DEVELOPING GENDER EFFECTIVE COACHES: ADDRESSING THE KNOWLEDGE TO APPLICATION GAP

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been an increase in opportunities for women and girls in sport in Canada. Yet, biases, stereotypes, and norms about gender remain deeply embedded within sport culture (Goorevich & LaVoi, 2025), affecting girls and women across the landscape. The purpose of this doctoral dissertation was to provide coaches with evidence-based tools for their pursuit of gaining confidence in addressing and deconstructing gender beliefs that affect their coaching practice through three interconnected studies. The studies included: (1) the narrative exploration of gender beliefs and the impact they have on coaching methodologies, athlete interactions, and self-confidence; (2) the creation of a gender-related coaching self-efficacy scale; and (3) the exploration of coaches' knowledge-to-action processes through the lens of social learning. In this pursuit, I aimed to support coaches in their development of gender responsive and transformative practices to better address the needs of girls in sport. A pragmatic philosophical orientation, informed epistemologically by social constructionism, was used in this dissertation research. In line with pragmatism, a mixed methods design approach was executed taking into consideration four theoretical frameworks including a combined model of coach self-efficacy (Feltz et al., 1999) and coach effectiveness (Horn, 2002; 2008; Côté & Gilbert, 2009), Wenger's (1998) theory of social learning and communities of practice, and Goorevich and LaVoi's (2025) continuum of gendered sport coach discourses. The results of this inquiry are presented through three articles.

In the first study, entirely qualitative in nature, I present composite vignettes that explored the diverse and context-dependent experiences of coaches coaching girls, further nuanced by the lived realities of women coaches. Data collection consisted of focus groups with 20 coaches ranging in sport and coaching experience. This narrative inquiry aims to illustrate

how coaching philosophies and practices are socially shaped through gendered discourses operating within sport. As a result of the findings from this examination, potential items for the scale development study were created. The need for more opportunities for coaches to develop self-awareness regarding their gender biases, reflect, and deconstruct their gender beliefs to make changes to their coaching practices was also highlighted as future areas for growth in coach education.

The second study was conducted through a mixed methods approach, consisting of the development and primary validation of the Girls-Centred Coaching Self-Efficacy Scale (GCSES). The scale development process followed previously established methodological guidelines (i.e., Boateng et al., 2018) with an initial 87 items being created through theory-driven item construction, coach focus groups (n = 20), expert review (n = 6), and cognitive interviews with coaches (n = 4). The revised instrument after this process included 31 items and was administered to 216 sport coaches. An exploratory factor analysis supported a four-factor structure for 23 final items accounting for 54.9% of the variance with strong internal consistency across subscales (α = .80–.92). Subscales include: (1) gender literacy in coaching, (2) understanding gendered sport experiences, (3) fostering gender-inclusive sport, and (4) girl-centred coaching practices. The findings from this study provide evidence for the GCSES to be used as a context-specific tool for evaluations and interventions aimed at advancing gender responsive and transformative coaching practices.

The third study used a mixed methods quasi-experimental design, exploring coaches' knowledge-to-action processes related to their girl-centred coaching self-efficacy through a combined online and social learning intervention. Twenty-five coaches took part in one of two conditions over a five-month period, either completing the series of Coaching HER's

foundational eLearning modules by themselves or engaging in a community of practice (CoP; Wenger, 1998) concurrent with the eLearning modules. Coaches in both groups took the GCSES pre- and post-intervention, and data were analyzed using mixed ANOVAs. Participants in the CoP condition were also invited to partake in a focus group (n = 6) grounded in the value creation framework (VCF; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020) to explore how value was created through their participation in the CoP. Effect and contribution data were collected throughout the intervention period (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2019). Although the study was underpowered to detect statistically significant differences between conditions, coaches who engaged in the CoP condition demonstrated small trends of mean improvements across all GCSES factors compared to the eLearning condition. Qualitative data, presented through two value creation stories (VCSs; Wenger-Trayner et al., 2019) and individual value cycle examples, aided in providing insight into the GCSES results as well as how coaches in the CoP condition translated learnings into changes to their practices. Altogether, the findings from the final study in this dissertation suggested that engagement in a CoP fostered opportunities for self-reflection, accountability, and contextual application of knowledge. Recommendations included the continued use of social learning in tandem with eLearning for coaching education to better support coaches' knowledge-to-action processes and the value of mixed methods research in this domain.

The results of this doctoral dissertation aim to provide an evidence-based foundation for understanding, measuring, and supporting coaches' development toward more girl-centred and gender-equitable coaching practices. Collectively, the findings advance both theory and practice by offering practical tools, empirical evidence, and a conceptual framework to guide future

coach education, research, and organizational efforts aimed at fostering meaningful and sustainable gender equity in sport.

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List of Acronyms

ANOVA: mixed design analysis of variance
CAC: Coaching Association of Canada
CEM: Coaching Efficacy Model
CES: Coach Efficacy Scale
CH: CoachingHER
CoP: community of practice
CSEBIS: Coach Self-Efficacy Body Image Scale
CWIS: Canadian Women and Sport
DEI: diversity, equity, and inclusion
EFA: exploratory factor analysis
E-L: eLearning
GCSES: Girls-Centred Coaching Self-Efficacy Scale
GEGS: Gender Essentialist Beliefs Towards Girls in Sport Scale
GES: Gender Equity Scale
KGIS: Keeping Girls in Sport
KMO: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure
J-I-T: just in time knowledge
LSS: Leadership in Sport Scale
NCCP: National Coaching Certification Program
PACE: Program for Athletic Coaches
PFA: principal axis factoring
S-E: self-efficacy
SoLID: Social Learning, Innovation and Development in Sport Lab
TNA: thematic narrative analysis
VCF: value creation framework
VCS: value creation story

Introduction

Introduction

Sport has long been recognized as a powerful context for promoting physical, psychological, and social development (Goorevich & LaVoi, 2025). Yet, despite much progress over the last few decades in increasing girls' participation, sport continues to reflect broader societal inequities that privilege boys, men, and dominant forms of masculinity (de Haan & Knoppers, 2020). Although opportunities for girls and women have expanded considerably, participation alone has not eliminated the gendered assumptions, organizational practices, and cultural norms that shape athletes' and coaches' experiences (Meier, 2015; Norman et al., 2018). Girls continue to leave sport at disproportionately higher rates than boys in Canada, and women remain underrepresented throughout coaching and sport leadership (Canadian Women and Sport, 2022; 2026). As a result, many girls continue to encounter sport environments that do not fully support their needs, identities, or long-term participation (Burton, 2015). These persistent disparities suggest that improving access alone is insufficient; attention must also be directed towards the quality of girls' sport experiences and the social environments in which they exist.

Among the many impactful actors in a girl's sport environment, the coach occupies a particularly influential position (Weiss et al., 2012). Coaches shape not only athletes' technical development but also psychological components such as their motivation, confidence, sense of belonging, and perceptions of what is possible in sport. Through everyday interactions, coaching behaviours may either reinforce dominant gender norms or challenge them, creating environments that support girls' continued participation and development (Goorevich & LaVoi, 2025). Consequently, coaching represents one of the most promising yet underexplored avenues for advancing gender equity in sport.

Although increasing attention in the field has been paid to the development of gender responsive and transformative coaching, most research has focused on identifying barriers and facilitators experienced by girls or describing characteristics of 'effective' coaching (Jones et al., 2019). Comparatively, little attention has been dedicated to understanding coaches' gender beliefs, how these beliefs shape their practices, or how coaches can be supported to critically examine and reflect on how they can transform these beliefs (Goorevich et al., 2025). Existing coach education has traditionally emphasized technical and sport-specific competencies, with relatively little attention dedicated to the development of coaches' capacity to recognize and address the social and cultural dimensions of gender. Consequently, advancing gender equity requires more than disseminating evidence-based recommendations; it requires supporting coaches to critically reflect upon, question, and reconstruct the assumptions that underpin their coaching practice (Norman, 2016).

Recognizing these challenges, this dissertation adopted a programme of research designed to better understand, measure, and support coaches' development toward gender-equitable coaching. Rather, coaches must be supported to critically reflect on the gendered assumptions that shape their coaching philosophies and practices while developing the confidence to translate this knowledge into action. Accordingly, this dissertation draws upon theories of coaching efficacy (Feltz et al., 1999), coaching effectiveness (Horn, 2002; Côté & Gilbert, 2009), social learning theory (Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020), and gendered discourses (Goorevich & LaVoi, 2025) to conceptualize coach learning as an ongoing, socially situated process through which coaches negotiate and reconstruct their understandings of gender.

To address these gaps, this doctoral research comprises three interconnected studies founded on the premise that advancing gender equity in sport requires transforming not only what coaches know, but also how they understand, question, and enact coaching practice within gendered sport systems (Jones et al., 2019). This inquiry was framed within a pragmatic philosophical orientation and employed a mixed methods research design. In the first study, I explored coaches' gender beliefs and how these beliefs inform coaching practices. Building upon these findings, in the second study, we developed and validated the Girl-Centred Coaching Self-Efficacy Scale (GCSES) to assess coaches' confidence in addressing gender-related dimensions of their coaching practice. Finally, for the third study, I examined whether combining an evidence-informed eLearning course with a community of practice (CoP; Wenger, 1998) enhanced coaches' knowledge-to-action processes and girl-centred coaching self-efficacy. Together, these studies sought to understand, measure, and support coaches' development toward gender responsive and transformative coaching practices. The findings from this research aim to make conceptual, methodological, and practical contributions through greater insight into coaches' gender beliefs, the introduction of a novel measure of girl-centred coaching self-efficacy, and the evaluation of an innovative approach to coach education grounded in social learning. In doing so, this work contributes evidence to support actors within the Canadian sport landscape in fostering equitable and inclusive sport environments for girls and women.

Chapter 1: Review of Literature

Literature Review

Girls' drop-out from sport is historically a well-documented and researched topic within the field of sport psychology (e.g., Blinde et al., 1993). A corresponding body of empirical research has since propelled this area of research further by investigating the barriers and facilitators to girls' sport participation. Some of the most cited barriers include economic status (e.g., Coakley, 2009), structural inequities (e.g., Kimm et al., 2002), and negative experiences as a result of identity characteristics other than gender (e.g., sexuality; Denison et al., 2020). While facilitators include opportunities to develop competence and confidence (e.g., Weiss et al., 2009); supportive relationships with coaches and peers (e.g., Fraser-Thomas et al., 2008; Ullrich-French & Smith, 2009); and fun, inclusive, autonomy supportive environments (e.g., Visek et al., 2015). Highlighted in all this work is the impact of the interactions and relationships with significant individuals in the sport environment, such as parents, coaches, and peers (Weiss et al., 2012). Indeed, most developmental theories feature the importance of social relationships for positive psychological development and past research in the field has explored how parents and coaches impact young female[1] athletes' self-perceptions (e.g., Amorose, 2002; Sabiston & Crocker, 2008), enjoyment (e.g., Dixon et al., 2008), and motivational orientations and behaviours (e.g., Weiss et al., 2009).

The Role of the Coach

Despite the important role other social actors play in a girl's sport experience, the role of the coach is particularly integral. Coaches influence not only athletes' physical and psychological development through their behaviours, attitudes, and interactions (such as their feedback patterns, motivational climate they create, and leadership style); they also play a role in

[1] Gender language (i.e., girls and women, boys and men) is used throughout the dissertation except in the case where I refer to a specific study in which the author(s) uses sex language (i.e., male/female) in which case the language of the dissertation follows that of the article.

determining the extent to which the sport environment is inclusive and equitable. For girls and other gender-diverse youth, a coach's influence is especially salient as they have the power to either challenge or reinforce harmful gender norms. When it comes to the psychological development of girls and gender-diverse youth in particular, stereotypes and norms have a significant impact. For instance, coaches' reinforcement and feedback patterns are consistently tied to girl athletes' experiences in sport, and most commonly coaches will base the quantity and quality of their feedback on their expectations of girls' ability levels (Horn et al., 2015). In sport, girls are assumed to be less physically able than boys, which has historically led to less instructional feedback and inappropriately high levels of positive reinforcement (Horn, 1985; Goorevich & LaVoi, 2025). Such inadequate feedback has been shown to exacerbate post-pubertal gender differences in physical capabilities and in turn, perpetuate harmful gender norms (Horn, 1985; Avner et al., 2025a). Relatedly, a coach's motivational climate can be based upon their definition of success, practice structures, and performance evaluations (Ames, 1992; Harwood et al., 2015). Weiss and colleagues (2009) found that female adolescent athletes preferred when their coaches placed a greater emphasis on a mastery climate (i.e., emphasizing effort, learning, and improvement) as opposed to a performance climate (i.e., emphasizing social comparison and winning), leading to greater enjoyment, perceived competence, and intrinsic motivation to participate. As such, coaches who use self-reference criteria as opposed to norm-reference criteria to define success enhance girls' thoughts, feelings, and behaviours regarding their sport skills (Weiss, 2009). In connection with a mastery climate orientation, autonomy-supportive coach behaviours also lead to increased positive emotions, greater perceived competence (Reynolds & McDonough, 2015), and self-determined motivation (Kipp & Weiss,

2013) in pre- and post-pubertal girls. Finally, female athletes who perceived higher levels of social support from their coaches also tended to remain in sport longer (Dishman et al., 2009).

In spite of these 'best practices' identified by leaders in the field, and the potential for perpetuating harmful gender norms, research still suggests that 'issues with their coaches' is one of the most common reasons for which girls drop out of sport (Stewart & Taylor, 2000; Crane & Temple, 2015). Many coaches do not sufficiently prioritize the needs of their girl athletes (i.e., relatedness; Norman, 2015) and girls' voices are often left unheard due to the patriarchal nature of most sport programs (Ekholm et al., 2019). Indeed, current research in coach education has identified several girl-specific topics still lacking training, such as gender equity (Norman, 2021), body image (Silva-Breen et al., 2022), and mental health (Ferguson et al., 2019). Current 'effective' coaching practices tend to be based on societal beliefs about women, such as their physiology, and entrenched gender stereotypes (Jones et al., 2019). The use of sport science knowledge to guide 'best coaching practices' does not consider the continually evolving sport landscape, the need to challenge the current status quo, nor the fact that the coaching process is likely to be received and learned differently between men and women because of differing gender socialization experiences (LaVoi, 2007). Additionally, the ongoing underrepresentation of women and gender-diverse people in coaching and sport leadership means that many coaches (unintentionally) operate within frameworks that contribute to the overall gendering of coaching and the perpetuation of harmful gender norms (Norman & Rankin-Wright, 2016). Critics argue that opportunities for women and girls' sport participation have increased since the introduction of Title IX (Abney & Richey, 1992; Francis, 1993), yet drop-out rates remain high, which points to the enduring need to develop more effective approaches to coaching girls and women (Meier, 2015; LaVoi, 2016).

According to the types of knowledge for effective coaching put forth by Côté and Gilbert (2009), a coach is often required to improvise and rely on professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge to create successful outcomes. Yet, LaVoi and colleagues (2007) argue in the discussion of coach effectiveness that a coach's gender beliefs have not been adequately addressed despite the salient role they play in informing coaching practices. Coaches who embody a gender essentialist perspective especially fail to acknowledge that all girls do not share the same experiences or identities, and ignore such differences in identities between girls and women based on identifying characteristics such as race, nationality, socio-economic status, religion, sexual orientation, ability, etc. (Allison, 2020; Simien et al., 2019). Gender essentialism, defined as the belief that men and women categorically possess separate and unchanging physical, social, and personality traits (Allison, 2018), perpetuates gender stereotypes and masculine dominance in sport and society broadly (Dzubinski & Diehl, 2018; Skewes et al., 2018). According to Kirton and Greene (2021), essentialist thinking posits that men and women have distinct, yet complementary characteristics also known as "essences" (p. 4) and fundamentally, essentialism is based on a gender binary (i.e., two-sex model) that does not consider any gender diversity not fitting within the 'man/woman' binary (Allison, 2018). Some notable examples of how gender essentialist thinking has limited or restricted the concept of gender in sport is through the discourse that women and girls are 'special' and possess 'unique' characteristics that need to be addressed when compared to coaching men (de Haan & Knoppers, 2020, Jones & Avner, 2020) or that men are physically superior to women (i.e., justifying the establishment of men and masculinity as the norm in sport environments; Allison, 2018).

Sport Coaching as a Gendered Practice

Recently, there has been a move towards recognizing how the coaching environment is influenced by deeply embedded societal gender norms and organizational cultures that privilege men, masculinity, and heteronormativity (Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2006; Goorevich & LaVoi, 2025). This work has opened the door for exploration on the impacts of gender essentialist beliefs and biases related to coaching girls (LaVoi et al., 2007; Messner, 2009; 2011; LaVoi, 2016), creating the opportunity for more thoughtful dialogue around coaching girls. Recognizing sport coaching as a gendered practice, scholars have argued for coach education that moves beyond technical instruction to foster "gender-responsive" (Norman, 2016) or "gender-effective" (Jones et al., 2019) approaches. Such approaches emphasize helping coaches critically examine the gendered assumptions embedded within their coaching. Research into gender responsiveness in coaching has followed four focus areas (Avner et al., 2025b) including: (1) if and how gender affects the coach-athlete relationship (e.g., Norman, 2016), (2) girls' and women's preferences related to their coaches' behaviours and practices (e.g., Stewart, 2016), (3) understanding the gendered assumptions and discourses which shape coaches' understanding of how to coach girls and women (e.g., Goorevich & LaVoi, 2025), and (4) the creation and evaluation of coach development interventions (e.g., Clarke et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, relatively little empirical work has examined the nature or prevalence of gendered beliefs (research focus area #3) among youth sport coaches working with girls, highlighting an important gap in the literature. In this pursuit, Goorevich and LaVoi (2025) proposed the continuum of coach discourses (further explained in the Theoretical Frameworks section of this dissertation), which presents the different ways in which coaches utilize gendered discourses, including gender essentialist, gender-blind or neutral, gender sensitive, gender responsive, and gender transformative. In their study, Goorevich & LaVoi (2025) found that the

most common gendered coach discourses were gender essentialist in nature. These included positive and negative stereotypes related to girls' and boys' physical (e.g., girls' bodies are weaker than boys – negative) and psychological (e.g., girls are better at following instructions than boys – positive). These differences demonstrate how entrenched these beliefs are in society. Comparatively, there were also examples of gender blind/neutral discourses (e.g., coaching girls is no different than coaching boys). These discourses reflect the traditional approaches prevalent in most coach education and illuminate the problems associated with coaches who say they just coach the individual (de Haan & Knoppers, 2020). Finally, examples of gender sensitive (e.g., the sport system does not support women coaches), responsive (e.g., girls may need more help with transportation to and from sport), or transformative (e.g., coaches should take up feminist pedagogy training) discourses were few and far between, with a lot of room for development in these areas (Goorevich & LaVoi, 2025).

Relatedly, previous intervention work grounded through a gender transformative lens has mostly focused on preventing gender-based violence in low- and middle-income countries in the international development scholarship (Mmari et al., 2024). According to this work, gender transformative interventions have been initiated to create more gender equitable relationships through the transformation of gender norms, attitudes, and roles (Gupta, 2000; MacArther et al., 2022). Additionally, the term "gender transformative" in this context is not to be confused with the use of this term related to changing gender identities (Mmari et al., 2024). In sport, gender transformative coaching builds upon the previous calls for gender responsive and/or effective coaching by taking a proactive approach in centring the lives, experience, and needs of girls with the ultimate goal of changing systemic structural integrities (Goorevich & LaVoi, 2025). Examples of gender transformative discourses function as "counter-discourses, privilege feminist

and anti-essentialist ideologies, and directly challenge masculine power norms in sport coaching" (p. 616).

Improving Coaches' Confidence for Coaching Girls

There is a need for coach education programs to move beyond the discussion of barriers and facilitators for girls' sport participation. Currently, most materials in coach education programs limit gender to biological differences (such as strength or puberty) and utilize boys, men, and masculinity as the normative performance standards (LaVoi et al., 2007; Allen & Shaw, 2009). Such programs tend to dismiss gender differences around motives for sport participation, the needs of girls in sport contexts, and how to challenge gendered beliefs about girls and other gender diverse youth. Furthermore, the effectiveness of traditional coaching behaviours is rarely challenged in coach education, which is problematic considering women and men participate in sport for different reasons and may therefore respond to coaching techniques differently (Stewart & Taylor, 2000). The idea of creating a 'model for effective coaching' has been discussed in coaching scholarship (Avner et al., 2025a); however, this standardized language assumes there is one truth and fails to teach coaches how to critically reflect on their and their athletes' socializations, and in turn, impact their coaching practices (Jones et al., 2019). Some research has explored teacher biases surrounding gender in physical education (Davis, 2003), and the introduction of gender equity training (Norman, 2021), but this remains insufficient in terms of changing coaches' behaviours around coaching girls and other gender diverse youth. Coaches perpetuate these essentialist discourses (both explicitly and implicitly), through gender stereotypes, biases, and gender blindness or neutrality, which negatively impact the experiences of girls in sport (Goorevich & LaVoi, 2025). Thus, there is an increasing need to problematize current instructional/relational approaches for coaching girls, as limited research

has explored this space (Jones & Avner, 2020). Furthermore, there is a need for research on the presence and prevalence of coaches' gender essentialist or gender-blind beliefs in relation to their women-identifying athletes. In order to see advancement in these areas of research, work must be done with coaches to advance their understanding of gender responsive/effective coaching, move them towards more transformational practices, and build confidence in their abilities to use such knowledge in their practice.

One could argue that there is a need to develop coaches' efficacy beliefs (i.e., confidence) around addressing gender in sport. Coaching efficacy is defined in the literature as "the extent to which coaches believe they have the capacity to affect the learning and performance of their athletes" (Feltz et al., 1999, p. 765). This concept has been traditionally assessed across four dimensions: game strategy, motivation, teaching technique, and character building. According to the model developed by Feltz and colleagues (1999; see Appendix A), coaching efficacy is influenced by numerous antecedents, including coaching experience and training, prior success, perceived ability of athletes, and school or community support. Coaching efficacy impacts coaching behaviour and the satisfaction, performance, and efficacy beliefs of both players and teams (Feltz et al., 1999). The original Coach Self-Efficacy Scale (CES; Feltz et al., 1999) was developed and tested on high school and collegiate coaches (Myers et al., 2008) but then validated for youth sport coaches (Feltz et al., 2009) and in the context of volunteer coaches (Feltz et al., 2009) in later iterations. From a gender lens, past research has suggested that men typically score higher on the game strategy dimension while women tend to score higher on the character-building dimension (Feltz et al., 2008), but that is the extent of the research being conducted related to gender differences. The CES is frequently used in the context of coaching science research to assess coaches' efficacy beliefs in various contexts but has yet to be used in

the context of gender beliefs. Relatedly, given the historical and contemporary dominance of boys and men as athletes, sport coaches, and sport leaders, coach ideologies about gender (i.e., that privilege men and masculinity) have remained unchallenged (Jones et al., 2019; Adams, 2020). One way we might be able to contribute to the reversal of these norms in sport is using a self-report inventory that reliably assesses coaches' self-efficacy related to their gender beliefs, which may impact their coaching practice with girls, positively or negatively. According to Young and colleagues (2020), self-report inventories are a beneficial component in the pursuit of creating more formalized coach development protocols whereby coaches have access to multiple sources of feedback to reflect on and advance their practice. As such, exploring coaches' confidence in their gender beliefs and how they impact their practices can be beneficial in illuminating ways in which we may be able to reverse the effect of the masculine dominance in sport, and provide better, more inclusive sport opportunities for generations of girls to come.

Chapter 2: Research Purposes

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this dissertation research project was to provide coaches with evidence-based tools in their pursuit of gaining confidence in addressing and deconstructing gender beliefs that affect their coaching practices. Such tools included a coach self-efficacy scale to predict and assess coaches' gender-related beliefs and, as a result, their behaviours, which was then used to evaluate coaches' practices and act as an assessment tool for the piloting of the CoachingHER (CH) intervention. Another tool, the CH coach education program, launched in 2023, aimed to address these gaps and improve coach efficacy in coaching girls. In line with the assumptions of the CH tool, the term 'girl' used throughout this document refers to any athlete who is younger than 25 years old and identifies as female. I note here that 'girls' are not a monolithic group and can only be delineated by age. This definition does not take into consideration the differing experiences girls experience in sport and physical activity because of their multiple and intersecting identities and the social, environmental, and cultural factors around them (Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport, 2018). Finally, as previous coach education scholarship has noted (Nash & Sproule, 2012), the introduction of curricula is often insufficient in the pursuit of changes to coaching practice. As such, this project also included a social learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) component wherein girls' sport coaches had the opportunity to engage in a community of practice (CoP; Wenger, 1998) as this 'untraditional' learning approach has been found to be successful in closing the knowledge to application gap for coaches in the context of women's sport (e.g., Kraft et al., 2021). The findings from this research aimed to contribute to gender equity in sport through the creation of a scale measuring coaches' self-efficacy related to their own gender beliefs and by increasing the implementation

of evidence-based coach education programs (i.e., CH) with the intention of keeping more girls in sport and advancing gender equity in sport more broadly.

Research Questions and Goals

Maxwell's (2013) approach to research design defined the function of research questions (RQs) as what is intended to be learned or understood. The present RQs were constructed through the consideration of validity, the conceptual framework, the goals of the research, and the proposed methods. These RQs were adapted slightly from those in the proposal in line with the exploratory mixed methods approach to the research. Four RQs guided this research including: RQ1) What are coaches' gender beliefs about coaching girls? RQ2) How do coaches' gender beliefs affect how they coach girls? RQ3) What are the underlying dimensions of coaches' gender-related self-efficacy? and RQ4) How is the knowledge-to-action process for gender transformative coaching practice impacted by supplementing eLearning modules with a CoP initiative? The overall objective of the project was driven by
my personal desire to train coaches to provide girls with a better sport experience. This statement provided the overarching reasoning for embarking on this project, connected all four research goals (RGs) to the RQs (Maxwell, 2013). The RGs included: RG1a (intellectual) to develop a tool to predict and assess coaches' gender beliefs, and, as a result, their behaviours that could then be used in RG1b (intellectual) to evaluate the coaches' practices and act as an assessment tool for future gender-based interventions. The other RGs were: RG2 (intellectual) to provide coaches with an opportunity to explore gender responsive coaching through the piloting of a series of online eLearning modules; and RG3 (practical/personal) to better understand how coaches move along the gendered discourses continuum and aim to apply gender transformative principles to their coaching practice.

Philosophical Positioning

Historically, there has been a vigorous debate between quantitative and qualitative purists who both equally assert their philosophical positions as superior (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). On the one hand, quantitative positivists believe that social science research should be objective, and researchers must remain emotionally unattached and uninvolved with the objects of study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). On the other hand, qualitative purists argue for constructivism, relativism, humanism, and sometimes postmodernism among a few of the most dominant positions. They also argue that the subject is not the only source of reality, and that there are multiple realities co-constructed within the social world in which both the researcher(s) and the subject(s) exist (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This disagreement led to an *incompatibility thesis* (Howe, 1988) positing that quantitative and qualitative research paradigms, and their associated methods, should not be mixed. Enter a third potential research paradigm salient for my dissertation – mixed methods, which is also frequently referred to as the "third wave" or a third research movement. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) define mixed methods as "the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts, or language into a single study" (p. 17). Gaining momentum over the last few decades, the goal of mixed methods is not to emphasize the use of one approach over the other, but instead to utilize the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both approaches (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In the literature, pragmatism (according to Charles Sanders Pierce, William James, or John Dewey) has long been promoted as a way to execute mixed methods research and address the dualism of methods previously argued against by purists from both camps. As such, this dissertation was situated specifically within a pragmatic philosophical orientation while drawing on social constructionist assumptions

to understand coaches' experiences and meaning making. Rather than positioning quantitative and qualitative methods as philosophically incompatible, pragmatism views different forms of evidence as complementary tools that can be combined to generate useful knowledge capable of informing practices (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008). Pragmatism is particularly well suited to research seeking to address complex, real-world problems, such as the exploration of gender beliefs, because it prioritizes the research question over allegiance to any single philosophical tradition (Morgan, 2007; Biesta, 2010; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Furthermore, past research exploring scale development has also utilized a pragmatic viewpoint (e.g., Koskey, 2016).

The overarching aim of this dissertation was not simply to describe coaches' beliefs about gender but to develop practical knowledge capable of supporting more equitable coaching practices. Consequently, the research combined qualitative and quantitative approaches across two out of the three studies, using each method where it was most appropriate to answer the research questions. At the same time, this pragmatic orientation was informed by a social constructionism understanding that coaches' beliefs, identities, and coaching practices are socially constructed through interactions with broader cultural, organizational, and historical contexts. This perspective recognizes that knowledge about gender and coaching is neither objective nor fixed but continuously negotiated through social experiences beyond individual ones (Crotty, 1998).

Ontology

From an ontological perspective, this dissertation adopts a relativist position, recognizing that multiple realities exist and are shaped by individuals' social experiences and interactions (Lincoln et al., 2018; Crotty, 1998). Coaches participating in this research were understood to

experience and interpret gender differently depending on their coaching contexts, personal histories, organizational cultures, and broader societal discourses. Consequently, no single objective reality of 'gender-equitable coaching' was assumed to exist in line with the scholars in this field who opine that 'best practices' for coaching do not take into consideration how the sport landscape evolves and the differing socialization processes of one's gender (LaVoi, 2007; Jones et al., 2019). Rather, we believe that the coach participants constructed different understandings of coaching girls, which were influenced by the social environments in which they coached.

Although the dissertation acknowledges the existence of material structures within sport (e.g., organizational policies, participation opportunities, and historical gender inequities), the focus was on understanding how coaches interpreted and responded to these structures within their own coaching practice. This relativist ontology therefore allowed multiple perspectives to coexist while recognizing that these perspectives emerge within broader social and cultural systems rather than in isolation.

Epistemology

Epistemologically, this dissertation was informed by social constructionism, which assumes that knowledge is created and reproduced through social interaction, dialogue, and shared interpretation rather than discovered as an objective truth (Crotty, 1998). From this perspective, coaches' understandings of gender, coaching competence, and equitable practice are viewed as socially produced through their interactions with athletes, other coaches, coach education, dominant cultural discourses, and power relations surrounding sport. The social constructionist lens shifts focus from the individual to society, arguing that what we understand as 'truth' is produced through language, social interaction, culture, institutions, and history

(Crotty, 1998). An example of such a 'truth' in the context of this research is: Why do coaches believe girls are naturally less competitive than boys? And how does society teach a coach to understand gender in this way? From the social constructionist perspective, this belief is not simply an individual's opinion but is produced through sport culture, coach education, historical gender norms, organizational practices, and even a coach's everyday conversations; shifting the focus away from the individual and towards how shared understandings are created and reproduced. This approach is further conceptualized through a social critical theory (Denison et al., 2013) lens in Article One.

This epistemological position informed both the generation and interpretation of data throughout the dissertation. Quantitative methods were employed to examine patterns across participants and to evaluate changes in coaches' gender-related self-efficacy; however, these findings were interpreted as contextually situated representations rather than objective or universal truths – also subscribing to the belief that there are patterns in quantitative data that cannot always be explained by numbers alone. Concurrently, qualitative methods (i.e., focus groups, interviews, and a community of practice) were used to explore how coaches collectively constructed meaning around gender and coaching. The researcher was therefore viewed as an active participant in the co-construction of knowledge rather than a detached observer (Lincoln et al., 2018). In keeping with a pragmatic orientation, the integration of qualitative and quantitative evidence enabled a rich understanding of the research problem while maintaining sensitivity to the socially constructed nature of coaching knowledge (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Chapter 3: Research Context

Research Context

Existing Programs and Research on Coaching Girls

There are a few examples of coach education resources aimed at improving girls' experiences in sport, in Canada. Most notably, Keeping Girls in Sport (KGIS), launched in 2018, is a paid online resource comprising four modules to "help coaches and youth activity leaders create safe and respectful environments for female athletes" (Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, n.d., p. 1) developed in partnership with Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, Canadian Women & Sport (CWIS), the Respect Group, and the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC). Key topics include participation trends of girls in sport, drop-out factors, types of injuries and prevention strategies specific to female athletes, and suggestions for keeping girls engaged in sport. This resource was unique at the time because it required participants to complete a self-assessment of their coaching philosophy at the beginning of the modules and a re-assessment at the end of the modules. This emphasis on self-reflection is crucial for the potential integration of past experiences and new knowledge according to many learning theorists (e.g., Jarvis, 2006). According to the evaluation of the program done by Szabo and colleagues (2023), overall, coaches responded positively to the KGIS module and listed numerous changes to their practice as a result (e.g., confidence in their abilities to create positive and trusting relationships with others, especially athletes' parents). The authors did not include the use of any quantitative measures to assess coaches' confidence or changes to their practice. They also highlighted the need for follow-up support for coaches to enhance learning and impact on practice (Szabo et al., 2023).

Despite these advances in our understanding of what girls need to stay in sport, and the evaluation of the KGIS program, current "effective" coaching practices are still reflective of

societal beliefs about females (Jones et al., 2019) and demonstrate a gap in the knowledge translation process. While the creation of a model for effective coaching of girls seems the likely next step, this approach assumes there is one single truth about women and sport without addressing the need for coaches to critically reflect on their socialization experiences and those of their athletes, and how these may impact their practices. Jones and colleagues (2019) argued that coaches who are capable of problematizing current effective practices and questioning assumed truths informed by existing cultural, physiological, and psychological assumptions surrounding gender can provide more gender effective coaching to girls. The goal is not to develop a best practice per se, but to restructure how we relate to and work with the idea of best practices and question these within our own social context.

Gender equity organizations, such as CWIS, have informally called on researchers to develop more gender responsive coaching resources (Rally Report, 2022) based on the fact girls are treated and experience the world differently than boys simply because they are girls. The CH tool is a salient example here. It was created by the Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport at the University of Minnesota, spearheaded by Dr. Nicole M. LaVoi. CH is a free "evidence-based, rigorously tested tool for sport coaches of girls that challenges the status quo and the taken-for-granted assumptions of what it means to coach girls" (CoachingHER, n.d., p. 1). The goal of the tool is to help coaches minimize gender inequalities and coach differently (i.e., girl-focused, gender-responsive). CH is a continually evolving tool, comprised of asynchronous eLearning modules. The CH program began with six foundational modules about coaching girls in sport and more recently has two new sets of modules on menstrual health and body confident coaching. In Article 3, I piloted the foundational modules in the Canadian context: (1) developing girls in sport, (2) challenging gender stereotypes, (3)

coaching girls, (4) eliminating barriers for girls, (5) recognizing girls' identities, and (6) supporting girls' needs. A social learning component (i.e., CoP) was also integrated into the intervention to potentially aid coaches in applying CH content to their everyday practice as suggested in the KGIS evaluation by Szabo and colleagues (2023). Previous work in the sport coaching domain has shown that CoPs provide coaches with the opportunity to share common concerns, ideas, and insights and co-create knowledge related to specific content or a common goal (e.g., Kraft et al., 2021; Duarte et al., 2020). Prior to embarking on facilitating the coach CoP in Article 3, I had previous experience facilitating and supporting multiple CoPs based on NCCP eLearning content with the CAC, which provided me with the foundational knowledge required to execute this project. I also continued to engage in endeavours such as this one through my participation as a master trainer in my supervisor's 3-year SSHRC grant to train social learning leaders for the Canadian sport system.

Finally, the Tucker Center team (LaVoi, personal communication, January 2023) identified to us that current self-efficacy scales are insufficient in measuring coaches' confidence related to the topics of the CH modules. The CES (Feltz et al., 1999) has previously been used as a tool to investigate coaches' needs to develop more effective coaching education content. For example, Malete and Feltz (2000) used the CES in a quasi-experimental design to assess the effects of the Program for Athletic Coaches (PACE; Seefeldt & Brown, 1990), a coach education program. Additionally, to better understand coaches' efficacy inadequacies, Fung (2003) administered the CES to a group of high school coaches and found the coaches felt more confident about the character-building dimension than the game strategy dimension (see below for a deeper discussion of the dimensions of self-efficacy according to the CES). As such, the CES can be used both as a pre-post measure to determine the effectiveness of a program's

educational content on the various dimensions of coaching efficacy and as a diagnostic tool to create educational content to meet the needs of a group of coaches (Feltz et al., 2008). As a result, Silva-Breen and colleagues developed the Coach Self-Efficacy Body Image Scale (CSEBIS; 2022) to effectively measure coaches' self-efficacy related to the CH body image module content. Following this, Goorevich and colleagues (2025) at the Tucker Center developed the self-report Gender Essentialist Beliefs Towards Girls in Sport Scale (GEGS), which addresses gender essentialist beliefs among sport coaches. The GEGS, however, is limited in that it does not address a coach's efficacy in recognizing and/or addressing how gender beliefs affect their coaching. We approached the study of coach self-efficacy beliefs similarly, with the creation and validation of a gender beliefs self-efficacy scale specifically designed to assess components of a coach's girl-centred gender beliefs. A validated scale to measure coaches' self-efficacy beliefs about girls in sport remains a unique contribution to this evolving field of research.

Chapter 4: Theoretical Frameworks

Theoretical Frameworks

Four theoretical frameworks were used in concert to organize and guide this dissertation research. A combined model (i.e., plug-and-play, Wenger-Trayner, 2013) of coach self-efficacy (Feltz et al., 1999) and coach effectiveness (Côté & Gilbert, 2009; Horn, 2002; see Appendix A) was used to frame my understanding of coach confidence in the creation of the quantitative scale instrument. Throughout the entire dissertation, the concepts of social learning as presented by Wenger (1998) were considered. More specifically, the value creation framework (VCF; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020) was used to plan, promote, and assess the qualitative research process across the later phases of the project. Finally, the continuum of gendered coach discourses (Goorevich & LaVoi, 2025) was conceptually positioned across the studies to help define the complex nuances of the relationship between gender and coaching and how coaches speak about these ideas.

Combining Coach Efficacy and Effectiveness

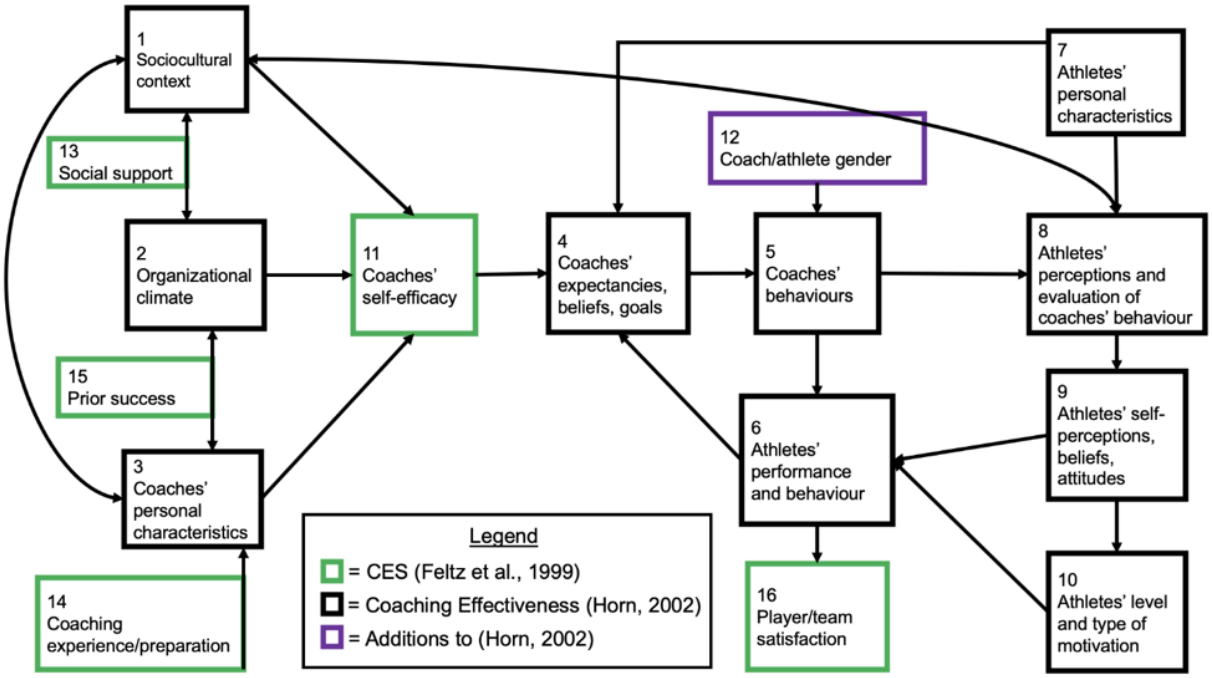
Many theoretical frameworks and models have been developed in education and sport scholarship as an effort to explain the concepts of efficacy and effectiveness. These include teacher efficacy (Denham & Michael, 1981), leadership effectiveness (e.g., LSS; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980), coach effectiveness (Horn, 2002, Côté & Gilbert, 2009), and coaching efficacy (Feltz et al., 1999). Yet, these concepts are not frequently considered in connection with one another, even though coaches play an important role in the motivation and performance of their athletes and teams. Much like a schoolteacher, an effective coach must play multiple roles (e.g., teacher, organizer, motivational speaker, etc.) to advance the learning and performance of their athletes (Boardley et al., 2008). Coaching efficacy research was pioneered largely by Feltz and colleagues (1999) when they created the coach efficacy model and subsequent CES (see

Appendix A). They developed a framework to study the relationships between coaching efficacy, coaching behaviour, and the motivation and performance of athletes. This model was developed through consideration of Bandura's work (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997) and the teaching efficacy literature (Denham & Michael, 1981; Fuller et al., 1982; Ramey-Gassert et al., 1996, etc.) and filled the gap of sport-oriented conceptual models for coaching efficacy. It assumed, much like teaching efficacy is a significant variable in teaching effectiveness, that coaching efficacy also plays a significant role in coaching effectiveness. Coaches' efficacy beliefs sit in the middle of the framework, influenced by past performances (e.g., win/loss record, coaching experience), perceived ability of athletes, and perceived social support (e.g., parental and community). As a result, coaching efficacy should have an impact on how one coaches, how one's players perform, how confident and motivated the athletes are, and how satisfied one is with one's coaching. In the CES, four dimensions of coaching efficacy were operationalized; game strategy, motivation, technique, and character building. Since the initial development of the model and scale, much research has explored the antecedents, outcomes, and athlete perceptions of the efficacy model; especially in considering the efficacy beliefs of coaches at different competition levels (e.g., Marback et al., 2005), coaches' gender (Myers et al., 2005), and the coach' influence on athletes' efficacy beliefs (Horn, 2008). Yet, in the context of this research, the sole use of the CES is insufficient to explain the coach-girl athlete dynamic. According to Horn (2002), though coaches may believe certain strategies are the most effective for enhancing the efficacy beliefs of their athletes, the effectiveness of such strategies is mediated by the meaning athletes assign to them. As such, the athletes' perceptions of the effectiveness of their coach's strategies may be more salient than the coach's perceptions in the discussion of enhancing athlete motivation, confidence, and performance. The lack of explanation for athletes'

beliefs was addressed through the inclusion of Horn's (2002) model of coaching effectiveness (see Appendix A), which positioned coaches' behaviours at the centre of the model (box 5). Coaches' expectations, values, beliefs, and goals for their athletes (box 4) act as the central mediator for numerous antecedent factors, including sociocultural context (box 1), organizational climate (box 2), and coaches' personal characteristics (box 3). Though Feltz and colleagues (2008) later argued that coaches' self-efficacy for coaching should be included in the coach's personal characteristics (box 3), I argued in my dissertation proposal that a coach's self-efficacy beliefs should be positioned as a mediator between the antecedent factors (boxes 1-3) and coaches' expectancies, beliefs, and goals (box 4; see Figure 1 for a visual representation). The integration of Horn's (2002) model added depth to the antecedents and consequences of the coaching efficacy model and offered an explanation for the role athletes' evaluations of their coach's behaviour play not only in their own development of efficacy beliefs, but in how the coach-athlete relationship can impact coach efficacy. Though the use of these terms in the literature can be confusing, coaching efficacy was operationalized throughout this work as a variable in the broader concept of coaching effectiveness. These combined frameworks offered a starting point for the scale development process and the foundational efficacy and effectiveness literature to create a gender-specific research instrument.

Figure 1

Conceptual model of coach efficacy and effectiveness



Social Learning Theory

Historically, the ways in which societal institutions address issues of learning assume learning is an individual process with a clear beginning and end (Wenger, 1998). Lave and Wenger (1991) called this assumption into question when they introduced the concept of situated learning while studying the learning trajectories of apprentices as they journeyed from peripheral participants to full members in their trade through their continued engagement in social practices with legitimate, competent members of the community. This 'social' learning theory highlighted the importance of collaboration and support with and from other community members. Here, learning is continually referred to as a 'journey' because it requires participants to negotiate their understanding of themselves and their identity "as a person-in-the-world, as a member of a sociocultural community" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 52) to optimize engagement. Social learning spaces are unique when compared to traditional learning practices (i.e., the learner is expected to apply knowledge in a process of transfer from the setting in which they gained such knowledge) as participants can explore knowledge indigenous to their practice and the

applicability to specific contexts, something particularly relevant to the topics of this thesis. This social practice of learning as part of a community was then expanded into the concept of a community of practice (CoP; Wenger, 1998) defined as a group of "people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 4). CoPs, an example of a social learning space, involve three central dimensions: (1) mutual engagement of participants within the community, (2) a joint enterprise informed by collective negotiations, and (3) a shared repertoire that enables members to create meaning (Wenger, 1998). CoPs create value for members because they accompany the learner in the application of relevant knowledge. There are a few assumptions inherent to CoPs, but meaning, and our "ability to experience the world and our engagement with it as meaningful" – is ultimately what learning is to produce (Wenger, 1998, p. 4) and given a CoP's curriculum is guided by the needs of the learners, this social approach to learning has provided the opportunity for coaches to develop competency in their specific contexts, supporting the development of just-in-time (JIT) knowledge (e.g., Van Woezik et al., 2021) and is particularly relevant for complex topics such as gender inclusive coaching where there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

In the development of this theory, Wenger and colleagues provided guidelines for cultivating CoPs, including seven guiding components: (1) designing with evolution in mind, (2) creating dialogue between outside and inside perspectives, (3) inviting various levels of participation, (4) developing both public and private community spaces, (5) focusing on value creation, (6) combining excitement and familiarity, and (7) creating a rhythm for the community (2002). Furthermore, value can be conceptualized in a CoP according to four modes: generating, evaluating, translating, and framing (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). These modes

drive both the individual and co-constructed processes of learning. At this point, the value creation framework (VCF; Wenger-Trayner et al., 2011; Appendix C) was created as a tool to promote, plan, assess, and evaluate the value created through social learning imperatives, learning activities, participants and their identities, boundaries, context, conditions, aspirations, existing evidence, indicators, data, and assumptions (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015). The VCF consists of eight value creation cycles, with the five initial value cycles including *immediate*, *potential, applied, realized*, and *transformative* forming the basis of most learning loops (Wenger et al., 2011). Two more values were introduced as the framework was subsequently developed, *strategic value* and *enabling value,* to account for the strategic work and different types of support needed to nurture and sustain CoPs. Finally, the most recent iteration of the VCF included the addition of the final cycle *orienting value*, which furthers our understanding of how the histories of our fellows in the CoP can be relevant to learning (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020) and how a CoP fits within a greater landscape of practice and the benefits of engaging in social learning at the boundaries of our practice (see Appendix B for examples of reflective questions for each value cycle). According to the VCF, learning can occur through flows, loops, and branches of value creation. While all three are defined in Article 3, briefly a flow refers to the movement of value across cycles, loops demonstrate when a value flow has returned to its origin or an earlier part in the flow, and branches represent when learning is shared to a new space (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). These concepts are important because they illustrate how learning develops iteratively through social learning sand how participation in a CoP can contribute to ongoing change over time. Additionally, in the discussion of evaluation through the VCF, two distinct types of data were considered. First, effect data are considered by value cycle and reflect whether the social

learning space made a difference, beyond individual experience, to the stakeholders. Second, contribution data were collected across value cycles and framed within narrative value creation stories (VCSs), which have been shown to be an effective way of disseminating value that could otherwise go unnoticed in a CoP (Wenger et al., 2011; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020).

The Gendered Discourses Continuum

In coaching, as in other realms, how we speak about women and girls is a key determinant in how they are treated. As sport has historically been defined as a 'gendered organization' (Acker, 1990), our understanding of how masculine norms persist through coach discourses is essential in breaking down these structures and moving towards more gender equitable sport. In their analysis of coach gendered discourses, Goorevich and LaVoi (2025) proposed that coaches commonly construct and (re)produce five gendered discourses, existing on a continuum. These include gender essentialism, gender blindness/neutrality, gender sensitivity, gender responsiveness, and gender transformative (see Figure 2). Gender essentialism, defined in the literature review, can most commonly be split into three types of discourses: physical differences, psychological differences, and social differences further sub-divided into negative and positive stereotypes between girls and boys. Gender blindness or neutrality is conceptualized as when coaches consider gender to be irrelevant to their coaching practices. Yet, when discussing girls' needs in sport, many coaches unintentionally craft their answers from the male perspective (i.e., the norm in sport), perpetuating the uneven power dynamics in sport, the masculine dominance of sport, and thwarting girls' gendered needs in sport (Norman, 2016). Gender sensitivity is where we start to see positive impacts on girls' sport experiences. This kind of discourse is defined as when coaches acknowledge gendered

differences in athletes' sport experiences (e.g., the need for menstruation education as related to sport performance) and have started to think about how sport is a reflection of society's dominant gender norms. Next, gender responsiveness takes this one step further when coaches actively question gender dynamics within coaching methodologies and address inequities through the reduced use of harmful gender norms and practices. At the other end of the continuum sit gender transformative discourses, the proactive approach coaches take in centring the lives, experiences, and needs of girls and women. The continuum as a whole was utilized through this body of work to conceptualize the varying ways coaches make sense of gender and to critically examine how dominant assumptions about girls and women in sport are maintained, challenged, or transformed through coach learning. Rather than viewing coaches as simply gender-aware or gender-unaware, the continuum provided a theoretical lens through which coaches' beliefs, self-efficacy, and learning experiences could be interpreted, allowing for an examination not only of what coaches know about gender but also of how that knowledge translates into coaching practice and broader efforts toward gender equity in sport.

Figure 2

Continuum of sport coach gendered discourses



Note. The continuum of sport coach gendered discourses, from A. Goorevich & N. M. LaVoi, 2025, "Essentially different or equally the same: Uncovering sport coach discourses about coaching girls," Sports Coaching Review, 14(3), 607. © 2025, reprinted by permission of Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group, https://www.tandfonline.com

Chapter 5: Methodology and Methods

Methodology

The following chapter overviews the methodology and methods (organized by article); used to conduct the research for this dissertation. A description of the methods of each article is presented. Each description includes six sections, including: (1) the methodology used to guide the article, (2) the context situating the article, (3) the procedures (e.g., recruitment), (4) the participant samples, (5) the data collection instruments, and (6) the data analysis. The chapter closes with a general section on research quality.

This dissertation project consisted of a mixed methods approach guided by the pragmatic paradigm. This paradigm was chosen largely due to the flexibility it allowed for the use of a plurality of methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) and the value it places on the creation of knowledge in our social world (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). According to a pragmatist epistemology, knowledge is not reality. Knowledge is based on socially shared experiences and constructed to successfully manage one's existence and to take part in the world (Goldkuhl, 2012). Pragmatism is also founded on the principle that researchers should use the philosophical and/or methodological approach most applicable for the research problems being investigated (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998), keeping the focus on the consequences of the research questions and results as opposed to the methods (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). This does not mean pragmatic scholars ignore other philosophical arguments; instead, this shows that meaning is inseparable from the needs of human experience and dependent on the context (Dillon et al., 2000). As such, a pragmatic researcher's choice of one interpretation of reality over another is decided by how well that choice achieves the desired goals or anticipated outcomes (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008). Abductive reasoning is an iterative form of inquiry in which researchers move back and forth between empirical data and existing theory to develop the most plausible explanations for

observed phenomena. Used commonly in pragmatic approaches, it allows researchers to move between deductive and inductive as an active participant in creating data and theories (Goldkuhl, 2012). According to pragmatism, the world is in a 'constant state of becoming' (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019), changed through the ways in which we consciously take action against our warranted beliefs in an attempt to change our existence (Goldkuhl, 2012). Overall, pragmatism is considered a set of philosophical tools oriented to addressing and solving practical problems in the world (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). This paradigmatic position aligned well with the purpose of this project, as well as the various methodologies used throughout the three articles to problematize and explore how to coach girls more effectively in sport through the lens of the four theoretical frameworks guiding this project.

Methods

Article One: Narrative Analysis

Methodology

For Article One, I chose to adopt a narrative inquiry approach to analyze and interpret the data (McGannon & Smith, 2015). This was fitting for the study's purpose, given it allowed me the opportunity to co-create meaning with the participants through illustrative collective stories, diving into both the coaching and sport experiences of women and girls. This work was grounded in the critical paradigm and a social constructionist epistemology (Ponterotto, 2005), allowing for exploration of narratives born not from the minds of individuals, but out of the power dynamics and henceforth, the practices, systems, and situations of marginalization evident in our society, and as a result, sport. Furthermore, the stories were constructed around a few of the metanarratives suggested by Book et al. (2024), including quest, order, and chaos.

Context

This narrative inquiry explored the social influences of and on coaches' perceptions of gender and their gendered experiences as coaches through two questions: 1) What are coaches' gender beliefs about coaching girls, and 2) How do coaches' gender beliefs affect how they coach girls? We aimed to better understand the barriers to, and potential venues for, more gender responsive coaching practices. The data presented in this article were supplementary to the data collected for the development of the Girl-Centred Coaching Self-Efficacy Scale (GCSES).

Procedure

Recruitment. After receiving ethical approval to conduct this first phase of the dissertation research in October 2023 from the University of Ottawa's Research and Ethics Board (REB #H-08-23-9458), 20 coaches were recruited using convenience sampling through LinkedIn poster (Appendix D) and emails to colleagues (Appendix U) in the sport coaching field. The participants were given a detailed description of the study (Appendices G, H) and provided informed consent (Appendix F) before committing to a focus group.

Participants. Twenty coaches agreed to participate in this study. All of the coaches met the inclusion criteria which included (a) being over 18 years old; (b) identifying as a coach (defined as a leader, coach, or volunteer of sport, fitness or physical education) of girls and young women under the age of 25 years old; (c) actively coaching girls or planning to coach girls in the next six months (in any sport or physical activity, at any level of competition); and (d) having coached girls in the last five years for a minimum of six months (or 2 season) before recruitment. I prioritized women-identifying and youth sport coaches, given their perspectives are not heard as often in the research (Hirsch et al., 2023). The coaches identified as White, except for one who also identified as Asian and participants represented a total of ten sports, both individual and team.

Data Collection Instruments

Semi-structured focus groups. I conducted four semi-structured focus groups with the twenty coaches, including 4-6 participants in each of the 60- to 90-minute sessions. The interview guide comprised four sections, including: (1) an icebreaker activity (i.e., anonymously write down on the platform Mentimeter something that makes them nervous related to talking about gender), (2) introductory questions, (3) gender essentialist-themed questions, and (4) gender responsive-themed questions (see Appendix I).

Data Analysis

All data were uploaded to the NVivo software program (Lumivero, 2023) to support the analysis process. The data were coded and analyzed through a thematic narrative analysis (TNA; Smith, 2016) to explore and make sense of the plot points in each participant's stories and to reproduce them later in a series of composite vignettes. The storyanalyst perspective was used to understand "the *whats* of the stories" (Smith, 2016, p. 263) and consisted of the seven-step inductive TNA. After transcribing, organizing, and indwelling, Book and colleagues' (2024) performance narrative type and five metanarratives deductively drove the formation of the overarching narratives within the composite vignettes. As a result, two creative composite vignettes were created to collectively encompass the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the various participants (Orr et al., 2018).

Article Two: Exploratory Factor Analysis

Methodology

In Article Two, a mixed method approach was used to develop the GCSES within the pragmatic paradigm. This paradigm was chosen for its flexibility in allowing a plurality of methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) and the value it provides in the creation of knowledge

in our social world (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Qualitative inquiry served as the primary methodological stance throughout the scale development process. According to Horn (2011), the prioritization of qualitative inquiries has been shown to be valuable when exploring emerging areas of research. A multistage mixed methods framework was therefore selected because it aligned with the pragmatic aim of using the best suited complementary methods to address the research problem, with qualitative findings informing the conceptualization of girls-centred coaching self-efficacy and quantitative analyses subsequently evaluating the resulting measurement tool (Leavy, 2017).

Context

Given the need identified in the scholarship and through the first study in this dissertation for a validated, context-specific tool to assess coaches' self-efficacy of gender-related beliefs, knowledge, and practices, I aimed to develop and preliminarily validate a novel scale instrument. Grounded in self-efficacy research and informed by feminist and critical sport literature, the outcome is named the Girl-Centred Coaching Self-Efficacy Scale (GCSES). The initial version of the GCSES can be found in Appendix O and the final scale after statistical testing in Appendix Q.

Procedure

Recruitment. Recruitment was completed over two phases. Phase 1 (the development phase) included the collection of qualitative data through coach focus groups, an expert panel, and coach cognitive interviews. Phase 2 (the testing phase) included the gathering of quantitative coach-report data through an online survey. All participants were conveniently recruited via LinkedIn and email messages (Appendix U). The participants for all activities were given a detailed description of the study and provided informed consent before participating in a semi-

structured focus group (Appendix F), cognitive interviews (Appendix L), or GCSES survey testing (Appendix N). The experts on the panel gave informed verbal consent prior to participating in their interview.

Participants. As mentioned in the methodology for Article One, I conducted four semi-structured focus groups with the twenty coaches with 4-6 participants in each of the 60- to 90-minute sessions (see Appendix I for the interview guide). The expert interviews were conducted with six scholars (two men and four women) from Canada and the UK, with expertise in sport psychology, coaching science, and sport sociology. The protocol for the expert interviews can be reviewed in Appendix J. Cognitive interviews were conducted individually with four girls' sport coaches, including two men and two women with experience coaching in track and field, rugby, volleyball, and alpine skiing. All coaches identified as White/Caucasian. Three interviews were conducted in English, and one was conducted in French. The interview guide can be found in Appendix M. Finally, for the scale testing, after removing those who did not meet the inclusion criteria or were identified as fraudulent/bot respondents, we were left with 216 completed responses. All of these 216 coaches the our inclusion criteria which included (a) being over 18 years old; (b) identifying as a coach (defined as a leader, coach, or volunteer of sport, fitness or physical education) of girls and young women under the age of 25 years old; (c) actively coaching girls or planning to coach girls in the next six months (in any sport or physical activity, at any level of competition); and (d) having coached girls in the last five years for a minimum of six months (or 2 season) before recruitment. The participants in the scale testing identified as Cisgender (97%), White (89%), Women (40%), head coaches (53%), and English speaking (89%). A copy of the SurveyMonkey (SurveyMonkey, n.d.) survey used for scale testing can be found in Appendix N.

Data Collection Instruments

Item development. The item development process was conducted over three phases. To begin, we[2] drew from pre-existing content on gender, sex, and coach self-efficacy, including a thorough review of the related literature and the exploration of relevant measures. In this phase, we also conducted semi-structured focus groups with sport coaches to ask them about their gender beliefs and the impact on their coaching practices. Through this first phase, we compiled a list of items that were potentially related to our scale instrument and representative of the relevant domains. The initial inventory of items consisted of 87 items rated on an eight-point Likert scale.

Expert panel. In the second phase, we recruited six scholars to evaluate the content validity of the 87 initial items. I interviewed all six experts, asking for their opinions on item wording, construct, and overall relevance. From this process, 46 items were removed due to irrelevance, confusing wording, or being double-barreled. An additional ten items were re-worded or clarified by using more common language and six new items were added to further deepen the reach of the domain to be studied. Post expert panel, the scale comprised 47 items.

Cognitive interviews. In the third phase, I used cognitive interviews to assess the face validity of the scale items with girls' sport coaches. The four coaches completed the scale in its (then) current format one week before their online cognitive interview where they engaged in retrospective probing based on the cognitive pretesting method (Koskey, 2016) in the interview. These interviews focused on overall comprehension of the items, question flow, and potential responses. From these interviews, 16 items were removed due to confusing/complex wording or irrelevance to practice. We also modified the language of the scale at this point to remove any

[2] In this section, "we" refers to one of my committee members Dr. Bradley Young, my supervisor Dr. Diane Culver, and I.

confusing terminology and definitions in the pre-scale information section (e.g., 'coach confidence'). The final scale at the end of phase three comprised 31 items (see Appendix O). At this stage we appraised the entire inventory to identify distinct, conceptually informed, coherent, and constituent themes. We also segregated the items into five distinct themes with specific operational definitions. The five themes included (1) knowledge, (2) beliefs, (3) behaviours, (4) gender binary, and (5) gender diversity. After a reiterative vetting process, a final 31 items split into five major themes with at least three items within each theme (Boateng et al., 2018) were submitted for data collection.

GCSES testing. Coaches completed the survey (comprised of the 31 items retained following the scale development process) one time between the months of June 2024 and January 2025 online using the SurveyMonkey platform (SurveyMonkey, n.d.; see Appendix N). Participants rated each item on an eight-point Likert scale in a random order (i.e., not organized by subscale).

Data Analysis

All data analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (IBM Corp., 2023; version 29.0.01). Before conducting the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), item distributions were assessed for normality, and the data were screened for missing values and outliers. Sampling adequacy was also evaluated to ensure factorability of the correlation matrix. The EFA was conducted on the full set of survey data using a principal axis factoring with varimax rotation. Retained factors included those meeting (1) Eigenvalues greater than 1.0, (2) a visual inspection of the scree plot, and (3) an examination of factor loadings. Items with factor loadings below .30 or with significant cross-loadings (i.e., loadings $\geq$ .30 on 2+ factors) were removed, and the analysis was iteratively re-run each time an item was removed to verify improvements in factor

structure. Internal consistency reliability for each factor was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. A breakdown of the EFA pathways brainstorm is located in Appendix P. In the final solution, 23 items were retained across four factors with each factor comprising between three and ten items (see Appendices Q and R).

Article Three: Mixed Methods Analysis

Methodology

In Article Three, a mixed methods quasi-experimental design was employed through a pragmatic lens due to the applicability to the problem-oriented approach of pragmatic research (Leavy, 2017). This article was part of a sequential series built upon the previous two articles, distinguishing it from a basic mixed methods design (Fetters et al., 2013). This type of framework has been previously used in longitudinal studies aimed at evaluating the design, implementation, and assessment of a program (Fetters et al., 2013), as was seen in this work through the CH eLearning intervention. Given the exploration of both quantitative and qualitative data, the latter was evaluated using the VCF (see Appendix B; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). This analysis included both effect and contribution data. On the one hand, effect data, aided us in understanding in what cycles value was created from the participants' participation in the social learning space (i.e., the CoP condition). The effect data included the: (a) changes in coaches' knowledge and attitudes, measured through the GCSES scale; (b) active engagement in the CoP, assessed by the coaches' participation/reflections on the collaborative Zoom Whiteboard (Zoom Video Communications, Inc., 2023); and (c) application of knowledge, explored through post-intervention focus groups. Gathering contribution data on the other hand, aided in understanding the role of the social intervention, namely how and why value was created from the social learning interactions (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2019). Within

this social learning approach, value creation stories (VCSs; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020) were created to demonstrate meaningful accounts for making sense of the social learning processes that occurred in the CoP. VCSs also helped to trace the value flows and learning loops between the value cycles. Also included were 10 examples of individual value cycles.

Context

Article Three compared the knowledge-to-action processes of girls' sport coaches through two separate interventions. One group of coaches completed the free, online eLearning course CH with no additional support, while another group of coaches completed the same eLearning course concurrently with a CoP. Coaches in both groups completed the GCSES at two timepoints, first before beginning either of the interventions in September 2025 and then one month following the end of the interventions in January 2026. These mixed methods data were supplemented with a collection of value flows from the coaches in the CoP condition.

Procedure

Recruitment. After receiving ethical approval to conduct this second phase of the dissertation research in September 2025 from the University of Ottawa's Research and Ethics Board (REB #H-08-23-9458-MOD2) when the GCSES scale items were finalized, coaches were once again recruited via a LinkedIn poster (Appendix T) and email (Appendix U). Specifically, coaches who had participated in a previous phase of the project (i.e., Article One and Two activities) who wished to be kept in the loop were emailed about the opportunity to engage in one of these interventions. The inclusion criteria required participants to again (a) be over 18 years old; (b) identify as a coach of girls who are under the age of 25 years old (defined as a leader, coach, or volunteer of sport, fitness, or physical education for or with girls); (c) be actively coaching girls or foreseeably coaching girls in the next six months (in any sport or

physical activity, at any level of competition); and (d) have coached girls in the last five years for a minimum of six months (or two seasons) prior to this project. I had a total of 75 coaches respond to the inquiry who were provided with a consent form prior to beginning the first completion of the GCSES (see Appendix X). The coaches self-selected or were assigned to the CoP group based on their availability to attend the six online sessions. Those who could not commit to attending 5/6 of the CoP sessions were assigned to the eLearning group.

Participants. In September 2025, 57 coaches completed the pre-GCSES, with 46 coaches in the eLearning condition and 11 in the CoP condition. In January 2026, only 15 coaches had completed the post-GCSES in the eLearning condition and 10 in the CoP condition. Given the intention was to conduct a pre-protocol analysis and the attrition between pre- and post-GCSES was extremely high for the eLearning condition, only full, completed data sets for both groups were used in the quantitative analysis. Across the entire data set, coaches identified as 72% woman/girl and 84% White/Caucasian. All coaches in the CoP were actively coaching at the time of the intervention.

Data Collection Instruments

Pre-Post GCSES. I utilized the GCSES developed in Article Two to gather quantitative data on coaches' girl-centred coaching practices. The pre-GCSES was administered online using the SurveyMonkey (SurveyMonkey, n.d.) platform before the start of the CoP condition and any completion of the CH modules in September 2025. The post-GCSES was administered one month following the conclusion of the intervention period in January 2026, once again online on the SurveyMonkey platform (SurveyMonkey, n.d.; Appendix X). Demographic data were only collected during the pre-GCSES.

Semi-Structured Focus Groups. To further explore coaches' experiences within the CoP, focus groups were conducted with a subset of participants from the CoP condition following termination of the CoP. A total of three focus groups were held (n = 6). The focus groups were conducted virtually using a semi-structured interview guide based on the VCF (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020) designed to explore coaches' perceptions of the CoP, perceived impacts, and key mechanisms of change. The questions were framed to elicit different types of value creation (see Appendix Y). The coaches were also prompted to reflect on changes in their knowledge and attitudes as indicators of effect data, as well as how participation in the CoP may have contributed to those changes.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (IBM Corp., 2023; version 30.0.00). Specifically, a mixed design analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine changes over the time period and the difference between the two conditions. Time was treated as a within-subjects factor, and conditions as a between-subjects factor. Assumptions of normality were assessed and supported the use of parametric analyses. Further, significant interaction effects were followed by post hoc pairwise comparisons to explore within- and between-group differences. Effect sizes were reported to assess the magnitude of observed effects. The qualitative data from the focus groups were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analysed using the VCF (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020; Appendix Z) through an abductive approach. In addition to identifying forms of value in the coaches' responses, evidence of value flows, loops, and branches were also considered. The qualitative results were framed through two VCSs (Wenger et al., 2011) and an additional table of testimonial effect data not covered in the two VCSs. Overall, the integration of quantitative and qualitative data occurred at the

interpretation stage, once again through the lens of the VCF (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). Integrating these forms of data enabled the survey scores to corroborate coaches' reported experiences, while the VCSs provided meaning and context to the numerical trends.

Research Quality

Numerous steps and parameters were utilized in this dissertation project to support the quality and validity of the research. Within the overarching pragmatic paradigm, a relativist approach was implemented in line with previous sport and exercise science research (Burke, 2016). The criteria to determine research quality were specific to each study, supporting Burke's (2016) notion that knowledge is constructed by the assumptions of the researcher and therefore such criteria should be selected as they are related to the study in question. This meant that not all criteria were applied to all three articles but instead were selected based on their relevance and application to the specific inquiry (Sparkes & Smith, 2009).

Across all three studies, multiple sources of data were collected (e.g., focus groups, expert panel, cognitive interviews, survey testing, CoP sessions) to triangulate findings through the examination of the data sources' convergence, inconsistencies, and contradictions (Mathison, 1998). More specifically, in the scale development process and subsequent utilization, data were also collected from multiple participant groups (e.g., coaches, sport leaders, expert academics in the field) to capture different perspectives, experiences, and outcomes of the participants' participation in this research – demonstrating research width. This was done in an attempt to account for the weaknesses of some data sources and strength of others (Denzin, 1978) and to develop a comprehensive understanding of the relevant elements involved in coaches' gender-related self-efficacy.

Throughout the project, multiple researchers and critical friends were included as a form of 'investigator triangulation' (Mathison, 1998). The other researchers were involved in various roles with the development of the GCSES, including as experts on the panel in the scale development process and as critical friends. These critical friends acted as theoretical sounding boards, assisting with the quantitative analysis and interpretation of the data, and scrutinizing the various aspects of the research process overall (Smith & McGannon, 2018; Tracy, 2010). Another critical friend was also employed in the creation of the narratives in Article 1 to give his perspective on the male narratives. Along this line, various participant groups were also asked for their input throughout the research project to ensure my interpretations were representative of their experiences. Member checking was included in both Article 1 and Article 3 for any qualitative data, meaning that transcripts, emerging themes, and quotes were shared back to the participants as a means to verify findings and as an additional opportunity for data collection (Maxwell, 2013). Finally, I kept a handwritten reflective journal throughout the entire project as I navigated my own experiences and biases regarding gender in sport and my own personal journey towards becoming a gender transformative individual (discussed further in the reflexivity section of the thesis' discussion). I loosely used Moon's (1999) reflective journaling conceptualization in my writing and note taking; thinking beyond a general description of the events/issues in the research activities and including additional considerations/ideas to critique, explore, and reinterpret what I had taken from each activity.

Chapter 6: Findings

Presentation of the Articles

The dissertation findings are presented in three articles. In Article One (in review for publication in *Sport Coaching Review*), I explored how coaches construct and make sense of gender in girls' sport through a creative non-fiction approach, examining how gendered beliefs and discourses shape coaching philosophies and practices. Through composite vignettes, the findings illustrate the diverse ways coaches reproduce or challenge gender norms, highlighting the need for greater critical self-reflection and more gender responsive coaching practices. In Article Two (published in the *International Journal of Sport Sciences & Coaching*), we developed and provided preliminary validation evidence for the Girl-Centred Coaching Self-Efficacy Scale (GCSES), the first measure designed to assess coaches' confidence in delivering girl-centred coaching practices. Using a mixed methods scale development process, the study identified four factors of girl-centred coaching self-efficacy and demonstrated preliminary evidence for the GCSES as a psychometrically sound tool for evaluating and supporting gender transformative coach development. In Article Three (in review for publication in *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*) I examined whether combining an eLearning course with a CoP better supported coaches' knowledge translation and girl-centred coaching self-efficacy than eLearning alone. Using a mixed methods design, the findings demonstrated that although quantitative differences between groups were not statistically significant, the CoP facilitated critical reflection, accountability, and the contextual application of learning, providing insight into how coaches translated knowledge into meaningful changes in practice.

Article One

Rourke, S. & Culver, D. M. (under review). The Social Influences of Gender: A Creative Non-Fiction Exploration of Gender Beliefs and Their Impact on Sport Coaching. *Sports Coaching Review.*

Abstract

Opportunities for girls and women in sport have expanded in recent decades, yet gender biases remain deeply ingrained in the coaching domain. This study aimed to explore how gender influences coaching practices through a creative non-fiction approach, capturing the beliefs, discourses, and philosophies of girls' sport coaches. Utilizing a narrative thematic analysis, we explored how coach beliefs, especially those that perpetuate gender norms and stereotypes (i.e., gender essentialist beliefs), shape coaching methodologies, athlete interactions, and self-perceptions of legitimacy, particularly among women coaches. Through composite vignettes, we present the nuanced and diverse realities of being a woman coach and coaching girls, illustrating how discourses about gender impact coaching philosophies and practices. The study underscores the need for coaches to increase their self-awareness regarding their gender biases and prioritize self-reflection. We advocate the need for gender-responsive coaching practices that directly challenge gender stereotypes in sport. Practical implications include the need for more opportunities for coaches to both learn about and discuss their gender beliefs, and to make changes to their coaching practices.

Keywords: narrative analysis, women coaches, gender equity, coaching girls.

Literature Review

Gender is a complicated social construct, frequently misused interchangeably with the biological construct of sex. This problem further perplexes the growing issue of the gender binary (i.e., two-sex model; Allison, 2018) in sport. In recent decades, opportunities for girls, women, and gender diverse individuals to participate in the sport domain have grown, yet sport overall remains a gendered system (e.g., Acker, 1990; Norman, 2010; LaVoi & Dutove, 2012), perpetuating masculine dominance particularly in the coaching realm. For us to effectively question such gender norms, coaching methodologies, narratives, and practices must be taken into consideration (Norman, 2016), especially since coach ideologies about gender, specifically those that privilege men and masculinity, often go unchallenged in sport (Jones et al., 2019). In this paper, we focus on *coach narratives*. These are the stories we are told and *what* we learn to talk about related to sport coaching, which are important in terms of *how* we come to impose order on our lived experiences and make sense of events and actions within the context of sport. Such stories are social creations, stemming not from the minds of individual coaches, but rather from the power dynamics of our society that perpetuate practices, systems, and situations of marginalization in sport. These narratives that conceptualize gender determine what is acceptable (i.e., normative) within the context of sport, thereby defining the social behaviours of coaches (de Haan & Knoppers, 2020).

Moreover, narrative research has shown that sport is sustained by these cultural stories, shaping how inequities are understood and explained (Book et al., 2024). Examining coaches' narratives, therefore, provides insight into how gender beliefs align with, or challenge, these dominant discourses. Gender essentialist beliefs, defined as those positing that men and women categorically possess separate and unchanging physical, social, and personality traits (Allison,

2018); perpetuates the gender binary in sport. The narratives within these essentialist beliefs, specifically those privileging men and masculinity, need to be explored, challenged, and taken into consideration in the pursuit to enhance coaching methodologies and improve girls' and women's experiences in sport (Norman, 2016; Jones et al., 2019). Coaches who embody gender essentialist beliefs fail to acknowledge that all girls do not share the same experiences and identities, and ignore many differences in identifying characteristics between girls, such as race, nationality, socioeconomic status, religion, sexual orientation, and ability, among others (e.g., Simien et al., 2019). Thus, conforming to the order narrative as conceptualized by Book and colleagues (2024), common narratives here include 1) girls have different, special, or even 'unique' characteristics in sport that need to be addressed when compared to boys and men (Ekholm et al., 2019; de Hann & Knoppers, 2020), 2) men are physically superior to women, and 3) women are less competitive, authoritative, and less interested in sport (Allison, 2018; Goorevich & LaVoi, 2025).

Furthermore, the issue of essentialist narratives continues to be perpetuated, both explicitly and implicitly, by coaches through gender blindness or neutrality (Jones & Avner, 2020). Studies in the field (e.g., Norman, 2016; Spaaij et al., 2019) have highlighted coaches' problematic use of gender-blind or gender-neutral narratives (e.g., a coach might say "I treat all athletes equally" or "I coach the individual"). Indeed, de Haan and Knoppers (2020) found high performance coaches who used a gender-neutral approach with their women athletes further perpetuated the gender essentialist beliefs that women deviate from masculine norms, rendering the coaching environment less inclusive and maintaining a sense of 'order'. These strategies are problematic, as they reinforce that gender does not exist, or is irrelevant in coaching (Goorevich

& LaVoi, 2025), further perpetuating gender inequities in sport (Allison, 2018; Goorevich & LaVoi, 2025).[3]

To encourage continued exploration and dialogue around these problematic narratives in a move towards more gender-responsive coaching practices, we chose to use vignettes to render accessible the narratives that privilege men and masculinity in sport. While recent scholarship has begun to explore these problematic gender essentialist beliefs and biases related to coaching girls (LaVoi, 2016; Messner, 2011), research is still lacking relating to the impacts of such beliefs on both girls' and women's athletic experiences, performance, and later development as coaches (Felton & Jowett, 2013), justifying the use of narratives to promote discussion and impact practice.

Here we examined the social influences of and on coaches' perceptions of gender and their gendered experiences as coaches through two questions: 1) What are coaches' gender beliefs about coaching girls, and 2) how do coaches' gender beliefs affect how they coach girls? Through this approach we hoped to identify barriers to, and potential avenues for, more gender responsive coaching practices. In our study, we prioritized the voices, perspectives, and experiences of youth sport coaches who are often overlooked as research participants, in favour of high-performance, elite-level, and well-known coach participants (Denison & Mills, 2018; Hirsch et al., 2023). By creating the conversation potential for coaches to elaborate on their gender beliefs and the impact of these on their coaching practices, we aim to further the dialogue

[3] In the context of sport, gender equity refers to the process of fairly allocating resources, program, and decision-making to all genders. It also involves addressing imbalances in the benefits available to people of different genders (Canadian Women and Sport, 2020). Comparatively, gender equality refers to providing the same resources, programs, and decision-making to all genders. A common example of this is equal pay for professional male and female athletes.

around gender inclusive practices in sport and explore stories highlighting how one's gender impacts their experiences in sport.

Methods

We grounded our research ontologically in the critical paradigm (i.e., meaning already exists in the world; Pino Gavidia & Adu, 2022) and adopted a social constructivist epistemology (Ponterotto, 2005). The rationale for this approach was to understand and interpret girls' sport coaches' social realities as shaped by the power relations seen through their constructed lived experiences within social and historical contexts. Such narratives are social creations; according to our philosophical stance, narratives do not come from the minds of individuals, but from the power dynamics evident in our society that establish practices, systems, and situations of marginalization in sport. Coaches' perceptions of gender in sport and their confidence in such beliefs were the focus of discussion-based focus groups. The collected data were co-constructed through dialogue between us and the participants, and we acknowledge the subjectivity of interpreting the individual coaches' experience (Pino Gavidia & Adu, 2022) in connection to the broader social fabric of sport culture. Recent narrative scholarship in sport and exercise science conceptualizes stories not as neutral reflections of experience, but as culturally available resources through which individuals construct identity, justify practice, and reproduce or resist dominant discourses (Book et al., 2024). As such, our stories are constructed around the metanarratives suggested by Book and colleagues (2024), including quest, restitution, order, decay, and chaos.

Our research team is made up of two self-identifying cisgender women with ample knowledge and experience in gender and coaching related areas. I, as the first author and doctoral candidate studying the relationship between gender and sport coaching, am actively

involved in advocating for girls and women in sport through various consulting initiatives. My co-author is a full professor with over 25 years of research experience in coach development, as well as extensive experience as a coach and coach developer. We worked collaboratively, conceptualizing the study and developing research questions. Following this, I conducted the focus groups and transcribed the data. We then worked collaboratively again in the data coding and initial creation of the stories, going back and forth, considering our own lived experiences as well as those of our participants. We acknowledge the critical role we played in co-creating the findings and the personal, vested interest we have in the topic.

Participants

After receiving ethics approval from the University of Ottawa (REB #H-08-23-9458), we conveniently recruited 20 coaches (*n men* = 5, *n women* = 15, *m age* = 36) to obtain an in-depth, comprehensive picture of the phenomena under study (Creswell, 2013). We used criterion based purposive sampling including; Participants who were (a) over 18 years old; (b) identified as a coach (defined as a leader, coach, or volunteer of sport, fitness, or physical education) of girls and young women[4] under the age of 25 years; (c) were actively coaching girls or planning to coach girls in the next six months (in any sport or physical activity, at any level of competition); and (d) had coached girls in the last 5 years for a minimum of six months (or 2 seasons) before recruitment. We prioritized women-identifying coaches given their direct experience existing in the patriarchal nature of sport (LaVoi, 2016). The participant group ranged in sport and coaching experience. All our coaches identified as White, except for one who also identified as Asian. They were all of Canadian descent and coached individual and team sports, including soccer, figure skating, basketball, track & field, volleyball, hockey, gymnastics, karate, rowing, and

[4] Forthwith any reference to girls in this paper refers to this group of girls and young women under the age of 25.

equestrian. Most coaches identified as recreational coaches with all but one having earned a basic level of formal coach education, while four participants identified as high-performance coaches. We recruited participants by e-mail and LinkedIn posts. Interested participants received a detailed description of the study and provided informed consent after which a face-to-face focus group on Zoom (Zoom Video Communications, Inc., 2023) was scheduled. Four semi-structured focus groups were conducted with 4-6 participants in each 60- to 90-minute session.

Data Collection

We collected data using semi-structured focus groups, allowing flexibility for the coaches to discuss relevant topics outside of the guide and build upon each other's answers (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). This approach aligned with the social constructionist assumptions of our research and afforded the generation of data through the continual interplay and co-construction of knowledge between us and the participants (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016). We audio-recorded the interviews and transcribed them verbatim. We then coded the transcripts and altered the participants' names and other identifying characteristics to maintain confidentiality. We sent the participants their transcriptions to review and make any changes. The interview guide comprised an icebreaker activity, introductory questions, gender essentialist themed questions (e.g., do you believe there are athletic characteristics that are specific to each gender?), and gender responsive coaching themed questions (e.g., you've just been assigned a U16 girls' group to coach. What's your approach?). To ease the coaches' discomfort around the topic, the icebreaker activity asked them to anonymously write down something that made them nervous when talking about gender in sport on the Mentimeter platform.

Data Analysis

For generations, storytelling has been used to disseminate knowledge and share experiences with the potential for these to be used within the sport setting to elicit reflection, emotion, and action (Ronkainen et al., 2016). As such, we chose to adopt a narrative inquiry approach in analysing and interpreting our data (McGannon & Smith, 2015). First used in the sport and exercise psychology domain within the disability sport context (e.g., Smith & Sparkes, 2002), narrative inquiry allowed us to interpret and reproduce the narratives (i.e., dimensions or common threads identified within stories) to co-create meaning and represent our participants' personal truths through illustrative collective stories and recommendations for enhancing the sport experience of women and girls.

Retaining the storytelling elements of the participants' thoughts, emotions, and experiences was a priority for us. Thus, we chose a thematic narrative analysis (TNA; Smith, 2016) to explore and understand the common and differing themes (i.e., plot points) in their stories (Riessman, 2008) and to later reproduce these in a series of collective short stories (i.e., composite vignettes; for example, see McGannon & McMahon, 2022). We adopted a storyanalyst perspective to understand the content of the participant focus groups (i.e., "the *whats* of the stories", Smith, 2016, p. 263) and employed the seven steps for conducting an inductive TNA according to Smith (2016). In narrative inquiry, we must try to approach the ways people think, see, hear, and feel about how they construct their lives before trying to change such conditions (Caine et al., 2018). After transcribing, organizing, and indwelling, Book and colleagues' (2024) performance narrative type and five metanarratives deductively drove the formation of the context-situated narratives including *Lack of Legitimacy* (i.e., feeling a lack of respect from other coaches, officials, and athletes as a woman coach – chaos), *Do it like a Man* (i.e., how women coaches feel they have to change their personality to fit a masculine narrative –

order), *Relying on Binary Beliefs* (i.e., the differences of working with girls versus boys – order), *Reframing Gender Beliefs* (i.e., how beliefs were re-evaluated throughout the interview process – quest), and *Boys Need it Hard* (i.e., the affirmation of binary beliefs about gender – order and chaos). This led to the final two TNA stages (i.e., describe & interpret and represent the results) in our storyanalyst approach (Smith, 2016), including the creation of our vignettes, with order, chaos, and quest as the most connected metanarratives to our research questions and our data.

Our use of TNA permitted us to create two creative composite vignettes collectively encompassing the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the various participants (Orr et al., 2018). Referring to the metanarratives and data-driven context-situated narratives as the foundation for the vignettes, we incorporated the focus group text of our participants' voices to create two stories. Smith's (2016) recommendations further guided the creation of vignettes, including developing a plot, creating character information, background information, and emphasizing verisimilitude. Multiple iterations of the vignettes were challenged by my co-author and a critical friend to ensure the vignettes were thought-provoking, offered real-life insights, and elicited emotion for the reader. Given no one on our research team identified as a man, we also sent the second vignette to a man coach with 30+ years of experience coaching mixed gender teams for review regarding verisimilitude.

Results

The six characters in the two composite vignettes below were constructed through the TNA of our data set, allowing us to answer our research questions. The italicized text represents direct quotations from participants of the focus groups, while bold text refers to the characters' inner thoughts, based on our interpretations of the data. Unformatted text represents the added storytelling to pull the vignettes together. Through these stories, we hope you see connections to

Book and colleague's (2024) metanarratives, especially those of chaos, order, and quest, as well as our context-situated narratives presented in the previous section. A full analytical breakdown is provided in the discussion.

From the Court to the Sidelines: Charlotte's Dive into Coaching

My name is Charlotte, and I come from what you might call a coaching 'dynasty'. My dad coaches varsity hockey, my mum has coached community basketball for as long as I can remember, and my sister runs a hockey skills development school. I take after my mum; basketball is in my blood, and I have been around coaching my entire life.

Now, I'm the head coach for the local U16 girls' team, and I occasionally sub in as an assistant coach for my alma mater men's team when they're short on coaches (which seems to be all the time lately). *I'm very grateful that I grew up where it was not weird to see a [woman] coach. I never second-guessed becoming a coach in the basketball world* and while I was hoping to eventually get a position with our women's team, the head coach of our men's basketball team is sick of his assistant coaches quitting on him, so he's offered me a permanent gig with the team and now I need to decide if I am going to take the job. I'm worried though, *I've had issues in the past with officials, and coaches on the opponent's team talking over any questions I have or [when] I've raised an issue that they know they're right on, I [never] feel totally spoken to with respect when it comes to some of the men [whether they be] coaches, opponents, etc.* and that was from my experience coaching girls! How am I ever going to learn to coach boys? Will they ever take me seriously? You would think, since I have such a wealth of knowledge from my family, this would be an easy decision to make, but I just keep thinking about the stories my parents have told me about the toxic nature of sport. My mum once tried to become involved with my sister's hockey team but, despite her coaching and playing experience, she was limited

to a team manager role while the male coaches ran practices and games. If not for my mum's love of basketball, she might have quit coaching that too. In fact, when she became head coach for one of the community basketball teams she said, "I *struggled with the referees and other coaches because I am a woman they'd often go to one of my male assistant coaches even though I would literally be standing in the centre of the bench taller, higher than everybody else, and they still didn't assume that I was the head coach".*

These experiences make me wonder whether I would begin the role already behind my male counterparts despite my playing credentials, coaching experience, and certifications. Not to mention, my dad has spoken at length about the *subtle sexism* he sees on and off the ice all the time. Would I be living in that world by taking the job? Right now, I'm considering turning down the opportunity. Just last week we *had this one ref, who came to the side and yelled he would give us a yellow card if we didn't get the girls to stop 'bitching' [and] even though I'm the one holding the clipboard, the ref went up to the dads standing on the sidelines first.* If the refs don't even associate with me now, coaching a girls' team, am I going to be basically invisible on the sidelines of the men's team?

I didn't think I'd be able to make this decision by myself, so I tapped into that coaching 'dynasty' to see if my parents had any advice for me. My mum immediately gave me the hard truth, "*As a woman coach, you always know that you must go above and beyond, to even reach the same level [of respect] as a man...I have to adapt the way that I would say things because I don't want to sound like a woman. [S]o I'm trying to downplay my personality so that I match the men, which is very frustrating, but I don't want to be seen as weak. I find when I'm working with male athletes, I have to work a lot harder at earning their respect and that usually comes with me joking around with them … and them realizing that I do know what I'm talking about. Just*

because I'm a [woman] coach, and I work with [girl] athletes more often, doesn't necessarily discredit my knowledge of the sport." Now part of me wonders whether I will have to do the same… *get them [the men's team] to work right away because ... unless I behave a little bit more like how I think a man would behave, [I will not] earn their respect. [If I started with a] softer skill, they would roll their eyes and think, 'of course, this is what she's doing.'* Maybe I just need to change my coaching approach because g*irls respond differently to coaching styles than boys do. So, you can, for lack of a better word, yell at the boys [but] often, you can't do that to girls; they will not respond to that. I'm aware of the fact that you have to change how you coach boys versus girls.*

My dad's also told me "*I've had several conversations with [coaches of] world champions and they talk about how much of a dichotomy there is; regardless of the age the [men] like focusing on external attention, what's going on with the other [team] whereas with the girls they say, 'we've got this, you're in this together, these girls are your sisters,' and the same [coaches] have very differing results depending whether they change their language*." In saying this though, it feels like it goes against everything I have been taught about developing a coaching philosophy and being authentic to myself. I'm realizing through this process that I don't have an easy road ahead of me, but I don't want to be like my mum, who quit when times got tough. I guess it's time to go have a talk with my potential new boss, maybe he's open to a woman coaching by his side, he did offer me the position after all.

Legacy and Gender Dynamics: Maxime's Reflections on a 40-Year Coaching Career

This story follows Maxime, a high school teacher and coach of 40+ years who, before retiring, agreed to an interview with one of his students, Jaime, who wanted to understand how gender has shaped his coaching career.

Jaime: Hi coach! I know we are all excited to learn more about what makes you tick and get some helpful titbits from your experiences. I'm wondering if gender plays a role in your coaching philosophy?

Maxime: Hmm… *I'm aware that I'm a male, coaching female athletes, so I don't think that gender comes into my coaching philosophy, I coach them as athletes*… [**jeez, she's not messing around, that's a hard-hitting first question**]. *My coaching philosophy isn't gender specific at all ... I'm coaching predominantly female athletes who are in a predefined female setting... [but] I can't say I've even considered gender specific philosophy.* I think you should ask me about our big sweep last season. Never in the history of our school has the girls' rugby team made it to nationals [laughs].

Jaime: That surprises me. There's so much discussion about coaching girls, but very little about coaching boys. I'm also curious because, for a rugby coach, you've always seemed quite soft spoken.

Maxime: You know, as for many of us *I haven't been trained in how to talk to [girls]* in a coaching capacity, and I know that girls typically don't respond to aggressive behaviours, so I would try to stay away from yelling or winding you all up. [**Girls are known to be sensitive, and I don't want my athletes to get offended or bring up safe sport concerns]** *I mean, I played contact sport growing up, right? So, our coaches would say… and I guarantee that every coach on a boys' team has said this, 'boys, let them know early' and that expression means that*

first collision you go into you try and destroy that other player because that sets the tone for the rest of the game and they're afraid of you – very macho masculine kind of stuff. I just can't imagine a coach saying that to a female athlete. I always felt it was more important that the girls felt included and supported.

Jaime: I actually think there were times you could have been harder on us.

Maxime: [**Is she telling me I'm too easy on them!?**] *Do you remember Sarah, the guest coach I brought in? She criticized me for not being tough enough on [you] girls and I think I was holding back, and that is a gender thing, because I was afraid to seem like an aggressive male whereas… [Sarah], as a female with female athletes, probably was less concerned about that.*

Jaime: Why were you so worried about how you would be perceived?

Maxime: *Deep down with [my] own biases and growing up in a certain time – [I'm] trying but [the world has] changed so we're all just in this transition period, trying to adapt to a new normal.* [**If only she knew how much sport has changed, I never would have agreed to an interview with these questions in my first few years**]. T*hat idea of male or femaleness we learn through play and socialization. For a lot of men, we have to unlearn that when you go from coaching boys into coaching girls.*

Jaime: So, what has changed for you?

Maxime: *I grew up in traditional male sporting environments, where it was aggressive, but I think the empowering language with female athletes is considerably more beneficial, at least in my experience coaching. If we're telling them they're ready and they've got the tools and we can do it, that's the language that they need to get going.* I am learning that using empowering language as opposed to the alternative, yields better results and I find that when I reflect on it, I AM becoming more intentional with the language I use. [**So, wait a second, I guess I kind of do consider gender in my approach? Hmm…**]. Just to go back to *your question earlier, the way I perceived [gender] was around coaching philosophy, and I think the approach that I bring to how I coach and what I want to impart on the community I work with doesn't change based on sex or gender, philosophically, I'm coaching athletes first, but I [still] must be aware of their gender, I think, to be able to coach well; and I think, adapting to what people need – that's the art of coaching.*

Jaime: I like that perspective. A good coach should be able to respond to individual needs.

Maxime: *I really do try and coach the individual and not necessarily let gender play a role in that, because I think we all have our biases when it comes to gender...but sometimes it is true that boys need to know how it feels, while girls have to think more about it. But sometimes it's not true, and coach the individual not their gender.* Relying on gender stereotypes can have harmful effects on not only your athletes, but also the sport environment in general. The more I think about this, and the more intentional I am in my reflection, I do think that considering your biases about gender should be incorporated into one's coaching philosophy, and *I was lucky two of my biggest coaching mentors were female, so I had a different education, and this gave me a*

better understanding. I think we need less of what is coming from the coaching stream of male coaches. We need more female perspectives in coaching because I think it makes a better environment overall. I would encourage you, Jaime, to think about pursuing coaching as a career because we need to encourage more coaches to step outside of the box and think critically, as you have tried to have me do today.

Discussion

The purpose of our study was to examine the social influences of and on coaches' perceptions of gender and their gendered experiences in sport to identify barriers to, and potential avenues for more gender responsive coaching practices. Better understanding coaches' perceptions of gender and the expression of their beliefs in the context of coaching is important for advancing equity and fostering inclusive environments for women, girls, and other marginalized groups in sport. In addressing our research questions, our findings highlight two interconnected insights. First, coaches' gender beliefs were often grounded in binary and essentialist assumptions about girls and boys (e.g., girls need protection, boys require toughness). Second, these beliefs were not abstract, but were enacted in practice through gendered coaching behaviours, expectations, and interactions with athletes and other stakeholders. The use of a narrative inquiry afforded us the opportunity to explore the complexity of coaches' perceptions of gender through the overlapping metanarratives of order, chaos, and quest; illustrate how these beliefs and practices are experienced, negotiated, and sometimes challenged within coaches' everyday realities; and identify potential theoretical and practical advancements for the field.

Evident throughout the coaches' experiences, and integrated into our vignettes, was the performance narrative type (Book et al., 2024), and while most research has demonstrated the performance narrative as primarily focused on athletes' identities and their senses of self being

entirely linked to their athletic performance (Sambol et al., 2024); coaches similarly engage in forms of identity performance as they navigate expectations of leadership, authority, and expertise (Potrac et al., 2017). Within our participants' stories, performance was not limited to technical coaching competence; rather, coaches described performing gendered expectations of what a coach "should" look and behave like when coaching girls. These performances unfolded within broader metanarratives of order, chaos, and quest (Book et al., 2024), which shaped how coaches made sense of their gender beliefs and their place within the coaching landscape. Coaches' gender beliefs were reflected in narratives such as *Lack of Legitimacy*, women's need to *Adapt Themselves* to fit the 'mold' required of a coach, and the different approaches to working with girls versus boys. These overall performance-related themes in these context-specific narratives reflected coaches' approaches to demonstrating and acting on their gender beliefs in professional settings.

While we initially set out to explore sport coaches' gender beliefs and the impact on their practice coaching girls, we found our results did not just centre around athletes, but also the experiences and beliefs of women coaches. In diving into the lived experiences of the women coaches specifically, it was clear there was pressure to conform to traditional gender roles in their coaching practice. Charlotte's story suggested the context-situated narrative *Do it like a Man* illustrating the operation of an order metanarrative (Book et al., 2024), in which established norms about coaching competence and authority remain largely unquestioned. Within this narrative structure, success is achieved through conformity to existing expectations rather than through challenging them. Our participants told us this discourse often affected their perceived authenticity and confidence, which played a role in the creation of the mum's character in Charlotte's story. Such descriptions of modifying their behaviour to appear more authoritarian

reflects a form of identity work, whereby individuals actively negotiate their sense of self in response to dominant cultural expectations of gender (e.g., Norman & Rankin-Wright, 2016). Importantly, this identity work is not simply cognitive but also emotional and relational. Potrac and colleagues (2017) previously highlighted how coaching identities are continually shaped through embodied emotional experiences produced in interaction with others. This suggests that feelings such as anxiety, frustration, or self-doubt are not peripheral, but central to how coaches make sense of their roles. For the women coaches in this study, these emotional experiences were closely tied to navigating gendered expectations of legitimacy (i.e., *Lack of Legitimacy;* context-situated narrative) and authority within their coaching environments. They discussed being unable to do their job as head coach, as their legitimacy was continually called into question by other stakeholders in the sport space, as evidenced in Charlotte's story. Whether it be a lack of respect from referees, parents, or a simple disconnect, women coaches felt, in many instances, they had to act in a more masculine way to appease the perceptions of their athletes, especially when working with men and boys. These interactions reflect the chaos metanarrative, in which taken-for-granted assumptions about coaching authority were disrupted (Book et al., 2024; Denison, 2010).

Chaos narratives often emerge when individuals encounter situations that challenge their expectations or sense of legitimacy. For the women coaches in our study, interactions with referees and other authority figures created moments where their identity as a competent coach was destabilized. We understood such moments as instances of identity threat, where women's competence or legitimacy was questioned in ways that reflect broader structural inequalities (Norman & Simpson, 2023). Within sport contexts, women coaches frequently encounter these challenges due to the persistent association of coaching expertise with masculinity (Norman &

Rankin-Wright, 2016). According to Messner (2011), the gender order in sport seems to be most accurately described by the concept of 'soft essentialism' where girls and women are "flexible choosers" (p.152) – required to adopt stereotypically masculine traits to be successful in sport, while continuing to demonstrate traditional aspects of femininity, such as being, in other areas of their lives, "naturally cooperative and group oriented" (p.162). The chaos experienced in these encounters, therefore, reflects not simply interpersonal conflict, but the ongoing negotiation of gendered power relations within sport. As a result, women coaches also seem to conform to the narrative that *Boys Need it Hard* – another context-situated narrative that became evident in our vignettes, reflecting a deeply embedded gender belief that equates masculinity with toughness and emotional suppression (Cushion & Jones, 2014). This narrative continues to be problematic as it normalizes harsher, more punitive, and less emotionally attuned coaching practices for boys, while reinforcing more protective approaches towards girls. From a broader sociocultural perspective, these practices are not simply individual coaching choices but are shaped through dominant discourses that position certain ways of coaching girls as more legitimate than others. As Denison (2010) argues, coaching practices are discursively formed where particular "truths" about effective coaching become taken for granted. In this way, gendered assumptions about toughness, authority, and emotional expression become embedded within one's coaching practices, often without critical reflection. While Book et al. (2024) offer valuable insight into how individuals make sense of their experiences through narratives, less attention has been given to how these narratives translate into practice. Unpacking narratives such as these invites coaches to reflect on how their beliefs shape practice and move them towards adapting their coaching style to meet the needs of each athlete through a more intentional gender responsive (Norman, 2016) approach.

While women athletes and coaches are increasingly given a voice in the literature (Sambol et al., 2024), there is an opportunity here to more intentionally integrate these perspectives into spaces that engage men coaches and shape their practices. At first, the men coaches in our study seemed unable (i.e., through lack of awareness) to provide their true beliefs about gender in sport, and how their biases may impact their coaching – a narrative reflected in Maxine's story and in the context-situated narrative *Relying on Binary Beliefs*. This is especially problematic in the endeavour to create more gender-inclusive sport environments since this is not a "women's only" issue (Burton & LaVoi, 2016). For many of the men coaches, early moments in our focus groups reflected a form of narrative uncertainty characteristic of chaos stories. Men coaches struggled to articulate their beliefs about gender or recognize how gender norms shaped their coaching practices. However, as discussions progressed, some participants began to reflect more critically on their assumptions (i.e., about toughness, emotion, and athlete needs) in an attempt to adapt their current belief system – *Reframing Gender Beliefs*. This movement from uncertainty toward reflection reveals the early stages of a quest narrative, in which disruption prompts individuals to reconsider previously unexamined beliefs (Book et al., 2024), as Maxine attempts to do in his vignette. This difficulty in articulating gender beliefs reflects not only a lack of awareness but also the ways in which coaching knowledge itself is socially and discursively constructed. Coaches often operate within taken-for-granted frameworks that position their practices as neutral or objective (Denison, 2010). For instance, men coaches truly do demonstrate a more controlling coaching style (Saarinen et al., 2023), even with their girl athletes, because there is a societal expectation to act this way.

At the same time, engaging in reflection can be emotionally disruptive, as questioning one's coaching practices may unearth deeply held aspects of one's identity (Potrac et al., 2017).

The movement from uncertainty toward reflection represents not just cognitive change, but an embodied and emotional process of renegotiating what it means to be a coach. According to Book and colleagues (2024), quest narratives are further characterized by meaning-making and personal growth following disruption. For the women coaches in this study, the quest often involves navigating a pathway toward legitimacy in a profession historically defined by masculine norms. Their stories reflected Charlotte's ongoing identity work as she negotiated how to remain authentic while adapting to the expectations of a new coaching role as presented in her vignette. This process aligns with broader research suggesting that coaching identities are continuously constructed through interactions with athletes, colleagues, and organizational cultures (e.g., Adams et al., 2010; Cushion & Jones, 2014). For women coaches in particular, identity development often involves negotiating tensions between personal values and the dominant norms of sport organizations (Norman, 2010). The quest narratives in our vignettes, therefore, highlight coaching as an ongoing process of identity formation rather than a fixed professional role. We believe coaches need the space to discuss their gender beliefs and how these may consciously or unconsciously impact their coaching philosophy and practices. We do not create enough opportunities for coaches of any gender to address how expectations and experiences influence their gender beliefs, sit with this often blindsiding information, and make changes to their resulting coaching practices.

Taken together, our findings not only support the relevance of order, chaos, and quest narratives (Book et al., 2024) but also extend this framework by illustrating how these narrative forms are embedded within gendered social structures. The order narrative reinforces existing gender norms within coaching culture, especially when considering coaching girls. The chaos narrative exposes tensions and inequities within those norms, and the quest narratives create

space for reflection and potential transformation. By examining these processes through a narrative lens, we tried to highlight how gender beliefs are both formed and enacted within the social context of coaching. Importantly, these narrative forms were not experienced in isolation; rather, coaches' stories often moved between them as individuals encountered challenges, reflected on their experiences, and reconsidered their beliefs about gender in sport. Understanding coaching through this narrative lens highlights how gender beliefs, especially those centred around coaching girls, are not static attitudes but are continually constructed and renegotiated through lived experiences in sport environments.

A clear limitation in this study was our use of binary language when discussing gender, namely the comparison of boys versus girls. We acknowledge there are more than two genders, and despite this binary approach stemming from the coaches' discussions in the focus groups, there could have been more intentional effort for us to discuss gender beyond a simple binary and to recruit participants who had a less linear view of gender, though this does not yet seem to be the norm in sport. Additionally, participants were mostly White, with European backgrounds. There could have been a stronger intentional focus on recruiting coaches of more diverse backgrounds and ages.

Implications of Findings

Our findings suggest the need for a cultural shift in how gender equity is understood in coaching, moving beyond simply increasing access for girls and women toward examining the beliefs and everyday practices that shape the sport environments they exist within (Coletti et al., 2021). The experiences and stories shared by coaches in this study illustrate how gender beliefs are often negotiated through lived experiences, moments of disruption, and reflection. As such,

creating opportunities for coaches to critically examine and discuss their experiences may be an important step toward fostering more gender responsive coaching practices.

One promising avenue for supporting this process is through the use of social learning spaces, aligned with the quest narratives present in our findings, where coaches reflected on their experiences and began reconsidering previously unexamined beliefs about gender in the presence of others. Such initiatives could include communities of practice (CoPs; Wenger, 1998) where coaches can engage in ongoing dialogue about gender, coaching philosophy, and athlete development. Within such settings, coaches could share experiences, challenge assumptions, and collectively explore strategies for creating more inclusive sport environments. Facilitating structured conversations around topics such as coaching language, expectations of athletes, and gender stereotypes may help coaches of any gender develop greater awareness of how their beliefs influence their coaching practices. CoPs are spaces where cycles of individual and collective reflection generate knowledge and promote changes to practice, aligning closely with action learning/research (Kraft & Culver, 2020). These iterative processes can position coaches not simply as recipients of knowledge but as active contributors in the development of truly inclusive coaching practices, such as brave spaces (i.e., a place where individuals feel free to express their beliefs without fear of retribution; Arao & Clemens, 2013), both for their own development and that of their athletes.

In addition to collaborative learning approaches, our findings highlight the importance of knowledge mobilization and accessible dissemination of research. The narrative vignettes developed in this study have the potential to serve as reflective tools to prompt coaches to consider how gender beliefs shape their coaching practices. These stories may be particularly effective when incorporated into coach education workshops, discussion guides, or professional

development sessions, where coaches can engage with the narratives and relate them to their own experiences coaching girls. We therefore plan to disseminate the vignettes and resulting themes that emerged from this research through coach-facing communications such as blog posts, newsletters, and presentations to sport organizations. The translation of research findings into accessible formats can help stimulate ongoing conversations about gender and coaching within the sport community. Future research could build on this work by exploring how reflective dialogue and collaborative learning initiatives influence coaches' beliefs and practices over time.

Conclusion

Our exploration of coach narratives provided valuable insight into the complex ways that gender beliefs and perceptions influence coaches' practices. Through the lens of narrative inquiry, we uncovered nuanced experiences highlighting the barriers faced by women coaches, the impact of gender beliefs in shaping coaches' professional identities, and the way in which gendered expectations shape the performance and legitimacy of coaching across the sport landscape. Our findings underscore the necessity to address the entrenched gender dynamics influencing both coaching practices and the broader culture of sport. In conclusion, our study calls for a reimagination of the coaching environment, where we move beyond simply increasing sport opportunities for women and girls to one where gendered assumptions and biases are actively questioned in supportive environments, and where inclusive practices are the norm. Our findings suggest that creating spaces for open dialogue, offering professional development opportunities focused on gender equity, and integrating gender-responsive practices into coach education are essential steps for fostering increasingly inclusive, empowering sport environments.

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Article Two

Rourke, S., Culver, D. M., & Young, B. (2026). Assessing Sport Coaches' Gender Beliefs: Development and Preliminary Validation of the Girls-Centred Coaching Self-Efficacy Scale (GCSES). *International Journal of Sport Sciences and Coaching, 0*(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/17479541261486246

Abstract

Coaches play a critical role in shaping girls' sport experiences; however, limited empirical attention has been paid to coaches' confidence in recognizing the influence of gender beliefs within their practice. Despite growing calls for gender responsive and gender transformative coaching, no validated measure currently exists to broadly assess coaches' gender-related self-efficacy and more specifically within this concept, girl-centred coaching self-efficacy. The purpose of this study was to develop and provide preliminary validation evidence for the Girls-Centred Coaching Self-Efficacy Scale (GCSES) that is grounded in self-efficacy theory, the Coaching Efficacy Model, and informed by feminist and critical sport scholarship.[1,2] Scale development followed established methodological guidelines.[3] An initial pool of 87 items was generated through theory-driven item construction, coach focus groups (n = 20), expert review (n = 6), and cognitive interviews with coaches (n = 4). The revised instrument, including 31 items, was administered to 216 sport coaches ($M_{\text{coaching experience}}$ = 14.4 years). Exploratory factor analysis supported a 4-factor structure reflecting coaches' confidence in: (1) gender literacy in coaching, (2) understanding gendered sport experiences, (3) fostering gender-inclusive sport, and (4) girl-centred coaching practices. The model accounted for 54.9% of total variance, with strong internal consistency across subscales (α = .80–.92). Findings provide initial evidence that the GCSES is a psychometrically sound instrument for assessing girl-centred coaching self-efficacy. The scale offers researchers and coach practitioners a context-specific tool to evaluate and strengthen initiatives aimed at advancing gender transformative coaching practice.

Keywords: gender-related self-efficacy, gender-responsive coaching, gender transformative coaching, exploratory factor analysis, scale development

Literature Review

The role of the coach is paramount in shaping the sport experiences of athletes. Through their behaviours, attitudes, and interactions, coaches influence not only athletes' physical and psychological development, but also the extent to which sport environments are inclusive and equitable.[2,4,5] For girls and gender-diverse youth, this influence can be particularly salient, as coaches have the power to either reinforce harmful gender norms or challenge them in ways that promote belonging and overall retention.[6,7] Exposure to such harmful gender norms through discrimination and gender bias, has been linked to a range of negative outcomes for girls including decreased self-confidence, heightened body image concerns, and increased sport drop-out. to name a few.[22,41,42]

However, coaching does not occur in a vacuum. Ongoing underrepresentation of women and gender-diverse individuals in sport leadership, alongside persistent gender inequities, means that many coaches, regardless of their gender, operate within frameworks that can unintentionally reproduce biases and exclusion, thus gendering sport coaching overall.[8,9,10,25] In response, gender-responsive or gender-effective coaching practices have been proposed as an important starting point. These approaches aim to help coaches interrogate and deconstruct gender biases impacting their coaching practices (e.g., interventions, training modules, and educational programs aimed at increasing coaches' awareness and capacity to address these issues).[11,12,27,30] Thus, laying the groundwork for more proactive gender transformative coaching to come. Yet, despite the salient role coaches play in fostering positive sport experiences, there remains limited research on how coaches' gender beliefs inform their practices, their knowledge of gender-responsive approaches, and most importantly, how confident they feel in applying a gender transformative lens to their coaching.

These efforts are further hindered by a lack of appropriate assessment tools. There continues to be no validated measure that captures coaches' gender-related self-efficacy; defined here as the confidence in recognizing one's gender beliefs and how they might impact one's coaching practices, or more specifically, girl-centred coaching self-efficacy, a domain-specific form of gender-related self-efficacy. As such, the purpose of this study was to tackle this gap through the development and preliminarily validation of a novel measurement tool designed to assess sport coaches' confidence in a) their knowledge of gender norms, b) how gender beliefs affect their practices, and c) engaging in gender-responsive coaching practices – a few key determinants of gender transformative coaches.

Coach Self-Efficacy

As our efforts consider a measurement tool relating to girl-centred coaching self-efficacy, the origin of content is grounded in the concept of self-efficacy (S-E), theorized by Bandura as one's belief in their ability to execute the required actions in order to manage prospective situation(s).[1] S-E plays a key role in shaping human motivation, performance, and decision-making.[2] In the sport coaching context, Feltz and colleagues introduced the Coaching Efficacy Model (CEM), which included four dimensions of efficacy beliefs in sport, namely: motivation, game strategy, technique, and character building.[2] Previous research has shown that coaches who are highly efficacious are more likely to foster positive athlete outcomes (e.g., such as their ability to persist in the face of challenges).[13] However, while the CEM has been widely adopted to assess coaches' beliefs about their technical and tactical competence, it has not been extended to S-E related to gendered coaching beliefs and practices. This is a notable omission especially with growing recognition that competence in coaching girls and gender-diverse athletes requires

more than technical and tactical knowledge; it also demands an awareness of how gender beliefs, norms, and structural gender inequities function within sport.[5,8]

Previous work in the field of gender equity and coaching efficacy has resulted in other coach related self-report measures, such as the Gender Equity Scale (GES) used to assess physical educators' attitudes towards equal opportunities, ability expectations, and gender-role stereotypes.[14] Recently, other coach self-report measures such as Goorevich and colleagues' Gender Essentialist Beliefs Towards Girls in Sport Scale (GEGS) have been created to test intervention outcomes related to coaches' gender essentialist beliefs.[15] This survey assesses gender essentialism among sport coaches, yet it is limited in that it does not address a coach's confidence (i.e., efficacy) in recognizing and addressing how gender beliefs affect their coaching. Altogether, there is still a gap in our assessment practices for understanding coaches' girl-centred S-E. Thus, building on the foundation of the previous work done in the field of coach S-E, and the need for a tool that blends theory, coach input, and psychometric rigour, the present study attempted to expand the concept of coaching S-E to validly and reliably include content relating to some determinants of gender transformative coaching, namely gender literacy and gender-inclusive practices.[5,16]

Gender Beliefs and Coaching Practice

The coaching environment is influenced by deeply embedded societal gender norms and organizational cultures that privilege masculinity, competition, and heteronormativity.[17] Both explicit and implicit stereotypes and biases shape how coaches, peers, and sport systems perceive and support athletes. More specifically, gender beliefs refer to the ideas, assumptions, and expectations people hold about gender roles, identities, and behaviours. In sport, these beliefs often take the form of gender essentialism – defined as the belief that men and women naturally

(i.e., innately) possess separate and unchanging physical, social, and personality traits.[18,19] Coaches may unintentionally reinforce such beliefs by providing different types of feedback, messaging around motivational orientation, or psychosocial support to athletes based on gender.[20,21,22,23]

When girls and gender-diverse youth are viewed according to traditional gender assumptions about strength, leadership, competitiveness or capability, these beliefs can shape the distribution of opportunities, resources, and safety within sport environments. For example, gender essentialist beliefs are often reflected in inequitable access to coaching attention, training time, facilities, funding, or competitive pathways, as well as in lower expectations for performance and leadership potential.[24] These structural inequalities can contribute to reduced skill development, decreased confidence, and earlier drop-out from sport. They also create environments where gendered norms are realized through exclusion, harassment, or the normalization of sexism or discriminatory language undermining psychological safety and belonging. Coaches, especially women coaches, may also feel pressure to conform to dominant coaching ideologies or lack the tools to question the prevailing assumptions about gender in their sport. This was seen in previous work, which showed that even highly competent women professionals struggle against the structural and cultural barriers in sport, suggesting the need for more gender-responsive approaches in coaching practice.[7] Importantly, gender essentialist beliefs not only disadvantage cisgender girls and women, but also significantly harm trans, non-binary, and other non-cisgender youth. Such essentialist or binary frameworks can result in misrecognition, social exclusion, less participation options, and a heightened risk of harassment and unsafe sport environments, further reinforcing their exclusion in sport.[11]As Plaza and

colleagues note, challenging stereotypes and biases is essential for creating equitable pathways where all athletes and coaches can develop their potential free from limiting expectations.[24]

Scholars and practitioners have increasingly called for a shift towards gender transformative coaching, which includes practices that not only acknowledge gender inequities but also actively seek to challenge and dismantle them.[12,25] Gender transformative coaches go beyond gender neutral/blind (e.g., using gender neutral language, which has in fact been shown not to positively affect athlete outcomes), gender sensitive (e.g., supporting girls' needs) and gender responsive approaches (e.g., retrospectively dismantling masculine norms by addressing inequities or reducing harmful gender norms in sport).[26,27] Instead, gender transformative coaches are proactive, adopting practices that are responsive to the diverse needs of their athletes.[27] These practices include recognizing the ways in which gender intersects with other aspects of athletes' identities, such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, and disability, and the resulting impact on their experiences in sport.[8] Such inclusive coaching requires a combination of understanding gender diversity, critical reflection, and action. For instance, gender transformative coaches may revise team policies, adjust communication styles, or reframe expectations to create more welcoming spaces for girls and gender-diverse youth.[11]

Despite this robust descriptive and qualitative literature, there continue to be limited efforts to assess how gender beliefs are held, which is an important determinant of gender transformative coaches. For example, current tools such as the GES only measure general attitudes towards gender equity but are not tailored to the specific context of sport coaching, specifically assessing knowledge and approaches contingent upon one's perception of gender.[14] What is still lacking is a context-specific, theoretically grounded measure that reliably and validly evaluates, in a comprehensive fashion, coaches' girl-centred S-E. Such a measure could

be used to explain coaches' intentions and behaviours within the coaching sphere and could also be used to judge the influence of future coaching education interventions targeting the development of gender transformative coaches for girls. As argued by experts in the field, creating equitable sport environments involves efforts to reshape the practices and structures that have historically excluded girls and women and gender-diverse people.[5,9,28,29] A lack of knowledge, awareness, and confidence may serve as critical barriers to gender transformative practices. Thus, the assessment of coaches' girl-centred S-E is vital for understanding the landscape that facilitates gender transformative coaching practices.

The Need for a Girl-Centred Scale

Given the need for a validated, context-specific tool to assess coaches' S-E of gender-related beliefs, knowledge, and practices, the present study aimed to develop and preliminarily validate a novel scale instrument grounded in the CEM and informed by feminist and critical sport literature.[2,5,27,30] In developing this seminal survey, we planned to draw on best practices in scale development and validation. As recommended by scholars in the field, the creation of our survey instrument involved the generation of conceptually grounded items, coupled with the use of mixed methods, such as expert reviews and cognitive interviewing.[3,31] We planned to follow this with factor analysis of coach-reported scores on an initial survey inventory. We planned these steps to ensure that the scale demonstrates both content and structural validity. In terms of the content of the survey, we sought to develop coherent content that asked coaches about (1A) their gender beliefs about coaching girls, (1B) how their gender beliefs affect how they coach, and (2) the underlying dimensions of coaches' gender-related S-E.

Methods

Study Design

A mixed methods approach was used in the development and validation of this scale. We utilized various recommendations in the scale development process and in the reporting of our findings.[3,31,32] After receiving ethical approval from the University of Ottawa (REB #H-08-23-9458), we commenced our two-phased approach. Phase 1 (i.e., the development phase) included the collection of qualitative data through coach focus groups (n = 20 participants), an expert panel (n = 6), and cognitive interviews (n = 4). Phase 2 (i.e., the testing phase) included the gathering of quantitative coach-report data through an online survey using the SurveyMonkey platform (n = 216).

Phase 1: Development of Scale Items

Item Development. The item development process occurred over three stages. First, we drew from pre-existing content on gender, sex, and coach S-E, including a thorough literature review of applicable research and the exploration of relevant measures. Through this process, we compiled a list of items that were potentially related to our scale instrument and representative of these domains. Second, numerous additional items were included based on the expertise and lived experiences of the research team, which included seasoned professionals in the fields of sport psychology, coaching science and practice, and gender in sport. The members of our research team have worked as coaches, coach educators, mental performance consultants, and as researchers in the field of girls and women's sport broadly and coaching specifically. The added items were compiled at this stage through the personal and professional experiences of the team. Third, we ensured that items covered all dimensions of coach S-E as defined by Feltz and colleagues, including motivation, game strategy, technique, and character building.[2] The initial inventory of our scale consisted of 87 items, rated on an eight-point scale ranging from 1 (Not at

All Confident) to 8 (Extremely Confident). All items in the inventory were preceded by the prompt “I am confident in my ability to...”.

Expert Reviews. After the initial item creation, a diverse group of experts was chosen to evaluate the scale’s content validity. Six scholars with expertise in sport psychology, coaching science, and sport sociology were invited by email for an interview assessing this inventory. The first author interviewed all six scholars (including two men and four women) and reviewed the initial 87 items with them. From these interviews, 46 items were removed due to irrelevance, confusing wording, or being double-barrelled. Moreover, 10 items were re-worded or clarified (e.g., utilizing more common language), and six items were added to more accurately represent the domains of study. Post expert feedback, the scale comprised 47 items.

Cognitive Interviews. We used cognitive interviews to assess face validity (i.e., clarity and relevance) of the items with four girls’ sport coaches recruited via convenience sampling. Our sample included two women and two men coaches across track and field, rugby, volleyball, and alpine skiing. All coaches identified as White/Caucasian. Three interviews were conducted in English, and one was conducted in French. The fourth interview was conducted in French to ensure bilingual Canadian coaches (i.e., where French is their first language) could be able to understand the content of the survey. The coaches completed the scale one week before participating in the cognitive interview, where they engaged in retrospective probing based on the cognitive pretesting method.[33] The interviews reviewed overall comprehensive, question flow, and responses.

Based on the cognitive interviews, 16 items were removed because of confusing or complex wording, or because the coaches said items were irrelevant to their experiences. We also modified the scale instructions at this time to ensure ease of completion and removed

terminology that appeared to cause confusion or bias for coaches, including 'coach confidence', 'gender beliefs', 'stereotypes', and 'bias'. We also defined 'girls and boys' at this time as athletes under the age of 25 years old. The final scale at the end of Phase 1, moving forward for testing, comprised 31 items.

At this stage, we appraised the entire inventory to identify distinct, conceptually informed, coherent, and constituent themes. To this end, the first author worked in concert with co-authors to segregate the 31 items according to operational definitions for five distinct themes. These five themes and their corresponding operational definitions were as follows; (1) *Knowledge* (i.e., a familiarity, awareness, or understanding of gender dynamics in sport and broader society), (2) *Beliefs* (i.e., subjective attitudes about the relationship between gender and sport coaching), (3) *Behaviours* (i.e., current observable actions, responses, and patterns of activity exhibited by coaches), (4) *Gender Binary* (i.e., knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that attribute separate, intrinsic qualities to girls and boys), and (5) *Gender Diversity* (i.e., observable patterns of activity exhibited by gender transformative coaches). After vetting and re-vetting, the three authors came to consensus on the inventory of themes and related items that would be submitted for data collection. All five themes had at least three items in line with scale development best practices.[3]

Phase 2: Testing the Scale

Sampling. The sample size of between 200-300 respondents was determined based on recommendations in the literature.[3,32,34] Coach participants were recruited through email and LinkedIn by the research team and sport organizations. The inclusion criteria required participants to (a) be over 18 years old; (b) identify as a coach who has coached girls under the age of 25 years old (defined as a leader, coach, or volunteer of sport, fitness, or physical

education for or with girls); (c) be actively coaching girls or foreseeably coaching girls in the next six months (in any sport or physical activity, at any level of competition); and (d) have coached girls in the last five years for a minimum of six months (or two seasons) prior to this project. The survey was completed once. The coaches did not receive any financial compensation for taking part in this study. All participants gave informed consent prior to participating.

Girls-Centred Coaching Self-Efficacy Scale (GCSES). The survey used the 31 items retained following Phase 1. Participants rated each item on an eight-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not Confident at All) to 8 (Extremely Confident). Randomized items pertained to subscales for Knowledge (6 items), Beliefs (4 items), Behaviours (10 items), Gender Binary (5 items), and Gender Diversity (6 items). The initial survey items are shown according to subscale in Table 1. We expected that higher scores on each subscale should indicate more transformative coaching practices towards girls and potentially other marginalized groups in sport.

Table 1
Initial Scale Items by Subscale

Subscale	Item
Factor 1: Knowledge	1. ...identify the coaching needs of my girl athletes
	2. ...identify the reasons why girls play sport
	3. ...identify the reasons for which girls leave sport
	4. ...identify the barriers to sport participation that girls uniquely experience
	5. ...identify the potential consequences of gender biases in sport
	6. ...identify the implications of gender biases in sport
Factor 2: Beliefs	1. ...identify how my coaching philosophy considers gender
	2. ...consider how my athletes' gender affects my coaching
	3. ...identify the ways gender may impact my coaching practices
	4. ...reflect on how gender norms might shape my expectations of my athletes
Factor 3: Behaviours	1. ...recognize gender stereotypes in how I coach my athletes
	2. ...identify gender biases in my coaching approach
	3. ...meet the coaching needs of my girl athletes
	4. ...build strong relationships with my girl athletes
	5. ...talk to my athletes without introducing gender biases
	6. ...recognize when I am using gendered language
	7. ...have a discussion with an athlete about gendered issues
	8. ...make discussions around gender with my athletes a normal thing
	9. ...prevent others (e.g., parents, coaches, referees, etc.) from engaging in gender shaming towards my athletes
	10. ...prevent my athletes from engaging in gender shaming
Factor 4: Gender Binary	1. ...express beliefs that distinctly apply to girl athletes
	2. ...express beliefs that distinctly apply to boy athletes
	3. ...express beliefs that distinctly apply to gender in sport
	4. ...describe stereotypes associated with coaching girls in sport
	5. ...describe stereotypes associated with coaching boys in sport
Factor 5: Gender Diversity	1. ...consider non-traditional matters of gender in relation to coaching practice

2. ...identify key coaching considerations related to non-binary gender
3. ...talk to my athletes while effectively considering diverse genders
4. ...use the gender pronouns preferred by my athletes
5. ...coach so that all genders feel included in sport
6. ...create an inclusive environment for all gender

Note. All scale items are anchored by "I am confident in my ability to...".

Demographic Information and Participants. We gathered the following demographic information related to age, gender identity, ethnicity/racial background, primary language, coaching roles, and experience as a coach. Participant recruitment yielded 392 responses. Responses were removed prior to analysis due to not meeting the inclusion criteria (n = 28), and when they were identified as fraudulent or bots (n = 148), leaving 216 participants on the survey. The majority of participants in the final sample identified as Cisgender (n = 211, 97%), White (n = 192, 89%), head coaches (n = 115, 53%) and English speaking (n = 208, 89%). 40% identified as a Woman/Girl, 23% as a Man/Boy, and 37% chose not to identify their gender further. All participants were above the age of 18 years old, had coached girls in some capacity for at least six months in the last five years, and ranged in coaching experience (2–40 years; $M_{\text{experience}}$ = 14.4, SD = 10.6 years). A full breakdown of participant characteristics is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Survey Participant Characteristics

Characteristics	*n* (%)
Gender Identity	
Cisgender	211 (97.7)
Genderfluid	2 (0.9)
Nonbinary	1 (0.5)
Prefer not to answer	2 (0.9)
Specific Gender Identity	
Man/Boy	50 (23.1)
Woman/Girl	87 (40.3)
Prefer not to answer	79 (37.0)
Race/Ethnicity	
White/Caucasian	192 (89.0)
Mixed/Multiracial	8 (3.7)
Black/African American	2 (0.9)
Asian	5 (2.3)
Native American	3 (1.4)
Hispanic/Latinx	1 (0.5)
Other	5 (2.3)
Role in Sport	
Head Coach	115 (53.2)

Assistant Coach	62 (28.7)
Sport Leader (e.g., admin, coach developer, etc.)	22 (10.2)
Other	17 (7.9)
Years of Coaching Experience	
>5	35 (16.2)
6-10	74 (34.3)
11-20	59 (27.3)
21+	48 (22.2)

Note. $N = 216$.

Data Analyses

Preliminary data analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (IBM Corp., 2023; version 29.0.01). Before conducting the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), item distributions were assessed for normality, and the data were screened for missing values and outliers. Sampling adequacy was evaluated using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity to ensure factorability of the correlation matrix. EFA was conducted on the full set of survey data using principal axis factoring (PFA) with varimax rotation. The number of factors to retain was determined through a set of criteria; (a) Eigenvalues greater than 1.0 (Kaiser's criterion), (b) visual inspection of the scree plot, and (c) an examination of factor loadings, including the strength and pattern of item loadings across factors. Items with factor loadings below .30 or with significant cross-loadings (defined as loadings $\geq$ .30 on two or more factors) were removed iteratively, re-running the analysis each time, to verify improvements in factor structure. Internal consistency reliability for each factor was assessed using Cronbach's alpha.

Results

Prior to the factor analysis, the data were screened for missing values, outliers, and assumptions of normality. Inspection of univariate skewness and kurtosis values indicated no substantial departures from normality, and no extreme outliers were identified.

Factor Extraction and Rotation

An initial EFA was conducted on the full set of 31 items using PFA with varimax rotation. The size of the KMO measure of sampling adequacy (KMO = .94) revealed that the GCSES items had sufficient common variance for factor analysis, and the significance of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, $x^2(465) = 4039.66$, $p < .001$, indicated that the correlation matrix was factorable.

The factor solution derived from the initial EFA yielded five factors which accounted for 55.8% of the variation in the data (factor 1 = 43.4%; factor 2 = 7.2%; factor 3 = 5.0%; factor 4 = 4.2%; factor 5 = 3.4%). Items with primary loadings below .40 or with significant cross-loadings (>.30 on multiple factors) were removed through iterative analysis (i.e., items 22, 23, 6, 10, 17, 29, 21, 8; see Table 3), in that order.

Table 3

Items Removed During Iterative Exploratory Factor Analysis

Item	Primary Factor	Highest Loading	Cross-Loading(s)	Reason for Removal
Item 22: Express beliefs that distinctly apply to boy athletes	Factor 5	.77	–	Factor 5 has insufficient items; this item loaded the highest onto Factor 5
Item 23: Express beliefs that distinctly apply to gender in sport	Factor 2	.52	.50 (Factor 1)	Cross-loading > .30
Item 6: Identify the implications of gender biases in sport	Factor 1	.53	.52 (Factor 2)	Cross-loading > .30
Item 10: Reflect on how gender norms might shape my expectations of my athletes	Factor 2	.52	.52 (Factor 1)	Cross-loading > .30
Item 17: Have a discussion with an athlete about gender-related issues	Factor 1	.49	.45 (Factor 3)	Cross-loading > .30
Item 29: Use the gender pronouns preferred by my athletes	Factor 5	.88	–	Factor 5 has insufficient items; this item loaded the highest onto Factor 5
Item 21: Express beliefs that distinctly apply to girl athletes	Factor 4	.54	.52 (Factor 2)	Cross-loading > .30
Item 8: Consider how my athletes' genders affect my coaching	Factor 2	.53	.47 (Factor 1)	Cross-loading > .30

Note. Items were removed sequentially based on low primary factor loadings (< .40) or significant cross-loadings (> .30) on multiple factors. Removal occurred iteratively, with the factor solution re-estimated after each item deletion.

Resultantly, the final EFA showed a four-factor structure that explained a total of 54.9% of variance among items (factor 1 = 18.2%; factor 2 = 13.4%; factor 3 = 13.0%; factor 4 = 10.4%). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity proved to be significant, $x^2(253) = 2773.40$, $p < .001$, and all communalities were over the required value of .40. Finally, all Eigenvalues in this final iteration were over the required criterion of 1 (factor 1 = 10.24; factor 2 = 1.90; factor 3 = 1.30; factor 4 = 1.01). In the final solution, 23 items were retained across four factors, with each factor comprising between three and ten items. The final rotated factor matrix is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Rotated Factor Matrix and Descriptive Statistics for the Girls-Centred Coaching Self-Efficacy Scale

Item	Factor			
	Gender Literacy in Coaching	Understanding Gendered Sport Experiences	Fostering Gender-Inclusive Sport	Girl-Centred Coaching Practices
Identify key coaching considerations related to gender diversity	.657		–	
Talk to my athletes while effectively considering diverse genders	.620		–	
Identify gender biases in my coaching approach	.616	–		
Recognize gender stereotypes in how I coach my athletes	.592	.457		
Identify the ways gender might impact my coaching practices	.589	.432		
Identify the potential consequences of gender biases in sport	.570	–		
Consider non-traditional matters of gender in relation to my coaching practice	.568		–	
Identify how my coaching philosophy considers gender	.560	–		–
Recognize when I am using gendered language	.517			
Talk to my athletes without introducing gender biases	.400			–
Identify the barriers to sport participation that girls uniquely experience		.675		
Identify the reasons that girls leave sport		.628		
Describe stereotypes associated with coaching girls in sport		.621		
Identify the reasons why girls play sports		.549		–
Describe stereotypes associated with coaching boys in sport	–	.480		
Discourage my athletes from engaging in gender shaming			.704	
Create an inclusive coaching environment for all genders	–		.651	
Coach so that all genders feel included in sport	–		.622	
Discourage others (e.g., parents, coaches, referees etc.) from engaging in gender shaming towards my athletes			.552	–
Make discussions around gender a normal thing with my athletes	–		.486	
Identify the coaching needs of my girl athletes				.722
Meet the coaching needs of my girl athletes		–		.700

Build strong relationships with my girl athletes				.542
Cronbach's α	.92	.80	.83	.80
Mean	6.10	6.40	6.50	7.0
SD	1.11	1.10	1.1	.90
Skewness	-.79	-.80	-1.01	-1.22
Kurtosis	.79	.22	1.15	3.01

Note. Factor loadings from principal axis factoring with varimax rotation. Items are listed by their highest factor loading. Loadings below .40 are suppressed. Each item loads primarily on one factor.

Following the final EFA, factor scores were computed for each of the four factors by aggregating items loading on each factor. Bivariate Pearson correlations were then conducted among the four factor subscales to examine the degree of association between the resulting dimensions. Inter-factor correlations are presented in Table 5. Correlations ranged from moderate to strong (r = .50-.73), with all associations demonstrating statistical significance (p < .001). The observed pattern of moderate inter-factor correlations provides support for the multidimensional structure of the scale and suggests adequate discriminant validity among the subscales.

Table 5
Inter-Factor Pearson Correlations

Variable	1	2	3	4
Gender Literacy in Coaching	–			
Understanding Gendered Sport Experiences	.66**	–		
Fostering Gender-Inclusive Sport	.73**	.50**	–	
Girl-Centred Coaching Practices	.62**	.58**	.52**	–

Note. N = 216. **p < .001.

Factor 1: Gender Literacy in Coaching

This factor captures a coach's self-reported confidence in recognizing and understanding how gender influences their coaching (e.g., "I am confident in my ability to identify gender biases in my coaching approach"). It includes the efficacy to identify gender norms, biases, and stereotypes, and to reflect on how these may be embedded in their language, philosophy, and

everyday coaching decisions. Factor loadings ranged from .40 to .66, and the internal consistency was excellent (Cronbach's α = .92).

Factor 2: Understanding Gendered Experiences in Sport

This factor reflects a coach's self-reported confidence in understanding the gendered factors that influence girls' sport participation (e.g., "I am confident in my ability to identify the reasons that girls leave sport"). It includes awareness of the motivations and barriers girls face in sport, as well as recognition of the stereotypes associated with coaching both girls and boys. Factor loadings ranged from .48 to .68, and the internal consistency was strong (Cronbach's α = .80).

Factor 3: Fostering Gender Inclusive Sport

This factor reflects a coach's self-reported confidence in creating and sustaining an inclusive sport culture where athletes of all genders feel respected, supported, and safe (e.g., "I am confident in my ability to create an inclusive coaching environment for all genders"). It includes the capability to discourage gender shaming among athletes and stakeholders, to engage in open conversations about gender, and implement inclusive practices that promote equity in sport settings. Factor loadings ranged from .49 to .70, and the internal consistency was excellent (Cronbach's α = .83).

Factor 4: Girl-Centred Coaching Practice

This factor reflects a coach's self-reported confidence in identifying and meeting the specific developmental, emotional, and performance-related needs of girls in sport (e.g., "I am confident in my ability to identify the coaching needs of my girl athletes"). It includes the perceived capability to build meaningful, trust-based relationships and to adapt coaching

strategies in ways that support girls' engagement and success. Factor loadings ranged from .54 to .72, and the internal consistency was strong (Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$).

Discussion

The purpose of our study was to preliminarily develop and validate the Girls-Centred Coaching Self-Efficacy Scale (GCSES), which assesses coaches' confidence in recognizing and addressing gender beliefs towards girls in their coaching practice through the underlying dimensions of girl-centred S-E. The results revealed a four-factor solution encompassing: (1) Gender Literacy in Coaching, (2) Understanding Gendered Experiences in Sport, (3) Fostering Gender-Inclusive Sport, and (4) Girl-Centred Coaching Practice. Each factor demonstrated strong internal consistency and theoretical alignment with the existing literature in the field of gender, S-E, and coach development. Our findings build upon the concept of S-E introduced by Bandura by situating it within the socio-cultural realities of sport, where gender beliefs often influence coaches' perceptions of their competence.[1] The GCSES also advances the CEM by incorporating the dimension of gender literacy as a core element of effective, socially responsive coaches.[2] This scale offers a new framework to understand and assess how coaches perceive their ability to recognize, navigate, and transform gender beliefs in the context of sport.

This study makes a novel contribution by operationalizing gender literacy, a concept which has been previously discussed conceptually, as a measurable construct of coach S-E.[5,8] While existing frameworks such as the CEM emphasize confidence in technical, motivational, and strategic domains, they do not account for the socio-cultural competence needed to create equitable and inclusive sport environments.[2] The GCSES aims to fill this gap by articulating parts of the psychological dimensions needed for gender transformative coaching. This conceptual expansion is particularly timely given the persistent gender inequities in sport

leadership and participation; especially considering coaches play a pivotal role in reproducing or disrupting gendered norms that affect girls' confidence, motivation, and retention.[5,6,35] The intention of the GCSES was to offer researchers and practitioners a means to evaluate coaches' readiness to engage in gender transformative practices, responding to long-standing calls for evidence-based tools to assess gender competence in sport.[11,28] Furthermore, the findings suggest that girl-centred S-E may function as an important enabling condition for behavioural change, echoing Bandura's assertion that S-E beliefs shape efforts, persistence, and resilience in pursuit of challenges.[1] However, S-E alone does not ensure that gender-responsive or gender transformative practices are enacted in ways that are critically informed or free from bias. In this sense, higher GCSES scores may reflect perceived readiness or openness to engage in inclusive and equity-oriented practices (i.e., examples of gender transformative coach behaviours), rather than direct evidence of their implementation.[13,36]

Interpretation of the Four Factors

Gender Literacy in Coaching

This factor is a foundational competency for equity work and captures coaches' awareness of how gender norms and power relations operate within sport. Consistent with previous scholars' conceptualizations, gender literacy involves recognizing how language, policies, and everyday practices privilege masculinity and marginalize those who do not conform to appropriate norms.[5,27] High confidence in this domain suggests that coaches perceive themselves as capable of identifying and questioning inequitable dynamics in their coaching environments especially when considering their girl athletes. This reflects growing recognition that gender literacy is not an "add-on" but a professional skill central to ethical and effective coaching.[16,25]

Understanding Gendered Experiences in Sport

This factor reflects coaches' ability to recognize the ways in which social, cultural, and institutional forces shape girl athletes' experiences differently based on their gender. As Plaza et al. demonstrated, implicit and explicit stereotypes continue to influence how girls and gender-diverse youth especially are perceived and supported in sport.[24] Coaches who score higher on the dimension likely possess greater awareness of these mechanisms, acknowledging that athlete development is affected not only by ability but by access, representation, and belonging. However, the retention of some binary language in some of the items (e.g., identify the reasons that girls leave sport) highlights both a limitation and a reality that many current coaching discourses still frame gender incorrectly in male-female terms as seen historically in the sport field.[17] Further developments of the GCSES should integrate intersectional and nonbinary language to reflect contemporary theory and practice.[37]

Fostering Gender-Inclusive Sport

This factor represents confidence in one's ability to create equitable and psychologically safe environments for all their athletes. Such confidence aligns with research emphasizing inclusive pedagogies and relational approaches to coaching.[11,27] Coaches who perceive themselves as capable of fostering inclusion are more likely to engage in practices that promote athlete autonomy, respect, and team belonging.[38] Therefore, the GCSES contributes to a growing body of literature that frames effective coaching as not just a technical endeavour, but a moral one as well, requiring sensitivity to the diverse experiences of athletes.

Girl-Centred Coaching Practice

The fourth factor underscores the potential to shift from gender-blind to gender-responsive coaching. Drawing on the athlete-centred coaching literature, this factor captures a

coach's self-reported confidence in adapting communication, motivational orientations, and support strategies to meet the needs of girls and gender-diverse youth.[39] This factor aims to capture coaches' perceptions of their girl-centred practices rather than an objective assessment of these practices. As such, while some coaches may interpret "meeting girls' needs" through a gendered lens, others may understand how socialization and structural barriers shape girls' engagement with sport.[23] Importantly, while this factor captures coaches' perceived ability to implement girl-centred coaching practices, it does not independently assess whether these practices are critically informed or free from gender bias. Within the broader scale, this dimension is complemented by Factor 1, which reflects coaches' capacity to identify and critically reflect on gender norms, biases, and stereotypes. Considered together, these factors distinguish between confidence in adapting coaching to girls' needs and the critical awareness required to avoid reinforcing essentialist or stereotypical assumptions. Coaches with high S-E in this final factor should be able to demonstrate the relational and pedagogical capacity to cultivate environments where girls feel valued, competent, and connected.

Implications and Limitations

The GCSES holds considerable promise for both research and practice. For coach educators, the scale could serve as a diagnostic tool to assess readiness for gender equity training and to tailor educational interventions accordingly.[12] Administering the GCSES pre- and post-intervention could also provide empirical evidence of learning outcomes and/or behavioural changes, advancing accountability in gender-equity initiatives. At the organizational level, the GCSES offers a potential means for evaluating the effectiveness of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies in the context of sport coaching.[40] Sport organizations could also use the GCSES data to identify areas where coaches feel less confident (e.g., addressing gender bias,

supporting gender-diverse athletes, etc.) and allocate resources for targeted professional development. Ultimately, enhancing forms of coaches' gender-related S-E may contribute to the broader goals of girls' sport retention, leadership development, and gender transformative coaching in sport.[6,11] Several limitations in this study warrant consideration. For one, our sample was predominantly White, cisgender, and drawn from a limited set of sport contexts, constraining generalizability. The use of an EFA provides preliminary but not confirmatory evidence of construct validity. Therefore, subsequent research should employ a confirmatory factor analysis and test-retest reliability to further establish psychometric robustness.

Additionally, the persistence of binary framing in some of the items reflects the tension between intentions of inclusivity and prevailing discourses in sport. Future work should seek to expand the GCSES to encompass intersectional dimensions of identity including race, sexuality, and disability, among others.[37] Future studies could also examine the relationship between GCSES scores and athlete outcomes such as belonging, motivation, or retention. Additionally, longitudinal designs could explore whether increases in girl-centred S-E predict actual behavioural changes in coaching practices, thereby providing stronger evidence for the scale's applied utility. Finally, cross-cultural validation and adaptation for different sport systems would further enhance the GCSES' global relevance.

More broadly, there are inherent limitations in relying solely on S-E as an indicator of gender-responsive or transformative coaching, as seen in other scale development work.[3,44] While S-E is a well-established predictor of behaviour, it reflects perceived rather than actual competence.[1] As such, coaches may report high confidence in their ability to navigate gender in sport while still holding implicit or unexamined biases that impact their coaching practices.[43] In some cases, elevated S-E may also be associated with an overestimation of one's competence

coaching girls particularly if said confidence is not accompanied by critical reflection on gender norms and power relations in sport. Importantly, the GCSES in its current state does not directly assess the presence of implicit or explicit gender bias, nor does it capture how coaching practices are experienced by girl athletes. Pairing the GCSES with complementary measures (i.e., validated assessments of gender bias, athlete-report measures, or observational evaluations of coaching behaviours) could provide a more comprehensive understanding of whether self-perceived competence translates into genuine gender-responsive or transformative coaching.

Conclusion

The present study introduces the Girls-Centred Coaching Self-Efficacy Scale (GCSES) as a theoretically grounded and empirically supported instrument for assessing girl-centred coaching S-E, a domain-specific form of gender-related S-E as a means to strengthen initiatives aimed at advancing gender transformative coaching practice. By integrating key gender-related topics into the psychology of coaching efficacy, the GCSES offers a new lens through which to understand and develop coaches' gender beliefs to create inclusive and empowering sport environments for girls and other gender-diverse youth. This work contributes not only to the field of gender and coaching, but also to the practical pursuit of more equitable, transformative sport cultures.

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Article Three

Rourke, S., & Culver, D. M. (in review). Using a Mixed Methods Approach to Examine Gender Beliefs within Knowledge to Action Processes for Girls' Sport Coaches. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal.*

Abstract

Despite growing attention to gender equity in sport, many coaches remain underprepared to translate knowledge about coaching girls into practice. Although eLearning is increasingly used in coach education, its effectiveness for supporting knowledge translation remains unclear. (Ruck & Moustakas, 2024). This mixed methods, quasi-experimental study examined whether supplementing eLearning with a community of practice (CoP; Wenger, 1998) enhanced coaches' knowledge-to-action processes and girl-centred coaching self-efficacy. Twenty-five coaches completed one of two conditions (*concurrent CoP* = 10; *eLearning only* = 15). Girl-Centred Coaching Self-Efficacy Scale (GCSES) data were analysed using mixed ANOVAs, while CoP focus groups data were analysed through the value creation framework (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020) to explore how learning was created and translated into practice. No statistically significant differences were observed between conditions, but small trends of mean differences were observed between coaches in both conditions. The qualitative findings provided insight into these patterns, illustrating how the CoP fostered critical reflection, accountability, and the contextual application of learning. Value creation stories further demonstrated how coaches translated learnings into changes within their practices and organisations through iterative learning loops, flows, and branches. Together, the findings suggest that integrating social learning alongside eLearning may better support the translation of gender transformative coaching knowledge into practice. More broadly, this study demonstrates the value of mixed methods research to understand not only whether coach learning occurs, but how it can be translated into meaningful action.

Keywords: *coach education, gender transformative coaching, knowledge translation, social learning*

Literature Review

Despite increased attention to gender equity in sport, girls continue to face persistent barriers to participation, retention, and positive sport experiences. Research consistently shows that girls are more likely than boys to drop out of sport during adolescence (Canadian Women & Sport, 2020), often due to factors such as a lack of confidence (e.g., Dishman et al., 2004), belonging (e.g., Coleman et al., 2008), or positive social environments (e.g., Weiss et al., 2009). Coaches play a critical role in shaping these experiences, influencing not only skill development but also girls' psychosocial outcomes such as self-esteem, motivation, and identity (Felton & Jowett, 2013; Weiss et al., 2009). Coaches who foster positive relationships, emphasise holistic development, and adapt their coaching practices to better meet the needs of girls represent the notion of gender transformative coaching. A gender transformative coach takes a proactive approach to their practice, responding to the diverse needs of their athletes by not just recognising the ways in which gender intersects with other identity aspects, but critically reflecting and acting as a result (Goorevich & LaVoi, 2025; Norman et al., 2018). However, despite this growing awareness, many coaches report feeling underprepared to effectively coach girls, particularly in relation to addressing gender-specific barriers and creating inclusive sport cultures. This highlights the need for targeted coach education that goes beyond technical instruction, instead focusing on the psychosocial and contextual dimensions of coaching.

In coaching, the application of new (or old) knowledge is influenced by a range of factors, such as prior experience, organisational culture, or perceived relevance (Côté, 2006). Coaches and educators were traditionally viewed as 'empty vessels' waiting to be filled with coaching knowledge (Rynne et al., 2006; Van Woezik et al., 2022); but simply providing information has been shown to be insufficient to support meaningful change because it does not take into consideration the inevitable social and environmental interactions that require coaches

to evaluate and apply their knowledge. Formal coach education has tended to operate on the assumption that coaches gain the necessary information to be a successful coach during coaching courses, disregarding the non-formal (e.g., coaching conference) and informal (e.g., past experience as an athlete) learning contexts that coaches often prefer to engage in (Erickson et al., 2008; Van Woezik et al., 2022). More recently, coach education has increasingly incorporated eLearning approaches as a means to increase accessibility (Cushion & Townsend, 2019). Online education modules allow coaches to engage with content at their own pace and are used in the Canadian context to disseminate knowledge and training on topics such as sport safety, ethical decision-making, and inclusive practices (Coaching Association of Canada, 2026). While eLearning offers clear advantages in terms of reach and flexibility, its effectiveness in changing coaching behaviours is less certain (Ruck & Moustakas, 2024). A key limitation of eLearning is its tendency to emphasise knowledge acquisition over application. Coaches report struggling to translate the knowledge they gain through these trainings into their practice due to the dynamic and context-specific environment of their sport (e.g., female-specific biological challenges; Ausland et al., 2026). This fact reflects a broader challenge in professional learning, where access to information does not necessarily lead to meaningful changes in behaviour or authentic learning (Crudgington, 2019).

As a result, the problem remains that despite being deemed ‘competent’, many coaches report negative experiences with formal coach education programs (Cushion, 2011) and a lack of context-relevant learning (Stoszkowski & Collins, 2014), which when considering women and girls amplifies the stereotypes of their abilities as coaches and athletes (Banwell et al., 2019). Most knowledge translation frameworks (e.g., Graham et al., 2006) emphasise that learning is not a linear process; rather, it requires active engagement, reflection, and adaptation within

specific contexts. Without opportunities for reflection, discussion, and contextualisation, learning may remain superficial and disconnected from one's practice (Stodter & Cushion, 2017). Learning environments can be more effective when they provide opportunities for coaches to reflect on their experiences, test new approaches, and receive feedback. Social interaction is particularly important in this process, as it allows coaches the opportunity to make sense of their knowledge, challenge assumptions, and co-construct understanding with others facing similar challenges. Enter social learning theory (Wenger, 1998), a perspective that learning cannot be separated from the environment in which it occurs, nor is it entirely an individual process.

Communities of practice (CoPs; Wenger, 1998), rooted in this social learning theory, offer a promising approach for addressing the limitations of traditional coach education. CoPs are "a group of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 4). Within a CoP, learning can occur through dialogue, the exploration of shared experiences, and collective problem-solving. In the context of sport coaching, CoPs have been shown to support reflective practice (Culver et al., 2019), develop leadership (Kraft et al., 2021), and create a sense of accountability (Bertram et al., 2016). By engaging with others who share common problems or passions, coaches can contextualise abstract concepts and explore how they might apply in their own practice settings. This is particularly relevant for complex topics such as gender transformative coaching, where there is not a one-size-fits-all solution. It is important to note here that there are a lot of myths around CoPs, some of which have been debunked in the literature (Culver & Trudel, 2008). Though work in the field has tended to paint CoPs in a positive light, constraints around time, organisational hierarchies,

cultural differences, and support for the causality of CoPs on outcomes should be considered when advocating for such an approach (Barbour et al., 2018; Kerno, 2008; Noar et al., 2023).

To better understand value[5] generated (or not) through social learning, Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) proposed the value creation framework (VCF), which conceptualises learning across value cycles including immediate, potential, applied, realised, strategic, enabling, orienting, and transformative. Refer to Figure 1 for a visual conceptualisation of the full VCF. Within the VCF, learning can occur through *flows, loops* and *branches* of value creation. Flows refer to the movement of value across cycles in ways that enable learning processes to continue and evolve over time (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). A learning loop is a type of flow, when "a value flow returns to its origin or an earlier point in the flow – enriched with additional learning gleaned along the way" (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p. 133). Such long loops improve practice as participants reflect on what happens when they put something into their practice, as compared to short loops which stimulate the flow of learning between one value cycle to another (often) adjacent cycle (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020). Branches represent when "a flow can take a life of its own" and learning is shared through a participant or artifact with another social learning space (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p. 143). These concepts are important because they illustrate how learning develops iteratively within social learning spaces and how participation in a CoP can contribute to ongoing change over time.

In order to evaluate the impact of a social learning intervention about things that matter to stakeholders (i.e., effect data) and whether or not this effect can be attributed to the intervention in question (i.e., contribution data), we must also consider these two distinct types of data

[5] See the CAC CoP How-to Model, p. 8. https://coach.ca/resource/communities-practice-how-model-building-social-learning-spaces

(Wenger-Trayner et al., 2019). First, effect data can be quantitative or qualitative, and they allow us to evaluate value beyond individual experiences to encompass the entire scale of an intervention by value type. Second, contribution data is what is collected across the cycles of value, often in the form of "value creation stories" (VCSs; Wenger-Trayner et al., 2019, p. 325), which can support the case that an intervention contributed to changes in practice. Overall, the VCF was developed to help generate, frame, translate, and evaluate the learning that can occur in CoPs and other social learning spaces (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). The framework has been employed previously in the context of coach education (e.g., Culver et al., 2024; Duarte et al., 2021; Vinson et al., 2024) and gender equity efforts (e.g., Kraft et al., 2020) especially through the utilisation of VCSs (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). VCSs provide narratives for how and what value has been created within SLS (Vinson et al., 2024) representing contribution data within the VCF. They also support the creation of learning loops because they can provide an overview of an entire learning flow (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020).

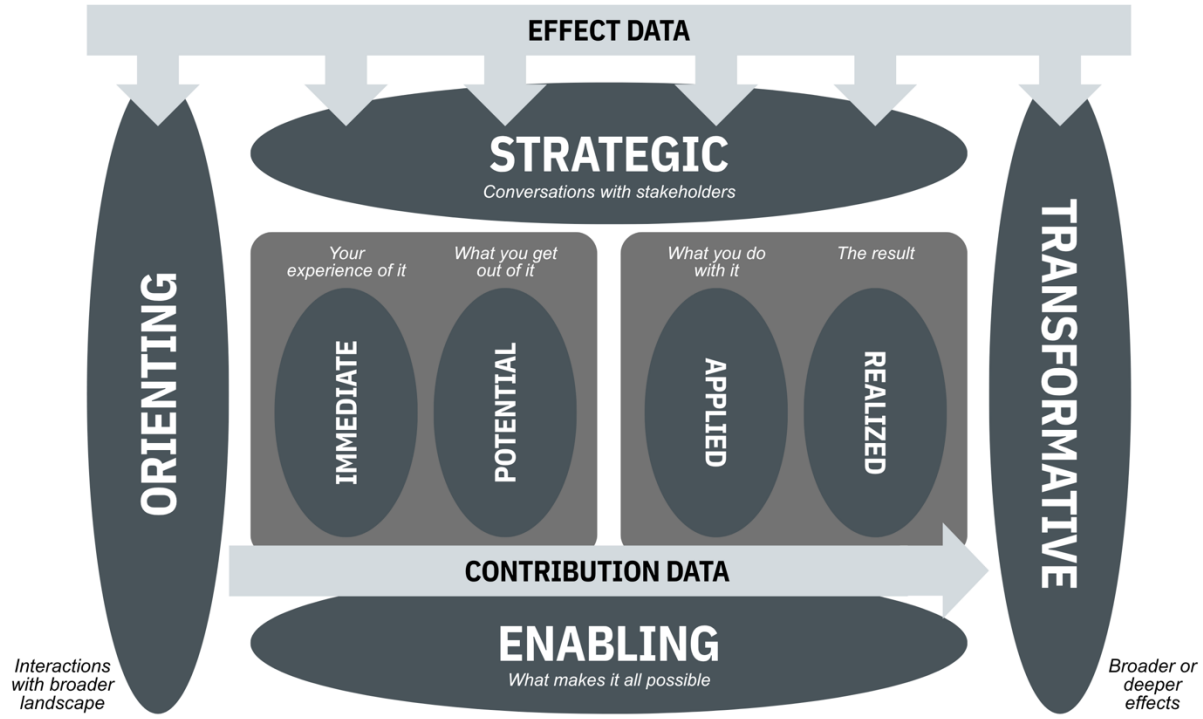


Figure 1: *The Value Creation Framework* (adapted from Wenger-Trayner et al., 2019)

In the pursuit of more comprehensive coach education than the existing formal programs, there is increasing recognition of the potential benefits of combining eLearning and CoPs, an approach that previously been used outside of sport (Chikh & Berkani, 2010; Katernyak et al., 2018). eLearning could provide foundational knowledge and the introduction of key concepts, while CoPs could support the ongoing, social processes required for knowledge translation and application. However, research examining this integrated approach remains absent in sport coaching. There is a lack of empirical work exploring how supplementing eLearning with a CoP influences coaches' ability to translate knowledge into practice, especially in the context of gender transformative coaching. Furthermore, few studies have applied a mixed methods approach (McGannon & Schweinbenz, 2011) to capture both quantitative self-report data alongside qualitative VCF data in the context of coach eLearning as attempted in this study.

Despite growing attention being paid to gender equity in sport and the increased use of eLearning in coach education, limited research has examined how social learning approaches such as CoPs can support the translation of knowledge into practice. We aimed to address this gap by creating a social learning opportunity for coaches (i.e., a CoP) to explore their own knowledge translation processes and engage in timely and relevant conversations about gender transformative coaching. In pursuit of this goal, we asked: How is the knowledge-to-action process for gender transformative coaching practices impacted by supplementing eLearning modules with a CoP initiative?

Methods

Study Design

We employed a mixed method, quasi-experimental design to examine the perceived impact of 1) the CoachingHER[6] (CH; 2025) online learning modules, and 2) participation in a community of practice (CoP) on coaches' girl-centred coaching self-efficacy over time. After receiving ethical approval from the University of Ottawa (REB #H-08-23-9458), we commenced our convergent parallel approach. The quantitative component consisted of a pre-post survey (i.e., the Girls-Centred Coaching Self-Efficacy Scale; GCSES; Rourke et al., 2026) administered to our two study conditions: 1) coaches engaged in a CoP concurrently with the completion of the CH eLearning modules (i.e., CoP condition) and 2) coaches completing the CH modules on their own (i.e., eLearning condition). The qualitative data were collected through focus groups with coaches in the CoP condition to explore their experiences, perceived impacts, and the mechanisms underlying any observed changes. Both quantitative and qualitative data were

[6] CoachingHER is a "transformative coaching resources designed to help sport coaches challenge conventional norms and rethink what it means to coach girls" (n.p., CH; 2025) developed by the team at the Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport at the University of Minnesota. A visual of the modules can be found in Appendix A.

collected during the same five-month period, independently, and then integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research questions. Both datasets were given equal priority during analysis. Integration occurred at the interpretation stage, where quantitative results and qualitative themes were compared and synthesised to identify areas of convergence, complementarity, and divergence. This design enabled us to assess not only whether the social learning intervention was associated with measurable changes, but also how coaches experienced and made sense of those potential changes.

Participants and Recruitment

Participants were recruited through email and LinkedIn by the research team and through support from the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC). The inclusion criteria required participants to (a) be over 18 years old; (b) identify as a coach of girls who are under the age of 25 years old (defined as a leader, coach, or volunteer of sport, fitness, or physical education for or with girls); (c) be actively coaching girls or foreseeably coaching girls in the next six months (in any sport or physical activity, at any level of competition); and (d) have coached girls in the last five years for a minimum of six months (or two seasons) prior to this project. A total of 58 coaches completed the pre-GCSES, with 12 in the CoP group and 46 in the eLearning group. Of this total, 10 in the CoP group and 15 in the eLearning group completed the intervention activities (i.e., CH eLearning and CoP, or CH eLearning only) and the post-GCSES. Coaches self-selected or were assigned to the CoP group based on availability to attend all six online sessions. Those who could not commit to attending 5/6 of the CoP sessions were assigned to the eLearning group. Demographic information collected included gender identity and racial background (see Table 1). Given our intention was to conduct a per-protocol analysis and the attrition between pre- and post-GCSES was high for the eLearning group (*n* dropout = 31), only

full, completed data from the two groups were used in the analysis (*n* CoP = 10; *n* eLearning = 15). The coaches did not receive any financial compensation for taking part in this study. All participants gave informed consent before participating.

Table 1

Survey Participant Characteristics

Characteristics	*n* (%)
Gender Identity	
Man/Boy	6 (24%)
Woman/Girl	18 (72%)
Nonbinary	1 (4%)
Prefer not to answer	0 (0%)
Race/Ethnicity	
White/Caucasian	21 (84%)
Mixed/Multiracial	1 (4%)
Asian	1 (4%)
Other	2 (8%)

Note. $N = 25$.

Quantitative Methods

Measures

Coaches completed the GCSES at two time points pre- (i.e., September 15th to October 3rd, 2025) and post-intervention (i.e., January 12th to 31st, 2026), assessing their girl-centred coaching self-efficacy with responses recorded on an 8-point Likert scale ranging from 'not at all confident' to 'extremely confident'. The GCSES is comprised of four subscales including: (1) gender literacy in coaching, (2) understanding gendered sport experiences, (3) fostering gender-inclusive sport, and (4) girl-centred coaching practices.

Procedure

The pre-GCSES was administered prior to the start of the CoP and CH modules, and the post-GCSES was administered one month following the conclusion of the intervention period.

Coaches in the CoP group engaged in six 90-minute virtual sessions from September to December 2025 corresponding to each of the six CH foundational modules (i.e., Developing girls in sport, challenging gender stereotypes, coaching girls, empowering girls' engagement, recognizing girls' identities, and supporting girls' needs). Each module was individually completed prior to the related CoP session and discussion in the subsequent CoP session. The comparison group did not receive the CoP intervention and instead were asked to complete the five CH foundational modules at their own pace within the same timeframe.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS (Version 30.0.00). A mixed design analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine changes over time (pre vs. post) and the difference between groups (CoP vs. eLearning), as well as the interaction between time and group. Time was treated as a within-subjects factor, and conditions as a between-subjects factor. Assumptions of normality were assessed by examining the distribution of change scores (post-test minus pre-test) for each condition. Shapiro–Wilk tests indicated that the data did not significantly deviate from normality for either the CoP group, $W(10) = .934$, $p = .490$, or the eLearning group, $W(15) = .970$, $p = .855$, supporting the use of parametric analyses. Significant interaction effects were followed by post hoc pairwise comparisons to explore within- and between-group differences. Effect sizes were reported to assess the magnitude of observed effects.

Qualitative Methods

Data Collection

To further explore coaches' experiences within the CoP, focus groups were conducted with participants who responded to the request ($n = 6$) from the intervention group following

termination of the CoP. A total of three focus groups were held with three participants in the first, two in the second, and one in the third session. The focus groups were conducted virtually using a semi-structured interview guide based on the value creation framework (VCF; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020) and designed to explore coaches' perceptions of the CoP, perceived impacts, and key mechanisms of change. All three focus groups took about 60 minutes with the third and final focus group finishing after 47 minutes. The questions were framed to elicit different types of value creation. The coaches were also prompted to reflect on changes in their knowledge and attitudes as indicators of effect data (i.e., evidence that something of value was achieved), as well as how participation in the CoP may have contributed to those changes (i.e., contribution data: the plausible role of a social learning space in producing an effect).

Data Analysis

Focus group discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, utilizing the VCF (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). An inductive approach was initially utilized for qualitative analysis where the primary author identified patterns and themes within the data including familiarisation with the data, initial coding, and the development and refinement of themes. During the coding stage an abductive approach was utilised where value types within the VCF were considered in the initial creation of the stories – taking into account the critical role both authors played in co-creating the findings based on our own lived experiences in this domain. The themes were reviewed and defined to ensure they accurately reflected coaches' experiences and the role of this social intervention in creating value. In addition to identifying forms of value creation, we also looked for evidence of flows, loops, and branches across the value cycles within the coaches' narratives. Consistent with Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020), flows were identified as instances where learning or value moved across cycles

(e.g., immediate value informing applied or realised value), loops were identified when participants described recursive processes in which earlier perceived experiences, reflections, or actions influenced subsequent learning and engagement within the CoP, and branches were identified as examples of value being shared into other contexts or social learning spaces. Attention to flows, loops, and branches enabled a more nuanced understanding of how learning developed over time and how participation in the social learning space contributed to ongoing changes in coaches' thinking and practice. Our results were then framed through value creation stories (VCSs; Wenger et al., 2011). To protect participant confidentiality and anonymity, all participant names presented in the findings have been replaced with pseudonyms. The data presented in the following section is comprised of two VCSs exploring the experience of two specific coaches in the CoP condition as well as additional examples of value created for five other coaches in the CoP condition and whether their involvement in the CoP lead to changes in their practices (Culver et al., 2024).

Integration of Data

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings occurred at the interpretation stage through the lens of the VCF (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). Specifically, the GCSES scores functioned as a type of effect data by providing evidence of changes in coaches' self-efficacy over time. The qualitative VCSs served as a type of contribution data to contextualise and explain quantitative results, particularly in relation to how participation in the CoP may have contributed to changes to practices. Integrating these forms of data aimed to utilise the survey scores to corroborate coaches' reported experiences, while the VCSs provided meaning and context to the numerical trends. This approach enabled a more thorough understanding of both the outcomes and underlying mechanisms associated with participation in

the two conditions and the social learning processes through which these outcomes were produced.

Results

Quantitative Results

A mixed-design ANOVA was conducted to examine changes in GCSES factors over time (pre, post) as a function of condition (CoP vs. eLearning). Table 2 presents the mixed ANOVA results for the four GCSES factors and the global score across time and condition. Across all outcomes, the Time x Condition interactions were not statistically significant (*p* = .175–.343; ηp^2 = .039–.079), including the global GCSES score (*p* = .242, ηp^2 = .059). Through inspection of the means (see Table 2), we found small trends in mean differences where the CoP group increased from 5.94 to 7.00 (Δ = +1.06), compared to the eLearning group that increased from 6.17 to 6.86 (Δ = +0.69).

Similar trends were observed across the GCSES subscales. The CoP group increased from 5.92 to 6.98 (Δ = +1.06), compared to a smaller increase in the eLearning group (6.29 to 6.91; Δ = +0.62). For Factors 1, 2, and 4, the same directional trends were observed, with the CoP group demonstrating small mean increases than the eLearning group. Due to the exploratory and applied nature of this study, participant recruitment was based on convenience sampling rather than an a priori power analysis. A retrospective sample size estimation suggested that approximately 34 participants would have been required to achieve conventional statistical power. Although the final sample size was close to this estimate, the study was underpowered to detect smaller effects, increasing the likelihood of a Type II error. This interpretation was supported by a post hoc power analysis, conducted using G*Power, which indicated that the achieved power to detect a time x condition interaction was 0.58. This is consistent with the pattern of non-significant interaction effects observed across the four GCSES factors.

Table 2

Mixed ANOVA Results for GCSES Global Score and Individual Factors by Condition

	Pre-Score (n=X)	Post-Score (n=X)		η^2p			*p*-value		
	$\overline{X}$ (±SE)	$\overline{X}$ (±SE)	Δ	t	c	t*c	t	c	t*c
Per-protocol analysis (*n* = 25; CoP *n* = 10; E-L *n* = 15)									
GCSES Factor 1: Gender Literacy in Coaching									
CoP	5.64 (±0.29)	6.83 (±0.20)	+1.19	.589§	.027†	.039†	**<.001**	.393	.343
E-L	5.79 (±0.23)	6.61 (±0.17)	+0.82						
GCSES Factor 2: Understanding Gendered Sport Experiences									
CoP	6.16 (±0.27)	7.18 (±0.19)	+1.02	.656§	.018†	.039†	**<.001**	.471	.343
E-L	6.35 (±0.22)	7.03 (±0.16)	+0.68						
GCSES Factor 3: Fostering Gender-Inclusive Sport									
CoP	5.92 (±0.30)	6.98 (±0.21)	+1.06	.566§	.061‡	.079‡	**<.001**	.185	.175
E-L	6.29 (±0.24)	6.91 (±0.18)	+0.62						
GCSES Factor 4: Girl-Centred Coaching Practices									
CoP	6.63 (±0.25)	7.30 (±0.18)	+0.67	.487§	.041†	.053†	**<.001**	.309	.267
E-L	6.93 (±0.21)	7.29 (±0.15)	+0.36						
GCSES Global Score									
CoP	5.94 (±0.28)	7.00 (±0.20)	+1.06	.571§	.001†	.059†	**<.001**	.886	.242
E-L	6.17 (±0.23)	6.86 (±0.17)	+0.69						

Note. $\overline{X}$= mean; ±SE = standard error; CoP = Community of Practice condition; E-L = eLearning condition; t = difference between times; c = difference between groups; t*c = interaction between time and condition; η^2p = partial eta-squared; Δ = mean change (post – pre). Effect size interpretation thresholds (Cohen, 1988) were †small effect (.01–.059); ‡moderate effect (.06–.139); §large effect (≥ .14). Bold values indicate statistically significant effects ($p < .05$).

Qualitative Results

This section features the VCSs of two individuals as well as further examples of value created for five other coaches in the CoP. These instances of value created were established through the data analysis process as meaningful within the context of the CoP condition and the quantitative results. The story visuals and value examples are made up of extended quotations pulled from session transcripts and/or post-program focus groups. Each instance of value should be understood as an example of how the coach in question derived value from their participation in the CoP. In the two VCSs we walk the reader through the coach's experience in the CoP through the lens of the first author's facilitation of the community. Each story is followed by a visual representation of the value flows, loops, and branches (Guldberg et al., 2019). Three themes underpinned the VCSs and value examples including: (1) moving from awareness to recognition of gendered assumptions and systemic issues, (2) modifying coaching practices and organisational behaviours, and (3) creating ripple effects beyond the individual coach.

Adrian's Story

This story illustrates the theme of 'ripple effects beyond the individual coach' and how Adrian's uncertainty navigating a new coaching role beyond his past experiences lead him to create a more inclusive environment at his daughter's soccer club. Adrian joined the CoP because despite his past experience in high-performance sport, his current role as a coach on his daughter's team was causing him to lose sleep. He is the current co-coach of his 8-year-old daughter's recreational soccer team with two other dads of girls on the team. Since no one lead coach was identified at the beginning of the season, it turned into whoever had the loudest voice was the one in charge. As such, the one dad who seemed on the surface to have the most coaching experience was the one who took the lead. Problematically, he tended to 'over-coach'

the girls leading to timid playing and negative locker room experiences which lead to Adrian believing it was up to him to make a change. After two CoP sessions and completing three of the CH modules, Adrian finally brough the issue to the community with hope they might be able to support him with ideas on how to address this challenge. We proceeded with a case clinic (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2023) activity to explore his issue which comprised five steps; context, understanding, sharing experiences, advice, and summary. Adrian provided the context (5 – 10 minutes) by framing the challenge and finishing with a specific question: "*How can I create a more positive co-coaching environment that better supports the girls' experiences on the team*?" The CoP group then moved into the understanding phase (15 minutes) where they asked clarifying questions. A note that at this step, no advice was given, the purpose of this part of the activity was to continue gathering information. Then, the group moved into smaller breakout rooms to share experiences (15 minutes) and stories from their own work that related to Adrina's challenge. The group then moved into the advice step (10 minutes) where they offered Adrian practical (but non-binding) recommendations for his current challenge. Finally, Adrian completed the activity by providing a summary (5 minutes) to the group reflecting on what stood out and what he intended to try out in practice. Between the third and fourth sessions of the CoP, Adrian talked to the technical director for the girls' academy program at the club and the two other coaches, highlighting the risk they were posing to the girls. He offered one of the solutions the CoP helped him co-create; given Adrina's experience in high-performance sport he would create a practice plan with the input from the other coaches and lead that plan at practice. By the end of the CoP in December 2025, Adrian spoke to how the co-coaching experience had improved, and the girls were having a better time on the team. Adrian did not stop there, he noticed other shortfalls in the club, including the lack of a women's performance subcommittee.

After the CoP ended, he utilized language that he had learned from the CH modules and our CoP discussions to advocate for such a group to the club's board demonstrating a branch to another social learning space. Direct quotes from Adrina about his experience navigating this challenge in his practice can be found in the visual representation of his story in Figure 2.

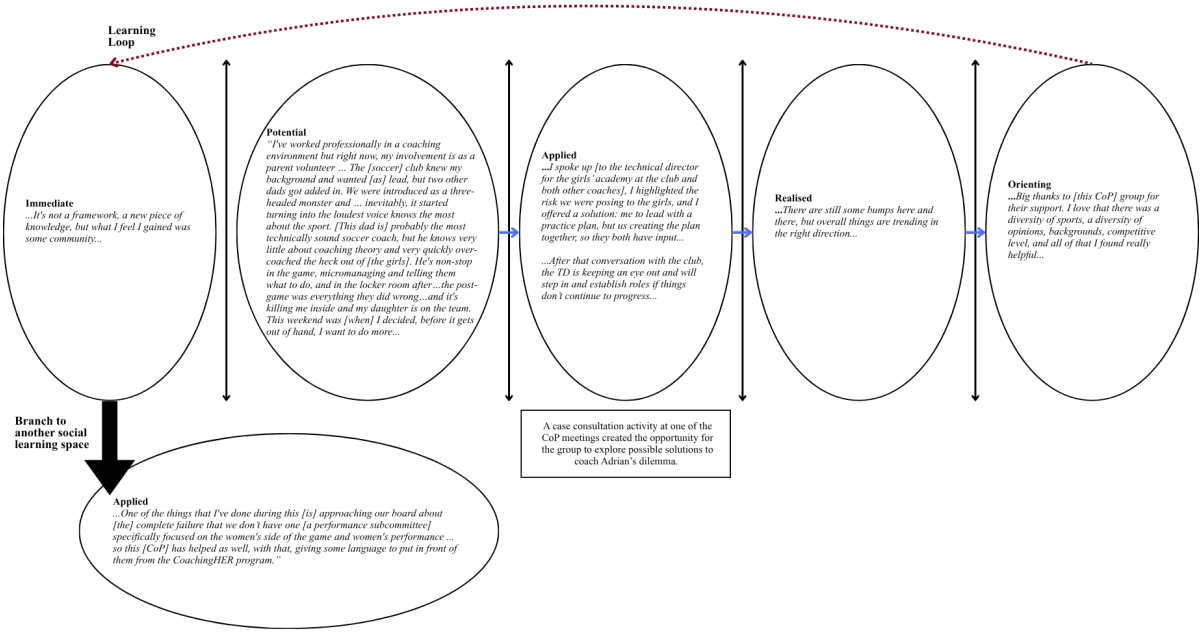


Figure 2. *Adrian's value creation story visual*

Elias' Story

While Adrian's story captures a series of value flows, a learning loop and a branch to another social learning space, the other VCS in this paper also traced learning interactions (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2017) that contributed to how other coaches in the CoP trained their summer staff. After Adrian shared his story, a few of the other coaches in the CoP came forward with situations they wanted the group to address collectively. Elias was one of these coaches who felt the confidence to share. Elias is a high-performance coach at a canoe-kayak club and works with both girls and boys of varying age groups. The club's board hired a new coach about eight

months before Elias' involvement in the CoP and despite Elias not playing a role (or having a say) in this coach's hiring or firing, he was responsible for assigning the coach to a group of athletes. Over the following months, no matter which group this new coach was placed with, Elias would receive written and verbal complaints from athletes and parents within a couple of weeks. First, Elias tried to get the board to remove this coach from their team, but every time he brought the situation in front of them, they did not feel comfortable addressing it or making a change. Elias wondered if it was because the board did not want to admit they had hired the wrong person. Elias brought this situation to the CoP group, feeling very discouraged, noting that anytime he tried to talk to this coach about coaching competencies, they would get extremely defensive, and the situation would not progress in a positive manner. One-on-one meetings with board members also did nothing to change this coach's behaviour. Not only was Elias worried about his athletes' experiences, but he was also concerned about being the only coach to bring bad news to the board which could have negative repercussions for him in other areas of his club and coaching. Together, the CoP offered Elias a space to vent and to suggest a few solutions, mostly centred around controlling what he could control, namely how he coaches his athletes. At of the end of the CoP, Elias informed the group that thankfully the coach had finally been let go from the club. Elias decided that he would make sure from this day on that any coach he was directly responsible for had adequate training not only in the sport-related competencies, but in the psycho-social ones as well. As a result, he mandated that all his summer staff and assistant coaches (especially those who coached the key age groups of U10, U12, and U14) had to complete the CH foundational modules.

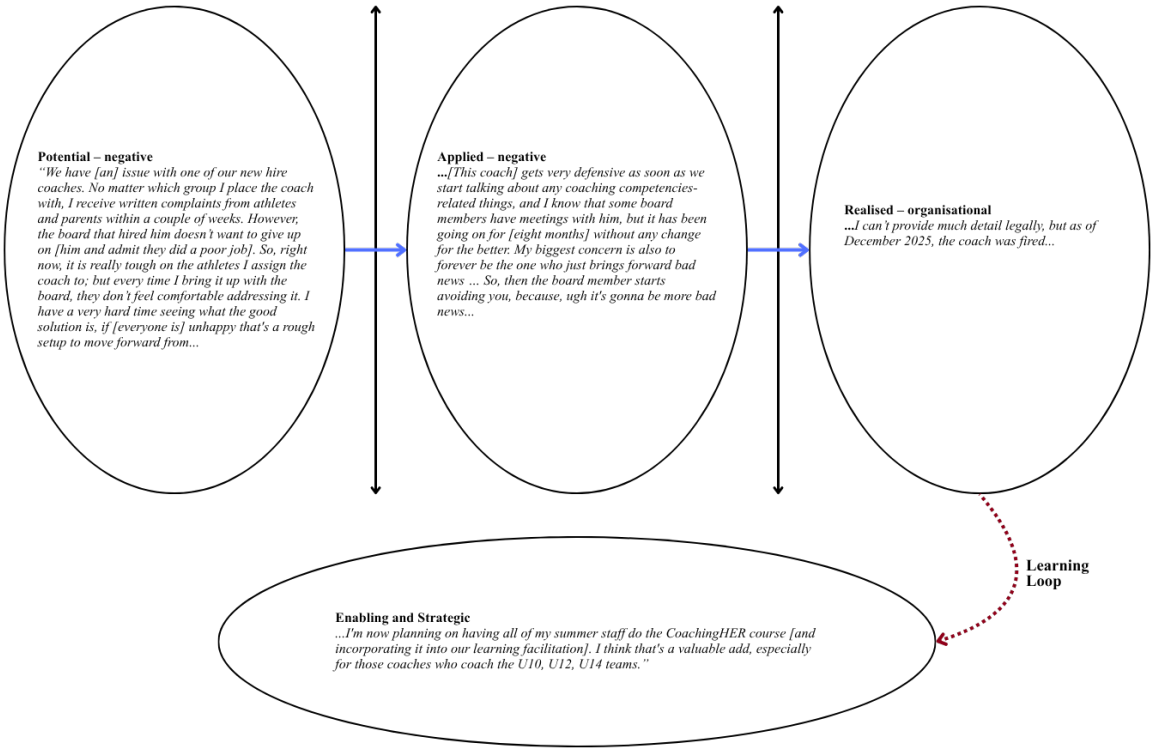


Figure 3. *Elias' value creation story visual*

The Value of Social Learning Spaces

In the following section, we have an example of value flows between cycles (see Figure 4) as well as 10 examples of value created for the coaches for each of the VCF's individual value cycles. Each quote is followed by an interpretation of the specific values dimensions, illustrating the ways in which value can take form at each cycle (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner 2020).

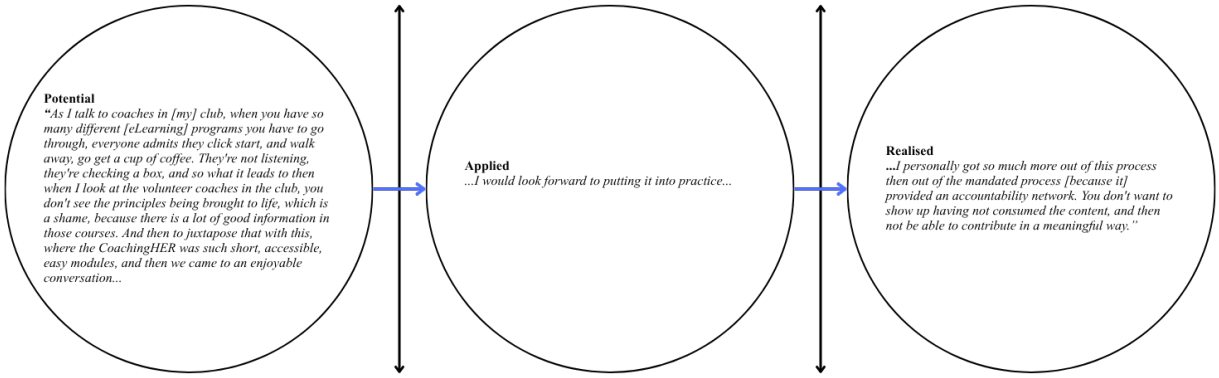


Figure 4: *Coach Adrian's value flow through three value cycles*

Immediate Value *(What's the experience?)*

Coach Jenna: "*What I enjoyed was the community aspect of the CoP. Like, this idea of these are other people who also embrace continuous improvement and want to be the best coaches they can, purely to provide the best experience for the athletes that they're working with."*

Value Dimension: This coach's reflection centred around the positive value she felt by being a part of the CoP community connecting to the dimensions of immediate value including; identification, a sense of inclusion, mutual recognition as learning partners, engaging with other perspectives, and exciting company.

Potential Value *(What comes out of it?)*

Coach Rachel: *"I diminish how important the impact that we have as a coach, no matter, I think, what age or what stage you're coaching. I just show up, and I know what I'm doing is important, but being part of the CoP, hearing the lessons, it is so important what we're doing, to have those role models here in my province. We don't have females coaching our provincial-level teams, because we're not trained, or we're not stepping up, or whatever that case is."*

Value Dimension: This coach's comment reflected how through the CoP, she was *paying attention* to her experience in sport as a coach and the broader landscape of women coaches in her province. Her quote provided evidence for the insight, information, intangibles, and self-worth dimensions of potential value.

Coach Anna: *"Coaching can be lonely, and that's my experience even within my club. You don't always talk to others who are doing similar things to what you're doing, and so it was nice to have this group to connect with, and even just reflect on all the material that was covered."*
Value Dimension: This coach's discussion comparing her coaching reality with that of participating in the CoP demonstrated the dimensions of intangibles such as inspiration to move forward, innovation, stories of others' experiences, insights, information, and potential collaborators – showing evidence not only of what her own experiences have been but how they might be changed in the future as a result of this space.

Applied Value *(What do you learn by applying it?)*
Coach Bruce: *"I think that what we learned here can be taken across the board for not just my coaching, but I was using it with reffing the other day. So, I had a call I made on the ice and as I left the situation, I went over and I talked to my partner, and I said this is the call I made, what would you have made? And then we kind of talked about it, and then we addressed it and then I actually went to the coach in between periods and acknowledged that I felt I made an error in the call and I was gonna work to fix it."*
Value Dimension: This coach exemplified the experience of *engaging uncertainty*. He took an approach learned in the CoP (i.e., case clinics) and used the essence of it in a difficult situation in

another area of his life, reffing. He showed an openness to 'not knowing' by sharing this dilemma with another referee, who validated his uncertainty, allowing him to follow up with the coach of the offended team, providing examples of the adoption/adaptation and reuse dimensions of applied value in other spaces. This is also an example of a branch to another space.

Realized Value *(what does that change?)*

Coach Elias: *"Sometimes we are not very good as a society at valuing what female coaches bring that male coaches are never gonna bring, and that's one of the things that's making me very good in my role at the moment, that I made sure to have several female staff working for me, because that makes me better. They challenge me in a different way. They make my program better overall."*

Value Dimension: This coach showed how he made links from the CoP discussions to how they related directly to his practice. He also spoke to how he tries to realize the value of women role models/coaches and his intentionality in supporting gender equity initiatives within his own context. These examples showcase the personal, collective, and organisational dimensions of realized value.

Transformative Value *(Does the difference you make have broader effects?)*

Coach Bruce: *"I'm reminded of my continued conviction to call it out when I saw how many different sports the exact same issue is occurring in, I feel like that just confirmed my belief that we have to address these coaches earlier, younger and get them before they've had a chance to do [damage]; and I don't think very many of them ever go into this wanting to do damage. I think*

most of them start off with all these great intentions, and then they get caught up in the need to perform."

Value Dimension: This coach was reminded, through participation in the CoP, that he plays a role in *making a difference* for all the athletes and coaches who will come after him, and though he may only be involved in a few sports in the country, there is merit to starting within your own context before trying to change the system broadly exhibiting the transformative value dimensions of personal transformation (internal) and empowerment (external).

Coach Cameron: *"There's a big mindset that I brought from this. It's shifting how I coach."*

Value Dimension: This coach's statement reflects the transformative value dimension of personal transformations (internal) and new identities (external). He attributes his participation in the CoP to affecting how he coaches in a positive way. He has identified valuable learnings or ideas and how they can directly be translated into his coaching.

Strategic Value *(What is the quality of engagement with strategic stakeholders?)*

Coach Bruce: "*When you're running an organization, you can make these things are mandatory so easily. You just say, look, if you want to coach, you have to take this course and they'll take the course even if only 50% of them really take away anything… it spreads, right? And it builds a base knowledge."*

Value Dimension: This coach reminded the participants in the CoP who do have decision-making power in their organisation, how easy it can be to implement gender equity initiatives into their coaching requirements. His quote demonstrated the aspirations and expectations and

power dimensions (external) of strategic value and the potential growth for coach education more broadly by adding and/or requiring resources, such as CoachingHER.

Enabling Value *(What makes it possible?)*

Facilitator Siobhan: *In order to create enabling value for the coaches in the CoP condition the ways in which I structured the CoP sessions and related resources was done intentionally. Using the Zoom-affiliated whiteboard allowed for products, reflections, and conversations to be easily documented and retrieved for all participants. Additionally, the structure of the CoP sessions followed a similar pattern (i.e., check-in, warm-up activity, main activity, check-out) allowing for a sense of collective familiarity with the recurring activity structures, enabling the potential to speed up processes and facilitate more learning. Finally, with these structures in place, meetings ran productively with little time wasted enabling potential for more action.*

Value Dimension: This reflection of mine demonstrated some of the ways in which I purposefully created a space for the coaches to focus on their learning, with few outside distractions. I also believe this created a sense of accountability for the coaches, because they knew exactly what was expected of them in the space and how they could participate in the CoP in different ways in line with the transparency, efficiency, process, and language dimensions of internal enabling value.

Orienting Value *(What else is potentially relevant?)*

Coach Jenna: *"That's where the work needs to happen. Everyone in the CoP was so great, and we all had our spots that we're not able to see, or things we don't have experience in, and so it*

was great to chat with people already doing such great work, and I just think how do we get the ones who actually really need this?"

Value Dimension: This coach describes how a next step in this field could be to see how we can bring more people into the fold to help support them on their gender equity journey. Though she does not provide an example of how we can achieve this, she is noting that within the landscape, the people engaging in initiatives such as this one are often the people who may not need this education as much as those absent from the space. This is an example of the internal dimensions of inherited boundaries and participant contexts, as well as the external dimensions of levels of scale and external audiences.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how supplementing eLearning modules with a CoP influenced coaches' knowledge-to-action processes related to gender transformative coaching practices. In response to persistent gaps in coach education regarding the psychosocial and contextual dimensions of coaching girls, this study explored two conditions in which the CH eLearning modules were administered: 1) in conjunction with a CoP (Wenger, 1998) and 2) for coaches to do on their own. Although the quantitative findings did not demonstrate statistically significant time by condition interaction effects, the qualitative findings provided important insight into how coaches interpreted, applied, and extended their learning through participation in the CoP.

At the core of social learning is the belief that the things people try in their practice provide valuable information and are a potential resource for others. The value of such shared knowledge deepens when such new insights or resources lead to changes in practices affecting broader communities (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2019). According to this theory, learning is also fundamentally relational and context dependent (Wenger, 1998), meaning coaches are not

passive recipients of information. Instead, coaches actively negotiate meaning while interacting with others, reflecting on their own lived experience, and experimenting in their own contexts. Our results confirm this notion as coaches in the CoP condition did not simply absorb the theoretical concepts from the CoachingHER modules. Instead, they used the CoP as a space to critically reflect on relevant coaching situations, test assumptions, seek feedback, and strategise solutions to complex interpersonal and organisational issues, as evidenced through the two VCSs and the subsequent examples of individual value cycles. The two VCSs specifically demonstrated the use of CoP activities (i.e., case clinics; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020) as an opportunity for coaches to draw on the experiences of others, make sense of their own coaching contexts, and most importantly, to take action. Across all the quantitative and qualitative data, three interconnected themes were co-constructed: (1) moving from awareness to recognition of gendered assumptions and systemic issues, (2) modifying coaching practices and organisational behaviours, and (3) creating ripple effects beyond the individual coach. Together, these themes help explain the value of the CoP condition despite the absence of statistically significant interaction effects.

Moving from Awareness to Recognition

One of the clearest findings co-constructed from the qualitative data was the role of the CoP in this study in helping coaches move beyond surface-level awareness of gender equity concepts toward a deeper recognition of how gendered assumptions and systemic issues manifest within their own coaching environments. Prior research has suggested that coaches may support gender equity conceptually while still reproducing inequitable coaching practices due to unconscious biases, organisational norms, or limited opportunities for critical reflection (Goorevich & LaVoi, 2025; Norman et al., 2018). The present findings suggest that socially

situated learning opportunities may help bridge this gap. For example, Adrian's VCS highlighted how participation in the CoP encouraged him to critically examine the coaching culture within his soccer club. While he initially described discomfort with the over-coaching and deficit-focused communication occurring on his daughter's team, the eLearning modules and the CoP appeared to provide both the language and confidence necessary to intervene. Importantly, Adrian's reflection moved beyond critique of one individual coach's behaviour and toward recognition of broader structural issues, such as the absence of clear leadership, gendered assumptions regarding coaching competence, and the organisation's neglect of women's performance development evident through the learning branch in his VCS.

Similarly, Elias' story demonstrated how the CoP created space for coaches to collectively process difficult organisational challenges. His concerns regarding a coach generating repeated complaints from athletes and parents reflected tensions between athlete welfare, organisational politics, and accountability. Through discussion within the CoP, Elias appeared to gain validation and confidence to address these concerns despite resistance from his organisational leadership. These findings align with prior research suggesting that CoPs can provide psychologically safe spaces for vulnerability, sensemaking, and collaborative problem solving (e.g., Bertram et al., 2016; Culver et al., 2019). Furthermore, coach Rachel's example of potential value examined the dimensions of insight, information, intangibles, and self-worth. Her participation in the CoP gave her the inspiration to move forward and an increased sense of dignity, morale, and self-worth. Importantly, these stories suggest that the CoP functioned as more than a support network. Rather, the CoP acted as a mechanism for critical reflection and identity negotiation. Coaches were not simply learning new information about coaching girls; they were reconsidering what it meant to them to be a coach in girls' sport contexts. This

distinction is particularly important in gender transformative coaching, where meaningful change requires not only increased knowledge but also shifts in beliefs, assumptions, and professional identities (Goorevich & LaVoi, 2025).

Modifying Coaching Practices and Organisational Behaviours

A second key finding was the extent to which some coaches described changes in their coaching practices and organisational behaviours following participation in the CoP. While small trends in GCSES scores cannot reliably confirm improved confidence related to girl-centred coaching practices, the qualitative data provided important insight into how these reported changes were potentially enacted. Participants frequently described applying concepts from the eLearning modules within their day-to-day coaching environments, including coach Bruce in his reffing and in calling out injustices when he encounters them and coach Adrian, who engaged more thoughtfully with the CH content because of the added accountability of the CoP. The coaches in the CoP condition engaged in iterative learning loops of application, reflection, and adaptation (see Adrian or Elias' VCS for examples of such loops), and were ten times more likely to complete all six eLearning modules compared to the eLearning only group. These 'loops' or what Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) describe as long learning loops, occur when experiences and insights are revisited and re-presented to the group over time (Vinson et al., 2024). Coaches in the CoP condition returned to subsequent sessions to discuss what they had attempted in practice, what challenges emerged, and how their approaches evolved. These iterative loops likely contributed to deeper learning and greater integration of CH concepts into practice. This finding reflects the knowledge-to-action literature more broadly, emphasising that knowledge translation is not a linear process of information dissemination but rather an ongoing process requiring contextual adaptation and feedback (Graham et al., 2006).

The importance of discussion-based learning (Garrett, 2020) was particularly evident in coaches' descriptions of accountability and implementation. Coach Adrian contrasted the CoP experience with the mandated online learning modules required of coaches within many sport organisations in Canada, noting that coaches often "click start" without meaningfully engaging with the content. Coach Jenna also spoke to this idea in her orienting value example, highlighting the need to get more coaches who do not meaningfully engage in continuing education to dive into this kind of engagement. In comparison, the CoP created an accountability structure where coaches felt responsible for arriving prepared, participating in discussions, and reflecting on how concepts applied to their practice. This finding reinforces concerns raised in prior research that eLearning alone may prioritise knowledge acquisition without sufficiently supporting behavioural change (Crudgington, 2019; Ruck & Moustakas, 2024). Relatedly, the non-completion rate mentioned above for the eLearning only condition was, perhaps, a result of the lack of accountability and agency required of coaches in that condition. Indeed, according to Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020), at the heart of learning to make a difference is the experience of agency. This suggests that in order to make a difference (as we intended to do with these interventions), a coach must actively engage with their own agency and with the collective agency of the group to generate, translate, frame, and evaluate value.

Ripple Effects Beyond the Individual Coach

A particularly important finding from this study was the evidence of ripple effects extending beyond individual learning outcomes. While the quantitative measures focused on individual self-efficacy, the qualitative findings suggested that participation in the CoP influenced organisational conversations (i.e., coach Adrian's VCS), coach development practices (i.e., coach Elias' VCS), and more proactive approaches to gender equity (i.e., individual value

cycle examples of orienting, strategic, and transformative values). These findings suggest that CoPs may create opportunities for coaches to collectively challenge and reshape organisational practices. For example, Adrian described using language and concepts from the CH modules to advocate for the creation of a women's performance subcommittee within his soccer club, demonstrating a proactive approach utilised by gender transformative coaches. His recognition of a gap within the patriarchal structure of his soccer club and the use of CH language to interrupt the masculine-dominated coaching methodologies at his club provide the foundation for transformative change (Goorevich & LaVoi, 2025). Similarly, in his story, Elias explained that following his experience in the CoP, he intended to incorporate CH into the onboarding and education processes for future coaches within his organisation. These examples reflect enabling and strategic value within the VCF and suggest that social learning interventions may contribute to organisational change processes beyond the individual participant level.

These findings are particularly important given the persistent structural barriers facing girls and women in sport. Research consistently demonstrates that gender inequities in coaching are maintained not only through individual attitudes but also through organisational cultures, leadership structures, and systemic norms (Norman et al., 2018). Therefore, interventions targeting individual knowledge acquisition alone may be insufficient to create meaningful change. Moreover, coaches repeatedly emphasised the importance of community and connection within the CoP. In the focus groups, coaching was frequently described as isolating (see coach Anna's example of potential value), particularly for coaches attempting to prioritise relational and girl-centred approaches within performance-oriented sport systems. The CoP appeared to reduce this sense of isolation by creating a space where coaches could share challenges openly and receive validation and ideas from others. This finding aligns with prior research suggesting

that CoPs foster belonging, collective identity, and ongoing professional support (Stoszkowski & Collins, 2014).

Implications for Coach Education and Knowledge Translation

The findings from this study have several implications for coach education and knowledge translation within sport. First, the findings support growing criticism of one-dimensional coach education approaches that prioritise content delivery over contextualised learning and application (Cushion, 2011; Stodter & Cushion, 2017). While eLearning offers important advantages related to accessibility, flexibility, and scalability, the present study suggests that eLearning alone may not sufficiently support the deeper reflective and behavioural processes necessary for gender transformative coaching. This does not suggest that eLearning lacks value. Indeed, both conditions demonstrated small upward trends in GCSES scores over time, indicating that the CH modules likely positively impacted coaches' girl-centred coaching self-efficacy. Rather, the findings suggest that social learning opportunities may enhance the impact of eLearning by creating spaces for discussion, reflection, and contextual application.

Second, the findings highlight the importance of designing coach education opportunities that move beyond technical skill development and explicitly address relational, cultural, and systemic dimensions of coaching. Coaches in the CoP discussed communication practices, athlete wellbeing, organisational culture, and inclusion, rarely focusing on sport-specific instruction. This reinforces the notion that effectively coaching girls requires more than technical competence; it requires the ability to critically reflect on social environments, relationships, and gendered assumptions (Norman, 2016; Goorevich & LaVoi, 2025).

Third, the study demonstrates the usefulness of the VCF for understanding how learning occurs within coach education interventions. Traditional evaluation approaches often focus

primarily on measurable outcomes such as knowledge acquisition or satisfaction (Graham et al., 2006). In contrast, the VCF allowed for examination of how value was created through flows, loops, and branches. The use of VCSs and individual value examples provided insight into the mechanisms through which learning is translated into action (i.e., contribution data), including relational support, accountability, confidence building, and the ability to influence organisations. These findings could also have implications for sport organisations and governing bodies seeking to advance gender equity initiatives. Organisations may benefit from integrating social learning opportunities alongside existing online training programs. Rather than viewing coach education as a one-time transfer of information, organisations could conceptualise learning as an ongoing and socially situated process requiring sustained engagement. This may be particularly important when addressing topics involving identity, equity, and cultural change. Work around this has been initiated in Canada, such as the ongoing social learning collaborations between the CAC and the Social Learning Lab (SoLID) at the University of Ottawa (e.g., Women and Gender Equity Mentorship Program; Culver et al., 2026) or Égale Action's Circuit 50/50 project (Égale Action, 2026).

Finally, the findings raise important considerations regarding the role of vulnerability and psychological safety in coach learning environments (Stoszkowski & Collins, 2014). Coaches in the CoP condition repeatedly emphasised, both during the CoP sessions and focus groups, the value of having spaces where they could openly discuss uncertainties, challenges, and failures without fear of judgement. Creating these conditions may be essential for supporting authentic reflection and growth, particularly when addressing topics that challenge deeply embedded beliefs and practices (Cushion, 2011).

Limitations & Future Directions

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the study involved a relatively small sample size with unequal group distributions and substantial attrition, particularly within the eLearning condition. Although small to moderate effect sizes were observed across several outcomes, the study was underpowered to statistically detect significant interaction effects. The post hoc power analysis indicated that the achieved power fell below recommended thresholds, increasing the likelihood of Type II error. While the initial sample size recruited would have met the standard set by the post-hoc power analysis, substantial attrition in the eLearning condition impacted our ability to achieve the appropriate group sizes. Additionally, while statistical testing is typically done between two equally sized groups, CoPs larger than ~25 people are difficult to manage, sustain, and achieve true social learning (Wenger-Trayner, n.d.).

Relatedly, the per-protocol analysis included only participants who completed both the intervention and post-test measures. As a result, the findings reflect the experiences of coaches who remained engaged throughout the study rather than all participants initially enrolled. It is possible that coaches who completed the intervention were more motivated, interested in gender equity topics, or predisposed toward reflective learning practices. Future studies should explore strategies to reduce attrition, particularly within standalone eLearning interventions. This may include incentives, increased organisational support, shorter intervention periods, or more integrated accountability structures. Another limitation relates to participant demographics. Additional demographic data should have been collected regarding experience including age, coaching experience, qualifications, etc. The sample was also predominantly White/Caucasian and primarily composed of women coaches. While this reflects broader participation trends within some gender equity initiatives (e.g., Norman, 2010; LaVoi, 2016), it limits the

transferability of findings across more diverse populations and cultural contexts (Carter-Francique & Flowers, 2013). Future research should intentionally recruit more diverse participants across race, ethnicity, gender identity, sport type, and coaching level to better understand how social learning interventions may operate across different contexts.

Additionally, the study relied on self-reported measures of coaching self-efficacy (i.e., the GCSES). Although self-efficacy is an important predictor of behaviour, self-reported confidence does not necessarily translate directly into behavioural change and may be subject to social desirability bias or shifting internal standards. As coaches engage with gender equity content, their understanding of what constitutes effective practice may evolve, potentially leading to more critical self-assessment over time (Malete & Feltz, 2000). Future studies could complement self-efficacy measures with behavioural or observational data to better capture changes in coaching practice. The duration of our study also represents a limitation. While the intervention extended over approximately five months, meaningful changes in coaching philosophy, organisational culture, and athlete outcomes may require substantially longer periods to emerge. Some coaches in this study described the intervention as initiating broader shifts in mindset and practice that were still unfolding at the conclusion of data collection. Longitudinal research extending beyond the intervention period could help determine whether observed changes are sustained over time and whether initial learning translates into long-term behavioural and/or organisational change especially when considering that certain value cycles such as realised and/or applied value take time to arise following coach learning activities (Bertram et al., 2016; Duarte et al., 2021).

Despite these limitations, this study provides important preliminary evidence regarding the role of social learning environments in supporting knowledge translation processes related to

gender transformative coaching. The qualitative VCF findings suggest that participation in a CoP created opportunities for reflection, accountability, contextualisation, and organisational influence.

Conclusion

Coaches play an integral role in supporting the overall psychosocial development of athletes of any gender. For girls in particular, they are not only more likely to drop-out of sport but also have negative sport experiences more generally. To better support the advancement of girls in sport, coaches need more support themselves in learning how to foster positive relationships, emphasise holistic development, and centre the needs of girls in their practices. Yet, meaningful coach learning extends beyond simply the acquisition of information – instead being more impactful when reflection, testing, and feedback are included in the process. Coaches in the CoP condition appeared to derive value not only from the CH content itself but also from the opportunity to discuss challenges, share experiences, and collaboratively negotiate meaning within a supportive community. In particular, the CoP functioned as a space where coaches could critically examine assumptions, experiment with new approaches, and begin reshaping their coaching identities and organisational practices. As sport organisations continue to pursue gender equity initiatives, there is a need for coach education approaches that move beyond isolated content delivery toward more relational and socially situated forms of learning. The findings from this study suggest that integrating current methods of coach learning (i.e., eLearning) with more socially designed approaches (i.e., CoPs) may represent one promising pathway for supporting coaches in translating girl-centred practices into meaningful, transformative action within their coaching environments.

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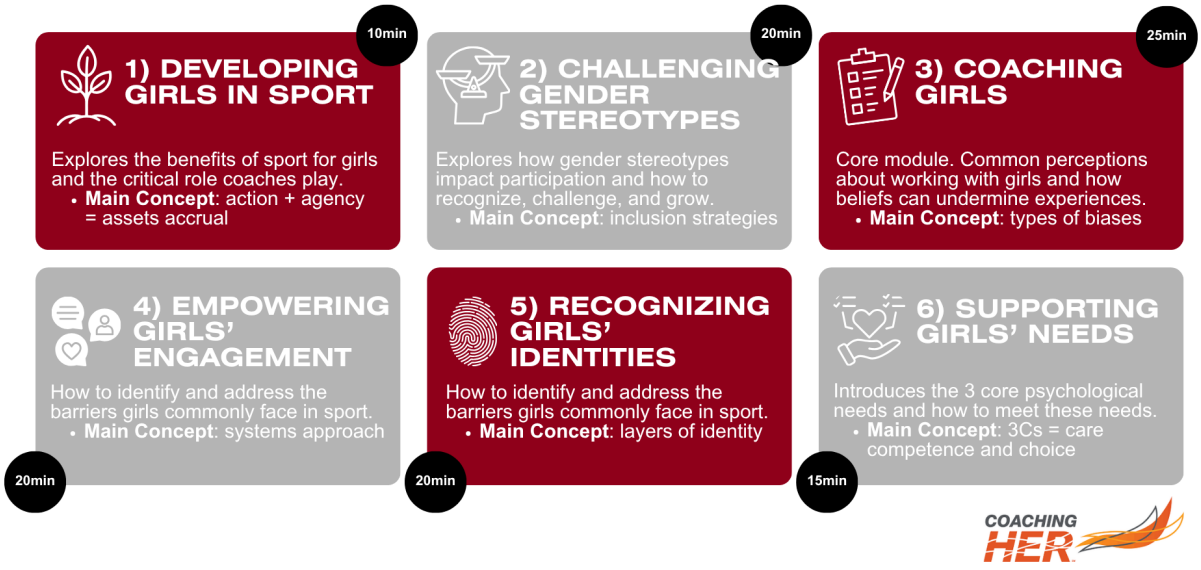
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Appendix A

Visual Representation of the CoachingHER Foundational Modules



Chapter 7: Discussion

Discussion

This discussion chapter is presented in three sections. First, I provide a general discussion that overviews the key findings from the above three articles. Following, in the second section, further elaboration on the theoretical contributions of this dissertation is discussed including the practical implications of my work. Finally, in the third section, limitations of this dissertation alongside recommendations for future research are presented.

General Discussion

To better understand coaches' gender beliefs, the purpose of this dissertation was to provide coaches with evidence-based tools in their pursuit of gaining confidence in addressing and deconstructing gender beliefs that affect their coaching practices. I also endeavoured to explore how social learning environments can support coaches' knowledge-to-action processes. The findings from this exploration were presented through three articles, summarized here. In Article One, a narrative analysis of coaches was conducted to explore how coach beliefs, especially those that perpetuate gender norms and stereotypes shape coaching methodologies, athlete interactions, and self-perceptions of legitimacy. While we initially set out to focus on both men and women coaches equally, our composite vignettes underscored the nuanced and diverse realities of not just coaching girl athletes but also being a woman coach. This additional emphasis on women coaches' experience within the gendered institution of sport (Acker, 1990; Messner, 2009) assisted in driving the continued need for a scale that assesses self-efficacy for all coaches in this domain. Important to note here as well, the narrative inquiry approach was chosen because language is not a neutral vehicle for describing experience, but a means through which beliefs are constructed and communicated. Coaches' narratives provide access to the dominant discourses that shape understandings of gender, revealing how particular assumptions

become normalized and subsequently influence coaching practices and interactions with athletes (Denison, 2010). In Article Two a self-report scale assessing girl-centred coaching self-efficacy was created. The findings provided a theoretical contribution through the creation of an assessment tool for girl-centred coaching self-efficacy. Article Two also provided practical examples of what girl-centred coaching looks like and the behaviours/actions required of strongly self-efficacious coaches in this domain keeping in mind the critical role coaches play in shaping girls' (and other genders') sport experiences. In Article Three, an intervention combining an eLearning course and a CoP was deliberately facilitated to support coaches in developing their gender responsive (and then potentially transformative) practices. This work grew from the need to move away from traditional coach education that primarily focuses on technical competence (Ausland et al., 2026), to further develop knowledge-to-action processes, and to address the limited attention paid to coaches' gender beliefs and the development of more gender transformative practices. Taken together, the three studies suggest a developmental pathway through which coaches may progress from awareness toward action in relation to gender responsive or transformative coaching.

The Social Nature of Gender Beliefs

One of the central findings that emerged throughout this thesis was that coaches' gender beliefs, attitudes, opinions or biases cannot be considered solely on an individual basis. Rather, they are socially produced, shaped through participation in broader cultural, organizational, and historical systems that define what is considered normal, acceptable, and valued within sport (Jones et al., 2019). One of the most compelling findings from Article One was the apparent contradiction between coaches' stated commitment to treating athletes equally and their simultaneous reliance on gendered assumptions when describing girls and women in sport;

demonstrating how gendered assumptions often operate invisibly within coaching practices. From a critical feminist perspective, this tension reflects broader critiques of gender-blind approaches, which argue that treating everyone the same can inadvertently reproduce inequity by ignoring the social and structural conditions that shape athletes' experiences (Ratna, 2011; Burton, 2015). Indeed, historically, coaching best practices have often been framed as gender neutral, with effective coaching assumed to involve applying the same principles to all athletes regardless of gender (de Haan & Knoppers, 2020). Through the focus groups, the coaches frequently described gendered assumptions (most often of a binary nature) as common sense understandings of sport rather than explicit beliefs they had consciously adopted. Yet as discussions progressed, participants frequently articulated gendered assumptions regarding communication, confidence, leadership, competitiveness, and emotional expression. This contradiction suggests that coaches may simultaneously reject overt gender stereotyping while remaining influenced by deeply embedded essentialist assumptions about gender (Allison, 2018; Ekholm et al., 2019). This also connects to past research on identity work, where success as a coach is achieved by conforming to the dominant cultural expectations of gender (Norman & Rankin-Wright, 2016) and through embodied emotional experiences (Potrac et al., 2017). As previously argued by Denison (2010), coaching practices are socially and discursively produced rather than simply chosen by the individual. Consequently, coaches may unknowingly adopt gendered assumptions that become normalized within sport culture and accepted as markers of effective coaching. In recognizing these tensions, there was a need to create a tool that could meaningfully assess gendered beliefs, biases, and assumptions. The findings from Article Two attempted to address this by demonstrating that coaches' confidence in recognizing and

addressing gender-related issues can be conceptualized and measured through the construct of girl-centred coaching self-efficacy.

Gender Transformative Coaching as a Developmental Process

The four factors identified in the Girl-Centered Coaching Self-Efficacy Scale (GCSES), including (1) gender literacy in coaching, (2) understanding gendered experiences in sport, (3) fostering gender-inclusive sport, and (4) girl-centred coaching practices, collectively suggest that efficacious coaching requires more than technical competence and an increased focus on gender-specific coaching (Ausland et al., 2026). This scale extends previous work in the coach efficacy and coach effectiveness domains by operationalizing gendered components of coaching competence, such as gender literacy, which has previously been discussed as a potential measurable construct of coach self-efficacy (LaVoi, 2016; Norman & Rakin-Wright, 2016). Importantly, the GCSES factors appear to represent more than specific coaching skills. Collectively, they reflect increasing levels of engagement with gender as a meaningful dimension of coaching practice and account for the socio-cultural domain previously missing from efficacy research (Feltz et al., 1999). Having (1) gender literacy and (2) understanding gendered experiences may be viewed as foundational knowledge underpinning competency that enable coaches to recognize how gender operates within sport. A high-scoring coach in these domains can not only identify gender norms, biases, and stereotypes but also feel confident in their understanding of the gendered motivations and barriers that shape sport participation, especially for girls. Furthermore, such coaches demonstrate the ability to reflect on how these may be embedded in their language, philosophy, and everyday coaching decisions. Such skills have been increasingly called upon in the literature as areas needing further research (de Haan & Knoppers, 2020; Jones & Avner, 2020). In contrast, (3) fostering inclusive sport environments

and (4) engaging in girl-centred coaching practices reflect action-oriented forms of competence that involve applying this understanding in one's coaching context. Coaches scoring high in these domains are confident in creating an inclusive sport culture that addresses gender-based exclusion or shaming for all genders but can also build relationships and meet the needs of girls specifically (Avner et al., 2020a). This distinction between the four factors is important because it highlights that awareness and action are related but distinct processes, reinforcing the need for additional work developing coaches' knowledge-to-action processes and providing the foundation for Article Three.

At the same time, the scale development findings highlight an important tension. Although the GCSES may help coaches assess their confidence in their ability to recognize gendered experiences or improvement areas in this domain, this confidence does not automatically translate into transformative coaching practices. Self-efficacy reflects a belief in one's capabilities, not necessarily the enactment of those capabilities (Bandura, 1997). As such, the scale captures an important precursor to change but does not resolve the broader structural constraints that coaches face. This distinction is particularly important when considering gender equity initiatives that focus primarily on educating individual coaches. Increasing awareness may be necessary, but awareness alone cannot dismantle the organizational and cultural systems that continually reproduce inequity (Avner et al., 2025a; Jones & Avner, 2020; LaVoi, 2016; Messner, 2011). The scale development also supports the notion that coaches may progress through different stages of engagement with gender issues. At one end of the continuum, coaches may demonstrate limited awareness of how gender influences sport experiences (i.e., prescribe to essentialist beliefs). As awareness develops, coaches may become increasingly capable of recognizing gendered barriers, stereotypes, and inequities (Goorevich & LaVoi, 2025). However,

awareness alone does not necessarily lead to changes in practice. Coaches must also develop confidence in their ability to respond to these issues and create environments that actively support girls and gender-diverse individuals. Thus, the GCSES factors provide preliminary evidence that gender responsive coaching involves both cognitive and behavioural dimensions, requiring coaches to understand gender as a social construct while simultaneously translating that understanding into practice.

Article Three aimed to tackle this complexity through the examination of coaches' knowledge-to-action processes. This study provides perhaps the strongest evidence for understanding gender transformative coaching as a developmental process – in line with past work on learning and development. Jarvis' theory of the lifelong learning process is particularly relevant here. According to the author, over the course of an individual's life, they will perceive their social situations, adapt their biography, and become who they are (Jarvis, 2006; Callary, 2012). Jarvis' conceptualization of learning can be articulated as a developmental process in which "the person's endeavour to develop her or his identity in relation to the surrounding environment" (Illeris, 2017, p. 36). Overall, though quantitative changes in girl-centred coaching self-efficacy were insignificant (see Appendix AA for a visual representation), qualitative findings revealed important shifts in how coaches understood their role and responsibilities as coaches in currently. Specifically, coaches who participated in the CoP described opportunities to critically reflect upon assumptions, share experiences, and question previously held beliefs about coaching girls in a group setting. Throughout the CoP, coaches were encouraged to engage with perspectives that differed from their own, creating opportunities to question established beliefs about gender and coaching. This process often involved engaging with uncertainty, which has been identified as an important catalyst for both social and transformative learning (Wenger,

1998; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). While current educational initiatives undoubtedly play an important role, the findings of this thesis suggest that focusing exclusively on individual learning may underestimate the influence of organizational culture, leadership structures, policy environments, and broader societal discourses. From a critical perspective, these findings challenge traditional models of coach education that emphasize the acquisition of technical knowledge and competencies (Nelson et al., 2006; Stodter & Cushion, 2017) and align with many learning scholars' postulations that learning must occur within an individual's social context (e.g., Jarvis, 2006; Lave & Wenger, 1991). A CoP is an example of a series of episodic experiences (Trudel et al., 2016) that were, in this context, used along these coaches' individual learning journeys. In the examination of the complementary aspects of these theories, Jarvis postulated that learning does not merely begin at the onset of a coaching job but continuously over the course of one's life (and coaching career) as the coach becomes more experienced as a result of doing, thinking, and feeling in social situations (Jarvis, 2006; 2007). Such development is not simply about becoming a better coach for girls; it is about cultivating the capacity to recognize and challenge inequity wherever it exists inside and outside the sport system. In this sense, gender transformative coaching represents both a pedagogical and political act, requiring coaches to move beyond awareness toward proactive action aimed at creating more equitable sport environments by examining the structures and institutions that shape coaching practice (Goorevich & LaVoi, 2025). The findings of Article Three support the continued use of social learning theory, which argues that meaning is constructed through participation in communities and relationships rather than through isolated cognitive processes (Wenger, 1998). Coaches' gender beliefs were therefore shown to be socially negotiated, reinforced, and challenged through interaction with peers. Learning occurred not only because coaches received information

about how to coach girls (i.e., through the CH modules), but because they were provided opportunities to critically examine how their experiences connected to the broader social fabric of sport.

Taken together, the findings across all three studies suggest that gender beliefs should not be conceptualized as individual deficiencies requiring correction. Doing so risks situating the problem solely within coaches themselves while ignoring the broader systems that shape those beliefs (Avner et al., 2025b). Instead, coaches' understandings of gender appear to be products of ongoing socialization within a sport culture historically organized around masculine norms, binary understandings of gender, and unequal distributions of power.

Theoretical Contributions

Measuring Gender Transformative Capacity

A significant contribution of this thesis lies in its attempt to address a longstanding challenge within gender equity research in sport: the difficulty of measuring coaches' capacity to engage in gender responsive and/or gender transformative practices. While researchers have increasingly documented the persistence of gender inequities in sport and advocated for more equitable coaching approaches, efforts to evaluate progress have often been constrained by the absence of context-specific assessment tools. As a result, discussions surrounding gender transformative coaching have largely remained conceptual, making it difficult to determine whether educational initiatives, policy interventions, or organizational changes meaningfully influence coaching practice. While the GCSES scale was developed as a psychometric instrument, its potential significance extends beyond methodological considerations. More broadly, the GCSES contributes to ongoing efforts to operationalize and evaluate concepts that have historically been difficult to define and measure within coaching research (Norman, 2021).

This issue reflects a broader challenge within equity-focused work. Across many sectors, including education, healthcare, and sport, organizations have increasingly committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion. Yet such commitments are often difficult to evaluate because the constructs themselves remain abstract, multidimensional, and highly contextual. Gender responsive coaching presents a similar challenge. Researchers and practitioners may agree that coaches should challenge inequitable norms, create inclusive environments, and support diverse athlete experiences; however, determining whether coaches possess the confidence and capacity to do so requires tools capable of capturing these dimensions in meaningful ways. The development of the GCSES offers some support for this gap by providing an empirically grounded tool designed to assess coaches' confidence in engaging with some of the girl-focused gender-related aspects of coaching.

The findings of this thesis also suggest that measurement plays an important role in making previously invisible aspects of coaching visible. Traditional approaches to evaluating coaching efficacy have largely focused on technical, tactical, and performance-related outcomes (e.g., the CEM; Feltz et al., 1999) while other measurement tools in this domain (e.g., the GEGS; Goorevich et al., 2025) have been created to assess intervention outcomes related to coaches' gender essentialist beliefs. These tools, though important, do not fully capture coaches' abilities to recognize and respond to the social realities shaping athletes' experiences. By identifying dimensions related to gender literacy, understanding gendered sport experiences, fostering inclusive sport environments, and implementing girl-centred coaching practices, the GCSES potentially expands what counts as legitimate coaching knowledge and competence. In doing so, the thesis contributes to a broader reimagining of coaching expertise and provides a foundation for coaches to understand what it means to be a gender efficacious coach. Historically, coaching

competence has often been associated with sport-specific knowledge, technical proficiency, and competitive success (Côté & Gilbert, 2009). Critical scholars have argued that such conceptualizations privilege dominant forms of knowledge while overlooking the social, cultural, and relational dimensions of coaching practice (Stodter & Cushion, 2017).

At the same time, the findings highlight important tensions regarding the relationship between measurement and social change. Measurement tools often create an impression of objectivity and precision that may obscure the complexity of the phenomena they seek to assess. Although the GCSES provides an important mechanism for evaluating coaches' confidence, confidence itself should not be conflated with transformative practice. Coaches may report high levels of self-efficacy and/or transformative intentions while continuing to reproduce inequitable norms and/or encountering structural barriers that limit their ability to enact change. Consequently, any attempt to quantify gender transformative capacity must acknowledge that measurement provides only a partial representation of an inherently complex social process (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). Viewed collectively, this thesis contributes to the emerging field of gender transformative coaching by demonstrating that concepts such as gender literacy, inclusive practice, and girl-centred coaching can be meaningfully operationalized and assessed. At the same time, it highlights the importance of viewing measurement as a single element of data rather than an all-encompassing answer to a complex problem.

Plug and Play – Blending Theories

A third overarching theme emerging across this thesis is the critical role of social learning in supporting coaches' movement from awareness to action. The results suggest that the process of moving towards more gender transformative forms of practice is not driven solely by the acquisition of knowledge, but rather through participation in learning environments that create

opportunities for dialogue, reflection, experimentation, collective sensemaking, and trialing in real world contexts. In this thesis, social learning served as a mechanism through which coaches could begin questioning not only their own practices, but also the broader systems in which those practices were embedded. According to Wenger-Trayner (2013):

> …social theory contributes to knowledge by producing perspectives, which can be used to make sense of the world. This sense making purpose entails a complex relation between theory and practice. The two can inform each other, change each other, but do not determine each other. Moreover, because perspectives can coexist, social theory does not progress in a linear fashion, with one theory replacing another, but by assembling a puzzle of interacting pieces (p. 1).

Per this statement outlining the interplay between theory and practice, the articles combined coach efficacy, coach effectiveness, social learning theory, and a continuum of gendered discourses using Wenger-Trayner's "plug-and-play" principle. The concept of integrating theories is especially relevant in the study of sport coaches' learning given the applicability of many learning perspectives and the diversity of coaches' social practices and roles in the sport domain (Werthner & Trudel, 2006). Traditional coach education has largely been grounded in knowledge transmission models that assume learning occurs through the dissemination of information from experts to coaches. Such approaches position coaches as recipients of knowledge, with the expectation that newly acquired information will subsequently be translated into practice. However, this assumption has been increasingly challenged within coach development literature, which recognizes that coaching knowledge is interpreted through coaches' experiences, contexts, identities, and social interactions (Cushion et al., 2010; Stodter & Cushion, 2017). The findings of this thesis support this critique. Across the studies, it became

apparent that understanding gender in coaching and becoming a gender transformative coach required more than exposure to information about girls' sport experiences or gender equity. Coaches needed opportunities to interrogate their assumptions, test ideas against their lived experiences, and collectively explore what gender transformative coaching might look like in their own practice. Furthermore, although previous work has tried to connect online learning with CoPs (e.g., Chikh & Berkani, 2010; Stoszkowski & Collins, 2017), these were not deliberate attempts to intentionally blend the two. In our case, a CoP was purposefully nurtured and guided by the key elements of a CoP (i.e., mutual engagement, joint enterprise, shared repertoire; Wenger, 1998) and the coaches used the GCSES and CH course to support their development as gender transformative coaches and to mutually engage in the ongoing process of reflection. This was followed by making actual changes to their practice (see Article Three for examples) and discussing the results of these changes in their CoP, thereby enacting the cycles of individual and collective action and reflection that drive social learning. Through their engagement in this reflective process, our mutual understanding of the various intersectional identities that influence women and girls' sport participation was strengthened. The use of a CoP was in line with the social constructionist lens of this research positing that knowledge is 'constructed through coaches' experiences of social practices and in their interactions with others (Cushion, 2006; 2011). This endeavour provided an example of what works in terms of moving gender equity forward in sport through social learning initiatives. Combining these approaches also illuminated what still needs to be done both in theory and in practice.

Reflexivity and my Own Journey as a Scholar

In lieu of a personal interest section above, I chose to include a section here on my own research reflexivity. This thesis was not only an examination of coaches' gender beliefs, but also

a process through which I came to critically examine my own assumptions about coaching, gender, and sport. As a researcher, I did not enter this doctoral work as a neutral observer. My experiences as a woman in sport, academic, and practitioner working to increase opportunities for girls and women in sport shaped the questions I asked, the assumptions I brought to the research process, and the interpretations I made throughout the dissertation. Consistent with critical and interpretive research traditions, reflexivity requires researchers to acknowledge how their identities, experiences, and beliefs influence the production of knowledge (Berger, 2015). Throughout this PhD, engaging in reflexive practice became essential as I sought to understand how coaches construct meaning around gender and how these constructions influence their coaching practices. I will admit, when I started this journey, I was particularly against those who used gendered assumptions when discussing women's and girls' sport. I would actively call these out and question my family and friends, but I did not have the background understanding of what drove these beliefs. I viewed gender inequities in coaching as largely a problem of cognitive knowledge. Influenced by my work in girls' sport programming and coach education, I assumed that many coaches wanted to create positive experiences for girls but lacked awareness of the unique social and cultural factors shaping girls' sport participation. Consequently, I entered the PhD believing that providing coaches with research-informed knowledge would naturally lead to more equitable coaching practices.

I also held assumptions about what constituted "good" coaching for girls. This became quite apparent to me when I started interviewing coaches for the first study in this dissertation. I listened as coaches used binary discourses, contradicted themselves in discussing their gender beliefs, and tried to prove to me that, despite all this, they were good girls' sport coaches who got results. This was difficult for me as I wanted to 'teach' some of these coaches, both men and

women, how their beliefs were wrong and could be having a negative impact on their athletes. But this was not my place, and further, was I really an expert on what makes a good coach, given I have very little tangible coaching experience? What power did I have to tell them that what they were doing was wrong? For the women coaches especially, I empathized with them, because I sensed they subscribed to these beliefs to fit into their sport environments, which for the most part were governed by men. This further ignited my quest to develop a tool that could assess these competencies, because clearly, coaches were not encouraged to critically reflect on their beliefs on their own. One of the most significant outcomes of this PhD was the realization that gender is often invisible within coaching contexts. Across the studies, I encountered coaches who genuinely cared about their athletes and viewed themselves as equitable practitioners, yet simultaneously reproduced assumptions rooted in gender essentialism or gender neutrality. Initially, I interpreted some of these perspectives as resistance to change. However, through engaging deeply with participants' narratives, I came to appreciate the complexity of coaches' experiences. Many coaches had themselves been socialized within sport systems where masculine norms were normalized and rarely questioned. Rather than intentionally perpetuating inequities, many were operating within dominant discourses they had never been encouraged to critically examine.

In many ways, this dissertation became an exercise in learning to see gender not only for participants but also for myself. As I engaged with literature on gender transformative coaching, feminist scholarship, and social learning, I became increasingly aware of the subtle ways gender assumptions are embedded in everyday coaching language, practices, and organizational structures. Looking back, this PhD changed not only how I understand coaching but also how I understand gender, learning, and change. The process challenged many of my initial

assumptions, deepened my appreciation for the complexity of coaches' experiences, and reinforced the importance of approaching difficult conversations with humility and curiosity. Most importantly, it highlighted that developing more gender equitable sport environments begins with learning to see what has long been normalized and unquestioned, particularly within ourselves. It also prompted me to take a more systems-level approach when considering work in this field, and how one must be proactive in one's own approach to gender equity. So yes, while I will still spark debate at the dinner table about problematic assumptions, my goal has become less to debate and more to understand where the belief comes from and a willingness to engage together in the uncertainty of such a complex, social topic. It is my hope that by being willing to engage in these difficult conversations, my practice as a researcher, practitioner, and hopefully coach in the future will inspire others to continually question what we accept as norms and when to push back against how things have always been done.

Practical Implications

One of the clearest implications of this dissertation was the fact that becoming a gender transformative coach appears to be a developmental process rather than a fixed state of competence. Across the three studies, coaches demonstrated varying levels of awareness, reflection, confidence, and action related to gender in sport, suggesting that gender transformative coaching is not simply acquired through exposure to information but develops through ongoing learning cycles of critical reflection and practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). Taken together, the findings indicate that coaches may move along a continuum from gender essentialist or blind approaches toward increasingly transformative forms of coaching that actively challenge inequitable structures and norms within sport (Avner et al., 2025b; Goorevich & LaVoi, 2025). Additionally, while coach education often focuses on

impacting individual knowledge and behaviour, the findings of this thesis suggest that coaches are embedded within gendered sport structures that continually influence how they make sense of coach-athlete relationships, coaching 'best' practices, and themselves as coaches, emphasizing the importance of engaging in social forms of learning and development (Jones & Avner, 2020). The development of the GCSES provided a practical tool that may support both coach development and program evaluation. The four dimensions identified through the scale offer a framework through which coaches can reflect on their strengths and areas for growth. For coach developers, the GCSES may serve as a diagnostic or reflective tool that helps identify areas where additional learning and support may be beneficial. For sport organizations, the scale may provide a mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of coach education initiatives and monitoring changes in coaches' confidence over time. Researchers may also utilize the scale when examining interventions designed to support more equitable coaching practices, including as a pre-post evaluation tool, as a reflective self-assessment tool, as a benchmark within coach education programs, or within organizational audits of coaching environments.

The value of measurement also extends beyond research contexts. In practice, the absence of meaningful evaluation tools can limit accountability within sport organizations. Gender equity initiatives are frequently implemented with limited mechanisms for assessing their effectiveness (Norman, 2021). Sport organizations may provide educational workshops, revise policies, or launch strategic plans without clear indicators of whether these efforts influence coaching practices and athlete experiences. The GCSES provides a foundation for the creation of accountability structures and supports that allow coaches to enact what they learn within the domain of girl-centred coaching. The findings of this dissertation also provided practical insight into what girl-centred coaching may look like in practice. Across the studies, coaches

increasingly recognized the importance of understanding the broader social realities that shape girls' participation in sport, such as gender stereotypes, social expectations, and experiences of belonging. As a result, coaches may benefit from adopting practices that intentionally create psychologically safe, inclusive, and empowering environments for girls. Such gender responsive practices may include actively seeking athlete input, fostering meaningful relationships, challenging gender stereotypes when they arise, adapting communication approaches to individual needs, and creating opportunities for girls to develop confidence, leadership, and agency within sport settings. Importantly, these recommendations should not be interpreted as suggesting that all girls require the same coaching approach. Rather, they highlight the importance of recognizing that athletes' experiences are shaped by multiple intersecting identities and social contexts. Girl-centred coaching, therefore, involves remaining attentive to these realities while creating environments in which all athletes can thrive.

The second clearest implication is the need to move beyond traditional coach education models that prioritize the transmission of technical knowledge and sport-specific competencies. Across the three studies, coaches' development toward more gender responsive and transformative practices was not, nor cannot be in the future, achieved solely through access to information. Rather, meaningful learning appeared to occur when coaches were provided opportunities to critically reflect on their assumptions, engage in dialogue with peers, and experiment with new coaching approaches within their own contexts and bring the learnings back to the community. These findings support growing calls for coach education that prioritizes reflective practice, critical inquiry, and social learning alongside technical skill development (Cushion et al., 2010; Stodter & Cushion, 2017). They also suggest that focusing exclusively on individual learning underestimates the influence of organizational culture, leadership structures,

policy environments, and broader societal discourse, especially in the consideration of gender in sport. Coach education cannot exist in isolation; rather, it should be integrated with organizational change initiatives that embed gender equity into policies, leadership practices, recruitment and retention strategies, accountability mechanisms, and the overarching culture of sport organizations (e.g., Burton, 2015; LaVoi, 2016). One avenue presented in this thesis was the use of a blended learning approach (i.e., combining eLearning with facilitated social learning opportunities) as a learning initiative that may be particularly valuable. While online learning can provide foundational knowledge regarding girls' sport experiences and gender equity (e.g., CH), CoPs may offer a better mechanism through which coaches can collectively make sense of this information, discuss challenges, and explore practical applications within their own environments. Article Three provided examples of coaches applying gender responsive concepts to their practice, demonstrating actual examples of coaches moving along the gendered discourses continuum. Importantly, responsibility for advancing gender equity should not be placed solely on individual coaches, as articulated by participants in Article One and Three. Rather, organizational leaders must also recognize their role in shaping the conditions that either enable or constrain equitable coaching practices. Efforts to develop gender transformative coaches should therefore be accompanied by broader organizational commitments to creating inclusive and equitable sport environments (Avner et al., 2025b). Overall, advancing gender equitable coaching requires more than increasing awareness of gender-related issues. Instead, it requires reimagining what it means to be an effective coach, supporting ongoing social learning opportunities, addressing organizational barriers, and providing practical tools that help coaches translate awareness into action.

Limitations and Future Directions

The work of this dissertation aimed to advance the field of gender equitable coaching through the unique methodological, empirical, and theoretical contributions. Notwithstanding these contributions, there are limitations of this work that must be acknowledged to guide future directions in this field of study. First and foremost, future research should prioritize the overall diversity of the coaches, especially those from marginalized or underrepresented groups. Overwhelmingly, participants across all three studies identified as White/Caucasian, reflecting a longstanding limitation within sport coaching research. Consequently, the findings may not fully capture the experiences, beliefs, and learning needs of coaches from racialized, Indigenous, or other historically marginalized communities. This is particularly important because while research in this field has encouraged us to move away from considering girls as one monolithic group, this approach has not been extended to other elements of individuals' identities, limiting the transferability of this work to broader populations. This dissertation was also conducted within the Canadian sport system, with primarily youth or grassroots level sport coaches, shaped by unique cultural, political, and (a lack of) organizational influence related to gender equity and coach development. While gender equity efforts must be prioritized from the bottom up (Norman, 2010; 2021), there is potential for future research to explore high-performance contexts, as well as the sport leaders who hold the power to make changes within their organizations.

Finally, from a methodological perspective, several aspects of this dissertation relied on self-report data, including coaches' perceptions, beliefs, and self-efficacy. While self-report measures provide valuable insight into participants' experiences and confidence, they may be influenced by social desirability bias and may not accurately reflect their behaviours in practice. Furthermore, the GCSES measures coaches' confidence in their ability to engage in girl-centred

coaching practices rather than their actual behaviours. As noted above, self-efficacy is an important predictor of action, but confidence does not necessarily translate into behavioural change (Bandura, 1997). There are numerous areas for which future research could advance the work initiated in this thesis including, the relationship between girl-centred coaching self-efficacy and observable coaching practices, the role of coach developers in facilitating conversations about gender, the athlete perspective, and further focus on hybrid learning models (e.g., mentor-supported learning highlighted in previous work as an important mechanism for supporting women coaches; learning, confidence, and career development especially; LaVoi, 2016). Through behaviour observation studies, coach developer education, and larger-scale social learning interventions, there is potential to strengthen gender equity initiatives while fostering coaches' accountability and continued reflection.

From a conceptual perspective, this dissertation focused primarily on gender as a lens for understanding coaching beliefs, learning needs, and practices. While this focus was intentional and aligned with the study objectives, it necessarily limited exploration of other forms of inequity (mentioned above) that shape coaching experiences and athlete outcomes (Crenshaw, 1989). Furthermore, the conceptualization of gender in this work remained quite binary, and future research should encourage the exploration of coaches' confidence regarding gender diversity, a need salient for the entire Canadian sport system to advance its gender equity efforts. Additionally, in Article Three specifically, the intervention examined changes over a relatively short period of time. Consequently, it remains unclear whether shifts in coaches' beliefs, confidence, and learning are sustained over the longer term and translate into lasting changes in their practice. Future longitudinal studies could provide valuable insight into the developmental

processes through which coaches move toward more gender responsive and gender transformative approaches.

Furthermore, future research could investigate how coaches develop identities as gender responsive or gender transformative practitioners. Understanding the personal, social, and professional experiences that shape these identities may help inform more effective coach education initiatives. In this work, a more explicit intersectional lens should be applied, centring voices currently absent from coach education and other professional learning spaces (Collins, 2015). As highlighted by coaches in this dissertation, meaningful change requires not only supporting those already engaged in equity work but also intentionally creating opportunities for diverse perspectives (particularly those prescribing to gender essentialist or blind discourses) to be included in collective learning processes.

Conclusion

While gender equity in sport remains a prominent priority, comparatively little research has focused on equipping coaches with practical, evidence-based tools to support more equitable coaching practices, particularly when working with girls. Recent calls for resources that move beyond raising awareness toward supporting meaningful changes in coaching practice provided the impetus for this doctoral research (Jones et al., 2019; LaVoi, 2016). The three articles within this dissertation were systematically designed and conducted to better understand how coaches construct gender-related beliefs, how confidence in girl-centred coaching can be measured, and how social learning environments may facilitate coaches' knowledge-to-action processes towards gender responsive and transformative practices. Article One provided insight into the narrative surrounding coaches' gender beliefs and the impacts such beliefs have on their practices. Particularly salient was the unconscious use of gender blind/neutral discourses in

everyday conversations, even in women coaches' language. Article Two detailed the creation and testing processes for the GCSES, a tool created to assess coaches' girl-centred self-efficacy. The GCSES operationalized girl-centred self-efficacy through four factors, including gender literacy in coaching, understanding gendered sport experiences, fostering gender inclusive sport, and girl-centred coaching practices. Finally, in Article Three, the GCSES was put to use in a hybrid learning intervention, where two groups of coaches completed the CH eLearning course, with one of the groups also engaging in a concurrent community of practice. This article shed light on the continued value of social learning interventions in the context of coach education, and the powerful potential to contribute to changes to coaches' practices.

Collectively, these three studies contribute theoretical, methodological, and practical advancements to the growing field of women and girls in sport. More importantly, they demonstrate that developing gender transformative coaches requires more than increasing awareness of gender inequities. It requires supporting coaches through developmental learning experiences that encourage critical reflection, challenge deeply embedded beliefs, and create opportunities to translate new understandings into everyday coaching practice. Coaches' gender beliefs are neither fixed nor solely individual; rather, they are socially produced, continually negotiated, and capable of change through intentional educational experiences situated within supportive learning communities. While coach education can support this process, meaningful progress toward gender transformative coaching ultimately requires questioning and reshaping the systems in which coaches learn and work.

In many ways, this dissertation reflects not only the coaches' journeys toward greater gender awareness, but also my own journey as a scholar learning to recognize, question, and challenge the gendered assumptions embedded within sport. It is my hope that this work

contributes, even in a small way, to creating sporting environments where every girl feels welcomed, valued, and supported to participate, thrive, and remain in sport throughout her life.

Statement of Contribution

I, Gillian Siobhan Rourke was responsible for gathering and analyzing all date collected for the three articles in this dissertation, along with writing the papers in this dissertation in its entirety. Dr. Diane M. Culver reviewed and provided feedback for all parts of this dissertation and play a key role in the creation, editing, and organization of the three articles. My committee members Dr. Penny Werthner and Dr. Bradley Young provided important feedback during my proposal defense around my dissertation methods and combining theories which informed the final research. Dr. Bradley Young specifically, also supported in the development of the Girl-Centred Coaching Self-Efficacy Scale by acting as one of the experts in the scale development process, assisting Dr. Diane M. Culver and myself in the item development, and reviewing the exploratory factor analysis data with me and the subsequent manuscript (Article Two) written about the GCSES. Therefore, he is a co-author on Article Two's manuscript. I was also supported by Dr. Willen Tozetto who reviewed the statistical output for Article Three and provided feedback in terms of statistical adherence, and Dr. Beverly Wenger-Trayner, who reviewed the value creation stories in Article Three for accuracy with the value creation framework.

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Appendix A – Models of Coach Effectiveness and Efficacy

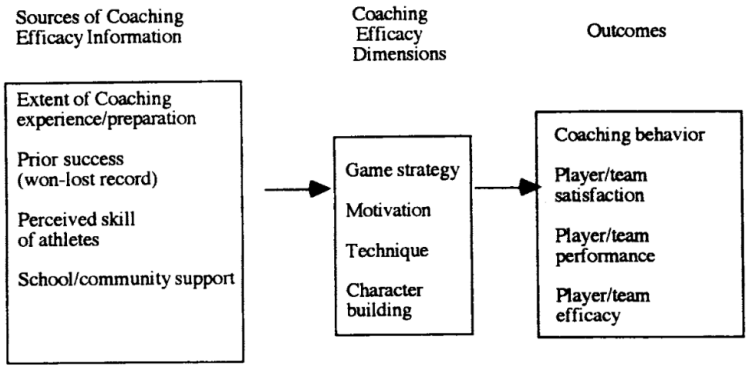
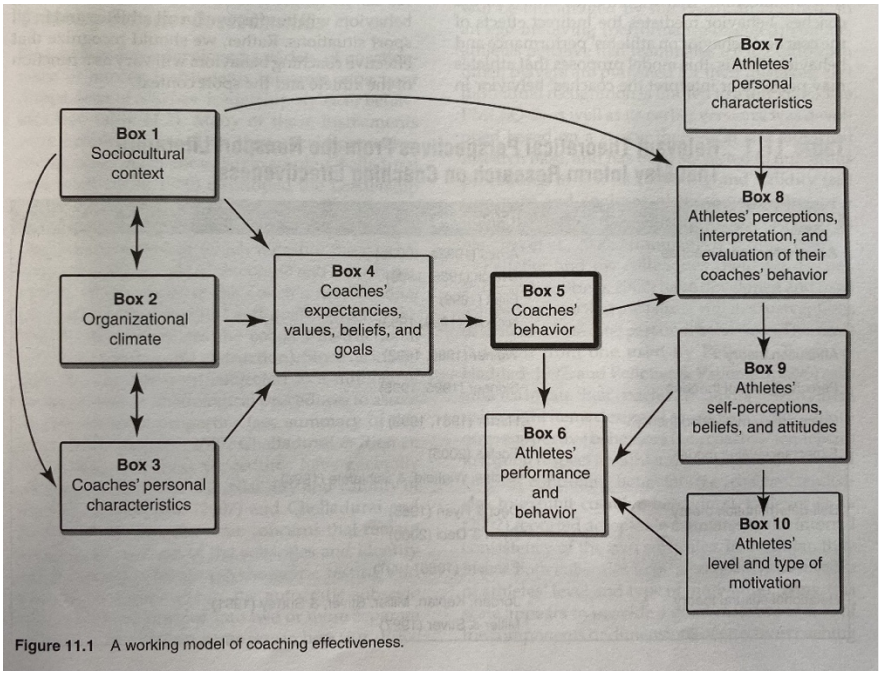


Figure 1. Conceptual model of coaching efficacy.

Note. The conceptual model of coaching efficacy, from D. L. Feltz et al., 1999, "A conceptual model of coaching efficacy: Preliminary investigation and instrument development," *Journal of Education Psychology*, *91*(4), 766. © 1999 American Psychological Association. Reprinted with permission. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.91.4.765



Note. The working model of coaching effectiveness, from T. S. Horn, 2002, "Coaching effectiveness in the sports domain." In T. S. Horn (Ed.), *Advances in sport psychology* (2nd ed., p. 313). Human Kinetics. © 2002 Human Kinetics. Reprinted with permission.

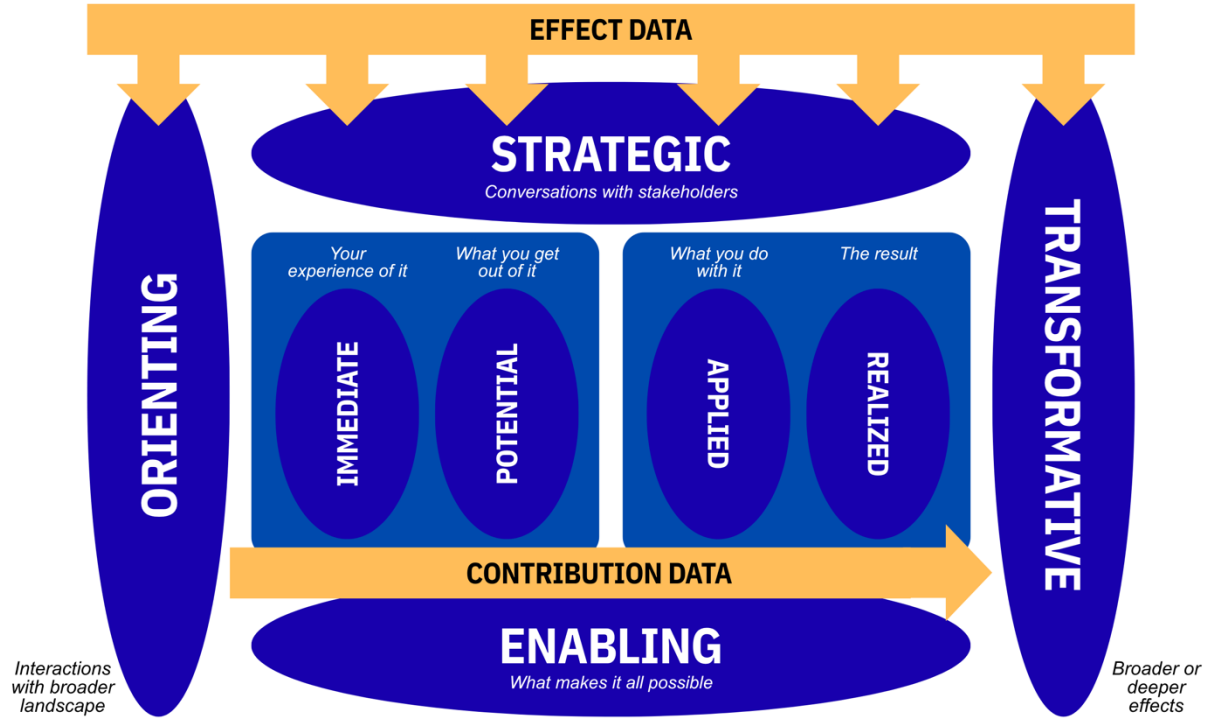
Appendix B – Value Creation Questions

Reflecting on Value Creation	
Value Creation Cycle	**Key Questions**
Immediate Value	***What happened and what was my experience of it?*** What were significant events? (What happened? How much participation was there? What was the quality of the mutual engagement? Was it fun, inspiring, convivial? How relevant to me was the activity/interaction? With whom did I interact or make connections? Which connections are most influential on my own development?)
Potential Value	***What has all this activity produced?*** *How has my participation changed me?* (Have I acquired new skills or knowledge? Has my understanding of the domain or my perspective changed? Do I feel more inspired by the work I do? Have I gained confidence in my ability to engage in practice? *How has my participation changed my social relationships?* (What access to new people have I gained? Do I know them well enough to know what they can contribute to my learning? Do I trust them enough to turn to them for help? Do I feel less isolated? Am I gaining a reputation from my participation?) *What access to resources has my participation given me?* (Do I have new tools, methods, or processes? Do I have access to documents or sources of information I would not have otherwise?) *What position has the community acquired?* (Has the community changed the recognition of our expertise? Have we acquired a new voice through our collective learning?) *How has my participation transformed my view of learning?* (Do I see opportunities for learning that I did not see before? Do I now see opportunities for convening a community of practice or network in the service of learning that I did not see before?)
Applied Value	***What difference has it made to my practice/life/context?*** (Where have I used the products of the community/network? Where did I apply a skill I acquired? When did I leverage a community/network connection in the accomplishment of a task? Was I able to enlist others in pursuing a cause I care about? When and how did I use a document or tool that the community produced or made accessible? How was an idea or suggestion implemented? At what level – individual, team/unit, organization?)

Realized Value	***What difference has it made to my ability to achieve what matters to me or other stakeholders?*** (What aspects of my performance has my participation in community/network affected? Did I save time or achieve something new? Am I more successful generally? How? What effect did the implementation of an idea have? Did any of this affect some metrics that are used to evaluate performance? What has my organization been able to achieve because of my participation in community/network?)
Transformative Value	***Does the difference you make have broader effects?*** (Has the process or social learning led to a reflection on what matters? Has this changed someone's understanding of what matters? Does this suggest new criteria and new metrics to include in evaluation? How has this new understanding affected those who have the power to define criteria of success? Has this new understanding translated into institutional change? Has a new framework or system evolved or been created as a result of this new understanding?)
Strategic Value	***Has the community been directly connected to the strategic imperative?*** (Should the community be part of strategic conversations? What conditions are needed for these strategic conversations to take place? Have these strategic conversations taken place? What are the indicators that would suggest this is either desirable or happening? What kind of data was collected to assess the level of strategic engagement?)
Enabling Value	***Have you received the support you would ideally need?*** (What enabling factors were secured? Under what conditions was the support available? Was the right level of support available? Was this support evident? Has it been on-going?)
Orienting Value	***Where do you find yourself in the broader landscape?*** (What is the landscape? Where is the learning situated in the landscape? Where is the landscape are relevant activities and resources? Where are there audiences who would find the learning from the space relevant?)

Note. The eight value creation cycles are presented with key questions established by Wenger and colleagues (2011), Wenger-Trayner and colleagues (2015), and Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) to explore each value cycle as experienced by CoP participants. These questions may be used to guide interviews and focus groups to better understand the value coaches may gain from participating in this research project.

Appendix C – The Value Creation Framework



Note. The Value Creation Framework (VCF), from E. Wenger-Trayner, B. Wenger-Trayner, C. E. Beverly, M. K. Kahn, & J. C. Turner, 2019, *Learning to make a difference: Value creation in social learning spaces*. The framework illustrates the value creation cycles (outlined in blue) and the guiding questions associated with each cycle (shown in italics). Adapted from the original figure.

Appendix D – Initial Ethics Approval

24/10/2023

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 I CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL

Numéro du dossier / Ethics File Number	H-08-23-9458
Titre du projet / Project Title	Developing Gender Effective Coaches: Addressing the Knowledge to Application Gap
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)	24/10/2023
Date d'expiration (jj/mm/aaaa) / Expiry Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	23/10/2024

Équipe de recherche / Research Team

Chercheur / Researcher	Affiliation	Role
Gillian ROURKE	École des sciences de l'activité physique / School of Human Kinetics	Chercheur Principal / Principal Investigator
Diane CULVER	École des sciences de l'activité physique / School of Human Kinetics	Superviseur / Supervisor

Conditions spéciales ou commentaires / Special conditions or comments

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Appendix E – Ethics Modification Approval

23/09/2025

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 I CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL

Numéro du dossier / Ethics File Number	H-08-23-9458
Titre du projet / Project Title	Developing Gender Effective Coaches: Addressing the Knowledge to Application Gap
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)	24/10/2023
Date d'expiration (jj/mm/aaaa) / Expiry Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	23/10/2026

Équipe de recherche / Research Team

Chercheur / Researcher	Affiliation	Role
Gillian ROURKE	École des sciences de l'activité physique / School of Human Kinetics	Chercheur Principal / Principal Investigator
Diane CULVER	École des sciences de l'activité physique / School of Human Kinetics	Superviseur / Supervisor

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Appendix F – Study 1 – Focus Groups – Consent Form

Coach Consent Form – Study 1 – Focus Groups

Developing Gender Effective Coaches: Addressing the Knowledge to Translation Gap

Siobhan Rourke, MHK
Doctoral Candidate
Faculty of Health Sciences
School of Human Kinetics
University of Ottawa

Diane M. Culver, PhD
Full Professor
Faculty of Health Sciences
School of Human Kinetics
University of Ottawa

Invitation to Participate: I have been invited to participate in a research project conducted by Siobhan Rourke and Dr. Diane Culver through the school of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa. This study is being conducted as part of Siobhan's doctoral degree requirements.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to understand the relationship between coaches' gender beliefs and their coaching practices to develop a self-efficacy assessment scale for coaches to use in developing more gender effective coaching practices.

Participation: My participation in this study will involve participating in an in-person or online, one (1) time (approximately 1-2 hours) focus group in which I will share my beliefs about gender and how they impact my coaching practices and experiences in sport. These focus groups will be audio and video recorded. Upon completing this focus group, I will also be asked to participate in Phase 2 (completing the aforementioned scale once validated to assess learning from the Coaching HER online coach education course) and/or Phase 3 (a community of practice in which I can share my experiences applying the content from the Coaching HER modules) of the research project. I will be asked at the end of the focus group if I wish to engage in these additional opportunities and will be provided with a separate recruitment letter and consent form, should I wish to continue in the research.

Assessment of risks: My participation in this study entails very limited foreseeable risks. However, if I experience any discomfort, the primary researcher has assured me that she will make every effort to minimize this discomfort. I may decide to stop my participation at any time, without consequence.

Benefits: My participation will contribute to the field of sport psychology and coach education and development. Specifically, my participation will support and enable the development of a self-efficacy scale for coaches to assess their gender essentialist beliefs and to be used broadly in

the development of more gender effective coaches. Additionally, participating in this focus group may serve as a personal growth opportunity, in that I will be expanding upon my own practice and critically reflecting on my beliefs.

Privacy of participants: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I share during individual forms of data collection (i.e., interviews) will remain strictly confidential. Participants will be asked to maintain confidentiality during focus group meetings; however, anonymity is not possible between participants. Please note that the group activities are conditions under which we cannot guarantee that other participants will protect the anonymity of other participants or the confidentiality of the information they share in the group. I have been informed that the researchers will respect and protect my anonymity and the confidentiality of the information I share but cannot guarantee that other participants will do the same. We ask you, as a participant in this research to respect the anonymity of other participants and the confidentiality of the information they share in the group. The content from these discussions will be used for the completion of this doctoral research and other publications for dissemination. I understand that the information discussed during these focus group(s) is to remain confidential.

Confidentiality and conservation of data: I have been assured that the written documents, video recordings, transcriptions, assessments, and research notes will be kept in a secure manner in the researcher's office and on her computer during the research. Video recordings will not be used in any public manner but participants' quotes from transcripts may be used in written publications and presentations. Data will only be accessed by the primary researcher and her supervisor Dr. Diane Culver. Data will be kept indefinitely unless otherwise requested.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, given the collective nature of the group discussion data gathered until the time of withdrawal will not be destroyed.

Acceptance: I, _____, agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Siobhan Rourke and Diane Culver, PhD, in the School of Human Kinetics, at the University of Ottawa.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact Siobhan Rourke.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact:

Faculté des sciences de la santé
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Faculty of Health Sciences
School of Human Kinetics
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Email: ethics@uottawa.ca.

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's name:	Signature:	Date:
_____	_____	_____
Researcher's name:	Signature:	Date:
_____	_____	_____

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Appendix G – Study 1 – Focus Groups – Recruitment Letter

Recruitment Letter – Study 1 – Focus Groups

Developing Gender Effective Coaches: Addressing the Knowledge to Translation Gap

Siobhan Rourke, PhD(c)
Doctoral Candidate
Faculty of Health Sciences
School of Human Kinetics
University of Ottawa

Diane M. Culver, PhD
Full Professor
Faculty of Health Sciences
School of Human Kinetics
University of Ottawa

Dear Coaches,

My name is Siobhan Rourke, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Ottawa in the School of Human Kinetics supervised by Dr. Diane Culver. This letter is to invite you to participate in a study within my doctoral research project. This study is focused on the creation and development of a gender-based self-efficacy scale for coaches. I have participated in sport my whole life, but many self-identifying girls are not so fortunate. Girls are dropping out of sport at alarming rates, and as coaches we have a key role in improving the sport experiences for girls. Within this project we aim to develop a self-efficacy assessment scale for coaches to use in developing more gender effective coaching practices. Our hope is that by increasing our awareness about how our beliefs and values impact our coaching we might be able to better support girls in their sporting endeavours.

As a participant, you will be engaging in the first phase of this doctoral research. Within this foundational phase, you, the coach will be asked to participate in a focus group about gender beliefs and their impact on your coaching practice. There is limited research that exists about this relationship, so the information you provide will help inform the scale items in the development of this assessment tool. Specifically, you will be asked to participate in a single (1) focus group to share your experiences. You may also be asked to participate in a single (1) follow-up interview should additional information or clarification be needed. Follow-up questions may also be asked via email, should you prefer this option. You might also be asked in the future to take an initial version of the assessment once a draft has been created should you be interested in continuing to engage in this research project. Focus groups will either be held in person (i.e., if you are within driving distance of the University of Ottawa) or over a video conferencing service (I.e., Zoom). If you choose to

participate, each session will take place at a time that is most convenient for the community. Each session will run for approximately 60-90 minutes.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may choose to resign your participation at any point during the study, without consequence. Coaches will be accepted for participation in this phase based on the following inclusion criteria; (a) being over 18 years old; (b) identifying as a coach of girls who are under the age of 25 years old (defined as a leader, coach, or volunteer of sport, fitness, or physical education for or with girls); (c) actively coaching girls or will foreseeable be coaching girls in the next six months (in any sport or physical activity, at any level of competition); and (d) having coached girls in the last 5 years for a minimum of six months (or 2 seasons) prior to this project. This research is being conducted through the University of Ottawa and is not affiliated with the organizations which have distributed this letter of recruitment. If you are interested in participating in this study and contributing to the fields of sport psychology and coach education, please contact me so that we may further discuss this exciting opportunity.

Thank you for your consideration,

Siobhan Rourke, PhD(c)

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Appendix H – Study 1 – Focus Groups – Recruitment Poster



Appendix I – Study 1 – Focus Groups – Interview Guide

ICEBREAKERS	
Trying to get at their entrenched beliefs – Get them to do a breathing exercise before starting the interview to center ourselves in the space, imagery – remember the first time you coached girls, the last time you coached girls and what was it like (think about atmosphere, area, surroundings, feelings, what did you do, etc.) and repeat for boys or mixed sports.	Acknowledging this can be a stressful thing to talk about: What makes you nervous/fears about talking about gender related to sport? (write down one fear about participating in this focus group - **see Mentimeter**)

INTRO

- What's one thing you love about coaching? (1 sentence or less)
- What is your definition of gender?
- How do you see gender playing a role in your coaching? Is gender considered in your philosophy?
- What are your beliefs about coaching girls versus boys?
    - Do you believe differing approaches are needed when coaching girls vs boys?
    - What do you like/dislike about coaching girls? boys?
    - What is the best approach for coaching girls? Is there a best approach?

GENDER ESSENTIALISM

- How do you think your ideas about gender formed? How did you learn about what it means to be a boy or girl in sport? And/or in general?
- **Do you have, if any, problems or issues coaching girls?**
- **If you coach, or have coached both boys and girls, how is coaching girls different from coaching boys?**
  Do you believe there are athletic characteristics that are specific to each gender?
    - e.g., Are female athletes more compliant than male athletes?
- Do you think the genders participate in sport for different reasons?

GENDER RESPONSIVE COACHING

- You've just been assigned a U16 girls' group to coach. What's your approach?
    - Would this be the same or what differences would you make if this was a U16 boys' group?)

Appendix J – Study 2 – Expert Panel – Protocol

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this phase of my PhD research project! This document will outline the necessary information for a successful think-aloud interview. **Please note in your orientation email which set of scale items you are reviewing** (i.e., Part 1: Beliefs, or Part 2: Behaviours) **AND the colour you are assigned for any text input**. You are not required to make any text notes in the spreadsheet but if you do, please ensure they are in your assigned colour (see legend in column P). Please keep this reference guide handy during your individual review of the items and during our think-aloud interview as it will be helpful for your reference.

Interview Purpose	RQs
The proposed CGSES scale items have been derived from sound research and literature. We know we cannot move forward with 80 items. The value you bring today is to keep, refine, or exclude items according to content relevance, representativeness, and technical quality**.	The development of a survey tool to appraise and understand coaches' gender beliefs and how they impact their coaching practices.

Step 1 (to be completed before think-aloud interview)
Please rank each item based on your quick, initial feeling for general relevance in the column labeled your first name (i.e., B to F) according to the colour scheme below (i.e., fill cell with below colours, as the case may be);
Green: Well worded item, relevant to context, well connected to one of our domains.
Yellow: Awkward wording, connection to too many domains, incongruence with purpose.
Red: Major issues with wording, irrelevant item for purpose, no connection to a domain.
Note: *Should you need an example, please refer to Column B, Row 4 – 'Diane'.*

**Step 2
In the interview I will present you with ~40 items one at a time. Then I will ask you questions related to the following and make notes in the spreadsheet;

1. **Initial think aloud thoughts about the item related to the purpose of the project.**
2. **Content relevance**: Does it relate to the broader question of why I'm developing this inventory (see RQ above in table)?
3. **Representativeness**: How does this item relate to/represent the following domains (see domain definitions below).
    a. Which domain do you believe the item best represents/fits under?
4. **Technical Quality**: Wording, item understandability

Note: *We will do this for all the items, some will be much quicker than others.*

Possible Domains & Definitions

Beliefs	A coach's set of beliefs and opinions about males and females and about the purported qualities of masculinity and femininity (Deaux & Kite, 1987).
Cognition	The thinking processes that underlie coaching decisions.
Knowledge	A coach's personal behaviors, experiences, and strategies to effectively and successfully meet the various demands of coaching (professional, interpersonal, intrapersonal) (Côté & Gilbert, 2009)
Behaviours	A function of a coach's own characteristics, such as personality, experience, and abilities including the ability to adjust to the situation in which a coach operates. **The unconscious and/or conscious ways a coach acts and reacts in their given context.**
Strategy	A coach's confidence in their ability to coach and lead their team to successful performances during practices and competition (Feltz et al., 1999)
Technique	A coach's beliefs regarding their instructional and diagnostic skills (Feltz et al., 1999).
Character Building	A coach's confidence in their ability to affect their athletes' personal development and positive attitude toward the sport (Feltz et al., 1999).
Motivation	A coach's confidence in their ability to influence their athletes' psychological skills and states (Feltz et al., 1999).

Appendix K – Study 2 – Expert Panel – Interview Script

Hello! Thank you so much for agreeing to take part in the expert interview for my scale development project. Before we begin, I want to confirm you have had a chance to briefly review the items you were assigned, and you have the protocol document open. The XXX items in front of you are derived from sound research and literature. We know we cannot move forward with XXX items. The value you bring today is to keep, refine, or exclude items.
I want to remind you that my broader purpose here is to develop a scale that can assess coaches' gender beliefs about their own coaching -- and how they affect their coaching practices. I am now going to walk you through XXX items one by one. Some of these items will be related, developed from focus groups with coaches about boys' and girls' participation in sport and other ones are derived from relevant coaching and gender beliefs scales that could be applicable to any gender. Based on previous expert interviews, some items may be struck out or in different text colors. We will still review these items, and I will provide background as to why they differ. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Please go ahead and read the first item aloud.

Do you understand the item?

Is it relevant for my purposes? Do you think this content needs to be on an eventual survey that examines XXX? Please think about this in the context of my purpose and RQ.

On a scale of 1-10 how relevant is it to my purposes?

What do you think about the item technically? Is it written in an intelligent way? Is it understandable with that purpose in mind?

When you consider this item, how many of the domains does it respond to? Can you bold the one you think it is most related to? (Note: *If the expert cannot pick one, let them opt out and note it when reviewing the recording – could stick as combined factors later on*).

At the end of the interview, ask if they think there is anything missing from the items.

Appendix L – Study 2 – Cognitive Interviews – Consent Form

Developing Gender Effective Coaches: Addressing the Knowledge to Translation Gap

Siobhan Rourke, MHK
Doctoral Candidate
Faculty of Health Sciences
School of Human Kinetics
University of Ottawa

Diane M. Culver, PhD
Full Professor
Faculty of Health Sciences
School of Human Kinetics
University of Ottawa

Invitation to Participate: I have been invited to participate in a research project conducted by Siobhan Rourke and Dr. Diane Culver through the school of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa. This study is being conducted as part of Siobhan's doctoral degree requirements.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to understand the relationship between coaches' gender beliefs and their coaching practices to develop a gender essentialism beliefs self-efficacy scale.

Participation: My participation in this study will involve participating in an in-person or online, one (1) time (approximately 1 hour) interview in which I will take the gender beliefs self-efficacy survey and then one (1) week later engage in an interview to discuss my experience taking the survey and any feedback I have for the development process. Upon completing this cognitive interview, I may also be asked to participate in Phase 2 (completing the aforementioned survey once validated to assess learning from the Coaching HER online coach education course) and/or Phase 3 (a community of practice in which I can share my experiences applying the content from the Coaching HER modules) of the research project. I will be asked at the end of the interview if I wish to engage in these additional opportunities and will be provided with a separate recruitment letter and consent form, should I wish to continue in the research.

Assessment of risks: My participation in this study entails very limited foreseeable risks. However, if I experience any discomfort, the primary researcher has assured me that she will make every effort to minimize this discomfort. I may decide to stop my participation at any time, without consequence.

Benefits: My participation will contribute to the field of sport psychology and coach education and development. Specifically, my participation will support and enable the development of a self-efficacy scale for coaches to assess their gender essentialist beliefs and to be used broadly in the development of more gender effective coaches. Additionally, participating in this cognitive interview may serve as a personal growth opportunity, in that I will be expanding upon my own practice and critically reflecting on my beliefs.

Privacy of participants: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I share during individual forms of data collection (i.e., interviews) and activities (i.e., group discussions, reflections) will remain strictly confidential. Participants will be asked to maintain confidentiality during focus group meetings; however, anonymity is not possible between participants. The content from these discussions will be used for the completion of this doctoral

research and other publications for dissemination. I understand that the information discussed during these focus group(s) is to remain confidential.

Confidentiality and conservation of data: I have been assured that the written recordings, transcriptions, assessments, and research notes will be kept in a secure manner in the researcher's office and on her computer during the research. In five years, all material data will be shredded, and electronic data will be erased.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed.

Acceptance: I, _____, agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Siobhan Rourke and Diane Culver, PhD, in the School of Human Kinetics, at the University of Ottawa.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact Siobhan Rourke.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact:
Office of Research Ethics and Integrity
University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall
550 Cumberland St, Room 154
Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
Tel: (613) 562-5387
Email: ethics@uottawa.ca.

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's name:	Signature:	Date:
_____	_____	_____
Researcher's name:	Signature:	Date:
_____	_____	_____

Appendix M – Study 2 – Cognitive Interviews – Interview Guide

SCALE PROCESS

1. How long did it take you to complete this questionnaire? (1st vs 2nd time?)
2. After reading the introduction/instructions were you surprised by the scale items?
3. Did you like the sliding scale (0 – 10) or would you prefer a Likert scale (1 – 5)? Why?

INDIVIDUAL ITEMS

Q1

1. Why did you answer _____?
2. How does your coaching philosophy consider gender?

Q2

1. Why did you answer _____?
2. What would be an example of a belief about girl athletes?

Q3

1. Why did you answer _____?
2. What would be an example of a belief about boy athletes?

Q4 -- Q5

1. Why did you answer _____?
2. How would you define/describe a coaching need of your girl/boy athletes?

Q6 -- Q7

1. Why did you answer _____?
2. What would be an example of a stereotype associated with girls/boys in sport?

Q8 -- Q9

1. Why did you answer _____?
2. Between Q8 and Q9 which makes the most sense to you or is the most relevant?

Q10

1. Why did you answer _____?
2. What is one reason why girls may leave sports?

Q11 -- Q12

1. Why did you answer _____?
2. Between Q11 and Q12 which makes the most sense to you or is the most relevant?

Q13

1. Why did you answer _____?
2. What are some of the consequences gender biases can have in sport?

Q20 -- Q21

1. Why did you answer _____?

2. How would you define gender shaming? What is an example of gender shaming?

ITEM SECTIONS

Q1 -- Q9

1. Looking at the past 9 questions, are there any you think were confusing, hard to understand, or irrelevant?
2. Anything you would like to add about this section before we move on?

Q10 -- Q17

1. Take a few minutes to review the next 7 questions.
2. In your opinion, do any of these beliefs not impact the coach-athlete relationship?
3. Are any of these beliefs not relevant?
4. Are any of these beliefs unfamiliar or confusing?

Q18 -- Q24

1. Take a few minutes to review the final 7 questions.
2. In your opinion, are any of these behaviors not possible in a sport setting or in your program?
3. Are any of these behaviors not relevant?
4. Are any of these behaviors unfamiliar or confusing?

SCALE REVIEW

1. What were your impressions of the scale as a whole?
2. Do you think this scale measures what we are trying to measure (i.e., the confidence in ability within a sport context)?
3. Overall, your score would hypothetically indicate you have ____ confidence in your ability to discuss and tackle these issues related to gender. Would you agree or disagree with that assessment? Why?
4. Anything else you would like to add, comment on, or questions you may have?

Appendix N – Study 2 – GCSES Questionnaire

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Gender & Coaching Confidence Survey

Screening Questions

Complete these screening questions to determine if you are eligible to participate in the survey. In this survey we define 'girls' and 'boys' as any athletes under the age of 25 years old. Please note by clicking the consent button at the bottom of the page, you consent to your data (i.e., email address, survey responses) being used for the purposes of Siobhan Rourke's doctoral research. You are under no obligation to participate and if you choose to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any consequences. If you choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed.

What is your email address? *Please only include if you are willing to complete the survey again to support additional statistical testing later on.*

* Are you over the age of 18 years old?

- ◯ YES
- ◯ NO

What is your gender identity?

- ◯ **Cisgender** (your gender identity aligns with the sex assigned at birth).
- ◯ **Transgender** (your gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth).
- ◯ **Nonbinary** (your gender identity falls outside the traditional categories of male and female).
- ◯ **Genderqueer** (you reject traditional gender categories, identify with a fluid or ambiguous gender identity).
- ◯ **Genderfluid** (your gender identity may shift or change over time).
- ◯ **Agender** (you do not identify with any gender or feel a lack of gender identity).
- ◯ You don't have an option that applies to me. I identify as (please specify).

What is your ethnicity or racial background?

- ◯ White/Caucasian
- ◯ Black/African American
- ◯ Asian
- ◯ Hispanic/Latinx
- ◯ Native American
- ◯ Middle Eastern/North African
- ◯ Mixed/Multiracial
- ◯ Other (please specify)

What is your primary language?

- ◯ English
- ◯ French
- ◯ Other (please specify)

* What is your current role in sport?

- ◯ Head Coach
- ◯ Assistant Coach
- ◯ Support Staff (e.g., athletic trainer, mental performance coach, etc.)
- ◯ Sport Leader (e.g., admin, coach developer, etc.)
- ◯ Other (please specify)

* How many years of experience do you have as a coach (in general)?

* Do you identify as a coach of girls (i.e., leader, coach, or volunteer of sport, or physical education for, or with, girls)?

- ◯ YES
- ◯ NO
- ◯ Other (please specify)

* Are you currently actively coaching girls (in any sport or physical activity, at any level of competition)?

- ◯ YES
- ◯ NO

* Have you coached girls for at least 6 months (total) in the last 5 years before taking this survey?

- ◯ YES
- ◯ NO
- ◯ I don't know

* I consent to participate in this study:

- ◯ YES
- ◯ NO

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Gender & Coaching Confidence Survey

This survey asks about your confidence in recognizing and understanding your gender beliefs and how they impact your coaching practices. Please think about your own specific sport setting(s) and the athletes that you coach (as opposed to your family members or friends) when answering these questions. In this survey we define 'girls' and 'boys' as any athletes under the age of 25 years old. If you have not experienced one of the situations described, please answer to the best of your ability how confident you think you would be in that situation.

Instructions

Think about how confident you are as a coach. Please rate your confidence for each of the items below on a scale of "not at all confident" (0) to "extremely confident" (8). There are no right or wrong answers, so please answer as honestly as possible.

I am confident in my ability to identify the coaching needs of my girl athletes.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

I am confident in my ability to identify the reasons why girls play sports.

0 [not confident at all]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

I am confident in my ability to identify the reasons that girls leave sport.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

I am confident in my ability to identify the barriers to sport participation that girls uniquely experience.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

I am confident in my ability to identify the potential consequences of gender biases in sport.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to identify the implications of gender biases in sport.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to identify how my coaching philosophy considers gender.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to consider how my athletes' genders affect my coaching.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to identify the ways gender may impact my coaching practices.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to reflect on how gender norms might shape my expectations of my athletes.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to recognize gender stereotypes in how I coach my athletes.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to identify gender biases in my coaching approach.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to meet the coaching needs of my girl athletes.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to build strong relationships with my girl athletes.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to talk to my athletes without introducing gender biases.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to recognize when I am using gendered language.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to have a discussion with an athlete about gender-related issues.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to make discussions around gender a normal thing with my athletes.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to discourage others (e.g., parents, coaches, referees, etc.) from engaging in gender shaming towards my athletes.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to discourage my athletes from engaging in gender shaming.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to express beliefs that distinctly apply to girl athletes.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to express beliefs that distinctly apply to boy athletes.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to express beliefs that distinctly apply to gender in sport.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to describe stereotypes associated with coaching girls in sport.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to describe stereotypes associated with coaching boys in sport.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to consider non-traditional matters of gender in relation to coaching practice.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to identify key coaching considerations related to gender diversity.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to talk to my athletes while effectively considering diverse genders.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to use the gender pronouns preferred by my athletes.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to coach so that all genders feel included in sport.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to create an inclusive coaching environment for all genders.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Gender & Coaching Confidence Survey

End of Survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. If you are able to take the survey again for additional statistical testing AND/OR want to learn more about training or education on gender-related issues in sport coaching, please email the primary investigator Siobhan Rourke

Appendix O – Study 2 – Initial GCSES Items (31)

RQ: The development of a survey tool to appraise and understand coaches' confidence in their gender beliefs and how these beliefs impact their ability to meet the challenges and surmount various impediments influenced by gender in their coaching practices.

This survey asks about your confidence in recognizing and understanding your own gender beliefs and how they impact your coaching practices. Please think about your own specific sport setting(s) and the athletes that you coach (as opposed to your family members or friends) when answering these questions. **In this survey we define 'girls' and 'boys' as any athletes under the age of 25 years old.** If you have not experienced one of the situations described answer to the best of your ability how confident you think you would be in that situation.

Think about how confident you are as a coach. Please rate your confidence for each of the items below on a scale of "not at all confident" (1) to "extremely confident" (8). A reminder that there are no right or wrong answers, so please answer as honestly as possible.

0	4	8
[not at all confident]	[somewhat confident]	[extremely confident]

I am confident in my ability to...

Knowledge: a familiarity, awareness, or understanding of gender dynamics in sport and broader society

1. ...Identify the coaching needs of my girl athletes (A)
2. ...Identify the reasons why girls play sport (A)
3. ...Identify the reasons for which girls leave sport (B)
4. ...Identify the barriers to sport participation that girls uniquely experience (B)
5. ...Identify the potential consequences of gender biases in sport (C)
6. ...Identify the implications of gender biases in sport (C)

Beliefs: subjective attitudes about the relationship between gender and sport coaching

1. ...Identify how my coaching philosophy considers gender (D)
2. ...Consider how my athletes' gender affects my coaching (D)
3. ...Identify the ways gender may impact my coaching practices (E)
4. ...Reflect on how gender norms might shape my expectations of my athletes (E)

Behaviours: current observable actions, responses, and patterns of activity exhibited by coaches

1. ...Recognize gender stereotypes in how I coach my athletes (F)
2. ...Identify gender biases in my coaching approach (F)
3. ...Meet the coaching needs of my girl athletes (G)
4. ...Build strong relationships with my girl athletes (G)
5. ...Talk to my athletes without introducing gender biases (H)
6. ...Recognize when I am using gendered language (H)
7. ...Have a discussion with an athlete about gendered issues (I)
8. ...To make discussions around gender with my athletes a normal thing (I)

9. ...Prevent others (e.g., parents, coaches, referees, etc.) from engaging in gender shaming towards my athletes (J)
10. ...Prevent my athletes from engaging in gender shaming (J)

Gender Binary: knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that attribute distinct, intrinsic qualities to girls and boys

1. ...Express beliefs that distinctly apply to girl athletes (K)
2. ...Express beliefs that distinctly apply to boy athletes (K)
3. ...Express beliefs that distinctly apply to gender in sport (L)
4. ...Describe stereotypes associated with coaching girls in sport (M)
5. ...Describe stereotypes associated with coaching boys in sport (M)

Gender Diversity: observable patterns of activity exhibited by gender transformative coaches

1. ...Consider non-traditional matters of gender in relation to coaching practice (N)
2. ...Identify key coaching considerations related to non-binary gender (N)
3. ...Talk to my athletes while effectively considering diverse genders (O)
4. ...Use the gender pronouns preferred by my athletes (O)
5. ...Coach so that all genders feel included in sport (P)
6. ...Create an inclusive coaching environment for all genders (P)

Appendix P – Study 2 – Exploratory Factor Analysis Pathways Brainstorming

EFA Pathways Brainstorming
BRAD'S PATHWAY from our mtg

- Cut 22/25 (for same reason as described below)
- Cut 8 (multiple loading across different factors – not large enough difference)
- Cut 6 + 10 (similar wording, also a lot of cross-loading)
- Cut 15 (cross-loading)

PATHWAY 1 – 3 FINAL FACTORS

- Cut 9 (similar scores = .5 across factor 1, 2, and 3)
  - At this point 18 has cross loading issues (factor 2 and 4)
- Cut 22 + 25 (the only two boy specific ones, make up factor #5, and don't load on any other items)
  - At this point factor 5 is restructured to be something else
  - Item 10 (factor 1 & 2), 8 (factor 1 & 2), 6 (factor 1 & 2), 15 (factor 1 and 4) have cross loading issues
- Cut 15 (cross-loading) - makes it go down to only 4 factors, and the 4th factor only has 2 items with
  - Item 21 (factor 1 & 3) has cross loading issues
- Cut 16 + 29 (only two that make up the re-adjusted 4th factor)
  - Item 12 (factor 1 & 2) has cross loading issues
- Cut 12 (similar scores cross-loading in two factors)
  - At this point no cross loadings are between 0.40 of each other – stopped cutting of items

FACTOR 1	**New Factor Dimension**
#24. Describe stereotypes associated with coaching girls in sport	Gender Awareness and Bias in Coaching Girls
#6. Identify the implications of gender biases in sport	
#23. Express beliefs that distinctly apply to gender in sport	
#3. Identify the reasons that girls leave sport	
#11. Recognize gender stereotypes in how I coach my athletes	
#4. Identify the barriers to sport participation that girls uniquely experience	
#21. Express beliefs that distinctly apply to girl athletes	
#10. Reflect on how gender norms might shape my expectations of my athletes	
#8. Consider how my athletes' genders affect my coaching	

#2. Identify the reasons why girls play sports	
#7. Identify how my coaching philosophy considers gender	

FACTOR 2	**New Factor Dimension**
#28. Talk to my athletes while effectively considering diverse genders	Fostering Gender Equity and Inclusion in Sport Environments **diversity
#31. Create an inclusive coaching environment for all genders	
#27. Identify key coaching considerations related to gender diversity	
#18. Make discussions around gender a normal thing with my athletes	
#17. Have a discussion with an athlete about gender-related issues	
#30. Coach so that all genders feel included in sport	
#20. Discourage my athletes from engaging in gender shaming	
#26. Consider non-traditional matters of gender in relation to coaching practice	
#5. Identify the potential consequences of gender biases in sport	

FACTOR 3	**New Factor Dimension**
#13. Meet the coaching needs of my girl athletes	Supporting and Advocating for Girls in Sport
#1. Identify the coaching needs of my girl athletes	
#14. Build strong relationships with my girl athletes	
#19. Discourage others (e.g., parents, coaches, referees, etc.) from engaging in gender shaming towards my athletes	

PATHWAY 2 – 3 FINAL FACTORS

- Cut 25 (to see if splitting the two items in factor 5 reloads the 4 other factors)
  - Items 16 (factors 1 & 5), 17 (factor 1 & 3) have cross loading issues
- Cut 16 (cross loading across factor 1 and 5 – trying to get factor 5 to disappear)
  - Items 23 (factor 1 & 2), 6 (factors 1 & 2), 10 (factors 1 & 2), 15 (factors 1 & 4) have cross loading issues
- Cut 29 (loads on nothing else than factor 5 & has no friends)
  - Items 15 (factor 1 & 4) and 21 (factors 2 & 4) have cross loading issues
- Cut 15 (for closest cross loading – makes it go down to three factors total)
  - Item 12 (factor 1 & 2) has cross loading issues
- Cut 12 (for cross loading)
  - At this point no cross loadings are between 0.40 of each other – stopped cutting of items

FACTOR 1	New Factor Dimension
#24. Describe stereotypes associated with coaching girls in sport	The Role of Gender in Shaping Coaching Approaches and Athlete Experience Or Coach Awareness of Girls and Gender in Sport
#6. Identify the implications of gender biases in sport	
#23. Express beliefs that distinctly apply to gender in sport	
#11. Recognize gender stereotypes in how I coach my athletes	
#3. Identify the reasons that girls leave sport	
#9. Identify the ways gender may impact my coaching practices	
#4. Identify the barriers to sport participation that girls uniquely experience	
#21. Express beliefs that distinctly apply to girl athletes	
#10. Reflect on how gender norms might shape my expectations of my athletes	
#8. Consider how my athletes' genders affect my coaching	
#2. Identify the reasons why girls play sports	
#7. Identify how my coaching philosophy considers gender	

FACTOR 2	New Factor Dimension
#28. Talk to my athletes while effectively considering diverse genders	Inclusive and Gender-Responsive Coaching Practices
#31. Create an inclusive coaching environment for all genders	
#27. Identify key coaching considerations related to gender diversity	
#17. Have a discussion with an athlete about gender-related issues	
#30. Coach so that all genders feel included in sport	
#18. Make discussions around gender a normal thing with my athletes	
#20. Discourage my athletes from engaging in gender shaming	
#26. Consider non-traditional matters of gender in relation to coaching practice	
#5. Identify the potential consequences of gender biases in sport	
#22. Express beliefs that distinctly apply to boy athletes	

FACTOR 3	New Factor Dimension
#13. Meet the coaching needs of my girl athletes	Supporting and Advocating for Girl Athletes
#1. Identify the coaching needs of my girl athletes	

#19. Discourage others (e.g., parents, coaches, referees, etc.) from engaging in gender shaming towards my athletes	
#14. Build strong relationships with my girl athletes	

PATHWAY 3 – 4 FINAL FACTORS – CHOSEN PATHWAY

- Cut 22 (to see if splitting the two items in factor 5 reloads the 4 other factors)
  - Items 6 (factor 1 & 2), 23 (factor 1& 2) and 17 (factor 1 & 3) have cross loading issues
- Cut 23 (cross loads to factor 1 and 2 – closest values)
  - Items 8 (factor 1 & 2), 10 (factor 1 & 2), 17 (factor 1 & 3) and 6 (factor 1 & 2) have cross loading issues
- Cut 6 (cross loads to factor 1 and 2 – closest values)
  - Items 10 (factor 1 & 2), 17 (factor 1 & 3), 8 (factor 1 & 2)
- Cut 10 (cross loads to factor 1 and 2 – closest values)
  - Item 17 (factor 1 & 3) has cross loading issues
- Cut 17 (cross loads to factor 1 and 3)
  - Item 21 (factor 2 & 4) has cross loading issues – ignored this in favour of the small number of items in factor 5
- Cut 29 (one of two items in factor 5 – only loads on that one factor)
  - Items 15 (factor 1 & 4) and 21 (factor 2 & 4)
- Cut 21 (cross loads to factor 2 and 4 – closest values)
  - At this point no cross loadings are between 0.40 of each other – stopped cutting of items
- Cut 8 (as a result of Brad's feedback and the fact that it did not fit well with factor 3's othet items)

FACTOR 1	**New Factor Dimension**
#27. Identify key coaching considerations related to gender diversity	Recognizing and Addressing Gender Bias in Coaching Or Critical Reflection on Gender and Coaching Behaviours
#28. Talk to my athletes while effectively considering diverse genders	
#12. Identify gender biases in my coaching approach	
#11. Recognize gender stereotypes in how I coach my athletes	
#5. Identify the potential consequences of gender biases in sport	
#7. Identify how my coaching philosophy considers gender	
#9. Identify the ways gender may impact my coaching practices	
#26. Consider non-traditional matters of gender in relation to coaching practice	
#16. Recognize when I am using gendered language	
#15. Talk to my athletes without introducing gender biases	

FACTOR 2	New Factor Dimension
#3. Identify the reasons that girls leave sport	Gendered Motivations, Barriers, and Stereotypes in Sport *Programming, intake, barriers
#4. Identify the barriers to sport participation that girls uniquely experience	
#24. Describe stereotypes associated with coaching girls in sport	
#2. Identify the reasons why girls play sports	
#25. Describe stereotypes associated with coaching boys in sport	

FACTOR 3	New Factor Dimension
#20. Discourage my athletes from engaging in gender shaming	Building Respectful and Gender-Inclusive Sport Cultures *coaching actions
#31. Create an inclusive coaching environment for all genders	
#19. Discourage others (e.g., parents, coaches, referees, etc.) from engaging in gender shaming towards my athletes	
#30. Coach so that all genders feel included in sport	
#18. Make discussions around gender a normal thing with my athletes	

FACTOR 4	New Factor Dimension
#1. Identify the coaching needs of my girl athletes	Supportive and Responsive Coaching for Girls
#14. Build strong relationships with my girl athletes	
#13. Meet the coaching needs of my girl athletes	

Appendix Q – Study 2 – Final GCSES Master Items List

1. Identify key coaching considerations related to gender diversity (1)
2. Talk to my athletes while effectively considering diverse genders (1)
3. Identify gender biases in my coaching approach (1)
4. Recognize gender stereotypes in how I coach my athletes (1)
5. Identify the potential consequences of gender biases in sport (1)
6. Identify how my coaching philosophy considers gender (1)
7. Identify the ways gender may impact my coaching practices (1)
8. Consider non-traditional matters of gender in relation to coaching practice (1)
9. Recognize when I am using gendered language (1)
10. Talk to my athletes without introducing gender biases (1)
11. Identify the reasons that girls leave sport (2)
12. Identify the barriers to sport participation that girls uniquely experience (2)
13. Describe stereotypes associated with coaching girls in sport (2)
14. Identify the reasons why girls play sports (2)
15. Describe stereotypes associated with coaching boys in sport (2)
16. Discourage my athletes from engaging in gender shaming (3)
17. Create an inclusive coaching environment for all genders (3)
18. Discourage others (e.g., parents, coaches, referees, etc.) from engaging in gender shaming towards my athletes (3)
19. Coach so that all genders feel included in sport (3)
20. Make discussions around gender a normal thing with my athletes (3)
21. Identify the coaching needs of my girl athletes (4)
22. Build strong relationships with my girl athletes (4)
23. Meet the coaching needs of my girl athletes (4)

Appendix R – Study 2 – GCSES Master Factor Breakdown

FACTOR 1: GENDER LITERACY IN COACHING (c*onfidence in recognizing how gender norms, biases, and stereotypes influence coaching language, philosophy, and practice*)

This factor captures a coach's confidence in recognizing and understanding how gender influences their coaching. It includes the ability to identify gender norms, biases, and stereotypes, and to reflect on how these may be embedded in their language, philosophy, and everyday coaching decisions. **Coaches scoring high in this area are aware of how gender shapes athlete experiences and are intentional about creating more equitable and inclusive sport environments. This helps coaches examine and adjust their own practices to reduce bias and foster inclusion.**

Focus: self-reflection on how gender shows up in a coach's own practice
Type of Knowledge: internal, practice-based awareness
Key Themes: recognition of personal gender bias and stereotypes, understanding how one's own coaching philosophy and communication reflect or challenge gender norms, awareness of gender-inclusive language and behaviour in direct interactions with athletes

Items (Cronbach's Alpha = .915)

24. Identify key coaching considerations related to gender diversity (27)
25. Talk to my athletes while effectively considering diverse genders (28)
26. Identify gender biases in my coaching approach (12)
27. Recognize gender stereotypes in how I coach my athletes (11)
28. Identify the potential consequences of gender biases in sport (5)
29. Identify how my coaching philosophy considers gender (7)
30. Identify the ways gender may impact my coaching practices (9)
31. Consider non-traditional matters of gender in relation to coaching practice (26)
32. Recognize when I am using gendered language (16)
33. Talk to my athletes without introducing gender biases (15)

FACTOR 2: UNDERSTANDING GENDERED SPORT EXPERIENCES (*confidence in understanding the gendered motivations, barriers, and stereotypes that shape sport participation, especially for girls*)

This factor reflects a coach's confidence in understanding the gendered factors that influence sport participation. It includes awareness of the motivations and barriers girls face in sport, as well as recognition of the stereotypes associated with coaching both girls and boys. **Coaches scoring high in this area believe/perceive/report that they are knowledgeable about how gendered expectations and systemic factors shape athletes' experiences and decisions to engage or disengage from sport. This helps coaches develop informed, context-sensitive approaches to athlete recruitment, retention, and engagement (especially for girls).**

Focus: knowledge of gender-related patterns and societal factors in sport participation
Type of Knowledge: external understanding, athlete-focused, systemic awareness
Key Themes: understanding why girls participate or leave sport, recognizing societal and cultural stereotypes that impact athletes and coaching roles, identifying barriers and motivations shaped by gender norms

Items (Cronbach's Alpha = .796)

1. Identify the reasons that girls leave sport (3)
2. Identify the barriers to sport participation that girls uniquely experience (4)
3. Describe stereotypes associated with coaching girls in sport (24)
4. Identify the reasons why girls play sports (2)
5. Describe stereotypes associated with coaching boys in sport (25)

FACTOR 3: FOSTERING GENDER-INCLUSIVE SPORT (*confidence in creating an inclusive sport culture and addressing gender-based exclusion or shaming in sport*)

This factor reflects a coach's confidence in creating and sustaining an inclusive sport culture where athletes of all genders feel respected, supported, and safe. It includes the ability to discourage gender shaming among athletes and stakeholders, engage in open conversations about gender, and implement inclusive practices that promote equity in sport settings. **Coaches who score high in this area lead with intention to create inclusive environments. They are proactive in challenging gender-based harm (like shaming or exclusion) and work to ensure all athletes feel respected and valued, regardless of gender.**

Focus: sport culture, proactive inclusion, confronting gender-based harm
Type of Knowledge: interpersonal and cultural leadership
Key Themes: creating welcoming, inclusive environments for athletes of all genders, discouraging gender shaming and harmful behaviours among athletes and other stakeholders, normalizing conversations about gender in sport, promoting respect and psychological safety across the team, modeling inclusive values through coaching leadership

Items (Cronbach's Alpha = .825)

1. Discourage my athletes from engaging in gender shaming (20)
2. Create an inclusive coaching environment for all genders (31)
3. Discourage others (e.g., parents, coaches, referees, etc.) from engaging in gender shaming towards my athletes (19)
4. Coach so that all genders feel included in sport (30)
5. Make discussions around gender a normal thing with my athletes (18)

FACTOR 4: GIRL-CENTRED COACHING PRACTICE (*confidence in building relationships and meeting the coaching needs of girls in sport*)

This factor reflects a coach's confidence in identifying and meeting the specific developmental, emotional, and performance-related needs of girls in sport. It includes the ability to build meaningful, trust-based relationships and to adapt coaching strategies in ways that support girls' engagement and success. **Coaches who score high in this area are effective at building meaningful relationships with girls and tailoring their coaching to meet their needs. They demonstrate a deep commitment to supporting girls' growth, confidence, and long-term engagement in sport.**

Focus: athlete-specific support, connection, responsiveness to girls' needs
Type of Knowledge: applied, athlete-specific coaching skills
Key Themes: understanding and responding to girls' developmental and motivational needs, building strong, trust-based relationships with girl athletes, adapting coaching approaches to better support girls, prioritizing communication, connection, and belonging, and valuing the lived experiences of girls in sport

Items (Cronbach's Alpha = .803)

1. Identify the coaching needs of my girl athletes (1)
2. Build strong relationships with my girl athletes (14)
3. Meet the coaching needs of my girl athletes (13)

Factor	**Core Question**	**Focus Area**	**Type of Knowledge**
1. Gender Literacy in Coaching	*How does gender shape my coaching?*	Self/practice awareness	Reflective & Critical
2. Understanding Gendered Sport Experiences	*How does gender shape their experience?*	Athlete/societal awareness	Contextual & Systemic
3. Fostering Gender-Inclusive Sport	*What culture am I creating?*	Team environment and leadership	Behavioural & Interpersonal
4. Girl-Centered Coaching Practice	*How am I supporting these girls?*	Individualized support	Relational & Practical

Appendix S – Study 3 – CoP Focus Groups – Consent Form

Developing Gender Effective Coaches: Addressing the Knowledge to Translation Gap

Siobhan Rourke, MHK
Doctoral Candidate
Faculty of Health Sciences
School of Human Kinetics
University of Ottawa

Diane M. Culver, PhD
Full Professor
Faculty of Health Sciences
School of Human Kinetics
University of Ottawa

Invitation to Participate: I have been invited to participate in a research project conducted by Siobhan Rourke and Dr. Diane Culver through the school of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa. This study is being conducted as part of Siobhan's doctoral degree requirements.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to implement a Community of Practice (CoP) with girls' sport coaches to promote, plan and assess the value created through social learning in conjunction with the Coaching HER online modules.

Participation: My participation in this study entails engaging in a **concurrent** community of practice (CoP) for 4 months while I am completing the Coaching HER online coach education modules (seven modules – roughly 4 hours of online work total).

- I will participate in four-six (4-6) community of practice sessions (roughly two per month) over four (4) months, over Zoom at a time that is mutual convenient for all participants. These sessions will be audio and video recorded. As I complete the Coaching HER online modules, and apply the content into my practice, I will share my experiences within the CoP. Such sharing will provide learning opportunities for others and self-reflection opportunities within my own practice. I will also complete written reflective activities and other 'homework' (e.g., personal value narratives) during the six-months of the study, which I will share directly with the researchers.
- Complete the self-efficacy assessment created in Study 1 on two (2) occasions, a) prior to completing the CH modules and b) one month after the completion of the CoP and CH modules.
- Engaging in 15-30 minutes of reflective 'homework' between CoP sessions using the online collaborative tool, Mural.
- One (1) 30–90-minute audio/video-recorded individual interview or focus group one month after the completion of the CoP; in-person or over Zoom at a time/location that is mutually convenient. This final interview will contribute to the qualitative data being collected for this phase of the research.
- One (1) possible follow-up 10–30-minute audio-recorded interview or follow-up email should further clarification/information be needed.

Assessment of risks: My participation in this study entails very limited foreseeable risks. However, if I experience any discomfort, the primary researcher has assured me that she will make every effort to minimize this discomfort. I may decide to stop my participation at any time, without consequence.

Benefits: Research in the field has suggested that a significant barrier for girls' sport participation is the lack of trained coaches. This research aims to increase coaching knowledge and strategies for best practices for coaching girls. This information may then be disseminated and reach a wider range of coaches and stakeholders to facilitate high quality sports for girls. As a participant, I will be contributing to the field of sport pedagogy and developing networks and connections with other coaches in the field. With my engagement in discussions, I will also be gaining new insight into evidence-based strategies for coaching girls.

Privacy of participants: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I share during individual forms of data collection (i.e., interviews) will remain strictly confidential. Participants will be asked to maintain confidentiality during focus group meetings; however, anonymity is not possible between participants. Please note that the group activities are conditions under which we cannot guarantee that other participants will protect the anonymity of other participants or the confidentiality of the information they share in the group. I have been informed that the researchers will respect and protect my anonymity and the confidentiality of the information I share but cannot guarantee that other participants will do the same. We ask you, as a participant in this research to respect the anonymity of other participants and the confidentiality of the information they share in the group. The content from these discussions will be used for the completion of this doctoral research and other publications for dissemination. I understand that the information discussed during these focus group(s) is to remain confidential.

Confidentiality and conservation of data: I have been assured that the written documents, video recordings, transcriptions, assessments, and research notes will be kept in a secure manner in the researcher's office and on her computer during the research. Video recordings will not be used in any public manner, but participants' quotes from transcripts may be used in written publications and presentations. Data will only be accessed by the primary researcher and her supervisor Dr. Diane Culver. Data will be kept indefinitely unless otherwise requested.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, given the collective nature of the group discussion data gathered until the time of withdrawal will not be destroyed.

Acceptance: I, _____, agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Siobhan Rourke and Diane Culver, PhD, in the School of Human Kinetics, at the University of Ottawa.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact Siobhan Rourke.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact:

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity
University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall
550 Cumberland St, Room 154

Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
Tel: (613) 562-5387
Email: ethics@uottawa.ca.

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's name:	Signature:	Date:
_____	_____	_____
Researcher's name:	Signature:	Date:
_____	_____	_____

Appendix T – Study 3 – Recruitment Poster

uOttawa

Coaches Needed for our Research Study!

Developing Gender Effective Coaches: Addressing the Knowledge to Application Gap

The purpose of this study is to explore how gender impacts coaches' beliefs and practices through the testing of Communities of Practice for the enhancement of online learning (i.e., *Coaching HER;* Tucker Center, 2024) and the new Coaching Gender Self-Efficacy Scale (CGSES).

ELEMENTS OF THE STUDY

- **Coaching HER online Modules (7 total - FREE)**
- **4-6 Online Community of Practice Sessions**
- **Complete the Coaching Gender Self-Efficacy Scale at two time periods**

Who Can Participate?

- Sport Coaches Ages 18+;
- Coach (for girls under 25 years old) in any sport or physical activity;
- Currently coaching or will coach girls in the next six months;
- Have coached girls for at least six months in the past 5 years

BEGINNING SEPT 2025



Interested?

Contact Siobhan Rourke for more information

Complete the Interest Form at this link or using the QR code.

Your participation is voluntary and may be stopped at any time.
This project has been approved by uOttawa's Office of Research Ethics & Integrity

Appendix U – All Studies – Email Recruitment Text

Study 1

Dear [insert name],

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Siobhan Rourke, and I am a PhD candidate under the supervision of Dr. Diane Culver at the University of Ottawa. I am reaching out to you today to **recruit girls' coaches** for the first phase of my PhD research project. We are developing a coach confidence scale aimed to help improve girls' sport experiences and keep more girls in sport.

To this email, I have attached both the recruitment poster and letter for your information. Essentially, we want to better understand your coaches' experience coaching girls and how gender may impact their practices. We hope to engage with diverse coach perspectives on gender equity in sport.

If you are interested or know any coaches who might be willing to participate, please respond to this email or direct me to the appropriate person. I am looking to conduct **a single 1-hour focus group** at the end of the month.

Thank you so much for your consideration,
Siobhan Rourke

Study 2

Dear [insert name],

I am currently recruiting girls' sport coaches to complete the survey I am developing for my PhD research. Those eligible are coaches who have experience coaching girls (girls = under the age of 25 years old) in any capacity or competition level.

I am sharing two versions of my flyer here along with the direct link to complete the survey. I would greatly appreciate if you would be willing to share this with those in your network that qualify.

Thanks,
Siobhan

Study 3

You are receiving this email as you have previously participated in one of my doctoral research studies and consented to being informed about future opportunities. Kindly let me know if you would like to be removed from this list.

Good afternoon,

I'm currently recruiting coaches for the final research study as part of my doctoral work at the University of Ottawa. This study involves testing *Coaching HER* — a FREE online coach education course designed to improve how we coach girls and address gender bias in sport in

conjunction with the use of Communities of Practice (CoP) to help with the application of online learning to practice.

If you're 18 or older, have experience coaching girls (in sport, fitness, or physical education), and want to contribute to important research and your own coaching development, I'd love to hear from you!

Participation is flexible and includes support completing the online *Coaching HER* modules, CoP group sessions, and a chance to share your insights.

Interested or want to learn more? Reply to this email or complete the Interest Form here.
Thank you for considering!

Sportingly,
Siobhan Rourke

Appendix V – Study 3 – Community of Practice Session Planning

Coaching HER Overview
Module 1: Developing Girls in Sport (10 mins)
Module 2: Challenging Gender Stereotypes (20 mins)
Module 3: Coaching Girls (25 mins)
Module 4: Empowering Girls' Engagement (20 mins)
Module 5: Recognizing Girls' Identities (20 mins)
Module 6: Supporting Girls' Needs (15 mins)
TOTAL = 1h 20m

Whiteboard Link: [redacted for participant confidentiality]

#1 – Developing Girls in Sport
CoP Session Plan

Timing	**Activity + Description**	**Notes**
15 mins	Welcome + Roundtable Intros	
5 mins	Check-In	
10 – 15 mins	**Warm-Up Activity**: Assets we Gained	**Set-Up**: Invite participants to reflect individually for 2–3 minutes on one asset (moral, psychological, physical, emotional, academic, social, or occupational) that *they themselves* gained through sport when they were younger. **Sharing**: Have them share in pairs or small breakout groups. Ask: • What asset did you choose and why? • How did a coach (or another adult) play a role in that? **Purpose**: Brings the abstract "assets" language to life through lived experiences. Sets a positive, personal tone.
20 – 25 mins	**Main Activity**: Coaching Actions for Asset Building	**Step 1 (Individual Reflection)**: Share the equation **ACTION by adults + AGENCY by girls = ASSET ACCRUAL**. Ask each coach to spend 3–4 minutes writing down:

		• One *positive coaching action* they already do that supports girls' development of assets. • One *new action* they could take (inspired by the module) to better support girls' asset-building. **Step 2 (Small Groups)**: In breakout groups of 3–4, have coaches: • Share their actions with one another. • Discuss how these actions might address challenges like the **parent sideline situation** or other real-life scenarios. • Choose one action (from the group's list) they believe would be most impactful for girls' experiences. **Step 3 (Report Back)**: Each group summarizes: • The action they chose. • Why do they believe it supports girls' assets (psychological, social, emotional, etc.). • How they would implement it in their own team context.
15-20 mins	**Group Debrief**: Bringing it to Our Coaching	**Whole-Group Reflection Prompts**: • What coaching actions did you hear that you want to try in your own practice? • How do your actions as a coach protect girls from negative sport experiences (burnout, low confidence, dropout)? • How can you actively create opportunities for girls' **agencies** — so it's not just you acting *for* them, but them building their own voice and confidence? • If you could make one change tomorrow to ensure your athletes leave practice with more assets than when they arrived, what would it be?
5 mins	**Check-Out**	**Closing Commitment**: Ask each coach to share (in chat or out loud) the *one action* they will experiment with in the next two weeks.

Purpose – this module will help you;

A. **Understand** the assets, benefits, girls gain from sport participation;

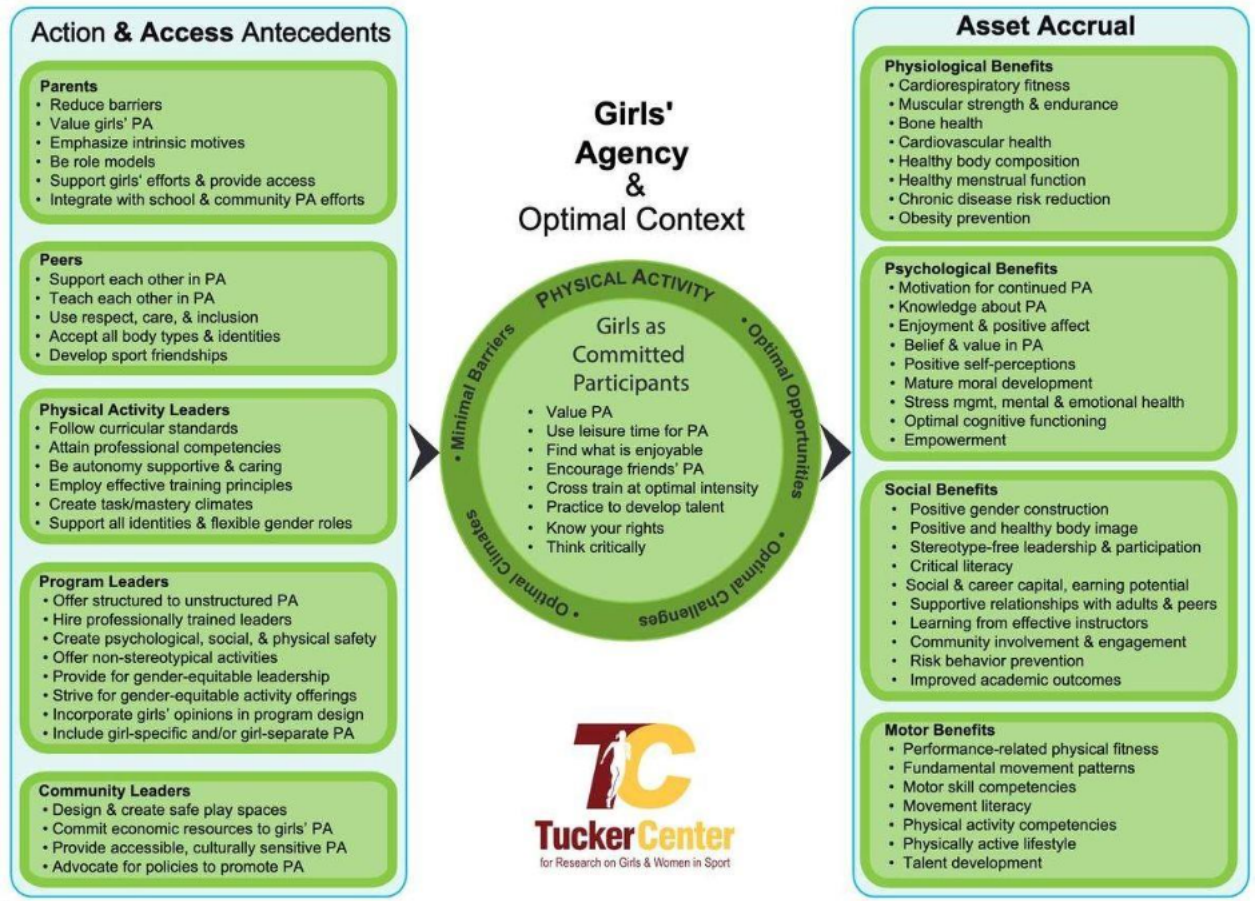
B. **Identify** your role in girls' ability to benefit from sports;
C. **Reflect** on negative outcomes of sport participation that some girls experience and how to avoid them.

Key Terms

Asset (useful, positive, or desirable outcome or benefit)	Moral Assets
Psychological Assets	Physical Assets
Emotional Assets	Academic Assets
Social Assets	Occupational Assets

General Notes

- Active, empowered girls strengthen families, communities, economies and help build sustainable development, which makes them an asset to any community.
- However, fewer girls play sports compared to boys, girls enter sport later, drop out earlier and at twice the rate of boys.
- How a girl feels about her coach is an important factor whether or not she continues to play. **Coaches are powerful role models who impact girls!**
- Evidence of a **"more is better" model** indicates that higher levels of involvement in physical activity and sport appears to translate into higher quality of life, prevention of high-risk behaviors, better self-esteem, improved health outcomes, and valuable developmental experiences for girls.



ACTION by adults + AGENCY by girls =ASSET ACCRUAL

NOTE: Module asks coaches to pick one ACTION item in the left column and commit to learning more about it.

SITUATION	**GENERAL ACTIONS** (**bolded responses** = productive)
Sometimes sport parents can take away from an optimal sport climate. A parent of one of your athletes is always yelling on the	**Call a parent meeting to remind everyone of expectations regarding positive behavior on the sidelines that**

sidelines during games. The parent yells at their own daughter and her teammates. Sometimes it is words of encouragement, but often the parent is criticizing players and giving coaching instructions. While none of your athletes have explicitly brought this up to you, you can tell that some of the girls are losing confidence in their playing abilities, feel uncomfortable, and are distracted. This is not the optimal environment we want!	**support the team and create an optimal climate for the athletes.**
	Do nothing and focus on your own coaching.
	Pull the over-involved parent aside to discuss how his actions might affect the entire team.
	Pull the daughter of the over-involved parent aside and ask her to tell her dad to stop yelling during games.
	Ban the parent from attending games.
	ACTIONS w/YOUR TEAM
	Call an athlete-only meeting to reassert they should focus on only taking coaching instructions from the coaching staff and reinforce that parents have an important role but not coaching during the game.
	Call an athlete-only meeting where you explicitly call out the parent as an example of poor behavior to the entire team.
	Ask the entire team to go home and talk to their parent(s) about behavioral expectations during games.
	Use this situation as a teachable moment for your athletes. Have them reflect on what parent and coach behaviors could help them enjoy sport and focus on performing their best.

Reflection Questions

- If you played sports, what benefits or assets did you gain from participating?
- Did you experience any negative outcomes as a result of sport?
- In both your positive and negative experiences in sport, what was the role of the coach in those experiences?
- How can you increase the likelihood your athletes have a positive experience?
- What are the benefits resulting from sport participation that you see in the girls you coach?

#2 – Challenging Gender Stereotypes

CoP Session Plan

Timing	Activity + Description	Notes

15 mins	Welcome + Check-In	*Framing*: Last time we looked at the assets girls gain from sport, and the actions coaches can take to support those assets. This time we'll explore how gender stereotypes undermine those assets—and how we as coaches can challenge them together. Ask coaches to update on their action item (did it help build up your girls' assets?)
10 mins	**Warm-Up Activity**: Gender Stories in Coaching	**Set-Up**: In breakout room pairs, share: *"What's one gender stereotype you've seen show up in sport (as an athlete or coach)? How did it affect the girl(s) involved?"* -- 6 mins to chat (3 mins each) **Purpose**: Invites personal storytelling to ground learning in real practice.
20 mins	**Knowledge Sharing Activity:** Stereotypes in Our Contexts	**Breakouts (groups of 3–4)**: Each person names **one stereotype they see in their sport/setting** (e.g., language, uniforms, parent expectations). As a group, they discuss: • How does this stereotype show up in practice? • What impact does it have on girls' assets (confidence, social belonging, leadership, etc.)? **Back in main room**: Groups post their stereotypes + impacts on the whiteboard section so we can create a *community-generated map* of stereotypes/barriers
30 mins	**Main Activity:** Examining Our Own Coaching	**Individual reflection (5 min)**: Coaches jot down: • What language or habits in *my own coaching* might unintentionally reinforce gender stereotypes? • One action I can take this week to be more intentional in my language. **Triad breakouts (12 min)**: Share reflections, ask peers for suggestions ("Has anyone tried…?").

		Main room harvest (15 min): Invite a few volunteers to share the **most useful peer suggestion** they heard.
10 mins	**Check-Out**	**Closing Commitment**: Each coach posts in chat: • 1 stereotype they'll challenge • 1 concrete action they'll try this week • Facilitator highlights: **Session #1** → assets **Session #2** → barriers to assets + collective actions • Centers **peer knowledge** and co-creation (not just case studies). • Builds **artifacts** (maps of stereotypes, response strategies) that the CoP can revisit in future sessions. • Encourages **ongoing experimentation** and accountability (community commitments). Preview: *"In our next session, we'll keep building on these practices and learn from what you try out."*

Purpose – this module will help you;

D. **Understand** what gender stereotypes are and how they affect girls;
E. **Identify** gender stereotypes that are prevalent in sports;
F. **Reflect** on your own explicit and implicit gender stereotypes and biases about girls in sport.

Key Terms

Sex (male or female at birth – not the same as gender)	Gender Identity (e.g., transgender)
Gender (socially constructed – gender expression)	Gender Stereotype
Gender Bias	Gender Norms (cultural)

General Notes

- How coaches think about and perceive girls affects how they treat and coach girls.
- **All coaches, and in fact all humans, have stereotypes and biases.** Whether it's gender, age, ethnicity or culture, stereotyping undermines our ability to create safe, inclusive and diverse environments.

- When girls act, look or behave in ways that are not consistent with their gender (for example, girls who are not 'feminine' and act strong, aggressive, & competitive, and/or are told they "behave like boys!") they often face discrimination, harassment, judgment, bullying, teasing, social isolation, negative evaluation, unequal or unfair treatment, or are punished.
- **Kids develop a sense of their gender identity by age two or three.** Gender in most societies impacts our social life and refers to characteristics associated with masculinity and femininity… or what it means to act like a girl or boy.

Girls expected to be = passive, graceful caring, nurturing, emotional, quiet, accepting
Boys supposed to be = aggressive, powerful, tough, dominant, independent, logical, physically imposing, ambitious

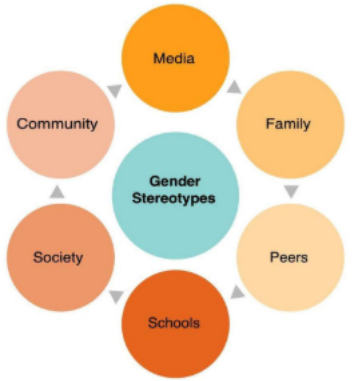
Types of Gender Stereotypes

1. Gender Stereotypes
2. Domestic Behaviours
3. Occupational
4. Physical Appearance

**differ around the world

Challenging Gender Stereotypes

1. Language (avoiding stereotyping, patronizing language vs using gender-neutral language)
2. Encouragement (including offering different uniform options)
3. Equality (pay the same amount for training?)
4. Visibility



NOTE: module asks coaches to commit to one action they can take this week to challenge gender stereotypes in their sport/on their team and reach out to org leaders to implement a change

SITUATION	**GENERAL ACTIONS** (**bolded responses** = productive)
You as a coach overhear two of your athletes talking during practice, and one says to the other one, "you throw like a girl".	**Talk to the whole team after practice about what you heard.**
	Reinforce positively
	Pull athletes aside and discuss what you heard.

Reflection Questions

- From your experience, what gender stereotypes have you experienced or seen others experience? How did that experience impact you?
- What is your gender story?
- Have you ever experienced limitations because of your gender?
- How have your sports experiences been shaped by your gender?

#3 – Coaching Girls

CoP Session Plan

Timing	**Activity + Description**	**Notes**
15 mins	Welcome + Check-In	Since our last session, what have you been noticing about gender stereotypes or bias in your coaching or sport environment? What questions or tensions have come up for you?
15 mins	**Warm-Up Activity**: Where do our biases show?	**Structure:** Pairs → whole group harvest **Prompt:** • "When you think about bias in coaching girls, where do you see it most clearly — in yourself, in your sport culture, or in the systems around you?" • "What do those moments look or feel like?" **Harvest:** On a shared board, capture where bias is showing up (e.g., "language," "performance expectations," "parent feedback," "uniforms," etc.). *Facilitator frame:* Rather than focusing on who's right or wrong, we're exploring *how bias operates* — often unconsciously — and what it teaches us about our environments. We are building upon the community-generated map of stereotypes/biases.
20 mins	**Knowledge Co-Creation Activity:** Difference vs Similarity Perspective	**Mini setup** (5 min): Briefly introduce the two perspectives: • Difference Perspective: Girls and boys are inherently different.

		• Similarity Perspective: Gender doesn't matter — treat everyone the same. Explain that both can oversimplify lived experiences. **Small-group Dialogue** (15 min): • Which perspective do you see more commonly in your sport? • How does it shape coaching approaches or athlete experiences? • What are the risks or missed opportunities in that dominant perspective? **Big group debrief** – each group reports back on their discussion.
30 mins	**Main Activity:** Peer "Case Consulting"	Using the Critical Friends Model — small group problem-solving. *Each group chooses one real case (from their own context or the provided ones).* **Example prompts**: • "I caught myself calling my players 'ladies' and didn't think twice — how do I shift language norms without making it awkward?" • "Parents still tell girls not to lift too heavy — how can I address that?" • "Girls are uncomfortable in the uniforms — what's an effective way to bring this up with the association?" **Steps**: 1. One person presents a case (2 min). 2. Group members ask clarifying questions (2 min). 3. Group discusses possible coaching responses, drawing on bias types and perspectives (10 min). 4. The presenter reflects on what they heard and what they might try (2 min). 5. Rotate once or twice depending on group size.

		Back in the main room, invite coaches to share patterns they heard across cases. **Prompt**: • "What principles are emerging about how to coach girls in ways that resist bias?" • "What are we learning as a community about what 'gender-effective' really looks like in practice?" Facilitator summarizes into a few co-created takeaways (e.g., "Coaching the individual, not the stereotype," "Awareness + action," "Language shapes belonging").
10 mins	**Check-Out**	**Closing Commitment**: Each coach posts on the whiteboard: • 1 way you will test or experiment how you notice, name, or shift bias in your environment?" **Session #1** → assets **Session #2** → barriers to assets + collective actions **Session #3** → collective actions Preview: *"In our next session, we'll start looking at how to take all of these actions we're working on and empowering girls' participation"*

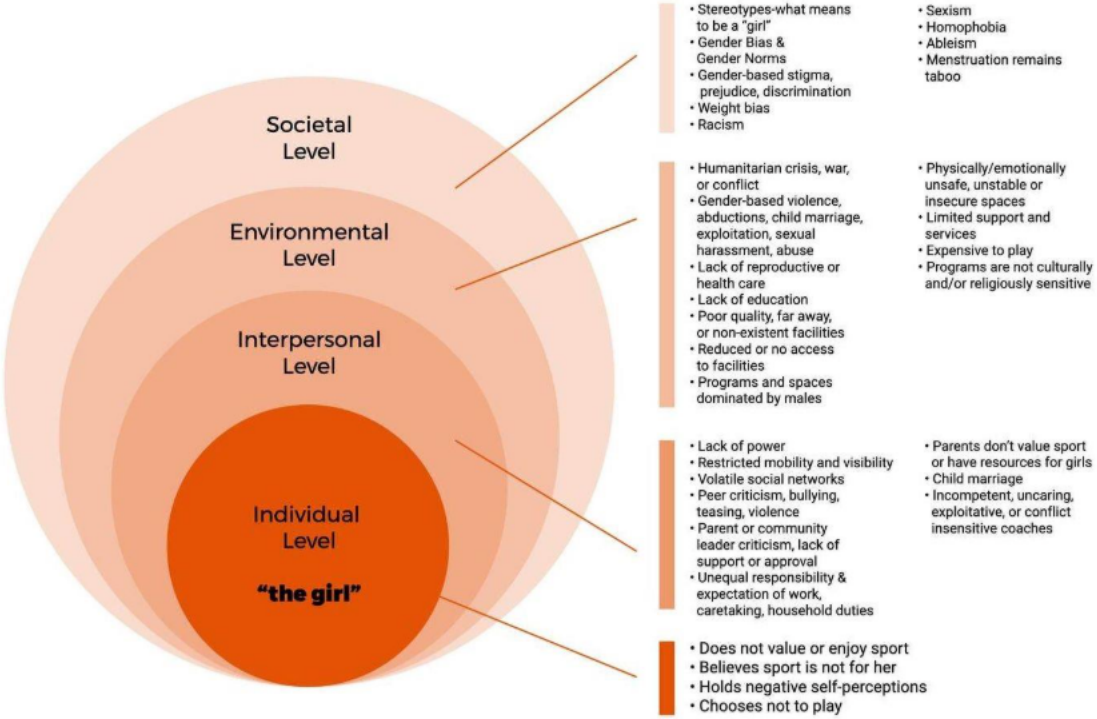
Purpose – this module will help you;

G. **Understand** common perceptions about coaching girls. Specifically, you will learn about the Difference and Similarity Perspectives;
H. **Identify t**he connection between girls' experiences in the world, and how gender, gender stereotypes and gender biases impact their experiences;
I. **Reflect** on how some perceptions may be based on stereotypes and bias that are harmful to girls.

Key Terms

Bias	Socialization

Nature + Nurture	Stereotypes
Difference Perspective (girls are naturally diff from boys)	Similarity Perspective ('gender blindness')



Types of Bias

1. **Likeability** (girls are kind and relational and do not assert themselves)
2. **Performance** (underestimate girl's sport performance and incorrectly assume they are less skilled than boys)
3. **Attribution** (girls are less competent that boys so coaches give them less credit for accomplishments and blame them more for their mistakes)
4. **Confirmation** (tendency to search for, interpret, favor or recall info that is consistent with or confirms their existing beliefs)
5. **Weight** (form unreasonable judgments based on a person's weight – stigma and shame will motivation people to lose weight – heavy people are a result of inadequate self-discipline or insufficient willpower)

General Notes

- We receive constant messages about what is expected of different genders, for example how to act, talk, look, and even what sports to play. These biases can become ingrained in our attitudes and behaviors and it's often impossible to completely get rid of them. Most of the time our biases are unconscious. But when we learn to be aware of our biases, we have a better chance of minimizing their impact and even counteracting them.
- Many girls don't think sport is for them, or don't see themselves as 'sporty.' By the time girls reach 17-18 years old just 28% describe themselves as 'sporty', compared with 58% of boys.
- Girls *do differ* from boys but not because girls have inherent and natural differences in emotionality, competitiveness, or toughness. At the core of Coaching HER® is the recognition that girls experience the world differently and are treated differently than boys, *because they are girls*.

Gender-Based Stereotypes

1. **All girls are the same** (research indicates there is more difference *within* groups of girls and within groups of boys, than *between* girls and boy.)
2. **Gender behaviour is genetic** (Girls and boys are not born more or less emotional or competitive, they are socialized to be more or less emotional or competitive. In other words, girls' behavior is influenced by genetics AND society, the environment, and people (INCLUDING COACHES) around them)
3. **Positive stereotypes complement girls** (research indicates that when we positively stereotype on one dimension, we may be unintentionally negatively stereotype in another. For example, a so-called positive stereotype like 'girls are easier to coach', may signal an underlying negative stereotype that 'girls are naturally less skilled and easier to coach because they have more to learn')
4. **Girls are better behaved than boys** (Coaches are more likely to praise girls for being well behaved. *Disruptive girls may be punished* because they are not 'acting like girls' (i.e., conforming to feminine norms of what girls should act like) while *similar behavior by boys may be ignored or accepted* as part of the 'boys will be boys' mentality)
5. **Girls should act like girls** (when girls do 'act like girls' and are passive, quiet, obedient, and well behaved [because they've learned that girls are supposed to act this way] coaches may perceive girls as less aggressive, assertive, engaged, or competitive! Good girls are often not taken seriously as committed, competitive athletes)

NOTE: Module asks coaches to pick three ACTION items below;

1. Take the Harvard Implicit Association Test
2. Coach the athlete
3. Set your expectations (based on individual not gender)
4. Encourage girls to be leaders
5. Speak up and intervene
6. Become aware of your own language (replace absolutes with more nuanced language)

7. Set high expectations that girls can play sport and be successful
8. Girl girls positive feedback
9. Provide as many opportunities as possible for girls (visible, accessible, and create safe environments)

SITUATION	**ACTIONS**
A coach of the Oxford Golden Eagles shouts, “Let’s go, ladies!" to her soccer players to encourage and motivate them to play harder.	• ‘Ladies’ is associated with stereotypical behaviors that are not relevant to performance or achievement in sport. It reminds female soccer players of their group & establishes girls as different. • Say “Let’s Go Eagles!” OR “Let’s Go Team!” instead.
SITUATION	**ACTIONS** (**bolded responses** = productive)
To help your team be in better physical condition for the upcoming season, you are starting a new training program that improves strength and muscle endurance. Since you don’t have any equipment or access to a weight room, in this new program the team will be doing a variety of circuit training exercises that includes isometric exercises for enhanced stability. In a team meeting you introduce the new program. A small group of three athletes are whispering to each other and do not look happy about this new program. The first few times you take the team through the new program, many of them love it and are giving full effort. You notice after the first two weeks the group of three is not taking the training seriously, is doing the minimal amount of effort, and often tries to skip doing many of the circuit training stations. It is starting to affect the rest of the team. You and your assistant coach decide to talk to the three athletes. When you pull them aside and ask them why they are not giving full effort in the circuit training, one of them replies, “I don’t want to get big and bulky.” Another athlete jumps in to say, “Yeah, I don’t want to gain more muscle. I just want to tone the muscle I already have.” While the third athlete states, “My father told me, girls aren’t supposed to have big muscles.”	You yell at them and say, “That is ridiculous! I’m the coach and you do what I tell you! Now get back to the circuit.”
	You kick them off the team.
	You threaten to take away their playing time if they don’t improve their effort in training.
	Roll your eyes, say “Quit worrying about getting bulky!,” turn your back and walk away.
	You reply, “You know what? I totally hear where you're coming from.”
	You ask the group of three, “Help me understand. When you say ‘bulky’ what does that mean to you?”
	Ignore all their comments, say nothing, turn your back and walk away.

SITUATION	ACTIONS (**bolded responses** = productive)
Your sport association or school ordered the same exact uniforms for both the boys and girls basketball teams. As the season progresses, you have noticed that many of the girls have complained that their new uniforms are uncomfortable for them to wear.	Do nothing. You have no control over the uniforms.
	Call a team meeting to ask the girls' opinions on the new uniforms.
	Order new uniforms as a surprise for the team.
	Call a team meeting and assert that having the same uniforms is an example of equality; assert that the boys don't complain, so the girls should not either.
	Talk to the head of the association/school about ordering different uniforms for your team and other girls' programs.

Reflection Questions

- Are the statements on the common perceptions list true for ALL girls you coach?
- How might these perceptions impact *how* you coach girls?
- How might your perceptions about girls impact you and then girls you coach?
- What barriers have you encountered (interpersonal, environmental, societal) that girls' experience in sports that differ from boys?
- At which level (of the systems model) do you think girls' and boys' experiences in sport differ the most?
- How will you try to limit gender stereotypes in your coaching as a result of this module?

#4 – Empowering Girls' Engagement

CoP Session Plan

Timing	Activity + Description	Notes
15 mins	Welcome + Check-In	"In our last sessions, we explored the strengths girls gain from sport, the gender stereotypes that can limit those strengths, and how we as coaches can take action to create more inclusive spaces. Today, we're going to dig deeper into the *systems* that shape girls' sport experiences — from what they believe about themselves to the policies and cultural norms around them." "These barriers don't exist in isolation. A girl's confidence, her family's expectations, the safety of her community spaces, and the messages she receives from media and peers all interact. By understanding those layers, we

		can identify where we can make change — even small, local change — that empowers girls to stay engaged and thrive in sport."
15 mins	**Warm-Up Activity**: Seeing the Invisible	**Structure:** Small groups → whole group harvest **Prompt:** To help coaches identify and reflect on *invisible or hidden barriers* that limit girls' participation and engagement in sport — particularly those that are normalized, subtle, or systemic rather than overt. "Not all barriers that keep girls from engaging in sport are visible. Some are baked into our environments, routines, and expectations — things we might never question because they feel normal. Today we'll practice 'seeing the invisible' barriers that shape girls' opportunities and confidence." "We'll think beyond the obvious, like funding or facilities, and notice the quieter influences — expectations, unspoken rules, or traditions that may be holding girls back.
30 mins	**Main Activity:** Peer "Case Consulting"	Using the Critical Friends Model — small group problem-solving. *Each group chooses one real case (from their own context or the provided ones).* **Example prompts**: • "I caught myself calling my players 'ladies' and didn't think twice — how do I shift language norms without making it awkward?" • "Parents still tell girls not to lift too heavy — how can I address that?" • "Girls are uncomfortable in the uniforms — what's an effective way to bring this up with the association?" **Steps**: 6. One person presents a case (2 min). 7. Group members ask clarifying questions (2 min). 8. Group discusses possible coaching responses, drawing on bias types and perspectives (10 min). 9. The presenter reflects on what they heard and what they might try (2 min).

		10. Rotate once or twice depending on group size. Back in the main room, invite coaches to share patterns they heard across cases. **Prompt**: • "What principles are emerging about how to coach girls in ways that resist bias?" • "What are we learning as a community about what 'gender-effective' really looks like in practice?" Facilitator summarizes into a few co-created takeaways (e.g., "Coaching the individual, not the stereotype," "Awareness + action," "Language shapes belonging").
10 mins	**Check-Out**	**Closing Commitment**: Each coach posts on the whiteboard: • 1 way you will test or experiment how you notice, name, or shift bias in your environment?" **Session #1** → assets **Session #2** → barriers to assets + collective actions **Session #3** → collective actions **Session #4** → looking at it through the lens of the whole system Preview: *In our next session, we'll start looking at girls' identities and how the intersection of the different characteristics impacts their sport experience.*

Purpose – this module will help you;

A. **Understand** the many barriers that can limit girls' sport engagement and participation at all levels (systems theory);
B. **Identify** barriers that girls may face even in your own community;
C. **Reflect** on and develop strategies that limit or reduce barriers and empower girls to participate and engage in sport.

Key Terms

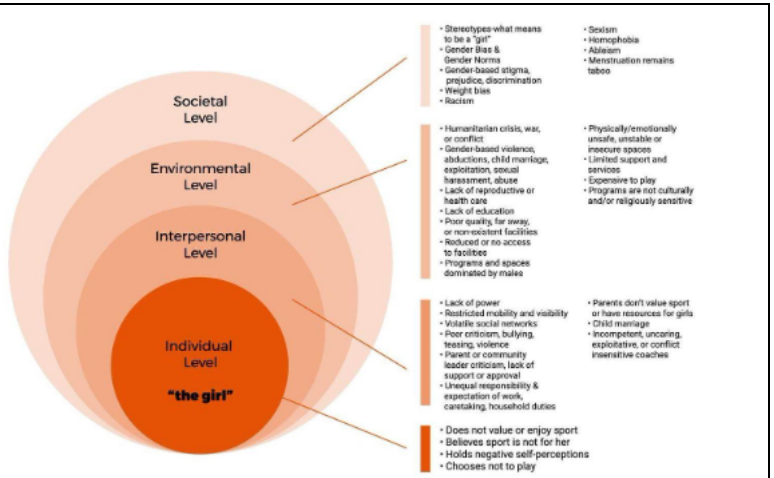
Barrier	Something that blocks or is intended to block *(in this context, girls' sport participation)*
Conflict Sensitivity	Conflict sensitivity is a deliberate practice to ensure our processes and actions minimize negative and maximize positive effects. It requires 'Do no harm' and asking 'Does my work support peace and security, or could it possibly fuel conflict in this context?' Because sport can challenge traditional gender-norms, efforts to expand access to sport can fuel conflict, discrimination and exclusion in communities.
Empowerment	The process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights.

Levels of Influence on Girls

- Girls and their coaches exist in a complex system that influences girls' experiences in and ability to participate in sport. That system has different layers that can *support or inhibit* girls' engagement in sport, including the **individual, interpersonal, organizational/environmental, and societal levels.**
- Gender discrimination, starting in childhood, continues to disproportionately rob girls around the world of their childhoods and limit her chances. A girl is far more likely to be denied her rights, be kept from school, forced to marry, subjected to violence. Her voice undervalued, if it's heard at all.
- This assault on childhood also deprives nations of the energy and talent needed to progress. Gender equality is a fundamental human right and that right is violated by gender-based discrimination
- Sport is a place that can help girls be strong and empowered and counter the harmful effects of the world they live in.



Level	Examples	Barriers

Individual	"The girl"—includes factors such as how a **girl thinks and feels, what she believes and values, and what she chooses and likes and dislikes.** A barrier at the individual level could be a girl not believing she is competent enough to participate, so she does not play. The individual level also includes all dimensions of a girl's identity, which is covered in our next module, Recognizing Girls' Identities. √ Girls' values, choices, beliefs, expectations, effort, interests, and enjoyment are shaped by the people important to her (like coaches!), and the team climate, her community, and the values and beliefs of the society in which girls live.	
Interpersonal	Includes the people (i.e., social influences) in a **girl's world such as coaches, teachers, peers, religious leaders, siblings, and parents**. An example of an interpersonal barrier could be that parents expect that girls are in charge of housework and sibling care in the home, which limits time available for them to be physically active.	
Environmental	Includes the **policies and rules, use, safety and quality of space, and participation opportunities in the community**. An example of an environmental barrier could be a community not having sport teams for girls, or safe spaces for girls to play.	
Societal	Includes the **norms, stereotypes, values, and cultural beliefs** that affect girls. These are the hardest to change and often result in inequalities and	

	discrimination. An example of a societal barrier could be a gender stereotype that 'girls are not as competitive and aggressive as boys' which can limit sports opportunities for girls.	

Situation	**Actions** **(bolded** = correct)
You notice a few of your athletes regularly miss practice during a particular time each month. You don't want to make your athletes uncomfortable or assume the reason they are missing practice, but you suspect it might be when they are menstruating. ***How should you handle this situation in a way that empowers girls, and helps eliminate menstruation as a barrier to sport participation?***	Make an announcement to the team that having your period or menstruating is not an excuse to miss practice.
	Talk to your team about the menstrual cycle and ways to alleviate menstrual symptoms.
	Make available period products (e.g. tampons, pads, pain relievers, snacks) to your team and announce to your team that they are free to take anything they need.
	Have a meeting where you discuss and confront period myths and taboos and leave space for your athletes to ask questions.
	Adapt training programs based on your players' needs and how they are feeling.
	Limit playing time for players who are menstruating.
	Advise your athletes to look into birth control to manage their periods.

Reflection Questions

- At what level do you think girls experience the most barriers: the individual, interpersonal, environmental, or societal level?
- What are some barriers you faced in sport?
- What barriers are most relevant to the girls you coach?
- What factors prevent or hinder girls' engagement in sport?
- Which barriers would you like to eliminate?
- What strategies can you implement as their coach to help reduce or eliminate these barriers?
- Who can help you eliminate those barriers to promote more engagement?

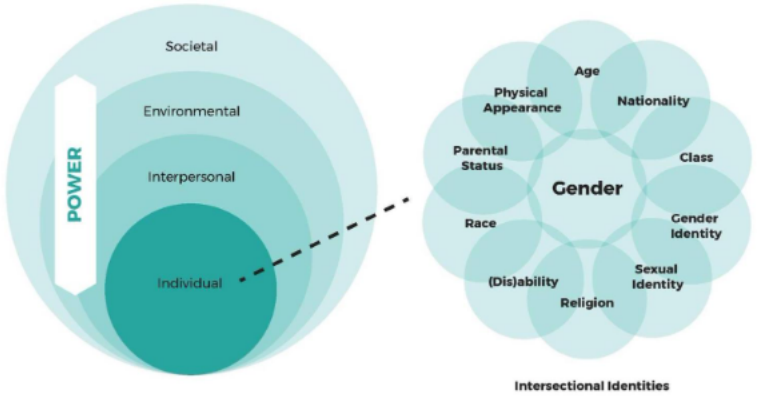
#5 – Recognizing Girls' Identities

Purpose – this module will help you;

A. **Understand** aspects of identity;
B. **Identify** how all girls' identities intersect and impact their sport experiences (which you started to learn about in earlier modules);
C. **Reflect** upon your own identities and how those influence your coaching approach.

Layers of Identity

- Girls can face an array of barriers in society that for some, may make sport participation difficult or impossible. In some cases, a girl may experience additional barriers based on who she is and how others perceive her. Girls who feel confident and empowered in themselves are valuable assets to their families, communities, and economies. Girls that know, accept and respect their bodies are more empowered. As a coach, you can help create spaces where all girls feel valued, supported and comfortable to explore and become confident in who they are.
- Girls' different identities influence how you, their coach, perceive and interact with them. Girls whose identities are similar to society's expectations may have a different experience from girls who defy these expectations or norms.
- **Ask your athletes to share about all their identities, those you can see, and those you can't.** *NOTE: Disclosing an invisible identity should never be mandatory! But if they do choose share, be affirming, curious and seek to understand: "Tell me more about that!*"
- **Athletes with mental health challenges often are invisible.** Teach your team why it might be helpful to exchange words we commonly use like "crazy" or "insane"



with more precise (e.g., difficult, wild, uncommon) or non-marginalizing (bananas) language.	

Invisible Identities

1. **Acknowledging both visible and invisible identities promotes inclusivity** within teams by recognizing the diversity of individuals involved. Creating an environment that normalizes, respects and values all identities, whether you can see it or not, fosters a sense of belonging, acceptance, and mutual respect among athletes and coaches.
2. **Invisible identities can influence access to resources, opportunities, and support** within the sports community. Recognizing and addressing disparities related to invisible identities such as socioeconomic status, religious beliefs, mental health, or neurodiversity is essential to promoting equity and ensuring that all girls have a fair chance to participate and succeed in sports and have similar experiences.
3. **Understanding and supporting athletes' unique identities**, and the experiences and challenges it may bring, **can enhance their confidence, resilience, and motivation**, ultimately contributing to their success and personal development both on and off the field.

Key Terms

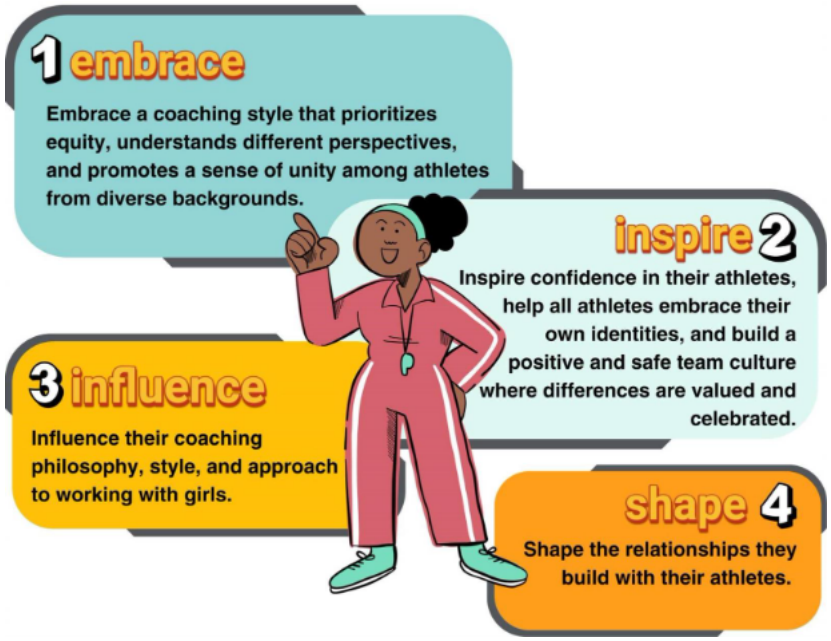
Identity	A specific marker of how one identifies themselves at any given time; set of characteristics that distinguish an individual.
Intersectional Identities	Multiple factors of advantage and disadvantage. Examples can include gender, sex, caste, race, social class, nationality, ethnicity, language, sexual identity, religion, disability, and physical appearance. These social identities intersect and depending on our environment, can impact us positively or negatively.
Sex	Used to label a person as ‘female’ or ‘male’ at birth. This term refers to a person’s external genitalia and internal reproductive organs. **Intersex** is a general term used when a person is born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't fit the boxes of ‘female’ or ‘male’. When a person is assigned a particular sex at birth, it is often mistakenly assumed that this will equate with their gender; it might, but it might not.
Gender	People tend to use the terms sex and gender interchangeably, but they are not the same. While a person’s sex is assigned at birth, gender, however, is a socially constructed concept. Gender refers to the behaviors, roles and identities of girls/women, boys/men and gender-diverse people. A person may not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth: regardless of one’s sex, they can identify as girl, boy, woman, man or non-gender specific. Gender can be expressed in a number of ways (**gender**

	expression); some common examples include clothing, behavior and pronouns. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time.
Gender Identity	An individual's inner concept of self as a woman, a man, a blend of both or neither (**non-binary**). One's gender identity can be the same (**cisgender**) or different (**transgender**) from the cultural expectations of the sex assigned at birth. Gender identity is influenced by both environmental and biological factors. Increasingly popular gender identity phrases include **gender independent, gender creative, gender queer, gender fluid, gender expansive, gender non-conforming, and gender diverse**. 63% percent of transgender and gender non-conforming people experience serious acts of discrimination—events that have a major impact on a person's quality of life.
Transgender	An umbrella term in which one's assigned biological sex doesn't match their felt gender identity.
Sexual Identity/Sexual Orientation	An individual's emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to others. Sexual orientation may be attraction to the other sex (heterosexual), same sex (gay or lesbian), or both sexes (bisexual).
LGBTQ+	Acronym that describes sexual and gender identities that aren't heterosexual or cisgender. It stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Two-Spirit and the countless affirmative ways in which people choose to self-identify. LGBTQ+ youth may experience greater body dissatisfaction and are also between 2 to 6+ times more likely to engage in disordered eating behaviors (e.g., fasting, binge eating, self-induced vomiting, laxative use, diet pill use, anabolic steroid use) compared to their same-aged peers.
Race	Refers to physical differences (like skin color) that are given significance and meaning by a society or culture.
Ethnicity	Large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin or background.
Disability	Physical or mental impairment that substantially limits activity.
Affinity Bias	An unconscious tendency to seek out and get along with others who are like us in appearance, beliefs and background, and to avoid or even dislike people who are different from us.

A Coach's Identity

1. **Embrace:** A coach who openly identifies as LGBTQ+ may create a supportive and accepting environment for girls of all sexual orientations. This coach may emphasize the importance of respect, diversity, and creating a safe space for LGBTQ+ athletes. Their coaching philosophy may revolve around embracing individual differences, fostering inclusivity, and celebrating authenticity.

2. **Inspire:** Coaches can inspire confidence by celebrating small victories, offering unwavering support during setbacks, and setting achievable goals, emphasizing each athlete's unique strengths and potential for improvement.
3. **Influence:** Coaches who are able to relate to their athletes on a personal level, understand girls' perspectives, and respect girls' individual identities are likely to be more effective in motivating and developing their athletes.
4. **Shape**: A female coach might relate to the struggles of painful menstrual cycles by teaching the girl how to adjust their energy in practices and adjusting her expectations during those times.



Situation	**Actions** (**bolded** = correct)
You as the coach overhear two athletes gossiping about, critiquing, and saying they "feel uncomfortable" because their teammate, Khadija, wears a hijab.	Ignore the statement and pretend you didn't hear it.
	Talk to the team and ask them: What are the ways we can support our teammates who are different from us on and off the court?

	Talk to the entire team and reinforce your team culture. Gossip and talking behind a teammate's back is not part of the culture we want to create together.
	Ask the athletes what questions they have about the hijab.
	Call the teammate over who is wearing the hijab and ask her to explain to teammates why she is wearing the hijab.
	Have a team meeting where you explicitly talk about the fact that everyone has different strengths and differences they bring to the team.

Team Activity
Round 1: Have the pair identify three things they have in common
Round 2: Now have the pair find one thing they don't have in common

Situation	**Actions** (**bolded** = correct)
A new athlete has joined your team, and they identify as non-binary and use they/them pronouns. ***What can you do to make this athlete feel safe, comfortable, and respected?***	Don't acknowledge their pronouns and continue to use she/her.
	Ask the athlete and the athlete's family about their medical and psychological status.
	Have everyone on the team introduce themselves and say their pronouns.
	Make the athlete explain what it means to identify as non-binary to the rest of the team.
	Make a point to use inclusive language when talking directly to the team or in any team correspondence (e.g. saying "everyone" or "team" as opposed to "ladies").
	Ensure all team changing room facilities and bathrooms meet the athlete's needs. For example, ensure an all-gender private bathroom is available for the athlete if that is what they prefer.
	Highlight and make visible other non-binary, transgender, and gender-diverse athletes in all sports as role models (e.g., Layshia Clarendon, Quinn, Chris Mosier, Nikki Hiltz).

	To keep things fair, make a team policy that everyone should be called by the pronouns that are associated with their sex assigned at birth.

Reflection Questions

- What are your identities?
- How are your identities different from or similar to the girls you coach?
- What are your invisible identities?
- What are the aspects of your identity that are important to you?
- Are there aspects of your identity you hide from your athletes?
- What aspects of identity do you want or need to learn more about that will help you be a better coach?
- How can you become aware of your own Affinity Biases so they don't impact how you coach?

#6 – Supporting Girls' Needs

Purpose – this module will help you;

A. **Understand** the three psychological needs all of us have - relatedness, competence, and autonomy that in **Coaching HER®** we call ***'The 3Cs' = Care, Competence, and Choice***.
B. **Identify** the positive and negative outcomes that result when the ***3Cs*** are and are not met.
C. **Reflect** on your role in girls getting their ***3Cs*** met in the context of sport.

Key Terms

Extrinsic Motivation	Doing something as a means to an end, to get a reward, not because it is fun or enjoyable.
Psychological Need	A psychological nutrient that is essential for girls' growth and necessary to live a healthy, fulfilled life.
Intrinsic Motivation	Doing something that is rewarding, fun and enjoyable to do, just for the sake of doing it. The primary 'reward' is the pleasurable feeling of interest or enjoyment of doing the activity.

Girls' Psychological Needs

- Higher-level needs become more challenging to satisfy due to interpersonal and environmental barriers, which you learned about in previous modules.
- However, coaches can support girls' needs, especially psychological needs, which we call **The 3C's.**
- The 3C concept comes from the self-determination theory (SDT).
- Girls who say their psychological needs are satisfied tend to perceive their coaches as giving them more autonomy/choice. This can feel scary to coaches because they are used to having control and controlling athletes.



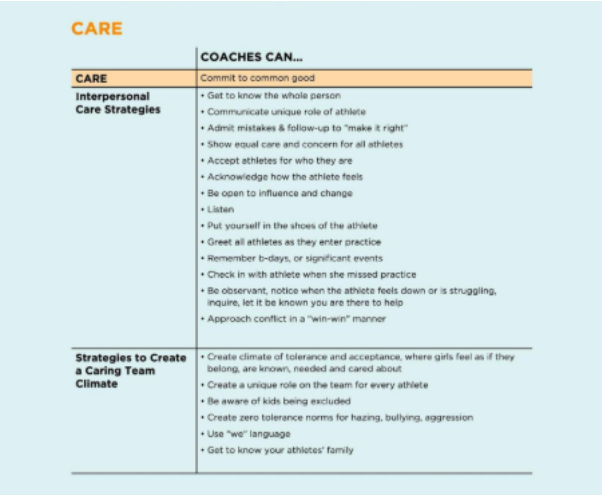
Care: [relatedness] the experience of warmth and bonding, satisfied by connecting to and feeling significant to others. This need is about feeling valued, known and needed. When we don't experience relatedness we can feel a sense of social isolation, exclusion, and loneliness.

Competence: the experience of effectiveness and mastery, developing, improving, and growing skills. Girls gain competence as they successfully engage in activities, experiences, and opportunities for using and extending their skills and expertise. When we don't develop competence, we can experience a sense of ineffectiveness, helplessness, or even failure.

Choice: [autonomy] the experience of feeling self-determined, having choices and not feeling controlled. When girls feel a sense of autonomy, they feel in control of their actions, thoughts, and feelings. When we don't experience autonomy we can feel pressured and conflicted and pushed to do something we don't want to do.

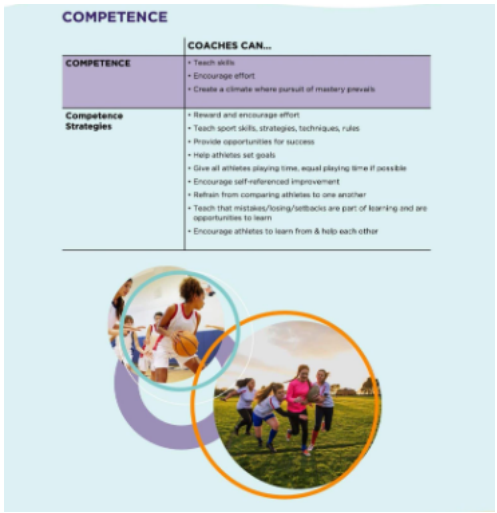


Supporting the 3C's



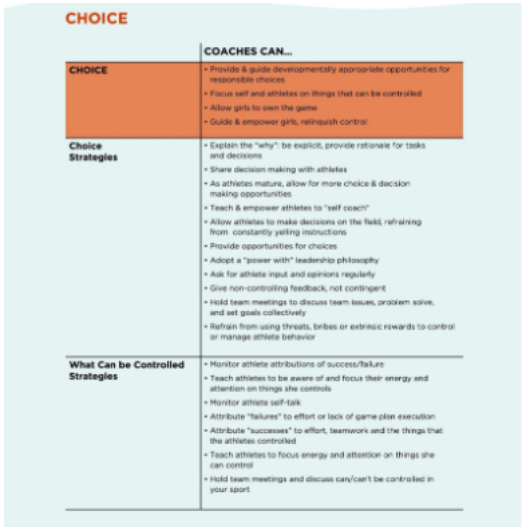
CARE

	COACHES CAN...
CARE	Commit to common good
Interpersonal Care Strategies	• Get to know the whole person • Communicate unique role of athlete • Admit mistakes & follow-up to "make it right" • Show equal care and concern for all athletes • Accept athletes for who they are • Acknowledge how the athlete feels • Be open to influence and change • Listen • Put yourself in the shoes of the athlete • Greet all athletes as they enter practice • Remember b-days, or significant events • Check in with athlete when she missed practice • Be observant, notice when the athlete feels down or is struggling, inquire, let it be known you are there to help • Approach conflict in a "win-win" manner
Strategies to Create a Caring Team Climate	• Create climate of tolerance and acceptance, where girls feel as if they belong, are known, needed and cared about • Create a unique role on the team for every athlete • Be aware of kids being excluded • Create zero tolerance norms for hazing, bullying, aggression • Use "we" language • Get to know your athletes' family



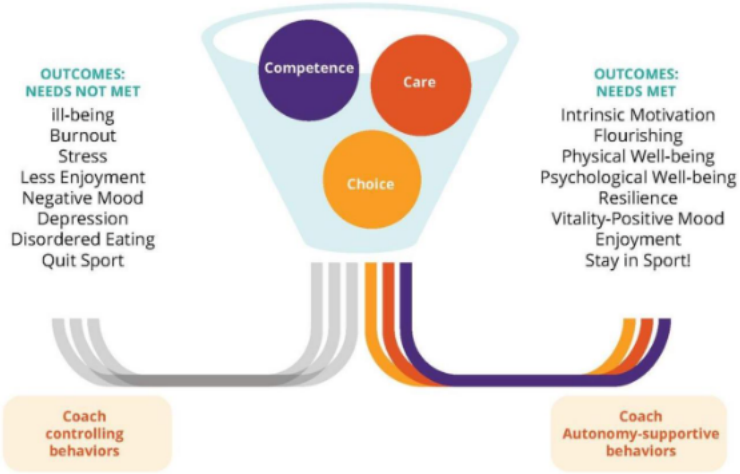
COMPETENCE

	COACHES CAN...
COMPETENCE	• Teach skills • Encourage effort • Create a climate where pursuit of mastery prevails
Competence Strategies	• Reward and encourage effort • Teach sport skills, strategies, techniques, rules • Provide opportunities for success • Help athletes set goals • Give all athletes playing time, equal playing time if possible • Encourage self-referenced improvement • Refrain from comparing athletes to one another • Teach that mistakes/losing/setbacks are part of learning and are opportunities to learn • Encourage athletes to learn from & help each other



CHOICE

	COACHES CAN...
CHOICE	• Provide & guide developmentally appropriate opportunities for responsible choices • Focus self and athletes on things that can be controlled • Allow girls to own the game • Guide & empower girls, relinquish control
Choice Strategies	• Explain the "why": be explicit, provide rationale for tasks and decisions • Share decision making with athletes • As athletes mature, allow for more choice & decision making opportunities • Teach & empower athletes to "self coach" • Allow athletes to make decisions on the field, refraining from constantly yelling instructions • Provide opportunities for choices • Adopt a "power with" leadership philosophy • Ask for athlete input and opinions regularly • Give non-controlling feedback, not contingent • Hold team meetings to discuss team issues, problem solve, and set goals collectively • Refrain from using threats, bribes or extrinsic rewards to control or manage athlete behavior
What Can be Controlled Strategies	• Monitor athlete attributions of success/failure • Teach athletes to be aware of and focus their energy and attention on things she controls • Monitor athlete self-talk • Attribute "failures" to effort or lack of game plan execution • Attribute "successes" to effort, teamwork and the things that the athletes controlled • Teach athletes to focus energy and attention on things she can control • Hold team meetings and discuss can/can't be controlled in your sport



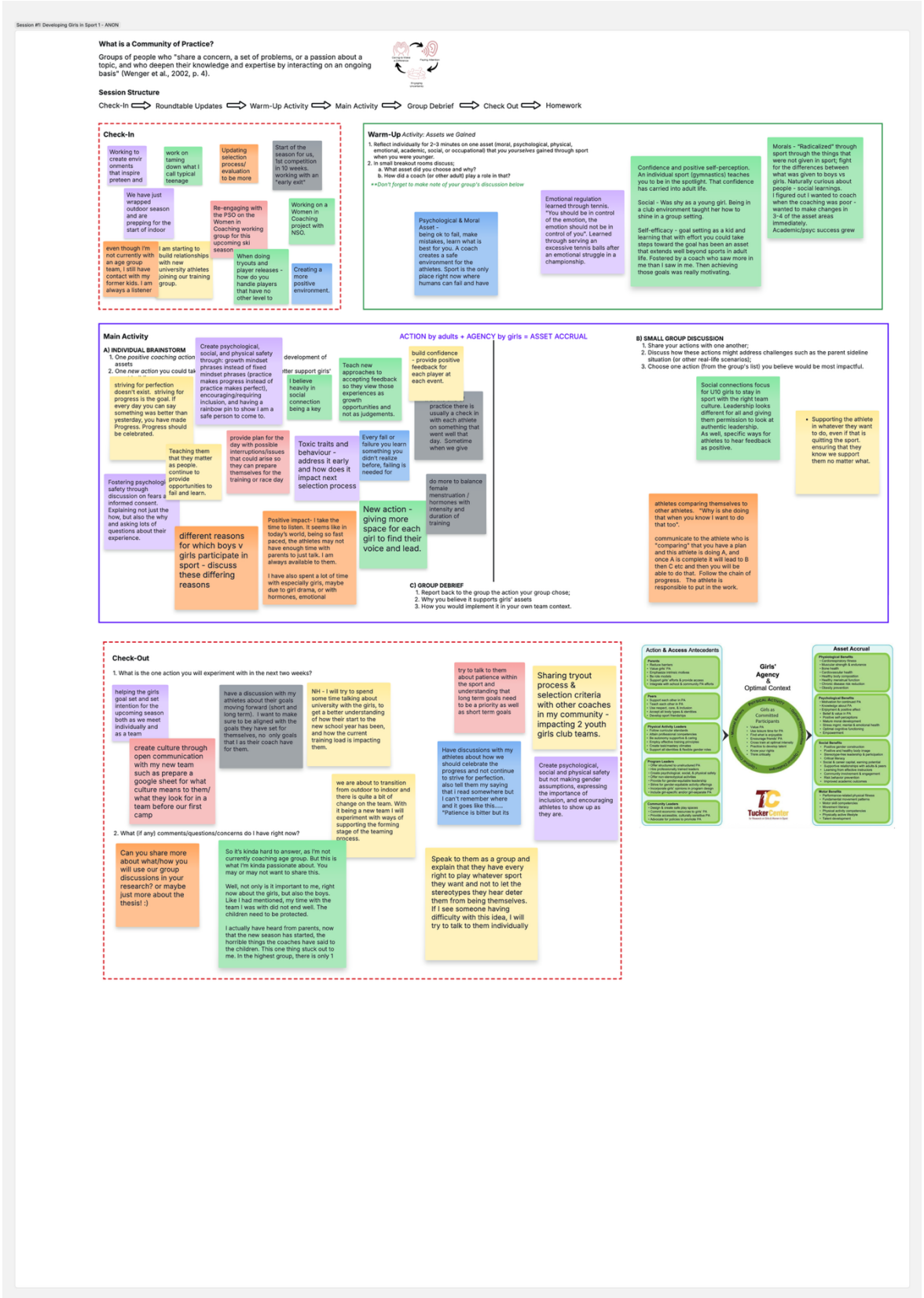
SITUATION	ACTIONS
	Ignore it.

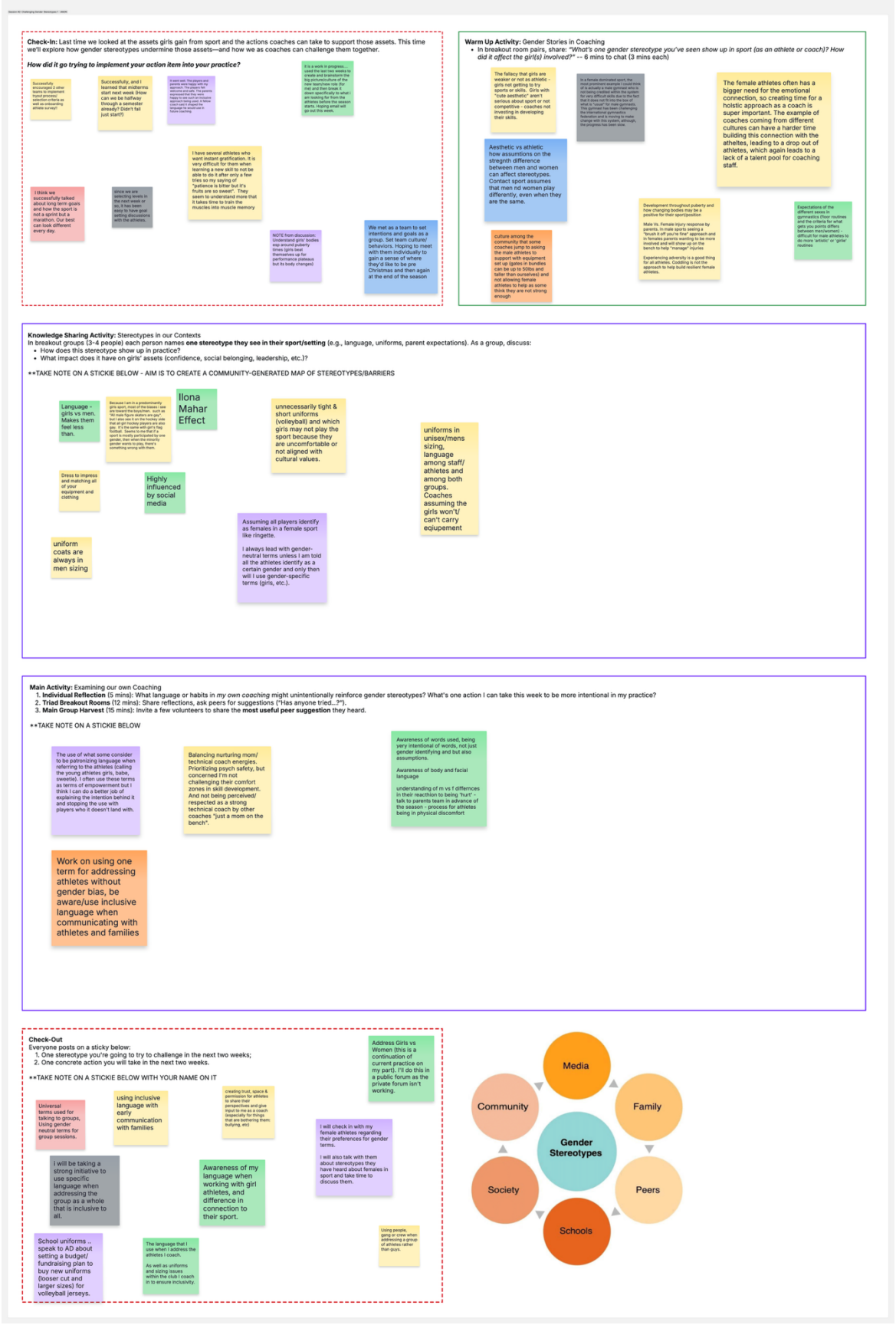
You overhear some girls on your team talking, and hear one girl, Mary, say "*Well, I know that coach doesn't care whether or not I'm on the team. I'm not his favorite*." You are surprised by this comment and wonder why she would say this to her teammate. ***What should you do now that you've overheard this conversation?***	Get defensive and exclaim that you don't have favorites.
	Pull Mary aside to discuss what you overheard.
	Pull her teammates aside and ask her why Mary thinks you have favorites.
	Have a team meeting to reiterate how important everyone on the team is and how much you care for them.
What could you do to help Mary feel cared about?	Give her more playing time.
	Check-in with Mary when she misses practice.
	Be observant, notice when she feels down or is struggling, inquire, let it be known you are there to help.
	Nothing needs to be done, you do care about Mary, it's not your responsibility to remind her.
	Tease Mary and tell her she is not your favorite, and then tell her you are just kidding.

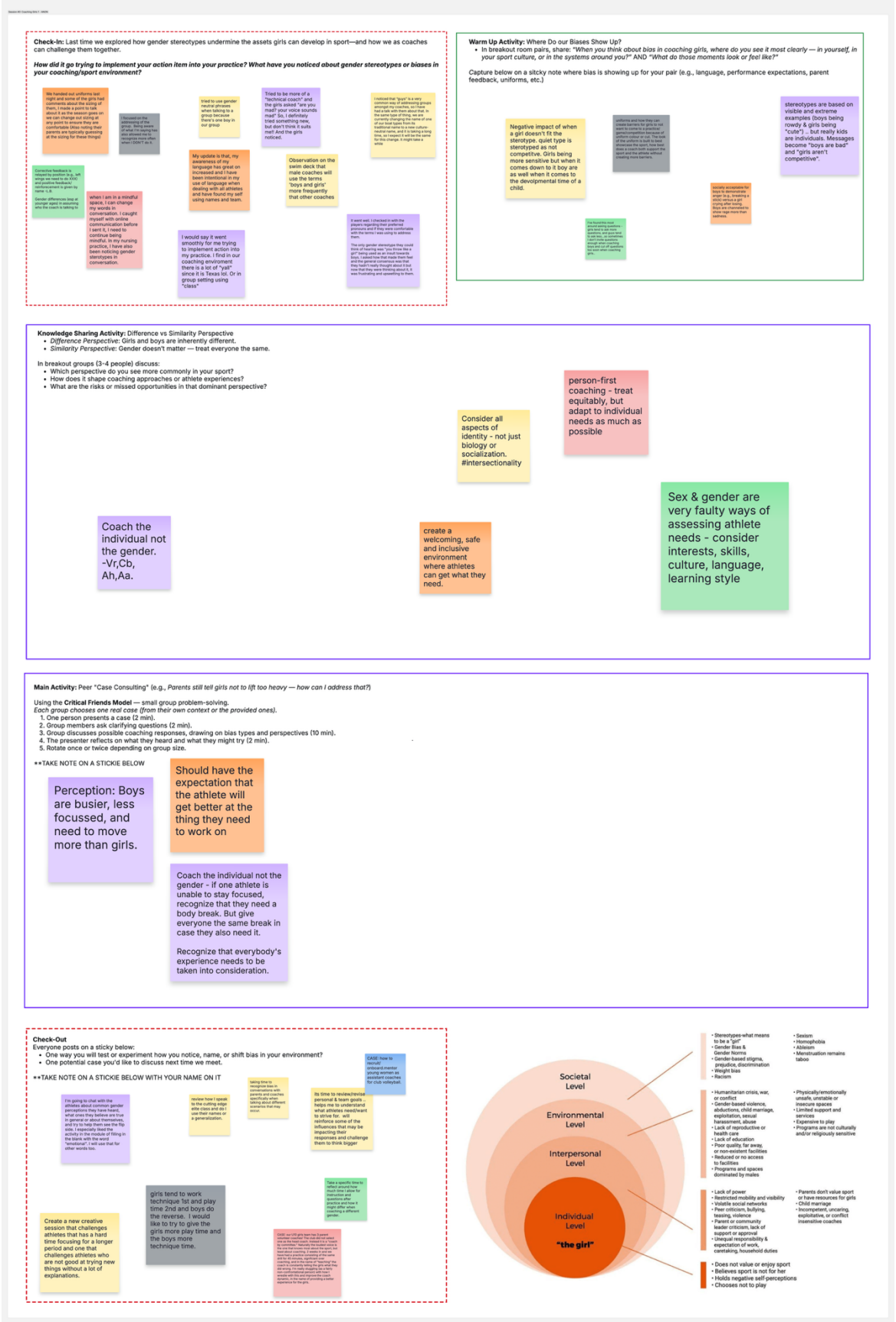
Reflection Questions

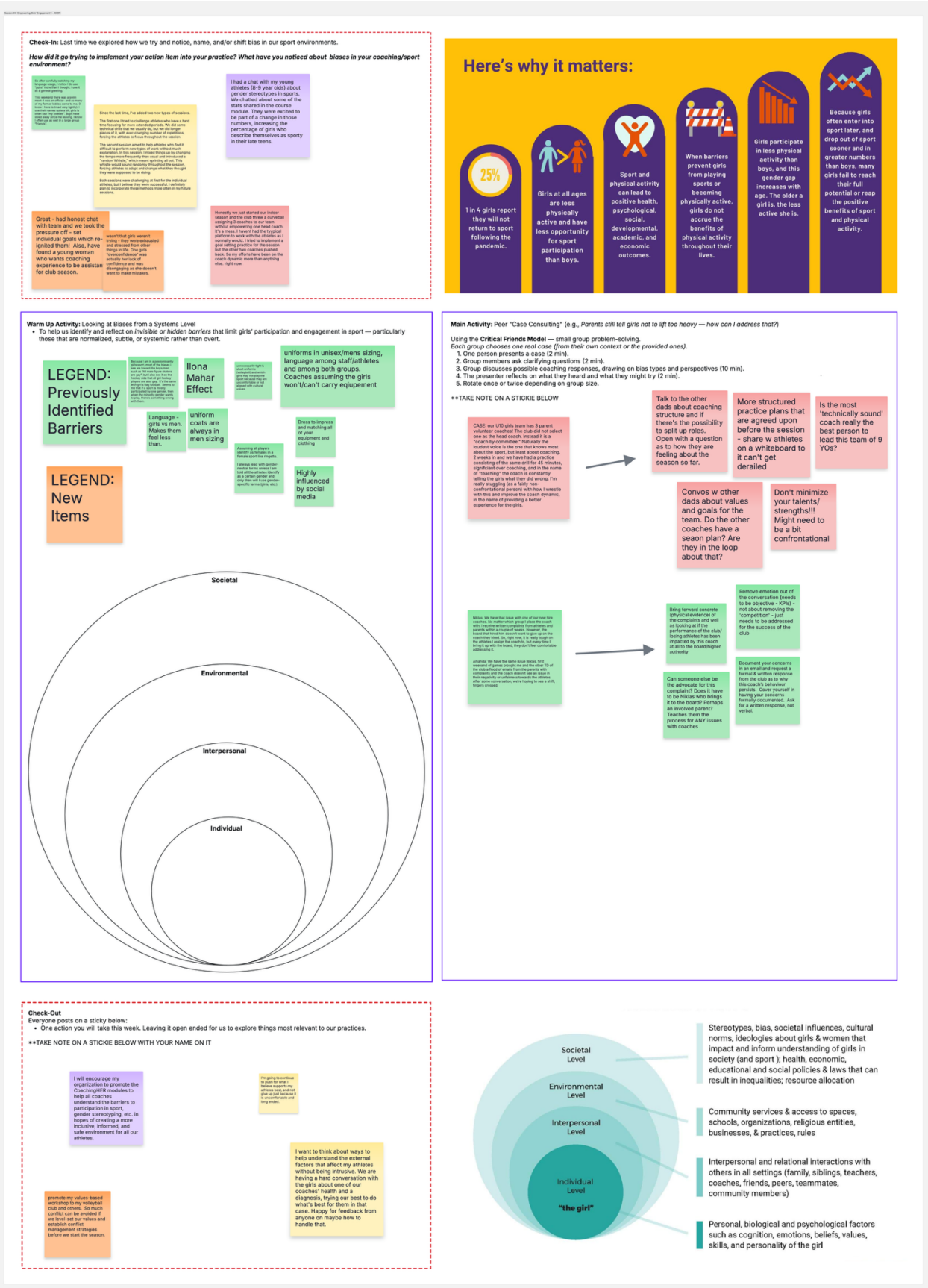
- Think about if *your* own human needs of care, competence, and choice are being met right now.
  - Do you feel cared about and valued?
  - Do you feel like you are growing and improving and becoming more competent?
  - Do you feel you have choices?
  - What could you do to help increase the likelihood your needs are met?
- Think about *an athlete* who is having a difficult time.
  - Which need of the athlete (Care, Competence, and Choice), do you think is not being met?
  - How could you better support that need?

Appendix W – Study 3 – Community of Practice Whiteboard




Check-In: Last time we looked at the assets girls gain from sport and the actions coaches can take to support those assets. This time we'll explore how gender stereotypes undermine those assets—and how we as coaches can challenge them together.
How did it go trying to implement your action item into your practice?
Successfully encouraged 2 other teams to implement tryout process/ selection criteria as per the coaching athlete survey!!
Successfully, and I learned that midterms start next week (How can we be halfway through a semester already? Didn't fail just start?)
I have several athletes who want instant gratification. It is very difficult for them when learning a new skill to not be able to do it after only a few tries so my saying of "patience is bitter but it's fruits are so sweet". They seem to understand more that it takes time to train the muscles into muscle memory
I think we successfully talked about long term goals and how the sport is not a sprint but a marathon. Our best can look different every day.
We met as a team to set intentions and goals as a group. Set team culture/ behaviors. Hoping to meet with them individually to gain a sense of where they'd like to be pre Christmas and then again at the end of the season
Warm Up Activity: Gender Stories in Coaching
In breakout room pairs, share: "What's one gender stereotype you've seen show up in sport (as an athlete or coach)? How did it affect the girl(s) involved?" -- 6 mins to chat (3 mins each)
The fallacy that girls are weaker or not as athletic - girls not getting to try sports or skills. Girls with "cute aesthetic" aren't serious about sport or not competitive - coaches not investing in developing their skills.
Aesthetic vs athletic how assumtions on the stregnth difference between men and women can affect stereotypes. Contact sport assumes that men nd women play differently, even when they are the same.
The female athletes often has a bigger need for the emotional connection, so creating time for a holistic approach as a coach is super important. The example of coaches coming from different cultures can have a harder time building this connection with the athelte, leading to a drop out of athletes, which again leads to a lack of a talent pool for coaching staff.
culture among the community that some coaches jump to asking the male athletes to support with equipment set up (gates in bundles can be up to 50lbs and taller than ourselves) and not allowing female athletes to help as some think they are not strong enough
Development throughout puberty and how changing bodies may be a positive for their sport/position
Male Vs. Female injury response by parents. In male sports seeing a "rub it off" and "get back on" approach and in females parents waiting to be more involved and will show up on the bench to help "manage" injuries
Experiencing adversity is a good thing for all athletes. Coddling is not the approach to help build resilient female athletes.
Expectations of the different sexes in gymnastics (floor routines and the criteria for what gets you points differs between men/women) - difficult for male athletes to do more 'artistic' or 'girlie' routines
Knowledge Sharing Activity: Stereotypes in our Contexts
In breakout groups (3-4 people) each person names one stereotype they see in their sport/setting (e.g., language, uniforms, parent expectations). As a group, discuss:
How does this stereotype show up in practice?
What impact does it have on girls' assets (confidence, social belonging, leadership, etc.)?
**TAKE NOTE ON A STICKIE BELOW - AIM IS TO CREATE A COMMUNITY-GENERATED MAP OF STEREOTYPES/BARRIERS
Language - girls vs men. Makes them feel less than.
Ilona Mahar Effect
unnecessarily tight & short uniforms (volleyball) and which girls may not play the sport because they are uncomfortable or not aligned with cultural values.
uniforms in unisex/mens sizing, language among staff/ athletes and among both groups. Coaches assuming the girls won't/ can't carry eqiupement
Dress to impress and matching all of your equipment and clothing
Highly influenced by social media
Assuming all players identify as females in a female sport like ringette.
I always lead with gender-neutral terms unless I am told all the athletes identify as a certain gender and only then will I use gender-specific terms (girls, etc.).
uniform coats are always in men sizing
Main Activity: Examining our own Coaching
1. Individual Reflection (5 mins): What language or habits in my own coaching might unintentionally reinforce gender stereotypes? What's one action I can take this week to be more intentional in my practice?
2. Triad Breakout Rooms (12 mins): Share reflections, ask peers for suggestions ("Has anyone tried...?").
3. Main Group Harvest (15 mins): Invite a few volunteers to share the most useful peer suggestion they heard.
**TAKE NOTE ON A STICKIE BELOW
The use of what some consider to be patronizing language when referring to the athletes (calling the young athletes girls, babe, sweetie). I often use these terms as terms of empowerment but I think I can do a better job of explaining the intention behind it and stopping the use with players who it doesn't land with.
Balancing nurturing mom/ technical coach energies. Prioritizing psych safety, but concerned I'm not challenging their comfort zones in skill development. And not being perceived/ respected as a strong technical coach by other coaches "just a mom on the bench".
Awareness of words used, being very intentional of words, not just gender identifying and but also assumptions.
Awareness of body and facial language
understanding of m vs f differnces in their reacthion to being 'hurt' - talk to parents team in advance of the season - process for athletes being in physical discomfort
Work on using one term for addressing athletes without gender bias, be aware/use inclusive language when communicating with athletes and families
Check-Out
Everyone posts on a sticky below:
1. One stereotype you're going to try to challenge in the next two weeks;
2. One concrete action you will take in the next two weeks.
**TAKE NOTE ON A STICKIE BELOW WITH YOUR NAME ON IT
Address Girls vs Women (this is a continuation of current practice on my part). I'll do this in a public forum as the private forum isn't working.
Universal terms used for talking to groups. Using gender neutral terms for group sessions.
using inclusive language with early communication with families
creating trust, space & permission for athletes to share their perspectives and give input to me as a coach (especially for things that are bothering them: bullying, etc)
I will check in with my female athletes regarding their preferences for gender terms.
I will also talk with them about stereotypes they have heard about females in sport and take time to discuss them.
I will be taking a strong initiative to use specific language when addressing the group as a whole that is inclusive to all.
Awareness of my language when working with girl athletes, and difference in connection to their sport.
School uniforms .. speak to AD about setting a budget/ fundraising plan to buy new uniforms (looser cut and larger sizes) for volleyball jerseys.
The language that I use when I address the athletes I coach.
As well as uniforms and sizing issues within the club I coach in to ensure inclusivity.
Using people, gang or crew when addressing a group of athletes rather than guys.
Media
Family
Peers
Schools
Society
Community
Gender Stereotypes


Check-In: Last time we explored how gender stereotypes undermine the assets girls can develop in sport—and how we as coaches can challenge them together.
How did it go trying to implement your action item into your practice? What have you noticed about gender stereotypes or biases in your coaching/sport environment?
We handed out uniforms last night and some of the girls had comments about the sizing of them, I made a point to talk about it as the season goes on we can change out sizing at any point to ensure they are comfortable (Also noting their parents are typically guessing at the sizing for these things)
I focused on the addressing of the "why" in the delivery of what I'm saying but also showed me to recognize more often when I DON'T do it.
tried to use gender neutral phrases when talking to a player because there's one boy in our group
Tried to be more of a "technical coach" and the girls asked "are you mad? your voice sounds mad" So, I definitely tried something new, but don't think it suits me!! And the girls noticed.
I noticed that "guys" is a very common way of addressing groups amongst my coaches, so I have had a talk with them about that. In the meantime, I'm also currently changing the name of one of our boat types from its traditional gendered name to a more-neutral name, and it is taking a long time, so I expect it will be the same for this change. It might take a while
Corrective feedback is delayed by position (e.g., left wings we need to do XXX) and positive feedback/reinforcement is given by name - L-R
Gender differences (esp at younger ages) in assuming who the coach is talking to
when I am in a mindful space, I can change my words in conversation. I caught myself with online communication before I sent it, I need to continue being mindful. In my nursing practice, I have also been noticing gender stereotypes in conversation.
My update is that, my awareness of my language has great on increased and I have been intentional in my use of language when dealing with all athletes and have found my self using names and team.
Observation on the swim deck that male coaches will use the terms "boys and girls" more frequently that other coaches
I would say it went smoothly for me trying to implement action into my practice. I find in our coaching environment there is a lot of "yall" since it is Texas lol. Or in group setting using "class"
It went well. I checked in with the players regarding their preferred pronouns and if they were comfortable with the terms I was using to address them.
The only gender stereotype they could think of hearing was "you throw like a girl" being used as an insult towards boys. I asked how that made them feel and the general consensus was that they felt it was an insult and that is now that they were thinking about it, it was frustrating and upsetting to them.
Warm Up Activity: Where Do our Biases Show Up?
In breakout room pairs, share: "When you think about bias in coaching girls, where do you see it most clearly — in yourself, in your sport culture, or in the systems around you?" AND "What do those moments look or feel like?"
Capture below on a sitcky note where bias is showing up for your pair (e.g., language, performance expectations, parent feedback, uniforms, etc.)
Negative impact of when a girl doesn't fit the sterotype. quiet type is sterotyped as not competitve. Girls being more sensitive but when it comes down to it boy are as well when it comes to the developmental time of a child.
uniforms and how they can create barriers for girls to not want to come to a practice/game/competition because of how uncomfortable the fit of the uniform is built to best showcase the sport, how best does a coach both support the sport and the athlete without creating more barriers.
stereotypes are based on visible and extreme examples (boys being rowdy & girls being "cute") .. but really kids are individuals. Messages become "boys are bad" and "girls aren't competitive".
society acceptable for boys to express anger (e.g., breaking a stick) versus a girl crying after losing. Boys are channeled to a different stage more than girls.
I've found this most around asking questions - girls tend to ask more questions and go forward to ask less.. or sometimes I don't invite questions because I'm assuming less and cut off questions too soon when coaching girls.
Knowledge Sharing Activity: Difference vs Similarity Perspective
Difference Perspective: Girls and boys are inherently different.
Similarity Perspective: Gender doesn't matter — treat everyone the same.
In breakout groups (3-4 people) discuss:
Which perspective do you see more commonly in your sport?
How does it shape coaching approaches or athlete experiences?
What are the risks or missed opportunities in that dominant perspective?
person-first coaching - treat equitably, but adapt to individual needs as much as possible
Consider all aspects of identity - not just biology or socialization. #intersectionality
Sex & gender are very faulty ways of assessing athlete needs - consider interests, skills, culture, language, learning style
Coach the individual not the gender. -Vr,Cb, Ah,Aa.
create a welcoming, safe and inclusive environment where athletes can get what they need.
Main Activity: Peer "Case Consulting" (e.g., Parents still tell girls not to lift too heavy — how can I address that?)
Using the Critical Friends Model — small group problem-solving.
Each group chooses one real case (from their own context or the provided ones).
1. One person presents a case (2 min).
2. Group members ask clarifying questions (2 min).
3. Group discusses possible coaching responses, drawing on bias types and perspectives (10 min).
4. The presenter reflects on what they heard and what they might try (2 min).
5. Rotate once or twice depending on group size.
**TAKE NOTE ON A STICKIE BELOW
Perception: Boys are busier, less focussed, and need to move more than girls.
Should have the expectation that the athlete will get better at the thing they need to work on
Coach the individual not the gender - if one athlete is unable to stay focused, recognize that they need a body break. But give everyone the same break in case they also need it.
Recognize that everybody's experience needs to be taken into consideration.
Check-Out
Everyone posts on a sticky below:
One way you will test or experiment how you notice, name, or shift bias in your environment?
One potential case you'd like to discuss next time we meet.
**TAKE NOTE ON A STICKIE BELOW WITH YOUR NAME ON IT
I'm going to chat with the athletes about common gender perceptions they have heard, what ones they believe are true in general or about themselves, and I'll do the activity in the flip side. I especially liked the activity in the module of filling in the blank with the word "emotional", I will use that for other words too.
review how I speak to the cutting edge elite class and do I use their names or a generalization.
taking time to recognize bias in conversations with parents and coaches specifically with different athletes in different scenarios that may occur.
CASE: how to recruit/ onboard/mentor young women as assistant coaches for club volleyball.
Its time to review/revise personal & team goals .. helps me to understand what athletes need/want to strive for. will reinforce some of the influences that may be impacting their responses and challenge them to think bigger
girls tend to work technique 1st and play time 2nd and boys do the reverse. I would like to try to give the girls more play time and the boys more technique time.
Take a specific time to reflect around how much time I allow for instruction and technique in my practice and how it might differ when coaching a different gender.
Create a new creative session that challenges athletes that has a hard time focusing for a longer period and one that challenges athletes who are not good at trying new things without a lot of explanations.
CASE: our U10 girls team has 3 parent volunteer coaches! The club did not select them, they were "assigned" to the team by committee." Naturally the loudest voice is the one that is the most confident and has a lead about coaching. 3 weeks in and we, coaches, are starting to see the same skill in the athletes, confidence in coaching, and in the name of "teaching" the girls are being pushed to do skills that are still wrong. I'm really struggling (as a born non-confrontational person) with how I approach this in the group coaching dynamic, in the name of providing a better experience for the girls.
Societal Level
Environmental Level
Interpersonal Level
Individual Level
"the girl"
• Stereotypes-what means to be a "girl"
• Gender Bias & Gender Norms
• Gender-based stigma, prejudice, discrimination
• Weight bias
• Racism
• Sexism
• Homophobia
• Ableism
• Menstruation remains taboo
• Humanitarian crisis, war, or conflict
• Gender-based violence, abductions, child marriage, exploitation, sexual harassment, abuse
• Lack of reproductive or health care
• Lack of education
• Poor quality, far away, or non-existent facilities
• Reduced or no access to facilities
• Programs and spaces dominated by males
• Physically/emotionally unsafe, unstable or insecure spaces
• Limited support and services
• Expensive to play
• Programs are not culturally and/or religiously sensitive
• Lack of power
• Restricted mobility and visibility
• Volatile social networks
• Peer criticism, bullying, teasing, violence
• Parent or community leader criticism, lack of support or approval
• Unequal responsibility & expectation of work, caretaking, household duties
• Parents don't value sport or have resources for girls
• Child marriage
• Incompetent, uncaring, exploitative, or conflict insensitive coaches
• Does not value or enjoy sport
• Believes sport is not for her
• Holds negative self-perceptions
• Chooses not to play


Check-In: Last time we explored how we try and notice, name, and/or shift bias in our sport environments.
How did it go trying to implement your action item into your practice? What have you noticed about biases in your coaching/sport environment?
I had a chat with my young athletes (8-9 year olds) about gender stereotypes in sports. We chatted about some of the stats shared in the course module. They were excited to be part of a change in those numbers, increasing the percentage of girls who describe themselves as sporty in their late teens.
Great - had honest chat with team and we took the pressure off - set individual goals which re-ignited them! Also, have found a young woman who wants coaching experience to be assistant for club season.
Honestly we just started our indoor season and the club threw a curveball assigning 3 coaches to our team without empowering one head coach. It's a mess. I haven't had the typical platform to work with the athletes as I normally would. I tried to implement a goal setting practice for the season but it's been pushed pretty far back. So my efforts have been on the coach dynamic more than anything else, right now.
Here's why it matters:
25%
1 in 4 girls report they will not return to sport following the pandemic.
Girls at all ages are less physically active and have less opportunity for sport participation than boys.
Sport and physical activity can lead to positive health, psychological, social, developmental, academic, and economic outcomes.
When barriers prevent girls from playing sports or becoming physically active, girls do not accrue the benefits of physical activity throughout their lives.
Girls participate in less physical activity than boys, and this gender gap increases with age. The older a girl is, the less active she is.
Because girls often enter into sport later, and drop out of sport sooner and in greater numbers than boys, many girls fail to reach their full potential or reap the positive benefits of sport and physical activity.
Warm Up Activity: Looking at Biases from a Systems Level
To help us identify and reflect on invisible or hidden barriers that limit girls' participation and engagement in sport — particularly those that are normalized, subtle, or systemic rather than overt.
LEGEND: Previously Identified Barriers
LEGEND: New Items
Ilona Mahar Effect
uniforms in unisex/mens sizing, language among staff/athletes and among both groups. Coaches assuming the girls won't/can't carry eqiupement
Language - girls vs men. Makes them feel less than.
uniform coats are always in men sizing
Dress to impress and matching all of your equipment and clothing
Highly influenced by social media
Societal
Environmental
Interpersonal
Individual
Main Activity: Peer "Case Consulting" (e.g., Parents still tell girls not to lift too heavy — how can I address that?)
Using the Critical Friends Model — small group problem-solving.
Each group chooses one real case (from their own context or the provided ones).
1. One person presents a case (2 min).
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3. Group discusses possible coaching responses, drawing on bias types and perspectives (10 min).
4. The presenter reflects on what they heard and what they might try (2 min).
5. Rotate once or twice depending on group size.
**TAKE NOTE ON A STICKIE BELOW
CASE: our U10 girls team has 3 parent volunteer coaches! The club did not select one as the head coach. Instead it is a "coach by committee." Naturally the loudest voice is the one that knows most about the sport, but least about coaching. 2 weeks in and we have had a practice consisting of the same drill for 45 minutes, significant over coaching, and in the name of "teaching" the coach is constantly telling the girls what they did wrong. I'm really struggling (as a fairly non-confrontational person) with how I wrestle with this and improve the coach dynamic, in the name of providing a better experience for the girls.
Talk to the other dads about coaching structure and if there's the possibility to split up roles. Open with a question as to how they are feeling about the season so far.
More structured practice plans that are agreed upon before the session - share w athletes on a whiteboard to it can't get derailed
Is the most 'technically sound' coach really the best person to lead this team of 9 YOs?
Convos w other dads about values and goals for the team. Do the other coaches have a seaon plan? Are they in the loop about that?
Don't minimize your talents/ strengths!!! Might need to be a bit confrontational
Niklas: We have that issue with one of our new tiny coaches. No matter which group I place the coach in, I've had multiple complaints from multiple parents within a couple of weeks. However, the board that hired him doesn't want to give up on the coach they hired. So, right now, it is really tough on the athletes I assign the coach to, but every time I try to switch it with the board, they don't feel comfortable addressing it.
Amanda: We have the same issue Niklas. first weekend of games brought me and the other TD of the club a flood of emails from the parents with complaints and the coach doesn't see an issue in anything he's doing. Frustrating to say the least. After some conversation, we're hoping to see a shift, fingers crossed.
Bring forward concrete (physical evidence) of the complaints and well as looking at if the performance of the club/ losing athletes has been impacted by this coach at all to the board/higher authority
Remove emotion out of the conversation (needs to be objective - KPIs) - not about removing the 'competition' - just needs to be addressed for the success of the club
Can someone else be the advocate for this complaint? Does it have to be Niklas who brings it to the board? Perhaps an involved parent? Teaches them the process for ANY issues with coaches
Document your concerns in an email and request a formal & written response from the club as to why this coach's behaviour persists. Cover yourself in having your concerns formally documented. Ask for a written response, not verbal.
Check-Out
Everyone posts on a sticky below:
One action you will take this week. Leaving it open ended for us to explore things most relevant to our practices.
**TAKE NOTE ON A STICKIE BELOW WITH YOUR NAME ON IT
I will encourage my organization to promote the Coaching4GLR modules to help all coaches understand the barriers to participation in sport, gender stereotyping, etc. in hopes of creating a more inclusive, informed, and safe environment for all our athletes.
I'm going to continue to push for what I believe is best for the athletes best, and not give up just because it is uncomfortable and long ended.
I want to think about ways to help understand the external factors that affect my athletes without being intrusive. We are having a hard conversation with the girls about one of our coaches' health and a diagnosis, trying our best to do what's best for them in that case. Happy for feedback from anyone on maybe how to handle that.
promote my values-based workshop to my volleyball club and others. So much conflict can be avoided if we level-set our values and establish conflict management strategies before we start the season.
Societal Level
Environmental Level
Interpersonal Level
Individual Level
"the girl"
Stereotypes, bias, societal influences, cultural norms, ideologies about girls & women that impact and inform understanding of girls in society (and sport); health, economic, educational and social policies & laws that can result in inequalities; resource allocation
Community services & access to spaces, schools, organizations, religious entities, businesses, & practices, rules
Interpersonal and relational interactions with others in all settings (family, siblings, teachers, coaches, friends, peers, teammates, community members)
Personal, biological and psychological factors such as cognition, emotions, beliefs, values, skills, and personality of the girl

Check-In: Last time we explored open-ended action items.

How did it go trying to implement your action item into your practice? What have you noticed?

I brought the coaching HER course up with fellow coaches and they were very interested. I'm hoping some complete it.

Continuing using vocabulary/ recognize bias in my communications with parents and athletes

We started a new team season within our organization last week, as well as getting my team ready for their provincial season. At this moment, so it has been the main focus for my time currently.

Since the last time, changes have been made in the organization to support athletes under my philosophy.

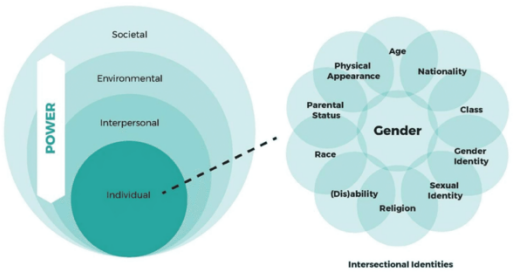
We did talk informally about the external factors that are impacting their lives right now.

Havent yet had the conversation about the health of one of our coaches but it is scheduled for the 18th

Didn't get to it as issue arose within my daughters club basketball team, so all my energy went into dealing with it. :(

I tried last time I was here to use more gender neutral things like saying "Class" or "skaters" rather than "you Guys" and I told my class about it before class started and I failed miserably. However both my classes stated that they also use "you guys" as well when addressing a group.

I did talk to my students about the emotional aspect of our sport.



Warm Up Activity:

- What are your invisible identities?
- What are the aspects of your identity that are important to you?
- Are there aspects of your identity you hide from your athletes?

In common
1. Both female
2. Both white
3. Both in our 40s
4. Both moms

Differences:
1. Different religious beliefs
2. Different food preferences (spicy vs non-spicy foods)

In Common:
1. she/her
2. Canadian
3. Coastal

Not in common:
1.Pet/no pet
2. Tall/small
3. Kids/no kids

Similarities
1. All women with she/her pronouns
2. Climate of sport funding in our provinces.
3. We all coach winter sports.

Differences:
1. Generational difference
2. Specific sports
3. Group teaching as opposed to private.

1. disability
2. parent
3. sexuality
4. marital/ relationship status
5. financial status

Main Activity: Peer "Case Consulting" (e.g., *Parents still tell girls not to lift too heavy — how can I address that?*)

Using the **Critical Friends Model** — small group problem-solving.
Each group chooses one real case (from their own context or the provided ones).

1. One person presents a case (2 min).
2. Group members ask clarifying questions (2 min).
3. Group discusses possible coaching responses, drawing on bias types and perspectives (10 min).
4. The presenter reflects on what they heard and what they might try (2 min).
5. Rotate once or twice depending on group size.

**TAKE NOTE ON A STICKIE BELOW

Cutting Edge Program (Elite) - second ice surface lead to a new class being offered. Other coaches are trying to dictate what is going on in this elite class, because it differs from their coaching approach. Not trying to change technique in this class, but offering different things to try, their power, edge quality, turns - which will all come into play as they move up through the level system.

Suggestion 1: Association needs to make sure the messaging about the purpose of the new elite course is clear. This will help set up framework for coaches meeting.

Suggestion 2: Arrange a meeting between all coaches to discuss co-coaching and different techniques for various skills

Suggestion 3: Meetings between private coach and course coach about individual athletes goals, what they are working on, etc. to try to get on same page. Come up with metrics to measure success/ development (e.g. like in vball you would look at serve percentage, and in swimming you would measure improvement by reducing times, etc.)

Suggestion 4: Approach all conversations with curiosity, not judgement. Maybe there's something that is not known by the different coaches.

Suggestion 5: Make it athlete focussed (outcome, development), and try to pull coach ego out of it.

Check-Out

Everyone posts on a sticky below:

- One action you will take this week. Leaving it open ended for us to explore things most relevant to our practices. Perhaps focus on your invisible identities.
- Have a 'coffee' chat' with another member before our final meeting. Discuss at minimum the situation brought up by Cindi and Valeska

**TAKE NOTE ON A STICKIE BELOW WITH YOUR NAME ON IT

Simply put want to explore the policies around gender identity disclosure within the organization, especially as I am coaching our athletes what their pronouns are given that right now me and my coaching team have no idea what they are.

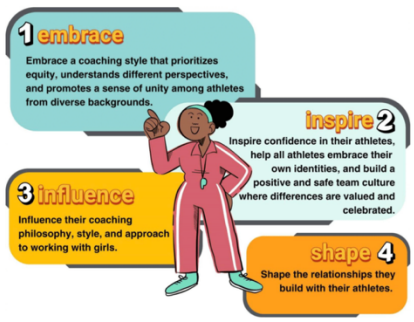
The conversation about the coaches health is scheduled for the 18th. I have also decided to meet with the parents ahead of telling the kids, but hoping that the parents can support me in telling the athletes and that this coach has with the athletes and wanting to tell the athletes themselves.

I'm going to do the 3 similarities and differences activity with my athletes

Read resources from Hijabi Ballers and look for free sport hijabs.

Ski racing in Ontario as a generalization is very high socioeconomic... (private school, parents with C suite positions, multiple homes) world, to where people call it a bubble.

take the time myself to reflect on the culture and bias to not assume in my communications with families



Check-In: Last time we explored open-ended action items.

How did it go trying to implement your action item into your practice? What have you noticed?

haven't been able to make the ask for hijabs yet, but have found a organization that might have resources!

I have started thinking about how to present a less costly spring camp in 2027, to support the athletes who has a difficult time with the price of new European camps. Having to navigate mostly government works makes it difficult to argue moving a camp back to the most cost effective US.

we were gearing up for our first competition of the season this past weekend - so nothing was implemented :(

Been focused on learning. I have started working on helping our team with their mindset. Check out with one another. It is going well.

Also met with the club and recommended a sub-committee focused on our girls program, volunteering my time. We have had our first meeting and pursued our first grant to subsidize additional programming for our girls' program.

With holidays it has been a little difficult to implement all of our ideas but with the new year I hope to bring some new solutions as well.

What suggestions do you have for [name redacted]'s situation?

Suggestion 1: Association needs to make sure the messaging about the purpose of the new elite course is clear. This will help set up framework for coaches meeting.

Suggestion 2: Arrange a meeting between all coaches to discuss co-coaching and different techniques for various skills

Suggestion 4: Approach all conversations with curiosity, not judgement. Maybe there's something that is not known by the different coaches.

Suggestion 3: Meetings between private coach and course coach about individual athletes goals, what they are working on, etc. to try to get on same page. Come up with metrics to measure success/ development (e.g. like in vball you would look at serve percentage, and in swimming you would measure improvement by reducing times, etc.)

Suggestion 5: Make it athlete focussed (outcome, development), and try to pull coach ego out of it.

Warm Up Activity

- Group 1: CARE = how do you make your athletes feel cared about and valued?
- Group 2: COMPETENCE = how do you create an environment where. your athletes are growing and improving?
- Group 3: CHOICE = do your athletes have choices? why or why not?

Each group is assigned one of the 3 basic needs and a discussion question to guide your thoughts!



COMPETENCE

Using correction as a way to build competence (giving the why and final outcome)

Help athletes understanding the background knowledge/reasoning for a skill

Not about if you scored/won/buckets scored - we had a strategy as a team + individ goals - did you achieve these or saw improvements?

Concept of self-learning (kids can start to understand what about a skill needs to be improved)

CARE

Greeting athletes in the morning, debrief Qs. Don't allow them to just say 'I'm fine: - get them to chat a little more,

Allow the athletes to be human first - coaches are a consistent human in their life (limit high/low emotions) so they know we are there for them no matter what

"If this goes wrong i'm still going to be your coach tomorrow, your friends will still be there, etc." - allows athletes to try their best and not fear failure

Learning > perfection

CHOICE

Give options between different areas of the gym (gymnastics) - what skills do they want to work on first based on what needs to get done that day.

Age-dependent

When our actions as coaches rob people of their autonomy - what are we doing that takes away choice? We love to jump in and correct (internal vs external coach) - but this doesn't allow the athlete to self-correct - start with a Q instead (do you know what you want to work on next?)

One Q per practice and you can't share that Q with another person - allows practice to keep moving

Coaches always have something to say during the time-out - but wishes that her coaches would have asked what they were struggling with/what was hard

Main Activity: Peer "Case Consulting" (e.g., *Parents still tell girls not to lift too heavy — how can I address that?*)

Using the **Critical Friends Model** — small group problem-solving.
Each group chooses one real case (from their own context or the provided ones).

1. One person presents a case (2 min).
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3. Group discusses possible coaching responses, drawing on bias types and perspectives (10 min).
4. The presenter reflects on what they heard and what they might try (2 min).
5. Rotate once or twice depending on group size.

**TAKE NOTE ON A STICKIE BELOW

Next Steps Activity

1. Individual Brainstorm

Take a quiet moment to reflect and jot down answers to three prompts:
a) One belief or assumption that has shifted for me about coaching girls/gender-diverse youth is...
b) One specific gender-responsive tool, strategy, or concept I want to keep using is...
c) One moment from the CoP that impacted me or changed how I see my role as a coach is...

**TAKE NOTE ON A STICKIE BELOW

Season Planning: Managing friendship/ clique dynamics of a new club team with some athletes coming from a team who's coach got fired at the end of last season

Warm & Fuzzies (anonymous) - complete during off-season or right before they go to camps (often in different locations)

Intentional at the end of the season to 'adjourn' the last season and close out

Pancake breakfast once a month where a parent comes in and make the food

Xmas party (x4 activities - trivia, charades, gingerbread houses)

Potlucks

(during practice time or directly after)

Olympics watch party option in Feb

Tuckmans Model

Don't jump right into the performance

Setting expectations and norms, culture of the team - use this time to define what the team is about

First time 'this group of girls' has come together - not last year's team with a few additions

Next Steps Activity

2. Small Group Exchange

a) What does gender-effective coaching *look like* in action?
b) Where could these practices show up in your day-to-day (practice planning, communication, feedback, team culture, parent interactions)?
c) What barriers might show up—and what strategies can help you work through them?

**TAKE NOTE ON A STICKIE BELOW

ONE THING I WILL START DOING...	ONE THING I WILL STOP OR SHIFT...	ONE THING I WILL CONTINUE OR STRENGTHEN...	WHO CAN SUPPORT ME IN STAYING ACCOUNTABLE???

Check-Out
Everyone posts on a sticky below:

- One action you will take this week;
- Write a message to your future coach self (6 months ahead).

**TAKE NOTE ON A STICKIE BELOW WITH YOUR NAME ON IT

Thanks for all the great team-building ideas! I'm excited to put them into my season plan.

Research Focus Groups and Interviews
As part of my PhD research project, I'm hoping to conduct a few focus groups or individual interviews to discuss your experience with the Coaching HER modules, our CoP, and what impact it had/will have on your practice.

*Please put your name down for one of the time slots below. If none of the time works for you we can proceed with an individual interview. These sessions will last for about 1 hour.

Appendix X – Study 3 – Girl-Centred Coaching Self-Efficacy Scale

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Gender & Coaching Self-Efficacy Scale (GCSES)

Pre-Survey Questions

Please complete these pre-survey questions in order for us to properly code your data. Please note by clicking the consent button at the bottom of the page, you consent to your data (i.e., email address, survey responses) being used for the purposes of Siobhan Rourke's doctoral research. You are under no obligation to participate and if you choose to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any consequences. If you choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed.

* What is your full name?

* What is your email address?

* What time are you completing this survey?

- ◯ 1st time completing the survey (pre-Coaching HER modules)
- ◯ 2nd time completing the survey (post-Coaching HER modules)

What is your gender identity?

- ◯ **Cisgender** (your gender identity aligns with the sex assigned at birth).
- ◯ **Transgender** (your gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth).
- ◯ **Nonbinary** (your gender identity falls outside the traditional categories of male and female).
- ◯ **Genderqueer** (you reject traditional gender categories, identify with a fluid or ambiguous gender identity).
- ◯ **Genderfluid** (your gender identity may shift or change over time).
- ◯ **Agender** (you do not identify with any gender or feel a lack of gender identity).
- ◯ You don't have an option that applies to me. I identify as (please specify).

What is your ethnicity or racial background?

- ◯ White/Caucasian
- ◯ Black/African American
- ◯ Asian
- ◯ Hispanic/Latinx
- ◯ Native American
- ◯ Middle Eastern/North African
- ◯ Mixed/Multiracial
- ◯ Other (please specify)

* I consent to participate in this survey:

- ◯ YES
- ◯ NO

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Gender & Coaching Self-Efficacy Scale (GCSES)

This survey asks about your confidence in recognizing and understanding your gender beliefs and how they impact your coaching practices. Please think about your own specific sport setting(s) and the athletes that you coach (as opposed to your family members or friends) when answering these questions. In this survey we define 'girls' and 'boys' as any athletes under the age of 25 years old. If you have not experienced one of the situations described, please answer to the best of your ability how confident you think you would be in that situation.

Instructions

Think about how confident you are as a coach. Please rate your confidence for each of the items below on a scale of "not at all confident" (0) to "extremely confident" (8). There are no right or wrong answers, so please answer as honestly as possible.

I am confident in my ability to identify the coaching needs of my girl athletes.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

I am confident in my ability to identify the reasons why girls play sports.

0 [not confident at all]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

I am confident in my ability to identify the reasons that girls leave sport.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

I am confident in my ability to identify the barriers to sport participation that girls uniquely experience.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

I am confident in my ability to identify the potential consequences of gender biases in sport.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to identify how my coaching philosophy considers gender.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to identify the ways gender may impact my coaching practices.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to recognize gender stereotypes in how I coach my athletes.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to identify gender biases in my coaching approach.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to meet the coaching needs of my girl athletes.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to build strong relationships with my girl athletes.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to talk to my athletes without introducing gender biases.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

I am confident in my ability to recognize when I am using gendered language.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

I am confident in my ability to make discussions around gender a normal thing with my athletes.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

I am confident in my ability to discourage others (e.g., parents, coaches, referees, etc.) from engaging in gender shaming towards my athletes.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

I am confident in my ability to discourage my athletes from engaging in gender shaming.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

I am confident in my ability to describe stereotypes associated with coaching girls in sport.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

I am confident in my ability to describe stereotypes associated with coaching boys in sport.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

I am confident in my ability to consider non-traditional matters of gender in relation to coaching practice.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to identify key coaching considerations related to gender diversity.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to talk to my athletes while effectively considering diverse genders.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to coach so that all genders feel included in sport.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I am confident in my ability to create an inclusive coaching environment for all genders.

0 [not at all confident]	1	2	3	4 [somewhat confident]	5	6	7	8 [extremely confident]
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Gender & Coaching Self-Efficacy Scale (GCSES)

End of Survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Note you are only allowed to complete this survey 2 times (once prior to completing modules and once after you have completed all modules). Please email the primary investigator Siobhan Rourke if you have any questions or need additional support.

Appendix Y – Study 3 – Focus Group Guide

Value Type	Question(s)
Immediate (direct experience)	• What was your experience like being a part of the CoP? o Did you feel included? Welcome? o Did you identify with others in the group, or the group itself? • What moments or discussions in the CoP stood out as helpful or insightful for you? • How did participating in the sessions make you feel more equipped in your role as a coach? • What part of the CoP format (breakouts, resources, peer interaction) was most useful in the moment?
Potential (what comes out of the experience)	• What did you take away from your participation in the CoP? o How did the check-in/out and activities (e.g., case clinics) play a role in this? o Did participating expand your network or give you people you feel you can now reach out to? • Was there a specific idea, tool, GE language, or story shared that you found valuable right away? • What tools did you take away from the sessions? o Expand on this, how might they be useful in your coaching environment? • What new connections, resources, language,or ideas from the CoP do you expect to use in the future? • What did you gain through the CoP that you may not be using yet, but anticipate will matter to your growth?
Applied (learning in doing)	• Was there anything from the sessions you tried to apply into your practice? o Can you share an example of something from the CoP that you tried in your coaching practice? o New initiatives? • Did the CoP influence a recent decision, conversation, or coaching behaviour? • What changes have you made (big or small) as a result of something you learned in the modules or the CoP sessions? • What barriers, if any, did you encounter when trying to use what you learned?
Realized (making a difference)	• What impact have you noticed since applying new coaching strategies from the CoP? o Have you seen changes in athlete responses, team environment, or athlete confidence/belonging? • What feels more intentional in your coaching now compared to before the CoP?

	• How do you know the changes you made are making a difference?
Strategic (systemic influence)	• Have you shared any ideas, tools, or practices from the CoP with other coaches, leaders, inside or outside of sport? • Has your participation sparked any new initiatives, conversations, or policy changes in your sport environment? • Do you see the CoP contributing to broader culture change in the context of sport coaching? How? • What opportunities do you now see for influencing gender equity in your sport beyond your individual role?
Enabling (what makes things possible)	• What actions, routines or processes in the CoP meetings did you find valuable? • What specific skills, tools, or resources from the CoP have made it easier for you to act differently as a coach, and/or implement something from the modules? • Can you give me an example if your participation in this CoP has affected change/how you think about gender? o If you hadn't had this CoP participation and only taken the modules... • How did the CoP help reduce obstacles or give you the confidence you needed to try new, gender-responsive practices? Maybe beyond coaching? o See if they mention the CoP vs not • Can you describe a time when someone or something from the CoP (a contact, a resource, a tip) enabled you to solve a problem you couldn't before? • What ongoing supports (peer check-ins, CH modules, etc.) from the CoP do you now rely on to be more gender-effective in your coaching?
Orienting (broader landscape)	• Has participation in the CoP clarified what issues (things?) you should prioritize focusing on in your coaching practice? If so, how? • Which frameworks, questions, or conversation prompts from the CoP helped you interpret situations differently or make decisions more confidently? • How has the CoP influenced the goals or priorities you set for your program, team, or athletes? • When you face a coaching dilemma related to gender or inclusion now, what from the CoP/modules guides how you approach it? • Are there any boundaries in your practice that could not be addressed in the CoP?

	• Have you gotten anything from the other participants (connected with them or will continue to connect?)(Collaborations?) • Have you explored or leveraged any connections that your CoP colleagues have outside of the CoP?
Transformative (broader effects)	• Are there any examples of when the CoP led to a fundamental change in how you see your role as a coach (e.g., identity, purpose, or responsibilities)? • Are there any examples of when the CoP led to a fundamental change in how you now approach coaching girls? • Has anything you learned in the CoP led to a sustained change in your program, policies, or the culture of your team? • Have you taken on new leadership, advocacy, or change-maker activities as a result of this CoP (e.g., starting initiatives, influencing policy, mentoring others)? • What would you say has changed most permanently about your approach to equity and inclusion since joining the CoP?

Contribution Data

- Check-in and check-out sticky notes, other contributions from participants on the whiteboard;
- Stories of change shared on the whiteboard
- My observation notes

Effect Data

- GCSES pre/post measure
- Participation and engagement records;
- Meeting polls about how members feel?
- Career advancement (might be too long term)

Appendix Z – Study 3 – Value Creation Tracking Template

Value Creation Tracking Template

Strategic: What is the quality of engagement with strategic stakeholders?

・I thought there was a number of parts of the modules and the process that was valuable, I'm sure, for women as well, but I think it has a greater value for men who didn't grow up as young women, who don't grow up in those circles, they don't understand.
・this type of learning, of taking something... then actually trying to apply it to real life with other human beings, was one of my recommendations to the Future Sport Commission. That, yes, it's great that we have all this online learning, but... I'm just not seeing people being able to digest it and put it into practice, and especially alone.
- There's coaches that mean harm and then there's people who are ignorant and causing harm. So the ones that are ignorant, how do we wrap them up in a community of people to help guide them so that they're doing less harm and I think a CoP is a way to stay current and actually address the issues that are coming up for people. So that coaches don't feel lonely, that they have a place to be vulnerable ... you want to be a coach, then you've got to be wrapped up in community, where we do community learning, not individual.
- When you're running an organization, you can make these things mandatory so easy. You just say, look, if you want to coach, you have to take this course and I'll take the course even if only 50% of them really take away... it spreads, right? And it builds a base knowledge.
-

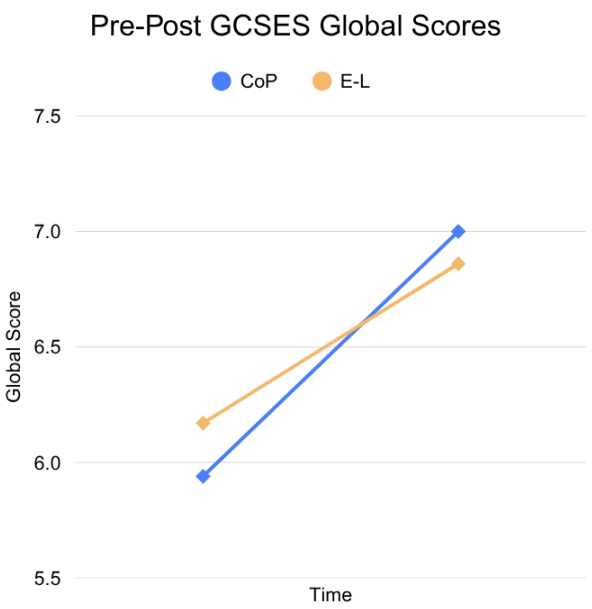
Orienting: Finding yourself in a broader landsc	Immediate: Your experience of it	Potential: What you get out of it	Applied: What you do with it	Realized: The result	Transformative: Does the difference you make have broader effects?
・I found it really quite useful in having the different people coming from different sports and different areas. I think there is an intrinsic value that comes from dealing with people across sports and ages to see that the problems aren't localized to your organization they're sort of systemic across the concept of coaching young women, some of the same issues permeate everywhere, and need to be addressed. ・That's where the work needs to happen, everyone in the room was so great, and we all have our spots that we're not able to see, or things we don't have experience, and so it was great to chat with people already doing such great work, and I just think how do we get the ones who actually really need this? - I look away, all of these things and have tried to kind of trickle it down. For me, most of my coaches are 16, 17, 18. Which is the perfect time to get them in there, so they haven't developed habits yet, or have a preconceived notion of how [coaching is] supposed to be, and I think that's [our role as members of the CoP], reaching out to the people who probably don't have that awareness or pass it on to the people that they have under them. - I love that there was a diversity of sports, a diversity of opinions, backgrounds, competition level, and all of that I found really helpful. (internal)	・I also think sometimes being a coach can be really lonely, especially if you're trying to [make] changes within sport ... [especially if] you feel like you're the only one talking about it, or, a few people saying, I knew this, but it was so helpful to have somebody else say, yes, we agree with you, you're doing the right thing, even though it's hard, and maybe other people don't want to hear it. It's really hard to be the person that speaks up, so I think there was, like, a great sense of community of other people who share the same values and want sport to be safe and it's not a waste of time. ・I think [the CoP] works. It fits the way I both learn and share learning. It includes stories, analysis, outcome, revision, improvement. I think that's why it would be valuable for any coach who wants to be coaching within organizations to have a group that they have to touch base with at certain intervals. What this taught me is it doesn't have to be every week, it doesn't have to be all the time, it doesn't have to be for a long time, it gives enough that you could offload a little bit and that's not somebody who's completely directly related to what my problem possibly is. - What I enjoyed was the community aspect of the CoP. Like, this idea of these are other people who also embrace continuous improvement and want to be the best coaches they can purely to provide the best experience for the athletes that they're working with. - Coaching can be lonely, and that's my experience even within my club, you don't always talk to others that are doing similar things to what you're doing, and so it was nice to have this group to connect with, and even just reflect on all the material that was covered. - There was value in hearing XXX' experience, and his techniques and advice and what he was doing [in HP sport] versus what we're doing at the grassroots level, and that applicability of the high performance versus grassroots. But I would like to see the effectiveness of an age-stage-based group versus a global group. - It's not a framework, a new piece of knowledge, but what I feel I gained was some community. - It was really good to connect with other coaches since most of my connections are with coaches within my own sport. So it's really nice to have that group atmosphere with other sports and other viewpoints. We [were] all relatively experienced coaches, too, so having all of that wealth of information and experience to pull from was really a really good experience. -	・Looking at biases from a system level was also a good reminder for me of the invisible or hidden barriers - sometimes I am so used to the barrier I just don't see it anymore, which means that I then can't work to fix it as I can't see the forest for the trees. ・I know for me that's part of why I wanted to join your group is because I feel a responsibility and the importance of this. That is so far beyond, like, winning youth games right now and having a daughter, especially, that I want to be the best dad to, who really is passionate about sport, and what it means, and then seeing what that can bring for society, and whether she never ... like, I don't care if she ever plays at a national level at all it's the life lesson that she's getting while she's participating right now, and how that's setting her up for life I feel like it's a really important topic. - I diminish how important the impact that we have as a coach, no matter, I think, what age or what stage you're coaching. I just show up, and I know what I'm doing is important, but being part of the CoP, hearing the lessons, it is so important what we're doing, to have those role models here in Nova Scotia. We don't have females coaching our provincial-level teams, because we're not trained, or we're not stepping up, or whatever that case is.	・it's also about putting yourself in those positions, not necessarily only reaching out when you have something specific, but having an ongoing schedule you meet with a group. I think there's a lot of value to that. I know that I do that as part of my coaching, that I have a group of other head coaches from around the country, and we meet every two weeks and you always end up getting something new that you wasn't really expecting from it. There's a lot of value in putting yourself in those positions. ・I haven't made changes in my own coaching since I mostly coach men, but I have shared stories with coaches to help them change and to understand the importance of the change and ability to change (in the first place!). - I think the critical piece of asking us to reflect on things, and the accountability of me having to put my thoughts to paper....the space to actually digest what I'm doing, or what I'm planning to do next week. I do so much great stuff, and then I was like, oh, I have to commit to something this week, and then actually someone's gonna ask me if I did it, and have to commit to actually doing it. I found that accountability piece was probably really great ... More of the consistent practice of being a bit more structured in not just doing what feels right in the moment, but really having more of a solid plan. I don't want people to think I'm not a technical coach because I value culture so much that I think I come across as free a little bit, but, there is work behind it, so I think maybe that will make me feel better that... if I document my work. - I think that can be taken across the board for not just my coaching, but I was using it with reffing the other day. So, I had a call I made on the ice and as I left the situation, I went over and I talked to my partner, and I said this is the call I made, what would you have made? And then we kind of talked about it, and then we addressed it and then I actually went to the coach in between periods and acknowledged that I felt I made an error in the call and I was gonna work to fix it. - I'm planning on having all of my summer staff do the Coaching HER course. I think that's a valuable add, especially for those coaches that coach the U10, U12, U14 teams. So, I'm planning on incorporating that into our learning facilitation. - I've spoken to other coaches in my circle [about] this group, and it's been super helpful, a lot of the things that I learned or heard or that we've chatted about, I've been able to already pass along to other coaches, and they've all seemed to be really receptive to it and I know of people who would be interested in doing something like this and helping shift that culture.	・There's a big mindset that I brought from this. It's shifting how I coach. ・One of the things that I've done during this, that I was going to be doing anyways, but this has given some good language to, approaching our board about.... they've got subcommittees and performance groups, and I think that it's a complete failure that you don't have one specifically focused to the women's side of the game, and, we need to have a subcommittee for women's performance ... so this has helped as well, with some of that, like, giving some language to put in front of them from the Coaching HER program. - Sometimes we are not very good as society at valuing what female coaches bring that male coaches are never gonna bring and that's one of the things that's making me very good in my role at the moment, that I made sure to have several female staff working for me, because that makes me better. They challenge me in a different way. They make my program better overall.	・My continued conviction to call it out when I saw how many different sports the exact same issue is occurring in, I feel like that just confirmed my belief that we have to address these coaches earlier, younger and get them before they've had a chance to do [damage] and I don't think very many of them ever go into this wanting to do damage. I think most of them start off with all these great intentions, and then they get caught up in the need to perform for the parents. ・I did the Hockey Canada gender identity course and the certification. Which is a really interesting story, because how I ended up going through that was one of the guys that I was coaching with (an ex-NHL star). His daughter came home and was talking to him about things. He just didn't understand what she was saying and he called me, and he's like, I want to take this course, but I don't want to do it alone. I think you're a guy who will take it with me, and if I ask dumb questions, you're not going to make me feel like a dumb hockey jock and, he's like, I had never heard cisgender, I didn't understand half the pronouns, when people said, what's my cisgender? I said, no, I have a sister. So we took the course, and at the end of it we would just, like, sit and talk, because we had a number of kids on teams that were in various, identity phases [and] he said, traditionally, he would have just been like, this is stupid [but] instead, he was just more open to it. So, what I found about what we did in the [Coaching HER] course was it was kind of like that scenario, but in a broader way with different material. So, I definitely find that useful. So yeah, for me, the cases were probably the most useful if I hadn't taken a number of programs previously, through different organizations. I'd take one through soccer, I'd taken one through football, I'd taken one through hockey, And, you know, I did the old respect in sport and all those courses.

Enabling

・As I talk to coaches in the club, when you have so many different things you have to go through, all the different programs, everyone admits they just click start, and walk away, go get a cup of coffee. Like, they're not listening. They're checking a box, and so what it leads to is then when I look at the volunteer coaches in the club, you don't see the principles brought to life, which is a shame, because there is a lot of good information in those courses. And then to juxtapose that with this, where the Coaching HER was such short, accessible, easy modules, and then we came to an enjoyable conversation I would look forward to then put it into practice. I personally got so much more out of this process then out of, like, the mandated process [because it] provides an accountability network. You don't want to show up having not consumed the content, and then not be able to contribute in a meaningful way.
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Appendix AA – Study 3 – Visual Representation of Pre-Post GCSES Scores

PRE-POST GCSES SCORES



Note. Both CC and eL groups demonstrated mean improvements across all GCSES factors.

