018). To implement CPYD effectively, coaches need to model critical consciousness, reflect critically, and seek professional development opportunities to improve themselves each season (Gonzalez et al., 2020). As developing one's critical consciousness can be a challenging process, coaches may benefit from working with researchers, coach developers, and educators who are informed of coach learning processes. Moreover, collaborative research is needed to build on the explorations

of coaches' attitudes toward social issues in sport to understand the coach's role in transforming sport (Camiré et al., 2022).

Paradigmatic Approach and Methodology

The study was guided by a relativist ontology, informed by a social constructionist epistemology (Lincoln et al., 2018), and grounded in cultural sport psychology (CSP; McGannon & Smith, 2015). With a relativist ontological lens, reality is considered subjective, multiple, fluid, and contextually dependent. With a social constructionist lens, knowledge is considered socially constructed by researchers and participants as they interact with each other and the world around them (Poucher et al., 2020). Cultural praxis operates as a heuristic within CSP to intentionally account for issues of diversity, identity, and power in sport that are undertreated, through the integration of critical and cultural consideration, and Freirean concepts (Ryba, 2013). Cultural praxis guided the promotion of social justice in this study by (a) using an inquiry approach that localised the lived experiences of Sophie and (b) engaging in reflexive processes to enhance our (Sara and Sophie) critical awareness of the influence of biases, intersecting identities, and power (Blodgett et al., 2015). All authors believed that competitive sport can be a site for promoting social justice.

Aligning with a cultural praxis agenda, a narrative inquiry methodology was used, where self-identity is considered socially and culturally constructed (McGannon & Smith, 2015). With narrative inquiry, individuals are storytellers who communicate meaning (i.e., about one's thoughts, emotions, motivations, and self-identities) to make sense of their experiences (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). Stories are personal but also socially and culturally constructed (Frank, 2010). Elements of feminist research were infused into the research process by recognising the fluidity of gendered identities and addressing hierarchical power imbalances that occur in research (Beal,

2018). Sport was viewed as a context to critically explore gender, as it is traditionally dominated by (white) men's success to the detriment of women's progress (e.g., Cooky & Messner, 2018).

Method

Participants

As co-participants in the collaboration, we (Sara and Sophie) purposefully use a first-person narrative to enhance genuineness and establish the narrative tone for the reader. I, Sara (aged 29, white woman, she/her pronouns), was the lead researcher and acted as the PLC in this study. I strived to be a *learning companion* and not an *all-knowing researcher* (Stelter, 2014), and came to the PLC role with coach, athlete, and graduate student experiences. In addition to engaging in professional development opportunities, I participated in reflexive discussions with my academic supervisor (Martin, third author), colleagues (two who have acted as PLCs), friends, and family. My vision of our collaboration was a “non-linear never-ending journey that I *choose* to partake in, to help Sophie become confident in enacting positive change” (November 2021).

I, Sophie (aged 28, white queer person, they/them pronouns), come from a French-Canadian family of teachers and am a teacher myself; finding solutions or the most appropriate approach when intervening with kids is part of my family culture. Nordic skiing became a place of belonging, where I felt safe to come out as a queer person to my friends. My years as a competitive skier eventually led me to coaching. Nordic skiing embodies many of my passions: moving fast, being active in nature, and interacting with others. While I worked with Sara, I coached about 45 high-performance competitive athletes (ages 14-18) with a head coach, who also mentored me, and other coach staff. I also was co-building a newcomer youth sport program in my community (ages 7-16). This research was and still represents an opportunity to

collaborate with Sara, a passionate professional in the field, without shame or judgement. As I was not the head coach of the ski clubs where I worked, I had the time and energy to partake in this collaboration.

Procedure and Data Collection

I (Sara) recruited Sophie through purposeful and convenience sampling (Patton, 2015). After receiving institutional and ethical approval, a colleague suggested Sophie may be a good fit because of their passion for safe and inclusive sport. With ample time and effort required to partake in the collaboration, it was important to have a relational connection with the participant. With the help of a colleague, I was connected with Sophie via email, and I sent them the study information letter and infographic (Appendices N). After discussing the study, Sophie provided informed consent to participate in the collaboration. Over 15 months, throughout two competitive seasons, we met 13 times virtually and once in-person to discuss Sophie's coaching needs (see Table 1). We also chatted via email, Facebook Messenger, voice notes, and using a shared Google Slides document. Each of our conversations were audio-recorded with Sophie's permission. Similar to research on PLCs in sport (Milistetd et al., 2018; Rodrigue et al., 2019), Sophie was purposefully recruited as a competitive youth sport coach due to their extensive involvement in their dynamic sport context, which limited their time and capacity to critically reflect on their coaching (Cushion, 2018). To address the study purpose, Sophie was also purposefully recruited based on their passion and commitment to create more inclusive and safer sport spaces.

Table 1*Details of Sophie/Sara Meetings*

Date and Length	Topics
1) November 2021, 35 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review study purpose, roles and expectations, potential benefits, and risks
2) Pre-season interview: November 2021, 116 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss first timeline, coach philosophy, sport context, social justice issues, athletes' psychosocial development
3) December 2021, 100 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss newcomer ski program athlete and coach recruitment • Create safer sport for gender and sexual diverse athletes • Decide coaching topics
4) January 2022, 76 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debrief results of implicit bias test and coach mind map • Discuss newcomer ski program coach recruitment • Debate tokenism vs. representation in sport
5) January 2022, 150 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss results of implicit bias test and self-assessment scores • Explore gendered experiences of competitive skiing • Foster athletes' self-confidence, self-esteem, and relevant life skills
6) January 2022, 90 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure physical and cultural safety • Develop awareness of social issues in sport • Build positive relationships with/between youth, long-term participation
7) January 2022, 70 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debate impacts of girls-only sport programs • Discuss safety issues trans athletes may experience • Review coach values and critical praxis development • Build team values in the newcomer ski program
8) February 2022, 100 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local Indigenous communities • Support athletes' performance goals • Deal with coaching approaches that focus on winning
9) March 2022, 101 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review impacts of the newcomer ski program and future work ahead • Encourage others to stand up for change, to think critically • Review biases and assumptions
10) In-person observation: March 2022, 330 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss newcomer ski program structure, participation, sustainability • Support athletes' autonomy • Grow confidence for dialogue instead of debate, reflect on cancel culture
11) April 2022, 151 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the purpose of competitive sport • Change sport cultures towards inclusivity, access, representation, honesty • Debate the potential for nonbinary sport
12) Post-season interview: April 2022, 150 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debrief second timeline • Explore changes to coaching approach, definitions of key concepts
13) August 2022, 88 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make connections to transform sport • Review tokenism vs. representation in coaching • Review safe sport policies and their implications (e.g., trans athletes)
14) February 2023, 116 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss impact of politics on youth's sport participation and experiences • Deal with coach burnout • Strategize the next steps for the newcomer ski program • Consider the fluidity of gender identities

Before their 2021-2022 competitive season began, Sophie completed a timeline to organise their learning experiences as a coach, with attention paid to social justice and lessons learned/taught in sport. As a visual method and a form of graphic elicitation, the timeline allowed Sophie to narratively organise their memories and experiences across time (Sheridan et al., 2011). I asked Sophie to explain their timeline during a semi-structured interview (Appendix O), and their coaching philosophy, sport context, social justice topics, and developmental benefits they intended their athletes to experience from sport. At the end of the interview, the collaboration process was reviewed, including how we would meet (virtually, at a time convenient to Sophie), what we would discuss (coaching and social issues in their sport context), and how their reflection would be supported.

The in-season meetings were structured to varying extent based on Sophie's life/coaching needs; using relevant theory and literature, I planned reflective questions and probes based on our prior discussions (e.g., dealing with conflicts between coaches) and areas that I/we felt needed more exploration (e.g., understanding inclusion; see an example of a meeting outline in Appendix P). I also created a shared Google Slides document, where I posted reflective activities Sophie reviewed in between our meetings, and they added reflections and information from their coaching, teaching, and professional development (see Appendix Q for example content). By the third meeting, Sophie identified three coaching goals that guided our collaboration: (a) include athletes of all identities; (b) become more confident to intervene with social issues; and (c) co-build a newcomer youth ski program in the community. Supporting Sophie's critical praxis was the core of our collaboration: Sophie's *reflections* centred on their attitudes, behaviours, and motives around social issues in their sport context to guide their *action* in creating positive change. The NCC approach guided my PLC actions to foster an accepting and compassionate

environment, such as using the re-authoring method where I helped Sophie view their coaching experiences as a self-written story that could be externally reviewed and altered (Stelter, 2014). Motivational interviewing techniques were also used to support Sophie when they exhibited ‘change talk’ (i.e., an expressed desire and commitment to change), such as using open-ended questions and focusing on leading instead of instructing (Rollnick et al., 2019). Similar to NCC, motivational interviewing is a form of communication where the ‘clinician’ and ‘client’ are equal partners and focus is placed on empowering people to explore their meaning and capacity for change when they feel hesitant, uncomfortable, and immovable (Rollnick et al., 2019). I had trained using motivational interviewing techniques during my graduate studies and found the overlap of the personal coaching approaches to be complimentary.

At the end of their season, Sophie completed a second timeline focused on their learning journey during the collaboration. The timeline was discussed in a semi-structured interview (Appendix R), as well as their experiences of the collaboration, coaching intentions, and perceptions of social issues in sport. I continued messaging with Sophie about their coaching experiences and video called in August 2022 (during the off-season) and February 2023 (during the 2022-2023 season). Overall, data were collected intensively over the first six months, followed by additional meetings and check-ins over the next nine months.

After our collaboration ended and I began to organise and analyse the data, I discussed with my academic supervisor, Martin (third author; aged 40, white man, he/him pronouns), how involved and entangled Sophie and I were. Martin acted as a critical friend (Smith & McGannon, 2018) throughout the duration of the study, offering a critical lens and insight to how I acted as a PLC, interpreted the data, and shared Sophie’s story. I approached Sophie to gauge the extent to which they would want to be involved in the research process. After I made Sophie aware of

what their participation would entail (e.g., reviewing and refining the creative nonfiction vignettes, contributing to the writing and reviewing of the article), they enthusiastically agreed and consented to become a co-author. Throughout the analysis and writing process, we discussed how to ethically include Sophie's experiences, such as blinding some information to not reveal identifiable information about their peer coaches, family, or athletes. While seemingly unconventional, researchers have involved participants as co-authors in sport psychology research, such as through assessments of PLC-coach collaborations (Rodrigue et al., 2019) and via collaborative autoethnography (e.g., Spowart & Pearson, 2023). Involving Sophie as a co-author for this study also aligns with CSP and narrative inquiry, as we purposefully included voices and details of our cultural praxes experiences and provided a queer author space to share their story in sport psychology research.

Data Interpretation

Data interpretation involved two narrative phases to illustrate the complexity of Sophie's learning during the collaboration. First, I acted as a story analyst to identify narrative themes, patterns, and relationships across the data (Smith, 2016). The analysed data were then interpreted using a creative analytical practice (CAP; McMahon, 2016), as Sophie and I acted as storytellers to develop creative nonfictions (CNF) of the subthemes. CAP was used to bring the readers into Sophie's emotions and cognitions and to possibly foster readers' self-reflection and introspection (McMahon, 2016; Smith & Sparkes, 2009). As a story analyst, I used thematic narrative analysis (Smith, 2016) to critically explore the dominant discourses that impacted Sophie's perceptions of how they *should be* and what they *should do* (e.g., Cooky & Messner, 2018). Each audio file of our interactions were transcribed verbatim and organised into a master document with our emails, Facebook messages, and voice notes. I began data analysis in May 2022, after most of

our collaboration had occurred by reading the transcripts several times, listening to audio recordings, and memo-ing in the margins *what* was being said by thinking *with* and *about* the stories (Frank, 2010). I considered how Sophie's stories were impacted by their identities, the manifest/latent cultures of their sport context, and the sociocultural climate present during the study (i.e., during the COVID-19 pandemic, calls for social change in sport). It was important to consider the co-authors' positionality and assumptions while engaging in narrative analysis, in that we all believe competitive sport should be more inclusive through intentional and transformative actions.

I then began to generate narrative themes by connecting patterns in the stories identified through critical questioning and notetaking (e.g., how are the stories bound within the discourses Sophie has access to?). Extended sentences of the notes were written down to summarise the coded manifest and latent meanings without fragmenting the stories. Moving back and forth between the meanings of the data and developing themes, I refined the narrative relationships into one central narrative theme of Sophie's developing praxis, 'reducing exclusion one intervention at a time'. Three subthemes were developed: (a) figuring out what to fight for, (b) growing through discomfort and unknowns, and (c) experiencing progress. Sophie and I critically discussed how the themes aligned with their learning journey. For instance, Sophie refined the themes to reflect more deeply who they had become during the collaboration, such as clarifying how *some* progress occurred towards their political efficacy, but ongoing work is needed. As a critical friend (Smith & McGannon, 2018), Martin then reviewed the themes and questioned how the narratives advanced (e.g., what *meaning* is behind Sophie's frustration?).

As a research team, we decided to present the data through snapshot vignettes, which are narrative sketches that capture an experience within a specific time and/or setting (Spalding &

Phillips, 2007). As a storyteller, I led the iterative CNF process by selecting captivating excerpts from our interactions (Smith, 2016). I then drafted the CNFs with Sophie's feedback and suggestions for other excerpts. Sophie contextualised the CNFs (e.g., adding settings, feelings, emotions) and I refined and organised the CNFs to align with the subthemes (Smith, 2016). The CNFs were then shared with Martin, who critically reviewed the flow, content, and positioning within the subthemes. Organising the data into snapshot vignettes may give the reader a window into Sophie's nonlinear learning processes for creating safer, more inclusive sport. We aimed to capture the essence of *what* and *how* of Sophie's experiences (Spalding & Phillips, 2007), while retaining their feelings and emotions in a resonating and accessible way (McMahon, 2016). As learning is socially experienced across one's life (Jarvis, 2006), the CNF vignettes are organised as 'time hops', cutting across moments of Sophie's learning journey to present a nonlinear yet coherent narrative. Deriving from posthumanist thinking (Barad, 2013), the work of Shelton and Melchior (2020) inspired our use of time hopping to expose the reader to vulnerable moments that *make up* who Sophie has (and may) become. While some of the vignettes are presented in a chronological order, the placements of the vignettes were decided based on the 'feel' of organising these stories. For example, the nonlinear time hopping approach guided questions such as 'Does this ordering help to build the larger subtheme plot?' and 'Does this ordering present information not yet shared?' To preserve anonymity, we used creative writing practices (e.g., the notion of verisimilitude, developed characters; Smith, 2016) not to reveal identifiable information of others in Sophie's life.

Study Quality

Reflexivity was integrated throughout the research to acknowledge power and positionality as researchers and participants and to ensure Sophie felt psychologically safe

sharing their stories (McGannon & Smith, 2015). Before data collection, I engaged in deliberate efforts to assess and enhance my readiness, competence, and reflexivity to undertake the study. For instance, after participating in a bracketing interview led by a trusted and trained colleague, I examined my biases and hesitations that may impact the study (e.g., what if I disagreed with the coach?). I continued to reflect on my biases through ongoing critical conversations with Martin (Smith & McGannon, 2018). I reflected through running and walking in nature, dialogue, and journaling. After each meeting, I would also reflect on my readiness as a PLC, topics I/they felt were uncomfortable, and how I could better support Sophie's praxis. As the focus of this study was to *co-create* knowledge (Stelter, 2014), power was distributed by centring Sophie in the research process as a collaborator and involving them in the CNF creation. Through a comprehensive 15-month-long data collection, the CNFs coherently, concisely, and insightfully present a meaningful picture of Sophie's learning and coaching journey (Lieblich et al., 1998).

Time Hop Snapshot Vignettes of Sophie's Developing Critical Praxis

The vignettes detail the learning journey of Sophie in developing their critical praxis. Specifically, introspections are offered on how Sophie became confident in finding their voice, how they evolved to respond rather than react, and how they engaged in dialogue to address social issues in/beyond sport. Three themes of Sophie's praxis are presented through vignettes that time hop between our memories, actions, and desires: (a) figuring out what to fight for, (b) growing through discomforts and unknowns, and (c) experiencing progress.

Figuring Out What to Fight For

The common thread in Sophie's learning journey is a push/pull tension between wanting to advocate for change but feeling dragged down to a bystander. Through their many memories of saying nothing when a conflict occurred, Sophie felt an internal push of not feeling ready to

act, but also an internal pull of *needing* to be a leader. The push/pull tensions were impacted by Sophie's exploration of figuring out what change they *should* fight for in/beyond sport.

About six years ago, while training at the national centre

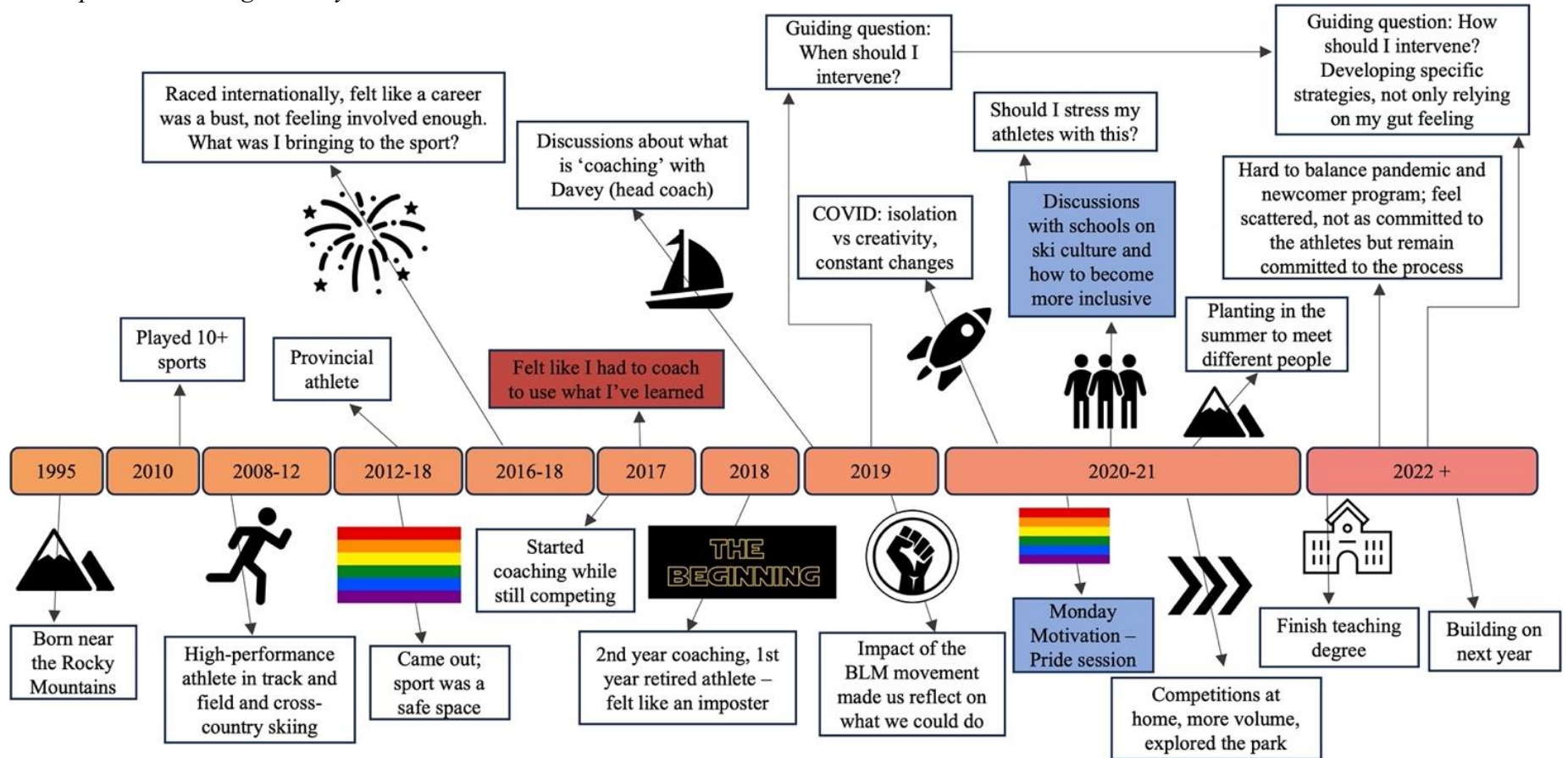
Last month sucked. I lost my excellence carding status because I wasn't at a top-ranked athlete anymore. There goes the majority of my funding and extra support to reach my high-performance goals. But I still want to do this. *Who am I without my sport?* So, two weeks ago, without enough funds to sustain my training, I moved back home. It's been a community effort: Mom and Dad have been super helpful, family friends came to my fundraiser last week, and my training group adapted their schedule so I could join them. But a pit has been growing in my stomach. My process feels... *empty*. Everything is about me. As an athlete, I feel useless. So, this year, I'm going to coach, give back to my sport and community. But what *coach* do I want to be?

November 2021, after the first meeting with Sara

I'm in a good place to begin this collaboration: I am supported by the club and head coach (Davey) to be *me*; I'm cognisant of my language, trying not to use 'guys' and 'girls' because it might leave an athlete out. I need to build trust first for the 'little dust' I'm leaving to create positive change. Sara told me, "We both have our own expertise, I'm not here to tell you what to do." But I'm uneasy... *what am I supposed to do?!* I've been coaching for five years, retired from sport for four, very gay since day one. Inclusivity in sport has been in my mind for a while now, but I still haven't cracked anything. My values and beliefs have been building to where I am *now* (Figure 1). Working with Sara is an opportunity that I want to make work.

Figure 1

Sophie's Coaching Journey Timeline



Note. BLM = Black Lives Matter movement.

2020-2021 competitive season, coaching during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic

Nordic is one of the only sports that can still happen because we're outside in the cold. So, during this limbo state, we've added 'Monday Motivation' sessions online to discuss different subjects like social injustices that our team and club feel are important. One session was about my and other coaches' experiences of being out in our sport and how we have felt included and excluded at different times. The session was amazing, *empowering*. I've worn a fuzzy unicorn one-piece suit during practices for years, with a rainbow horn and tail. I like goofing off, but subtly, I wear this suit to show it's okay to be yourself, to be gay or bi or queer or whatever. I think our kids finally connected that message during the online session that we want to create a safe space for *everyone* at our club. I've talked with Davey about a structure that would divide girls and boys less in sport, this binary is on my mind often. Maybe someone is not yet comfortable or willing to share that piece of their identity. It's an angle that I'm choosing as a way to *deconstruct* sport. It might not be our role as coaches to create a system beyond women/men competitions, but we can try. But I still wonder, is it okay to be loud about what I believe in?

May 2020, grocery shopping during the COVID-19 pandemic

With everyone conscious of their space because of the pandemic, grocery shopping has been a longer task lately. I'm walking to the produce section when I hear the crashing of carts and someone yelling. A family is trying to go one way, a hijab-wearing woman with small children, while a blonde, white woman is crossing the other direction, not following the one-way arrow system taped on the floor. But the blonde woman, who is clearly in the wrong, continues to yell at the family for being in the way. Heads down, the family keeps moving through the store, saying nothing. And then the woman turns to me, "They never smile, *these people*", loud enough

for the family to hear. I'm stunned. I look around, confused about who she was talking to. I say nothing, I'm... *frozen*. I walk away, feeling my face turn red under my mask. *Uggh* why didn't I say anything? My inner voice is so loud: Dude, this is why Black Lives Matter is so strong right now. You need to *fucking* react. Another incident where I wanted to do something, but I didn't.

December 2021, off for the holidays in-between competitions

I've been in competitive sport my whole life; I want a new challenge, to learn new things. I've noticed that we're not serving the local population around the ski club, maybe because they can't afford it or can't access the hills. But the competitive athletes can get to practice because their families have vehicles... most (but not all) members are white, privileged, rich, financially, but also from being generational skiers, knowing the culture, having the equipment and confidence to join. Now that I've seen how others cannot access skiing from co-building the newcomer youth ski program, I question my role as a *competitive* coach. We're a competitive club in a sport system that is focused on winning... is creating a newcomer ski program morally, ethically okay? Are the two streams of sport compatible? I know kids everywhere need support from coaches and I'm not going to quit my job, I love coaching. I also have the privilege to try and change the system from within. But what's the ethical thing to do? I'm trying to think big picture. Does it matter who I coach if there might not even be snow here in 20 years?

Growing through Discomfort and Unknowns

When Sophie feels confident enough to speak up, they experience an internal push tension to *react* quickly, leading to conflict instead of dialogue. There are also societal push/pull tensions for sport to be *one* way, fixated on performance, winning, and ignoring social issues in sport. Sophie has been experiencing a pull away from competitive sport for a while, feeling there

could be a different way to approach sport, to disrupt our current ways of coaching. Navigating these push/pull tensions transpires from Sophie growing through discomfort and unknowns.

January 2019, waiting for my car to defrost after practice

Nance's name flashes on my phone screen. I bet she's calling to brag about all the snow they got this week, but instead, I hear sobbing. Nance choked out that one of her athletes, Jamie, quit. She explained, "Jamie didn't fit in with the competitive ski world anymore now that they identify as trans". Our meets, our training, and even our hotel rooms for meets away from our club are all organised into boys and girls, men and women. Nance lets out a deep breath, "When Jamie came out, they needed an adult to talk to. I don't think they had anyone who understood." I'm trying to be supportive, but I can't find the words. Clearing her throat, Nance continues, "They're scared and stressed, and Jamie's family is having a hard time understanding." Nance came out a couple of years after me, also to our team first. We've both had family members who were not open or welcoming after coming out, but we still belonged and competed for our club. My heart is beating too fast, making me feel nauseous from this phone call.

December 2021, reflecting after meeting with Sara

Nance's athlete, Jamie, quitting skiing still weighs on me. *Heavily*. We're trying to create club cultures that are safer for *everyone*, but exclusion persists. I want to be loud and fight for all athletes who are scared to be their true selves, but I'm torn... How would I react? I want to be clear and confident, not defensive. It's hard, though, because my gut reaction is *WHAT THE HELL?!* Will this ever change? Will our understanding of gender and sexual diversity evolve in sport? Like when I started the (unofficial) pride group in our club, another coach said, "Do you really need to do that? Isn't that drawing more attention to those kids?" I responded louder, "Yeah, but we need to be loud about pride, so they feel like their voice is important". The coach

rebutted, “Yeah, but I’m already supporting them, as I do for all athletes.” I sometimes can’t help but be confrontational in my reaction; I feel for trans and nonbinary athletes because not everyone inherently belongs in sport. I need communication tools to discuss social issues with adults without conversations becoming hardcore debates. Where’s the line? How do I want to exchange with others to foster mutual growth? I want to stop hesitating, freezing, and then hating myself for saying nothing. I also want to ensure that when I do say something, I don’t explode in anger in people’s faces. How can I find the right balance? I’m not asking coaches to know everything, it’s impossible and I don’t know everything either, but *at least* be open to change.

January 6th, 2022, immediately after taking bias tests² sent by Sara

I am fluctuating between acceptance and guilt. Guilt for my bias test results, for having these assumptions, for the systemic racism, discrimination, and the exclusion of *so many people*. *Hmmm...* Maybe ‘guilt’ is not the right word because there is guilt... but it’s more that I was *uncomfortable* during the test. So maybe noticing my discomfort makes me feel bad?

January 13th, 2022, driving home from practice

Sara told me to keep reflecting on my biases after I took the test, and she added a few strategies to our Google Slides, like practicing mindfulness and considering others’ perspectives, good things that are hard to do. I’m trying to dig deeper in my reflections: my parents and most of their friends were born in Canada; my family, the people I’ve met and interacted with, there isn’t that much diversity; being an athlete and a coach in a sport practiced mostly by white people... that’s all impacted my biases. I know that as a white person, I have more privilege and power, and I know that I have a lot of work to do. It’s embarrassing, in a sense, that I have biases, but I’ve... I’m very... at this moment, I’m at the level of *acceptance* to work through

² Sara sent Sophie the [Harvard Implicit Association Test](#) during their collaboration as a suggested reflective activity.

things. It all seems to be coming together: the help from Sara, my teaching experiences, the reflections I had on wanting to change sport during the pandemic... *my mind is shifting*.

August 2023, while writing this article

I do not feel guilt, and instead, I now see biases as normal, an inherent part of being human. I want to continuously develop awareness of my biases to be able to confidently decide how to act on them. I want to continue being conscious of my actions. With my identities and social position, I am privileged to have the time and space to reflect.

February 2022, early morning gym session

My large noise-cancelling headphones are always on at the gym because I don't want to be bothered, but I can feel someone watching me. Turning away from my squat rack, a guy I somewhat recognise nods and yells at me, "Ah, so cool! I just saw this picture of the American university swimmer you posted!" He must have seen my Facebook post about [Lia Thomas](#), a trans university student-athlete competing in swimming in the USA. I feel proud that our competitive sport world is shifting towards inclusion. But then my stomach drops, I don't think we're talking about the same thing. I cautiously ask: "What are you talking about?" He nods at me, "It's so unfair for that swimmer to compete. All I want is sport to be fair." He thought my post was *against* trans athletes. I had to contain myself. *This is not the place to make a scene*. But I couldn't stop from saying loudly, "Sport is unfair! There's doping, drugs, abuse. Many more unfair things than trans athletes competing!" Just because they are trans, that's all people focus on. My whole body shakes as I pop my headphones back on. Just finish up and get out of here. That was not a good interaction. But should I be yelling at a random guy who is not seeing the full picture of what sport could be, should be? I can't fight my way through every issue.

August 2022, after summer training practice

To end the practice, we wanted to do a relay race. One coach proposed ‘girls versus boys’ teams and instantly I have this awkward kneejerk feeling. I think most kids identify as a girl or boy right now, but I know not 100% do. But I wasn’t able to intervene. It brought me back to Nance’s experiences of her athlete quitting because they no longer fit in sport. I *never* want that to happen in our club. And I *hate* confrontation. Maybe Sara can help... Sitting in the parking lot with the windows down, waiting for my air-conditioning to kick in, I ask Sara for advice. After a couple minutes, she replies, “Could you get your athletes involved in making those decisions?” Yes! I need a list of ideas so I can refer back and add athletes’ suggestions, so everyone is included. This will help with teaching too! I tell Sara to keep me accountable about using the list, and she added, “Consider if your groupings are going to ‘other’ the athletes. Maybe don’t make groups for who’s travelled for vacations or not.” I need to keep reflecting on the gender/sex binary in sport; there’s something there... not necessarily a discomfort... more like an unknown.

Experiencing Progress

Sophie experiences an internal push/pull tension to *keep trying*, which entails an awareness of the need to continue to grow by being challenged and hearing people’s stories. They also need to lean on people for support when confusion or fear happens, or when mistakes are made. As they steer this new push/pull tension, finding comfort in both sides of the tension, Sophie is experiencing progress towards developing their critical consciousness, *becoming* a person-coach who promotes inclusion in and beyond competitive sport.

November 2022, training before the competitive season

My adrenaline is so high right now; what a great end to the practice! I debriefed with an athlete tonight whose goal was to make sure people were more included in the team. This year, because of my talks with Sara, I had more viewpoints, more information to share, and more

confidence. I actually had questions for the athlete to reflect on what she was doing to approach inclusion in sport. Paying it forward, one positive dust at a time.

March 2022, meeting with Sara at end of our collaboration

Sara takes me through another ‘re-authoring activity’. Reliving uncomfortable moments is not fun, but imagining a different outcome allows me to practice if and when uneasy feelings happen again. Right now, I’m back in the grocery store with the blonde lady and the family she yelled at... I smell the produce, hear the Top 40 radio playing, feel the fluorescent lights buzz above me. Instead of freezing again I say something to the blonde woman: “What do you mean by *those people*? What are you trying to get at?” I know I get the most emotional when issues touch me directly or that I’m passionate about, but I need to reflect *before* I respond... I guess some time has gone by because Sara asks, “Did your screen freeze?” I’ve been sitting here frozen but in a different way. I think my mind is blown... *The glass just shattered. Wow.* Something just shifted.

April 2022, putting the skis away after coaching a newcomer program session

The program tonight was amazing! More people came, including three older women who were laughing the whole time, adding a fun vibe. Having adults and kids there together form the community, it was just one of the greatest coaching experiences *of my life*, showing that we can be active at all ages. I’m very emotional... This is how I want to feel as a coach all the time.

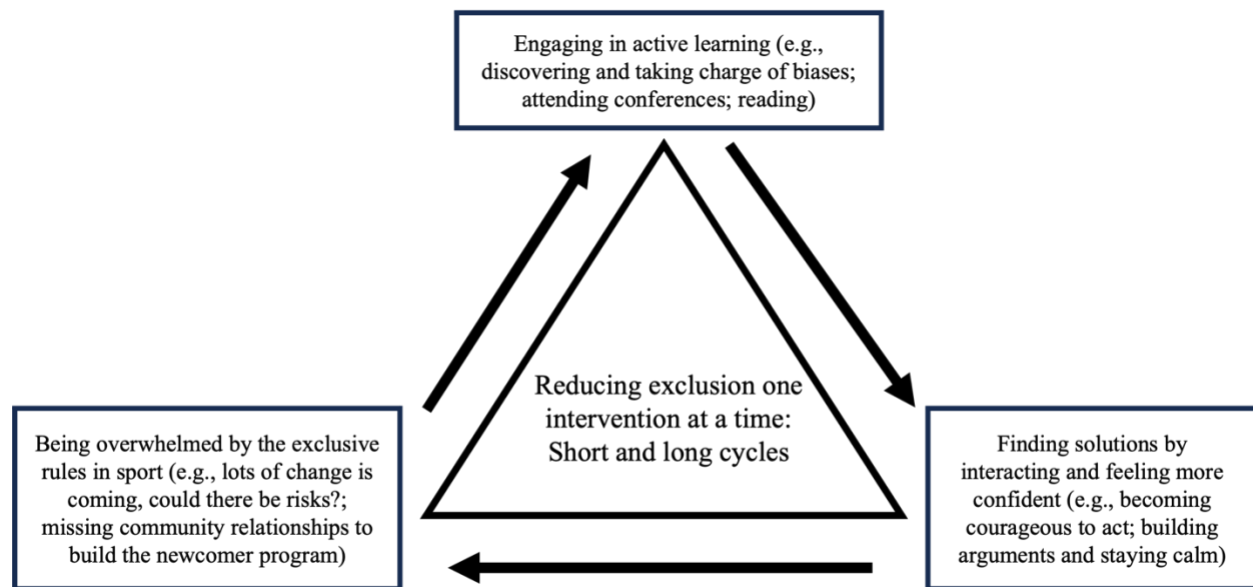
July 2022, on a day off from planting trees out West

I almost dropped my phone, I was so excited! I immediately sent Sara the [article](#) detailing a small victory for gender equity in Nordic skiing. Women and men will finally race the same distance for multiple events. I asked for this equality in races for years! As a former athlete, equity in distances was an issue I felt confident advocating for. I’m proud to be part of a group of

people that created *actual* change. It's pretty cool to see how I can be more critical now in my reflections after working with Sara. Like how the argument against equal distances continues to be around 'TV time', not enough broadcasting was available for both races. But the weather varies and affects the speed of all skiers; it can't *just* be about broadcasting, especially now with more accessible social media. Equal distance is a win, but let's keep moving. What can I do to change our sport?

April 2022, preparing for the last collaboration meeting with Sara

Before working with Sara, I would face an issue, feel bad, and then try to learn from it. My process felt like separate boxes, building on each other. Now, I see my learning as more entangled, moving between short and long cycles of seeking new knowledge, finding solutions, feeling confident, and then being overwhelmed by exclusion and all the rules (Figure 2). A short cycle was becoming more aware of my language, like using different ways to communicate with athletes than saying 'guys'. A long cycle was improving my ability to talk about gender diversity. Instead of shying away from uncomfortable conversations, I can calmly chat with coaches and athletes about gender inclusivity. And I know I'm not alone: I discuss with Davey how we can make sport safer; in my teaching placements and with my family, I talk about intervening with kids. I'm making connections, finding my voice, and figuring out what I want to say to respond faster when an issue happens. I have support to lean on when I get overwhelmed by sport rules and cultures that exclude others, like nonbinary and trans athletes. It's impossible to change the world, but one action that leaves positive dust might make a long-term impact. If I see something wrong happening, I might not respond immediately, but I *will* intervene.

Figure 2*Sophie's Perceived Learning Journey Following the Collaboration**January 2023, at a coffee shop reflecting on our collaboration*

What's changed is *how* I see conflict. It's cheesy but I think about what Sara said months back: that "it's never too late to apologise after the fact". You might process something a long time after an issue happens. I used to be so worried if I *should* intervene. Now, I'm like *how* will I reflect on this conflict and respond properly? I'm grateful for working with Davey, my family's support, and my experiences, all helping me to refine my communication and reflective tools I have today. I'm also accepting that I intervene more slowly because I need to be informed before acting. I will get better at dealing with conflict as time goes on. When I started coaching, I felt so disconnected: *Why the hell am I here? Just because I was a good athlete means I can coach?* I'm no longer walking on eggshells; I feel empowered. I've loved coaching at our clubs. I feel we are helping our athletes thrive in skiing and life. What a dream job. But change is calling me... I want to make a positive impact through sport in more schools and communities. Can we burn it

all down, transform sport into something more inclusive for everyone? Can we include nonbinary and trans athletes in competitive sports? There's a lot of unknowns, but I'm ready to learn. *Bring it on.*

Discussion

Through time hopping snapshot vignettes, Sophie's learning journey of wanting to reduce exclusion in sport one intervention at a time was presented through their memories, actions, and yearnings of a transformed sport. While Sophie's desire to "burn it all down" (i.e., the current sport system) has been building over time, they still experienced push/tensions that affected their confidence to advocate for positive social change. As the PLC, I (Sara) supported Sophie's confidence to enact change by creating a safe space within our collaboration built on empathy, openness, and vulnerability (Lee et al., 2021; Stelter, 2014). Through bespoke learning opportunities, Sophie examined how their biography and biases (e.g., as an educated white, queer person) affected their coaching within their sociocultural world (Jarvis, 2006; McGannon & Smith, 2015). With a greater understanding of their biases, Sophie practiced using their power to overcome tensions of being silent and actively engaging in conversations on social issues in sport, disrupting latent discursive practices to create safer spaces for their athletes (Spaaij et al., 2020). Per the CPYD framework, Sophie was developing a stronger political efficacy in their understanding and ability to critically reflect on social issues in sport, which led them to advocate for positive social change. For example, as a queer person, Sophie desired to become more confident in including gender and sexually diverse athletes and coaches in sport. This belief may have been impacted in part by their positive experiences of coming out and proudly being out in sport (Fink et al., 2012). I joined others (e.g., head coach, family members) in Sophie's developmental network to aid in their praxis (Leeder & Sawiuk, 2021; Moon, 2004). Sophie had

been developing the foundational elements of their CPYD, their 5C's (i.e., competence, confidence, connection, caring, and character), within mostly safe and supportive learning environments, including their sport context, their work as a teacher, and their participation in this study. Moreover, during the collaboration, Sophie developed new networks to enrich their learning, such as with immigration services about newcomer's needs in their community.

As a lifelong learner, Sophie came to our meetings with passion and an eagerness to engage in dialogue (Jarvis, 2006). We exchanged as equals with our own expertise (Rodrigue et al., 2019; Stelter, 2014). During the collaboration, we reflexively discussed issues of diversity, identity, and power in sport that are undertreated or ignored (Ryba, 2013). For example, referring to relevant literature (e.g., Berger et al., 2019), I led a discussion on gendered biases in sport. Sophie then decided to complete the Keeping Girls in Sport e-module and shared their reflections in the Google Slides document (e.g., "We need a community approach to better support girls in sport"). Critical reflection seemed to be occurring individually and collectively. Working with Sophie was also mutually beneficial; I strengthened my ability to connect theory to their experiences and be an empathetic listener, which are important skills for an early career researcher. When Sophie felt a push/pull tension related to their critical action, I would caringly provide them with the space and time to find solutions without solving their problem (Lee et al., 2021; Rollnick et al., 2019). Opportunities were provided for Sophie to practice problem-solving in our meetings, such as through re-authoring activities where Sophie reflected on a prominent memory from different perspectives, standing back from themselves and considering how their emotions impacted the outcome (Stelter, 2014). The re-authoring activities helped Sophie to engage in deeper, more critical reflection (Moon, 2004), and accept past behaviours of not advocating for change. The time hopping vignettes suggest how Sophie experienced the process

of *becoming* a critically conscious coach through reflection on meaningful episodic experiences (Callary et al., 2012). Collectively, Sophie's critical consciousness building was nourished by their engagement in reading, reflecting, dialogue, and action around social issues in sport, all happening within environments shaped by humility and trust (Freire, 1973).

Feeling more confident in their political efficacy, Sophie explored near the end of the collaboration how experiences of oppression and empowerment in sport are intersectional, including athletes and coaches who are trans and nonbinary (e.g., Gurgis et al., 2022; Willson et al., 2022). With Sophie's personal exploration of gender and sexual fluidity, they recognised that the binary of women/men in sport has generated incessant disjuncture in their learning journey (Jarvis, 2006). Sport is formally organised based on sex and gender; the dominant narrative in sport is binary categorisation, with the female/woman athlete being inferior and weaker (Erikainen, 2020). As LGBTQ+³ competitive athletes and coaches share their stories, political debates occur to regulate who is (and is not) able to compete in sport (Erikainen, 2020; Spurdens & Bloyce, 2022). By the end of the collaboration, Sophie was able to set realistic goals for 're-norming' sport cultures, such as addressing discrimination when observed and fighting against discursive practices that resisted social justice efforts in sport (Berger et al., 2019; Spaaij et al., 2020). Through their advocating for equal racing distances for women and men, Sophie also experienced gratification and motivation to continue fighting for inclusive change in sport. Small moments of praxis (e.g., grouping athletes beyond gender) were acknowledged and celebrated during the collaboration to foster Sophie's political efficacy, confidence, and their drive to keep trying to enact positive change (Gonzalez et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2021).

³ Defined by Egale, LGBTQ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer. An increasing number of different identities, including nonbinary and two spirit, are included in the '+' sign for consistency and simplicity.

When our collaboration began, Sophie felt unsteady in addressing social issues in sport, questioning when or how to intervene and craving support from others (Tam et al., 2021). Building on their prior experiences, Sophie believed that their “mind shifted” towards becoming a “better coach” throughout our collaboration as they experienced critical moments of disjuncture (Jarvis, 2006). As Sophie became more confident in identifying, reflecting, and ultimately taking action to change oppressive social conditions in sport, their critical consciousness advanced, and efforts were made to support peer’s critical reflection and athletes’ CPYD (Gonzalez et al., 2020). Aligned with the CPYD framework, Sophie acknowledged the importance of building trust and strong connections before fostering others’ critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action (Gonzalez et al., 2020). Their coaching approach, as demonstrated over a 15-month-long collaboration, demonstrates how Sophie first cared about equity, inclusion, and diversity in sport, and then transformed their coaching to effect change (Norman, 2018; Tinning, 2022). The findings from this study demonstrate how, with support, competitive sport coaches can move beyond feeling unaware or unwilling to intervene and use their power to enact positive change (Bishop et al., 2023; Kochanek & Erickson, 2019). The time hopping vignettes also add great depth to the sport coaching literature, revealing that a coach’s critical consciousness development is not a linear process. To sustain Sophie’s ‘sporting and political activist identity’, as an individual who advocated for transformative change inside and beyond sport (Smith et al., 2016), it was important to discuss their feelings of being overwhelmed or burnt out from their coaching efforts and provide space and time for Sophie to recover from difficult coaching and life experiences.

With a tailored and empathetic approach, individuals working with coaches (e.g., mentors, developers, sport psychologists) may support coaches in developing their critical praxis

while coaching competitive sport. Like Sophie, it may be beneficial for coaches to work with a PLC at the beginning of their career, to have more time and capacity to engage in deep reflection and meet in-season without added coaching duties. The use of reflective journals, logs, or activities may also be beneficial for coaches to use and refer back to when feeling challenged (Rodrigue et al., 2019), such as the shared Google Slides document Sophie and I used together. Coaches who aim to foster safer sport may also benefit from establishing a developmental network for reflective, emotional, and informational support (Lee et al., 2021; Leeder & Sawiuk, 2021). As coaches confront pervasive discourses that focus on youth athletes' performance over their well-being, becoming effective and confident communicators will be essential for navigating pushback from individuals with a different awareness of social justice (Gonzalez et al., 2020). A coach's critical praxis should be understood as *developing*, and support should be adaptive to one's biography, needs, and sport context. Coaches without peer or organisational support may need additional help to confidently engage in critical praxis. The hope is for competitive youth sport coaches to feel supported and empowered to critically act at an individual (e.g., modelling inclusive coaching) and collective level (e.g., advocating for gender equity) to transform sport.

Concluding Thoughts

This study provides a novel contribution to the coach development literature, and answers calls from Leeder and Sawiuk (2021) to use collaborative approaches that “go beyond description, unearthing the multifaceted, contested, and concealed complexities of mentorship” (p. 147). The longitudinal collaboration, almost 23 hours of online meetings across 15 months, provided the necessary time to engage in meaningful reflection together, a challenge often faced by coaches of coaches (Costello et al., 2023). Future research should include more in-person

observations and meetings to contextualise better the coach's experiences (Grant et al., 2020; Rodrigue et al., 2019). By simultaneously developing my (Sara's) critical praxis (e.g., through anti-racism training and discussing with critical friends), I became aware of how my biography impacted the collaboration (Blodgett et al., 2015). However, I was not trained as a coach developer and did not have personal experiences as a competitive coach, which may have limited my PLC abilities (Rodrigue et al., 2019). Building on previous collaborative research (Milistetd et al., 2018; Rodrigue et al., 2019), the PLC role was utilised from a social issue perspective to support a competitive coach *beyond* performance-related needs. While transformative work is needed across the competitive youth sport system, coaches can enact positive social change through reflecting, learning from others, and intervening when an inappropriate action occurs (Berger et al., 2019). To address social justice issues in sport, a PLC may support the coaches' critical praxes and enhance their awareness and readiness for change. Researchers and practitioners are encouraged to continue exploring how individuals in the sport system can support coaches' critical praxes development to foster transformative competitive youth sport.

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**Article 3: Running with it: An autoethnographic account of becoming a personal learning
coach**

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Video Abstract



Note. The video is housed on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/ejXgVZjmP0>). English subtitles are available by selecting the Closed Captions (CC) icon.

Introduction

November 2019: I'm trying to be wallpaper in this campus meeting room, listening to François' Ph.D. defence. While he explains becoming a *personal learning coach* to support competitive coaches' learning, something clicks... what does this person do? I try to record my reflections quickly in my notebook, drawing a thick, inky rectangle around "PLC". For my Ph.D. project, I want to work *with* competitive youth sport coaches to support their reflection as they create safer sport spaces. As I continue listening to François, I realise a PLC is what I've been looking for! A reflective soundboard, a *learning companion*, to support learning as coaches' coach. Could I be a PLC? I look out the window, catching the last of a tree's leaves blown away. A sobering thought shadows my optimism: can I even do this? I quietly place my pen down, easily defeated. Unlike François, I'm not a coach developer or a competitive coach, and do not deeply understand the coach learning literature. But what I do have is *time* (a whole Ph.D.!) to refine my skills, build relationships with coaches, and learn. I also have a passion for transforming competitive sport to include all athletes safely. My hand finds my pen again, quickly writing down, "A PLC to help coaches create safer, more inclusive sport?"

While in the room and listening to François' Ph.D. defence, I (Sara, first author) did not yet know that I would *become* a PLC and foster collaborative relationships *with* coaches using narrative-collaborative coaching (NCC; Stelter, 2014). As suggested by Rodrigue and Trudel (2019), NCC is used to (a) focus on a coach's specific context, (b) work around a coach's narratives to support *in-situ* reflection, (c) collaborate to co-create knowledge, (d) create a safe learning space to question dominant norms and biases, and (e) facilitate open-ended dialogue relevant to a coach's learning. I aimed to support coaches' critical reflection *from* their coaching practice as it happens within a sociocultural context (Milistetd et al., 2018; Rodrigue et al., 2019). Coaches may benefit from engaging in critical reflection to understand their biases and how they can help their athletes in relation to social justice issues. Sport researchers refer to social justice as a dynamic and multifaceted construct involving raising awareness of oppression, inequities, and diversity in concerted efforts to afford equitable opportunities for all people (Camiré et al., 2022; Newman et al., 2019). However, engaging in critical reflection is difficult and time-consuming, particularly when coaches lack guidance and support (Cushion, 2018).

Organisational interests may also inhibit coach learning to ‘what works’ in the micropolitical sport context, leading to superficial and uncritical reflection (Downham & Cushion, 2022).

Integrating critical theory into coach development approaches, including the PLC role, may help coaches become more confident in their ability to critically reflect and support young athletes facing complex challenges in sport and wider society. Gonzalez et al.’s (2020) critical positive youth development (CPYD) framework proposes that the development of one’s competence, confidence, connection, caring, and character (i.e., 5C’s) may lead to contributions (i.e., 6th C) within one’s community and society. Critical consciousness (i.e., 7th C) can then be developed, which involves (a) critically reflecting on how oppression is created and sustained through systems of power, (b) becoming politically efficacious in one’s ability and capacity to bring about social change, and (c) engaging in critical action to address social oppression and marginalisation. The Brazilian educator and activist Paulo Freire (1973) initially conceptualised critical consciousness as the cyclical and iterative process of reflection and action working together to effect positive social change through critical praxis. The CPYD framework has been used to explore competitive youth sport coaches’ difficulties in developing their critical consciousness, suggesting the need for ongoing support (Bishop et al., 2023).

When the PLC and coach engage in co-learning, they exchange knowledge and derive mutual benefits (Stelter, 2014). As a PLC, I used the CPYD framework as a guiding lens to support two competitive youth sport coaches’ critical consciousness development during their sport season, Sophie and Zoe⁴. While the process of becoming a PLC is unique, my autoethnographic process may be useful to cultural sport psychology (CSP) researchers, coach developers, and competitive youth sport coaches who aim to create safer, more inclusive sport.

⁴ Sophie gave informed consent to be identified in this article. ‘Zoe’ is a pseudonym that was selected by the lead author and approved by the participant.

My Autoethnographic Process

Paradigm, Methodology, and Framework

With a relativist and social constructionist lens, I consider reality subjective, multiple, fluid, and contextually dependent, and knowledge socially constructed through interactions (Lincoln et al., 2018; McGannon & Smith, 2015). My autoethnography was grounded in CSP research, to create dialogue among researchers and participants to understand sociocultural challenges that impact access to and experiences of sport (Ryba, 2013). I used a cyclical process of cultural praxis to be(come) aware of and challenge the dominant discourses of competitive youth sport by combining theory, lived culture, and social action (Blodgett et al., 2015). I also used narrative inquiry to explore my sense of self and connect with others through storytelling (Frank, 2010). Aligned with creative analytic practices (McMahon, 2016) used within narrative inquiry, I used a ‘both/and’ style of autoethnography (Ellis, 2004) by layering emotional stories *showing* my becoming with analytic *telling* to create new ways to understand the PLC role. Autoethnography is a storied qualitative methodology understood as the combination of three components: ‘auto’ refers to the self, ‘ethno’ refers to culture and human interactions, and ‘graphy’ refers to the process and product of conducting research (Ellis, 2004). Regarding ethical considerations, I acknowledge the sociocultural dimension of story creation, a process through which Martin (second author) acted as a critical friend to challenge and advance my reflexivity (Smith & McGannon, 2018). The CPYD framework was used to theoretically guide our (myself, Sophie, and Zoe) critical consciousness development and analyse our praxes towards social justice in sport.

Procedure and Participants

During my Ph.D., I received ethical approval from my institution to act as a PLC and purposefully recruited Sophie and Zoe, who were coaching competitive youth sport in Eastern Canada. Sophie had been coaching Nordic skiing (~45 boys and girls, ages 14-18 years) for five years when we began working together in November 2021. Aged 28, Sophie (they/them) identifies as a queer, white, French-Canadian person who was completing their teacher's education program at the time of the study. Over 15 months, during two competitive seasons, I met with Sophie 13 times virtually (for 22.4 hours) and once in person (for 5.5 hours), also chatting through Facebook Messenger, email, and voice notes. I started collaborating with Zoe in January 2022, as she coached basketball for a women's university team (ages 18+ years) and a girls' provincial team (ages 14+ years). Aged 29, Zoe (she/her) identifies as a white woman and has coached intermittently since 2010. I worked with Zoe for nine months, meeting 12 times virtually (for 17.5 hours) and connected through lengthy text messages and voice notes. A private Google Slide document was developed and shared with each coach, housing reflective activities, notes, and resources for further communication.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data for my autoethnographic process came from (a) personal memories; (b) recorded reflections as field notes during my Ph.D. in multiple notebooks and my phone; (c) transcripts and notes from discussions with critical friends (Smith & McGannon, 2018); (d) transcripts of interviews and PLC-coach meetings; and (e) meaningful artifacts I collected throughout the process (e.g., social media posts, newspaper articles, photographs). Analysis occurred throughout the PLC-coach collaborations as I focused on the phenomenon of becoming a PLC (Ellis, 2004). Following the end of both collaborations, I reviewed the data as a whole to engage in emotional

recall and then developed narrative themes and storylines of my PLC becoming experiences (Ellis, 2004). Throughout the collaborations, I engaged in reflexive dialogue with two colleagues, Michel and François, who have previous experiences acting as PLCs with competitive coaches, and I reflexively assessed the relational and sociocultural impact of my experiences with Martin. I also read autoethnographies on coaching (e.g., Cronin et al., 2018; Preston & Fraser-Thomas, 2018), running as a woman (e.g., Allen-Collinson, 2023), and Ph.D. experiences (Callary et al., 2012; Pentón Herrera et al., 2022) to understand diverse writing processes and experiences. Writing was an ongoing, cyclical process to share my salient narrative themes of becoming a PLC.

Grounding my Autoethnography in the Act of Running

Throughout my life, running outdoors has led me to reconnect with my goals and intentions. My running-reflecting-writing method helped me to feel, think, and emote on my PLC becoming reflections (Colyar, 2013). During my Ph.D., I regularly ran for 5 to 10 kilometres in the Central Experimental Farm (i.e., referred to as “the farm” moving forward), an urban farm located within the City of Ottawa in Canada. Running in the farm took me back to my childhood home: the cows strolling in the pasture, tractors tilling the land, crickets chirping in the long grass. Once I finished a kilometre, I would wade into the grass, slowly pacing back and forth to record my reflections in my phone as field notes. I would then start running again. Some runs would stir many reflections, so I would stop to type after 500 metres or continue recording my reflections once I was got back home. When I shared my grounding through running process with Martin, he said, “Well, I’d tell you to *run* [pun intended] with it... run every day. Run, write, run, write.” And that is what I did.

Lessons Learned in Becoming a Personal Learning Coach

My PLC becoming experiences are presented through personal photographs and creative nonfiction storytelling of my running-reflecting-writing memories in the farm. Specific memories are added to contextualise my reflections. Written as a 29-year-old Ph.D. candidate in sport psychology/pedagogy, the stories portray a dynamic ebb and flow of memories and experiences that will live on beyond this written text.

Using my ‘full’ biography to be(come) a personal learning coach

Figure 1

Farm pathway covered in snow.



A vast and open space unfolds before me. There's just the wind and the snow and my heavy breathing. Consistent huffs of in, out, in, out. The windchill pierces through the layers covering my neck and chin. Try to breathe through your nose, Sara, you know it is more efficient... *Nope, not today.* I'm running out of sunlight, betting on my body to get me home before dark, desperately trying to clear my mind... I cannot place what I'm feeling right now. With a slight slip on ice hidden under the snow, my heart drops and I find the words: I feel

exposed from the responsibility to support Sophie's and Zoe's coaching. How can I help them? Why should they trust me? This uncertainty (weakness) is not my friend.

I am my mother's daughter. Proud. Stubborn. Easily defensive—or maybe more positively—a passionate fighter. A listener and a fixer. A typical middle child mediator. I was raised to be curious, bold, and take on challenges. My family is humble to a fault, and we strive to always work harder—often to the detriment of our health and well-being. I come from generations of settlers in Canada and grew up in rural Southwestern Ontario, an area with little racial or religious diversity. Sport was idealised in our community. My parents grew up in large, low-income families, so they aimed to be 'good' parents (i.e., demonstrate they could provide opportunities for their children) by enrolling us in multiple sports (Wheeler & Green, 2014), and my siblings and I aimed to be 'good' kids by listening and respecting adults. I was privileged to be an athlete, to find purpose in sport: learning how to lead in soccer, ringette, and ice hockey teams and refining my resolve as a cross-country and track runner. I have the privilege of participating socially in sports now as an adult and continuing to run.

I am also the daughter of a coach. While I was blind to this as a child, I was privileged to have my mom coach me on multiple competitive ice hockey and ringette teams. She (seemed to) confidently coach sports she never got to play. She was a strong leader when we faced other teams, usually coached by men. It took me years to realise how rare it was to have her as a coach or the other women who coached me (Hoeber & Dahlstrom, 2021). Following my mom's footsteps, I started coaching as an undergraduate student, wanting to volunteer in my community while also unearthing meaning beyond my academic activities. However, in my first coaching role for a barrier-free ice hockey program offered to youth living in low-income neighbourhoods, I quickly learned how homogenous my sport experiences were.

October 2017: “Hurry up, let’s get on the ice!” a coach yells as he runs down the hallway. I shake my hands, burning from tying 12 pairs of skates, and search in my duffle bag for a screwdriver—*shit, it’s not here*. Two girls remain in our dressing room, quietly waiting for me to fit their helmets over their matching box braids. I whisper, “Sorry, one second”, and sprint to the equipment closet at the other end of the arena, knowing each passing minute makes the girls feel like they don’t belong. With two larger helmets and a screwdriver in my hands, I rush back, finding another coach squishing the smaller helmet over one of the girl’s braids, cursing under her breath. Shocked, I shout, “Hey! We can adjust the helmets, just wait a second”. The coach kept her eyes focused on the girls, saying sternly, “*You knew* we were practicing today. You can’t wear braids. Do your hair differently next time.” I had an instant bad feeling in my gut, but I stayed silent. We are both white women, coaching a barrier-free hockey program for kids in low-income neighbourhoods. Like these two girls, the majority of our players are racialised youth, kids who have never had the chance to play ice hockey before. Clearly irritated, the coach tells me to get on the ice and walks out of the dressing room. I quickly fasten the straps of the larger helmets and ashamedly promise this situation won’t happen again. As I run onto the ice, my mind is preoccupied with what just happened... *Why did I say nothing?*

An icy chill runs down my spine, but it’s not from the freezing wind sweeping across the farm, making loose snow dance on the path before me... it comes from uncovering that repressed memory and my assumptions of sport being an inclusive space for all youth. I long to redo the helmet situation, tell those girls they can wear their hair however they choose, that we (coaches) will make sure they can play safely, that they belong on the team. What happened in that dressing room, with the coach’s chosen words and my chosen silence, is a clear example of *white privilege*; we both contributed to the normativity of whiteness pervasive in ice hockey cultures (Gearity et al., 2019). As a white woman researcher and coach, my attempts to be anti-oppressive and critically conscious are impacted by my privileges (Potts & Brown, 2015). As coaches, the power of our words and actions has *meaning*, and staying silent sends the wrong message. I was not the loud, passionate fighter I thought I was. Maybe this experience was a key catalyst in my PLC journey, allowing me to see (and hopefully seize) opportunities to transform sport towards inclusion in the future, to be(come) an active agent of change.

Coaching became a social outlet for me, a proud part of my identity. I missed competing as a young athlete... working with my teammates towards a shared goal, pushing through

discomfort, being a part of something that was bigger than me. I longed for a collaborative project during my Ph.D., and this feeling was amplified by the isolation experienced by the COVID-19 lockdowns. I was also experiencing debilitating mental health issues. I had ignored my anxiety, depression, and insomnia for years, and it finally bubbled up, leaving me unrecognisable, a shell of my former lively self, hovering in the corner afraid to move.

September 2019: It's day 25 of 28 of my Ph.D. comprehensive exam and I'm *broken*; mentally, physically, emotionally broken. A swift reversal from the productive and motivated graduate student identity I've proudly clung to. Why did I start my comprehensive exam the same week a major scholarship was due? Why did I not tell my committee or my supervisor I've spent two weeks sick, unable to get out of bed, praying for my antibiotics to work? Why have I made this narrative for myself that I'm alone? I'm lacking confidence and motivation to study, to work, *to be*. My stubbornness is destructive; *you need help, Sara*.

Through (much-needed) therapy, I learned I was also experiencing burnout from chronic stress and would need time, patience, and support to get past the stress cycles (Nagoski & Nagoski, 2020). Being a graduate student was all-consuming, draining the life from my other identities (Callary et al., 2012): a partner, friend, sister, daughter, community member, runner. I longed for that feeling of belonging, being in nature, breathing in the energy from the trees. I desperately wanted to believe my partner when he'd say, "One day at a time, just keep moving", but I was lost. My competitive brain labelled this as a *weakness*. Be tougher. Fight through it. Academia is a high-performance, anxiety-provoking environment for many doctoral students (Pentón Herrera et al., 2022); I can't be *this* fragile.

Frozen sheets of snow pile up against the large gate that blocks car access to Cow Lane in the farm. A long hanging steel chain whips around in the wind, slamming against the steel gate like a metronome keeping pace. The focus needed to carefully cross the path between the gate and the fence has allowed my fears to flood my brain. CLANG! *You don't belong here*. CLANG! *You can't support coaches' learning*. CLANG! *What do you even know about social justice?*

CLANG! CLANG! CLANG! It's hard to quiet the ruminating. Darkness has covered the sky, so I head out of the farm, needing more time to unpack my reflections under the streetlights.

François had already tried to subside my questions and concerns. We met at a campus restaurant a few weeks after he passed his Ph.D. defence, as I had been thinking non-stop about the PLC role. He ordered an appetiser, asking, "Are you getting anything?" I lied and said I already had lunch. I'm comfortable around François, but I was too nervous to eat, not wanting to reveal I had no idea what I was doing, that I already felt like an imposter, that I was scared to begin. He pointed to my inky hand-written notes and laughed, "You've been busy!" François listened quietly as I ran through my prepared questions, eating his food. I let out a big sigh and felt the tension covering my shoulders, felt my stomach grumble under my sweater. François laughed again, "Sara, take a breath! Focus on building rapport and trust with your coaches first. You'll figure out how to best support each coach as you work *with* them". I wanted to believe François, but I had more internal work to do. I still have more internal work to do.

Figure 2

Winter sun setting over a neighbourhood road.



The taunting clangs of the steel chain fade as I stride home for my last kilometre, ready to get out of these cold, damp clothes. On this vacant residential road, I have a moment of clarity: *I feel heavy*. It's not just the weight of the extra layers needed for winter running; it's not just the darkness coating the sky or the heavy winter air. I've been wrestling with feeling guilty for my privilege and social position, the time I had to address my mental health issues, and my perceived (in)ability to be a PLC... it's all been weighing me down. As a funded Ph.D. candidate, I *should* contribute to research and society. I live in a dual-income house and have a safe place to sleep, a loving partner, supportive family and friends, I *should* be happy. Right? Now crawling into the house, I have a way-too-hot shower and throw on my comfiest clothes, burying myself under blankets (and shame) on the couch. Noticing my deflated demeanour, my partner cautiously suggests reframing my situation: "How can your mental health journey be an *advantage* as a PLC?" How can I use my personal (and painful) experiences of reflection, awareness, and compassion to support Sophie and Zoe?

Throughout the months that followed this moment of clarity, I slowly began to reclaim my sense of self—finding joy in volunteering as a coach for an after-school girls' running program. Spending time running and cycling with friends. Joining a women's book club to discuss literary themes of gender inequity and oppression. Building a community to support my PLC process with Martin, Michel, and François. Engaging in training for anti-racism, gender equity in sport, and becoming informed in mental health literacy. Recognising the need to unpack, accept, and mitigate my biases and assumptions as they will impact my interactions with research participants and youth athletes. I learned how to turn 'bad months' into 'bad days'; slowly healing my burnout by connecting with and caring for others (Nagoski & Nagoski, 2020).

What I previously understood as my fixed self-identity has been shifting to a fluid and adaptable identity by recognising how my *becoming* is unified with my family, friends, and peer relationships (Callary et al., 2012; Pentón Herrera et al., 2022). I can better understand how my experiences, knowledge, values, attitudes, beliefs, and moments of disjuncture have shaped who I am and may become (Jarvis, 2006). I see how my feelings of guilt can be used as facilitators to move and act, to get out of the house, just like how Sophie was motivated to reflect on their biased assumptions when they felt guilty for saying nothing during a moment of exclusion in sport. Being *reflexive* is part of my *becoming*; to recognise and come to understand my biases and then purposefully work to transform my biases to reduce oppressive effects on others (Ryba, 2013). I can see more clearly how I need to actively address the exclusionary dichotomies constructed from my biography and upbringing of who belongs in sport, who experiences discrimination, and who has a voice to enact change. The privileged circumstances of which I was born and currently live provide me with a platform to reflect and advocate for positive social change as a researcher, coach, and PLC (Blodgett et al., 2015; Camiré et al., 2022). When I've been at my lowest, I'm supported by my loved ones. And I have an opportunity to collaborate *with* Sophie and Zoe, who are both motivated to transform competitive sport, to co-learn and develop our critical consciousness. I finally saw how my *full* biography, the good and not-so-good, meaningfully shaped my PLC role.

Focusing on the intricacies of relationality

Figure 3

Sun setting over a farm pathway, grass growing beyond a fence.



I consciously soften my breathing as I weave through the waves of people embracing the warm and early spring in the farm tonight. But I can't help but breathe in deeply, wanting to fill every inch of my lungs with fresh air. I spot the cows in the distance, serenely back in their outdoor pasture. With a new season, the farm feels *alive*. I'm still riding the inspiring wave from working with Sophie during their winter season. We connected immediately, maybe sensing how our personalities were similar, having a habit of oversharing and caring deeply. Prior to meeting with Sophie, I struggled with the idea of virtually discussing how we could transform competitive sport contexts through a screen. I thrive in (in-person) social environments, being able to read people's body language, catching moments of hesitation and reflection to encourage deeper, meaningful dialogue. But with Sophie, despite the virtual setting, we clicked right away. During our first meeting, Sophie started crying within minutes, sharing how athletes were excluded from skiing based on their gender and sexual identities and how Sophie wanted,

needed, to change the sport culture. My ‘fixer’ brain took over, asking them if they wanted to take a break and grab a glass of water. It was terrifyingly testing for me to accept the silence over the next 30 seconds (which felt like 30 minutes). Finally, Sophie cleared their throat, nodded, and said, “Okay, I’m good. I *want* to talk about it”. The timing of our collaboration was impeccable; Sophie felt comfortable sharing, often beginning our meetings without any small talk, diving into the challenges or the successes they experienced in their coaching practice the week prior. We both observed how Sophie’s critical praxis shifted as they became more confident in their ability to enact positive change in sport (i.e., political efficacy; Gonzalez et al., 2020). I remember sharing my thoughts on Sophie’s progress with Michel, “If this is what a PLC does, listening and guiding when appropriate, I could act in this role forever!” It was clear that our supportive and trusting relationship was helping Sophie’s learning (Stelter, 2014), but their eagerness to co-create knowledge was also enhancing my confidence as a PLC.

Feeling extra motivated this evening, I continue down Morningside Lane, past the cows nudging each other with their noses. But the pep in my stride quickly falters as I recognise the running group I joined last year, training ahead of me. As I get closer, guilt washes over my already red face. My participation in the group was short-lived; I blamed quitting on the workload of my Ph.D. and additional research projects, but really, I felt like an outsider, not strong or quick enough to keep up. Ironic because if I kept training with the group, I would undoubtedly have become a stronger runner. Everyone was friendly, but my lack of self-confidence was louder. I longed for social interaction but held myself back. I give a little wave to the running group as they pass me, catching bits of their weekend plans.

Figure 4

Farm road leading to a large red barn and silo.



As I round the bend and work my way towards the large red barns at the top of this gradual incline, my encounter with the running group makes me think of Zoe. She has felt alone throughout her competitive season, desiring a connection with her peer coaches and searching for that missing piece to bond with her athletes. During our meetings, I was learning when and when not to push sensitive conversations further to protect her from harm and distress. I was familiar with facilitating semi-structured interviews, clearly being in a facilitator role, *the researcher*. As a PLC, the lines between researcher and participant were blurred, we were creating knowledge *together* (Stelter, 2014). Zoe and I did not meet in person, like I did once with Sophie. Relying on my emotional skills to ‘sense the mood’ in the virtual space was challenging; I tried to search for non-verbal and verbal cues to either move on or probe further (Ellis, 2017; Pascoe Leahy, 2021), but the physical distance between me and Zoe sometimes impacted our ability to connect.

When I began working with Zoe, she cautiously shared how her coaching experiences were obstructed by those around her, predominately by the men head coaches who made her feel

small and questioned her knowledge and her role as a coach (LaVoi et al., 2019). Through many emotional conversations filled with tears, long pauses, and unfinished sentences, I sensed there was a deeper history between Zoe and some of her peer coaches, but her guard was up.

March 2022: It's been over an hour now, and I feel like we are surfing the top of a breakthrough but not yet taking the plunge. Zoe shares how she felt after not being invited to 'beers after practice', not receiving the invite as her peer (men) coaches discussed in front of her where to meet later. She knows these social interactions are *more* than just a beer. Zoe starts to connect her latest experience of sexism, of 'missing out', to a coaching memory she has hinted at but not yet shared. Beginning to cry, I try to provide space. But my silence hits differently in our virtual meetings, it feels unsympathetic, *impatient*. If we were in person, I could better read Zoe's expressions, sense the mood if she wanted to share more. But here we are, thousands of kilometres apart.

I *felt* for her. I pictured a close friend or family member in Zoe's place, how I would want to hug them, nod encouragingly, maybe cry together. I was Zoe's learning companion as a PLC, but my support could not replace the relationships Zoe desired with her peer coaches and organisational staff. I also knew how easy it is to isolate yourself during difficult times. I've been asking Sophie and Zoe to reach out to others who can support their critical praxis, while I've been doing the opposite. Bailing on plans, spending weekends in my home office, glued to my laptop, harming my relationships. *Why don't you use your own advice, Sara?*

With my head down and arms pumping, I reach the top of the incline, where Morningside and Ash Lane meet. As I gasp for air, habitually placing my hands on my hips, the smell of freshly tilled dirt fills my airways. This immediate exhaustion is a friendly reminder, telling me I can push further and keep trying even when life is hard. Each time Sophie or Zoe asked me, almost with despair, "What should I do?" I took a moment to remind myself of my PLC role—to listen and encourage, not to fix or correct—and I reframed the question to encourage them to self-reflect and introspect (Stelter, 2014). Together, we pushed through disjuncture, through unknowns and discomforts, towards harmony, to a greater understanding of who we are and what we know (Jarvis, 2006). And since we were working *together*, I felt like it was less scary to try

and fail and then try again. To support their critical consciousness-raising, this process involved recognising social issues in sport (e.g., sexism, racism, neglect of mental health) and discussing their role as coaches to address such issues (e.g., proactively establishing team cultures that use inclusive and affirming language). Our discussions became helpful beyond coaching; Sophie explored how to create an inclusive and proactive culture in their school classroom as a teacher. I, too, felt changed beyond the PLC role, finding myself more easily sitting in discomfort, rather than trying to rush through intimidating feelings of unknown.

We also spent considerable time together discussing their coaching practice, reflections, and intentions for their future careers. As a funded Ph.D. candidate, I was privileged with *time* to dedicate to my collaborations with Sophie and Zoe, not having to work part-time or as a research/teaching assistant. To foster reciprocity, I made myself completely available to Sophie and Zoe, meeting at times of their choosing, often with less than 24 hours' notice. We engaged deeply and vulnerably about why they continue coaching and what gendered challenges they have faced and overcome. The tears, the laughter, the pauses. Discussing our aspirations for a reimagined competitive sport system built around the athletes' (persons') needs, I could not tell you how their athletes fared performance-wise when we worked together. As Martin suggested, our conversations were *in the clouds*, untethered to a structured format. We would converse between meetings by sending messages and resources to each other. The anchored connection I had with Sophie and with Zoe enabled me to be as present as possible in their sport contexts, learning the names and behaviours of their peer coaches, family members, partners. I (finally) genuinely felt like I grasped the *companion* aspect of the PLC role. Being a PLC is giving me *meaning*. I am learning how to be more patient with Zoe, focusing on her strengths as a coach to foster her self-confidence. I am learning how to ask for help and to lean on others for advice and

expertise when I am limited in my knowledge. Sophie's shared reflections in our Google Slides have encouraged me to consider the complicated nature of sociocultural issues and see the benefit of dialogue with individuals who may have divergent opinions.

I also became *emotionally invested* in Sophie and Zoe's well-being and coaching. During one of our critical discussions, Martin pondered, "How you describe your conversations with the coaches, it sounds almost as if you have become friends". I could feel my face blush red when he said 'friends'. I looked down self-consciously at my running shoes, noticing the dried mud from my trail run last weekend. *Were there not ethical issues in me becoming friends with my research participants?* But I *did* feel friendly with Sophie and Zoe. I looked forward to our talks, hearing how they were doing and what learnings they had stumbled upon. I felt comfortable sharing personal stories of challenges in my learning. Their pain, shared virtually, became my pain.

February 2023: Presenting at a sport sciences conference, there are academics, sport practitioners, and organisational staff sitting before me, listening to my PLC journey with Sophie. Everything was going well until I discussed Sophie's critical actions for more inclusive sport... something blocks my throat, my eyes swell with water, obstructing my view behind my glasses. *Shit. DO NOT CRY SARA.* Sophie had a difficult season; a close friend who coached at another club had an athlete quit skiing because they no longer 'fit in' the competitive sport world after coming out as trans. As a queer person, Sophie was distraught hearing of this situation, believing that sport could be a safe space for others to come out like it was for them. In front of this crowd, I realise I have *stayed* with Sophie's pain. I thankfully catch the eyes of a colleague; she gently smiles and gives a nod of support. *Deep breath out.* Finding my composure, I use my emotion to embolden the powerful sport leaders seated before me to understand that exclusion is happening *right now* in sport, and coaches want to make a difference but need more support.

The setting sun illuminates my way home. I see the running group stretching by the path entrance, now finished with their training. I'm reminded of the days when I ran with my friends, tackling the rolling hills and worn-down trails together. Even though I miss my friends striding beside me, I'm learning how to feel content with this time by myself, running through a beautiful landscape to work through my reflections and *become* a stronger PLC for Sophie and Zoe.

Before meeting the coaches, I asked Michel, "How will I know when the collaboration is done?".

I remember he laughed, sharing, “It will feel right... they’ll stop needing you”. From building reciprocal relationships with Sophie and Zoe, I found myself staying in contact with them after the formal study ended, carefully continuing the collaborative dialogue with the coaches as a form of disrupting the “temporality of research relationships” (Mason, 2023, p. 716). I wanted not to feel rushed by the structures of the Ph.D. program delineating that data collection should be completed in a certain amount of time (Mason, 2023). I remember Sophie jokingly asked if we “were breaking up now” after our last meeting, expressing (albeit comically) a feeling of desertion at the end of our collaboration (Mayan & Daum, 2016). Sophie asked if we could continue chatting for reflective and critical support, which led to my enthusiastic “Yes!”.

Knowing my limits as a researcher-participant acting as a PLC

Figure 5

Moon rising over a farm road.



It’s a surprisingly cool evening tonight. What light remains of the setting sun reflects off the water puddles ahead of me on the road. But the light is fleeting; by the time I reach the puddles, all I see is dark, murky water. In the darkness, I question if I should keep stopping to

record my reflections. Individuals' access and participation in outdoor spaces are structured by gender, race, and other identities (e.g., Allen-Collinson, 2023; Roper 2016). While running in urban and rural spaces, women are often hyper-aware of the potential dangers lurking down dirt paths and dark roads (Allen-Collinson, 2023). A memory from my undergrad flashes in my mind of walking home alone one night. A man followed me home, yelling at me to get in his truck. I arrived home safely and did not experience physical harassment as many women do while outdoors, especially women of equity deserving groups (e.g., Roper 2016). The trees sway in front of me; a chilly wind pulls their branches back and forth. My privilege and social position as a white woman living without a disability impact my outdoor experiences. However, just because I have felt unsafe outdoors does not mean I am *all-knowing* of all people's outdoor experiences, or all women's experiences in sport. Avoiding the potholes on the farm road, I extend my stride and realise that I must apply the same perspective with Sophie and Zoe. Yes, we have *some* similar experiences in sport, but their unique biographies, experiences, values, and knowledge are essential for our collaborations.

As an empathetic and emotional person, I need to reflexively “deal with the feelings, emotions, power imbalances, and the stress embedded in the researcher/study participant relationships” (Frisby, 2010, p. 442). I need to question my relational impact: Is my empathetic demeanour and open-ended questioning revealing a comfortable, safe, and informed researcher? Am I being perceived as compassionate towards their coaching experiences? How are my own experiences of challenging exclusionary sport systems impacting our relationships? Am I speaking too much or sharing too much? While I understood why the NCC principles are *guidelines* not to prescribe specific actions for the PLC, I was still searching for rules to follow. It was challenging balancing being courageous to encourage the coaches to dig deeper into their

reflections while also expressing humility as I was not all-knowing and was also benefitting professionally from our dialogue (Freire, 2005; Nelson et al., 2016). I hear Michel's advice floating with the wind, "When you feel lost, go back to the theory, remember what guides your PLC role." Being a PLC is not supposed to be easy; being a learning companion and engaging in co-learning with coaches requires resolve and patience. *Lean in, Sara, embrace the unknown.*

In the distance between the swaying trees, I see the bright yellow glow emanating from the greenhouses. The peaceful yellow hue is calming, comforting, and a constant glow. Nothing has felt constant during the PLC-coach collaborations, an ebb and flow of feeling prepared, lost, confident, and unsure all at once. Each day has brought new challenges and new learnings. Presenting opportunities to reflect on who I am and what my role is and is not as a PLC. I needed to align myself with feminist principles of fostering *engagement* with the participants to avoid *exploitation* (Sprague, 2016). I was, first and foremost, a researcher engaging with participants to acquire data for my Ph.D., data I needed to complete the requirements of my doctoral program. However, I needed to be more than a data-acquiring researcher. But what could/should this more I was yearning for be? Per Martin's feedback, I needed to critically reflect on the ethical considerations of becoming friends with my participants (Mayan & Daum, 2016). It was challenging to balance the tightrope between being caring enough to build rapport while also not exploiting Sophie and Zoe's personal (and often painful) coaching experiences for 'rich' data (Pascoe Leahy, 2021). Together, we aimed to co-learn and co-construct knowledge around safer and more inclusive sport. Martin encouraged me to view the SaraSophie and SaraZoe entanglements as an advantage of the PLC role and how I could not be separated from the coaches' learning journeys. I was constantly reflecting on how my choices could not solely be for me to gather 'rich' data for my Ph.D. Overtime, I consciously encouraged the coaches to talk

about what they needed, even if that meant the conversations did not touch on the critical theory and social justice topics central to my Ph.D. project. But I often struggled accepting that this study was also about *me*... maybe it felt too narcissistic to think so?

Both coaches were also moving through vulnerable, life-changing journeys while we worked together: Sophie was in deep exploration of their gender and sexual identities, and Zoe was questioning her role as a coach within a gendered sport system. Did I leave the coaches feeling exposed, like they shared too much with me? After checking in post-meeting, the coaches decided what was kept as ‘data’ and what was removed completely or modified if the text was too personal, or too soon, to share. This member reflection process was familiar; I had experience modifying my own stories at the peak of my mental health challenges. It was too personal or too soon, too much to share with some people how my crippling anxiety was affecting me. As my supervisor, Martin was supposed to be aware of barriers impeding my Ph.D. progress, but I held back how much I was hurting because of the shame I was feeling, not yet ready to admit to my supervisor why I was (very) behind in my work. Even when mentorships are built on dialogue and trust, there will still be power dynamics that shape how comfortable individuals feel in sharing sensitive experiences. So, while I was not expecting Sophie and Zoe to share everything with me, I hoped I was creating a safe and welcoming environment for them to share what they wanted to. Thankfully, I also continued seeing my own therapist, as I found myself ‘staying’ with Sophie and Zoe’s sensitive stories (Lynch et al., 2022; Mason, 2023) while recovering from my burnout and mental health challenges. Having *big* feelings was not a new experience, but now I also carried Sophie’s and Zoe’s challenges and successes with me. I often think about my emotional response while sharing Sophie’s coach experiences during that sport conference... have other CSP researchers cried while recounting their studies? I needed to refer

to pedagogies of self-preservation (Lynch et al., 2022), listen to my own advice when I told friends and family to recover after a tough day and be honest about my mental health challenges.

Figure 6

Farm greenhouses glow a bright yellow hue against a dark night sky.



I stop beside the greenhouses to let the yellow light blanket my skin. The purpose of the greenhouse is to nourish the experimental crops, but it also acts as a North Star giving light on a dark farm road. Like the greenhouses, I had one purpose as a PLC: to support Sophie and Zoe by helping them shine light on their coaching practices. I was not prepared for how the effects of the PLC collaborations would reach beyond the two coaches and me, spreading light beyond the metaphorical greenhouse walls. I caught myself employing PLC strategies in my other Ph.D. studies by asking participants to dig deeper into their reflections, turning semi-structured interviews into dialogue.

This shift from *interviewer* conducting semi-structured interviews to *PLC* engaging in dialogue occurred when I felt comfortable (e.g., seeing an opportunity for a coach to reflect deeper on gendered expectations in sport; Levi et al., 2022) but also when I felt uncomfortable

(e.g., not agreeing with a coach's response; Olive & Thorpe, 2011). While conversing with a coach during the conduct of another study, he casually shared that he did not understand how he had white privilege, as he had faced adversity and worked hard for his career. I was torn; we just had an engaging conversation about becoming aware of social issues in sport and advocating for equitable and inclusive sport. But this coach's white privilege was invisible to him (McIntosh, 1998). As a CSP researcher, to fully employ a cultural praxis, should I challenge his biases? My mind was racing, quickly considering my onto-epistemological assumptions, personal beliefs, and ethical responsibilities as a researcher (Olive & Thorpe, 2011). After pausing to reflect, I decided to jump in. I found myself compelled to act, explaining how the colour of my white skin may increase my safety while running outdoors, compared to how Black, Indigenous, and racialised people may be harassed, followed, and murdered while running outdoors. I explained how while I might have more risk of being attacked because I am a woman, no one will question why I am running because I am white. The dialogue that ensued with this coach after my uninvited sharing provided me reassurance for jumping in, although I remain unsure if using PLC methods with a coach not partaking in a collaboration is appropriate. Until that moment, shifts occurring in my research approach from becoming a PLC were subconscious, unknown to me. But I continued to become a PLC beyond the collaborations. Learning more about NCC was changing my behaviours; I also felt compelled to challenge friends' and family members' biases and assumptions in a kinder, more balanced way.

As my heart rate continues to drop during this pause from running, I wave my hands through the yellow greenhouse light that is growing new life. An explicit collaboration is necessary between a PLC and coach, with both parties consenting to work together. I had to understand my limits around using NCC and PLC methods with individuals beyond Sophie and

Zoe, as I desired to help others reflect and act critically but had to question if it was appropriate to intervene. Slowly realising how I often give my friends and family members unsolicited advice and attempt to ‘mediate’ their shared issues has led me to question why I feel compelled to be the ‘fixer’ in my relationships in the first place. By ‘helping others’, am I projecting what I want to do? How I want to feel?

Sophie seemed to have a stronger foundation for their critical praxis development, critically reflecting *with* their peer coaches, family, friends, and teacher colleagues, all helping Sophie to feel less isolated and marginalised as a coach (Hoeber & Dalhstrom, 2021). Conversely, Zoe was alone, desperately wanting a woman to mentor her in advancing as a coach against sexist sport cultures and norms. She was living in a new city, building her coach relationships from scratch. We discussed how gendered barriers are sustained across sport systems and how homologous reproduction enables the same people (men) to advance in coaching (LaVoi et al., 2019); but I couldn’t change Zoe’s sport system, which infuriated me. Michel encouraged me to consider how Zoe’s learning journey and coaching practices were impacted by the sociocultural factors in her sport context (Downham & Cushion, 2022), sharing that “not every sport context may enable coaches to advocate for social change”. Martin guided me to ponder if the obstacles Zoe was facing meant she had far fewer opportunities for developing her critical consciousness, which I perceived as occurring on a slower, less observable path than Sophie. Given these circumstances, I felt limited as Zoe’s PLC, disappointed with my ability to support her. Perhaps the theme of Zoe’s learning journey was finding her coach voice and building her values and goals. Maybe that journey is less aligned with the academic purpose of my Ph.D. project (i.e., creating safer and more inclusive sport spaces), but nonetheless still very important for Zoe’s coaching, for *her* becoming. As a PLC, I

was learning that ‘shifting’ toward critical consciousness may not be an immediate and straightforward process for all coaches; it can take on many narrative forms overtime.

With a deep exhale, I continue my run under the twinkle of the stars and the streetlights. Running has been a gift throughout my life, a way to connect my mind with my soul, my heart with my feet. During this running and academic journey, I have evolved. I had no idea, sitting in François’ Ph.D. defence years ago, that undertaking the PLC role would shape my *becoming* as a researcher, coach, and person. I will continue to question my role in purposefully impacting coaching research and practice, never wanting to be stagnant in my praxis. The long-term impact of our work is unknown, but for now, I can confidently say that the PLC-coach collaborations I helped nurture were mutually beneficial and supportive of developing to varying extents the critical consciousness of *three* people: Sophie, Zoe, and myself.

Concluding Thoughts

To be(come) a supportive and compassionate PLC, I needed to use my ‘full’ biography, to assess who/why *I am*; focus on the intricacies of relationality; foster honesty and reflexion; and know my limits as a PLC operating within the confines of a Ph.D. project. Through running-reflecting-writing, I deeply engaged in what becoming a PLC meant to me and how it impacted the relationships entangled in my Ph.D. studies. I am privileged to be able to run outdoors when I want (need) to, with considerable time as a well-funded graduate student, access to outdoor spaces, and decent running shoes on my feet. I am also privileged to have worked as a PLC and have supported two coaches’ critical consciousness, in understanding that my perceptions of ‘safer and more inclusive sport’ are impacted by my power, privilege, and social position as a (white, woman, educated, non-disabled) researcher. As our sociocultural world continues to change and coaches face new challenges in their sport contexts, it will be a great responsibility of

PLCs and other individuals working with coaches to support their critical consciousness development and meet their evolving learning needs.

In this autoethnography, I shared one way to become a PLC to support sport coaches' critical praxis development. Building on the work of other PLCs (Milistetd et al., 2018; Rodrigue et al., 2019) and learning from my experiences, PLCs may benefit from acquiring a lifelong learning approach and developing skills for becoming self-aware, attentive, and supportive. PLCs working with coaches should understand and communicate their role within the collaboration, as well as ask for feedback and adapt their efforts throughout the process. Based on my experiences, becoming a PLC can be enhanced by leaning on your support systems and finding creative ways to interact for both virtual and in-person collaborations. If you are supporting a coach's critical consciousness development or developing your own, I encourage you to be patient, vulnerable, and honest. I hope that by sharing personal stories of challenges and successes in my critical consciousness building, I demonstrate how *becoming* has no end destination and will be unique to each person (Jarvis, 2006).

Through my own critical consciousness building, I can more clearly see that the common thread weaved through my Ph.D. comes back to building strong relationships. Powerfully said by Aiko Bethea⁵, an equity, diversity, and inclusion expert, "Transformational culture work is always relational, it's not transactional. Real diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging work is not about a checklist. It's about relationships". Time was needed with each coach to build a strong foundation of rapport, trust, and vulnerability before engaging in dialogue on transforming competitive youth sport. After many critical discussions with my supervisor, Martin, I have also come to view my own becoming, positionality, and (emotional) entanglement in the study as an

⁵ Stated on the podcast *Dare to Lead with Brené Brown*.

advantage, as a way to strengthen and nuance the collaborations (DeLuca & Batts Maddox, 2016). Reimagining competitive youth sport contexts towards inclusion and belonging will require researchers and PLCs to build relationships *with* coaches. Culture change is a slow, difficult process, but individuals can shape meaningful sport spaces through their daily actions and language as they critically and consciously consider their power, privilege, and social position as a coach.

The stories presented in this autoethnography, while written from my first-person account, are not just my own. The voices of the participants, family, friends, and colleagues are present and intertwined with my autoethnographic account (Ellis, 2017). I am thankful for Sophie and Zoe's moral courage to act as agents of change in sport (Gonzalez et al., 2020) and for their openness during the collaboration. Through deep, honest, and reflective conversations, our co-learning process during the collaboration was weaved into a large and vast farmland, each swaying tree, growing field, mooing cow, and nourishing greenhouse representing a different moment of praxis, a different moment of becoming.

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Epilogue: Coaching for inclusivity and representation in competitive rugby: “Where’s the line for creating a diverse environment but also not having the token XYZ?”

Mid-season, after Monday’s practice

Head coach Brooke and her assistant coach Gabby are chatting in the otherwise empty parking lot between their cars. The mosquitos are starting to nip at their ankles despite the strong wind sweeping across the dark pitch. The lights turned off at least 30 minutes ago; the post-practice debrief has been longer than usual. It’s been a streak of losses on the pitch, but more importantly, a streak of challenges with the players—outbursts of anger, not listening to team rules, disrespect towards the coaches. It’s well known that coaching teenagers comes with challenges, but Brooke questions if she can do more as a coach to create a positive sport culture.

Gabby’s arms are crossed as she leans on her car hood, saying “Okay, last thing on my list, let’s scrap out the warm-up we’ve been doing. We aren’t keeping the girls’ attention long enough, and it’s frustrating to watch”.

It’s clear she is frustrated, and I am, too. We put so much time into our coaching, and with this age group it goes unnoticed. But Gabby doesn’t seem to be as understanding as I am. I decide to wrap up the conversation on players’ performance and focus on other important aspects: “Yeah, they are super chatty, but honestly, I don’t see that as a bad thing right now.” I attempt to broaden Gabby’s perspective on what an *inclusive* sport program looks like, but it often is brushed aside. I search Gabby’s face for any kind of interest or curiosity, *any kind* of engagement as I ask, “Did you hear Alex talking today?”

Standing up from her car and heading to the driver’s door, Gabby adds, “No, what did she say?”

Gabby definitely hasn't been listening. How many times have we had this conversation?
“Gabby—we've been over this. Alex goes by 'they' now.”

Ready to leave, she's now opening her car door, “Right, right, sorry. What did you overhear?”

Trying not to show my disappointment, I explain that Alex was sharing that they came out to their school friends outside of the team, but instead of hearing what I did, that Alex felt safe to share their journey with others, all Gabby said was 'cool'. Her Apple watch screen is glowing as she keeps checking the time—I get it, you want to get home. So do I. But I'm not going home with a 'cool' response, so I add, “Yeah, it's a *huge* step forward. I'm really proud of them... It's a good reminder that we should both be more mindful; we often still use the terms 'girls' and 'guys' when we address the team.”

Gabby's in her car now. Sighing loudly, she says, “It just feels so ingrained to use those words.”

I clear my throat, one last try at getting her attention, “I can relate to that for sure, but we need to go beyond discomfort. What about using the mascot instead? Like 'let's go Cardinals?’” Cranking her neck, Gabby yells out the window, I can make out “Okay! See you Wednesday!” as she drives out of the parking lot. I guess we are moving on from this conversation for tonight. Gabby's lack of engagement just doesn't vibe with how I want to coach, how I *need* to coach. I can't create a welcoming space for Alex and the other players if my assistant coach is not on board. The gravel crinkles under the weight of Gabby's car as she pulls out from the parking lot, flooding the farmer's fields with her headlights as she drives home blissfully unaware of my irritation. What I really want to do right now is scream: *Why aren't we on the same page about this?* Yes, it sucks to lose again and again. It sucks that it takes 10 attempts to get everyone's

attention while we are speaking. It sucks that we are most likely not going to make the playoffs like we intended. But I don't really care if we win or lose. I really don't. Does that make me a bad coach? I'm trying to teach these athletes how to respect themselves, respect their opponents, and respect the environment around them. I just want the athletes I am coaching to be good people. Isn't that also important?

Because Gabby is straight, maybe she doesn't appreciate the significance for Alex coming out beyond our team. A month ago, when Alex came out to our team, they told us that only our team knows they identify as nonbinary; no one knew yet at home or at school. I had a moment of like, '*Oh shit*, this is happening. What you say next has meaning'. It felt like two minutes passed before I was able to choke out, "Sometimes you can't 'be out' everywhere in your life, but I will work to make this a safe place for you." When Alex told us that only the team knows made me feel *so small*, sending me right back to when I was only out as bisexual to my rugby team. I know the pain of not being your true self in all aspects of your life. I don't wish that feeling on anyone.

Seeking belonging is *ingrained* in me, a part of who I am. Maybe because belonging is something that's *been stolen* from my family; stolen from Grandpa when he was forced to attend the nearby residential school, stolen from my stepbrothers when they're called racial slurs while playing sports. I didn't start playing sports until I was 8 or 9 years old because the script I had memorised said, 'I'm too fat. I'm not athletic. I can't play sports'. Mom and Grandma helped me as much as they could, but it was tough. I'd see the other kids in their uniforms playing outside together—a team, a community, belonging. Finally, after years of lacking confidence and self-esteem, I found my team. I knew Mom hated rugby—she'd talk with the neighbours about their daughter playing, seeing her hobbling out of the van multiple times with broken bones, always

from rugby. So, the message was clear: ‘You’re not doing it’. *But I wanted it.* So, I tried out for the team and didn’t tell my family. To this day, I’m still playing. I’m becoming a decent rugby player now as an adult, but where could I have been if I had a good support system when I started rugby as a child? Could I have played at the university and varsity level? Could I have made the provincial team? Even my family, to this day, hate that I play rugby, and they hate even more than I’m coaching other girls to play rugby. I guess I’ve always gone against the grain, against the status quo. Now, I can take my experiences and use them to *really* create a team for my athletes to belong, to thrive, to be their true selves.

Rugby was the one place where no one would even bat an eye that I’m gay. Everyone on my team was just really cool with it, you know, “Oh, Brooke likes girls too, that’s cool”. I was like, “*Whoa, I can be gay?! That’s okay?*” And the response was, “*Half of us are gay, too!*”. Over time, my confidence went beyond rugby; I could be my true self *everywhere*. I know there are a lot of people, especially older people who are gay, bisexual, or trans, where being out in their sport just genuinely wasn’t an option. Mom took some time to come around. She wasn’t super comfortable with me being bisexual at first. It’s definitely better now, but if I had a homophobic coach, or if my sport was not accepting, or if my teammates were not supportive... *I don’t know...* Would I have continued to pursue other women? I probably would’ve just stayed in the closet. Maybe Alex came out to us because they also felt that sense of belonging like I did.

Brooke’s focus comes back to the car, realising she’s been parked in her driveway for a while now. The car lights and radio turn off—it’s been 15 minutes since she turned the keys over. Brooke is somewhere else, lost in thought but motivated to continue creating a safe space for athletes on her team to be themselves.

Mid-season, at the end of a Sunday game

The players are spread out on the side of the pitch, Brooke can see their bellies rise and fall, breathing hard after an intense game. She watches the players slowly switch from their cleats to their other shoes and notices one athlete, Ruth, take moccasins out of her bag. The coloured beads look similar to the ones Brooke has at home. She's noticed Ruth's moccasins before but has questioned how to bring it up, not wanting to make her feel uncomfortable.

I sit down beside Ruth, but she makes no acknowledgement of my presence; her head is down, eyes focused on the blades of grass like they were staring in an action movie. I clear my throat and say, "I noticed you wore moccasins today; they look dope!" Ruth's eyes widen and shift towards me. I got her attention! She replies softly, "I love them. They're super comfy."

Ruth is one of the quieter players. She keeps to herself and does not engage a lot with the coaches beyond talking about rugby. But this is my time to break through, make a connection. I smile and add, "I don't know if you noticed, but I have similar ones." Ruth is now making direct eye contact. I can see her eyes squint a bit as she listens. "My Mom wears them too!"

Ruth nods with more enthusiasm than I've seen from her all season, "I did notice that, actually! I've started wearing them more at school and when I'm out of the house. I uh, um..." I give Ruth a reassuring nod, supporting her to keep sharing. "I was a bit nervous at first to wear them out of the house... I was worried that someone would comment on them."

"I totally get that. But they're super cool. You should definitely show them off." Pausing for a second, I ask, "Are you and your family Indigenous?"

A wide smile spreads across Ruth's face. Confidently now, Ruth says, "Yes, we are."

I tell her, "Mine too!" Maybe I'm the first Indigenous coach she's had. Maybe I'm the first woman coach she's had. *Wow*. I know that coaching is a huge responsibility, but this kind of representation... these conversations are beyond meaningful for me. Now, we have a foundation

to grow from. I wave to Ruth and the other players as they leave the pitch. It was a tough game, but I feel like we just won. Gabby waves me over, but I tell her to go on without me. I need to let some of this energy out.

Feeling energised, Brooke jogs over to her car and throws her duffle bag in the trunk. Grabbing the reflective vest always in her car, Brooke heads out for a run under the town's streetlights. She needs to let this conversation with Ruth marinate for a while, adding to the many reflections she has stored over the years about the representation of Indigenous peoples in sport.

Our players need connection, a safe place to be themselves, to be active and try. To fail and try again. But for players like Alex, like Ruth, who face challenges based on their identities, they need *more*. Discrimination and racism happen in our town, like everywhere else. But change is happening. Like last year, when our Women's National Rugby team went to an Indigenous community, it was amazing. These kids got some love, *finally*. Showing the kids, 'Look, *I'm like you* and look how far I've come', it's... *it's huge*. Even if they experience racism along the way, which they probably will, they must know that they still have a place in sport... It's really important for us coaches and sport leaders to *just give back more*. Rugby *100%* has shaped who I am today. I just wish more people would take a look at where they are because of their sport and like realise, you know, *it's time for me to give back* to the sport that gave me so much. The need and want is there. Now it's time for us who are coaches, sport leaders, high-level players, to make an effort and go out to underrepresented communities, to help light the fire in our youth and allow them to see that sport is a place where they can belong.

I want to support Ruth and other Indigenous athletes in finding their place in sport—it's a major goal of mine—but I also need to be critical of how often representation can quickly turn

into tokenism without the right intentions. I've been the 'equity hire' before. It definitely is not a great feeling, like I'm a woman, Indigenous, *and* bisexual. I've *clearly* been one of the poster children for diversity and inclusion. On Truth and Reconciliation Day last year I was asked to read a plaque to begin a ceremony I attended. I felt pretty cool being asked, I am really proud of my culture. But then, right before we began, a woman told me the plaque was not in English. It was in my Indigenous language, which I can't read. It felt like a double slap in the face. *That's kind of part of the problem here, honey.* I can't even read the language of my ancestors, for many historical reasons. Like, *come on.* This white person just assumed that I could read the plaque when a lot of the truth and reconciliation initiatives are exactly about acknowledging how our culture was taken away from us. I don't know how to read it. I don't know how to speak it. My Grandpa wasn't allowed to speak his language at school. He was never able to teach it to me...

Where the town streets meet the country roads, Brooke comes to a halt. Breathing heavily, her hands come to the top of her knees as she tries to blink away the spots in her eyes. She lets out a big laugh—she did not intend to do a speed workout tonight, but the energy seems to have pushed her stride faster than normal. Taking a minute to slow her heart rate down, she reminds herself to be an optimist as well as a realist because of the fine line between representation and tokenism she's very familiar with. As she opens her car door, she closes her eyes tight and says aloud for only the wind to hear: "Okay Brooke, remember the positive thing that happened today. Maybe your conversation with Ruth was meaningful. Just maybe. Hold on to that feeling."

End of the season, at the club banquet

The hall is filled with laughter and cheery voices. Brooke looks at her athletes sitting at the circular tables, some are laughing at one girl's phone and others are chatting about their plans for after high school. The drama of the night centres on who is coming back for next

season, their last before university. Alex is seated in the middle of the group, chatting with everyone. Picking at her nails—a nervous habit she’s had since childhood—Brooke questions the kind of future Alex might have in rugby.

There’s still so much work to be done. I don’t know what competitive sport will become in the next few years for Alex or other nonbinary and trans athletes. I can understand the hesitancy around high-contact sports and the implications of players on women’s teams who were assigned the sex of male at birth. It’s such a complex issue. Nevertheless, trans people should have a place in sport, like everyone else. If I’m put on the spot, the best I can do is just keep advocating for inclusion *for all people* and keep trying to speak to those high up in sport organisations to get policies and protocols *changed* for more inclusivity. As a coach, if I’m creating a more inclusive space, I also need to know the policies in our sport because I have no idea right now. What I do know is that Alex had a great season, a superb season. They shared with me after our last game how thankful they were for having us as coaches this year and for including them in the team. I bawled my eyes out on the drive home, probably not the safest decision to drive in such an emotional state. I was just so thankful that the athletes I coached were *shining*, radiant with confidence and joy, even though our win-loss record shows we had a pretty shitty season. Winning was never my goal; I wanted to help my athletes become confident, respectful, and powerful leaders who know their voice is important on and off the pitch. I feel like being an inclusive coach is how I can help to *break the cycle*. I must go through the challenges that come with being an agent of change. I need to show the athletes I coach that I’m confident in myself and my body in order for them to know that they should be as well. Like, *I’m 26*, and I’m *finally* starting to feel confident about who I am. There’s so many times that, looking back, if I was more confident, where could that have taken me? If I had the confidence or self-

love that I do now, where could I be? I didn't stand up for myself, didn't believe in myself. I want the athletes I coach to... I just... I'm *sick and tired* of a lot of girls *not having confidence in themselves* and not having the confidence to take over the world, especially in sport. So many women just don't believe in themselves. What I've taught my athletes this season, I'm really hoping it transfers into the other spheres of their lives.

Brooke's team is called for their photo. Everyone walks to the front of the hall, laughing together, arms hanging off each other's shoulders. The photographer asks if they had a team cheer they could say for the photo. Without hesitation, the team shouts, "What's the score? Zero-zero!" Brooke pinches the inside of her palms with her fingernails, trying to keep herself from crying. Looks like her message of becoming good people first and good athletes second came through after all.

A few days later...

Brooke receives the team photo in her email inbox. She immediately notices how Ruth wore her beautiful, big, beaded earrings. Thinking back to the banquet, she hears Ruth's voice loud amongst the crowd, laughing and sharing with the others—behaviours that might seem normal to any other observer, but Brooke knows being social is something Ruth has been improving all season. She is part of the team, more confident in who she is, and excited to show off her culture. Her earrings stand out in the picture, maybe because Ruth looks so proud, but maybe because Brooke sees herself in Ruth's image or what she could have been if she grew up playing sports with the same support.

CHAPTER IV: General Discussion

Summary of the Articles

The purpose of my dissertation was to advance our current understanding of critical praxis development within competitive youth sport through narrative introspections into coaches' learning journeys. Hannah's story was shared through the Prologue detailing how she believed her coaches were aware of the inequities women faced in sport, but ultimately were not creating positive change for the athletes. Hannah's story sets up the remaining narratives in the dissertation, all from the perspective of competitive youth sport coaches. In Article 1, three composite CNFs are shared of coaches' challenges and successes in creating safer and more inclusive competitive youth sport spaces. To support coaches in overcoming hesitation, avoiding burnout, and sustaining their critical praxis efforts, the findings suggest the need for more supportive, individualised approaches to coach development to support coaches' awareness, reflection, and actions for social change in sport. In Article 2, time hopping snapshot vignettes were presented to portray Sophie's PLC-coach collaboration experiences and their non-linear journey of tackling oppression and discrimination in sport. Building on previous studies with PLCs in competitive sport, the findings suggest the many benefits of collaborative and reciprocal approaches to coach development, with a specific focus on supporting coaches' critical consciousness building. In Article 3, my experiences of becoming a PLC with two coaches (Sophie and Zoe) are narratively shared through an autoethnography. Running-reflecting outdoors was used to situate the feeling, thinking, and acting that occurred during my dissertation and my process of becoming a PLC. Lastly, in the Epilogue, Brooke's experiences were shared as she actively worked to transform competitive sport and promoted her Indigenous culture.

Collectively, the findings may advance CSP research through theoretical, conceptual, methodological, and practical contributions.

Theoretical and Conceptual Contributions

In the present dissertation, theoretical and conceptual generalisability (Smith, 2018) may be promoted through a deeper understanding of coaches' awareness of, reflections on, and actions toward social justice within competitive youth sport contexts (Milistetd et al., 2018; Rodrigue et al., 2019). As suggested by Rodrigue and Trudel (2019), I acted as a PLC by employing five essential components of NCC by (a) focusing on a coach's specific context, (b) creating a safe learning space to question a coach's biases, (c) supporting in-situ reflection by working around a coach's narratives, (d) co-creating knowledge through collaboration, and (e) facilitating open-ended dialogue relevant to a coach's learning (Stelter, 2014). Five theoretical and conceptual contributions are detailed through these essential NCC components.

First, I centred the coaches' subjective realities and sociocultural experiences within their sport contexts in my dissertation (Stelter, 2014). This centring occurred by understanding the coaches' biographies, values, and memories regarding social justice in sport (e.g., personal experiences and/or witnessing discrimination) and their intentions for transforming competitive youth sport. The use of narrative, open-ended questioning was advantageous to exploring the coaches' contexts on a deeper level (Milistetd et al., 2018; Rodrigue & Trudel, 2019). While there are many ways to guide coaches through the PLC role, the NCC approach was beneficial in promoting empathy, perspective-taking, and dialogue (Stelter, 2014), crucial features of critical consciousness-raising (Freire, 1973; Gonzalez et al., 2020). The use of NCC and the CPYD framework may be *complementary* to support coaches' learning and development. Therefore, a theoretical and conceptual contribution of this dissertation lies in the potential generalisability of

the NCC approach with a *critical* theoretical lens to recognise how coach learning is affected by micropolitics and power dynamics in sport (e.g., Gearity & Henderson-Metzger, 2017; Love et al., 2019). The findings of this dissertation may inform future research with an NCC approach by innovatively exploring coach learning through the lens of a short story or a film to promote dialogue that challenges coaches to question their taken-for-granted coaching practices.

Second, I strived to create a safe and comfortable learning space to foster dialogue around the coaches' biases, values, fears, pressures, and pervasive norms that impact their coaching (Stelter, 2014). The findings may inform the future use of NCC to explore coaches' subjective realities and underlying discursive practices impacting their learning at deeper, often unconscious levels. Specifically, coaches' disjuncture around social issues in sport may be lessened by building rapport *before* discussing sensitive topics, engaging in vulnerable sharing of personal experiences (i.e., act of self-disclosure in counselling; Way & Vosloo, 2016), and facilitating dialogue of coaches' challenges and triumphs. The present dissertation may theoretically and conceptually contribute to the PLC role by demonstrating the need to feel safe in the collaboration, thus requiring ongoing training, self-reflection, and external support while working with sport coaches. The findings also demonstrate that some coaches' transformative approaches may be resisted and belittled in their sport contexts (e.g., Spaaij et al., 2020). Researchers should consider how to employ the NCC component of creating a safe space for problem-posing dialogue to support coaches' praxes (Freire, 1973).

Third, the coaches' narratives were centred in the research (Stelter, 2014) to support reflection and awareness of their coaching approaches towards critical consciousness. A potential theoretical and conceptual contribution of this dissertation is nuancing the NCC approach and the understanding of coaches' critical praxes through re-authoring activities with a *critical* approach.

As shown in the findings, considering alternative narratives may help coaches shift the meaning of their identity beyond dominant narratives in sport, such as conforming with their sport organisation's authoritative culture of 'win-at-all-costs' at the sacrifice of their personal beliefs (Zehntner & McMahon, 2014). The findings may advance the use of NCC to co-construct a different ending to a coach's stories to (re)discover their strengths and realise new opportunities for critical action (Gonzalez et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2021) as they coach. Moreover, the findings may contribute to furthering the Gonzalez et al. (2020) CPYD framework through storytelling *with* NCC, as coaches may have difficulty in discovering narratives of advocating for social justice in prevailing normative discourses without the support of an empathic and patient PLC.

Fourth, through the development of collaborative partnerships, co-learning and the co-creation of knowledge occurred (Stelter, 2014). As a PLC, I uplifted the coaches as contributing members of the collaboration with their own knowledge, values, experiences, and expertise. We *all* experienced changes in our critical consciousness and experienced varying confidence levels to enact social change. I also learned from the study participants not in a PLC collaboration, from them vulnerably sharing their stories, reflections, values, experiences, and expertise. The findings from this dissertation may contribute theoretically and conceptually to advance the NCC approach by illustrating how knowledge can be *continuously* co-created during a coach's season through ongoing cycles of critical praxis (Freire, 1973), addressing limitations of previous social justice initiatives with coaches that were short-term (Norman, 2018; Kochanek et al., 2023). Moreover, the findings may contribute to the collaborative aspect of NCC by outlining how individuals can help coaches navigate and cope with criticism when others in their sport context resist their efforts to create safer, more inclusive sport. Theoretically and conceptually, this dissertation potentially helps readers to understand the fourth NCC component in a different,

more critical light by exhibiting the importance of coaches building supportive networks to sustain their social justice coaching approach post-collaboration (Lee et al., 2021; Tinning, 2022).

Lastly, the NCC component of open-ended dialogue (Stelter, 2014) facilitated critical consciousness development. This dissertation potential adds to our theoretical understanding of NCC through the meaningful, vulnerable, and, at times, therapeutic dialogue (Stelter, 2014). While qualitative research is *not* therapy (Pascoe Leahy, 2021), dialogue can help coaches shift from disjuncture to harmony in their understanding of social justice. Stelter's (2018) concept of 'moments of symmetry' was refined in this dissertation by encouraging coaches to reflexively hear, feel, and think about similar experiences of understanding and addressing social justice in sport. The findings from this dissertation thus may nuance and improve this NCC component through the use of dialogue to encourage *critical transformation* on a personal and social level (Freire, 1973). As limited research has occurred in coach education that is grounded in Freirean notions, including dialogue and power distribution (e.g., Cope et al., 2021), the findings suggest how coaches' reflection may be supported toward critical reflection on social justice in sport, beyond reflecting on one's coaching practice (Milistetd et al., 2018; Rodrigue et al., 2019). A potential theoretical contribution of this dissertation is demonstrating how faith and hope for a 'better' sport system was cultivated, humility was expressed through vulnerable sharing, and love and trust were fostered through the strong rapport built over lengthy meetings, all essential elements of dialogue (Freire, 1973). Those who use NCC may enhance critical dialogue *with* coaches by first increasing coaches' awareness of the underlying values guiding their coaching to foster conscious and intentional action towards socially just youth sport spaces.

Moreover, through the use of the CPYD framework, a final theoretical and conceptual contribution of this dissertation may lie in demonstrating *how* coaches moved from critical introspection to transformative practice, a process that has had limited exploration in sport (Norman, 2018; Tinning, 2022). While I more often referred to the latter half of the framework during my analysis (i.e., critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action), the findings of this dissertation suggest how developing the 5C's may be an important basis for evolving coaches' critical consciousness. For instance, Brooke felt *competent* in her capacity to effectively coach youth sport; *confident* in her self-worth and in her ability to coach; *connected* with individuals in her sport environment, including peer coaches and athletes; developed *character* through a set of ethics for safer and more inclusive sport; and was *caring* by showing empathy and sympathy for others. With the development of her 5C's in a safe and supportive environment, Brooke then became aware of her intersectionality and *critically reflected* on how oppression is created and sustained in sport, and how power is used for oppression and liberation. Through her critical reflection, Brooke began to feel more *politically efficacious* and capable in addressing social justice issues in sport, with the understanding that she had more to learn as sport and society evolves. With an enhanced sense of political efficacy, Brooke *critically acted* as a sport coach and practitioner to create safer, more inclusive sport with clear and respectful boundaries, inclusive language, and purposeful diverse representation within her team and community. Therefore, the CPYD framework can be used to illustrate how Brooke was in a process of developing her *critical consciousness*, through feeling more confident in her ability to identify and reflect upon oppressive social conditions in/beyond sport, particularly as they relate to her positionality as a bisexual Indigenous woman, sister, friend, daughter, and subsequently take action to change such conditions.

Together, the narrative presentation of coaches' shifting and developing critical consciousness in this dissertation presents readers with an enriched view of the CPYD framework for how efforts of critical action can reinforce one's critical reflection and political efficacy bidirectionally. The coaches enhanced their awareness of injustice in sport (e.g., through dialogue with me, peers, and family members), challenged their normative sport cultures (e.g., which neglected athletes' and coaches' mental health and well-being), and addressed discriminatory practices in their sport (e.g., advocating for using athletes' preferred pronouns). The coaches embodied criticality, perceiving their role and purpose as coaches "to address inequities and to make a better world" (Tinning, 2022, p. 101). The findings can be used to inform future research utilising the CPYD framework, highlighting the need to work with sport coaches and support their non-linear learning journeys while they coach. The CPYD framework may also guide researchers in advancing what positive youth development in youth sport can become with a critical lens (Camiré et al., 2023; Gonzalez et al., 2020) and foster coaches' critical consciousness as they engage in a continuous flux of becoming (Freire, 1973). The CPYD framework provided critical language to deeply understand the coaches' critical praxes development.

Methodological Contributions

The dissertation offers four methodological contributions that can inform future research on coaches' critical consciousness development in competitive youth sport. First, a methodological contribution of the dissertation lies in embedding a narrative *feel* throughout the document with the inclusion of a Proem, a Prologue, three articles, and an Epilogue. By embedding narrative storytelling throughout the dissertation, I took a small 'risk' (i.e., including non-traditional elements in my dissertation) to show professors and graduate students how a

conventional approach to writing a dissertation can be infused with creative and narrative practices. While still meeting traditional benchmarks for a doctoral dissertation, I presented the many learnings from my research experiences and interpretations through accessible and relevant storytelling (Cavallerio, 2022). With this alternative dissertation design, graduate students may be inspired to share their research in more creative and innovative ways that stretch conventional methodological limits. Academic supervisors may also see the benefits of introducing their students to narrative inquiry when engaging in youth sport and coaching research.

Second, the four vignettes developed and used within this dissertation offer a methodological contribution by providing concrete examples of how dialogue can be fostered with youth sport coaches and athletes around social justice issues in sport. The four vignettes (in Appendix E) outline social issues in competitive youth sport, including youth and coaches' experiences of homophobia, racism, sexism, and xenophobia. Vignettes and CNFs are suggested by sport scholars to guide coaches' learning and reflection (Douglas & Carless, 2008), particularly when coaches work with equity deserving athletes (Allan et al., 2023; Gearity & Henderson Metzger, 2017; McMahon, 2013). From a methodological perspective, the vignettes enabled the participants to consider their current awareness of social issues in sport, question their ability to critically reflect, and hypothetically consider how comfortable they would feel addressing similar social issues in their sport context (Freire, 1973). It is proposed that the vignettes promoted naturalistic generalisability for the participants (Smith, 2018; Stake, 2005), through the reading of compelling and evocative stories of social injustice. Naturalistic generalisability cannot be claimed by the researcher as it occurs when a study "resonates with the reader's personal engagement in life affairs or vicarious, often tacit, experiences" (Smith, 2018, p. 140). As such, CSP researchers may find the vignettes in this dissertation useful as a

methodology for guiding dialogue with coaches to enrich coach learning and reflection around social justice issues in sport. As coaches may perceive social issues to not be relevant in their sport context (Newman et al., 2021), face challenges understanding the complexities of social issues in sport (Bishop et al., 2023), and have limited (to no) education or training on social justice in sport (Tam et al., 2021), vignettes informed by research and practice can serve as a valuable method to develop coaches' critical consciousness.

Third, with the innovative use of creative methods and varied CAP, the narrative findings contribute to CSP methodology and methods by revealing how varied CAP (i.e., CNF, vignettes, autoethnography) can effectively portray the ebb and flow of coaches' critical praxis. For example, in Article 1, the reflective portfolio enabled the participants to feel autonomous to choose what to include in their portfolio (e.g., reflective notes, screen shots of social media and news, personal photographs, YouTube videos) and develop a heightened self-awareness of their current understanding of social issues. While the portfolios were not used by the participants as much as I had anticipated, they did discuss the value of this method for engaging in critical reflection of their coaching as they coached, to ultimately move through additional praxis cycles. Discussing the coaches' portfolios in detail during their post-season interview led to the recognition of the coaches' praxis development, with the artefacts acting as meaningful reminders of their critical reflection and action. As the coaches' in-season stories and reflections were discussed during the post-season interviews, the portfolio data served to nuance the analysis and develop the CNF. Through CAP, concrete examples of exclusion, fear, and hesitation were shared as the participants enhanced their awareness of social justice issues in sport, including around gender inequity, neglect of mental health, and the exclusion of women, newcomers, 2SLGBTQ+, and racialised athletes. Researchers may use creative methods and CAP in future

research to capture coaches' feelings, thoughts, and emotions as they reflect on their coaching actions and work toward critical action.

The participants also shared how they benefited from the CAP through dialogue fostered by member reflections (Smith & McGannon, 2018), demonstrating the utility of CAP for presenting narrative findings and evoking emotional responses (Smith, 2016). Member reflections refer to a process where participants review the findings to generate enriched understanding and insights through dialogue (Smith & McGannon, 2018). For instance, Hannah and Brooke each reviewed and provided feedback on their respective CNFs. Requested changes were made to ensure the stories were representative and felt like their *first voice* (e.g., changing 'reserve' to 'Indigenous community'). I also presented Hannah's story with an accompanying video at the Eastern Canada Sport and Exercise Psychology Symposium (ECSEPS) in March 2023. As I read Hannah's story, the room became still and silent. Many audience members became emotional, and the session moderator cried in the front row. One person commented, "I feel like I know Hannah. I could see what kind of person she was and what she would fight for". Therefore, a methodological contribution of this dissertation is illustrating the potential for CAP, in terms of promoting the development of critical consciousness, to broaden graduate students' and researchers' options for analysing and presenting qualitative data beyond thematic tables and quotes. A few weeks later, Hannah shared her story with her family, and again, there was an emotional response. Brooke also shared her CNF with her girlfriend, who started crying as they read the story together. Almost nine months after his study participation ended, Nolan engaged in member reflections on the CNFs in Article 1, detailing how the study impacted him and how his critical reflections have continued:

I feel the same today as when we met and discussed things. I continue to be a person of privilege, and because of my race, background, and gender, I am afforded many

advantages that so many others aren't. Would I have been given the opportunity to coach at an elite level, if I was from a different ethnic background? Perhaps? When I started coaching, if I was openly gay, would I have been hired...? I suggest not. I strongly believe I can be a better person, especially when it comes to biases of all kinds. I can continue down a better path and encourage everyone in my circle to do the same.

Nolan expressed his commitment to supporting others' critical consciousness development, revealing the benefit of integrating qualitative methods across a coach's season to explore learning (Kendellen & Camiré, 2020). With the inclusion of a reflective portfolio and ongoing, participant-centred dialogue, the selected methodology and methods within Article 1 created a positive impact for the participants to view their critical consciousness develop across their season, and therefore, serves as a methodological contribution to future CSP studies that employ a similar methodology. Collectively, readers may experience familiar "settings they move in, events they've observed or heard about, and people they have talked to" (Smith, 2018, p. 140) through the narrative findings, demonstrating how naturalistic generalisability serves as a potential methodological contribution in this dissertation.

Lastly, a methodological contribution of this dissertation is the innovative use of time hopping as a method to showcase how Sophie's critical consciousness development is 'untimely' and has been evolving across their life and biography, within and beyond competitive youth sport. Borrowing from posthumanist thinking (Barad, 2013), the time hopping approach is used to explore "the temporalities of our intra-actions with/before/beyond one another" (Shelton & Melchior, 2020, p. 52). The presentation of the findings reveals the *never linear* aspect of stories with an overlapping of one's past, present, and future reflected in our memories, feelings, and actions (Jarvis, 2006; Murriss & Kohan, 2021; Shelton & Melchior, 2020). This innovative method may serve as a useful approach to enhance future interpretations of coaches and athletes' development around social justice by moving beyond the belief that development is *always*

linear from past to present to future. CAP that is presented through time hopping may be more relevant and accessible to readers due to the non-linear familiarity of the story presentation.

Practical Contributions

Four practical contributions and recommendations are offered from this dissertation. First, the findings of this dissertation contribute to coaching practice by demonstrating the need for accessible training and education to enhance coaches' awareness, understanding, and confidence in addressing social justice issues in sport. Similar to youth sport coaches in other studies (e.g., Bishop et al., 2023; Tam et al., 2021), none of the coaches who took part in the studies encompassed in the present dissertation had been trained for social justice in sport, yet identified a need for formal and informal opportunities to learn more about what social justice is (and is not) and how to become more comfortable in addressing social issues. While some e-modules are offered to address social justice in youth sport (e.g., Anti-Racism in Coaching, Keeping Girls in Sport), without experiential learning or ongoing support, coaches may be hampered in developing their critical praxis. The coaches who presented greater comfort and confidence in addressing social issues had training beyond sport, such as unconscious bias and equity training through their work, and other coaches sought out social justice-related resources and information when training was unavailable. As such, the findings from this dissertation illustrate the need for coach training to be flexible to coaches' current understanding of their biography, biases and assumptions, and the existence of social issues in sport (Newman et al., 2022).

To advance social justice-related coach training and education, researchers are encouraged to work with coaches to support their understanding of social justice in sport *as they* coach (Kochanek et al., 2023), such as through a PLC guided by NCC. Existing roles in

Canadian sport systems, like the coach developer, could also be adapted to include elements of the NCC and targeted training to supporting coaches' critical consciousness development. As coaches will each have a different developing critical consciousness, it may also be advantageous to create a 'choose your own adventure' virtual coach training program that is adaptive to coaches' current understanding of social justice issues in sport. An interactive pathway could be created with CNF and vignettes guiding coaches to be(come) openminded and learn more about social issues in sport. As demonstrated in related narrative research (e.g., Allan et al., 2023; Duarte et al., 2021), the use of vignettes and interactive questioning built around coaches' narratives could help foster understanding and relatability to addressing social justice-related challenges in sport. Overall, the findings from this dissertation demonstrate the need for all individuals involved in the sport system, including but not limited to coaches, to engage in transdisciplinary training opportunities related to developing their critical consciousness.

Second, the findings of this dissertation contribute to coaching practice by highlighting the importance of empathetic dialogue to support coaches' agency in their critical consciousness development. Dialogue can lead coaches to experience heightened awareness and confidence to challenge pervasive stereotypes, biases, and structural inequities in sport (Kochanek et al., 2023). As demonstrated in this dissertation, ongoing, long-term support can be very useful in helping coaches maintain their critical consciousness development and address new challenges as they happen (Lee et al., 2021). With rapport and trust, individuals who work with coaches can *actively* listen to the narratives that guide their coaching (Scott & Soares Moura, 2023; Stodter et al., 2021). There are coaches who want to quit, are burnt out, desperately need support, and need someone to listen to them. The present dissertation contributes to coaching practice through evidence that support, education, and guidance are needed for developing coaches' critical

consciousness, especially if they are working in sport contexts that are not conducive to inclusive coaching (Berger et al., 2019; Tinning, 2022). However, sensitivity should be considered for who is leading such dialogue with social justice vignettes, as sport practitioners, including but not limited to coach educators, coach developers, sport psychologists, mental performance consultants, and counsellors, may not be trained nor accredited in supporting coaches' experiences of social justice in sport.

It may also be beneficial to support coaches' critical consciousness during the beginning of their careers, as they may have fewer administrative and coaching duties. For instance, as shown in this dissertation, coaches who are presently constructing their coaching philosophy and approach may benefit from working with coach educators, developers, or PLCs to *expand* their critical consciousness while already engaging in deep reflection and introspection. Presenting coaches with an option to work with a PLC after a few years of coaching experience may prove useful to their development and encourage lifelong learning toward criticality. While employing individuals across Canada to act as PLCs, with the appropriate training and experience, may be logistically and feasibly difficult, there is merit in exploring how existing roles in coach development systems could be adapted to implement NCC and components of the PLC for supporting coaches' learning. Ultimately, as exhibited in this dissertation, the coach must be motivated and open to engage in a co-learning process toward change (Stelter, 2014).

Third, the findings of this dissertation contribute to practice by demonstrating how safer and more inclusive competitive youth sport can be facilitated by coaches. Aligning with Gurgis et al.'s (2023) findings, the coaches fostered *safer sport* through a continuous involvement of physical (e.g., using proper equipment, resting while injured, burnt out, or fatigued), psychosocial (e.g., promoting and modelling inclusive and affirming language), relational (e.g.,

building mutual trust and dialogue with/between athletes), and cultural (e.g., acknowledge and celebrate diverse religions, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds) safety considerations. Moreover, the participants intentionally optimised the sport context around their athletes' needs, such as by providing resources for mental health and acknowledging the underlying discrimination in sport (Gurgis et al., 2023; Vella et al., 2022; Willson et al., 2022). By fostering a safer sport context, the participants discussed how they perceived themselves as having fostered inclusivity within their teams and programs. *More inclusive sport* referred to proactively and intentionally creating sport environments and cultures that foster connectedness, belonging, and empowerment, where youth athletes are encouraged to be their true selves and feel supported in their agency and capacity-building (Anderson et al., 2023; Canadian Women & Sport, n.d. b; Cunningham, 2022). Each coach involved in this dissertation required more peer and organisational support to coach for social justice. This finding can inform future research in terms of examining how multi-level collaborations can be nurtured to support the transformation of sport by considering the perspectives and needs of youth athletes, coaches, sport parents, and organisational staff. This dissertation contributes to coaching practice through an enhanced understanding of safer and more inclusive sport in the competitive youth sport context. Based on the findings of this dissertation, researchers and coach educators may promote safety and inclusivity in competitive youth sport through tailored collaborations by paying attention to coaches and athletes' needs in their sport context (e.g., using inclusive and affirming language, not grouping athletes based on dichotomies or assumed identities).

Lastly, the findings from this dissertation may promote generativity (Barone & Eisner, 2012) as readers become transformed by the stories and compelled to act in socially just ways in and beyond sport, and transferability of the narrative findings (Smith, 2018; Tracy, 2010) as

readers question their critical awareness of social justice in sport. As posed by Ryba et al. (2020), CSP researchers should engage in reflexion around the impact research is making. Specifically, are we doing *enough* to “move the theoretical discussions into action and social change that extends beyond academia?” (Ryba et al., 2020, p. 11). I echo Ryba et al.’s (2020) notion and encourage CSP researchers to critically consider how to promote/facilitate/foster *real social change* immediately to address social injustices in sport and society.

Limitations and Future Directions

Four limitations of this dissertation are addressed, along with specific areas for future research and practice. First, while efforts were made to recruit individuals with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and identities, more purposeful recruitment could have occurred. For instance, in Article 1, out of nine participants, only three women were recruited, leading to a limited understanding of women’s intersectional experiences in competitive youth sport contexts. The studies were also limited in that, beyond asking their highest level of education, no questions were asked regarding the participants’ socioeconomic status. Understanding coaches’ socioeconomic status will help researchers to understand how sport is and is not accessible for particular individuals. As Gearity et al. (2019) encouraged, including participants of privilege (e.g., white, heterosexual, men, individuals living without a disability) can be beneficial to explore coaches’ perceptions of social issues in sport. However, care should also be provided to meaningfully share the stories of participants from equity deserving groups who have historically been marginalised in sport and research (e.g., coaches with a disability, 2SLGBTQ+, women, Indigenous People; Camiré et al., 2022; Ryba et al., 2020; Walton-Fisette & Sutherland, 2018) and have undertaken invisible labour in their advocacy and activism efforts. Recruitment for this dissertation may have been difficult for many reasons, such as the psychosocial and emotional

challenges coaches and athletes were experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e., as recruitment began in November 2021) and the potential lack of reach through online recruitment efforts. Therefore, in future research, researchers studying social justice should purposefully and intentionally recruit coaches with diverse experiences and identities to expand our understanding of coaching youth sport.

Second, building on Bishop et al.'s (2023) research using the CPYD framework with one high school sport coach, the CPYD framework helped elucidate coaches' developing critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action. However, this theoretical framework was designed for understanding youth's experiences and not adults, and the foundational aspects of the framework (i.e., the 5C's developed within a strength-based supportive environment) were not directly explored within this dissertation. Nonetheless, using the CPYD framework provided the language and understanding of critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action that helped with my analysis and PLC approach. In future research, it may prove useful to consider how the CPYD framework could be adapted to explore adult's critical consciousness development or design new theoretical and conceptual approaches that are specific to coaches' development.

Third, I purposefully used pseudonyms in attempt to humanise the participants and have you, the reader, better connect with the participants' stories. However, when the participant did not want to self-select their pseudonym, I randomly allocated a name (using a random name generator) and asked for confirmation for its use in the article. This process of selecting pseudonyms is a limitation in that there is no impartiality in names or labels, and there may be symbolic and political meanings with the selected names used in this dissertation (e.g., associated with gender, age, ethnicities, and race; Heaton, 2022). Researchers should be mindful

of selected names in their work, even if they were ‘randomly selected’, and engage in reflexion on the power involved in naming research participants to make conscious cultural pseudonym choices (Guenther, 2009; Hoerber, 2023).

Lastly, while coaches engaged in dialogue with me, the researcher, no opportunities were provided, as part of the dissertation, for shared learning and interaction amongst other coaches in competitive youth sport contexts. Integrating additional qualitative methods may help participants in future studies engage in critical reflection and action *during* their research participation, such as facilitating focus groups instead of or in complement to individual interviews. Coaches’ critical consciousness may be further supported in social learning spaces, including communities of practice (CoPs; Wenger-Trayner & Wegner-Trayner, 2015). CoPs refer to a social learning space where people gather to advance knowledge through a shared desire to enact change and make a difference (Wegner-Trayner & Wegner-Trayner, 2020). Within sport coaching, social learning spaces and CoPs have been shown to facilitate dialogue *between* coaches and support active learning, reflection, and confidence building (e.g., Bertram et al., 2016; Culver, Kraft, et al., 2019). Social learning spaces may be particularly beneficial for coaches who work with a PLC (Stelter, 2014) to enrich their network with others who are also on critical praxis journeys. Implementing a CoP may be valuable to support coaches who face challenges and successes in creating safer, more inclusive sport and to reach a larger population of competitive coaches.

Concluding Thoughts

Through narrative introspections, coaches’ critical praxis development within competitive youth sport was explored in this dissertation. There are paralleled findings in this dissertation that align with growing research on critical praxis in sport coaching (Bishop et al., 2023;

Kochanek & Erickson, 2019, 2021; Tam et al., 2021) and reflect how many individuals acting as changemakers require more support and guidance in their praxis development and efforts. As shown throughout Chapter III, there are competitive youth sport coaches who: (a) feel hesitant or unsure in their role of addressing social justice issues in sport; (b) are burnt out or close to burning out from the (invisible) labour required for their advocacy and activism; and (c) are experiencing progress in their critical actions and efforts. Acting a PLC and a researcher, I too felt hesitancy and progress in my critical praxis efforts. As change makers may experience resistance as they attempt to transform sport (Gonzalez et al., 2020), it is important that coaches feel supported and recognised by their sport organisations and governing bodies. Taking pauses and having a support system, such as through social learning spaces, can help change makers recover from social justice-related burnout and continue their invaluable critical action efforts. A deep love and passion for coaching youth athletes kept the coaches coming back to their roles despite the uncertainty and challenges they faced in creating safer, more inclusive sport.

Competitive youth sport coaches have an evolving list of responsibilities and demands within a complicated and dynamic environment. As we learn more about addressing social injustices in sport, coaches will need additional time and space within their busy schedules to pause, learn, reflect, and act. While sport can become *more just* and *safer*, there is no final destination or absolute end for ‘safe’ competitive youth sport. Sport has been, and may continue to be, a site for exclusion and discrimination for equity deserving athletes and coaches (Gurgis et al., 2022). Coaches’ developing critical consciousness is also never a destination, but always an ongoing and sociocultural process. Outlined through the CPYD framework, coaches’ critical consciousness can be developed in a sustainable and meaningful way through becoming more

aware of social justice issues and one's social position, experiencing shifts in one's attitudes to enact positive change, and developing the confidence to act.

Illustrated in this dissertation, storytelling can be a powerful tool for fostering dialogue, compassion, and critical praxis (Frank, 2010; Freire, 1973). As a lifelong learner and storyteller, I aim to continue amplifying the voices of coaches who are told 'no' as they try to create safer sport spaces, who are excluded and discriminated against, and who are exhausted and wanting to quit due to a lack of organisational and structural support. As I said in my acknowledgement section, to those who are transforming our competitive youth sport contexts towards social justice and empowerment, your coaching efforts do not go unnoticed; I believe in you, I hope to pass you the microphone so others can hear your stories too. If sport is truly an integral part of our Canadian culture, then we have a duty to ensure all young athletes feel included.

As a CSP researcher, I aim to enact cultural praxis and create safer, more inclusive and safer sport spaces by working with coaches while also coaching community youth sport. To combine my biographies of researcher-coach and fittingly conclude this doctoral dissertation with a story, I aim to promote compassion and dialogue one last time. The story below, titled 'What Coaching Means to Me', details my experiences as a Girls on the Run coach for the past three years⁶. I am privileged to coach community youth sport to translate my education and knowledge of critical theory and social justice in sport. In concluding this dissertation, I encourage you, the reader, to reflect on your awareness and understanding of social justice issues happening in competitive youth sport contexts. How might you become more comfortable and confident in enacting positive social change? I look forward to seeing what we can all do

⁶ After sharing the CNF with Girls on the Run organising staff, it was requested to use the script and my voiceover to create a video to promote the program. The video can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=roSB334ou4E>

together. Quoting one of the participants in this dissertation, the time is due to work together, to create more inclusive, safer sport spaces, and to enact positive social change... *“Bring it on”*.

What Coaching Means to Me

Figure 1

Coaching the end-of-program girls’ 5-kilometre run.



Note. Photography taken by Ashley White, used with permission from the OSEG Foundation.

I feel sweat drip off my arms while we slowly run around the stadium. The air is barely moving, but Aida is unbothered. Under her breath, she sings along to the Katy Perry song blasting from the speakers, *“You’re gonna hear me roarrrrrr”*. Two more laps left until the finish line. I know Aida has never been in an organised sport program before... actually, I don’t think any of the girls have. As we weave around volunteers jogging beside girls of all heights and sizes, my heart jumps into my throat; I feel a great responsibility to be their first coach.

Aida breathes deeply with each step, *in the nose, out the mouth*, just like the coaches demonstrated last week. “Okay, time for a walk,” she huffs out as we reach the corner of the field. Tucking the front of her black hijab into her bright pink program t-shirt, she remarks, “My

parents are in the stands. My brother didn't believe I could run the whole thing, so I made him come too." She chuckles, holding my hand tightly, swinging it back and forth.

"And what do you believe, Aida?" I ask, nudging her shoulder with my elbow. She looks forward, a huge smile forms under the bright paint and temporary tattoos decorating her face.

"Of course I can finish! *I believe in me.*" Her confidence is *loud*. We walk past another coach and girl from our team, also baking in the sun. Aida screams, "You can do this!!!" and pumps her fist in the air. Just 10 short weeks ago, when we began the program, Aida was so quiet, reserved, and easily deflated when we ran. She points to her teammates already finished on the side line, shaking posters, and cheering on the remaining runners, "Wow, our girls did so good today! We are all so strong and *faaaaast!*" Aida laughs, shouting the last word as she sprints away from me. When I catch up to her at the water station, she is still laughing.

We reach the final corner, and I let go of Aida's hand, wanting her to cross the finish line by herself. But she is not alone; with her two hands raised high, her teammates immediately swarm her in a loving huddle. I can hear Aida yell beneath the pile-up, "I knew I could do it!" I tip the beak of my hat a little lower, hiding the warm tears pouring down my face.

The girls wave me over, screaming "Coach Sara" in a cheer. The letters C O A C H may be spelled out on my back, showing what role I have in the program, but the meaning of this word is *deeper* to me. I have an opportunity to be a role model, foster girls' confidence and belonging in sport. Nurture their understanding, in a genuine and supportive way, that there may be barriers for racialised youth, for girls who wear a hijab or head scarf, for girls living in low-income neighbourhoods. But that does not mean they cannot play sports, or run fast, or aim to be the prime minister or an astronaut or a famous soccer player. That does not mean they cannot belong *here*, in sport, or anywhere else. As I jog towards our team huddled together, I consider

the impact that coaches can have on youth athletes and the need to support the next generation of coaches and athletes who will lead the charge in transforming sport and society towards inclusion. What else can I do with the coaching skills I am developing? Who else can I *become*? No matter what lies ahead, right now I know... I know that it is an *honour* to be their coach.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Ethics Approval Certificates

Université d'Ottawa

Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE | CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL

Numéro du dossier / Ethics File Number	H-09-21-7318
Titre du projet / Project Title	Reimagining Competitive Youth Sport Contexts as Facilitative of Socially Relevant Developmental Climates for Athletes
Type de projet / Project Type	Thèse de doctorat / Doctoral thesis
Statut du projet / Project Status	Approuvé / Approved
Date d'approbation (jj/mm/aaaa) / Approval Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	12/11/2021
Date d'expiration (jj/mm/aaaa) / Expiry Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	11/11/2022

Équipe de recherche / Research Team

Chercheur / Researcher	Affiliation	Rôle
Sara KRAMERS	École des sciences de l'activité physique / School of Human Kinetics	Chercheur Principal / Principal Investigator
Martin CAMIRÉ	École des sciences de l'activité physique / School of Human Kinetics	Superviseur / Supervisor

Conditions spéciales ou commentaires / Special conditions or comments

Le Comité d'éthique de la recherche (CÉR) de l'Université d'Ottawa, opérant conformément à l'Énoncé de politique des Trois conseils (2014) et toutes autres lois et tous règlements applicables, a examiné et approuvé la demande d'éthique du projet de recherche ci-nommé.

L'approbation est valide pour la durée indiquée plus haut et est sujette aux conditions énumérées dans la section intitulée "Conditions Spéciales ou Commentaires". Le formulaire « Renouvellement ou Fermeture de Projet » doit être complété quatre semaines avant la date d'échéance indiquée ci-haut afin de demander un renouvellement de cette approbation éthique ou afin de fermer le dossier.

Toutes modifications apportées au projet doivent être approuvées par le CÉR avant leur mise en place, sauf si le participant doit être retiré en raison d'un danger immédiat ou s'il s'agit d'un changement ayant trait à des éléments administratifs ou logistiques du projet. Les chercheurs doivent aviser le CÉR dans les plus brefs délais de tout changement pouvant augmenter le niveau de risque aux participants ou pouvant affecter considérablement le déroulement du projet, rapporter tout événement imprévu ou indésirable et soumettre toute nouvelle information pouvant nuire à la conduite du projet ou à la sécurité des participants.

The University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board, which operates in accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (2014) and other applicable laws and regulations, has examined and approved the ethics application for the above-named research project.

Ethics approval is valid for the period indicated above and is subject to the conditions listed in the section entitled "Special Conditions or Comments". The "Renewal/Project Closure" form must be completed four weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to request a renewal of this ethics approval or closure of the file.

Any changes made to the project must be approved by the REB before being implemented, except when necessary to remove participants from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) only pertain to administrative or logistical components of the project. Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes that increase the risk to participant(s), any changes that considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project or the safety of the participant(s).

Kim THOMPSON
Responsable d'éthique en recherche / Protocol Officer
Pour/For Daniel LAGAREC Président(e) du / Chair of the Comité d'éthique de la recherche en sciences de la santé et sciences / Health Sciences and Sciences Research Ethics Board

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Ethics Renewal Approval

Université d'Ottawa

Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE | CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL

Numéro du dossier / Ethics File Number	H-09-21-7318
Titre du projet / Project Title	Reimagining Competitive Youth Sport Contexts as Facilitative of Socially Relevant Developmental Climates for Athletes
Type de projet / Project Type	Thèse de doctorat / Doctoral thesis
Statut du projet / Project Status	Renouvelé / Renewed
Date d'approbation (jj/mm/aaaa) / Approval Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	12/11/2021
Date d'expiration (jj/mm/aaaa) / Expiry Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	11/11/2023

Équipe de recherche / Research Team

Chercheur / Researcher	Affiliation	Rôle
Sara KRAMERS	École des sciences de l'activité physique / School of Human Kinetics	Chercheur Principal / Principal Investigator
Martin CAMIRÉ	École des sciences de l'activité physique / School of Human Kinetics	Superviseur / Supervisor

Conditions spéciales ou commentaires / Special conditions or comments

Le Comité d'éthique de la recherche (CÉR) de l'Université d'Ottawa, opérant conformément à l'Énoncé de politique des Trois conseils (2014) et toutes autres lois et tous règlements applicables, a examiné et approuvé la demande d'éthique du projet de recherche ci-nommé.

L'approbation est valide pour la durée indiquée plus haut et est sujette aux conditions énumérées dans la section intitulée "Conditions Spéciales ou Commentaires". Le formulaire « Renouvellement ou Fermeture de Projet » doit être complété quatre semaines avant la date d'échéance indiquée ci-haut afin de demander un renouvellement de cette approbation éthique ou afin de fermer le dossier.

Toutes modifications apportées au projet doivent être approuvées par le CÉR avant leur mise en place, sauf si le participant doit être retiré en raison d'un danger immédiat ou s'il s'agit d'un changement ayant trait à des éléments administratifs ou logistiques du projet. Les chercheurs doivent aviser le CÉR dans les plus brefs délais de tout changement pouvant augmenter le niveau de risque aux participants ou pouvant affecter considérablement le déroulement du projet, rapporter tout événement imprévu ou indésirable et soumettre toute nouvelle information pouvant nuire à la conduite du projet ou à la sécurité des participants.

The University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board, which operates in accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (2014) and other applicable laws and regulations, has examined and approved the ethics application for the above-named research project.

Ethics approval is valid for the period indicated above and is subject to the conditions listed in the section entitled "Special Conditions or Comments". The "Renewal/Project Closure" form must be completed four weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to request a renewal of this ethics approval or closure of the file.

Any changes made to the project must be approved by the REB before being implemented, except when necessary to remove participants from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) only pertain to administrative or logistical components of the project. Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes that increase the risk to participant(s), any changes that considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project or the safety of the participant(s).

Safaa LAMHOUEB
 Coordonnatrice de l'éthique / Ethics Coordinator
 Pour/For Daniel LAGAREC Président(e) du/ Chair of the Comité d'éthique de la recherche en sciences de la santé et sciences / Health Sciences and Sciences Research Ethics Board

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Appendix B – Consent Forms

Athlete Study



Université d'Ottawa
Faculté des sciences
de la santé

University of Ottawa
Faculty of Health
Sciences

Athlete Consent Form

Study Name: Exploring how Youth Sport can be Reimagined to Become more Inclusive and Meaningful

Principal Investigator: Sara Kramers, PhD Student, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa, [REDACTED]

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Martin Camiré, Associate Professor, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa, [REDACTED]

Purpose of the Study: To explore how competitive youth sport can be reimagined to become more inclusive and meaningful for all athletes. This study is being conducted as part of Sara Kramers' PhD thesis.

Funding: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship (#169908).

Participation: My participation consists of taking part in (a) two individual interviews and (b) developing one creative portfolio. My participation in the study will begin approximately one month before my season starts, will last for the duration of my season, and will end approximately one month after my season has finished.

Before my season begins, I will participate in one individual interview to discuss my sport setting, explore social justice topics, and detail what I want from my sport participation, from a developmental perspective. The interview will last approximately 60-90 minutes, will be conducted via videoconferencing (e.g., MS Teams, Zoom), will take place at a time/place of my choosing, and will be audio-video recorded.

Throughout my season, I will develop one creative portfolio that exemplifies my experiences as an athlete, with specific attention to social justice topics and lessons learned through sport. My creative portfolio can include any physical and/or digital/electronic items (e.g., photographs, videos, drawings, newspaper clippings) that symbolize a visual representation of my experiences as an athlete throughout my sport season. I may ask the researcher to participate in 1-2 meetings if I have any questions on the development of the creative portfolio throughout my season (lasting approximately 30 minutes each).

After my season has ended, I will participate in a second individual interview where I can explain my creative portfolio in greater detail and my experiences as an athlete during the season. The interview should last approximately 60-90 minutes, and will be conducted via videoconferencing (e.g., MS Teams, Zoom), take place at a time/place of my choosing, and be audio-video recorded. I will have the opportunity to review all of my interview transcripts.

Benefits: The study is being conducted to advance the scientific and practical knowledge as it relates to how sport can be reimagined to be more inclusive and meaningful for all athletes. The findings will be organized into practical implications for sport practitioners, be published in a peer-reviewed journal, and be presented at scientific conferences. My involvement in the study can help me reflect on ways I can develop as a person from my sport participation. The new knowledge derived from this study will help instigate a more socially responsible approach to coaching youth sport.

Risks: The researcher will inform me of potential risks associated with psychological and emotional discomfort that could arise from my participation in the interviews on social justice issues. If I experience any psychological and/or emotional discomfort, I

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can access the Canadian Sport Helpline at www.abuse-free-sport.ca. I may access the toll-free Helpline from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Eastern Time), seven days per week by telephone, text (1-888-837-7678) or email (info@abuse-free-sport.ca) in both official languages. For emergency resources, I can also access Crisis Services Canada at <http://www.crisisservicescanada.ca> and 1-833-456-4566 as well as the Kids Help Phone at www.kidshelpphone.ca and 1-800-668-6868.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: I understand that the content related to my participation will only be used by members of the research team, meaning that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. Anonymity will be assured by having codes or pseudonyms assigned to each participant, meaning that my name will never be used nor mentioned. All other identifying information like other people's names (e.g., coaches, teammates, family), the name of my team/program/club, or the city that I live in will be replaced with pseudo-identities like "Coach [X]" or "Pseudonym" when reporting the findings. The study is being conducted independently from my sport organization, so they will never know that I participated in the present study.

Data Conservation: All physical and electronic documents related to the study will be stored at the University of Ottawa, in a (a) password protected computer and (b) locked cabinet in the principal investigator's locked office and will be kept for five (5) years (calculated upon the end of data collection), after which all documents will be securely destroyed and safely deleted.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal: My participation is voluntary. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty, or to refuse to answer questions. My decision to take part in the study will not, in any way, influence my status as an athlete. If I choose to withdraw from the study, the data collected from my participation until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed and will not be used.

Compensation: I recognize that I am not to receive any monetary compensation for participating in this study.

Questions: If I have any questions regarding this study, I can contact the principal investigator Sara Kramers at [REDACTED] or the thesis supervisor, Martin Camiré at [REDACTED]

For any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this project, I can contact the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity at the University of Ottawa, 550 Cumberland, Room 154, Ottawa, ON, K1N 6N5, (613) 562-5387, ethics@uottawa.ca.

Consent: I have read the consent form and I understand the procedures of the study. Also, I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. At the beginning of the interview, I will have the opportunity to ask questions and verbally consent to participate in the present study. My verbal consent will be recorded. My signature indicates my consent to participate. I should print a copy of the consent form to keep for my personal records.

I agree to participate in the present study

Print Name

Signature

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Note. The term 'creative portfolio' was initially used in the recruitment and consent forms. After feedback from the pilot coaches and critical discussions with Martin, the method was renamed to 'reflective portfolio' to clearly outline the purpose of the method: to encourage reflections of social justice issues in the coaches' sport contexts.

Coach Study



Université d'Ottawa
Faculté des sciences
de la santé

University of Ottawa
Faculty of Health
Sciences

Coach Consent Form

Study Name: Exploring how Youth Sport can be Reimagined to Become more Inclusive and Meaningful

Principal Investigator: Sara Kramers, PhD Candidate, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa, [REDACTED]

Thesis Supervisor: Martin Camiré, Associate Professor, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa, [REDACTED]

Funding: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship (#169908).

Purpose of the Study: To explore how competitive youth sport can be reimagined to become more inclusive and meaningful for all athletes. This study is being conducted as part of Sara Kramers' PhD thesis.

Participation: My participation consists of taking part in (a) two individual interviews, and (b) the construction of one creative portfolio. My participation in the study will begin approximately one month before my season starts, will last for the duration of my season, and will end approximately one month after my season has finished.

Before my season begins, I will participate in one individual interview to discuss my sport setting, coaching philosophy, explore social justice topics, and what I want athletes to experience from their sport participation, from a developmental perspective. The interview should last approximately 60-90 minutes, and will be conducted either via videoconferencing (e.g., MS Teams, Zoom) or in-person, take place at a time/place of my choosing, and be audio-recorded.

Throughout my season, I will develop one creative portfolio that exemplifies my experiences as a coach, with specific attention to social justice topics and lessons learned/taught through sport. My creative portfolio can include any physical and/or digital/electronic items (e.g., photographs, videos, drawings, newspaper clippings) that symbolize a visual representation of my experiences as a coach throughout my sport season. I may ask the researcher to participate in 1-2 meetings if I have any questions on the development of the creative portfolio throughout my season (lasting approximately 30 minutes each). The meetings will take place either virtually (e.g., MS Teams, Zoom, email, phone call) or in-person, taking place at a time/place of my choosing, and be audio-recorded.

After my season has ended, I will participate in a second individual interview where I can explain my creative portfolio in greater detail and my experiences as a coach during the season. The interview should last approximately 60-90 minutes, and will be conducted either via videoconferencing (e.g., MS Teams, Zoom) or in-person, take place at a time/place of my choosing, and be audio-recorded. I will have the opportunity to review all of my interview transcripts.

Benefits: The study is being conducted to advance the scientific and practical knowledge as it relates to how sport can be reimagined to be more inclusive and meaningful for all athletes. The findings will be organized into practical implications for sport practitioners, be published in a peer-reviewed journal, and be presented at scientific conferences. My involvement in the study can help me reflect on ways I can support athletes' development from their sport participation. The new knowledge derived from this study will help instigate a more socially responsible approach to coaching youth sport.

Risks: The researchers will inform me of potential risks associated with psychological and emotional discomfort that could arise from my participation in the interviews on social justice issues. If I experience any psychological and/or emotional discomfort, I can access the Canadian Sport Helpline at www.abuse-free-sport.ca. I may access the toll-free Helpline from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Eastern Time), seven days per week by telephone, text (1-

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888-837-7678) or email (info@abuse-free-sport.ca) in both official languages. For emergency resources, I can also access Crisis Services Canada at <http://www.crisisservicescanada.ca> and 1-833-456-4566.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: I understand that the content related to my participation will only be used by members of the research team, meaning that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. Anonymity will be assured by having codes or pseudonyms assigned to each participant, meaning that my name will never be used nor mentioned. All other identifying information like other people's names (e.g., coaching staff, family), the name of my team/program/club, or the city that I live in will be replaced in text with pseudo-identities like "Assistant Coach [X]" or "Pseudonym" when reporting the findings. The study is being conducted independently from my sport organization, so they will never know that I participated in the present study.

Data Conservation: All physical and electronic documents related to the study will be stored at the University of Ottawa, in a (a) password protected computer and (b) locked cabinet in the principal investigator's locked office and will be kept for five (5) years (calculated upon the end of data collection), after which all documents will be securely destroyed and safely deleted.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal: My participation is voluntary. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty, or to refuse to answer questions. My decision to take part in the study will not, in any way, influence my status as a coach. If I choose to withdraw from the study, the data collected from my participation until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed and will not be used.

Compensation: I recognize that I am not to receive any monetary compensation for participating in this study.

Questions: If I have any questions regarding this study, I can contact the principal investigator, Sara Kramers at [REDACTED] or the thesis supervisor, Martin Camiré at [REDACTED].

For any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this project, I can contact the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity at the University of Ottawa, 550 Cumberland, Room 154, Ottawa, ON, K1N 6N5, (613) 562-5387, ethics@uottawa.ca.

Consent: I have read the consent form and I understand the procedures of the study. Also, I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. At the beginning of the interview, I will have the opportunity to ask questions and verbally consent to participate in the present study. My verbal consent will be recorded. My signature indicates my consent to participate. I should print a copy of the consent form to keep for my personal records.

I agree to participate in the present study

Print Name

Signature

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Note. The term 'creative portfolio' was initially used in the recruitment and consent forms. After feedback from the pilot coaches and critical discussions with Martin, the method was renamed to 'reflective portfolio' to clearly outline the purpose of the method: to encourage reflections of social justice issues in the coaches' sport contexts.

Personal Learning Coach Collaboration



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University of Ottawa
Faculty of Health
Sciences

Study 2 Coach Consent Form

Study Name: Facilitating Inclusive and Socially Relevant Developmental Sport Climates for Athletes

Principal Investigator: Sara Kramers, PhD Candidate, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa, [REDACTED]

Thesis Supervisor: Martin Camiré, Associate Professor, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa, [REDACTED]

Purpose of the Study: Through a season-long study, we aim to collaborate with coaches as they facilitate socially relevant developmental sport climates for their athletes. This study is being conducted as part of Sara Kramers' PhD thesis, with the broader purpose of exploring how competitive youth sport can be reimagined to become more inclusive and meaningful for all athletes.

Funding: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship (#169908).

Participation: My participation consists of taking part in (a) one timeline activity, (b) two self-assessments of my life skills teaching, (c) two individual interviews, (d) multiple coaching conversations throughout my season, and (e) optional in-person observations of my practices and/or competitions. Together, my participation in the study will begin approximately one month before my season starts, will last for the duration of my season, and will end approximately one month after my season has finished.

Before my season begins, I will create a timeline in which I describe, draw, and/or write out details about my previous learning experiences in sport. Specific attention should be paid to my learning experiences around social justice and lessons learned/taught through sport. The timeline can be completed on physical paper or digitally/electronically and should take between 60-120 minutes to complete. I will also complete one self-assessment of my life skills teaching using a provided tool, which should last approximately 15-20 minutes. Then, I will participate in one individual interview to discuss my timeline and self-assessment, as well as my coaching philosophy, sport context, social justice topics, and what I want competitive youth sport to offer, from a developmental perspective. The interview will be conducted either via videoconferencing (e.g., MS Teams, Zoom) or in-person, take place at a time/place of my choosing, and be audio-recorded.

Throughout my season, I will work collaboratively with the principal investigator to reflect on my coaching practices and to plan how to implement strategies and activities to create an inclusive and meaningful sport climate for my athletes. The reflection and planning will occur through multiple "coaching conversations" through different forms either virtually (e.g., Zoom, phone calls, emails) or in-person and lasting various durations. The coaching conversations will also be audio-recorded and take place at a time/place of my choosing. With my consent, the researcher (Kramers) may conduct in-person observations of practices and/or competitions throughout my season. The purpose of the observations is for the researcher to take field notes of my interactions in the sport context (e.g., with athletes, with other coaches) to guide the coaching conversations. If I decide to have the researcher conduct observations, the observations will occur at a time/place of my choosing.

After my season has ended, I will complete one self-assessment of my life skills teaching using a provided tool, which should last about 15-20 minutes. I will then participate in one individual interview to discuss my self-assessment and explore my experiences throughout the season, such as what, if anything, was learned through the reflection and planning processes and if/how my coaching approach was adapted throughout the season. The interview should last about 60-90 minutes. The interview will be conducted either via videoconferencing (e.g., MS Teams, Zoom) or in-person, take place at a time/place of my choosing, and be audio-recorded. I will have the opportunity to review all of my interview transcripts.

Benefits: The study is being conducted to advance the scientific and practical knowledge as it relates to how sport can be reimagined to be more inclusive and meaningful for all athletes. The findings will be organized into practical implications for sport practitioners, be published

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in a peer-reviewed journal, and be presented at scientific conferences. My involvement in the study can help me reflect on ways I can support athletes' development from their sport participation. The new knowledge derived from this study will help instigate a more socially responsible approach to coaching youth sport.

Risks: The researchers will inform me of potential risks associated with psychological and emotional discomfort that could arise from my participation in the interviews or interactions on social justice issues. If I experience any psychological and/or emotional discomfort, I can access the Canadian Sport Helpline at www.abuse-free-sport.ca. I may access the toll-free Helpline from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Eastern Time), seven days per week by telephone, text (1-888-837-7678) or email (info@abuse-free-sport.ca) in both official languages. For emergency resources, I can also access Crisis Services Canada at <http://www.crisisservicescanada.ca> and 1-833-456-4566.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: I understand that the content related to my participation will only be used by members of the research team, meaning that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. Anonymity will be assured by having codes or pseudonyms assigned to each participant, meaning that my name will never be used nor mentioned. All other identifying information like other people's names (e.g., coaching staff, family), the name of my team/program/club, or the city that I coach in will be replaced in text with pseudo-identities like "Assistant Coach [X]" or "Pseudonym" when reporting the findings. The study is being conducted independently from my sport organization, so that my organization will never know if I agreed to participate or not.

Data Conservation: All physical and electronic documents related to the study will be stored at the University of Ottawa, in a (a) password protected computer and (b) locked cabinet in the principal investigator's locked office and will be kept for five (5) years (calculated upon the end of data collection), after which all documents will be securely destroyed and safely deleted.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal: My participation is voluntary. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty, or to refuse to answer questions. My decision to take part in the study will not, in any way, influence my status as a coach. If I choose to withdraw from the study, the data collected from my participation until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed and will not be used.

Compensation: I recognize that I am not to receive any monetary compensation for participating in this study.

Questions: If I have any questions regarding this study, I can contact the principal investigator Sara Kramers at [REDACTED] or the thesis supervisor, Martin Camiré at [REDACTED]

For any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this project, I can contact the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity at the University of Ottawa, 550 Cumberland, Room 154, Ottawa, ON, K1N 6N5, (613) 562-5387, ethics@uottawa.ca.

Consent: I have read this consent form and I understand the procedures of the study. Also, I understand that my participation is completely voluntary, and I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. At the beginning of the interview, I will have the opportunity to ask questions and verbally consent to participate in the present study. My verbal consent will be recorded. My signature indicates my consent to participate. I should print a copy of the consent form to keep for my personal records.

I agree to participate in the present study (i.e., one timeline activity, two self-assessments of my life skills teaching, two individual interviews, multiple coaching conversations throughout my season).

I agree to participate in the optional observations of my practices and/or competitions.

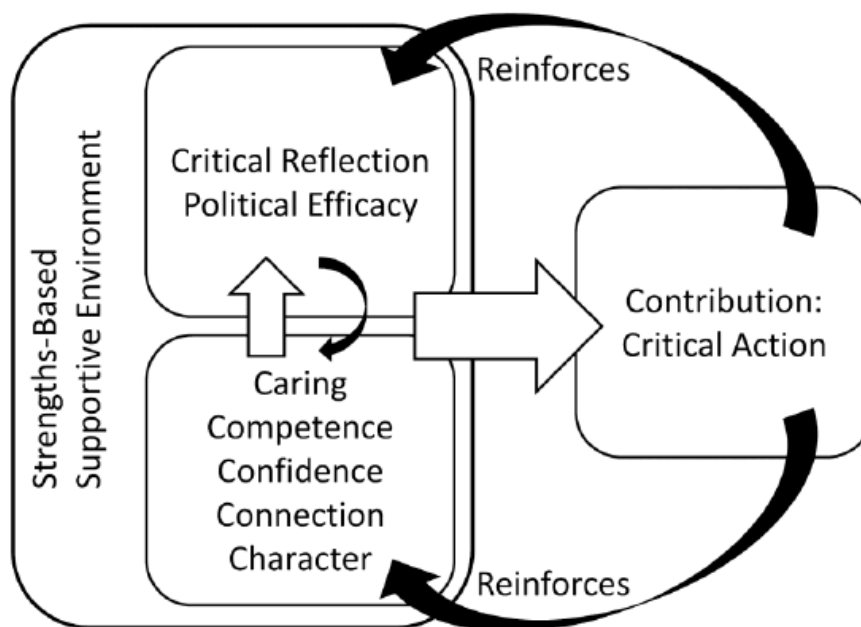
Print Name

Signature

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix C – Critical Positive Youth Development Framework

(Gonzalez, Kokozos, Byrd, & McKee, 2020)

Appendix D – Bracketing Interview Guide

1. What is your thesis topic?
2. Why are you doing this research?
3. In what context will you be conducting your research?
4. What is your personal experience in this field of research?
5. Can you elaborate on your experiences?
 - Athlete and coach experiences within youth sport?
 - Academic experiences?
 - Life experiences?
6. What does an “inclusive and meaningful sport climate” look like to you?
7. Why should competitive youth sport be “reimagined?”
8. What do you believe sport should offer young athletes?
9. What role can the coach play in supporting young athletes’ development?
10. Do you believe coaches understand/ believe why PYD can be important in sport?
11. What should a model coach do to facilitate “inclusive and meaningful sport climates”?
12. How do you define “social justice”?
13. What social justice issues occur within youth sport contexts?
14. How might coaches advocate for social justice and change in sport?
 - Athletes?
15. What challenges might coaches face in advocating for social justice and change in sport?
 - Athletes?
 - What are your solutions to these potential challenges?
16. How have you prepared to act as a PLC with coaches (study 2)?
 - What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
 - Perceived challenges? Solutions?
17. How will you navigate between acting as a PLC and a researcher (study 2)?
 - How are you going to interact with the coaches in the interviews compared to the “coaching conversations”?
18. What do you think you will find in the results?
19. What are the challenges you anticipate facing during your research?
 - What are your solutions to these potential challenges?
20. How do you plan on collecting and analysing your data?
 - How will these be adequate procedures?
21. How will you continue to monitor your assumptions throughout the process of research?

Appendix E – Social Justice Vignettes

Story 1

After practice finally ended, I threw my cleats into my bag and stormed off to the parking lot. On the way home, Mom kept trying to pry out of me what was wrong, but I didn't tell her how bad things were getting. I just don't understand why Coach T keeps using that language around us. Is he completely oblivious to the fact that some people on the team might not be straight? When he yelled at us to "stop being so gay" because we spent an extra 2 minutes chatting in the change room, I saw Coach D make an uncomfortable face, but he didn't ask Coach T to stop. It's pretty clear that Coach T is the boss and that he'll never take us seriously if we tell him that he's wrong, but at least I thought Coach D might stand up for us. It's almost worse that Coach D did nothing because I think he knows me and another guy on the team are dating. Even asking for an extra water break sent Coach T off on a temper tantrum about us being "babies" and "needing more time to fix our makeup". It's starting to influence how some of the guys talk as well, saying things like "Quit being such a sissy" and "You're such a homo" when someone messes up a play. I'm realising that I don't feel comfortable being myself on the team anymore. I can't tell Mom this is happening because I'm afraid she'll tell Coach T to try to fix things. But if he ever found out that I'm gay, it would be 100 times worse for me and probably worse for the other guys who aren't straight, either. I want to stand up for myself and others, but I choke on the words... I can't imagine I'd be treated the same if he knew. I guess I'll just continue to lie about "taking my girlfriend out" after every Friday practice.

Story 2

Jordan shows up to hockey try-outs ready for the upcoming season. His family just moved to a new neighbourhood, so he had to leave the league where he had played hockey since he was five years old. As a young Black man, Jordan knows that the majority of his teammates do not look like him, but he still wants to feel like he belongs in a hockey community, like the ice rink is his second home. That is until he goes to the arena in his new neighbourhood. After his dad signs him in, Jordan makes his way to the dressing room. The comments start right away, coming from multiple people in the room; one questioned, "Who is this new guy?", another said directly to Jordan, "You know, basketball try-outs were last Wednesday". This gets a chuckle from most of the players in the dressing room, while those who remained silent avoided eye contact with Jordan. These comments were nothing new for Jordan; he has accepted over time that it is easier to fit in with humour rather than incite confrontation. Jordan replies, "Right, right, good one!" as he takes a seat and starts to put his equipment on. A player asks him if his role on the ice is to be the "enforcer, like Wayne Simmonds?". A coach drawing a drill on the whiteboard quips, "No, he seems more like a PK Subban, a defensive guy". Jordan again awkwardly laughs it off, "You're going to have to wait and see!" but knows these particular comparisons are made only because he is Black. Jordan scans the room for players or coaches who might notice these comments are inappropriate, but the jokes remain unchallenged. This makes him question if he even wants to make this team.

Story 3

It's the beginning of the second set. I should feel calm and collected by now, but I still can't get my heart rate down. I bounce the ball three times with my racquet and take a deep breath. I can see my coach sitting in the stands, but I try not to look up too long because I don't want the umpire to accuse her of coaching me. It has been a rocky start to the match, and I can't handle any other external stressors at this point. I fault my first serve and see my opponent smirk on the other side of the court. I close my eyes and take another deep breath. I tell myself, "Stay in the game. You've earned your spot. Stay in the game." It was too late; my second serve hits the net, and I double fault. My mind is elsewhere—back to before the match when my opponent and her coach loudly argued about my playing eligibility to the umpire, claiming that my hijab was a uniform violation. I heard them say it would "give me an advantage" or "be a distraction" or that it could be "unsafe". They threw every excuse at the umpire,

hoping somehow to make me ineligible to play. My coach ran over and tried to defuse the situation: “There are no rules against wearing a hijab or head scarf in the handbook, and it serves no advantage to Salma during play.” After 10 minutes, that felt to me like 10 hours, the umpire told both coaches that I was indeed in my right to play with a hijab. As I walk toward the court, emotionally exhausted from this ordeal, I hear my opponent say to her coach, “How do we know she is even Canadian?”. It is pretty hurtful that they see me only as a Muslim—not a young woman or an athlete or a tennis player or a sister or a student, or a complete person with multiple connected identities. I end up losing the match in straight sets without even winning a game in the last set. I make my way to the dressing room and collapse on the floor—I feel completely defeated. I have to play against this same opponent again in three weeks. I feel tears run down my cheeks as I say the same mantra as before, “Stay in the game. You’ve earned your spot. Stay in the game”.

Story 4

Coaches and athletes of the women’s and men’s cross-country teams are boarding the bus to go to the national championships for university sports. Dan, the head coach of the men’s team, plops down in the seat across from Lina, the head coach of the women’s team. He asks Lina, “Hey sweetie, do you mind doing a coffee run once we get to the venue? I’m exhausted!” Lina responds, “No Dan, I can’t get you a coffee when we get to the venue.” He scoffs and asks why not. Lina turns to him, saying, “Well, you know I won’t have time to do a coffee run because, one, it is not my job, and two, I’ll be busy with my athletes, doing their warmups”. He laughs and points around the bus at the female athletes, “Why do the girls need to warm up? They’re practically *jogging* compared to the guys.” Lina turns away from Dan and says, “Dan, come on, please! That’s untrue and unnecessary—I’m trying to motivate *all* of our athletes, who have *all* earned their place here at nationals.” Dan raises his voice louder, “Okay Lina, *relax*, no need to get hysterical. This is not new information; we can all agree that girls’ sports just aren’t the same quality as men’s”. The bus is usually bursting with noise, but right now, it is silent—with athletes from both teams tuning in. Lina says quietly, “Listen, Dan. It’s our *women’s* team, not our *girls’* team.” Sensing some tension, the assistant coach for the men’s team speaks up, “Hey everyone, we’re on the same team here, can we just focus on nationals and not argue right now?” Lina grabs her bag and moves towards the back of the bus to sit with her assistant coach. She can hear two of Dan’s athletes discussing behind them: “Well, Coach Dan has a point. If the girls ran the *real* cross-country race with us men, they would not stand a chance”.

Appendix F – Vignette Considerations for Development and Administration

Considerations for Development	
Data sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research findings, literature reviews, theoretical and conceptual frameworks. - Real life experiences. - A singular source or eclectic mix.
Purpose/function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guided by the research purpose, data sought, and respondents. - Promote/focus/stimulate discussion. - Solve problems. - Identify attitudes. - Seek beliefs. - Report practices, models of practice, norms, understandings.
Vignette format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Paper vs. electronic. - Short vs. lengthy (shorter vignettes suggested for younger participants). - Single vs. multiple.
Capturing reality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Level of authenticity. - Hypothetical vs. ‘real’. - Protection of anonymity and confidentiality. - Leaving “space” for interpretation, particularly with younger participants, to define the situation in their own terms.
Piloting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pilot prior to use to assess the extent of how representative it is of situations and participants.
Vignette/participant congruence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complexity vs. simplicity. - Ambiguity vs. clarity. - Colloquial vs. formal language.
Settings and terminology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Degree of familiarity with the situation (settings/language specific to a particular cohort or profession). - Ability to adequately respond to the vignette. - Appropriateness of using age-relevant and gender-neutral language.
Considerations for Administration	
Data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As a sole method or combined with other methods. - Group or individual sample. - Which phase within the research study will it be used.
Presenting the vignette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open and/or closed questions. - Unfinished sentences. - How much information is shared. - Presented in-person or online.
Instructions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear instructions for delivering and responding.
Response perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As a vignette character. - As a member of the public. - From their own viewpoint. - Provide adequate time for responses.

The considerations are adapted from Barter and Renold (2000), Bradbury-Jones, Taylor, and Herber (2014), and Skilling and Stylianides (2020).

Appendix G – Hannah Interview Guides

Pre-Season Interview Guide

Introduction and Demographics

- Reiterate the purpose of study, that participation is voluntary, are free to withdraw at any point.
- Any questions before beginning? Thank you for your participation.
- Demographic information (e.g., age, sex, gender, ethnicity, highest level of education).

Contextualise the Sport Setting

1. If you could write a short story or film about your athletic experiences, what would it look like?
 - Why do you play competitive hockey?
2. Can you describe your sport context?
3. Can you describe what the broader community is like where you play hockey (e.g., university)?
4. Can you describe how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected you/your sport since March 2020?
5. How have you coped during the pandemic with the absence of sport?
6. How would you describe the nature of the interactions you have with your coaches/teammates?
7. Does reflecting play a role in your athletic practice? Why or why not?

Social Justice in Sport

8. What does the term *social justice* mean to you?
9. What role do you think coaches occupy in addressing issues of social justice with their athletes?
10. What is your level of comfort/confidence with addressing social justice issues in sport?
11. What is your level of motivation with addressing social justice issues in sport?
12. What challenges do athletes/coaches face in addressing social injustices in sport?

Present Vignette:

13. What are your thoughts of the story? What is resonating with you?
14. What issues do you see present within the story?
 - How would you address similar issues within your team?
 - What would you want your teammates/coaches to do?
15. Have you ever encountered similar instances of social injustice?
 - Examples? Do you feel comfortable sharing more information about this experience?
16. Have you ever encountered instances of social justice or empowerment in your sport context?
 - Examples? Do you feel comfortable sharing more information about this experience?
17. Why might these topics/issues be important to address in sport?

Developmental Impacts of Youth Sport

18. What do you believe sport offers you, as an athlete, from a developmental perspective?
19. What kind of influence do you think your coaches have on you and your teammates?
20. What skills/characteristics/values are important for you to learn/transfer through sport?
21. What do you feel is your coaches' role in teaching/developing those skills/characteristics/values?
22. What skills/characteristics/values do you want to refine/develop during the upcoming season?

Conclusion

- Offer an opportunity to discuss anything further or something that was not touched upon.
- Discuss the construction of a reflective portfolio (i.e., in-season) and post-season interview.
- Offer thanks and explain how they can be involved in member reflections if desired.

Post-Season Interview Guide

Introduction

- Reiterate the purpose of study, remind participant that their participation is voluntary and that they are free to withdraw from the study at any point.
- Ask if they have any questions before beginning and thank them again for their participation.

Review the Sport Season

1. Tell me about your season with your team.
 - How were the relationships?
 - Were there any conflicts? Any triumphs?
 - You believed your role for this season was to welcome in the new players, how did that pan out? Did your role change?
2. How would you describe the nature of the interactions you had with your coaches this season?
3. What, if anything, has changed regarding how your coach acted this season, compared to other seasons?
4. Did you have any reflective moments around your sport or team this season?
5. Was your season impacted by the pandemic at all? How did you cope?
6. Did your perceptions of your sport (or sport in general) shift or change after this season?
 - In the first interview you described how you played sport because it gives you a purpose, a reason to get up, get your body moving.

Exploring your Reflective Portfolio – *While the athletes will be encouraged to lead the dialogue during this section, some questions may be asked to support the conversation:*

7. Can you walk me through your portfolio?
 - There was something you sent me during your season from your coach: a letter she wrote to you at Christmas? Do you mind sharing what that was for me now?
8. What was the experience like in constructing your portfolio?
9. How did you decide what was/was not included in the portfolio?
10. Can you elaborate on the meaning behind the items that make up your portfolio?
11. Did you discuss your portfolio with others (e.g., teammates, coaches, parents, friends)?
 - Did this interaction change your portfolio?
12. How do you feel about your portfolio now, after discussing it?

Social Justice in Sport

13. What does the term *safe sport* mean to you now? Has it changed since the beginning of the season?
14. What does the term *social justice* mean to you now? Has it changed since the beginning of the season?
 - Previously said it was about movements and actions to lessen inequalities that people face.
 - In sport, you discussed how social justice and sport are connected, especially with being a female in competitive sport and the inequalities that women face today.
 - What is your personal stake in addressing social justice issues in and outside of sport? Like where do you fit?
15. Now at the end of the season, what is your level of comfort/confidence with addressing social justice issues in sport, within your team?
16. What is your level of motivation now with addressing social justice issues in sport, within your team?
 - Last time you said you were motivated to make things change for the better.
17. Did you encounter (e.g., experienced yourself or observed) instances of social injustice this

season?

- Do you feel comfortable sharing more information about this experience?
- 18. Did you encounter (e.g., experienced yourself or observed) instances of social justice or empowerment in your sport context this season?
 - Do you feel comfortable sharing more information about this experience?
- 19. Did your coach explicitly address any social justice issues in your sport context this season?
 - Do you feel comfortable sharing more information about this experience?
- 20. Based on your experiences this season, what could coaches do better to create, safe, inclusive, and meaningful sport spaces?
 - Other sport stakeholders – admin, athletic directors, athletes?

Developmental Impacts of Youth Sport

21. What comes to mind when I say meaningful sport? Or making sport more meaningful for athletes?
22. What do you believe sport offered you this season, from a developmental perspective?
 - Still around 'being a coachable athlete'?
23. What kind of influence do you think your coaches had on you as an athlete this season?
 - As a person?
24. What skills/characteristics/values were important for you to learn/develop through sport?
25. What skills/characteristics/values were important for you to transfer to other contexts?
26. What have you learned in sport (if anything) that you prefer to not have learned/ that you wish you didn't?
27. What do you feel your coach's role was in teaching/developing those skills/characteristics/values?

Conclusion

- Offer an opportunity to discuss anything further or something that was not touched upon.
- Offer thanks to the participant and explain how they can be involved in member reflections if desired.

Appendix H – Coach Study Information Letter

Study Name: Exploring how Youth Sport can be Reimagined to Become more Inclusive and Meaningful

Principal Investigator: Sara Kramers, PhD Candidate, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa, [REDACTED]

Thesis Supervisor: Martin Camiré, Associate Professor, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa, [REDACTED]

Hi!

We are looking for competitive sport coaches who are interested in taking part in a **season-long study** to explore how competitive youth sport can be reimagined to become more inclusive and meaningful. To be eligible, participants must (a) coach a competitive sport [team/program/club] during the 2022 season, with (b) athletes between the ages of 14-24. The study is being conducted as part of Sara Kramers' PhD thesis and will be conducted solely in English. The new knowledge derived from this study will help instigate a more socially responsible approach to coaching youth sports. Your participation in the study will begin approximately one month before your season starts, for the duration of your season, and approximately one month after your season has ended.

Before your season begins, your participation will include taking part in **one (1) individual interview (60-90 minutes)** to understand your sport setting, coaching philosophy, explore social justice topics, and detail what you want athletes to experience from their sport participation, from a developmental perspective. Social justice refers to identifying the role that privilege, power, and social position have in society, while advocating for equity, diversity, and inclusion. There may be a variety of social justice topics discussed (e.g., gender equity, anti-racism, LGBTQI2S+ inclusion). The interview will be conducted either via videoconferencing (e.g., MS Teams, Zoom) or in-person, take place at a time/place of my choosing, and be audio-recorded.

Throughout your season, your participation will include the **development of one reflective portfolio**, that exemplifies your experiences as a coach, with specific attention to social justice topics and lessons learned/taught through sport. Your reflective portfolio can include any physical and/or digital items (e.g., photographs, videos, drawings, newspaper clippings) that symbolize a visual representation of your experiences as a coach throughout your sport season. You may ask the researcher to participate in 1-2 meetings if you have any questions on the development of your reflective portfolio throughout your season (lasting approximately 30 minutes each). The meetings will take place either virtually (e.g., MS Teams, Zoom, email, phone call) or in-person, taking place at a time/place of my choosing, and be audio-recorded.

At the end of your season, your participation will include taking part in **one (1) individual interview (60-90 minutes)** to explore your reflective portfolio and your experiences as a coach throughout your sport season. The interview will be conducted either via videoconferencing (e.g., MS Teams, Zoom) or in-person, take place at a time/place of my choosing, and be audio-recorded.

It is important to note that the content related to your participation will only be used by members of the research team. Anonymity will be assured through the use of codes or pseudonyms on all documentation, meaning that identifying information will never be used nor mentioned throughout the research process. Your participation is completely voluntary and your decision to take part (or not) in the study will not, in any way, influence your status as a coach. If you decide to participate, you can remove yourself from the study at any time or refuse to answer certain questions. The study is being conducted independently from your sport organization, so that your organization will never know if you agreed to participate or not.

If you have any questions regarding the study, you can contact the principal investigator, Sara Kramers or the thesis supervisor, Martin Camiré.

For any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this project, you can contact the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity at the University of Ottawa, 550 Cumberland, Room 154, Ottawa, ON, K1N 6N5, (613) 562-5387, ethics@uottawa.ca.

If you wish to take part in the study, you can contact Sara Kramers by phone [REDACTED] or email [REDACTED].

Thank you for your time and assistance.

Sara Kramers, PhD Candidate

Coach Study Infographic

SEEKING RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Do you want to explore how competitive youth sport can become more safe, inclusive, and meaningful?

WHO ARE WE LOOKING FOR?



Coaches

- Coaching a competitive sport team/program this year
- With athletes between the ages of 14-24



WHAT WILL BE INVOLVED?



Pre-Season Interview

- Explore social justice topics relevant to your sport and community
- Discuss lessons you believe should be learned/developed in sport
- Approximately 60-90 minutes



Develop a Creative Portfolio

- For you to document throughout your sport season your experiences and reflections as they relate to social justice topics (e.g., photographs, videos, newspaper articles, Instagram posts)



Post-Season Interview

- Explore your creative portfolio items in greater detail
- Discuss your experiences as a coach
- Approximately 60-90 minutes

INTERESTED?

Contact Sara Kramers at [REDACTED] for more information



Principal Investigator: Sara Kramers, PhD Candidate, [REDACTED]
 Thesis Supervisor: Martin Camiré, Associate Professor, [REDACTED]
 Study approved through the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Ottawa, ethics@uottawa.ca

Appendix I – Coach Pre-Season Interview Guide

Introduction and Demographics

- Reiterate the purpose of study, that participation is voluntary, are free to withdraw at any point.
- Any questions before beginning? Thank you for your participation.
- Demographic information (e.g., age, sex, gender, ethnicity, highest level of education).
- Coach education and coach training completed.
- What information is sought out for coaching (e.g., podcasts, YouTube videos, articles, blogs)?

Contextualise the Sport Setting

1. If you could write a short story or film about your coaching experiences, what would it look like?
 - Why do you coach?
 - What is your coaching philosophy?
 - Can you please give me a brief summary of your experience in sports?
2. Can you describe your sport context?
3. Can you describe what the broader community is like where you coach?
4. Can you describe how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected your coaching/your sport since March 2020?
5. How have your athletes/you coped during the pandemic with the absence of sport?
6. How would you describe the nature of the interactions you have with your athletes?
7. Does reflecting play a role in your coaching practice? Why or why not?

Social Justice in Sport

8. What does the term *social justice* mean to you?
9. What role do you think coaches occupy in addressing issues of social justice with their athletes?
10. What is your level of comfort/confidence with addressing social justice issues in sport?
11. What is your level of motivation with addressing social justice issues in sport?
12. What challenges do coaches face in addressing social injustices in sport?

Present Vignette:

13. What are your thoughts of the story? What is resonating with you?
14. What issues do you see present within the story?
 - How would you address similar issues with your team?
 - What would you want your athletes to do?
15. Have you ever encountered similar instances of social injustice?
 - Examples? Do you feel comfortable sharing more information about this experience?
16. Have you ever encountered instances of social justice or empowerment in your sport context?
 - Examples? Do you feel comfortable sharing more information about this experience?
17. Why might these topics/issues be important to address in sport?

Developmental Impacts of Youth Sport

18. What do you believe sport offers your athletes, from a developmental perspective?
19. What kind of influence do you think you have as a coach on your athletes?
20. What skills/characteristics/values are important for your athletes to learn/transfer through sport?
21. What do you feel is your role in teaching/developing those skills/characteristics/values?
22. What skills/characteristics/values might you teach your athletes during the upcoming season?

Conclusion

- Offer an opportunity to discuss anything further or something that was not touched upon.
- Discuss the construction of a reflective portfolio (i.e., in-season) and post-season interview.
- Offer thanks and explain how they can be involved in member reflections if desired.

Appendix J – Coach Reflective Portfolio Information Letter

Study Name: Exploring how Youth Sport can be Reimagined to Become more Inclusive and Meaningful

Principal Investigator: Sara Kramers, PhD Candidate, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa, [REDACTED]

Thesis Supervisor: Martin Camiré, Associate Professor, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa, [REDACTED]

What is a reflective portfolio?

The reflective portfolio is meant to represent and exemplify your experiences as a [coach/athlete] in your sport context. It can include a variety of items that represent your experiences, such as: photographs, drawings, audio/video clips, newspaper clippings, song lyrics, short stories, stickers, etc.

How do I make it?

Throughout your season, reflect on *how you see, think, and feel about yourself* regarding what aspects of your [coach/athletic] self-identity feels important. Include any items that relate to your sport experiences, specific to (a) what reimagined sport could look like, (b) which social justice issues are/were relevant in your sport context, and (c) what developmental impacts occurred through your [coaching/sport participation].

Where is it stored?

Your portfolio can be organized based on your preferences/items selected. It could include all physical/tangible items, stored in a binder or box, or taped on a piece of paper or a bulletin board. It could include all electronic items, saved on your computer/devices in a folder. Or it could be a mix of both physical and electronic items, saved in a variety of folders. Wherever it is located, keep it safely and securely stored.

How will it be used in the study?

At the end of your season before the second interview, you will be asked to share your final portfolio with the principal investigator. Depending on the file types of the items collected, this may mean that a folder is shared electronically (i.e., securely through OneDrive by creating a password for the link) that includes the various photos, videos, notes, etc. that make up the portfolio. If you created a physical portfolio, you could take a picture of the portfolio and share it through email. Any emails shared during the research process will be securely destroyed and safely deleted. All physical and electronic documents related to the study will be stored at the University of Ottawa, in a (a) password protected computer and (b) locked cabinet in the principal investigator's locked office and will be kept for five (5) years (calculated upon the end of data collection), after which all documents will be securely destroyed and safely deleted.

You will have an opportunity to discuss your portfolio during the second interview (e.g., your process in creating it, what the items mean to you). With your consent, your portfolio may be reported as part of the study findings (e.g., in peer-reviewed publications, conference presentations). If you agree to this, all identifiable information will be blurred and/or removed (e.g., people's faces, logos of sport programs/organization).

Why is it important?

By constructing the portfolio, you may engage in reflection around what you want sport to offer/what you want from sport – how it can be reimagined to become more inclusive and meaningful. This creative and reflective process will support your agency and voice – you are making the decisions as to what is included (or not) and why. In constructing your portfolios, it may enhance the findings from the second interview because you may be able to articulate your experiences more clearly from efforts of self-exploration and self-reflection.

How can I get help?

If you are unsure if an item “fits” within your portfolio or have any questions, send the principal investigator, Sara Kramers, an email at [REDACTED] or text/call at [REDACTED]. If interested, 1-2 optional meetings will be hosted to answer questions regarding the portfolios throughout the season.

Appendix K – Example Portfolio Artifacts

ANDREW

Inspirational Video

<https://youtu.be/oDzfZOfNki4> [Duke women's basketball head coach]. Thought this was a pretty cool video for everyone to watch.

New Club Logo?

Awesome picture this morning from an emotional control class I'm taking. This is going to be our new logo right here!

What I can control and what I can't

Data source: amnaff/brown | infographic design by progressgrid for educational and motivational purposes



BEN

Last Practice before Holidays

Yesterday we had our last practice before the holiday break. We had around 16 guys in attendance, and I chose to split the session into drill/fun/game. We started with a drill where I focused on a weakness for our team in throwing. Then I took the drill and combined it into a game that challenged the players to think quickly and make decisions fast.

- Athlete safety was a top priority to ensure no one was injured going into the holidays. I didn't push the athletes too hard.
- One of the games included making a quick decision of picking one of your teammates from the group to send into a drill. No prejudices were observed, and everyone felt included.
- Yesterday, my players learned that although this is a high level of sport, you can enjoy the game and not have to worry about making it serious all the time.

BROOKE

Our Sport is Special

I've said it time and time again, but I truly believe that our sport is the most inclusive sport. It doesn't matter what ethnicity you are, sexuality, gender you identify with, size, or any other aspect you can think of, there's a place in the sport for you. One thing also that you will notice, is that there isn't a future, present, or past player who doesn't actively try and recruit for the sport, because well, it's something special.

This past summer my province had the honour of hosting a National Women's game. Not only did our women's team win the game, but they made sure to leave a legacy behind. They did this by volunteering their time to go out to a First Nations Reserve while they were here and show our youth that there is a place for them at all levels of sport... I know this is something that will be remembered for years.

In my professional life, I once met with a community member from a historically underrepresented area, and she looked at me with tears in her eyes and said: "our youth need help. They are becoming products of their environments, and I know that Sport and Recreation can change their path". The need and want is there, now it's time for us who are coaches, sport leads, high level players, etc. to make the effort and go out to underrepresented communities, to help light the fire in our youth, and allow them to see that sport is a place where they belong.

DOUG

Why I coach...

I began coaching in 2015 when the coach that I quit the sport because of was fired from the head coach role at [club]. I wrote one thing in my notebook before I started coaching. "Be the coach you wanted to have". And that's what I strived for every day.

I had rough days, but I always tried to be the caring, conscious and inclusive coach that I didn't have at the peak of my time in the sport. When I was younger, I had good coaches, but I went through a lot of mental health issues that I wasn't even aware of because no one ever asked. I was anxious and depressed, worsening as I got older and by the time, I was 16/17 training a lot, I was at an all-time low which sustained itself for a few years till my doctor recommended a change. With that in mind I tried to ensure my athletes knew I was there if they needed someone to talk to. Through hard work and a coaching staff that communicated and performed our roles as individuals and as a team well, we won the finals.


EMMA

After a Home Game

Club coaches came to scout players

- Players unable to afford low school team fees, never mind astronomical club fees
- Comments from coach "it's too bad, wasted potential". That's the systems fault.
- NOT ACCESSIBLE
- I cannot relate to this because I have been very fortunate to be able to partake in these activities


MARCO

 **David Klein** @Coac... · 3h
(THREAD) As a coach, the mental health of your athletes should be your top concern.

Here's 3 tools to give your players... 🗨️

2 7 28

Show this thread

 **David Klein** @Coac... · 3h
Dont be that coach who only focuses on physical skills.

Our world is too stressful and difficult.

We need positive coaches like you who help kids regulate their big feelings.

Your players take these strategies with them for the rest of their lives. 🙌🙌🙌

 **Jon Beck** @CoachJon... · 21h
Life lessons learned in sports cannot be taught in any textbook. Sportsmanship, passion, responsibility, putting others first, being unselfish, giving effort to what you love. That's learned through experience. There's no better way to build that experience than through sports!

 **Jon Gordon** @Jon... · 23h
A teammate is forever. And so is a coach who impacts your life.

MELANIE

First Practice

Back to practice for the first time. Really excited to see the guys as they have been back on campus for a month already. Lovely that our two captains made a point to run over before I got my coat off to check in and catch up. Both had COVID-19 in January...I wonder if that will have long-term consequences for both of them in their future?

Will COVID-19 become an issue for athletes like concussion protocols have? That would be an extra layer of frustration and difficulty beyond just physical (and mental) injury....

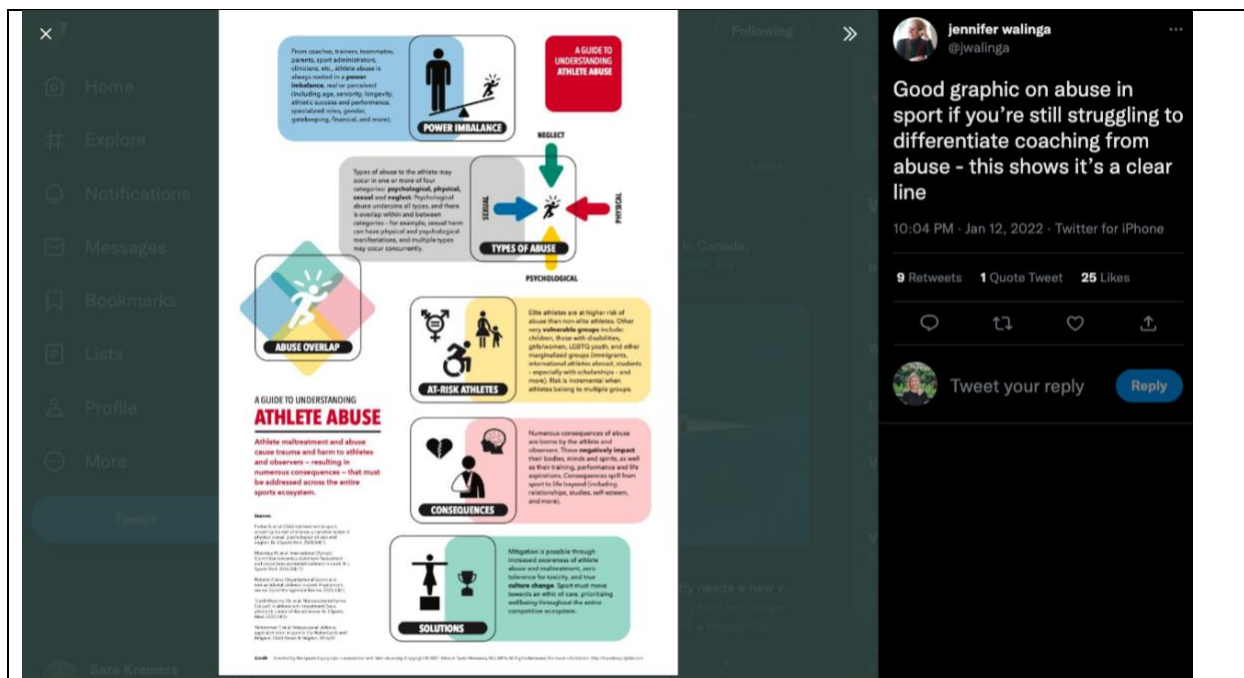
I always feel a bit more alive when I'm at practice. Energized, and ready to take on the next adventure.

Lack of Diversity Everywhere

Working at a university on the west coast with the women's team there. Also, a large lack of diversity. See? It is everywhere!! However, there were quite a few children involved with their youth program that were Black and Indigenous, so perhaps there is a future for kids who might continue playing our sport into their teenage or adult years.

Non-abusive Coaching

Crazy to think some folks need a graphic to distinguish how not to abuse athletes. This type of behaviour is not acceptable outside of sport so how can some believe it is okay within sport? Flies directly in the face of being a good human using transformational behaviours.



NOLAN

Recap of our Training Camp

We met some new players in the last 10 days, via them reaching out to us via Instagram, which brings me to my issue of the day... ***our sport isn't recognized at our university.***

- Despite the popularity of the sport in our province, and the seemingly large presence the sport has in the United States (which includes games on the main ESPN network) here it isn't even a recognized sport. At our university, it is treated the same as the juggling club, or the quidditch team
- Student athletes do not know we exist until they see us on social media. We are not on the athletics site. The equivalent men's team, however is...
- The men's team is the closest sport to ours and shows a gender difference that is allowed to perpetuate by the provincial interuniversity sport organization and its member university teams. Colleges treat our sport as a true sport!
- High school students that are planning their post-secondary choices find it hard to understand why the sport isn't treated the same at the college and university level in our province.

Because at our university it "isn't a sport" ... we get \$0 funding from the school, and we also get zero recognition, despite the hard work our athletes give. We never appear on the official school website, social media, game recaps etc. To our student athletes it is basically like we DO NOT exist. That is disheartening for them all. More to come...

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Incident

Today I took a call from a mother of a parent who has a daughter on one of the minor sports teams that are under the association I work for. The call was upsetting and disturbing to me as she shared how her daughter has been treated since coming out as bisexual this spring. The call has me spinning in all kinds of directions, on how or what I should do with the knowledge that has been shared.

- I must verify these statements and accusations.
- I must address the issue with the leader(s) involved.

- I wish to ensure that something like this NEVER is allowed to happen in my organization ever again.
- I will act on this

Update on New Policy for Diversity, Inclusion and Equity

I will attach the final policy once it has been vetted by folks I shared with. So, to wrap up the issue with organization and the accusation, today I googled and researched and then took parts and pieces from several sources and created a “Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Policy”. I was very pleased with it. I sent it to many of my colleagues... for opinions.

- I was actually surprised that not everyone I sent it to was on board. I made assumptions that everyone would be, however I immediately got one response back from a long-time friend who said “why do we need this? Just be a good person, we don’t need a policy telling us what to do”.
- Most others have been very quick to say the document is great and that they welcome it being put into practice.

Word/Phrase Choices at Practice & Games

A week before the season started, during a post-game huddle I shared with the athletes that I was taking part in this study, and that I wanted to become better at using inclusive terms when speaking to my team. I have a habit of always using “guys”, example: “Guys we have 2 outs, Good inning guys, Guys we need to tighten up the defence, Guys you’re playing well”. I asked the athletes to try and point out when I use terms like this and said that I wanted to use fully inclusive terms more often, such as “team, athletes” or using our school’s mascot name. As a team we quickly realized that there aren’t as many neutral terms as one would think...

Looking back at the first weekend of games, I think I did “okay” in my use of terms, however I was far from perfect. I don’t think there is anyone who is offended by “guys”, or “ladies” as one of my assistants always uses. In the heat of the moment “guys” remains my go to.

I will keep working at this, this week at practice and again on the weekend at our games.

Handling A New Player Inquiry

Over the weekend, On Instagram I had someone named Matthew reach out on our social media and ask if they had reached the university team account. I gathered my thoughts on how to respond correctly. In my mind I was like, this person should clearly know that this is a “women’s team”, but then at the same time I was like perhaps they do and they’re still inquiring. I shouldn’t make an assumption based on a person’s name. I also asked my team captain for her opinion, and she supported me.

So, I asked the following: “Have you played competitive previously? Did you play for a club before coming to the university? How do you identify as a person if you don’t mind me asking?”

I wanted to better understand this person before giving a quick answer. Matthew responded by saying they played in high school, and that he identified as a CIS male.

- Truth, I then googled what that meant.
- After confirming it was what I thought I replied again

“Thanks Matthew, this is a women’s sport only.”

He then replied, “Oh sorry, is there a men’s team?” which of course there isn’t. A simple inquiry as to try-outs can be a lot more complicated in today’s world. I am however happy how we handled this.

RYAN

Social justice issues

Cost is one regular issue that comes up.

We have made an effort this season to incorporate larger groups multiple ages and events like whole club BBQ, activities during Pride Month so everyone is more aware.

Our location in the city is repeatedly invaded and impacted by our homeless tent community. Many thefts, people entering our boathouse environment, vandalism, and damage.

This social issue is now a hotbed top around our club as a safety concern for younger rowers and coaches, women aren't feeling as safe. It's early in the morning and later at night. Equipment being stolen right off our trailers before we go to races... what to do with these people? Many varieties of observations and ideas. Some are NIMBY [not in my backyard] types and others are more straight to the point that they shouldn't be there. More security etc. this is a larger problem in our city and one that isn't easy to solve. But we are seeing things every day. Overdosing, fires, homeless etc.

Lessons Learned

Event by Royal Roads University on survivors in sport from abuse and maltreatment.

<https://royalroads.ca/events/healing-survivors-healing-sport>

News Article about Overturning NFL Player Sexual Assault Charges

Appealing Watson's suspension gives the NFL a chance to course correct



Cleveland Browns quarterback Deshaun Watson walks during an NFL football practice in Berea, Ohio, Saturday, July 30, 2022. (David Dermer/AP)

Bad process equals bad results.

Donnovan Bennett
 @dennovanbennett
 August 4, 2022, 12:52 PM



That's the one-sentence history of Roger Goodell's approach to "justice" during his tenure as commissioner of the National Football League. But with the news the NFL is appealing the first conduct policy decision of 2022 — the suspension given to Cleveland Browns quarterback Deshaun Watson on Monday in connection with a string of alleged sexual assaults — Goodell has a chance to change his legacy and recalibrate the league's approach to player discipline.

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nfl/article/appealing-watsons-suspension-gives-the-nfl-a-chance-to-course-correct/>

So, the systemic patterns of relying on precedent when deciding consequences fails to bring about a proper change to consequences for actions as we develop a distaste for actions. The same old same old prevails while actions are not prosecuted to dissuade offenders from future transgressions. The old guard protects those committing offenses so they themselves are joy punished adequately.

Makes one wonder what the real penalty really is if one commits multiple assaults. Who really cares? What of the perception of protection?

*****Don't even get me started on the whole rash of Hockey Canada stuff going on.

Appendix L – Coach Post-Season Interview Guide

*Tailored for each coach based on their pre-season interview, portfolio, and any in-season discussions.

Introduction

- Reiterate the purpose of study: explore how competitive youth sport can be reimagined to become more safe, inclusive, and meaningful for all athletes—because there are many examples where athletes have not felt safe or had a good experience through sport. I want to hear *your* stories as a coach, understand *your* narratives around these topics.
- Remind that their participation is voluntary, that they do not have to answer a question if they do not want to, and that they are free to withdraw from the study at any point.
- Ask if they have any questions before beginning and thank them again for their participation.

Review the Sport Season

1. Tell me about your season with your team.
2. Any reflections to share on your coaching/team after we last chatted?
3. Has your coaching philosophy have evolved this season? How so?
4. Did you seek out other sources of information to better your coaching practice throughout the season (e.g., podcasts, YouTube videos, articles, blogs)?
5. How would you describe the interactions you had with your athletes this season?

Exploring your Reflective Portfolio – *While the coaches will be encouraged to lead the dialogue during this section, some questions may be asked to support the conversation:*

6. Can you walk me through your reflective portfolio?
7. What was the experience like in constructing your portfolio?
8. How did you decide what was/was not included in the portfolio?
9. Can you elaborate on the meaning behind the items that make up your portfolio?
10. Did you discuss your portfolio with others (e.g., peer coaches, athletes, family, friends)?
 - Did this interaction change your portfolio?

Social Justice in Sport

11. How would you describe *safe sport* now? Inclusive sport? Meaningful sport?
12. How did you attempt to create a safer space for your team? Inclusive sport?
13. How did you attempt to foster dialogue with your athletes?
14. What does the term *social justice* mean to you now?
 - Has it changed since the beginning of the season?
 - What “issues” are grouped within social justice issues for you?
15. Did you have any experiences or examples of how sport and social justice topics were connected this season? (injustice, empowerment)
16. Now at the end of the season, what is your level of comfort/confidence with addressing social justice issues in sport?
17. What is your level of motivation now with addressing social justice issues in sport?
 - How motivated are you to strengthen this ability and capacity?
18. What role do you believe other stakeholders (e.g., administrators, athletes) have in addressing issues of social justice at your sport?
19. What risks may your athletes face if they speak out against oppression or social injustices?

- Did you ever bring an expert in to help?
- 20. Were social justice issues discussed after an event occurred (teachable moments) or did you proactively discuss social justice issues?
 - What are some challenges you may have faced in addressing issues of social justice in your sport?

Developmental Impacts of Youth Sport

21. What do you believe sport offered the young athletes you worked with this season, from a developmental perspective?
22. What have your athletes learned in sport (if anything) that you preferred they did not learn?
23. What kind of influence do you think you had as a coach on your athletes this season?
24. What skills/characteristics/values were important for your athletes to learn/transfer through sport?
25. What do you feel your role was in teaching/developing those skills/characteristics/values?
26. What skills/characteristics/values might you teach your athletes during the next season?
27. How did you attempt to create a safe and inclusive space this season? Did you use other strategies to create a safe and inclusive sport space?

Conclusion

28. What do you want your future in coaching to look like? The ideal sport world?
29. What drew you to this study, motivated you to participate?
30. How would you like to be identified in this study?
31. Anything else? Offer thanks to the participant, member reflections if desired.

Appendix M – Coach Narrative Overviews

Andrew is always seeking out new information to learn and grow as a person and a coach; he aligns himself with lifelong learning and transformational coaching approaches. Andrew started coaching because he loved his sport but was not good enough to continue as a competitive athlete. As he started coaching at a young age, in the community where he grew up, he often found himself feeling small and spoken over by other coaches and parents. This is an area of frustration for him, as he is very passionate about his job and his professional development. With self-education, critical reflection, and discussions with trusted family and peers, Andrew has become more confident in his coaching, evident through accolades and positive feedback from his athletes and club. Andrew wants to be a role model for his athletes and demonstrate the importance of setting boundaries for your mental health, recovering after performing, and having a positive mindset. By the end of his season, he became more self-confident in finding his coach voice and speaking up for his coaching decisions. This fortified self-confidence also impacted Andrew's capacity to critically reflect and act around some social justice issues. For example, he strongly advocated for his young woman athlete and his woman coach colleague when leagues were removing girls' and women's scores from elite competitions for the argument of inclusion and retention. Compared to the first interview, Andrew was compelled to act after critical reflection by himself and with others, he spoke with those in charge and tried to explain how this is not inclusion. He also told his colleague that he supports her completely if she wanted to stand up against this rule change—being that ally and advocate, especially as he felt, as a white man, that he was out of place speaking out (that he would not be listened to). Andrew now feels more armed to deal with social justice issues because he is more confident. He has gained more knowledge on topics by self-educating himself, being exposed to different situations, and interacting/learning from others. For some social issues, Andrew now feels like his voice is valid and that he has a duty to stand up in a group when a social issue arises, because of his standing (as a coach) and his demographics (as a white, straight male). Beyond these two situations, his approach to dealing with social justice issues is to be quiet and listen, only speaking up if the athletes or his peers asked him to. On one hand, this is a proactive mechanism, to protect himself from ostracization and protect his athletes from harm and further discrimination; conversely, he seems to not fully comprehend the 'critical' aspect of social justice and recognise how intersectionality and power imbalances affect individuals' experiences. He recognises that he has lots to learn and become more comfortable with social issues, such as better understanding his white privilege and finding his voice when he knows something is wrong, especially when it goes against what he considers the 'new norm'.

Ben was focused on creating a safe environment where players can feel challenged but also that they belong, they can turn to Ben for any issue. To create this space, he focused on being open, accessible, approachable, and vulnerable with his athletes. He attempted to foster relationships with and between his players by engaging in informal conversation to get to know them, and organising groups with different players often (e.g., in drills, for overnight tournaments). He felt confident in his ability to hypothetically stand up for his players if they experienced social justice issues in his sport but recognised that (luckily) he had little to no experience of social issues occurring in sport or amongst his athletes. With this limited experience, Ben did not feel like he would be the one making the noise if something did happen (e.g., when discussing the vignettes), meaning he wants to be that coach who is the strong and loud advocate and ally, but also knows his personality and may be this person with a real example. In other words, Ben felt like he was a different person as a coach compared to outside of sport—in sport he had a responsibility to stand up for his players, be a role model, create that safe space and ensure everyone's safety; outside of sport—he is quiet, more reserved. He acknowledged his position of power and privilege as an educated, young, white man who is in a coach role, and that non-white players are less often playing competitive frisbee and are often type casted into specific positions based on assumptions of speed vs skill. With this understanding, Ben made it a goal to help non-white players develop a range of skills, so they could play any position now and in their future frisbee careers because he wanted to fit against the stereotype, although he did not explicitly acknowledge why he was supporting their full-field

development. Ben believed it was important for his athletes to develop critical thinking skills and awareness, so they could (a) understand where they could improve in sport and (b) be grateful for what they have and give back to others (e.g., through volunteering). Overall, he wanted the university program to be known for being respectful and focusing on the person first before the player, and the team first before the individual. The word ‘legacy’ was spoken by Ben, but also unspoken as he shared his coaching approach and stories of creating safe spaces. Based on his previous experiences, he felt a large responsibility as a coach to develop the next generation of ultimate players, to grow the sport, and to ensure his athletes want to keep playing ultimate for the rest of their lives—that it was his legacy to grow the sport. Moreover, there was a lot of discussion on what kind of legacy they were building in the program, and what it might look like if/when he left. Ben demonstrated some critical awareness and reflection of social issues in sport (e.g., racism, gender equity), and some critical action through sport (e.g., volunteering, developing non-white players’ skills, changing language to be inclusive of gender and sexual diverse folks), but he still showed hesitancy when asked what he would feel comfortable with confronting if a situation happened, and would only bring up an issue if he was clearly and explicitly presented with, assuming that his players were self-aware and respectful.

Brooke is new to coaching but has strong values that guide how she wants her athletes to feel in sport and what they should be developing. As a still-competing athlete, Brooke recognises how her sport can be a place for fostering self-reflection, self-awareness, and belonging. Her sport has given her the confidence to be her true self, carries over to her other life beyond sport. She identifies as a bisexual Indigenous woman, coming out for the first time to her teammates who accepted her right away. Brooke’s ability to critically reflect on issues of social justice in and beyond sport is driven by her passion for safe sport spaces, like she had in her early adult years, as well as from her intersectionality and first-hand experiences with discrimination. She cares deeply for her athletes—wanting to be that role model and strive for being the best, most confident version of herself. This involves being vulnerable and comfortable in front of her athletes, normalising bad days, and discussing important topics which she believes are invaluable for sport and life. For instance, Brooke discusses the importance of consent with her athletes, developing self-awareness for who you are, being trustworthy, and a kind and respectful person, being that they are in grades 10-12 and will experience different life contexts beyond sport. Brooke is a lifelong learner and is passionate about having difficult and critical conversations. She seeks out mentors and peers in coaching and sport to learn from and lean on when she does not have the answers. She is also passionate about changing the sport world to be more inclusive for all identities and peoples. This passion for sport changing people’s lives and making sport more equitable through her career may come from her childhood (single mom for a while) and knowing about different social issues, like Indigenous cultures and issues. Support youth’s potential rather than they become a product of their environment. Brooke believes that coaches should be acknowledging and proactively preparing to welcome different identities in sport and do the self-reflection and research so that their sport space is safe for all. For instance, if you have athletes who are Indigenous or Black, proactively learn more about biases and stereotypes, learn about history and intergenerational trauma that might impact these athletes. Overall, Brooke’s critical praxis and consciousness were well developed and ever evolving.

Doug fiercely cares for his athletes and aims to protect their mental health and well-being. His coaching philosophy is ‘person first, athlete second’, which he has worked tirelessly to integrate into his club’s and sport’s culture. It is important for Doug to build trusting relationships with each of his athletes, through informal conversations and checking in, and more formal meetings to set individual goals for the season. Importantly, the goal sheet he created asks the athletes to reflect on their goals inside and outside of sport, their strengths as a person, and their commitment to accept who they are regardless of the outcome at the end of the season. A main goal was around supporting the athletes’ awareness for and development of their self-acceptance—of who they are as human beings and what they can achieve with the right support and training. With this coaching approach of person-first, Doug often met resistance from other coaches, staff, and board members in his sport, who he felt often defaulted to a ‘win at all

costs' mentality that sacrificed athletes' health, stability, and longevity in the sport. The time and effort required in this coach role left Doug neglecting his mental health and crashing from the inside. He decided to stop coaching at the end of this season to explore other educational and career opportunities. This decision weighted heavily on Doug, but by building strong relationships with coaches at his club who shared his philosophy, and supporting athletes in leadership roles, he felt confident leaving his coach role. During the second interview, Doug shared a more positive outlook on his decision to step back from coaching, even being able to identify how his athletes benefited from him placing boundaries for his mental health and trying a new career in his late twenties. He recognises how his intersecting identities (white, male, straight) and his role as a coach place him in a position of power and privilege. Moreover, he recognised how much power all coaches have, and how that power can be used negatively to manipulate and harm athletes, and positively to foster autonomy, belonging, and a safe sport context. Doug demonstrated a strong critical praxis and consciousness. Over the last few years becoming more in tune with his emotions and mental health, and experiencing traumatic mental health issues with his athletes, he has refined his critical awareness and reflection skills. While Doug's comfort for dealing with social justice issues waivers based on his understanding of the topic and his fluctuating social anxiety, he shared many examples of advocating for his athletes' safety, health, and inclusion in his club. Notably, Doug joined an equity, diversity, and inclusion committee with his sport organisation after one of his athletes experienced racial discrimination during a training session. In these committee meetings Doug often keeps quiet, as he navigates his intersectionality and issues of representation. He feels that he would want to stand up and advocate for his athletes if a social issue happened, but that he would need to be fully informed and educated on the topic before doing so – his confidence and motivation to act on social issues was dependent on his understanding of the issue and relationships built with the athletes. Overall, Doug is an empathetic, reflective, and caring person, who hopes his legacy of building a positive and person-centred club lives on.

Emma strongly knows who she is and what she stands for—which is gender equity, inclusion, and respect. She clearly remembers the first time she experienced sexism and harassment from an older male coach, when she was 11 years old. The team she was coaching this year is different from her previous experiences; it is a boy's high school team, and the players are diverse in terms of race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, immigrant status, and religion. Not only is she cognisant of many social justice issues folks may experience in sport, but she also feels strongly towards being an advocate and ally, to stand up for what is right when it is safe to do so. Moreover, she recognises the privileges she has as a young, educated, cisgender white woman, and that not everyone will be able to speak up based on their intersectionality and situations. She is a lifelong learner, always questioning why someone is done a certain way and how it can be improved. Her confidence for critical action varies on the issue, as her lived experience as young woman led to experiencing sexism and gender inequity in sport, and she has not had experiences of racism. This critical awareness and reflection may stem from how she was raised, to be respectful but also stand up for what you believe, and being selective in who she befriends and trusts – folks who also care about social justice and engage in critical discussions. Emma strongly believes that sport should be used to develop good people first, and good players second. However, she struggles with how this development might occur, besides being an approachable and caring coach, and building rapport, trust, and positive relationships with and between her athletes. She sees this development as a shared and collaborative approach with her athletes. During her season, her athletes had a difficult time controlling their emotions and often broke out into fights or would ignore what Emma was asking them to do. She related this experience of not being respected to how she feels around other men who coach; that she has to rationalise what she deserves to be there and that she has the skill, maybe from being a former player, to also be a good coach. This experience led her to reflect on how sexism is present at implicit and explicit levels, and what she can do to improve sport for women and girls, along with other equity deserving groups. She is fiercely passionate about broader topics of gender equity, respect, trust, and acceptance of girls and women in sport and coaching.

Marco is a first-generation Italian Canadian man, born in the 1950s, who knew he was meant to coach from a young age. He was passionate when describing his coaching approach to be fair—by treating everyone the same no matter your circumstances or background—but also in his approach to develop strong, competitive, team-focused players. Marco described himself as ‘being ahead of his time’ in his ‘fair’ approach to coaching, focusing on who players are as individuals before athletes. He demonstrated lifelong learning tendencies, such as by welcoming feedback and questions to his coaching approaches, learning from interacting and observing others, seeking out new ways to coach often (e.g., on social media, coach autobiographies), and his willingness to be involved in coach education and training groups. Marco was surprised by the examples (vignettes) of coaches not creating safe spaces for their athletes, believing that young coaches should be more in tuned with dealing with athletes of today. He identified that he was raised and coached differently compared to the Gen Z athletes he coaches now, and noted relief that he will be retiring soon so he does not have to deal with the issues that are interacting with sport now. Specifically, Marco does not believe that sport of all competitive levels should be a place to discuss or protest social justice issues (e.g., kneeling during the anthem). By the end of his study participation, Marco opened up about his beliefs and values in coaching, but also showed interest in learning from others and gaining new perspectives. He shared the importance he places on having defined concepts in his mind, and of engaging in conversations with his wife and adult children around difficult and complicated topics. By the end of the study, Marco felt more open and aware of how social issues may be intertwined within sport and felt appreciative to be in this study and discuss inclusive and diversity topics with me.

Melanie described herself as a lifelong learner and a transformational coach, who was curious and eager to learn more and become uncomfortable around inclusion, reconciliation, equity, and diversity in sport. She grounded her coaching in building trusting, positive relationships with and between her athletes—by using transformational coaching behaviours, checking in with athletes often and informally, asking questions, and providing opportunities for them to practice being leaders in sport, and continuously building her learning around coaching sport. However, as an assistant coach, Melanie felt somewhat confined to what she could create within the team and recognised that boundaries were needed for her mental health to ensure she is not taking on too much, based on her previous experiences of not being re-hired as the head coach. She also noticed how her intersecting identities sometimes helped and hindered her coaching (e.g., being able to ‘hide’ her sexuality, being a woman coaching men’s sports). Melanie recognised that her sport was a predominately white space and the college struggled in recruiting diverse players of different race/ethnicities. Moreover, she had experiences in sport where folks from equity deserving groups were often objectified and used as tokens to promote the sport, which she wanted to avoid. In her first interview, she described feeling terrified to say the wrong thing or offend someone when discussing racial issues in sport. By the second interview, Melanie was still low in her comfort level (maybe 2/10 or 3/10) in addressing social injustices, but also could connect how she had become more aware over the last four months and was able to connect her professional development learning from her job (teaching) back to sport from this study participation. She felt this study provided her time and space to reflect intentionally on social issues in sport, especially by writing down her reflections and then discussing with me during the interviews provided her that space to unpack her reflections and question her assumptions. To become more confident and comfortable, Melanie needed to have more honest conversations with a variety of folks, including those of equity deserving groups, who had mutual trust, so she could learn and grow rather than be scared to speak. She believes in the importance of intersectionality when discussing social justice issues in sport, particularly how she identifies as part of the LGBTQ+ community but importantly does not want to be the spokesperson for this group—it is a privilege to take the time and space to learn about social justice without fearing each day based on your identities and background. She questions how coaches without lived experiences can move forward without positioning those with lived experiences as the token educator. With her coaching experiences, education, and position as a teacher, Melanie demonstrated critical awareness and reflection, but was often hesitant to engage in critical action due to possible consequences of judgement, offending others, or

being wrong. Nonetheless, this was recognised and noted as an area for improvement (i.e., demonstrating critical awareness and reflection) that she was willing to engage in. She wanted to change the sport system to become more inclusive and safer for all athletes.

Nolan is a coach for a women's sport team at the university varsity level, though without the varsity resources, such as uniforms, transportation, budgeting, or office space. Additionally, he and his team deal with implicit and explicit gender inequities throughout their seasons. This is a source of frustration for him, and he works to create a safe, welcoming space for his athletes to be their true selves and bring forward any social injustices in sport and in their community that they wish to address. This space is created through engaging with each athlete personally, discussing social issues directly with the team, and advocating for his athletes when needed. Through sport, his family, and his work, Nolan is aware of how his critical praxis and consciousness has been building and progressing over his life, and more so over the last 10 years. Similar to his approach to coach education/training, Nolan strengthens his critical praxis through interactions and relationships, self-education, and linking learning from other contexts, particularly his workplace where he often learns about biases and assumptions. His critical progression was positively impacted over the course of his study participation: dealing with a claim of discrimination based on sexual orientation → realising an equity, diversity, and inclusion policy was missing to proactively and purposefully better deal with any future issues → creating a policy → involving his athletes, peer coaches, and board members in editing the policy → adjusting other actions based on his heightened critical awareness, like inclusive language changes → dealing with other situations more inclusively, like appropriately asking for someone's gender identity rather than assume. This was the right time for Nolan to participate in this study—he recognised how having the portfolio as a tangible reflective journal helped him to record his progression and having critical conversations with me helped him to push his critical awareness. Moreover, he notes this critical praxis occurring from his progressing understanding of his biases (both from sport and work), his ability and personality to reflect on social injustices, the situation that sparked the creation of the policy, and his involvement in my study. His confidence to act on social issues is high because of his exposure and willingness to discuss difficult social issues with family, friends, and peers, but he also is aware that he does not have all of the answers. Knowing that his inner circle and community believe in the same things provides Nolan with support and security. Nolan's approach to social justice issues is explicit and intentional—he wants to be that respectful person his kids can look up to and trust, and that coach that helps his athletes with anything they need. Overall, it is clear that Nolan's approach to creating just spaces is entangled throughout who he is as a person, and not just present in one context, or just in his coaching.

Ryan feels passionately around being aware of safe sport and social justice issues in his sport, and around acting proactively to question and change the systems and structures in place. As a middle-aged white man, he recognises the privilege and responsibility he has in society and in sport and uses this platform to speak up for others and push the needle towards more inclusive, safer sport. A self-declared lifelong learner, Ryan aims to know what issues may be occurring in his sport before something happens, such as by staying up to date on coach education and inclusive language, or making sure that systems are in place for equity, inclusion, and accessibility (e.g., covering fees for families who cannot afford the sport). He believes this eagerness to advocate for others and enact positive social change may be from how his parents raised him and the coaches he had as an athlete, but also maybe to overcompensate for being typecast into a group of white men who are not interested in change. This typecasting is very much as Ryan's mind as he coaches and interacts with other (white, male) coaches—he is actively trying to work against it but in a way that is purposeful and not performative. Ryan is very involved with his sport, with experience at the national and Olympics competitions as well as in his local and high school clubs. He takes coach education seriously, completing as many levels as possible—he sees education as a way to spark change in coaches' mindsets and open the door to safe sport and inclusive practices. If you are not engaging in ongoing education, professional development, training, and critical conversations, you are not

doing your role as a coach. During his season, Ryan had to step away from his coaching position because he was frustrated with culture happening at the club; feeling silenced when asking for change or a discussion, other staff afraid to come forward, getting defensive responses or no engagement when asking for shifts towards safer sport. However, there still were positive moments throughout the season of critical reflection and action, such as having an open conversation with an older (white, male) coach around the importance of using a trans athletes' preferred pronouns or implementing a feedback survey to check in with athletes and give them a platform to communicate openly. From his experiences and education as a teacher, and quest for safe sport cultures, Ryan demonstrated a strong critical consciousness and praxis, and continues to reflect how he can involve move beyond polarisation in sport by discussing uncomfortable topics with sport coaches. He is confident in who he is a person, father, and coach, and this confidence is embedded in his intentions, motivations, and actions to create safe sport and advocate for positive social change.

Appendix N – Study Information Letter (Personal Learning Coach)

Coach Information Letter

Study Name: Facilitating Inclusive and Socially Relevant Developmental Sport Climates for Athletes

Principal Investigator: Sara Kramers, PhD Candidate, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa,
[REDACTED]

Thesis Supervisor: Martin Camiré, Associate Professor, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa,
[REDACTED]

Hi!

We are looking for youth sport coaches of competitive teams/programs who are interested in taking part a **season-long collaborative study** to facilitate inclusive and socially relevant developmental sport climates for their athletes. To be eligible, participants must (a) coach a competitive sport team/program/club between winter/spring 2022 and winter/spring 2023, with (b) athletes between the ages of 14-24. The study is being conducted as part of Sara Kramers' PhD thesis and will be conducted solely in English. The new knowledge derived from this study will help instigate a more socially responsible approach to coaching youth sports. Your participation will begin approximately one month before your season starts, for the duration of your season, and approximately one month post-season.

Before your season begins, your participation will include completing **one timeline of your learning journey as a coach (60-120 minutes)** with attention to learning around social justice and lessons learned/taught through sport, **one self-assessment of your life skills teaching (15-20 minutes)**, and **one individual interview (60-90 minutes)** to discuss your timeline and self-assessment scores, as well as your coaching philosophy, sport context, and social justice topics. Social justice refers to identifying the role that privilege, power, and social position have in society, while advocating for equity, diversity, and inclusion. There may be a variety of social justice topics discussed (e.g., gender equity, anti-racism, LGBTQI2S+ inclusion). The interview will be conducted via videoconferencing (e.g., MS Teams, Zoom), take place at a time/place of your choosing, and be audio-video recorded.

Throughout your season, your participation will include working collaboratively with the principal investigator to reflect on your coaching practices and to plan how to implement strategies and activities to create an inclusive and meaningful sport climate for your athletes. Such strategies and activities may be related to addressing social justice issues within sport (e.g., gender equity) and teaching socially relevant life lessons (e.g., being a leader for social change). The reflection and planning will occur through **multiple "coaching conversations"** through different forms (e.g., videoconferencing, emails) and lasting various durations, which will also be audio-video recorded, if possible.

At the end of your season, your participation will include completing **one self-assessment of your life skills teaching (15-20 minutes)** and **one individual interview (60-90 minutes)** to discuss your self-assessment scores, as well as your experiences as a coach throughout your sport season. The interview will be conducted via videoconferencing (e.g., MS Teams, Zoom), take place at a time/place of your choosing, and be audio-video recorded.

It is important to note that the content related to your participation will only be used by the research team. Anonymity will be assured through the use of codes/pseudonyms on all documentation, meaning that identifying information will never be used nor mentioned throughout the research process. Your participation is completely voluntary and your decision to take part (or not) in the study will not, in any way, influence your status as a coach. If you decide to participate, you can remove yourself from the study at any time or refuse to answer any questions. The study is being conducted independently from your sport organization, so that your organization will never know if you agreed to participate or not.

If you have any study-related questions please contact the principal investigator, Sara Kramers or the thesis supervisor, Martin Camiré. For any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this project, please contact the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity at the University of Ottawa, 550 Cumberland, Room 154, Ottawa, ON, K1N 6N5, (613) 562-5387, ethics@uottawa.ca.

If you wish to take part in the study, you can contact Sara Kramers at [REDACTED]

Thank you for your time and assistance.

Sara Kramers

Study Infographic (Personal Learning Coach)

SEEKING RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Do you want to be better prepared to facilitate safe, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate sport climates for your athletes?

WHO ARE WE LOOKING FOR?



Coaches

- Coaching a competitive sport team/program this year
- With athletes between the ages of 14-24



WHAT WILL BE INVOLVED?



Pre-Season:

- Create a timeline of your learning journey as a coach
- Complete a first assessment of your coaching approach
- Take part in a first interview on your expectations surrounding social justice for your upcoming season (approximately 60-90 minutes)



Throughout your Season

- Collaborate with the Principal Investigator to plan and implement strategies to facilitate safe, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate sport climates for your athletes



Post-Season

- Complete a second self-assessment of your coaching approach
- Take part in a second interview on your experiences surrounding social justice in your past season (approximately 60-90 minutes)

INTERESTED?

Contact Sara Kramers at [REDACTED] for more information



Principal Investigator: Sara Kramers, PhD Candidate, [REDACTED]
 Thesis Supervisor: Martin Camiré, Associate Professor, [REDACTED]
 Study approved through the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Ottawa, ethics@uottawa.ca

Appendix O – Pre-Season Interview Guide (Personal Learning Coach)

*Tailored for each coach based on their completed timeline and any initial conversations.

Introduction and Demographics

- Reiterate the purpose of study, remind participants that their participation is voluntary and that they are free to withdraw from the study at any point.
- Ask if they have any questions before beginning and thank them again for their participation.
- Ask demographic information (e.g., age, sex, gender, ethnicity, highest level of education).
- Ask what coach education and coach training they have completed related as a coach.
- Ask if other sources of information are sought out to better their coaching practice (e.g., podcasts, YouTube videos, articles, blogs).

Reviewing the Timeline

1. Can you walk me through your timeline?
 - Why did you use this formatting (e.g., bullet point, short stories)?
 - Do the different colours/sizes of font mean anything?
 - How long did it take you?
 - Did you complete the timeline in one sitting?
 - Did you discuss it with anyone else (e.g., family, peer coaches)?
2. Did you learn anything about yourself from completing the activity?
3. Was completing this activity helpful for triggering new reflections or memories about your past coaching experiences?

Contextualise the Sport Setting

4. If you could write a short story or a film about your coaching experiences, what would it look like?
 - Why do you coach?
 - What is your coaching philosophy?
 - Can you please give me a brief summary of your experience in sports?
5. Can you describe your sport context?
6. Can you describe what the broader community is like where you coach?
7. Can you describe how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected your coaching/your sport since March 2020?
8. How have your athletes coped during the pandemic with the absence of sport? How have you coped?
9. How would you describe the nature of the interactions you have with your athletes?
10. Does reflecting play a role in your coaching practice? Why or why not?

Social Justice in Sport

11. What does the term *social justice* mean to you?
12. What role do you think coaches occupy in addressing issues of social justice with their athletes/teams?
13. What is your level of comfort/confidence with addressing social justice issues in sport, with your team?
14. What is your level of motivation with addressing social justice issues in sport, with your team?
15. What challenges do coaches face in addressing social injustices in sport?

Present Vignette:

16. What are your thoughts of the story? What is resonating with you?
17. What issues do you see present within the story?
 - How would you address similar issues with your team?

- What would you want your athletes to do?
- 18. Have you ever encountered (e.g., experienced yourself or observed) similar instances of social injustice?
 - Different examples? Do you feel comfortable sharing more information about this experience?
- 19. Have you ever encountered (e.g., experienced yourself or observed) instances of social justice or empowerment in your sport context?
 - Do you feel comfortable sharing more information about this experience?
- 20. Why might these topics/issues be important to address in sport?

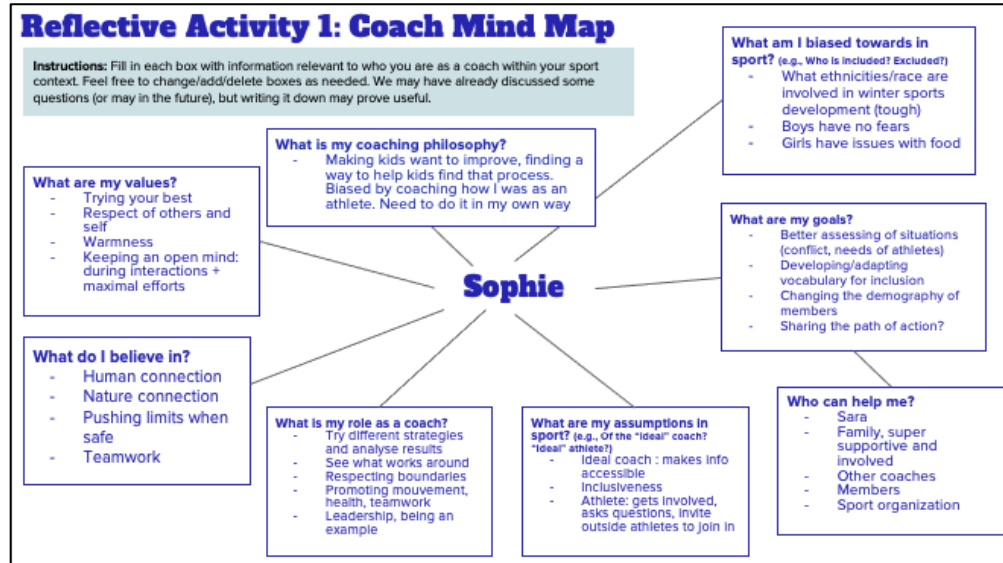
Conclusion

- Based on what we have discussed, would you change/add anything to your timeline? Would you change your self-assessment scores?
- Offer an opportunity to discuss anything further or something that was not touched upon.
- Discuss the collaboration throughout the season (e.g., purpose, timeline, roles, and expectations, how we can communicate and collaborate).
- Offer thanks to the participant and explain how they can be involved in member reflections if desired.

Appendix P – Example of Sophie Meeting Outline

1. How are things going!
2. Questions to ask if Sophie shared an issue that happened in their sport context:
 - Is there another point of view that we could explore?
 - In what way might you have tackled the task differently if the context was different (e.g., not competition)?
 - Are others seeing this issue from different points of view that may be helpful to you to explore?
 - Does this issue relate to other contexts – reflection on which may be helpful?
 - If you took a ‘step back’ from this issue, does it look different?
 - Do you notice that your feelings about this issue have changed over time, or in the course of chatting about it with me now?
3. Are there broader ethical/moral/wider social issues that you would want to explore?
4. Discuss alignment of coach development to transformative leadership:
 - Transformative leadership: grounded in critical theory and begins with critical reflection and analysis, moves to enlightened understandings, and results in action.
 - Requires critical theory to address empowerment gaps – systems and assumptions that perpetuate marginalisation.
 - Can be developed across all social identity groups.
 - Fosters’ competencies, such as examining one’s own participation in control and cultural domination, that aid in ally development.
 - Requires the development and appreciation of one’s privilege and power and the deconstruction and reconstruction of dominant knowledge frameworks.
 - Moral courage – a tenant of transformative leadership – prepares individuals to become more comfortable enacting public identities as agents for change, whether as allies working with or on behalf marginalised groups or as activities organising others to address injustice.
5. Could you describe how your reflections on these topics (of inclusion in sport) have changed since before we met? Since a month ago?
6. How have your reflections on these topics moved from reflections to action? Can you give me an example?
7. What competencies/skills have you learned or refined through this process of reflection?
8. How do you know this has developed further?
9. What do you still want to work on?
10. What gaps have you learned about in skiing/sport culture that may lead to more marginalisation?
11. What does ‘moral courage’ mean to you?

Appendix Q – Sophie Google Slides Examples



Reflective Activity 2: My Reflection Process

Instructions: Answer the following questions as best you can regarding what you currently do to reflect or what you would like to do. Responses can be bullet points, long responses, voice notes, etc. We can discuss your ideal reflection process together.

How do I know what I should reflect on? How do I notice things?

- When something is off, when a message I wanted to give was important to me, when the relationship is important.

Where do I reflect? (in peer discussion, through mentoring situations, in critical friend pairings, etc.)?

- With peers, with family (more teachers), with partner.

How do I record my reflection? (Voice recording, notebook, photographs, etc.)

- I haven't figured out a system that works. When it's = tasks, I write it in my agenda. When it's to much, I open a word document.

How can I find time to reflect?

- I don't fill out my schedule to the max, I spend time with other intervenants, weekly meetings

Do I just reflect about my strengths and weaknesses or about other things?

- I reflect on what I could've/should've said, my feelings, the other's feelings.

Why is it important for me to reflect on my coaching?

- Or else it is just automatic, survival. Time flies without the reflection. I get forgetful.

How can I cope with continuing to reflect when life gets busy?

- I accept that some periods are for improving, others to act and try (with intention or not) things I reflected on.

Reflection Activity 4: Making Sense of your Bias Tests

Instructions: Fill in your responses for each question. Something that may be helpful to keep in mind (and return to) as you continue to work on reducing your implicit biases. We can also talk about this together if you'd like!

What feelings or reactions did you have after learning about your results?

- Guilt, confirmation that I have biases, excitement for change.

What life experiences may have influenced your results? Consider your family/childhood, previous athletic experiences, your coaching experiences, your education, social groups, etc.

- Not many People of Colour in my environment : sport, music, school (handful of friends that are People of Colour)
- Focused lots on: girls in sport (didn't think of it at the time, but mostly white girls)

How might knowing these results impact your future decisions and actions? As a coach? As a teacher? In your broader life?

- I think I would like to share it with other coaches.
- I need to self talk to rewire my brain
- Prioritize the fights I want to fight. Accept I'm putting others a side.

Appendix R – Sophie Post-Season Interview

Catch-Up:

1. How have things been since we last chatted?
 - You've had exit interviews or closing interviews with your competitive athletes? Tell me about them, how do you think they went?
 - You sent me a voice note about one of the athletes wanting to be more inclusive and now you felt more capable in talking to her about inclusion in sport. Tell me more about this? Can you give examples of how you feel you've changed since last year?
2. In December, we discussed 3 main topics to work on together: 1) include athletes with more diverse identities; 2) intervene with conflicts or issues better; and 3) quality delivery of newcomer program. How do you feel now about these topics?
3. What are you working on this summer/off-season?

Experiences during the Collaboration:

4. Tell me about your experiences collaborating with me during the season.
 - What did you learn?
 - What are your perceptions of me as a PLC to support your reflection and coaching? How well did I support you? Challenge you? Did I seem credible enough?
 - When did you really buy-in to the process/collaboration?
 - How was the commitment for this study? Overwhelming? Not enough?
 - Did your coaching approach change from engaging in our coaching conversations? How? In what ways?
5. Walk me through the process of reflection and action we engaged in, what was useful/less useful?
 - What helped you in your self-reflection and learning?
 - What could have been improved?
6. How might other coaches benefit from collaborating with a researcher/practitioner?
 - Was this a good time for you to work with me as a PLC? Or thinking across your coaching career, when would you benefited the most? Earlier? Later? Why?
7. Can you please describe your reflective process now at the end of the season.
 - What has changed since we first met?
 - What worked/did not work?

Social Justice and CPYD:

8. What does the term social justice mean to you now? No matter what your background is, you would like to seek for the same recognition or the equivalent recognition as everybody else.
 - What about safe/inclusive sport? In French inclusion and integration are mixed up often... right now we are going for integration but long term we want inclusion. We have programs for everyone's need, but the atmosphere of the club comes together... there are exchanges within the communities, between all the groups. *Creating safe spaces in bigger groups is difficult for me*
 - What comes does 'meaningful sport' look like or mean for you?
 - How have these definitions changed for you overtime?
9. We discussed how inclusion and competitive sport often clash. What are your thoughts now?
 - Can competitive sport be inclusive and safe and meaningful?
 - Can competitive sport change if the system stays the same?
 - What is your role in this process as a coach?
 - What can others do? Athletes, coaches, parents, board members, etc.
10. What gaps have you learned about in skiing/sport culture that may lead to more marginalisation?
11. How did you navigate this season with your multiple identities? As a white queer person?

12. You brought up the idea of white ignorance once, tell me about this. What drew you to this topic? What did you think/resonate with?
 - How do you navigate skiing as a predominantly white space?
 - What kind of privileges do you reflect on as a white woman coaching skiing?
 - You took implicit biases tests back at the beginning of our collaboration. How do you feel about these biases and assumptions now (e.g., race)?
13. After many hours of chatting and reflecting and coaching:
 - What is your confidence/comfort in advocating for social change in sport?
 - What is your motivation for advocating for social change in sport?
 - How would you rank your ability to critically reflect on how oppression is created and sustained through systems of power? Take critical action?
14. If we think of a continuum, with being reactive/non-intentional on one end, and proactive/intentional on the other. Where would you place yourself now at the end of the season, regarding how you dealt with social justice issues in sport?
 - Why? Examples?
 - How (if at all) has this changed over the season?
 - When would you decide to bring an expert in to help?
15. What risks may your athletes face if they speak out against oppression or social injustices?
16. You talked last time about needing to build rapport with athletes or people in general before making an impact. How do you build this rapport? (April: feels small because only few people know about newcomer program – would need to have a larger leadership role; impact on newcomer youth/families; impact to transform the club)

Athlete Learning/Development:

22. What do you think your competitive athletes developed/learned from you this season? (November: responsibility, time management, organisational skills; January: self-worth, confidence)
23. Do you feel that you helped to develop your competitive athletes' critical thinking or reflective skills? So, they can be more aware of social justice issues in sport?
24. Do you feel that your athletes developed any awareness for their identities and social positions (e.g., privilege as athletes, as white people, as middle class)?
25. Do you feel that your athletes now feel more capable, confident, or motivated to be an advocate or ally for social change?
26. What (if anything) do you wish your athletes would not learn from being a competitive athlete?
27. Were there any examples you can think of realising that an athlete was using their learned life skills beyond skiing? At home, school, etc.?
28. Again, if we think of a continuum, with being reactive/non-intentional on one end, and proactive/intentional on the other. Where would you place yourself now at the end of the season, regarding how you taught your athletes life skills (beyond physical skills)?
29. What skills/lessons would you want your athletes to develop next season?

Wrap Up:

30. Are you happy with your participation in this study? Why/why not?
31. How can I help you moving forward?
32. Thank you!